

Foothills Unitarian Church, Fort Collins, Colorado
Green Sanctuary 2030 Opportunity Assessments

Rev 4/25/23

I. Congregational Transformation

1. Awareness, commitment, and spiritual and emotional grounding for the work

The grounding for Green Sanctuary work at Foothills is firmly established in the Foothills Vision, Mission and Values statements.

Vision Statement (January 2019) is (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.* This vision evolved out of a massive undertaking involving nearly 300 congregants participating in focus groups.

The Mission Statement, also created from congregational input, 5-8 years ago, addresses our goals less explicitly. 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.* At the time when this statement was crafted, “courageous love,” was interpreted to include not only love for people but also for the earth and its interdependent web of life.

As far as church policies, in the Board Policy Manual, Section 2.4.13 Environment, it states: *The Senior Minister and Board have a responsibility to act as stewards of our environment. To this end, whenever possible, the church will operate in ways that support environmental sustainability.* This is an explicit environmental policy introduced about 5 years ago by the Climate Justice Ministry.

These official statements express our values but may be less visible to the congregation than the explicit reference to other justice work. We have the **opportunity** to bring greater congregational awareness to these statements in support of our Green Sanctuary work.

In addition, a search of the Operations Manual and Employees Handbook showed that there are no policies in place governing environmental awareness in use of our facilities by renters. This might include use of disposables, Styrofoam, etc in the kitchen. This is an **opportunity** that might also need to be more explicitly communicated to not only renters but our own congregational groups who use the facilities including caterers who service events, such as weddings, memorial services and other events such as the auction.

Currently, all forms of communication are centralized through staff in the church office and they attempt to use different forms of communication to reach a wider audience. Paper distribution is being minimized. Since we are aware of challenges for some older congregants, we might consider churchwide orientation especially for senior citizens for better navigation of the church website and electronic communications. Addressing this **opportunity** would enhance our multi-generational engagement and help us to realize greater congregational transformation.

2. Knowledge of climate change and commitment to climate action for:

Members and friends:

Although informally evaluated, awareness is high among our members. Some members are even active in climate action groups that can bring friends in the cause to the church. As a tangential measure of our current levels of congregational concern and effective outreach, we have 124 individuals on our Climate Justice Ministry mailing list.

Justice teams:

The other justice teams (addressing peace, LGBTQ+, immigration, reproductive, housing, food security, and racial concerns) are all led by climate-aware individuals who participate in Intersections, a group for justice leaders led by senior minister Rev. Gretchen Haley.

Pastoral care team:

Like the Congregation, our Pastoral Care Team is really in tune with the climate and justice concerns and committed to furthering solutions. Our minister heading the pastoral care team has been actively involved in planning for an Active Hope Retreat and future groups to extend that effort, a distinct opportunity in the area of human resilience.

Minister: The ministerial staff of three ministers is highly informed and committed to the GS 2030 process.

Board members and congregational leaders:

The Board members, past and current, are well informed and supportive. Generally, awareness of the issues and choices around climate issues has been impacted positively by the process of making environmentally responsible choices for the building expansion.

3. Likely opportunities and challenges to increasing the congregation's awareness and engagement in transformative climate action

Foothills Unitarian, as a whole, is very much in support of climate action. The ministers are addressing climate and environmental issues more and more frequently, and they are very supportive of CJM-led events and efforts. The congregation seems to be receptive to these messages, and we would be hard pressed to find anyone who would declare themselves firmly opposed to transformative climate action. We are fortunate that our church community and its leadership are so enthusiastic in their support for climate action and the launch of

Green Sanctuary that they will likely be receptive to the efforts made on behalf of the Green Sanctuary endeavors. There is likely to be little pushback as we try to move the process forward. In the minds of the congregation this is also linked to our current Building Expansion effort. Since the building site adjoins the current sanctuary, the congregation is constantly reminded of the new building.

The challenge, then, is that the church community and its leadership is also very enthusiastic in their support for many types of justice efforts; there is A LOT going on within the church at any one time. The time and energy of the congregation is limited, and it can seem at times like those resources can get spread quite thinly across the various efforts. Our biggest challenge will be to rally the necessary participation and effort for the Green Sanctuary from a congregation that is being pulled in many directions at once. We are however, becoming increasingly aware that all justice issues impact our climate goals and we see intersectionality with other justice issues in the work we do.

Efforts on this front are already being made, most notably in the Intersections Justice group, which brings together leaders from many different justice efforts to find common working ground. It seems likely that the necessary engagement needed to move Green Sanctuary programs forward will not come as much from new programs created by Green Sanctuary in isolation, but instead will be formed at those places where climate action intersects with other areas of our social justice work.

Beyond internal Intersections work and following our Senior Minister's request, each Justice group is now engaging - on a year-long basis and perhaps beyond - a core community partner organization. (CJM is partnering with Trees, Water People, a highly respected local non-profit that works to stem climate migration from Central America and also works in local watershed restoration.) These justice partnerships will offer opportunities to Green Sanctuary by providing established relationships with local partners for potential climate work. The challenges include either supporting the non-profit's existing workload when already aligned with

climate action (e.g., our Housing Justice group partners with Habitat for Humanity and their homes model energy efficient decisions) or discerning how to enhance the non-profit's existing workload with a climate justice "add-on".

4. Current and recent work

Advocacy:

1. Our pre-COVID focus on oil & gas in our home county helped grow "Larimer Alliance for Health Safety and Environment". This is now an on-going external organization with CJM member representation in its advocacy work.
2. In 2016 Foothills sponsored the establishment of a Fort Collins Chapter of Citizen Climate Lobby which is now independent, thriving and meeting regularly with CJM member representation. We have helped spread word to our mailing list to aid their advocacy efforts and in the early years hosted their meetings in our facility.
3. There may be a further **opportunity** to tighten our bond with these other groups through our church communication, FB and other social media, and direct communications with members and leaders, especially since many leaders and participants of these groups began as CJM members and remain well aware of our efforts and Foothills and serve as a valuable conduit for interaction and communication.

Education

1. Book-discussion groups - "Green Boat" and "Justice on Earth", and in 2023 "Active Hope" (by Joanna Macy and Chris Johnstone)
2. UUA- adult education curriculum 2017-Our Place in the Web of Life
3. Maintained an environmental library (pre-pandemic) on-site with easy check-out for members. This is likely to be rejuvenated, especially since we will have increased space when the new construction is completed.
4. Films -We have hosted films and discussion: Bidder 70, Climate Refugees, others 2017-2018; Earth Day 2021 - Intelligent Trees; Summer series 2022

hosted 4 films on Regeneration that have attracted audiences beyond our usual CJM membership.

Programming

1. Local Food - Adopted church vegetable garden and hosted monthly “Seasonal Suppers” first in-person and then moved online with pandemic; in 2021 linked garden up with Kids Summer Camps and in 2022 linked up with Earth-Based Path Group for Fall Equinox ceremony/garlic planting. (Note: Building Expansion project interrupted 2022 summer season but 2023 season is in planning.
2. Earth Day - in 2021, to respond to imminent removal of beloved trees for the building expansion, CJM hosted a gratitude ritual, showed the online film “Intelligent Trees” and offered a family-friendly tree quiz. In 2022, we offered an online film “Inhabitants: Indigenous Perspectives on Restoring Our World”, a Bird-Watching morning, and formally announced the launch of Green Sanctuary with our theme of “Regeneration.” Regeneration was also adopted by our Ministry team as the theme for their spring series. In 2023, we offered the film: “The Letter” about Pope Francis’s ecumenical letter about the earth and climate change and the visit of key frontline leaders to Rome.
3. Green Sanctuary - we kicked off in 2022 with a 4-part summer environmental film series that attracted new faces from across the congregation and surveyed their concerns as an interest assessment.
4. Water - we joined Water22.org, a state-wide water conservation/caring campaign, and promoted water-conservation pledges among our congregation and outreach to Spanish-speaking families in the community. We worked with the Ministry team on to incorporate local river concerns in the Water Communion service. There is ample interest for more water programming to emerge.
5. Climate Cafe - piloted monthly “cafes” hosted by a member trained in climate psychology and emotional resilience. This has evolved into Earth Day 2023 hosting an “Active Hope” workshop, bringing in a facilitator from “The Work

That Reconnects". Furthermore, the Ministry is centering a month-long series of Sunday services around the theme of Active Hope. The Active Hope book discussion, facilitated by CJM members, has been part of the series. Small "Journey" groups on Active Hope will be rolled out in the summer of 2023 to further the familiarity of the congregation about these issues.

6. Intersections - emerging out of months of meetings among all-justice groups, the UUA Climate Disaster Response Training program was attended by people beyond CJM, and Green Sanctuary is in Justice leaders' awareness

Collaboration:

CJM has been leading efforts and actively discussing with other congregational teams how to undertake endeavors in areas of intersection. Foothills has been represented at our Fort Collins Area Interfaith Council but that was interrupted with pandemic and once we have some active campaigns we will use that platform to expand our efforts into other faith communities.

Our members are active in many secular outdoor organizations and we will seek opportunities to partner with them for outreach outdoor activities, especially with BIPOC youth. Collaborating with Trees, Water and People will allow us to publicize and support their work and to find opportunities to work with them in active, hands-on projects to aid marginalized communities nearby and abroad.

Challenges:

We have a very active congregation that is pursuing social justice in many directions. We have the **opportunity** to harness some of that energy, knowing that the challenge is to engage a population that is pretty busy with worthwhile pursuits. Another challenge for us to identify central themes that become recognizable to our congregation and help to coalesce the efforts. Still another challenge is identifying our active participants as we emerge from zoomland and have many new faces at the church.

Opportunities:

We have chosen “Regeneration” as the HOW to the Green Sanctuary WHAT. We have compiled contacts from both paper and e-questionnaires to better identify people’s interests in regeneration topics. Regeneration.org and Paul Hawken’s book are guiding us.

We held a forum/brainstorming event on Feb. 5 2023 brainstorming event on Green Sanctuary to assess where congregational energy is emerging. This helped to define some themes/teams for action.

We have some connection with BIPOC Alliance in Fort Collins, a group for which Foothills Unitarian served as an original fiscal sponsor. We hope that this will yield the **opportunity** for co-programming, especially with BIPOC youth.

Worship and celebration

1. Sermons are given on environmental issues on appropriate occasions such as Earth Day, Equinox, etc., with Earth-centered readings and music.
2. We have a Water Communion every summer/fall that celebrates earth and our connectedness and a summer flower communion. These services can provide opportunities for deeper messages about earth care and our interconnectedness.
3. Pastoral staff offered an entire Sunday Service series around the concept of Regeneration in 2022 and Active Hope in 2023, with an emphasis on building individual and collective agency and motivation for action.
4. Earth Day Sunday 2023 included a pick-up choir that sang modified lyrics of Hallelujah by Leonard Cohen that focused on climate change. It engaged the entire congregation as well as those who chose to be part of the impromptu choir. Two CJM members worked closely with our new choir director on the pick-up choir and suggested this Hallelujah version. He intends to provide

more opportunities like this and is amenable to our suggestions for music.

5. Deepening connections with the interdependent web of all existence:

We begin many of our meetings with a Land Acknowledgement to honor the original indigenous inhabitants of our land. A regular Vespers service occurs and some have been dedicated to celebrations Solstice and Equinox. Our Climate Cafes/Active Hope programs are inviting people to spiritual practices for emotional resilience and deepening interconnectedness. CJM chalice lightings and check-in's bring in elements of poetry, meditation and resiliency practices. Our choir director talked with CJM about offering opportunities to walk and sing in nearby outside spaces and we look forward to summer vespers in natural spaces.

6. **Opportunities** and challenges to an increased focus on transformative climate change in worship & celebration. We frequently have sermons in a series to deal with contemporary moral and religious issues. We could include more series that deal with the 7th principle. This is up to the ministerial staff. We could sponsor more celebrations around Earth-centered events. An exciting opportunity modeled in last year's Water Communion, is to extend the simple, long-standing rituals by deeper messaging and music in the service.

Religious education/exploration/faith formation

Children and youth

Our programs for children and youth at Foothills draw from the *UUA Tapestry of Faith Curricula* and *the Soul Matters Sharing Circle Curricula*. These curricula focus on our Unitarian Universalist Principles and Sources, including our 7th Principle - "*Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.*" The Soul Matters Lessons all include a component called "Nature Time."

We also create our own Lessons and Activities that mesh with the monthly Worship Themes, weaving in our deep value of interconnection with all living things. Past themes have included ***Regeneration***, focusing on bringing ourselves back to life and into alignment with the earth and all living things.

We celebrate Earth Day in our multi-generational church services and RE Groups as one of our core liturgical holidays.

We are extremely fortunate to be in Colorado and in an area of town offering close proximity to nature. We often take the children outside on the church grounds and to nearby Rolland Moore Park, Ross Natural Area and the Spring Creek Trail.

We offer week-long Summer Camps for Children and Youth that offer deep time in nature and activities that emphasize our connection to nature and earth care. The camp was held at Lee Martinez park which is located on the Poudre River and adjacent to the Lee Martinez Farm.

We have collaborated with the Church Organic Garden to have children and youth learn about organic gardening and to plant and harvest, and made signage with easy to understand verbiage about carbon sequestration.

Our programs help children to understand earth stewardship as a core spiritual value as Unitarian Universalists by weaving this into everything we do - examples above. For example - our chalice lighting words in our children's classroom include the words - "this is the church where we take care of the earth which is our home." Our 7th Principle is taught as a core theological value, that we are all connected and bound together in an interdependent web of life. We also model recycling our scraps after RE activities, and strive to use reusable materials in snacks, activities, and children's worship.

Young adults - some are very concerned about climate change but pandemic seriously derailed momentum. We have an **opportunity** to make new connections. We could reach out to youth to have them assess their own program for earth and regenerative awareness and topics and make suggestions for how they might want to engage with issues of Climate Justice (with possible facilitation by CJM leaders)

Intergenerational:

The Buckhorn Family Retreat is a yearly weekend retreat in a beautiful mountain setting with ample time for appreciating and interacting with nature and connecting in community.

Family Earth Day Celebrations, Outdoor Family Services on environmental themes, Family Nature Hikes in recent years.

Earth-Based Path seasonal celebrations for the Solstices and Equinoxes. Children and Families are welcomed at all of these and elements for all ages are included.

“Wonder Wild” spring break mini camps that allow children and families to explore faith themes in local natural areas

Likely **opportunities** for an increased focus on climate change in RE/faith formation:

1. Continued collaboration and support from the Climate Justice Ministry Team – like hikes, bird-watching, forest/river restoration volunteering, or special presentations.
2. Children and Youth involvement in the implementation of Green Sanctuary action items.
3. More **opportunity** for family involvement with the church garden, composting and water-wise landscape

Challenges we might encounter:

A significant challenge is to teach about earth stewardship and climate action in developmentally appropriate ways. There is an understandable concern that teaching about climate change/demise is developmentally inappropriate for young children and can be spiritually demoralizing for our older youth if not done with hope and sensitivity. We are guided by Arne Naess, father of deep ecology who said: "Unhappily the extensive moralizing within the ecological movement has given the public the false impression that we are being asked to make a sacrifice -- to show more responsibility, more concerned, and a nicer, moral standard. But all of that would flow naturally and easily, if the self widened and deepened, so that protection of nature was felt, and perceived, as protection of our very selves." so....

We are interested in how the Active Hope/Regeneration work can be incorporated for children and youth, giving them agency and hope for the future rather than a vision of a doomed planet.

What greater transformation of families and children would look like:

Families and children having a greater awareness and a sense of agency about how their actions can impact climate sustainability.

Families and children carrying the spiritual value of earth stewardship beyond church and into their lives.

A sense of stewardship for our church - including practices of sustainability that are built into how children, youth and families use our building and interact with the environment in and around the church.

Congregational life

Opportunities exist in ongoing and new small groups like the Active Hope Journey groups planned for summer.

Expanded action projects involving Youth in outdoor efforts.

As the new building opens there will be **opportunities** for educational efforts surrounding the new building and its features (insulation, solar panels, heat pumps) and education toward individual congregants making efforts in their own homes.

Worship themes of Active Hope and Regeneration provide spiritual grounding for the work.

Challenges: Engaging youth, and holding youth dismay/hopelessness

What might “congregational transformation” be like for the Foothills congregation? With Regeneration as the theme we envision a vibrant garden with intergenerational effort from many folks, new and old. The garden exhibits an active compost bin as a demonstration and an **opportunity** for participation.

Solar panels on the new building will demonstrate our dedication to moving toward net-zero energy and programs about them help educate and guide the community.

We would like to offer more **opportunities** for family and youth engagement with climate actions in hands-on projects, work on nearby areas deforested by fires or impacted watershed restoration work.

More congregants engaged in small groups that support the congregants in their efforts toward climate action and in resilience, like the planned Active Hope Journey groups.

Enhanced landscaping of our campus to incorporate nature-based play spaces to help develop a deep appreciation for nature in our children.

Offer a regular series of environmental films and speakers to grow greater awareness and a sense of agency about how our actions can impact climate sustainability.

In all of these ways, we see the entire congregation embracing Green Sanctuary as part of our congregational identity.

II. Mitigation

Although Green Sanctuary is not just about the church building, Foothills is currently accomplishing a major building project to expand its facilities with the construction of a new sanctuary to be completed by September 2023. This means that measuring the carbon footprint of our current space is less relevant. The process of designing and building this major expansion has had a considerable impact on the congregation, enhancing its awareness and appreciation for the **opportunity** to expand programs and exhibit our values through our building. It has helped the congregation to feel invested in a new “green building”.

The planning and execution of our building expansion embraced our principles at nearly every step:

1. The decision to remain onsite and preserve and remodel existing buildings was a decision that maximized reuse and minimized travel for congregants. It preserved a treasured place yet made room for all who wanted to enter.
2. We consciously chose an architect whose values encompass green building - in fact he has made a clear intention to only build net- zero buildings, announced on Earth Day 2019.

3. We enrolled in our City's Integrated Design Assistance Program (IDAP) that promotes design of energy efficient buildings. IDAP held an early meeting with Foothills building team, the architects and their team of design engineers, including an energy modeler. This helped to establish goals preceding the design work. We are getting \$\$ incentives by achieving those goals.

4. The building was sited on our existing lot with limited space but was oriented with more windows south, fewer north-facing, favoring energy efficiency and natural lighting.

5. The building envelope was considered with insulation and materials chosen to save energy, while still presenting a beautiful new facility, outside and inside.

6. The engineers designed a custom electric HVAC air heat pump system that has high capacity and lower energy. It also includes heat recovery from outgoing air.

7. Solar panels are planned to provide electric power although not in budget for phase I. The building is designed to be ready for their installation.

8. All spaces including the RE wing are connected for greater efficiency and integration of parts. This has the added benefit of embracing and integrating our education wing as less distinct and separate.

9. During construction we are dictated by the city to do maximal recycling of building materials due to demolition. The trees that were removed in the demolition phase were made into mulch for use on gardens and new trees will be planted.

10. There have been significant efforts to involve the congregation in the design process before and during architectural work. This involved gathering congregants at multiple times for their ideas and feedback.

11. We plan to include a future electric car charging station and conduit has been run for its future installation. We are tracking Colorado state grant programs for funding.

12. There will be opportunities for better recycling, composting in the existing buildings including the kitchen.

13. The fund-raising phase took place in Fall 2019 - Winter 2020 and generated pledges of about \$6 Million, for a total project estimated to cost about \$12M. We were paused after fundraising by the pandemic and yet when we resumed and modified the plan to fit the budget, we did not sacrifice the “green features” of the building, just cut back the scope to include less.

14. Although significant landscaping changes have not been included in Phase I, we chose not to expand the parking lot and thus preserved the church community vegetable garden. There has been an effort (noted elsewhere) for church community involvement in the project that heightens awareness of healthy organically grown produce. It will continue to provide programming opportunities.

15. The city required us to survey and catalog the trees on the property that were removed for construction and dictated the number of replacement trees. We will plant the required replacement trees for the 17 trees that were removed, using hardy native, less thirsty species.

16. We have heightened awareness of water usage by the church community and will move toward xeric landscaping to replace turf as any new landscaping is added. There is a detention pond to abate stormwater runoff that is designed for absorption of rainwater soil retention.

Facility emissions

Our goal is that our facility become an example to the community of an energy-efficient building using all-electric power derived from photovoltaic panels installed on the new roof.

Our clearest **opportunity** is to find a way to finance and install solar panels on the roof, a visible sign to the community of our values embodied.

Another **opportunity** will be to hold community-wide tours of our facility to broaden the knowledge-base for solar panels and heat-pump systems to both congregants and others.

Using the facility for community-wide arts events or political-forum educational events will also be an **opportunity** to increase the impact of our facility.

A remaining challenge is to find the right financing mechanism to put up the panels in the near future, and to take advantage of any programs that can help energy-efficiency in the buildings that have not yet been remodeled and are still heated by old natural gas furnaces.

Members' and friends' emissions

Most impactful and feasible **opportunities** for members and friends to reduce their personal/family carbon footprints?

Diet: Plant-based diets could be encouraged as well as support for local farms. This could be aided by highlighting our onsite garden and by promoting plant-based meals with appropriate education (like a cookbook of members' favorite plant-based recipes).

Home energy use: Encourage solar energy installations or sustainable energy usage. Promote residential heat pumps and energy-efficient appliances.

Transportation:

Promote public transit and carpooling and bicycling

Carbon offsets: Need more information about carbon offset programs. This could be another educational **opportunity**.

Encourage the congregation to calculate their individual carbon footprints by providing resources about what measures have the greatest impact. Encourage goal-setting for reduction.

How can members and friends be encouraged and supported to reduce personal/family emissions?

1. Education and information: CJM can provide the **opportunity** to learn about the options to develop sustainability in lifestyles
2. Advertising in church about energy saving and environmentally aware behaviors.
3. Badges and recognition for being a responsible environmental citizen. Lapel pins and buttons. (eco-heroes?)
4. Directory of congregants who “specialize” in aspects of sustainable living and could serve as resources.

Our carbon-reduction goal for members and friends?

It would be reasonable to ask congregants to make a 10-30% percent reduction based on their current levels.

What are the likely **opportunities** and challenges to achieving that goal?

Opportunities: To hold seminars/workshops in conjunction with tours of our new facility regarding home installation of photovoltaic systems.

Challenges: Such systems are expensive but CJM can identify funding opportunities and distribute that information.

Challenges: Following the pandemic church attendance/membership has not returned to previous levels so participation in our programs may be lower, but hopefully will be enhanced by opening the new building.

Opportunities: We need to develop programs that encourage more church attendance particularly with families and programs that reach beyond our current membership.

Activism

Engagement of the congregation with local, state, or national climate organizations?

Individuals active in CJM have engaged with the following organizations.

Unitarian Universalist Ministry for the Earth.

Interfaith Power and Light

Create Climate Justice

The church or individual members played an active role in establishing

~The Fort Collins Chapter of Citizens Climate Lobby

~Larimer Alliance for Health Safety and Environment (focused on oil and gas)

Individual members are active with numerous environmental/climate justice organizations including Audubon, Sierra Club, Save the Poudre, Trout Unlimited, and others.

Collaboration of the congregation with frontline and/or fence-line communities?

Active support and participation in Habitat for Humanity

An active member and supporter of the Interfaith Solidarity and Accompaniment Coalition (ISAAC) to meet immigrant/refugee needs

BiPOC Alliance - supporter and instrumental in establishment

Trees, Water, People - New and emerging CJM partner

Likely **opportunities** and challenges to developing greater engagement with climate organizations and collaboration with frontline and fence-line communities?

Opportunities: Much can be done through local, state and national government encouragement and lobbying and there are numerous climate/environmental groups in the community actively doing this.

Challenges: Even with UU's it is difficult for a church to engage too politically. This might need to stay just an activity for individuals.

Challenges: There are many environmental/climate and justice organizations active in Colorado and we need to become more informed of their activities..

Opportunities: We probably have members involved with many organizations so we need to find out the extent of that. Creating a directory of the involvement of members would help.

Congregational and community engagement

Efforts to encourage and support congregants and the border community in climate action?

Calls for advocacy have been sent to our climate justice mailing list of about 120 people in response to community partners like Citizens Climate Lobby and Larimer Alliance

Likely **opportunities** and challenges to increased congregational and community engagement?

The challenge for effective engagement is always time and effort. The **opportunity** is to present ways that lower the bar for more people to engage. Sometimes it is an automated quick email, or an organized event like a demonstration at the state Capitol or a hands-on tree planting for all ages to engage..

III. Adaptation and Resilience

1. Human Systems:

Planning and preparation for severe impacts of climate change and other natural disasters:

During the first 15 months of the pandemic shut-down, the current education building was used as an emergency shelter to house the Faith Family Housing Network clients. These families usually rotate each week between member churches, so during the heightened time of need for shelter when our building was closed to congregational use, we made it available to the program; families were stably housed there for the duration. In our planning we have looked to opportunities to be a similar resource to our community in the future.

The new sanctuary has beneath it a full basement with ground-level windows for natural lighting. We envision housing community partners in justice work as tenants for some of the space. The capacity of the sanctuary is 400, which will also provide a resource for the community that is currently in low supply. We envision community gatherings of many types in the space, including forums on social issues of importance, and arts events

Members of our community have been attending webinars and forums on Climate Disaster preparedness.

Our regular twice-a-month work as a remote distribution site for Larimer County Food Bank modified its procedures to accommodate the pandemic and continue the regular availability of food to the local population that are food insecure. This process could be adapted in the case of a natural disaster.

Adaptation/resiliency work with the broader community: collaboration with faith-based, secular, or marginalized groups?

As stated above, the work of housing families was done in conjunction with other churches in Fort Collins, our network partners in Family Housing Network

Likely opportunities and challenges to better prepare the facility, congregants, and the broader community for climate change and natural disaster?

We are a congregation that will always respond to community needs in whatever ways are possible. An **opportunity** and a challenge now is to create the networks of communication to allow for rapid response in the case of a disaster.

Work to inspire and sustain congregants and the broader community to engage in the long haul of climate action?

Climate Cafés held online in Fall/Winter 2021-2022 to hold the grief of the struggle with climate change and its consequences.

Active Hope book discussion in Spring 2023 leading to an Active Hope workshop over the weekend of Earth Day 2023. This was supported by the ministers' choice of

Active Hope as the Worship Theme for April and will be followed by the **opportunity** to hold small “Journey” groups on Active Hope in the summer 2023. The workshop engaged about 20 participants, many of whom were not previously very involved in the church or its justice ministries. The services, especially that given by the workshop leader Kathleen Rude, reached hundreds. Our **opportunity** and challenge will be to sustain the engagement of those affected and help them to set goals and act.

We often build human resilience with programs that strengthen personal strength through imagination and creativity. We must be able to imagine a better world before we are able to create it. Therefore we have the **opportunity** to plan creativity-building events to nurture creativity.

2. Natural Systems

Foothills has done little as a congregation in the past to protect or enhance a local or regional ecosystem although many of its members are engaged in work with local organizations that do so, notably Poudre Wilderness Volunteers, Trout Unlimited, Sierra Club.

Our 2023 choice of a key partner for the Climate Justice Ministry - Trees, Water, People - will be a significant step forward. They are active in climate migration issues as well as local watershed restoration. We know that working with them will provide us with opportunities for direct action, although not yet defined.

Hosting films like Beaver Believers in summer 2022 raised our awareness of beaver habitat and its role in protecting Western water and joining the Water22.org campaign during summer of 2022 laid the groundwork to reach out to both the Coalition for Poudre Watershed (CPW) and Water Education Colorado. We envision launching a CPW volunteer river/forest restoration group at Foothills as well as continued efforts in water literacy and conservation.

IV. Justice

In this section, the GS team focuses on climate justice to (a) identify potential options for inclusion in the action plan and (b) to establish baselines for measuring impacts.

Our Fall 2021 book group on “Justice on Earth” started to grow the awareness that climate work has too often been defined by energy/fossil fuel issues (traditionally white environmental concerns) and that Climate *Justice* was really asking us to step into the intersectional work of race, class and the environment. In addition, there is now a growing awareness of the global threats to nature/biodiversity and a call to regeneration in all areas of human endeavor.

The regular Intersections meetings held between our Senior Minister Rev. Gretchen Haley and the leaders of our individual Justice groups has led to a good understanding of the idea of intersectional work by Justice leaders. To the extent that congregants are involved in any one of the justice teams they have been introduced to the concept. Most notably, the Climate Justice Ministry has often raised the justice aspect of climate disaster, that the most vulnerable are victims of climate disaster and that has engaged the hearts of our other justice ministry teams. As yet, we have not translated ideas into particular projects.

Our Housing Justice Team works primarily on building Habitat homes. Recently, the idea was brought forward to educate the congregation about the energy-efficient features of these homes, and to engage in efforts to connect the Habitat homeowners with available community resources to install photovoltaic panels.

The Global Peace and Justice Ministry is currently holding a discussion on the importance of avoiding war if we are going to meet our Climate goals. (we might also suggest the converse, 'the importance of addressing climate change if we are to avoid the conflict that will ensue from mass migrations and other consequences). The role of justice for marginalized people and communities has also been a topic of

this group as a means of both avoiding war and providing space for Climate work. This is a clear example of the intersectionality of climate and justice issues.

Opportunities and challenges to justice leaders and congregants better understanding the intersectionality of climate & social justice?

Challenges in this arena are in identifying projects with needs that will effectively engage our congregants and thereby enhance their understanding. Thus far, our congregation has been primarily involved in staffing temporary housing for homeless families and in helping support families moving into housing.

In our community there is definitely room for education and advocacy for city support of energy-efficiency in low-income rental housing that would enhance the lives of renters more than landlords.

Collaboration

Work by the congregation done to prepare to be an effective partner/ally of a marginalized community:

During 2020-2022, a group of congregants working on racial justice engaged in the Eighth Principle Project, bringing racial justice to the forefront of congregational awareness. They had extensive online book discussions of Caste, and eventually a vote by the congregation in favor of adopting the Eighth Principle.

Currently the congregation is not collaborating with a frontline or fence-line community in environmental/climate justice action.

Likely **opportunities** and challenges to enhancing existing or forging new collaboration with a frontline community engaged in environmental/climate justice action?

We have had some discussions with BiPoC Alliance that suggest possibilities for engaging local BiPoC youth in outdoor activities to raise awareness of the environment, in ways that speak to them, possibly foraging and identification of traditional native food sources. We are adjacent to mountains and plains, and our community includes the Poudre River, all uniquely different ecological systems that offer opportunities for exploration. We envision that if we planned definite events this could provide an **opportunity** for wider congregational engagement.

Please submit your completed Opportunity Assessment and [Opportunity Assessment Guidelines](#) to Michael Hughes at <GSdocuments.Hughes@gmail.com>, cc. Rachel Myslivy <rmyslivy@uua.org>.

Please also complete the short [Opportunity Assessment Feedback](#) form, which will provide valuable information to help (a) improve GS 2030 and (b) document the impacts of GS2030.

Thank you.

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