

# THE MESSENGER

| NEWS FROM FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH FORT COLLINS |

**NOW THANK  
WE ALL OUR GOD**

**FAITH  
IN 3D**

**DIVINE  
ENCOUNTER**

**DELIGHTFUL  
DETOURS**

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## From the Editor | NOW THANK WE ALL OUR GOD

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As we fall into autumn 2021, life still feels a little like autumn 2020. I love changing leaves, cooling temperatures, and pumpkin spice everything, but this fall, COVID-19 uncertainty lingers and divides. As soon as we make plans, we have to change them. Every day, local authorities update guidelines and protocols. Some of us might be suffering from compassion fatigue. Yet, I know we are called to "Give thanks in all circumstances," (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

And, I *am* grateful. At long last, children are back in school, learning, adventuring, and asking questions. Mountain Aspens are starting to blush with a golden hue. Gladly, my family and friends have stayed healthy. What's more, I'm thankful to be a part of a passionate staff and congregation who have had a heart for the city for nearly 150 years.

I recently learned the history of the hymn, "Now Thank We All Our God." Martin Rinkart wrote the grateful words of this popular Thanksgiving hymn in 1636. In the middle of the Thirty Year's War, his town was impacted by famine and plague. As the only surviving clergyman, he was tasked with 40–50 burials per day. (Can you imagine???) Yet, in the middle of such tragedy and hardship, he turned to gratitude.

*Now thank we all our God with heart and hands and voices,  
who wondrous things hath done, in whom this world rejoices;  
who, from our mothers' arms, hath blessed us on our way  
with countless gifts of love, and still is ours today.*

*O may this bounteous God through all our life be near us,  
with ever joyful hearts and blessed peace to cheer us;  
and keep us in God's grace, and guide us when perplexed,  
and free us from all ills in this world and the next.*

Our bounteous God is near us despite any anxiety that comes with the blazing colors of a new season. When the heaviness of this world weighs us down, His blessed peace will cheer us. In the face of rising COVID numbers, He will free us from all ills, now and forevermore. With hearts and hands and voices, let us thank our God.

—Cathy Richardson

## THE MESSENGER

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531 SOUTH COLLEGE AVENUE  
FORT COLLINS, CO 80524  
(970) 482-6107  
WWW.FIRSTPRESFC.ORG

MINISTERS | THE CONGREGATION  
SENIOR PASTOR | COREY NELSON  
EDITOR | CATHY RICHARDSON

**PUBLISHING GUIDELINES |** THE MESSENGER is a publication for the people, passions, and mission of First Presbyterian Church Fort Collins. The newsletter seeks to inspire, inform, instruct, challenge, and motivate its readers to become engaged in the ministry of FPC. We pray that adult readers in all life stages will aspire to be faithful disciples for Christ.

Articles that support FPC's vision and mission will be accepted. All articles must be sponsored by one of the church's five Centers and are subject to the approval of the Editor. Submissions will be edited for length and suitability.

Article submissions will be accepted via email to [crichardson@firstpresfc.org](mailto:crichardson@firstpresfc.org). Contact Editor Cathy Richardson for more information, (970)482-6107. Check [www.firstpresfc.org](http://www.firstpresfc.org) for specific issue deadlines.



**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
FORT COLLINS**

# PASTOR'S CORNER

## BEGINNING OUR 150TH YEAR OF MINISTRY

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Hello Friends,

Just a couple of weeks ago we marked the 149th anniversary of our church. We are so grateful that a small congregation gathered on the banks of the Poudre River on Sunday, August 25, 1872 and formed the First Presbyterian Church of Fort Collins—a year before Fort Collins was officially a city and four years before Colorado was admitted to the Union as the 38th state.

As we begin our 150th year of ministry and mission in our community, we begin a yearlong celebration of our shared legacy, give thanks for our current vibrant church family and look ahead to see where God is leading us into our future. The working theme for this sesquicentennial (a word you'll hear often this next year!) will be, "A Heart for the City: Celebrating our First 150 Years."

While many of the celebrations will take place on and closer to our actual anniversary next August, our 150th Planning Team is already at work on a variety of inspiring, interactive projects that will provide ways for you to share your own memories, thanksgivings and dreams for FPC.

We're also looking forward to some significant events this coming year, including our music ministry's world premiere of composer Craig Courtney's "Divine Encounter" on Sunday, November 7 (see article on page 4). Stay tuned for more information soon.

I also want to acknowledge here, pivoting a bit, that our plans for this fall, including our anniversary plans, have been modified in light of higher COVID numbers in our community. We continue to monitor updates from our County and State Health Departments, medical and public health professionals in Fort Collins and colleagues at churches around town and across the country. We know that vaccines are safe and effective and that meeting in spaces with larger air capacity and airflow is safer for everyone, too. We are fortunate to have both high vaccination rates and several large rooms to meet in, including our sanctuary, as well as great outdoor spaces.

With this in mind, we are working to maintain as many opportunities for in-person worship, fellowship, small groups, children's and youth ministry, and service as possible. We are also

continuing to expand what we offer online for those who feel safer joining in from home these days. When we consider each other's overall health and well-being, we seek to balance the value to your spiritual, emotional, relational, and intellectual health that FPC worship, ministries, and programs offer to you alongside the value of safeguarding your physical health.

As always, if you have questions, concerns or feedback for me or any of our staff, officers, or leaders, please do not hesitate to reach out. We know there are a variety of perspectives and an ever-evolving body of research and realities that are moving with us through this season. We also know that nothing can separate us from our belovedness in God or our belonging in this wonderful family of faith. Happy 149th, everyone. You've never looked better!

Peace,  
Corey



**Our fall sermon series looks at three dimensions of our faith:**

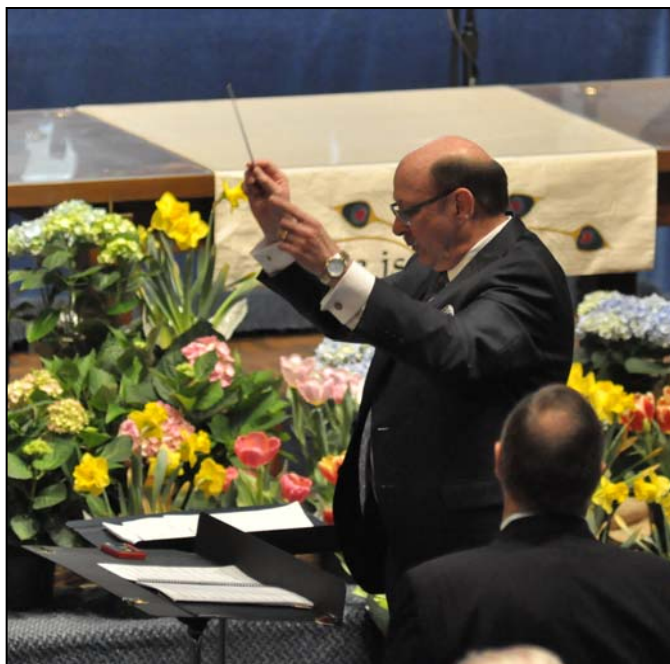
- How we personally grow our faith
- How we corporately practice our faith, and
- How we proclaim our faith out in the community and beyond

We will look at Personal Disciplines of Faith including Prayer/Meditation, Study, Honoring the Body, and Simplicity. Corporate Practices include Worship, Confessing/Forgiving, Hospitality, Generosity, and Gratitude. Finally, for Proclaiming Faith (sometimes called evangelism), we will focus on Testimony, Acts of Service, and Leaving a Legacy. Join us as we explore ***Faith in 3D***, September 12–November 21, 2021.

# DIVINE ENCOUNTER

## A WORLD PREMIERE MUSICAL PERFORMANCE

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Have you ever attended a world premiere? Many consider such events as once-in-a-lifetime experiences. First Presbyterian Church Music Ministry invites you to participate as, for the very first time anywhere in the world, they present an extraordinary choral commission in the Sanctuary on Sunday, November 7, 2021.

*Divine Encounter* is a three-part choral composition by distinguished composer Craig Courtney. Marvin Crawford will direct the Sanctuary Choir (including former members and guest performers), organist Joe McConathy, and a stringed instrument ensemble. With texts drawn from the Old Testament, the words and music artfully express the compelling relationship our God initiates and draws us into—a divine encounter, marked by Invitation, Offering, and Blessing.

### **Why is this so special for us?**

This commissioned piece celebrates the lifetime music ministries of Marvin L. Crawford, Director of Music and the Arts, and Joe McConathy, Organist. What's more, it is a fitting celebration

in the 150th anniversary year of First Presbyterian Church. Marv and Joe have led us in joyful, meaningful worship on countless Sundays.

### **When will this happen?**

On Sunday, November 7, *Divine Encounter* will be performed as part of our morning worship service(s). We will communicate specific details as we get closer to the date. For now, please keep this date in mind and plan to invite your friends and family for this premiere.

### **Who is the composer?**

Craig Courtney is considered one of the foremost sacred choral music composers in the world. He has focused his professional career in church music ministry both in the United States and Europe. An accomplished pianist, choral director, and composer, Courtney has published more than two hundred choral pieces and currently serves as both a staff composer and editor with Beckenhorst Press of Columbus, Ohio. He will be joining us for this premiere!

### **How did this come to be?**

This idea was envisioned in 2018 and championed by members of our Sanctuary Choir. Postponed twice by the reality of COVID, we believe November 7 is God's timing. The Edward D. Anderson Choral Scholars Fund, a generous donor-friend to the music ministry of our church, commissioned *Divine Encounter*. The fund was created in 2011 in honor of Edward D. Anderson (1916–2014), who had a stellar career in choral music at CSU as well as in several Fort Collins churches. He was also the founder of the Fort Collins Chamber Singers. Anderson was the father of FPC member Karlin Gray and her brother, Donald Anderson.

Mark your calendars for Sunday, November 7, 2021. Spread the word of this wonderful event to your family and friends. And please come to help celebrate the lifetime of service of both Marv Crawford and Joe McConathy.

—David Mills

No doubt, we all feel very fortunate to live in Fort Collins and Larimer County. We can engage in various cultural and arts activities, make use of an extensive system of trails and bike paths, and enjoy many other amenities. However, for many in our community, these positive features are offset by obstacles to overcome. Luckily, many committed, caring organizations within the Fort Collins area are dedicated to addressing these obstacles. This fall, Midweek eXperience (MX) at FPC will focus on these issues and organizations.

MX is a Wednesday night gathering that was created to deepen our connection to God and to each other. Typically, MX includes dinner, childcare, and classes for adults. This fall, MX's Fort Collins Issues Forum will be held in the Sanctuary each Wednesday evening from September 15–November 17, 6:00–7:00 p.m. Each week will address a different issue confronting those who live in Fort Collins. The MX series will open with a presentation from ISAAC (The Interfaith Solidarity and Accompaniment Coalition). They focus on issues centering on immigration, including assisting DACA and Dreamer candidates in working their way through the legal aspects of the process leading to citizenship. The following weeks will include presentations by:

- Christina Taylor from the Early Childhood Council of Larimer County will discuss problems that families face trying to find affordable childcare
- Rev. David Williams, who will speak about the work of the newly formed Our Commitment to Self and Society group, which addresses issues of racial equity
- The executive director of Homeward Alliance, David Rout, will explain the problems confronting the homeless in our community
- Dr. Blanche Hughes, the Vice President for Student Affairs at Colorado State, will discuss how CSU is working to address issues of diversity and equity on campus, and
- Police Chief Jeffrey Swoboda will discuss topics related to our criminal justice system

Other evenings will consider the availability of mental health services, the high cost of housing in our area, and the difficulties facing the Hispanic community. In each case, we will be finding out about the organization's concerns, their successes in addressing the problems they find in Fort Collins, and how we can support their work.

So, please mark your calendars now, and plan to join us for fun, fellowship,

and the opportunity to learn about the work of the many dedicated organizations that seek to make Fort Collins and Larimer County a genuinely great place to live for everyone.

*NOTE: No dinner will be offered this fall. Class begins at 6:00 p.m. in the Sanctuary and will also be livestreamed from our website.*

—Lynn Johnson



# delightful

## DETOURS

This has been a year and a half of COVID detours. I have visualized so many destinations: Sunday School, Advent Celebration, MX, the Christmas Pageant, and Vacation Bible School, but have found the roads blocked and have ended up in different places altogether. When Zoom Sunday School became the only alternative, I got one-on-one time with our families as I delivered the supplies they would need for the coming weeks. When the Christmas Pageant could not happen in person, we got to film it, and each child was highlighted and seen more than they usually are when the play is in person. Again, I got one-on-one time with our families. Although I much prefer all in-person activities, these “detours” have had their own charm and unexpected blessings.

Vacation Bible School was a delightful detour. We had to make decisions in early spring based on the COVID numbers and recommendations. To safely host VBS, we planned it outside and reserved a pavilion at Fossil Creek Park. We scaled back to three consecutive evenings. Limited in the number of people we could have, we did not advertise to the outer community. As a result, we were a small but totally wonderful group of 10 kiddos and 15 adults and youth.

It is hard to describe the charm of those three nights. We were able to do all of the activities together rather than rotate stations. We had gathering and table time (where we discussed the lessons and themes more in-depth). Then we all went to play games on the lawn. It was hot enough so that the games included lots of water play. Getting a water-filled sponge squeezed out over my head was a highlight! Hot and thirsty, we had a snack and then did crafts together before our closing time. Our service project

was to make squares for a quilt to give to a Habitat family. Although the two hours went by fast, it felt relaxed and fun, like a big family get-together. I am so grateful to all of the kids, Kelly and Lily Regan, and all of the volunteers and donors that made our VBS detour possible!

Next summer, we hope to turn the church into a castle and have a hundred “knights” filling our halls for a week. It will be fun, exciting, and meaningful. It will be totally different from the relaxed time we had together this summer, not better, not worse — just different. Still, I will cherish the memories of this summer’s unexpected detour.

—Pam Armstrong

### Volunteers Needed!

*Sunday School Teachers*  
(every other week)

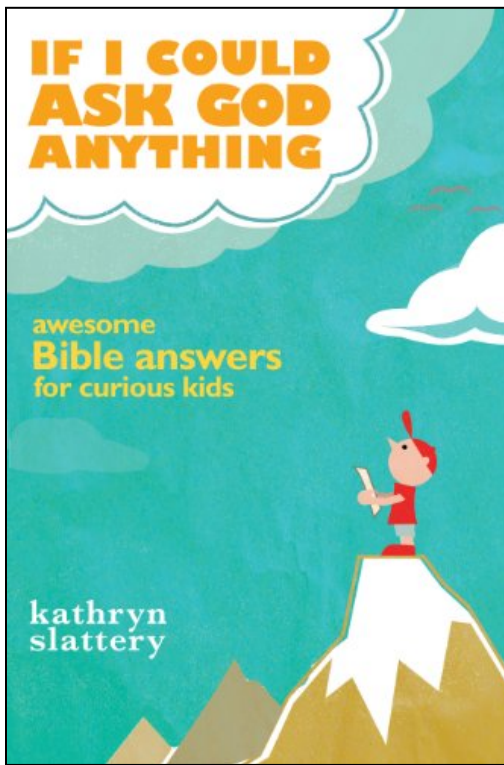
*Kids First Ministries Team Members*  
(meet every other month)

**This team is dedicated to creating quality programs to meet the needs of our kids and their families. We want to be sure to meet our ministry goals:  
ministry with, for, and by kids**

Contact Pam Armstrong,  
parmstrong@firstpresfc.org

# LIBRARY CORNER

## THE WORD SOURCE



IF I COULD ASK GOD ANYTHING: awesome Bible answers for curious kids, Kathryn Slattery. Nashville: Thomas Nelson 2006. 207 pp.

*If I Could Ask God Anything* is an excellent new book in our church library. The author Kathryn Slattery has gleaned questions from youth in Greenwich and New Canaan, Connecticut, and incorporated them into this book. (New Canaan, where Rev. Dr. Scott Herr is pastor, will ring a bell for some of us in Fort Collins.) I call this book Theology 101 because of its straightforward, easy-to-understand answers and eternal truths to theological questions.

As I read this book, my mind went back some decades when an elementary child, who evidentially had concentrated on the worship service, stopped me on the stairwell. He asked, “Miss Jane, does God really have an actual ghost living with Him?” I answered as best I could among a rushing crowd of children and then followed up that week with a more thoughtfully written statement for his age group. How I wish I had had Kathryn Slattery’s book to have shared with him as it takes up that same

question along with others as who is the Holy Spirit, how does the Holy Spirit help me, and what are the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

Other theological questions discussed in the book include God, Jesus, The Bible, Christianity, Prayer, the Church, Christian Seasons and Holidays, Being a Christian Here and Now, and Being a Christian Forever and Ever.

In my opinion, two areas on which one might want to seek further advice are the devil and hell.

*If I Could Ask God Anything* could be an excellent book for use in communicants’ classes. For those who want to think through theological matters again, Kathryn Slattery’s book would provide a refreshing review for any adult age. For those seeking further advanced study, check out Alister McGrath’s books.

—Jane Rolston

## FPC READS MONTHLY book discussion

SEPTEMBER book: nickel and dimed

SEPT. 14, 6PM OR SEPT. 15, 9:30AM &  
SEPT. 28, 6PM OR SEPT. 29, 9:30AM

OCTOBER book: The WARMTH OF OTHER SUNS

OCT. 12, 6PM OR OCT. 13, 9:30AM &  
OCT. 26, 6PM OR OCT. 27, 9:30AM

NOVEMBER book: This CHAIR ROCKS

NOV. 16, 6PM OR NOV. 17, 9:30AM & NOV. 30, 6PM OR DEC. 1, 9:30AM



FOR MORE INFO, VISIT  
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CROP Hunger Walks are community-based walks that raise funds to support Church World Service, a faith-based organization transforming communities around the globe through just and sustainable responses to hunger, poverty, displacement, and disaster. Twenty five percent of the funds raised go directly to the Food Bank for Larimer County.

The 2021 CROP Hunger Walk will start at 1:00 p.m. on Sunday, October 3, from the First Pres parking lot. The three-mile route (about an hour's walk) winds through downtown and Old Town. For some, a stop at Walrus Ice Cream is a traditional part of the route! We hope you'll plan to join in the fellowship and good cause of the walk and/or donate to help reduce food insecurity in Fort Collins and worldwide.

**To register and donate, visit  
[crophungerwalk.org/fortcollinsco](http://crophungerwalk.org/fortcollinsco)**



Every **\$65** provides two months of meals for a family in the U.S.  
*Thank You!*



Every **\$85** provides two piglets for a family to raise and sell to cover expenses.  
*Thank You!*