

December 2023



First Presbyterian
Church of Littleton

1609 W Littleton Blvd, Littleton, CO 80120

www.littletonpresbyterianchurch.org

fpcl@fpcl.org » 303798-1389

Join us for
Worship Every
Sunday at 10am

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And the Word became
flesh and dwelt among
us, and we beheld His
glory, the glory as of the
only begotten of the
Father, full of grace and
truth. John 1:14 NKJV

Celebrate the Season

December 3

1st Sunday of Advent

Pastor Bill Johnson

December 10

2nd Sunday of Advent

Lessons and Carols-Chancel Choir

December 17

3rd Sunday of Advent - Pastor Bill Johnson

"Prepare Your Minds for Christmas"

4th Sunday of Advent & Christmas Eve

10:00am Worship with Choir

4:00pm Children & Family Service
with Handbells

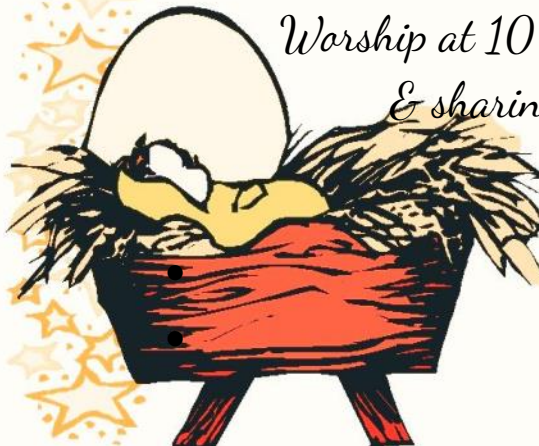
7:00 pm Communion & Candlelight

December 31

Worship at 10 with Christmas Carols
& sharing of Christmas memories.

January 7

Pastor Jonathan Murray
Congregational meeting immediately
following the service.



WELCOME TO OUR NEW PASTOR!



The FPCL Pastoral Nominating Committee is so pleased to share that we have selected the Reverend Jonathan Murray to be the next Head Pastor for First Presbyterian Church of Littleton!

Jonathan most recently served as Co-Pastor of Covenant Presbyterian Church, College Station, Texas, alongside his spouse the Reverend Caressa Murray. They equally shared the responsibilities of preaching in the pulpit, moderating session, overseeing committees and staff, pastoral care, worship leadership, and teaching. As partners in life, ministry, and parenthood, Jonathan and Caressa look forward to following where God leads each of them as they pursue individual calls to ministry in Colorado.

Jonathan has 14 years ordained experience and 21 years of professional ministry. Jonathan graduated from Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Austin, TX, in 2008 with a Master of Divinity. In October 2009, Jonathan was called as Pastor to St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, Needville, TX, and served until August 2014. He created a ministry for children based on Godly Play, expanded the middle and high school youth program, and led several new mission endeavors and summer trips.

Jonathan was then called by Covenant Presbyterian Church, College Station, TX, as Designated Pastor – a term that describes a two-year contract that can open to an installed pastoral relationship or be dissolved. Through discernment and prayer of Jonathan and the PNC, a new possibility opened for Jonathan and Caressa to serve as Co-Pastors. After 6 ½ years, we clarified the vision and values through the session and a strategic planning team seeking to claim the identity of this body of Christ. When Jonathan began in September 2014, his two children doubled the number of youth and children. When they left in October 2023, the youth group was thriving and the children's area in the sanctuary was overflowing with young families. During the clergy couples' ministry at Covenant, the church created new ministries for children, tweens, youth, college students, and for families with young children such as "Kids on a Mission" – a once-a-month Sunday afternoon that puts mission in the kids' hands through understanding bible stories of what Jesus did to serve a need.

Jonathan has served as keynote speaker at two youth conferences: in 2016, at Junior High Jubilee at Mo Ranch Presbyterian Conference, Hunt, TX, and in 2022, at SYNOD of the Sun Youth Workshop, Tulsa, OK. He was a clergy member of Faith Leaders for Justice Group of Bryan College Station, who work for food security, affordable housing, voters rights, and other justice issues in the community.

Jonathan will join First Pres on Sunday, January 7, 2024 to be formally introduced to the congregation and deliver the sermon. Immediately following, there will be a congregational meeting to approve Jonathan's terms of call. Jonathan will "officially" become the Head Pastor of First Pres on Monday, January 8, 2024.



Interim Pastor Bill Johnson will continue to lead, guide, and shepherd First Pres through Advent and Christmas. An interim pastor's role is to support the congregation in identifying its mission and purpose as the body of Christ during a time of transition and into the future and help prepare the congregation for new pastoral leadership. Pastor Bill has done so much more than this. He has been our congregation's rock and beacon of hope during our time of uncertainty. He has stood by us, entertained us, comforted us, and prayed with us as we have discerned what is next for First Pres. With the support of Pastor Bill, God has pointed us to Jonathan. Thank you and bless you Bill!

The PNC wants to thank you all for your patience during our journey to find a new pastor. We are so grateful and eager to have you meet Rev. Jonathan Murray on January 7 when he will be at church for a "meet and greet", and then when he first preaches on January 8. God has blessed us!

Believe Beloved Belong

Hello from Pastor Blakeley

Giving Thanks



Melissa & I enjoyed delivering thanksgiving meals together!

Dear First Presbyterian family—It's hard to believe, but we are nearly at the end of 2023, and as I reflect back on this past year of ministry around the church, I just want to say how profoundly blessed I feel to be a part of your staff! Thank you to everyone who has been so supportive with their time and talents—as I've said before, my role as your Pastor of Christian Discipleship depends greatly on the contributions of many dedicated volunteers. With Children's Ministry, Youth Ministry, pastoral care, and so much more, I'm very privileged to get to witness each week how we all help to make one another better as part of the Body of Christ. Also, during this extended season when we have been waiting for God to call our next Senior Pastor, I want to extend a hearty thanks to all of you for your patience

with the search process! Thank you for remaining committed to FPCL even amidst some transition and uncertainty. And of course, I know I speak for all of you when I offer my thanks to the members of our PNC, for their patient and diligent commitment to leading our church family through the pastoral search process. We're also all very grateful to our amazing Interim Pastor, Bill Johnson, who's done such a fantastic job of inspiring our church to continue moving forwards during a season where there could have been the temptation to sit back and wait. Pastor Bill, you will certainly be missed, even as we are excited to welcome Rev. Jonathan Murray as he steps into his new leadership role as our head pastor in 2024! God has been so faithful to us throughout this past year, and I am very excited to embrace everything He has in store for us in the New Year as we continue to live out our FPCL mission to "belong, believe, and be loving!"



I was fortunate to have my parents come from Alabama to hear me preach on October 26th

Reaching out and giving back

During November, our FPCL family found many different ways to reach out and give back in community with others! As always, on the first Sunday of the month, November 5th, our Communion teams went out to serve the Lord's Supper to many of our at-home members—a tangible way to demonstrate the love of Christ to these individuals, and to remind them that even though they may not typically be in

attendance on Sunday mornings, they remain valued and vital members of our church family! FPCL members are passionate about showing the love of Christ not only to our own membership, but to the community at large, and one way that we do that each month is through the Community Dinners. Held on the last Tuesday of the month in Ficklin Hall, each dinner represents an opportunity for our church family to decorate the tables, bring out our best plates and silverware, and open our doors to welcome as many friends and neighbors as we can to enjoy a delicious home-cooked meal. FPCL members volunteer at these dinners in several different capacities, serving as cooks, food servers, and table hosts. In October, the Community Dinner ended up falling on Halloween, so we weren't sure at first how this might affect the turnout. But we still ended up having a full house—and at my table, we even had a family all dressed up in their costumes to go Trick-or-Treating as soon as the meal ended! November is the one month where we actually don't have a Community Dinner because we instead plan a massive Thanksgiving meal delivery. This year, Kathy Frear took on the huge task of organizing this ministry and recruiting volunteers to help prepare and deliver meals. We ended up serving 356



Two of our amazing
Thanksgiving volunteers!

meals, which is just another amazing testament to that generous FPCL spirit! What a blessing to be able to deliver a hot meal with so many hot families on a day we set aside to thank God for all the ways He has so richly blessed us. A big thank you is in order to Kathy and all of our FPCL volunteers for coming together to pull this off, as well as to those who made financial donations. Thanks also to Meals on Wheels for providing their kitchen facilities, and to Chef Daniel Kurtz and his team for their help with all that cooking!

As your Pastor of Christian Discipleship, I also have the privilege of getting to share some of our church's resources with members of the community who may be in need. Each week, we have people who come by the church office to ask for assistance, and we are able to provide them with help including food bags filled with non-perishable, ready-to-eat items, ARC thrift store vouchers, RTD bus passes, and sometimes King Soopers gift cards. All of these donations are made possible because of the generous gifts and tithes of our FPCL members! Thank you also to Elinor Packard, who on the typical weekday spends a lot of time going up and down the stairs to answer the door, and give out items to our friends in need! I'm so proud that we have acquired the reputation of being a generous church that's always ready to share what we have with those whom God sends to our door. In this way, in the spirit of Matthew 25, we know that whoever we serve, we are also serving Jesus.



Children's Event at the Littleton Museum



Enjoying lunch at McDonald's after our visit to the Littleton Museum

During November, our FPCL Children's and Youth ministries also celebrated some special outreach events. On Saturday, November 4th, we took a group of kids and adult volunteers out to the Littleton Museum. This was a fascinating outdoor outing for all as we got to see some historic buildings, including a farmstead with animals, and a blacksmith's shop, which the kids really enjoyed! And to top it off, the kids got to have lunch at McDonald's afterwards! Then on Saturday, November 18th our FPCL Youth Group faced a challenging test of wits at the Mystic Escape Rooms in downtown Littleton. If you've never experienced one before, an Escape Room is an interactive adventure in which you and your teammates have to discover clues to solve a series of puzzles in order to reach your goal—all in under an hour. Even though not all of us managed to "escape" our rooms in time, we all enjoyed each other's company in a great teamwork building exercise. And then afterwards it was lunch at, you guessed it—McDonald's! I think the youth enjoyed going there just as much as the kids a few weeks before haha. And so did I! With Christmas rapidly approaching, we'll be having some more seasonal outreach events for both FPCL Children and Youth in the coming weeks. Thank you so much to everyone who supports these ministries, helping to connect the next generations to the congregational life of our church!

Conversational English class update

We continue to make progress with plans and preparations for a Conversational English class at FPCL! I am currently putting a team together, but the good news is—there's still room for more if you'd like to join! As I've shared before, while prior experience is great, it is certainly not necessary! Our goal with this class is not so much to teach English in a formal classroom setting, but more so through informal conversational exchanges to help students grow in their confidence and language skills. So if you've got a willing heart to connect with new people and show them the love of Christ through helping them to acquire a vitally-important life skill, we'd love to have you! Or if you know of someone who might benefit from being in the class, please get in touch with me as well! And always, whenever you have any questions or pastoral needs, please don't hesitate to contact me! I have office hours every **Monday-Wednesday from 9am to 12pm, or by appointment**. You can also call my direct office number at the church: **720-662-7134**, or email me at pastorblakeley@fpcl.org Thank you for reading, and may you and your family have a blessed Advent Season!

In Christ, Pastor Blakeley

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." --1 Corinthians 15:58

2023 Thanksgiving Dinner

WOW!

We prepared and delivered **356 free Thanksgiving meals** this year to people in our community with the help of about **50 wonderful** volunteers and many generous cash donors. Many thanks to all who helped make this wonderful tradition happen for the 16th straight year. Special thanks to the good folks at Nourish Meals on Wheels who allowed us full access to their “dream kitchen” and ordered most of the food for us.

Holiday Blessings! Kathy Frear



Dave & Jennet White
December 28, 1968
First Presbyterian Church of Littleton

*Be sure to wish
Dave & Jennet
White
Happy 55th
Wedding
Anniversary!*

A Minute for Stewardship – Christmas Joy Offering 2023

While much of Stewardship's effort during the year is to encourage the congregation to connect with FPCL through the giving of time, talent, and treasure, in the Advent season we hope you'll consider a special gift to the larger denomination and its ministries. The Christmas Joy Offering is an opportunity to support future, current and retired church workers in times of need.

PCUSA explains how the gifts are used this way:

Each year during the Advent and Christmas season, we turn our eyes to Bethlehem and celebrate the wondrous gift of Jesus Christ, our Savior. By giving to the Christmas Joy Offering, you honor this gift by providing assistance to current and retired church workers in their time of need and developing our future leaders at Presbyterian-related racial ethnic schools and colleges.

- *50% provides critical financial assistance to church leaders in need*
 - *Support grants that help retired church workers and their families with financial and housing needs.*
 - *Provide aid to church workers with urgent financial needs*
- *50% supports opportunities for future leaders at Presbyterian racial ethnic schools.*
 - *Give scholarships for racial ethnic students and future church leaders.*
 - *Equip racial ethnic leaders for ministry*



Join us in supporting this effort during Advent by placing your donation in the special offering envelopes during worship, or visiting the Christmas Joy Offering website:

<http://specialofferings.pcusa.org/christmasjoy>

Thanks for celebrating this Season of Generosity! Many thanks for everyone's participation in the Celebration Sunday chili potluck. All those who gathered in Ficklin Hall after worship enjoyed great food and fellowship as we celebrated affirming our gifts for 2024! *If you haven't yet returned your pledge card, please consider doing so in the next few weeks.*



See you in church - Merry Christmas!

FPCL Stewardship Committee: Dave LeMay, (Committee Chair), Sue Chandler, Dee Getzinger, Don Meersman, Trey McDowell, Nat Opperman

I Thank God Every Time I Remember You!

Philippians 1:3

I believe it is important to “thank” people for doing services in this church. It exemplifies who we are — a very giving church, with very giving people.

I believe it is important to “thank” people for doing services in this church. It exemplifies who we are — a very giving church, with very giving people!

Thank you Blakeley for taking the kids to the pumpkin patch and for getting the two Campos boys and taking them home! You give them such a great gift!

Thank you Blakeley for taking the kids to the Littleton Museum and for getting the two Campos boys there.

Thankful for Ben Renz serving communion for the first time and with such a huge smile. We need this more often with our youth!

Thankful for Mary Lareau having the gorgeous flower arrangement on the altar and having a celebration cake and photo albums for us all to enjoy from our great past 140 years. We are so blessed to be able to celebrate all this.

Thank you to young Mariella Boldenow for performing the “River Wide” on the Kirkin’ O’ the Tartans Sunday. She was fantastic and received a much deserved standing ovation.

Thank you to Alex Holt for getting the FB post active again for First Pres. She is doing an amazing job, so please read the posts and LIKE them if you are on FB. We are blessed to have her!!!



Thanks to Kathy Frear and all who helped us served 356 meals to those in need. The food was delicious and had such a warm and caring presentation in the packaging. Those who worked on this, helped so many have a great meal when they would not have otherwise.

And last, but not least, I want to personally thank our church family for being in my life for 17 years on Sunday, December 3. The years have flown by sharing love, work and fun and just being in each other’s presence, and all of it has shown me “it’s in the giving, we receive.” And once again, I want to thank Lynda and Jim Kizer for taking me to First Pres on December 3, 2006. I shall never forget that day or Carol Card coming up and asking me what color of crocheted dish cloth I wanted after just meeting her. Her behavior in our church represents who we are and have been for so many generations; and I am thankful for all of you each and every day. Praying for many more years together and growing in His love for each other!

With blessings and thankfulness — Dee

Dollars and Sense – A Word from Finance

Wow – 140 years!!! How many other institutions can you think of in your everyday life that have been around for 140 years?

First Pres must be doing something right. Perhaps it's our outreach to our neighbors with Community Dinners, Vacation Bible School, and help for the needy and homeless. Perhaps it's our overseas missions who help people that we will never know or see with often the very basics of life. Perhaps it's the warmth, inspiring music, and personal value of our Sunday morning services. Perhaps it's making the world a better place through the teachings of Jesus.

There are additional clues in the photo albums on display in Chandler Hall – the festive wedding pictures, tiny babies receiving their baptism, or perhaps a celebration of life for one of our departed. There are happy tables sharing a potluck, groups engaged in Bible study, or a picnic with games in the park. And there are the photos of the just-folks who gave their time and talent to “make First Pres go” over the years.

For any or all of these reasons, First Pres has received the enduring support of its members for 140 years. One can only imagine the early days – a small church with a modest building and perhaps a part time pastor. No office staff and no heating bills – just a coal stove. Local missions helping neighbors, or each other. No annual pledge drive – just generous weekly gifts when the plate was passed.

Fast forward to today – a full-time head pastor and a Pastor of Christian Discipleship, an office staff, a music program, child care, and a janitorial service. A Sunday School and Adult Bible Study. A 93-year-old building with ongoing maintenance needs, heating and cooling bills, and expensive insurance. And missions reaching out to our neighbors and the far corners of the world.

With so many of these expenses “baked in” to our operations, the annual pledge drive has become **a must** to let us know what our members are willing to support for the coming year. Strong pledges allow us to continue and grow. More modest pledges send the signal to trim our operations to live within our means.

For 2023, we are currently blessed with pledges *almost* covering our current expenses, the difference being made up from money in the bank from prior years' surpluses. We look forward to an even better 2024 – and with God's help, more than another 140 years of birthdays for First Pres. Happy Birthday!

Your Finance Committee -- Scott Chandler, Beth Opperman, Susan Strauss, Dick Graves, Charles Kellogg, Dave LeMay and Joan Lund (ex-officio), John Ansted (co-moderator), and Bob Chapman (moderator).



Adult & Children's Sunday School
December 10th is the last day of Sunday School for both children and adults. Watch for information about 2024 information!
The nursery is available on Sundays during worship.

MERRY CHRISTMAS

Financial Update

	October 2023		Year to Date 2023	
	Actual	Budget	Actual	Budget
Income	\$32,058.64	\$41,056.25	\$ 354,268.57	\$ 352,387.50
Expenses	\$40,251.17	\$39,437.56	\$ 354,254.97	\$ 393,410.65
Operating Surplus	(\$8,192.53)	\$1,618.69	\$ 13.60	\$ (41,023.15)

Thank you for the generous response to the stewardship letter! The 2024 pledges are generally more than the 2023 pledges. This will help your church meet the increasing costs of everything from supplies to utilities. The finance committee is working hard to come up with a balanced budget. If you haven't already sent in your pledge card, please do so. Thank you for your continued support.



Please Pray for....

Jan Hole, Carolyn Roark, Phil Ansted, Mary Ake, Donna Farris, Jan & Russ Fuiks, Jon Heggie, Joyce & Rollie Fuller, Joy Carreño, Judy & Bob Macdonald, Lonna Williams, Joan Cook, Eileen Witt, Pat & Jaime Yrastorza

In Service to Our Country

Major Ricky Casburn; Capt. Connor Venrick; Brett Wilson; Sgt. Benjamin Lund, Jordan; Bobby Johannsen; Connor McDaniel, Army; LCDR. Per Rychecky, Germany; Donnie Donahue, Marines; Nathaniel Syron; Cpl. Isaiah Boehm, Ft. Carson CO; Jeremy Colwell; Cameryn McKinnell, USAF; MAJ Wm McKinnell, USAF; Ulises Serrano

Missions

Jory & Mallory Bayne; Metro Denver; Presbytery of Zimbabwe; South Asia Mission; Highline Place; Love INC, Love With Actions(Rwanda)

Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 2 Corinthians 9:7.



Minute for mission

The Mission Committee has decided to expand our Giving Tree mission for the local children instead of doing the Samaritan's Purse Operation Christmas Child shoebox project this year.

We have 18 children enrolled in our Whiz Kids Tutoring program, all from low income households near our church. Many families are struggling to make ends meet with inflation and the current economy.

We plan to include siblings and parents in the Giving Tree this year in an effort to share our love and help them have a blessed Christmas. Ornaments with each child's or parent's name will be placed on the Giving Tree with details about their age, size, or wish list items on the back. The gifts will need to be delivered back to the church by **Sunday, December 10th** in order to give them to the children at the Whiz Kids Holiday Party on December 14th. This will be a fun mission to extend our love in Christ's name to bless the local children and their families. Members of the Mission Committee can help you with gift ideas as needed!

DEACON'S CHRISTMAS POINSETTIA SALE

Order Deadline: Monday, December 11, 2023

- Your purchase helps provide assistance to members and the local community.
- Poinsettias will be displayed Sunday, December 17, 2023.
- Poinsettias may be picked up after any of the Christmas Eve Services, December 24.
- If you would like a loved one's name included in the Christmas Eve bulletin, orders must be received by December 11.
- When you purchase a poinsettia, \$5.00 supports the Deacon's Fund.

Quantity	Price	Red Only	Take Home	Give to Home Bound	Total Due
	\$17.00 each				

In Memory or Honor of (Please circle one):
(name) _____

Ordered by: _____

Phone: _____



Make checks payable to: First Presbyterian Church.
Include payment with order. Place order in box in Chandler Hall
or mail to: First Presbyterian Church Littleton
1609 W. Littleton Blvd, Littleton, CO 80120