

SPRING 2021

THE COMMUNICATOR

FOOTHILLS UNITARIAN CHURCH



Fire Communion

IN THIS ISSUE

- The After | 2
- Vaccine Update | 5
- A Look Back at 2020 | 6
- Building Expansion Update | 8
- Circles Update | 10
- Caring Update | 11
- Foothills Checks In | 12
- The Eighth Principle | 13
- Common Conversation | 14
- Justice Summit Recap | 15

THE AFTER: MAKING PLANS FOR POST-PANDEMIC CHURCH

REV. GRETCHEN HALEY

Some of you know that my partner and I had exactly four hours notice before we went to pick up our daughter from the hospital. With my son, we had three whole days!

I always think about this when, a few weeks or months before their due date, expectant parents tell me how they are not sure they are “ready.” What’s funny is I believe them. Sometimes having too much notice about a big thing makes it harder.

I start with this because, with the vaccine rollout, it’s time to start planning for what church will look like post-pandemic.

While we had only a few days to move into virtual church, we have months to figure out what “going back” will look like, and so (like with parenthood!), I think that makes it much harder.

We become parents by parenting, and we'll become the church we'll be post-pandemic by being the church after the pandemic.

Just as we have learned how to do church in the pandemic by simply being the church. And, of course, this doesn’t mean we shouldn’t be



We offered 112 all-online services in the last year!

making plans! Just like my partner and I probably would’ve picked a better car seat with slightly more time for research and shopping, this advance notice gives us all a chance to consider our options and talk with other congregations, communities, and each other about how we want to gather and with what practices in “the after.”

We anticipate that the families from Family Housing Network / Faith Family Hospitality will be with us through May, after which they will return to rotating across churches as they did pre-pandemic. This will allow us to deep clean and do any needed maintenance in June. Then we believe some degree of indoor gathering may be possible in July.

Between now and then, we will be convening various conversations and task forces to assess the form, content, and timing of our post-pandemic church life together.

The only thing we can say for sure is that there will be robust online and in-person offerings, both because we value accessibility and because there's a lot about being online we don't want to stop! Depending on infection rates and vaccine availability, we can imagine some smallish in-person gatherings by early summer and larger gatherings by late summer.

We'll keep offering a good portion of what we've been creating for Sundays, including lay member

testimonials,
high-quality
visual
components,
and the
opportunity
for personal
conversation
and
connections
in breakouts.

We'll also add back in things

like singing together, choir, and hearing each other laugh (and yawn, and cry, and more). We'll add hugs and handshakes (when wanted!). I can't wait.

To offer both of these things is not easy and will take more resources in staffing, software, and volunteers. Some consultants talk about hybrid models requiring 40% more staff and volunteer hours than doing only in-person or virtual. We do not anticipate this heavy a lift, but it is important to remember that it's not merely the same work across multiple platforms.

With all this in mind, I'm currently anticipating a "re-launch" of in-person services in September or October. While we will have a lot of conversations on specifics, a few priorities for me include:

(1) Using online services to enable us to have two in-person services (rather than returning to three).

(2) Centering the needs and experiences of those who haven't had access to online services, especially families with younger kids.

(3) Remaining as agile, curious, collaborative, and creative throughout the process as possible so that as new information continues to unfold, we can adapt, grow, and continue to be the church our mission requires us to be.



The Chard family shares how they teach their kids to be antiracist and light our chalice.

(4) Ensuring that no one way of accessing the church's ministry is "primary," aka, no second-class church members! We need to create meaning-filled and quality experiences wherever they are offered. This means we need to think about sustainability, systems, and support at every step of the way.

The other thing I've noticed about long lead times for more traditional routes-to-parenthood is that there's more time to worry. But our short notice process taught me that sometimes you've just got to take that leap of faith! So, let's keep our guiding values at the center and trust each other. Let's keep being the Foothills Unitarian Church through it all.

And....leap!

With love and in partnership,

Rev. Gretchen



Our Foothills Summer Chalice Camp for kids age 5 -12 is back! Registration will open in mid-March. This summer we will offer two weeks of camp! June 7-11 & August 2-6. The tentative camp schedule is M-F 9 am-3 pm, subject to change depending on public health guidelines.

New this summer: July Coming of Age Intensive for 6th-8th graders - a rite of passage experience for middle schoolers to examine their values in UU community. Schedule & registration coming in March.

Join us for Deeper

every Wednesday
7-8 pm on Zoom

Connect with others and explore the themes of our series and worship. There will be time to check in with each other, watch content from Sunday worship, and go deeper into conversation through discussion questions.

Register at foothillsuu.org/events



VACCINE UPDATE!

There are many options to receive the COVID-19 vaccine for anyone age 60 or older (and 50 or over as of March 21st). Without sufficient planning at the national level, local communities need to step up to get this vaccine distributed. We need to rely on our informal networks to bring this pandemic – and all that comes with it – to an end. If you need a ride to get your vaccine, call A Little Help who are providing support for this need at 970-541-9877.

If you have tech challenges or otherwise are struggling to get this figured out, please do not hesitate to reach out for assistance by calling us at 970-493-5906.

To ask questions about the vaccine or vaccination sites, call the Joint Information Center at 970-498-5500 (M-F, 9:00 am – 4:30 pm), text 970-999-1770, or email publichealth@larimer.org.

You can find a list of places to register for the vaccine at foothillsuu.org/covidvaccine

Foothills Unitarian is also working to improve vaccine access in immigrant and BIPOC communities. Rev. Gretchen is collaborating with community partners to create hotlines and mobile vaccination clinics that specifically service immigrant and BIPOC communities.

THE FAMILY ROOM

Parents have had to show a special resiliency throughout the pandemic. To receive parenting support by text twice a week, text "FamilyRoom" to 97000.



A Look Back At 2020

As you peruse some of the 2020 highlights below, remember all of the ways that we met the struggle of 2020, not with bitterness or despair (though we've had our moments), but with generosity, creativity, kindness, and courageous love. (And know that for all the things we've listed here, there are 100 things we couldn't fit onto these two pages!)



Drive-Through Food Bank



Flower Communion

We shared
\$59,343.49 with
our community.

We hosted
'visiting' churches
from five
different states!

We welcomed three new staff members



Rev. Elaine Aron-Tenbrink
Assistant Minister



Katie Watkins
Director of Finance &
Operations



Kelsey DiAstra
Creative & Digital
Communication Manager



Water Communion

We dove deeper into worship series with Soul Scapes and The Orienting Guide.



We proved that an Online Auction could be both a great success - we raised over \$20,000 - and lots of fun!



(Un)Silent Night (Nine churches across three states joined us in hosting this magical night!)

Chalice Charge (we raised over \$1000 for families living in our building!)

We engaged 1284 people through our ministries .

BUILDING EXPANSION UPDATE

SUE SULLIVAN, BOARD PRESIDENT

There was a moment in Architect Peter Ewers' presentation at the Sunday, February 21 congregational meeting when he showed a rendering of the new sanctuary from the perspective of Drake Road. He said that the building during construction would draw attention from folks driving by and raise our profile.

I silently wondered if this was a benefit more noteworthy for the customer-driven businesses he designs than for a church like ours. But then I thought about our large Black Lives Matter banners on our buildings and our Burma-shave-style signs of support for so many marginalized groups. And I wondered, what does it say to passersby that our courageous-love-fueled congregation - which shares our plate each week and is so generous with our time and talent, too, in partnership with local groups - what does it mean to see a big new sanctuary going up at that church?

To me, it feels like a profoundly hopeful message to our larger community.



We speak our truth of a morally interconnected world. And we are growing. Folks are drawn to our mission and vision and want to join us in living out our shared values.

On Sunday, Feb. 21st, the congregation met online and voted overwhelmingly (144-4) to proceed with a revised Phase 1 of our Building Expansion Project, a master plan for an eventual doubling of our campus.

It was nearly a year ago that we celebrated our \$6 million capital campaign success and voted to proceed to final design on a Phase 1 centered on a new sanctuary building. Two weeks later, the reality of the pandemic hit and sent us into a new world of online worship, lockdowns, social distancing, and mask-wearing.

The board felt it was profoundly fortunate that our timing allowed us to pause the project and assess this new reality.

Now we are moving forward with a revised Phase 1 that represents



Aerial View of Building Expansion Design

months of re-visioning work and new financial modeling from our Building Expansion Team, our Building Expansion Finance Team, our architect and general contractor, and our church staff.

This version keeps our 400-seat seat sanctuary, includes a 4,000-square-foot lower level of insulated, wired, climate-controlled space that can later be subdivided, and connects the RE wing to the main buildings, with code upgrades, including installation of the elevator for universal access.

The congregational vote included authorizing the building teams and staff to acquire the short-term and long-term debt needed to finance the project fully. The plan includes no more than \$1.5 million in long-term debt, with the expectation that we

will reduce that amount significantly. While we will periodically solicit input from the congregation, In the interest of keeping the project moving forward on its most efficient timeline and limiting inflationary pressures, we are not planning to return to the congregation for another vote unless the design or cost totals change materially. The goal is to break ground this fall and finish by the end of 2022.

During the pandemic, we provided safe housing to 15 families in our building.

We look forward to continuing forward in this impactful and exciting process!

Sue Sullivan
President, Board of Trustees

CIRCLES UPDATE



REV. SEAN NEIL-BARRON

When colleagues ask me what I love most about Foothills, I always respond, “I love how they embrace learning and experimentation as a core part of who they are.” Over the past nine months, we've been doing a lot of experimentation. And I'm excited to update you on the culmination of nearly six months of intentional work regarding our Community Circles and Caring Ministry.

When we launched Community Circles, we didn't know what to expect. What happened far exceeded what we thought possible. We witnessed people caring for each other neighbor-to-neighbor, meeting their fellow Foothills members who they never knew lived so close, and working together to transplant rituals once firmly

rooted in the sanctuary into the soil of our local communities.

In close consultation and dialogue with Circle Leaders and other congregation members, we have decided to move away from circles as the primary way we gather and operate during these strange pandemic times.

Some circles will continue to meet in various configurations. (You find details about those continuing circles at foothillsuu.org/circles)

Our circles were the way we cared for each other during the past nine months. As Rev. Elaine explains in her Caring Update next, we hope to take what we learned and create a more sustainable system that still leverages our geographic connections.



Thursdays
6:45 – 7:15 pm
on Zoom
foothillsuu.org/events

The Kitchen Table

A weekly 30-minute Zoom gathering. Structured and guided by Rev. Elaine, the Kitchen Table is a place to catch our breath, find our grounding, acknowledge our joys, sorrows, and stressors, and receive nourishment for the road ahead. There is always a seat for you at this table.

CARING UPDATE

REV. ELAINE ARON-TENBRINK



We are dedicated to caring for each other during times of hardship and life transition. Our Caring Network offers support in many ways, including:

- Compassionate listening from our team of trained Caring Listeners (formerly known as “Parish Visitors”)
- Meal delivery
- Caring kits containing items of comfort and ritual for challenging times
- Prayer and blessing
- Spiritual support, including counseling and rites of passage
- Financial support in times of hardship

Each of our members now belongs to one of five Caring Network Geographic Regions:

Northern NoCo, East Fort Collins, West Fort Collins, South Fort Collins, and Southern NoCo.

Each of our Caring Listeners is assigned to a region to foster deeper connection and relationship.

To identify your region, visit foothillsuu.org/circles.

We all experience heartache, hard times, and significant transitions. Please let us know what's going on in your life. Visit foothillsuu.org/caring and fill out the “Request for Care, Prayers, or Support” form. A member of our Caring Network will get in touch with you soon.



Let us bring you or someone you know a kit with items of comfort and ritual to provide a little boost of love.

Request a caring kit at foothillsuu.org/caringkits

“Such a compassionate and loving gesture!”

“Wearing my shawl daily!”

“A wonderful outreach of love and kindness from my church family.”

FOOTHILLS CHECKS IN



RESPONSES

TOOLS FOR OUR SELF-CARE TOOLBOX

After many people expressed appreciation for deep breathing exercises during worship service, we asked our community to share favorite centering practices and help fill each other's self-care toolkits!

Lighting candles and appreciating the flame, the warm glow and flicker.

I hyper focus using my senses. For example, if I'm taking a drink of water, I fully engage my mouth with the sip – noticing if it's bubbly, uses different tastes, if it's cold or warm, if some stays on my lips.

Look out my window and do 10 eye blinks a couple times a day.

S.T.O.P. (1) Stop. (2) Take three deep breaths. (3) Observe how you are feeling. (4) Proceed with love into the world.

Gratitude exercise of listing 3 things you're grateful for each day or looking at the world like you're seeing it through the eyes of a child.

To participate in weekly check-ins, text "checksin" to 97000!

THE 8TH PRINCIPLE

FOOTHILLS 8TH PRINCIPLE TASK FORCE

Our shared commitment to the seven principles is a central part of what connects us as Unitarian Universalists. Momentum is growing around the country to include an 8th Principle affirming our commitment to address personal and systemic racism. The 8th Principle states:

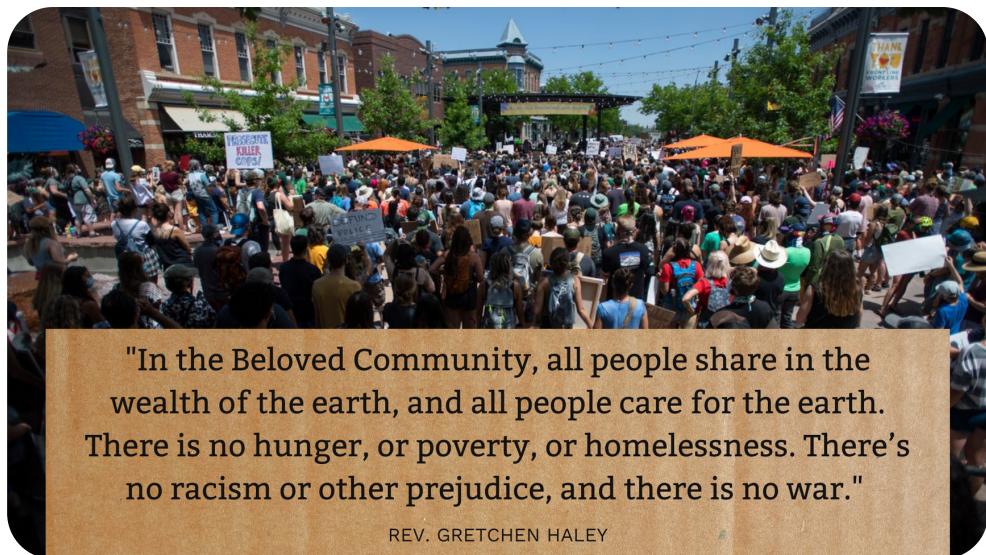
We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote: journeying toward spiritual wholeness by working to build a diverse multicultural Beloved Community by our actions that accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions.

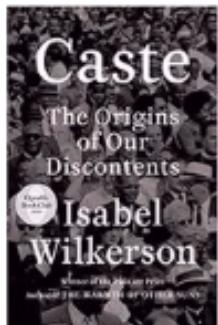
Here at Foothills, many of us view the invitation to adopt the 8th Principle as another step in deepening our understanding of racism and pledging to dismantle white supremacy. To that

end, we have created an 8th Principle Task Force, under the umbrella of our Racial Justice Team, to foster awareness and education of this Congregant-led movement. Our goal is to successfully adopt the 8th Principle during our May 23rd Annual Meeting, joining many other congregations in this important commitment.

[For more information, including a short video, background on this movement, and upcoming 8th Principle events, visit \[foothillsuu.org/8thprinciple\]\(http://foothillsuu.org/8thprinciple\).](http://foothillsuu.org/8thprinciple)

The 8th Principle is our proposal to be in covenant with the Beloved Community. Covenants can change a culture. They hold the potential to transform relationships, communities, and institutions. We hope you will join us in discovering more about the 8th Principle.





Common Conversation

an invitation from Rev. Gretchen Haley

When we talk about what we wanted to hold on to from 2020, many of us note our deeper understanding of racism and a growing commitment to dismantling white supremacy. This understanding and commitment was born of grief and outrage after seeing George Floyd and Breonna Taylor murdered. And then intensified when their killers were not held accountable.

And yet, these incidents of 2020 were only the most recent examples of our country's longstanding history of racial injustice. Despite what many of us learned in school or from our families of origin, racism has been built into our systems and culture right from the beginning - so much so that Pulitzer-Prize-winning author Isabel Wilkerson started to think of it not just as a matter of race but as a matter of caste.

Wilkerson writes: "Caste focuses in on the infrastructure of our divisions and

the rankings, whereas race is the metric that's used to determine one's place in that."

In *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents*, Wilkerson dives into the underlying structures we need to address to make real progress on dismantling white supremacy and racism in our country.

For these reasons, we are inviting what we're calling a "Common Conversation" with Wilkerson's ideas. There are many ways to participate in Common Conversation, including reading the book and many that don't require you to read the full text! (Which is why we didn't call it a "Common Read.") We want to make this conversation as accessible for as many people as possible!

There's more information on our Caste webpage, including how to let us know you are participating!

Join the conversation at foothillsuu.org/caste

JUSTICE SUMMIT RECAP

BY TICIE RHODES

In February, representatives of more than ten Foothills Justice and Service Ministries met virtually. This meeting marked the first step toward building a collaborative team that will allow us to multiply our potential to be forces for Courageous Love in Northern Colorado.

After introductions, we broke into small groups to unpack the existing strengths and weaknesses of our shared Justice work through the lens of "the 4 Ps:" Partnership, Power, Practices, and Presence.

A Social Mapping exercise illustrated where Partnerships are already strong and raised the question of how better-connected ministries might support the less well-connected teams' work. We also discussed ways we can strengthen community Partnerships.

Next, we examined Practices that might make our work more visible and accessible, especially for newcomers and those from underrepresented groups.

Finally, we examined Presence - who comes to "this table" and who does not. Recognizing that we were a group of mostly older white women, we were acutely aware that we lack whole worlds of opinions, ideas, and approaches that would enrich us all if we were a more diverse group. This is an area where creating new community Partnerships and avenues for newcomer participation will strengthen us.

Everyone who desires to spread Courageous Love through our Justice Teams should have a way to do so! With that goal at the forefront of our minds, we will continue our collaborative efforts with each other and the wider community.



The Way It Is by Lynn Ungar

One morning you might wake up
to realize that the knot in your stomach
had loosened itself and slipped away,
and that the pit of unfulfilled longing in your heart
had gradually, and without your really noticing,
been filled in—patched like a pothole, not quite
the same as it was, but good enough.
And in that moment it might occur to you
that your life, though not the way
you planned it, and maybe not even entirely
the way you wanted it, is nonetheless—
persistently, abundantly, miraculously—
exactly the way it is.