

January 2024



First Presbyterian Church of Littleton

1609 W. Littleton Blvd. Littleton, CO 80120

www.littletonpresbyterian.org ♦ fpcl@fpcl.org ♦ 303-798-1389

Join us for
Worship Every
Sunday at 10am

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2024 - A Time of New Beginnings

Behold, I will do a new
thing; now it shall spring
forth; shall ye not know
it? I will even make a way in
the wilderness, and rivers
in the desert. ..

Isaiah 43: 19



Happy New Year!



Greetings to one and all,

To all I have met and those I have yet to meet, let me extend my joy at being called as Pastor of First Presbyterian Church, Littleton. You have welcomed and received me warmly, and I look forward to getting to know you more and sharing more of myself.

I stand firm in my belief that God is already at work, and we are called to discern how we will participate. One of my favorite quotes is by Presbyterian Minister Frederick Buechner:

“The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet.”

The place to where you and I are called, individually and together, is where ministry happens. Ministry happens as we join together, with our diversity and uniqueness. Ministry happens as we read and study God’s Word to listen and learn for the voice of God’s Spirit. Ministry happens as we praise God through our worship, work, play, and service. I am excited to join your church family and join the community of Littleton as we discern together who God is calling us to be and where God is calling us to make visible God’s Kingdom.

My wife, Caressa, is an ordained Presbyterian Minister and she has been called as Pastor to New Hope Presbyterian Church, Castle Rock. It will be a rare occasion for she or I to be together in worship, however, we will make every effort to participate at social events where the other has been called.

I strive to keep routine in my weekly schedule, and once I learn more of the office schedule, I will make known my regular office hours so you know when you can find me at the church. I do encourage you to make an appointment to ensure you have my full attention.

As a general statement I keep Sabbath on Fridays with my wife. This means I will not answer my phone or check email. If I receive a call, I will check the message and respond if it is an urgent emergency, otherwise I will reply at my next opportunity.

I am grateful to a faith-filled, gracious, discerning, and committed Pastor Nominating Committee. I look forward to joining with you in the ministry of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit with the community in and around Littleton.

May God strengthen us, individually and together, to be all God created us to be so we may go forth in God's will.



Jonathan Murray, Minister of Word and Sacrament
Pastor, First Presbyterian Church, Littleton
Email: jonathan@fpcl.org

ANNUAL MEETING

The annual Congregational Meeting will be held on February 18, following the 10 am worship service. All reports must be submitted to Elinor in the church office no later than Thursday, February 1. Please submit the reports as a WORD document if at all possible. Include photos or clip art separately as a jpg file. Remember to make them short and sweet—no longer than 1 page.

FPCL STAFF

Please call the church office for contact information. 303.798-1389

Rev. Jonathan Murray, Minister of Word & Sacrament

Rev. Dr. Blakeley Winslow, Pastor of Christian Discipleship

Mary Dailey, Director of Worship Arts

Karen Meersman, Director of Handbells & Children/Youth Music

Elinor Packard, Office Administrator

Joan Lund, Financial Secretary

Tracy Eidson, Child Care

Believe Beloved Belong

Hello from Pastor Blakeley

That special time of year

Dear FPCL family—Christmas is always such a very memorable time around the church! I love just walking into the sanctuary at this time of year, to see the festive greenery, the beautiful trees, our special Advent banners, and most importantly—all of the pews filled! It's great to have so many people joining us for worship in the weeks leading up to Christmas, from long-time members, to new friends, and visitors. Our congregation certainly does a wonderful job of observing this sacred season with special music, the lighting of the Advent wreath, and by giving back to those in need, through the denominational Christmas Joy offering, and by purchasing gifts for both the children and their extended families who are connected to our Whiz Kids after-school tutoring program. With Christmas Eve falling on a Sunday this year, First Presbyterian offered a morning service at our regular 10am time, along with a 4pm family worship service, and a 7pm Candlelight service with Communion. All three were beautiful expressions of love and devotion to God as we celebrated together the birthday of King Jesus!

Advent: preparation for God's promise



Within Christian education, the weeks leading up to Christmas provide a wonderful opportunity to organize outreach events, as well as to help remind our children and young people about the centrality of Christ to all of our Christmas observances, and celebrations. With the FPCL Children's ministry in December, we had several opportunities to share about the true meaning of the season, while also enjoying fun and fellowship together. On Friday, December 8th, a group of us gathered on a frosty Colorado night to enjoy the spectacular light display at Hudson Gardens. Spirits were bright, as the song goes, and



just to make it even a little more festive, while we were admiring the different light displays, it began snowing! Talk about a "Winter Wonderland"! But for me perhaps the highlight of the evening came afterwards, as our nursery worker Tracy Eidson and I were giving a few of the kids a ride back home. I asked them about why we celebrate Christmas, and they both immediately began to talk about Jesus! Later that same weekend, we reinforced this important truth in our last Children's Sunday School class of the year, on December 10th. The kids enjoyed learning about the story of the first Christmas from both the Matthew and Luke accounts, and then took part in a special scavenger hunt to learn more about the different figures that make up the Nativity scene! Afterwards we decorated our tree, and before they could put an ornament on, each child had to share something they'd learned during the Bible lesson. A big thanks goes out to my wonderful wife Melissa,



who put together many of the activities and the lesson plan for that special Sunday.



Within our FPCL Youth Group, Advent also proved to be a fruitful time for fellowship, and spiritual instruction. On Tuesday, November 28th, we gathered together up on the 4th floor to decorate our Christmas trees, and we talked about the spiritual significance of some of the different Christmas symbols. Then, on Sunday, December 17th, we came together again up in the 4th floor Youth space for one of our most loved annual events—the Youth Christmas party. Everyone enjoyed a catered dinner from Romano's, along with some delicious desserts, and we got to play our traditional “White Elephant” gift exchange game. Even if not everyone

went home with the gift they wanted, at least no one left empty-handed! But again, amidst the fun and fellowship, the highlight of the night's events was spiritual. We read the story of the Magi from Matthew 2 together, and talked about some points of application that we could learn from their dedication to following God's star, and coming to worship Jesus. The night ended with a heartfelt group time of prayer.

THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU!!

As I close out my reflections on 2023, I want to end by thanking all of the many volunteers who have served throughout the year in so many different capacities to help make FPCL's ministries a success. I don't have the space to list all of the names here, but let me just emphasize once more that without all of you—we could not accomplish what we do in the areas of Christian education or pastoral care. Here are just a few ways in which your generosity with your time and talents has enabled our church to reach more people and do more of God's work in 2023! Thank you to those who selflessly volunteered a whole week of their time to help with Vacation Bible School 2023, from the initial gathering of supplies—to all of the events that week, and the final clean-up at the end! Thank you to those who were willing to help transport children to and from Sunday School, or ministry events, who otherwise would have been unable to come. Thank you to those Youth leaders who invested their time in young people over several months in our Confirmation class. Thank you to some kind volunteers, who were willing to come by the church on our busiest week day—Monday mornings, and help to give out benevolence items from the Welcome Center. Thanks to volunteers of all ages who missed the worship service in order to look after future generations of our FPCL family in the nursery! Thanks to those hospitality partners who made sure that we had delicious refreshments to enjoy after Sunday worship each week. Thanks to a team of talented quilters who gave many gifts of love this year in the form of quilts for the sick, and those who'd recently experienced loss. Thanks to teams of dedicated servants who were willing each month to take Communion to some of our at-home members. And thank you to so



many of you who have faithfully prayed for the different ministries of the church during this past year! What I've listed here is just the "tip of the iceberg" as the saying goes, but none of it could have happened without prayer. As we welcome Pastor Jonathan Murray in the New Year, I'm very excited to see what different avenues of ministry the Lord may be opening up for our congregation to pursue! As 2024 begins, remember too, that I am here to serve you! So 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 God's blessings accompany all of your endeavors in 2024!!

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



Mission Committee

The mission committee is so thankful to the congregation for the 75 gifts that were donated for the Whiz Kids. It was an amazing sight under the tree when all the gifts came in. We had enough money in our budget along with gifts that were given to mission to give each of the 17 families a gift card to King Soopers. The WizKids Christmas party was a huge success and the kids were so excited about the presents. Thank you again! This month, we were able to make additional donations to Meals on Wheels, Gracefull Cafe and the Severe Weather Network.

Also, we want to thank the PeacemakerQuilters for all the knitted hats and mittens. They were beautiful and the kids loved them!



Dates to Remember

- ★ Sunday, January 14, 2024: Congregational Meeting to elect deacons and elders.
- ★ Friday, January 19, 2024: Deadline for the February First Word Newsletter.
- ★ Sunday, January 21, 2024: Ordination and Installation of Deacons and Elders.
- ★ Friday, January 26, 2024 Memorial Service for Linda Hillman, Jill Moffat's sister.
1pm
- ★ Thursday, February 1, 2024: Deadline for Annual Reports.
- ★ Sunday, February 18, 2024: Annual Congregational Meeting.

A Minute for Stewardship—Thanks

“For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving...” – 1 Timothy 4:4 (ESV)



FPCL family and friends,

We were blessed in 2023 by the generosity of this congregation in so many ways! On November 12th we celebrated this good fortune and affirmed our pledge of time, talent, and treasure to the ministry of FPCL in 2024. This month we'd like to remind you of just a few ways this church put its spiritual gifts into action and extend a huge “Thank You” to all.

To begin, we extend a heartfelt “thank you” to our Interim Pastor, Bill Johnson, who led us through this time of transition. Our ministry was enriched with his unique spiritual gifts, he will be missed, and we pray for his ministry, his health and his family.

Our accomplishments this year are a result of the hard work of our staff, volunteer leaders and the church members who participate in our various groups, committees, and ministries. These are just a few highlights from 2023:

- Our PNC group met faithfully throughout the year and found Jonathan Murray, our new Head Pastor.
- 35 children attended the FPCL Vacation Bible School (VBS) which was supported by 29 adult and youth volunteers.
- We confirmed 4 youth in the spring and had an active youth program this year thanks to our Pastor of Christian Discipleship, Blakeley Winslow.
- The monthly Community Dinner grew stronger with a faithful team of volunteers providing a meal and fellowship to those in need.
- Over 300 Thanksgiving meals were delivered to our community due to the leadership of Kathy Frear and a team of dedicated volunteers.
- Women and Men Bible study groups continued to meet thanks to several volunteer leaders with strong support from Blakeley.
- Our mission team supported local and global ministry by supporting those needing help as near as Littleton, and as far away as Rhwanda through Love With Actions.
- Whiz Kidz continued this school year and many families received Christmas gifts from FPCL members.
- The Peacemaker Quilters continued to make and donate quilts for the newly baptized and people going through difficult times.

Through your gifts of time, talent, and treasure we will continue to grow in 2023 with ministry and action in support of our mission to Believe, Belong, and Be Loved. We are grateful for your affirmations of financial support that have helped to *nearly* fill our tree (see photo). If you haven't yet affirmed a financial gift for 2024, we hope that you will prayerfully consider this important spiritual practice.

Thanks again to everyone that helped make 2023 a success! We look forward to seeing and working with all of you this year – see you in church!

Your Stewardship Committee:

Dave LeMay, Chair
Trey McDowell
Sue Chandler
Dee Getzinger
Don Meersman
Nat Opperman



FREE COMMUNITY DINNER LAST TUESDAY OF EVERY MONTH 6:00 – 7:00 PM

January 30, 2024

Doors Do Not Open Until 6:00

**Where – First Presbyterian Church
1609 W Littleton Blvd.**

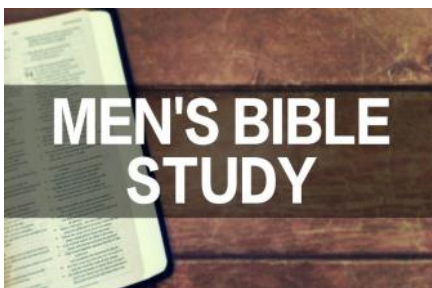
Spaghetti with meatballs and sausage, Italian Tossed Salad, Garlic Bread, Seasonal fruit and handheld desserts



Questions- (303) 798-1389

<http://littletonpresbyterian.org/dinner>

All Are Welcome!



Join in the fellowship and study
2 studies that alternate every other Monday
between a morning study and an evening study.
Morning Study 7:00am * Evening Study 6:30 pm
Contact Scott Chandler for morning information.
scott@franklincourtpartners.com or 303-888-0132

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.

- ♥ So thankful for all the giving in December —
- ♥ For all of the children on our Whiz Kids Christmas tree who got the gifts they asked for! And two little knit caps that had not been taken, I took to two little ones; and they loved them! So our hat makers made many little children happy.
- ♥ For Blakeley taking some children to the Hudson Gardens to see the lights on the 17th, and the Campos kids told me they had never seen anything like it and were so thankful.
- ♥ For the youth group who had a great white elephant gift party with treats and games and lots of fun and special messages by Blakeley.
- ♥ For the Community Dinner happening because of caring people at First Pres who gave their time on the night after Christmas! What a blessing that was!
- ♥ For Dave LeMay, Don Meersman, Nat Opperman and Bill Frear who helped move Pastor Bill’s things from his office and apartment the morning after Christmas.
- ♥ For Mike Hole, Don Wendell, Dick Graves and Bill Frear driving to Castle Rock to help Rev. Murray and his family unload a pod at their new home!
- ♥ For Rob Jornayvaz lighting the first Advent candle, who is eager to join our church in the new year! He is awesome!
- ♥ For the Rev. Stephany Crosby lighting the second Advent candle who is such a blessing to our church.
- ♥ For Doug and Hedy Lemieux lighting the third Advent candle on their 40th wedding anniversary, for the beautiful flowers on the altar and having wonderful treats for us after the service to celebrate. God bless them!
- ♥ For the Graham family lighting the fourth candle! How awesome for Andrew and Megan to have all four of their kids there — Charlie from Purdue who also brought his girlfriend, Oliver from the Citadel Military College and Elliott and Caroline, who are very active in the youth group. What a blessing to have watched these kids grow up in our little church and have them still coming to serve!
- ♥ To Blakeley helping a family in need when they came to him, because we have helped them before — for just one Christmas gift for each child. And then, that family had another miracle! A family at First Pres heard about this family and came forward to make sure the kids had a very Merry Christmas! THIS is the meaning of Christmas and THIS is who First Pres is — small but mighty!
- ♥ And last, but NOT least, for the amazing time we had with Pastor Bill on his last Sunday with us on New Year’s Eve. We shared our favorite Christmas memories, sang our favorite songs, laughed and prayed and, yes, some good tears were shed. We are better because of him.
- ♥ And now, we look forward to the New Year — and to having Rev. JONATHAN MURRAY begin his journey as our new pastor. We are so blessed.

“Be a reflection of what you’d like to see in others! If you want love, give love
— you get in return, what you give! — Author UNKNOWN

HAPPY NEW YEAR! — Blessings, Dee

Dollars and Sense – A Word from Finance

With God's help and FPCL's always-generous members, there's wonderful news with 2024 pledges. At this writing, Financial Secretary Joan Lund reports that we have received 58 pledges for 2024 from members who also pledged in 2023, with 44 of them showing a pledge increase; the overall average increase is 10% for these previous pledgers. Our total pledge trend has shown no increase since 2017 – until now. Adding in several NEW pledges for 2024, our proposed 2024 pledge budget shows an overall 15% increase over the 2023 budget. Hallelujah!

First -- this suggests that First Pres is doing some things right in carrying out God's work in our outreach to our neighbors with Community Dinners, Vacation Bible School, and help for the needy and homeless; our overseas missions who help struggling, less fortunate people with the very basics of life; perhaps it's the warmth, inspiring music, and personal value of our Sunday morning services; it surely includes happy gatherings of members at a potluck, picnic, Bible study, or just plain socializing; or perhaps it's making the world a better place through the teachings of Jesus.

Also – it's a true sign of faith to increase a pledge when many of us are being financially squeezed. High inflation is still here, and property taxes will be taking a jump for many of us. As a congregation, we are clearly putting God first; the scriptures say we will be repaid many-fold.

Malachi 3:10 – *“Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the LORD Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.”*

Like each of us, First Pres's expenses have increased significantly. This outpouring of support will allow First Pres to continue our current staffing level and programming, and bodes well for our future sustainability.

From your Finance Committee – THANKS to Pastor Bill, the Stewardship team, and our church leaders for pointing out FPCL's needs and opportunities, to each of you whose support has made this financial blessing possible, and to God who continues to guide us to be the best that we can be in carrying out his work.

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



Shabby Sheep Update!

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The daytime Shabby Sheep Bible Study is starting up again. We will be studying "Unshakable Hope" which is a series on the Right Now app. We will be starting Wednesday Jan. 17 at 10:00 in the Shabby Sheep room. We welcome any and all women of our church to join us. You can come any Wednesday at 10:00 and we'd love to have you. Any questions please contact Loretta at 303 549-7185 or Betsy at 303-908-5193.

See you on the 17th!

Financial Update

	November 2023		Year to Date 2023	
	Actual	Budget	Actual	Budget
Income	\$45,023.94	\$40,340.00	\$ 399,292.51	\$ 392,727.50
Expenses	\$33,243.94	\$45,618.72	\$ 387,548.74	\$ 439,029.37
Operating Surplus	\$11,780.00	(\$5,278.72)	\$ 11,743.77	\$ (46,301.87)

Happy New Year! I hope everyone had a wonderful Christmas. Session approved the 2024 budget which borrows \$28,690 from prior year surpluses to get us to a balanced budget. As always, staff will look for ways to save on expenses throughout 2023 in order to reduce the amount used from restricted funds. Thanks to all who pledged for 2024 and all who give what they can. Your generosity allows us to continue our missions in Littleton and beyond.

Please Pray for....



The Hostetter family upon the passing of Pat Hostetter, Ibbie Stroh and Family upon the passing of Jerree Stroh, Jill Moffat and family upon the passing of her sister Linda, Jan Hole, Carolyn Roark, Phil Ansted, Betty Anderson, Jill Van Den Bos, Kathy McDaniel, Marian Becker, 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)



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Believe Beloved Belong

OFFICE HOURS

Monday—Thursday 9am to 2pm, Friday 9am to Noon, Closed Saturday

WORSHIP SCHEDULE

- **10:00 am Sunday Worship**
- ♦ **FIRST WORD NEWSLETTER: The DEADLINE for the February newsletter is January 19th.**

Interested in Joining FPCL?

If you are considering joining First Presbyterian Church or would just like to know more about it, contact Elinor Packard at 303-798-1389 ext. 1