



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL  
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST · BOULDER

January 4, 2019

Dear Members and Friends,

This Sunday we enter the season of Epiphany, which is also the season we gather our financial pledges for the new year. Epiphany is a celebration of light. It's an invitation to look for light, to follow it, and to reflect it in our lives. Ultimately, it's a calling to *be* light in the world. It's an invitation to *shine*. As you consider your giving to the church for 2019, the Stewardship Team and I invite you to think about how you, and all of us together, are being called to reflect God's light and to let it *shine*.

As you know, the church depends on the contributions of members and friends. Because 92% percent of our annual operating budget comes from financial pledges, every offering you give, every dollar, makes a difference to the ministry we are able to do.

Still, when we speak of giving "to the church," we aren't quite capturing what we mean. The church isn't an entity we support. It's a life we share. When we give, we are giving to each other. We are investing in each other's faithful efforts and commitments. We are strengthening the communal life that knits us together as the body of Christ - our worship, our learning, the prayers we offer for one another and for the world, and the loving service we extend to our neighbors.

Our giving is an expression of our faith. It's an expression of our commitment to serve as a strong, bright witness to God's love in the world, and our belief that faith communities like ours, centered in a Spirit of openness and inclusion, with a heart of compassion and a deep commitment to service, have a critically important role to play in the world.

Last year, we shared with you that the giving of the congregation needed to grow substantially for us to sustain our level of staffing and program. You responded with great generosity, and your giving enabled us to meet our financial challenges. Thank you!

For 2019, we need to sustain our higher level of giving, and to continue the momentum upwards as our ministry is expanding to include a number of new initiatives - a Church-Wide Mission project, the search for new staff members focused on Finance and Communications, a growing Youth and Young Adult Ministry, and Dinner Church, a new monthly intergenerational worship service.

The enclosed materials speak about the shared life of giving and receiving we call First Congregational Church, UCC, Boulder. Like last year, we are sending a specific request for you to consider for your giving. Devotions written by members of the Stewardship Team are included as well for your reflection - one for each week in January. Please spend time reading them, praying about them, talking with others, and asking God what you will pledge in light of our common calling to shine God's love and to serve as a bright beacon of hope.

Together, we will consecrate our pledges in worship on Sunday, January 27, dedicating all that we have and all that we are, to God's good work and shining light in the world.

With gratitude for you and the life we are blessed to share,

The Rev. Christina Braudaway-Bauman  
Senior Minister



Dear Members and Friends,

Wow! 2018 was a magnificent year for First Congregational, UCC Boulder in many ways. At the very beginning of the year, the congregation spoke up through our 2018 pledging: "We love our church, its program and the contributions we make in our community and our world." We sent this message through a big leap in our collective pledging and then giving. Our average pledge went up from \$2,812 to \$2,977 and we had 30 new pledges. The challenge this year, for 2019, is to sustain and continue to grow our annual giving in ways that provide the church with a budget that makes a difference in our individual lives and the world around us.

We will meet this challenge **together as a community of faith**. Those of us who can give more, will give more so that those who may not be able to pledge as much as they would like will also go forth into the light rejoicing in the knowledge that we are, each one of us, a vital, contributing part of this church – a body which cares and supports one another as we do God's work in the world with money, time and talent.

God calls us to this joyful and challenging work of stewardship and to understand our financial giving as an essential practice of our faith. We invite you to use the enclosed devotional as you discern your calling, your own gifts, and how you will be part of the stewardship of First Congregational Church this year. You can fold the devotional into a "table tent" and keep it on your dinner table, using a different devotion each week.

May you experience the Epiphany Season with all the light God has to offer. Thank you, thank you, thank you!

Deep Gratitude and Abundant Blessing,

*Libbey*

Your Stewardship Ministry

Libby Black, Betsy Barrett, Chris Braudaway-Bauman, Allison Hamm, Jon Hinebauch, Jeanne Lounsbury, Eric Malmborg, Bob Matthias, Laura McCutchen, Nancy Stevens

P.S. We have only two weeks to follow up on pledges after Consecration Sunday on January 27, so please pledge by January 27!

[When do I pledge?](#)

- When you are ready. Anytime between next week and Sunday, January 27 – the end of our stewardship season. We do hope that you will be open to the spirit during the four weeks of our stewardship season as you hear from other members of the church. If you pledge early, you can always increase your pledge before the end of the month.
- If you pre-paid your 2019 pledge, thank you! Please complete the pledge card as usual and don't hesitate to take on our challenge and pledge more than you thought you might!
- Our follow-up this year is only 2 weeks! Please help your Stewardship Ministry by pledging your full amount by January 27.

### How do I pledge?

- Online. Go to our web page at [www.firstcong.net](http://www.firstcong.net), click on "GIVE" and choose "2019 Pledge."
- Click on "PLEDGE" in one of the emails you will get in the next few weeks.
- Return the enclosed pledge card in the offering plate on any Sunday at church or by mail. If you don't use the return envelope, please feel free to bring it back to church.
- Call the church office at 303-442-1787, extension 0, and leave your full name, your phone number and how much you would like to pledge for the year.

### How can I pay my pledge?

- Automatic withdrawal from your bank, which you set up through your bank. It will help the church office if you make your payment due date between the 5<sup>th</sup> and the 10<sup>th</sup> of each month and indicate "2019 pledge" in the memo.
- Credit card: Text 73256 with the message joy2givefcc. Choose 2019 pledge in the drop-down menu. FYI, it does cost the church a fee to process credit card payments.
- Personal check placed in the offering at church or mailed to the church. Please write in the memo "2019 pledge."
- Assets transferred to the church. For instructions, please email [Donna@firstcong.net](mailto:Donna@firstcong.net) with the words "instructions for asset transfer" in the subject line.

### When should I pay my pledge?

- Monthly is great. Weekly is fine. Some people appreciate the spiritual practice of putting a check in the plate each week.
- Annually – some people prefer to pay their whole pledge at once. Because your pledge payments do pay our bills, it is most helpful for our cash flow if this payment is in the first quarter of the year, or at least by mid-year.
- However it works for you – we will make it work for the church!

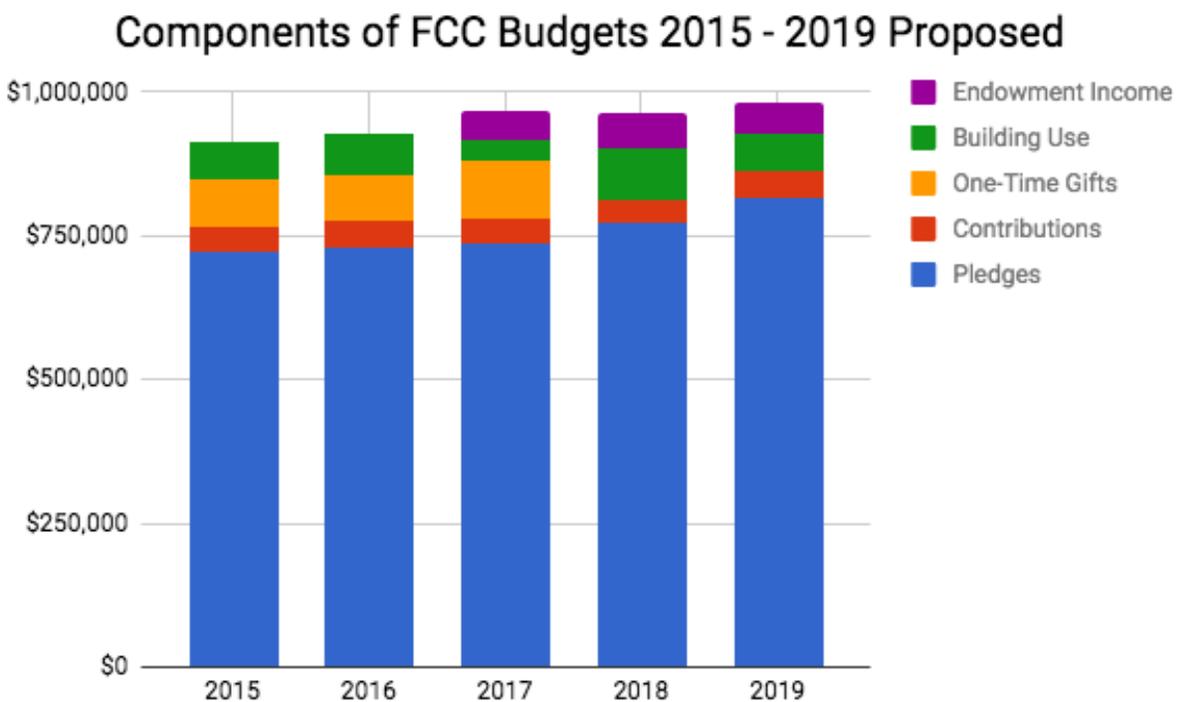
*Gratitude bestows reverence, allowing us to encounter everyday epiphanies, those transcendent moments of awe that change forever how we experience life and the world.*

## 2019 – Sustaining the Big Leap

The graph below shows the components of our annual operating budget income: pledges, contributions (what people give in the plate), one-time gifts, building use (rental and parking fees), and endowment income. You can see that in 2018, we made a big leap to eliminate the need for one-time gifts. This is a continuing goal.

### Our 2019 Goal: To continue the momentum gained in 2018

- We need you!
- We ask you to do your best to stretch to the request in your 2019 pledge letter.
- We will conduct our pledge drive during the month of January with no additional requests, so please, give it your all on your pledge!



### Notes

- The increases in our 2019 budget will support new office staff in finance and communications and a growing ministry to youth and young adults.
- The 2019 budget has less building use income because Fox Institute closed its doors and it was our largest building use tenant. We are looking for our next tenant.
- In 2018, we eliminated our dependence on one-time gifts. This was an enormous accomplishment, given that in 2017, we needed one-time gifts of \$100,000 to balance our budget. Let's do it again!

## 2019 Stewardship: Where We Want to Be

**Total Pledges: Grow from 253 to 280**

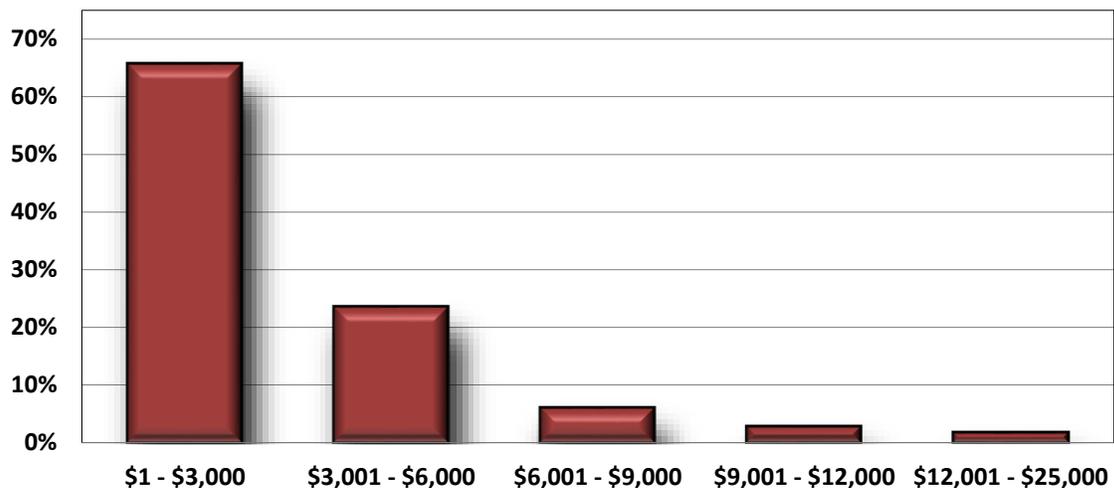
**Average Pledge: Grow from \$2,988 to \$3,108**

- 27 new pledges
- 80% of pledgers increase their pledge

### The graphs below show every pledge is important!

- About 65% of our pledges are between \$1 and \$3,000, providing nearly 30% of our pledge total. We couldn't do it without them.
- We have only a few pledges in the highest category and though large, they provide 12% of our pledge total. We couldn't do it without them either.
- Every pledge counts! – small, large and in between! Thank you for stretching to your next level.

### 2019 % of Total Target Pledges in \$ Categories



### What does my pledge support?

Your annual pledge helps to provide financial resources which support our church's ministry:

- Our worship, music, learning, care, and fellowship,
- Our outreach and service ministries with the wider community and church, including our partnerships with 32 organizations, serving people in need and working for social justice,
- The maintenance of our facilities, which we share with nearly 40 organizations in Boulder, making our church a vibrant center of community life. Many groups meet in our building free of charge or for a modest fee.

As we are expanding our ministry in a number of areas -- a church-wide mission project, growing youth and young adult ministries, a search for new staff in finance and communication, a visitation ministry, and a monthly evening dinner church worship service – we are also working to contain costs. Our target budget for 2019 includes a 4% increase over 2018.

## Helpful Information For First Time Pledgers

### What is a pledge?

- Your church pledge is a non-binding agreement of intent to share your financial gifts with the church to support the church's annual operating expenses. The operating budget supports salaries and benefits for our staff, running the facility, programs of the church including worship, music, youth programs, church school and small groups, fellowship activities, and substantial outreach into our community.
- **Our church financial policy requires us to write our budget based on pledges made, so full participation is critical.**
- 92% of our annual operating budget is funded through annual pledges to our operating budget. This year, our goal for pledges is \$805,958.
- Your pledge is an annual amount. We know that circumstances change and sometimes people find it necessary to reduce their pledge during the year. Or it may be possible to give an extra gift, beyond their pledge, at the end of the year

### What does my pledge pay for?

All of the annual operating costs of the church:

- Staff salaries and benefits
- Worship, music and education programs of the church
- Scholarships for youth and adult retreats and mission trips
- Maintenance and upkeep of our lovely buildings
- Utilities and property insurance
- Office supplies
- Small budgets for each of our Boards
- Support for the National UCC – Our Church's Wider Mission

First Congregational Boulder also has an Endowment. The income from the Endowment supports capital needs expenses, an enhanced music program, the arts program at the Church, MacKenzie Lectureship series and mission and social action projects. In 2017, the income from the Endowments was about \$75,000 of which \$40,000 went to mission and social action programs of the church.

### When do I pledge?

- When you are ready. Anytime between now and Sunday, January 27 – the end of our stewardship season. We do hope that you will be open to the spirit during the four weeks of our stewardship season as you hear from other members of the church. If you pledge early, you can always increase your pledge before the end of the month.
- Our follow-up is only 2 weeks! Please help your Stewardship Ministry by pledging your full amount by Sunday, January 27.

## How do I pledge?

- Online: Go to our [www.firstcong.net](http://www.firstcong.net), click on “GIVE” and choose “2019 Pledge.”
- Email: Click on “PLEDGE” in one of the emails you will get in the next few weeks.
- At Church: Return the enclosed pledge card in the offering plate on any Sunday at church or by mail. We will be blessing our pledges as a whole church on Sunday, January 27. Some families hold their pledge until then, but you do not need to. If you don’t use the return envelope, please feel free to bring it back to church.
- Phone: Call the church office at 303-442-1787, extension 0, and leave your full name, your phone number and how much you would like to pledge for 2019.

## How can I pay my pledge?

- Automatic withdrawal: You can automatically pay your pledge from your bank account each month. You set this up through your bank. It will help the church office if you make your payment due date between the 5<sup>th</sup> and the 10<sup>th</sup> of each month and indicate “2019 pledge” in the memo.
- Personal check: Place your check in the offering plate at church or mail to the church. Please write in the memo “2019 pledge.”
- Credit card: Text 73256 with the message joy2givefcc. Choose 2019 pledge payments.
- Assets: You can transfer assets to the church to pay your pledge. Appreciated assets are great for the potential tax benefits. For instructions, please email [Donna@firstcong.net](mailto:Donna@firstcong.net) with the words “instructions for asset transfer” in the subject line.

## When should I pay my pledge?

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- However it works for you – we will make it work for the church!

**Thank you! Please feel free to contact any member of the Stewardship Team or staff with your questions.**