

THE MESSENGER

| NEWS FROM FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH FORT COLLINS |

**GIVING PRESENCE
THIS CHRISTMAS**

CLOSE TO HOME

**GROWING
IN FAITH**



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From the Editor | HOME

As the temperatures drop and the holiday season approaches, I find myself longing for comfort and coziness, for fireplaces and fuzzy socks, and most of all for those things I associate with home. Over the past several years, my family and I have talked about this desire alongside the word "Hygge." Coming from a 16th-century Norwegian term meaning "to comfort" or "to console," hygge is related to the English word "hug."

When Pastor Corey told me that the theme for Advent and Christmas at FPC was "Close to Home," I immediately thought of the idea in terms of the comfort, companionship, connection, and simplicity of hygge. The home God calls us to is filled with it!

God wraps us in a cozy blanket of His love. With the soft light of His grace, the Holy Spirit comforts us. Jesus offers the warm cup of His salvation. Then, softly and tenderly, with open arms, He calls us home.

"Come home, come home!
You who are weary, come home."
Earnestly, tenderly, Jesus is calling,
calling, "O sinner, come home!"

Softly and tenderly, we welcome you home this holiday and always at FPC. May God's hygge be with us all. Merry Christmas, friends.

—Cathy Richardson

THE MESSENGER

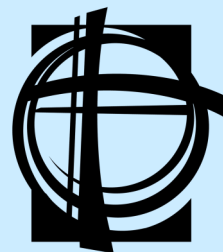
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531 SOUTH COLLEGE AVENUE
FORT COLLINS, CO 80524
(970) 482-6107
WWW.FIRSTPRESFC.ORG

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. Contact Editor Cathy Richardson for more information, (970)482-6107. Check www.firstpresfc.org for specific issue deadlines.



**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
FORT COLLINS**

PASTOR'S CORNER

CLOSE TO HOME

Hello Friends,

As many of you know, this time of year—all the way from Thanksgiving through Epiphany—is one of my favorites. I love the carols and the bells, the lights and trees, and the celebratory gatherings around tables with friends and family. Inevitably, some of these images and experiences take me back to my childhood home even as I savor creating a beautiful and comforting space in our current home.

Home. Our homes are ideally intended to be places of sanctuary, places of rest and recreation, places of belonging. The reality is that much of our lives are not lived in this ideal place. Therefore, to be human is to long for home and this is as true in our spiritual lives as it is in our physical lives.

Author Jen Pollock Michel, in her book, **Keeping Place**, reminds us that the Lord created us in the garden, at home with the Creator. One day, we will be united in heaven—our eternal home. But for now, we wander and long for home. In the midst of this middle, we make our own homes, we move from home to home, we keep house and open our homes to family and strangers, and the people of God—the church—is home.

Our theme for Advent and Christmastide this year is brought to us by the creative team, A Sanctified Art, who shaped the “I’ve been meaning to ask...” series we shared in June. They have picked up on this theme of home and describe it as follows:

“When something hits close to home, it affects us deeply. The stories and scriptures of Advent are tender, heavy with emotion, and vulnerable. We hold

the memories and truths of this season close to our hearts. Close to Home acknowledges that Emmanuel is with us, and yet, God’s promised day—our everlasting home—is not fully realized. We long for God to come close.



CLOSE to HOME

“The Advent and Christmas scriptures are rich with home metaphors and imagery. John the Baptist prophesies about the One who is to come, but reminds us that we are still wandering far from God’s promised day; his message hits close to home, especially for those experiencing inequity and oppression. After receiving the angel’s news, Mary retreats to Elizabeth’s home, seeking refuge and safety. Christ is born in the midst of a journey home, in a crowded dwelling space amidst livestock and shepherds alike. The Magi travel far from home to pay homage to

Christ, and, having been warned in a dream, they avoid Herod by traveling home another way.

“In these scriptures, home is both physical and metaphorical, something we seek and something we are called to build. Ultimately, God is our home and resting place. God draws near and makes a home on earth—sacred ground is all around us. This Advent, may we be comforted by the One who dwells intimately with us. May we expand safety and sanctuary for everyone wandering far from home. May we come home—wherever home is found—to live fully with joy, hope, and courage.”

Friends, you will find in this Messenger, on our website and in the weekly emails the full schedule for the many wonderful opportunities we’ll share in worship, fellowship, and mission over the next several weeks. I pray that this season truly is a homecoming as we find our home together as a family of faith and in our God, Emmanuel, who came to us and comes to us still with good news, peace, joy, and love.

Peace,
Corey

SO BLESSED

A DEATH DEFYING JOURNEY WHERE GOD WAS AT HAND

“God’s hand was with me every step of the way” is how Joan Crouch summarizes her death-defying journey that started at her home early last summer. “I remember getting up at 1:00 a.m. to use the bathroom and falling onto my walker, which collapsed. The next thing I remember from the floor is seeing my bedroom clock —3:00 a.m.—and my phone on the floor and calling 911.”



Joan Crouch has been a member of FPC for 28 years and worked as a surgical nurse for 42 years. Some members may know her as Joanie from her days working at Poudre Valley Hospital.

Treated and back home from the emergency room within 24 hours, Joan’s daughter Jo-Beth who lives in Thornton, had lingering concerns, so she called a good friend to check up on Joan. Alice, also a retired nurse, came immediately. “She’s not doing well,” prompted Jo-Beth to have an ambulance return Joan to Poudre Valley Hospital.

Joan was monitored carefully over the next five days, especially for atrial fibrillation, and was scheduled for a cardioversion on July 3. The standard procedure is to take images of the heart before shocking it back into rhythm. But Joan’s results were anything but standard. Initially, Dr. Miller canceled the procedure because it was determined that

Joan had a dissecting aorta and limited life expectancy without surgery. Even *with* open-heart surgery, doctors told Joan she had a 10% chance of a positive outcome.

Joan elected to have the surgery. Plans were made to transfer her to Medical Center of the Rockies, but 30 minutes later, MCR reported no open beds. Then, doctors arranged to fly Joan from PVH to Anschutz Medical Center in Denver, and soon, two flight nurses arrived to transition all Joan’s monitoring equipment to the mobile systems used for flight transport. In no time, Joan and her medical team were off by emergency helicopter.



Twenty minutes later, they landed at Anschutz. Joan was delivered directly to the operating room, where Dr. Brett Reese and his surgical team greeted her. Joan managed to tell him that she had assisted in surgeries using heart-lung bypass machines during her nursing career.

She heard his reply: “She’s a perfusionist—we’ve got to save this girl!” And they did! After six-and-a-half hours, Joan had a new aortic valve and a graft tube replacing the damaged part of the aorta, performed by the best cardiac surgeon in the region for aortic dissection.

When Joan looks back, she names the many “God-things” that saved her life: a fall that began it all, her dear friend Alice seeing something not right, heart imaging that revealed her dissecting aorta, no beds at MCR, helicoptering to Anschutz and arriving in just 20 minutes, the best cardiac surgeon on duty over the 4th of July weekend, Jo-Beth arriving from Texas before her Mom was out of surgery, and all of this occurring before the Delta variant of COVID took over hospital ICU’s. Joan’s recurring refrain is, “I am so blessed!”

— written by Jinny De Jong who became Joan’s FPC phone pal at the beginning of COVID lock-down. She promised Jo-Beth, who had plans to see family in Texas over the Fourth, to be there for Joan and was at PVH the morning of July 3.

GIVING PRESENCE THIS CHRISTMAS

Imagine that you suddenly lose your job, have unexpected medical bills, or have exhausted your financial and family resources, *and* you have children who are dependent on you, *and* you no longer have a home, *and* it is the holiday season. We at FPC have the opportunity to help four families who are in such situations this holiday season.

Since January 15, 2012, Faith Family Hospitality (FFH) has had a program to provide a safe place to sleep and nutritious food for families experiencing homelessness due to these types of situations. FFH has been able to do this only through the efforts of multiple faith communities and thousands of volunteers.

FPC will give this comfort and security to four families during the holiday season, beginning on December 19 through Christmas Day. On the morning of December 26, volunteers will pack up the families' belongings and move them to the next host faith community.

FFH is a ministry of presence (not presents). FFH makes sure each family member has gifts to open on Christmas Day and prohibits presents to the families from individuals (see sidebar). The families do need your *presence* as volunteers. We need people to come forward to cook and serve meals or sleep overnight in a comfortable host room. (Due to COVID protocols, we do not have evening hosts at this time.) The volunteer positions have limited contact with the guests. Behind-the-scenes roles include set up, take down, food shopping, and laundry of bedding.

Want to know more about FFH and the volunteer roles? There will be training via Zoom on Sunday, December 5, from 1:00–2:30 p.m. and on Monday, December 6, from 7:00–8:30 p.m.

There is also a 36-minute video that is very informative. In addition, there is in-person training at the Day Center one Tuesday morning each month. Contact Janet Schuchmann at jlsnv@aol.com or Betsy Towle at mtowle0@gmail.com to get a link.

Notices go out through MyFPC when it is time to sign up to volunteer. If you are not currently a part of this group and would like to receive notices and updates, contact Janet Schuchmann or Betsy Towle.

—Janet Schuchmann

DIRECT GIFTING POLICY FFH Philosophy regarding Sustainable Self-Sufficiency

FFH's goal for each family is sustainable self-sufficiency. This is achieved not by giving our guests money or material gifts, but by developing behaviors necessary to self-sufficiency.

Direct gifts of cash or in-kind gifts are prohibited. This includes gift cards, computers, automobiles, rental units, new clothes (such as jackets or shoes/boots), car seats, etc. The best place for those gifts is at the agency level – whether FFH or one of our many partner agencies.

Well-intentioned efforts often fail to benefit our guests as much as the donor might think when not done in the context of their case plan and with the coordination of our Program Director.



GROWING IN FAITH

LOOKING BACK AND FORWARD AT ADULT SPIRITUAL FORMATION

Even in the midst of all the uncertainty COVID has brought us over these past months, Adult Spiritual Formation activities have been growing over the last year. With studies on the Gospel of John, popular myths surrounding our faith, the Belhar Confession, Ephesians, and most recently, the Prodigal Son and Psalms, Sunday morning discussions have been both thought-provoking and lively. For those looking for other opportunities, the FPC Reads book discussion groups have tackled new books each month ranging from *Love is the Way*, by the Rev. Michael Curry to a look at creation care issues in *Braiding Sweetgrass*, by Robin Wall Kimmerer. Meanwhile, MX's Fort Collins Issues Forum has spent ten weeks hearing from and engaging with a variety of community partners who are each addressing the challenges faced by various groups in our community.

As we look ahead to 2022, in the months leading up to Lent, the Adult Spiritual Formation Committee is working to continue to provide a variety of avenues for church members

to grow in their faith. In January, we will be focusing on the Calvin University Lecture Series. Calvin is a four-year liberal arts university associated with the Christian Reformed tradition. For the past 30 years, they have presented a January Lecture Series, which in their words, is designed to "cultivate deep thought and conversations about important issues of the day in order to inspire cultural renewal and make us better global citizens in God's world." Although the lectures are presented live in Grand Rapids, Michigan, Calvin also makes it possible to watch these lectures remotely. Each weekday from Monday, January 10–Friday, January 28, participants can tune in to a different lecture on topics such as "The Gravity of Joy," "The True Impact of Social Media," "Biblical Interpretation through Church History," and "Why Stories Move Us."

On Sundays, from January 16, 23, and 30, we will focus on and discuss one of the previous lectures during the Sunday school hour. More information about how to access the lectures (they are

entirely free, but registration is required) and which lectures will be the focus of our Sunday morning discussions will be provided in January.

Then in February, we will spend four weeks with Dr. Steven Cooley examining images of Jesus over time. After exploring the broad issue of images, we will then look at Jesus in the work of American painter Warner Sallman. From there, the class will discuss a variety of representations of Jesus found in the early church.

As we move forward, the Adult Spiritual Formation Committee is always looking for new ideas for Sunday school topics, MX topics, and books for the FPC Reads discussions. And, with our goal to provide hybrid experiences both in-person and online, we are also looking for those who might be willing to help with the technical aspects of our programming. If you have any ideas or technical prowess to share, please let us know your interest by contacting Lynn Johnson or Madgetta Dungy.

—Lynn Johnson

JOIN US IN PERSON OR ON DEMAND

FREE
DAILY
LECTURES

the **January
Series**

January 10–28, 2022
12:30–1:30 p.m.
calvin.edu/january

Calvin
UNIVERSITY



Trunks of Fun

On a cold and rainy Halloween morning, 17 First Presbyterian Church folks opened their trunks and their hearts to over 40 kids and youth at our first-ever Trunk-or-Treat and CANDy Extravaganza and Food Drive. Each trunk-or-treater left with candy, a balloon, goat kisses, and a smile. In addition, the youth collected over 500 pounds of donated canned goods for The Food Bank for Larimer County. Thank you to all who made this event such a great time!



Third Graders Receive Bibles

This fall, the FPC Foundation provided funds to gift the following third graders with Bibles: Roslyn Geiger, Colton Holmes, Isla Hoskins, Maximillian Montgomery, and Joshua Smith. The presentation of a personal Bible when our children are in third grade is a tradition that our children look forward to and that sparks their lifelong love for the Word of God. The Children's Ministries would like to thank the FPC Foundation for investing in our children's spiritual foundation!



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CLOSE to HOME

ADVENT & CHRISTMAS 2021
First Presbyterian Church
Fort Collins

During the Advent season, we journey through scriptures rich with home metaphors and imagery, where home is both something we seek and something we are called to build. Eternally, God is our home and resting place.

Close to Home acknowledges the "already but not yet" tension of our faith: Emmanuel is with us, and yet, God's promise—our everlasting home—is not fully realized. We long for God to draw near and make a home on earth.

This Advent, may we be comforted by the One who dwells intimately with us. May we expand safety and sanctuary for everyone wandering far from home. May we come home—wherever home is found—to live fully with joy, hope, and courage.

ADVENT WORSHIP

SUNDAY | 11.28 | 9AM | Homesick (with communion)
SUNDAY | 12.5 | 9AM | Laying the Foundation
SUNDAY | 12.12 | 9 & 11AM | Christmas Music Festival
SUNDAY | 12.19 | 9AM | Seeking Sanctuary

NIGHTLIGHTS

WEDNESDAY | 12.1 | 6 PM | Realities' Tree-lighting Event

BELLS OF CHRISTMAS

SUNDAY | 12.5 | 7 PM | 36th Annual Handbell Concert

A way in a manger

SUNDAY | 12.19 | 10:30AM | Children's Nativity Play

LONGEST NIGHT

WEDNESDAY | 12.22 | 7 PM | Contemplative Worship

CHRISTMAS EVE

FRIDAY | 12.24 | 5 & 7 PM | Candlelight Service