



CONGREGATIONAL CLARION

First Congregational Church • Salt Lake City, Utah • Loving God and Our Neighbor • April 2024

April Worship

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

April 7

Holy Hilarity

April 14

Life Together:
So Simple It Will
Blow Your Mind

April 21

Life Together:
I'll Just Have to
Show You

April 28

Life Together:
Power Tools
Required

May 5

Communion

Life Together:
Handle with Care

Getting Ready for New Growth

by Rev. Doug Gray

At last the snow and ice have melted. Today I saw daffodils and crocus peeking through the soil. The grass is starting to green up. I'm excited about spring finally coming!

But there are some things to do to get ready for new growth—turn over the soil in the garden, dig out the remnants of old weeds, catch some of the new weeds that are just getting started, add some fertilizer... I know doing a few things now, I will see everything multiplied as the garden becomes green and fruitful and the lawn gets thick and lush.

And Easter is almost upon us! I'm getting ready for new growth on the inside too—trying a few new things, letting some unhelpful habits go, feeding the soil of my mind with more of God's Word and prayer, letting my heart drink in the Living Water in worship, taking more time to reminding myself what it means that Jesus would die for me (for us) on Good Friday and rise again Easter morning. Am I prepared for the new life Jesus would give me?

Tony Campolo is famous for a story about a preacher who wound up the crowd by saying, "It's Friday...but Sunday's coming!" As we head into the final days of Lent, we may be feeling that we are not quite ready for new life, that we have a little more to do before Jesus comes with new life to us. Perhaps we are tired and worn from working hard, balancing crazy schedules and keeping body and soul together. Perhaps we are still grieving or hurting from some loss. Perhaps we are not feeling as strong as we once were or would like to be. These are all part of our "Friday" experience...but Sunday's coming! So let us get ready for the new life Jesus wants to bring, so that when the fullness of Christ's Rising bursts upon us on Easter, we will be ready. New life, new hope, new strength, new grace, new growth. God bless you all! See you soon!



Holy Week Worship Services ~ As we approach the sacred time of Holy Week, we invite you to join us in reflection, prayer, and worship as we commemorate the profound journey of Jesus Christ towards the Cross and celebrate the joyous occasion of His Resurrection.

Here is the schedule for our Holy Week Services:

- ✿ Palm Sunday Service March 24 @10:30am ~ Let us begin our journey through Holy Week by commemorating Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem.

- ✿ Women of the Passion with ASEC March 27 @ 7pm

- ✿ Maundy Thursday Agape Feast March 28 @6pm ~ Join us as we remember the Last Supper, the washing of the disciples' feet, and Jesus' profound teachings on love and service.

- ✿ Good Friday Service shared with ASEC March 29 @7pm ~ Together, let us reflect on the solemnity of Jesus' crucifixion and sacrifice for humanity's salvation.

- ✿ Easter Sunday Service March 31 @10:30am ~ Celebrate with us the joy of Christ's Resurrection, as we proclaim the victory of life over death and hope over despair.



Holy Hilarity Sunday Is Coming!

The Deacons and Pastor Doug have decided to try embracing the idea of “Holy Humor Sunday” (see ”Churches resurrect an old Easter custom”) this year. The Sunday after Easter will find us doing worship with a fun and zesty twist. So bring a friend and come prepared to laugh together! We may have time for joke breaks during worship, so feel free to bring a clean joke to share! Oh, and did I say you could wear your baseball fan gear too?



Churches Resurrect an Old Easter Custom

Many American churches are resurrecting an old Easter custom begun by the Greeks in the early centuries of Christianity — “Holy Humor Sunday” celebrations of Jesus' resurrection on the Sunday after Easter.

For centuries in Eastern Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant countries, the week following Easter Sunday, including “Bright Sunday” (the Sunday after Easter), was observed by the faithful as “days of joy and laughter” with parties and picnics to celebrate Jesus' resurrection.

Churchgoers and pastors played practical jokes on each other, drenched each other with water, told jokes, sang, and danced.

The custom was rooted in the musings of early church theologians (like Augustine, Gregory of Nyssa, and John Chrysostom) that God played a practical joke on the devil by raising Jesus from the dead. “Risus paschalis - the Easter laugh,” the early theologians called it.

In 1988 the Fellowship of Merry Christians began encouraging churches and prayer groups to resurrect Bright Sunday celebrations and call it “Holy Humor Sunday,” with the theme: “Jesus is the LIFE of the party.”

Many churches from different traditions responded enthusiastically. Holy Humor Sunday services are bringing back large crowds to churches on a Sunday when church attendance typically drops dramatically.

(www.joyfulnoiseletter.com, website for the Merry Fellowship of Christians)

WORSHIP SCHEDULE

BIBLE STUDY SERIES

Date	Title/Topic	Scriptures
3/31	Easter Sunday The New Life of Grace and Justice	Job 19:21–27 Matthew 25:31–46
4/7	Holy Hilarity Sunday Communion	Psalm 100 Luke 6:37–42
4/14	Life Together: So Simple It Will Blow Your Mind	Micah 6:6–8 1 Corinthians 1:18–2:5
4/21	Life Together: I'll Just Have to Show You	Psalm 98 1 Corinthians 2:1–16
4/28	Life Together: Power Tools Required	Deuteronomy 6:4–12 1 Corinthians 3:1–16
5/5	Communion Sunday Life Together: Handle with Care or The Arrogance of Judging	1 Corinthians 5:1–13

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, and we will try and provide help with set up and clean up. If you have any questions, please contact Cissy Wolff at cissywolff@gmail.com, or call/text at 801-243-5457



Sandwich Making for April 21

Please make a note of this date if you're planning to participate. If you have any specific questions or need further information, feel free to ask.

Life Together

Friday Lunch Bunch Study

Maybe we think we know what church is. Maybe we think we know how God comes to each of us. But did you ever wonder what it would take to transform your life and the lives of those around you? Did you ever wonder how you could get closer to God, how to balance family, work and faith, and how to live a life full of Christ in a difficult world? All of those questions are ones the Christians of Corinth wrestled with in first century, and as Paul writes to them, we find ourselves—the good and the bad—in his letter. Come learn about your life and how life is meant to be better together!

Adult Formation ~ Adult Formation will take a break March 31 (Easter!) and April 7 (Holy Hilarity Sunday!). We will resume April 14. Keep an eye on your weekly emails for more information!



Taizé Worship with All Saints

April 7 and 21 @ 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!





Breakfast Feeds the Soul

Men's Breakfast

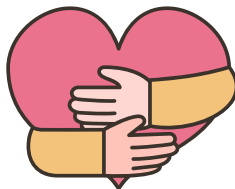
April 3 at 8am at Sharon's Café –
Conversations are always good and the food is always tasty. Not all are members of the church, but all of us are trying to live lives marked by grace.

Women's Breakfast

Ladies, mark your calendars! We are thrilled to invite you to a Women's Breakfast on April 12 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. RSVP to Cynthia Gray

Cares and Concerns Committee

The Deacons Board wants to revive the Cares & Concerns committee, which would help provide a meal to members who are ill, injured, or have surgery. We are looking for volunteers to coordinate this committee as well as volunteers who could provide a part of a meal (main dish, dessert, salad) in a time of need. We would also like to create a list of volunteers who might be willing to help with putting together a reception following a funeral/memorial. Please let us know if you are willing to help in any capacity toward this caring community commitment. Please contact Carla McIntire or Diane Forster-Burke.



Informational Meetings on the Budget, Missions and the Future

We are excited to invite you to participate in a series of informational meetings focused on our budget and future planning. Your input and engagement are invaluable as we work towards the upcoming year. These meetings aim to provide transparency and foster collaboration between our members and council. We encourage all to attend and share their perspectives, ideas, and priorities.

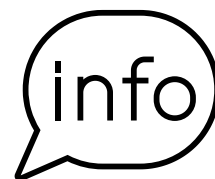
April 28 ~ Following Worship

May 1 ~ Zoom @7:30pm

May 5 ~ Following Worship

May 14 ~ Meeting @6pm

(Location ~ Sawdey/Wolff residence)



Shepherding Program Kicks Off!

What does being church really mean? One answer is to care for each other. The new Shepherding Program, an "in-reach" project of the Deacons, is trying to help our church get better at just that. In the next few weeks, you are likely to receive a phone call from one of the Deacons, just to ask how things are going, how we could help, and to receive any feedback from you about how we can improve the church. Whoever calls is just calling to listen, and they are happy to help or to get you the help you need. If you have questions about the program or who your shepherd is, feel free to call the Church office or to talk with Carla (Chair) or Pastor Doug. (By the way, if you're in leadership, you won't get a call—we figure we are hearing from you already 😊)

BUDGET



From the Trustees: The Budgeting Process by Phil LeHoux

We had our “first look” at the outline of a budget for the 2024-25 year, which starts July 1st. This preliminary document consists of the Treasurer taking the current year’s spending pattern to the end of February and extrapolating it, with escalations, into next year, while adding any additional expenditures either anticipated or desired by the various Boards. It may come as a surprise to many, but our costs are 86% “people” and only 14% “stuff/services.” The many category lines in the budget which is mostly made up of many small categories of stuff and services tend to obscure this fact. Revenue to cover these expenses, a combination of Unrestricted Giving and interest income, is then factored in to determine the overall financial health of the congregation.

How good are the numbers? Pretty good actually, at least on the expenditure side, since we are no longer burdened with building “surprises” (of the unwelcomed kind). Most of our other costs can be projected from inflation data and decided salary increases. New programs and equipment expenditures may not be direct burdens on the operating budget since these may qualify for distributions from the FCC Trust. The income side, at least the Giving part, is much harder to predict. This is the Stewardship aspect where the trustees are trying to improve their understanding of the short- and longer-term implications of the trends. The short-term pattern is very positive. This year, Giving has increased over \$20% through a combination of plate contributions, online donations and draws from members’ IRA accounts. However, to keep this in perspective, this is less than \$10,000 more than the \$41,000 expected/budgeted through the end of February. The longer term of a decade or more continues to reflect the trend of reduced income directly associated with reduced participation, an unfortunate trend experienced by most of our sister churches.

You may have questions regarding the expenditure side of the preliminary budget that was reviewed at the last Congregational Meeting, especially now that you may have had time to digest the contents of the spreadsheet. Please feel free to engage any trustee about it at coffee hour or through a call.

April Outreach ~ Becky Bishop

The Outreach Board has chosen The Utah Food Bank program “Kids Café” to receive donations designated to Outreach for the month of April. Kids Café: Kerri Duncan is in charge of Kids Café and she was excited to hear that we were supporting her program.

“Filling the nutrition gap that exists during out-of-school hours with nutritious after-school meals.” They currently serve 2,000 meals a day. During the summer, when the children are not in school, they serve meals at parks and other locations.

Utah Food Bank’s Kids Café is offered in partnership with educational after-school sites at local elementary schools, Boys & Girls Clubs, and community centers. Last year alone, this program provided 366,466 meals to children at risk of hunger. Kids Café meals provide the kind of nutrition that grows healthy, resilient bodies and minds. It helps fill the nutrition gap that often exists during out-of-school hours for many children who rely on free or reduced-price meal programs during the school day. The objectives of the program are twofold: first, to ensure that the children most vulnerable to hunger receive an evening meal, and second, to provide balanced nutrition in each meal served.

Last year, our Kids Café kitchen staff prepared an average of 1,409 meals each weekday. These meals were packed and transported to 121 sites where at least 50% of the children qualify for free or reduced-price school lunches. Participating sites offer not only a way to satiate hunger, but also a safe place where children can participate in educational, recreational, and social activities under the supervision of trustworthy staff.



Next Steps Committee Keeps Moving Forward

In February’s *Clarion*, we introduced the Next Steps Committee which is working on the key questions from our Congregational Conversations:

- 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”

The Committee has nearly completed a questionnaire for all the members of the congregation, as we try to understand better who we are now, what kinds of talents and passions for service we have, and how you understand our church’s mission. Don’t be surprised if you get something in the mail, email or a phone call about it!

What Happened at the Congregational Meeting, March 10?

The minutes are still being prepared, but below is a summary to keep everyone in the loop.



1. **Moderator Track Nominations and Election.**

Cissy Wolff was nominated to serve as Second Associate Moderator (she accepted). Next year's Moderator Track was then elected:

Moderator 2024–25: Glenda LeHoux
First Associate Moderator 2024–25: Karyl Bennion
Second Associate Moderator 2024–25: Cissy Wolff
Immediate Past Moderator: Bill Brown

2. **Forming Nominating Committee.** Some of the seats on the Nominating Committee are filled by the Church's By-laws: Pastor and Past Moderator. Three further seats are members-at-large. Nominations were given from the floor, and the at-large members were elected.

Nominating Committee for 2024–25: Carla McIntire (Past Moderator), Rev. Doug Gray (Pastor). At-Large: Becky Bishop, Scott Brown and Glenda LeHoux

3. **Trust Fund Authorizations.** The Trustees recommended three expenditures from the Trust to help All Saints Episcopal Church with their parking lot (\$5,500), to help All Saints with their roof (\$25,000), and for improved worship and streaming technology (\$20,500). These expenditures were approved by the congregation.


4. **Presentation of the Preliminary Budget.** Treasurer Mike McIntire presented the preliminary budget for 2024–25, with commentary. Copies of the budget are available from the church office upon request. There was a great deal of discussion around the proposed budget's assumption (on recommendation from Council) that we set aside half of the proceeds of the sale of the building to make a difference in the community. No decisions were made, but there was a motion to bring this matter up for Congregational discussion and vote at the Annual Meeting on June 2.

5. **Report from Next Steps Committee** — Rev. Gray talked about the effort by the Next Steps to answer the Congregation's questions (see "Next Steps Marching Forward" above). The plans are in development but in broad strokes, the hope is that the congregation will have a series of informational meetings in the fall, take that information, and begin in earnest the strategic planning for our church's future. The hope (and prayer!) is that we will have more clarity after that information, and can chart our course as a fellowship with faith and boldness. (The February Clarion also has an article about this committee's work.)

6. **Report from Outreach** — Becky Bishop (Chair) talked about the different missions that Outreach has been hearing from and supporting. Outreach's role runs parallel with the Next Steps Committee, finding and "short listing" the most exciting and deserving missions, so that our congregation can think more clearly about how we want to make a difference in our community. Then in the fall, our congregation will hear directly from some of these organizations, and see how God leads us.

7. **Pastor's Report.** Pastor Doug reminded us that we are on a journey. Some of our fellowship are going to really want to run ahead—they are so excited about the possibilities! Some of our fellowship may not be so keen—they are excited too (or maybe not!) and need some time to wrap their minds and hearts around what God is doing! We are going to need to be patient with each other as we head out into these uncharted waters because we want to all get there, and we want to do it together.

APRIL 2024

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	1 Church Office Closed	2 Outreach Meeting@11am Kristi out of office through April 5	3 Men's Breakfast @8am	4 Trustees Board Meeting@1:30pm Choir Rehearsal @7pm	5 No Bible Study	6
7 Choir Rehearsal @9:30am Holy Hilarity Sunday Worship Service @10:30am	8 Church Office Closed	9 Deacons Meeting@3pm	10	11 Choir Rehearsal @7pm	12 Women's Breakfast@9am Bible Study @Noon	13
14 Adult Formation @9:15am Choir Rehearsal @9:30am Worship Service @10:30	15 Church Office Closed	16 Council Meeting @2:30pm	17 Clarion Article Deadline	18 Choir Rehearsal @7pm	19 Bible Study @Noon	20
21 Adult Formation @9:15am Choir Rehearsal @9:30am Worship Service @10:30am Sandwich Making Following	22 Church Office Closed Rev. Doug Remote Hours Through the 25th - He is visiting with his Dad	23	24	25 Choir Rehearsal @7pm	26 Bible Study @Noon	27
28 Adult Formation @9:15am Choir Rehearsal @9:30am Worship Service @10:30am Informational Meeting Following	29 Church Office Closed	30				

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.

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

1710 South Foothill Drive • Salt Lake City, Utah

801-487-1357 • www.firstcongregationalslc.org

firstcongregationalslc@gmail.com

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