

1. Name of the Congregation: Foothills Unitarian Church
2. Address of the Congregation: 1815 Yorktown Ave, Fort Collins, CO 80526
3. Website of the Congregation: <https://foothillsuu.org/>
4. Green Sanctuary point person: Name, Email, & Phone
John Bryant greenuume@gmail.com 972-978-6242
5. Minister of the Congregation: Name, Email, & Phone
Gretchen Haley gretchen@foothillsuu.org Call/text 303-877-0934
6. Membership: 1100 active congregants including 557 official members. Some active participants interact entirely online.

7. Religious Exploration (RE) enrollment:

In 2021, there were 1,041 individual members attending Sunday Services. In addition to that, there were 356 members in small groups of religious exploration. This includes Journey Groups (small groups that more deeply explore topics introduced in the Sunday services), Deeper Groups (small groups exploring religious themes), and Basecamp Groups (individuals who are new to our church and exploring UU theology and church structure). In addition to the adult RE programming, there were 267 children and youth that were involved in various RE programs such as a Coming of Age Intensive and Kids Camp. It's anticipated that these numbers will increase in 2022 as our membership increases, and more of the congregation feels comfortable with in-person groups and activities.

8. Type of congregation: Urban Rural Suburban
Small city of 176,000 in Northern Colorado, quite separate from the Denver metro area and its suburbs
9. *Please provide the vision/mission/goals statement of your congregation.*
Vision: Adopted by the Board Dec. 2018 as a result of forums involving over 300 congregants, revised slightly July 2019.

We, the members of Foothills Unitarian Church, commit to create and sustain a healthy, vibrant religious community where: (1) Foothills is a vital part of the lives of its people, providing abundant opportunities for relationships across differences that provide joy, care, and belonging for all. (2) .We are actively engaged in a process of lifelong spiritual deepening that allows us to live lives of meaning and purpose in a world that needs our Unitarian Universalism. (3) We understand that being a part of Foothills requires us to give abundantly of our time, and this deepening involvement helps us to identify and grow our individual gifts. (4) We each give generously and gratefully of our financial resources in ways that foster a deep ownership of the impactful work we support. (5) We recognize and dismantle prejudice and oppression in all their forms, including within ourselves, allowing us to be more effective and trusted partners to marginalized communities in Northern Colorado and beyond. (6) Foothills is a leader in Northern Colorado in developing sustainable, innovative, intersectional approaches to caring for our earth and its people to ensure a greater flourishing of all life. (7) We do the work to make Unitarian Universalism accessible to all in Northern Colorado.

Mission: Foothills Unitarian Church unleashes courageous love in Northern Colorado and beyond by embracing our diversity, growing our faith, and awakening our spirits to the unfolding meaning of this life.

Values: Our congregation is guided by our shared values and vision: Joyful Resilience, Collective Courage, Deepening Belonging, Transcendent Wonder.

Covenant: Love is the spirit of this church and service is its law, this is our great covenant, to dwell together in peace, to seek the truth in love, and to help one another.

10. Help us understand your congregation's historical context: are there any recent highs or lows that might impact how you will approach taking on this transformational climate-change journey?

Foothills Unitarian was started in 1898 by a small group of people inspired by the circuit-riding female minister who had preached in Longmont, Loveland and Fort Collins in the 1880s trying to get a church established. It is unusual for a UU congregation in the West to have such a long history, but it is one that the congregation

is proud of. We are about to celebrate our 125th anniversary, chronicled by a new book on the church's history to be published in Fall, 2022. Throughout that time, Foothills Unitarian has had thriving times and a few when it came close (by one vote) to shutting its doors. At one point it merged with another denomination (Congregational) and shared a facility. It has occupied several different buildings, including one that has now been replaced by a burger joint. It has helped to found congregations in nearby towns as well.

In the more recent past, starting in 1972, two individual men served as the senior ministers for more than 25 years each. Both were well-loved by the congregation; the last minister was minimally connected to the UUA, so the congregation remained somewhat skeptical of any denominational programming. In 2015, all of that changed when the congregation voted to call its associate minister, a young woman, as the new senior minister. This resulted in an exodus of some individuals who were more identified with the church of the retired minister than with UUism. They objected to the selection process recommended by the UUA as well. A few years later, there were several incidents of misconduct by church staff and again an exodus of members occurred for various reasons including objections to the UUA-recommended process that addressed the misconduct. However, during that time period, there was net growth. New people flooded into the congregation after the U.S. 2016 election. The congregation changed. It continued to have many families with children and a large number of older people, but fewer who had long histories with the church.

The new senior minister encouraged the growth of congregational involvement in justice programs, not just the individual participation of congregants as had been the pattern, but organized church efforts.

We became founding members of a cooperative effort by a collection of Fort Collins churches and synagogues to provide housing for homeless families (Faith Family Hospitality Network) and engaged the congregation in hosting the families quarterly. We became a Sanctuary congregation and welcomed a woman and her children sheltering from deportation. We partnered with the local Food Bank to establish the first mobile Food Bank site for food distribution from the church parking lot twice a month on

Sunday afternoons. This effort offered support to families in a different part of town and on the weekends, increasing accessibility of food bank services; the church continues to provide the staffing for this effort. Congregational efforts in social justice led to two awards - one from the city of Fort Collins and in 2017 the UUA Bennett Award for Congregational Action on Human Justice and Social Action. Our senior minister, Rev. Gretchen Haley, became an organizing resource for many interfaith justice issues in the community, from standing up at the local mosque, to vaccine equity efforts in the BIPOC community.

We expanded the notion of generosity among congregants by giving half of the collection plate each Sunday to a community partner that shared our values. This increased giving among congregants. We moved from a culture of scarcity to one of abundance and gratefulness.

When the pandemic began in March 2020, the church volunteered its resources once again as a semi-permanent site for the families in the Faith Family Hospitality Network. Instead of moving the families each week from church to church, participants housed in the program remained in our facility for more than a year. Other congregations helped provide meals and services during that time.

During 2020 - 2021 pandemic times, the church went entirely online but made extensive efforts with neighborhood circles and other small group efforts to keep congregants engaged. Again, we saw some erosion of membership but many new members. In the Spring of 2021, a group within the church initiated an Eighth Principle project, an effort to educate the congregation on issues of race and prejudice. It sponsored online study groups on the book Caste and ultimately passed a congregational resolution to support the Eighth Principle.

Rev. Gretchen embraces the UUA and its programs, participating in various gatherings at the district and national level for ministers. She was selected to lead the concluding service at GA 2022.

11. As part of your review of your congregation's historical context, we ask that you take a long view, even as far as identifying the indigenous people whose land you occupy. Across our denomination, as part of the national reckoning around systemic racism, congregations are identifying their location in the context of historical oppression of indigenous people and of all people of color. Research and identify any historic moments when systemic oppression was locked in for people of color in your area. Examples include redlining, sundown towns or counties, abrogation of treaties with indigenous people, or pervasive repression of voting rights. This process will further your understanding of systemic racism in your region, and it may also help you identify a future justice project and a potential partner for collaboration. Please describe whether this information is new to your congregation or was already known prior to this opportunity assessment.

We want to summarize both historical and current realities to provide a more complete profile of our home and our church:

~ **Indigenous legacy:** Fort Collins, nestled against the foothills of the Rocky Mountains in Northern Colorado, was founded in 1864 but as a CSU professor/archaeologist likes to say, "Fort Collins didn't begin with Fort Collins. It didn't begin with the establishment of Camp Collins or the military camp that everybody associates it with. This place has been used for 13,000 years." The land that Foothills UU resides on are the traditional and ancestral homelands of the Arapaho, Cheyenne, and Ute Nations and peoples. This area was also a site of trade, gathering, and healing for numerous other Native tribes. It is less an inhabited landscape and more of a crossroads place. With the recent cultural reckoning, our indigenous neighbors who have always been here are gaining some long-deserved visibility and conversations about native priorities have begun locally. Our *Climate Justice Ministry* recently offered the film "Inhabitants" as our *Earth Day 2022* program. We feature a "land acknowledgement" on our webpage and at our events, and look forward to supporting a local "landback" effort and the tribes' prioritized need for a ceremonial center.

~Migrant/immigrant racism: Our area was historically home to sugar beet fields farmed by migrant laborers from Mexico and Germans from Russia who started immigrating to Northern Colorado at the turn of the 20th century. Many of these families settled here, joined more recently by others from Mexico and Central America, facing racism then and now. *With initial fundraising from the Foothills community and an agreement to be the fiscal sponsor, the Emergency Immigration Fund (EIF) launched in August 2017. We helped EIF grow into the primary crisis support for immigrants in Northern Colorado during the pandemic, with over \$800,000 given out in 2020-2021. All of this was possible because in responding to an overwhelmingly dire present moment, we looked out toward the arc of what our community is about. We raised support and funds for a vision in 2017 that enabled a more impactful future. In 2021, EIF achieved growth and stability that allowed the fund to transition to fiscal independence. EIF is now led by members of the immigrant and Latinx communities.*

We now partner with The BIPOC Alliance as their fiscal sponsor and share the resource of our building to provide the organization with office and event space. Just as we saw above, nurturing organizations that respond to the needs of the present - and are led by those who are part of the communities they serve - prepares us to react rapidly when needs arise and to sow sustainable change in our beloved community.

Foothills UU joined Sanctuary Everywhere, a partnership with 7 other community organizations supporting families as they build new lives in Northern Colorado. Foothills members serve across three Sanctuary Everywhere teams - Core, Village & Legal. We are now supporting a family of more than 15 from Nicaragua and continue to support a family we first met in 2019.

Additionally, in early 2021, Foothills reached out to our partners and worked with them to establish a new alliance - The Vaccine Equity Coalition - with their leadership and expertise at the center. We secured initial funding for their work and raised the profile of their role as leaders in public health. Some highlights: 2700 people registered for

vaccines through the Spanish-language call line; 1411 vaccine doses given at 5 community clinics; 5000+ Latinx households contacted through text and social media about vaccine clinics; \$5,000 contributed directly from Foothills Unitarian to jump-start it.

~ Racial Justice & Anti-Racism: Fort Collins is 82% white (non-Hispanic), ~12% Hispanic, < 2% Asian, <1% Black-African American, ~.5% Native American with the balance being multiracial. *Foothills UU mirrors these demographics. We are growing in awareness and activities to address white supremacy and privilege. In May 2021, our congregation voted decisively to adopt the 8th Principle and pledged to hold ourselves accountable to this commitment and fulfill the potential of our first seven principles for all people. Highlights: 198 people involved with racial justice through a training, social change team, or book discussion group; \$7234 raised to provide critical mental health support for BIPOC community members in Fort Collins; 107 people participated in Common Conversation on the ideas in “Caste”. In addition, 16 representatives from our Justice ministries and service groups have been meeting for over a year to more explicitly address social change and social justice at the intersections, share knowledge/lessons learned, provide support to each other, and improve communication/cross-pollination.*

~ Environmental justice/ access to food, land, water...:

We live in the US West, which is facing the worst mega-drought in over 1200 years. It is our very watershed of the Cache La Poudre River where western water law began, a response to the water wars of mid-1870's. Water is a precious treasure, and a very complicated, essential system here. Water is already a hot commodity shaping the rural West, curbing urban access to regional agricultural products, and further limiting access for young farmers and more-localized ag. Water - or the lack thereof - will largely define our collective future. *CJM tends the church garden and has been offering seasonal suppers with a focus on plant-based entrees and local produce. Foothills UU partners with Sproutin' Up, a CSA co-directed by a Foothills member who also heads up our mobile food pantry. During summer of 2022, CJM is promoting Water22, a*

statewide campaign addressing water conservation and water quality in 2022, and will tie this pledging campaign to our September Water Communion.

The Front Range of the Rockies is an area with often severe air quality problems, #1 being emissions from oil & gas industries and vehicles that react in the summer heat to create health-threatening ozone pollution, followed by #2 climate change which means more wildfire smoke and more warm days to trap pollution. *Members of CJM were instrumental in the formation of The Larimer Alliance for Health, Safety & the Environment, a coalition of Northern Colorado citizens and groups committed to protecting Larimer County from harm from fossil fuels. CJM also promotes statewide and national initiatives around the Suncor plant north of Denver and other air quality policies.*

~Housing Insecurity

*In 2022, the median listing home price in **Fort Collins** was \$550K and our affordable housing stock is meager. In 2019 data – a snapshot of people experiencing homelessness on a single night in January - our home county of Larimer showed 22%, the highest in the State of Colorado. *Foothills UU is a founding member of Faith Family Hospitality. Now in its 9th year, this network of 25 local congregations who provide temporary housing to families experiencing homelessness. In addition, we hosted families full-time from early in the pandemic to May 2021. We also participate in an annual Interfaith Build with Habitat for Humanity.**

~ Food Insecurity

In Larimer County, 10.9% residents live at or below the Federal Poverty guideline, 38,040 residents are food insecure and 32% of school-aged children receive free or reduced meals. *Since 2017, we have partnered with our county's Food Bank and offered a mobile food pantry twice a month from our parking lot. During the early pandemic months, we served clients in a drive-through mode. 195 volunteers/year make this possible.*

~ Emerging efforts

LGBTQ+ *Foothills* has been a “welcoming congregation” since 1998. Earlier in 2022, we launched a “Be More Gay/ Be More Trans to offer support for transkids and their families.

Reproductive Justice ... is intersectional. We are mobilizing, reaching out to financially support our neighbor UU in Wyoming, a “trigger” state.

12. Reflect on why the congregation is pursuing Green Sanctuary accreditation. What is motivating you to undertake this comprehensive program?

It is time. We are in a climate emergency described in detail by the IPCC report and finally acknowledged by most of our community. Parts of the country are experiencing severe storms and flooding and the West is burning and suffering from extreme drought. It is time for all of us to mobilize.

For many years Foothills has been part of a city that has a Climate Action program that has set ambitious goals for achieving net zero emissions by 2030. For at least ten years we have participated in the Fort Collins Climate Wise program designed for businesses and other large entities to align their activities with the city’s climate goals. Many may have felt that we were “already a green-enough sanctuary”. During the years of massive change in leadership and efforts in social justice programming, we were not yet ready for another big effort.

Then, in 2018, we hired an architect for a major building expansion project who embraced building sustainably as a significant part of his firm’s identity. The congregation really supported this move and made generous pledges to support the vision. Then the COVID pandemic arrived. Although the project had a 6-month hiatus and some goals were put aside, the congregation remained in support of a building that is net zero-ready, a model of sustainable building for the community.

In 2021, the Climate Justice Ministry group resumed meeting with an awareness of the urgency of the climate crisis. CJM gained new members who brought energy, leadership and the will to start the Green Sanctuary process. Major efforts in social

justice had been achieved and the new Green Sanctuary 2030 spoke to issues of Intersectionality that resonated with our congregational identity.

Our ministers embraced this goal and we gathered a core working group and are starting. Our goal is to have the entire congregation become aware and embrace the Green Sanctuary Program as part of our congregational identity, in much the same way that our other justice programs have become part of our congregational fabric.

13. After completing this Congregational Profile, please complete the very brief Profile Feedback form. Your responses will be used to (a) improve GS 2030 and (b) assess the impacts of GS 2030.

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