

CONGREGATIONAL CLARION

First Congregational Church ~ Salt Lake City, Utah

February 2024

February Worship

Unless otherwise noted,
all services at 10:30am.

February 4 Communion

Living the Questions

“Who the Heck
Is in Charge Here?”
Taizé @ 7pm

February 11

Last Sunday Before Lent Superbowl Sunday

Living the Questions:

“How Do I Cross the Gap to
Believe?”

February 14

Ash Wednesday @ 7pm

Grace and Justice:

“Because We Need Justice
with Grace”

February 18

Lent 1

Grace and Justice:

“What Is Doing Justice?”
Taizé @ 7pm

February 25

Lent 2

Grace and Justice:

“Is There Less Grace in
the Old Testament?”

March 3

Lent 3

Grace and Justice:

“What Does Jesus Say?”
Taizé @ 7pm



Is It Grace Without Justice?

Is It Justice Without Grace?

By Rev. Doug Gray

I have a confession to make: I really like forensic shows. Forensic Files, Cold Case—there are sooo many good ones out there. I confess that I really like hearing about the science, but also the creative ways detectives use the science to solve the mysteries. And I especially like it when they catch the perpetrators. There’s a horrified part of me that gets some savage satisfaction from the catching and punishing of people who do awful things. Some of the victims’ families talk about justice—and what they seem to mean is the Old Testament ethic, “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.” But throughout the Bible, justice is a much bigger and deeper priority for God and the Kingdom that God is trying to make.

As we head into Lent, I would like us to spend time fleshing out the Biblical concepts of Grace and Justice. To help us think more deeply and broadly about grace and justice, we are going to work through Timothy Keller’s book, *Generous Justice: How God’s Grace Makes Us Just*. You are welcome to read along with me, and it will serve as an element in our Friday Lunch Bunch discussion as well. What I like about Keller’s book so far, is that I am discovering I didn’t really understand grace or justice very well, and I certainly didn’t see clearly how they were connected.

Especially as we are thinking about how we as a congregation could make a really big difference in our community, I am hoping our conversations around this book, will clarify some of how God might want to work through us.

Thank You, God, for Lent and a season to reflect on our relationship with You and with each other.

Lenten Devotionals

We are delighted to announce that Lenten Devotionals will be available for pick up in St. John Hall. As we embark on this sacred season of Lent, these devotionals are designed to guide and inspire you on your spiritual journey.

Let us come together as a community to observe Lent, deepen our faith, and share in the spirit of fellowship. Your presence and participation are invaluable.



February Worship Schedule

We have all asked the great questions of life—Is God out there? Does God even care? Why am I alive? If God is real, how do we communicate? Why do bad things happen? The great thing is...the Bible wrestles with all the greatest questions of life. During the six weeks between the Christmas season and Lent, we will journey towards answers to some of life's most perplexing questions, and see what the Bible has to say about them.

For more discussion time on a question, come to the Friday Lunch Bunch the Friday before! (See below) Starting on Ash Wednesday, we will switch gears for Lent, to Timothy Keller's book, *Generous Justice: How God's Grace Makes Us Just*.



Friday Lunch Bunch Living the Questions then Grace and Justice

Do you have questions about God and the Bible and don't know where you can ask them? Friday Lunch Bunch is a safe place to ask questions, and to ponder them together. As Christians, we have wonderful resources in the Bible and other travelers on the road of life. Between New Year's Day and February 11, we will explore the questions, share our experiences and delve into these timeless topics. Every Friday, we will tackle the Question for Sunday. As an added bonus, Pastor Doug and Rev. Joanna Hart will be team-teaching these sessions, each bringing their own unique perspective. Beginning on February 15, we will switch gears to Tim Keller's *Generous Justice: How God's Grace Makes Us Just*.

Taizé Worship with All Saints February 4 and 18 @ 7pm

Worship is meant to be experienced with all our senses, to involve our whole body in praising and honoring God. The Taizé worship experience is designed to do just that. Twice a month, All Saints Episcopal hosts Taizé worship—meditative music, prayerful chanting, thoughtful message, and Biblical worship all rolled into one! Why not give it a try!



Date	Title/Topic	Scriptures
2/4	Communion Living the Questions: Who the Heck Is in Charge Here?	Matthew 18:19–20 Ephesians 2:11–22
2/11	Last Sunday Before Lent Living the Questions: How Do I Cross the Gap to Believe?	Mark 8:27–9:3
2/14	Ash Wednesday Grace and Justice: Because We Need Justice with Grace	Isaiah 43:1–10 Luke 4:14–30
2/18	Lent 1 Grace and Justice: What Is Doing Justice?	Deuteronomy 10:12–19 Romans 8:1–4
2/25	Lent 2 Grace and Justice: Is There Less Grace in the Old Testament?	Leviticus 19:9–18 Matthew 5:17–26
3/3	Lent 3 Grace and Justice: What Does Jesus Say?	TBD

Understanding the Habits of Nones

Adult Formation on Sundays @9:15am

In every poll of religious involvement, the category growing the fastest for the last decade or so is the “Nones,” those with no religious affiliation. Yet still, Gallup reports that well over 90% of Americans believe in God. We will explore Ryan P. Burge’s *The Nones: Where They Came from, Who They Are, and Where They Are Going* (2nd Edition, 2023). One interesting thing about the author: He is a published political scientist and an ordained pastor in the American Baptist Convention! Our prayer is that this fascinating topic for our times will help us understand ourselves, our families and our communities better. The discussions will be team-led by Father Trace Browning and Rev. Doug Gray.

2/4 Chapter 4: Nones Are Not All Created Equal

2/11 Chapter 6: What We Can Change and What We Cannot

2/18 New Series: TBD

February Outreach ~ Becky Bishop

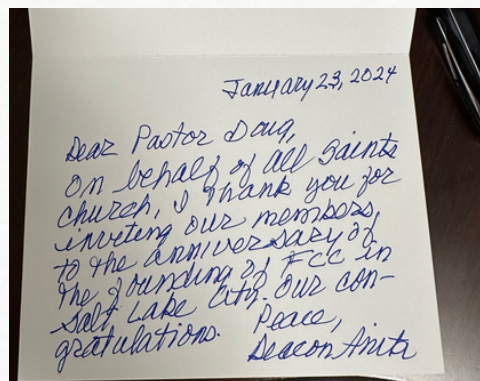
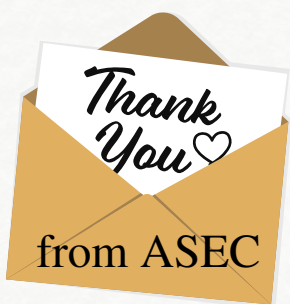


The Outreach Board has chosen to support Friendship Manor for the month of February. Friendship Manor is a collaboration between First Congregational Church, Holladay U.C.C., The Unitarian Church, and Congregation Kol Ami.

Friendship Manor lost their hot meal service and as a result, lost the opportunity for residents to have social interaction. The result has been that some residents are isolated. Friendship Manor has been having more regular social gatherings for the residents. They do not have a budget to provide hearty snacks for these gatherings and mostly offer cookies to the 60 to 70 residents who attend.

Friendship Manor provides donated Danbury Cross pastries and coffee every morning. They use 4 large cans of ground coffee (Costco or Folgers) every month.

Designated funds collected in February will be donated to Friendship Manor to support their planned social events. We will collect ground coffee for them as well. Costco or Folgers is what they currently use, but any brand would be appreciated.



Breakfast Feeds the Soul



Men’s Breakfast

February 7 at 8am at Sharon’s Café – Conversations are always good and the food is always tasty. Not all are members of the church, but all of us are trying to live lives marked by grace.

Women’s Breakfast

Ladies, mark your calendars! We are thrilled to invite you to a Women’s Breakfast on February 9 at 9am, we are meeting at Delice on State Street. It is a fantastic opportunity for us to come together, enjoy a delicious meal, and connect with one another. We will be making this a regular monthly event, held on the second Friday of every month, so if you can’t make this month, we hope to catch you next month.



Anniversary Thank You!

We had a wonderful Anniversary Dinner on January 21! So many people helped make the dinner possible. With our immediate pastor moderator sick (Oh Carla! Wish we could make it go away faster for you!), other past moderators stepped up to help with the planning. Thank you, team! Thanks especially to Glenda LeHoux who made the catering arrangements with Olive Garden and helped get all the rest of us organized. Your kind words at the beginning of our meal really set the stage for our warm and welcoming time together. Thanks to all of you who helped set up—everything looked nice and was ready for when the food and people came. Thanks, too, to all the people who helped clean up. We really appreciate your pitching in so that everything could get spic and span again. And of course, thanks to the crew who moved the original pulpit around that Sunday—into our worship space, then upstairs and finally back to its resting place. It was a lovely time and a memorable day thanks to all of you! Well done!



Anniversary Dinner Thoughts 2024

By Rev. Doug Gray

I love this idea of having a dinner to remember the anniversary of our church's first official worship service, on January 22, 1865. It's a great opportunity to remember who we are! So I thought today, we might share some of our favorite stories about our church—doesn't matter when it was times when you feel like our church was at its best? If we can keep them shortish, that means more people get to share. Make sure you speak up so everyone can hear!

What makes our church great?

We could say it's the warm sense we have of each other and the history we share. We could say it's the new friends we have made since coming here to nest with All Saints Episcopal—thank you God for the warm people of this fellowship—so glad some of you could join us today! I think I can speak for others when I say we are just beginning to see the great things we will do and become together.

What makes our church great?

I think you see it at the very beginning. We have always had a longing to understand. Our church grew out of the Young Men's Literary Association, renting space in what was called, Daft's Hall. We began as people called together because they were different from the LDS culture around them, welcoming anyone who wanted to seek God too. As a church, we would seek God as we knew Him in Jesus Christ, but we made space for people to believe lots of different things, to find God in their own way, and to try to create what Martin Luther King Jr called, "the blessed community" in Salt Lake City. So we opened our church doors to help other faith communities and service groups start and grow—because we knew God's vision would take all of us. We remember this church's first pastor, Rev. Norman McLeod, who preached his first sermon on Jesus saying, "Can Any Good Come Out of Nazareth? Come and See." And people came! Education has always been important to us. By March, the church had a hundred children enrolled in Sunday School, and by October, one hundred and fifty. By November, the church had bought land and built its first building, Independence Hall, a place for the church and the community to meet and become a blessing.

From the beginning, we have been Congregational, because Congregational organization allows us to be more responsive to God, to each other and to the needs of our community.

And alongside the great ones of the past, when people look back on these very days, we, too, will stand in places of honor—for we, too, have sought God's will, and have answered the call—to leave a building, and launch into the unknown with God. We have returned to our earliest, mobile days of renting space. We are experiencing some of the challenges of seeking God's will together, and the giddy possibilities of helping to create that "blessed community" in which people have enough food, clothing and shelter, so that they experience God's transformative love.

Truly, we stand on the shoulders of giants, and we are writing this next, courageous chapter. We still long to understand God better. We are still open-hearted to all who seek God and still believe education lifts people up. We still believe that if people come and see, they will find God is doing amazing things in our midst. "Therefore," as the writer of Hebrews puts it, "since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the brokenness that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us...Consider Jesus [and those who have gone before us] who endured such opposition...so that you will not grow weary and lose heart." Because at the end of the day, we too are here, so others may stand on our shoulders to see what God can do through us. I can't wait to see what God is going to do with us in the coming year!

(Audio/video (mostly audio) are available on our church's YouTube Channel.



Faith, Hunger and Homelessness Day at the Capitol

On January 18, FACE (Faith Advocacy Coalition Ending) Hunger and Homelessness hosted a day to raise awareness for these two critical issues at the State Capitol. The event included leaders from many religious traditions and other non-profits who were asked to speak about the importance of addressing the needs of the housing insecure from the perspective of our faith tradition. (See “Rev. Gray’s Remarks” below for what our pastor said.) In addition to the non-profit and religious leaders, Wayne Niederhauser, the Governor’s “point person” on homelessness spoke about upcoming efforts to prioritize ending homelessness in Salt Lake City and the State of Utah. We were joined by high school service groups and legislators. Thanks to all the people from our church and All Saints Episcopal who showed their support by being there! Our two churches were the best represented there. For photos and news on the event, head to <https://www.crossroadsurbancenter.org/news>. They have links to the media stories about the event!

Faith, Hunger and Homelessness Day

Rev. Gray’s Remarks

Good morning! I am the Rev. Doug Gray, from the First Congregational Church of Salt Lake City. We were founded in 1865, the first faith community in Utah outside of the LDS church, and from the beginning we recognized the importance of radical hospitality. We shared our building with more than 70 of the longest-serving faith communities and service groups of Salt Lake City—including the Methodists, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, and the Jewish faith community—as they were beginning or growing their lives and service.

In our tradition, we remember that as Jesus was starting his ministry, he went to synagogue in his hometown of Nazareth and was given the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. From it Jesus read,

Luke 4:18–19 “The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to preach good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
and recovery of sight for the blind,
to release the oppressed,
to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” (NIV)



We are here today as faith communities to proclaim this is the year of the Lord’s favor, when we will be mindful of the oppressed, concerned for the hungry, and dedicated to sheltering the housing insecure. We are people of prayer. We pray that our legislators and all Utahns would have hearts filled with compassion, and treat each human being with the dignity they deserve for being created in the image of God. But we also believe prayer and actions must go together—strong faith must find expression in caring for those in most need. The question is not whether there is need, but whether we have the political will to truly make a difference. Today, we call on the legislators and faith communities to turn their compassion into the will to make a difference with hunger and homelessness. With God’s help and our hard work, let us open the deep wells of grace and providence, and make this year the year of the Lord’s favor.



Gloria Lee, from [All Saints] Episcopal Church, and the Rev. Doug Gray, of the First Congregational Church of Salt Lake City, talk prior to sitting down with representatives from numerous faith groups and organizations gathered at the Capitol in Salt Lake City for Faith, Hunger and Homelessness Day to express support for legislative proposal that would reduce homelessness on Thursday, Jan. 18, 2024.

Scott G Winterton, Deseret News

Link to read full article:

<https://www.deseret.com/2024/1/18/24042574/utah-homelessness-initiatives-faith-leaders>



Next Steps Committee Starts Looking for Answers to the Congregation's Questions

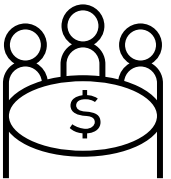
In November and December 2023, we had Congregational Conversations to talk about who we are, what we are passionate about, and to brainstorm questions that would help us move into the future together. These questions boiled down to five areas:

- Demographics and other information about our church membership
- Issues and needs that our church members are the most concerned about
- Demographics and other information about our surrounding communities
- Wanting to understand the perspectives and needs of each of the generations in our society right now.
- Wanting to understand the perspectives and needs of “Nones”, those who have “no religious affiliation”

To help us figure out how to answer these questions and communicate them to the congregation, Council created a small committee—Bill Brown(Moderator), Carla McIntire(Immediate Past Moderator), Rev. Joanna Hart(Member-at-large), and Rev. Doug Gray(Pastor). This committee has met twice already and is hard at work to have a plan of action ready for Council at its February 20 meeting. If you have additional thoughts about these questions or the process, feel free to reach out to the members of this committee. If you would like to learn about the “Nones,” that is the current topic for the Adult Formation Class on Sunday mornings. (See “Adult Formation” elsewhere in this issue.)

From Your Trustees ~ Phil LeHoux

Your trustees continued to address its primary areas of responsibility relating to the economic and business aspects of congregational governance. Church expenses continue to follow expected patterns and amounts. Our revenue to the general fund as well as to our Outreach needs have continued for the year to exceed expectations and recent experience. For this, we are thankful to everyone.



Pastor Doug, with the assistance of Mike McIntire, has continued to amass and refine proposals to enhance the quality and reliability of our online projection of worship. Proposals have been reviewed and analyzed and a vendor selected to provide and install the necessary equipment. The emphasis has been on ease of setup and use, with minimal Sunday equipment handling. Upgrades to the sound system will also improve audio quality (feedback, begone!) for worship attendees. The ambitious schedule Doug has suggested is to have everything in place before Easter.

At our January meeting, the equivalent of a Buildings and Grounds Committee from All Saints Episcopal Church (ASEC) made a presentation to the Board, outlining their proposed project to replace the roof and add solar panels over the new construction. In this endeavor, they asked for our assistance with the project financing. The primary issue they are facing is a very tight time constraint as a deadline to apply for a major grant to offset the cost of the solar installation. As many of you may be aware, the high initial cost of a solar installation makes the economic return marginal in many cases, the benefits of reduced fuel use and pollution notwithstanding. Subsidies in the form of tax incentives or grants greatly improve the economics. In this case, it is a grant from Rocky Mountain Power and possible Federal subsidies that improve the economics. The ASEC grant application must show financing in place at time of submission. As ASEC only began their capital campaign a week ago, the necessary funding will not be in place in time to meet this requirement.

The Trustees recognized their limitations regarding the dispersal of funds outside budgeted limits, but arrived at a plan that would meet ASEC's immediate need for committed financing. This consisted of approving a loan from our property sale proceeds that would return an interest approximately equivalent to the amount being received by the money in our bond fund. This loan, up to \$250,000, would be interest only through the construction period, while allowing time to receive grants that are not released until completion. Council voted unanimously to support the trustees in this plan, recognizing the opportunity to assist ASEC in its time of need, when they have been so generous and welcoming to our community in our need for a new home. Currently, the loan documents are being prepared by both our and ASEC's legal representatives. It is expected that all the loan conditions will be finalized at the next trustees meeting, in time to have the loan documents in place and executed by the end of February.

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
				1 CHOIR REHEARSAL @ 7PM	2 FRIDAY LUNCH BUNCH BIBLE STUDY @ NOON	3
4 ADULT FORMATION @ 9:15AM CHOIR REHEARSAL @ 9:30AM WORSHIP SERVICE @ 10:30AM TAIZÉ @ 7PM	5	6 OUTREACH BOARD MEETING @11AM	7 MEN'S BREAKFAST @8AM (SEE ANNOUNCEMENT)	8 TRUSTEE BOARD MEETING @ 2PM CHOIR REHEARSAL @ 7PM	9 WOMEN'S BREAKFAST @ 9AM (SEE ANNOUNCEMENT) FRIDAY LUNCH BUNCH BIBLE STUDY @ NOON	10
11 ADULT FORMATION @ 9:15AM CHOIR REHEARSAL @ 9:30AM WORSHIP SERVICE @ 10:30AM	12	13 DEACONS MEETING @ 3PM SHROVE TUESDAY ASEC FOOD TRUCKS	14 ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE @ 7PM VALINTINES DAY POTLUCK	15 CHOIR REHEARSAL @ 7PM	16 FRIDAY LUNCH BUNCH BIBLE STUDY @ NOON	17
18 ADULT FORMATION @ 9:15AM CHOIR REHEARSAL @ 9:30AM WORSHIP SERVICE @ 10:30AM TAIZÉ @ 7PM	19 PRESIDENTS DAY	20 COUNCIL MEETING @ 2:30PM	21	22 CHOIR REHEARSAL @ 7PM	23 FRIDAY LUNCH BUNCH BIBLE STUDY @ NOON	24
25 ADULT FORMATION @ 9:15AM CHOIR REHEARSAL @ 9:30AM WORSHIP SERVICE @ 10:30AM TAIZÉ @ 7PM	26 REV. DOUG GRAY ON VACATION TIL FEB 29 BACK IN OFFICE MARCH 1	27	28	29 CHOIR REHEARSAL @ 7PM		



Building Requests and Calendar Updates

Please direct all building use requests through the church office by email at firstcongregationalslc@gmail.com or by leaving a written note. This will help eliminate any building conflicts. If you have any items that need to be added to the church calendar, please also let the office know by email.



Coffee Hour Hosts Needed

Celebrating a special occasion?
Enjoying the fellowship after an uplifting worship service?

Consider helping with Coffee Hour. There is a sign-up sheet by the goodies.

We especially need help on the following dates:

March 24, April 14, and June 2.

If you have any questions, please contact Cissy Wolff at cissywolff@gmail.com or call/text at 801-243-5457.

PICTURES FROM OUR CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PAGEANT 2023



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

1710 South Foothill Drive • Salt Lake City, Utah

801-487-1357 • www.firstcongregationalslc.org

firstcongregationalslc@gmail.com

Find us on:



Donations accepted by Check, Cash, or [Paypal](#) - Scan QR Code Below for [Paypal donations](#)

