

First Congregational UCC, Boulder Faith Formation Blueprint

Our Dream

To Grow in Faith Together Our Whole Life Long

God is present, active, and alive in the world as the life-giving and life-transforming power of love. Love is at the center of all we do and are. Our deepest desire is for all people to know that they are God's beloved. Each person belongs to God, and is precious, treasured, and loved.

We believe each one of us made in the image of God and is endowed with unique gifts to be discovered, developed, and used for common good. Immersed in God's love and blessing, we open ourselves to listen for the leading of the Spirit who invites each one of us and all of us together as a church

- to live out God's love as a lifelong journey of faith,
- to grow in faith through worship, learning, service, advocacy, giving, and prayer,
- to put our hearts and our minds, our voices, hands, and feet to work for the wellbeing of all creation.

Our Principles

Faith formation is a wide welcome and a lifelong journey

Our commitment to the extravagant love of Jesus makes the words "All are Welcome" as inclusive as they sound. As we often say in worship, "Whoever you are and wherever you are on life's journey," you are welcome here. The journey of faith is an ongoing, never ending, lifelong adventure of learning and discovery.

Faith is formed in inter-generational community

Faith is formed and grows in the midst of relationships of trust, including across generations, as people get to hear each other's stories, share experiences, offer support, celebrate joys, and honor life's transitions and milestones. Every person of every age is a student as well as a teacher, and there is wisdom to share between the generations of faithful people.

Faith formation engages all the senses

Our worship and our whole life together as a congregation is a school for learning how to see and hear more clearly, to become more aware of God's presence in our lives and the needs of the world, and more able to discern the movement of the Spirit, so that we can align our prayers and our commitments to God's good purposes. Our worship and all the activities of our life together in the church train us to notice how God is present and at work everywhere.

Faith is formed and practiced everywhere

Faith is formed in the context of church life, but also in settings beyond our congregation. The wider community and the natural world we interact with every day give us opportunities to practice and experience God's love. Our households are essential and powerful learning laboratories for being formed in faith on a daily basis.

Faith is formed through shared personal stories and God's Story

We are a narrative people. Faith is formed through sharing personal stories with one another and by putting our individual experiences in conversation with the largest story there is, the one about God's life giving and transforming power found in Scripture. It's a story that links us to a wide circle, the generations of faithful people who have gone before us and the millions around the world seeking to follow the way of Christ, and who, like us, find in God's story the love that gives our lives meaning, purpose, identity, comfort and courage.

The story is unfinished, which means that our still-speaking God is continually inviting us to become part of it, allowing our lives to be subplots of the grand narrative, and making our own contributions to its ongoing epic unfolding.

Our Practices

We seek to know more and more about each other's stories and the larger story of God's love as we experience it in our lives, as we study and learn about the Christian faith and the needs of the world, as we lift them in worship, explore them in forums, share them in small groups and fellowship events, and engage them in the wider community.

We seek to be Spirit led, leaning joyfully into practices of discernment, attending to the Spirit's movement and energy, and following where she leads us, embracing experiments, and viewing mistakes as opportunities to learn, pivot, and refine.

We seek to help people of all ages identify, develop, and use their God given gifts, to celebrate them, and to honor and support their callings – both their individual callings and the callings we share as a congregation, including our ministries for mental health, racial justice, gun violence prevention, and climate action, and our congregation's covenants – Open and Affirming, Inclusive Language, Just Peace, Creation Justice, Accessible to All, and WISE (Welcoming, Inclusive, Supportive, and Engaged for Mental Health).

We seek opportunities to grow in faith together, sing and pray together, study and talk together, make music and art together, serve together and play together. In the words of our behavioral covenant, "we honor each person as a sibling in Christ, maintaining an atmosphere where people feel safe to express differences, listening with respect, interest, and curiosity, seeking understanding, and sharing our thoughts and ideas in ways that bring positive energy to groups and projects."

We seek to dwell in God's presence, enjoy each other's company and friendship, get to know and support each other, and look for ways to be of service, to make a difference in other people's lives, and to contribute to building a more just, more loving community and world for everyone.

Our Plan

Our plan for the next one to three years is to deepen and expand our practices and opportunities of faith formation, by focusing on the following areas.

Worship

Building on the joy of our First Sunday intergenerational worship services, we plan to add more opportunities for all ages in worship, starting with Summer Sunday Brunch Church during July

and August, and continuing in the fall, to enhance children's and youth engagement in First Sunday Worship.

Baptisms, Confirmation/Questformation, and the gifting of Kindergarten Bibles and Third Grade Bibles and High School Senior Blankets are treasured milestone events in the life of our congregation. Are there layers of activity we could add that would make them even more meaningful? What other milestone events can we add to our annual offerings?

Children and Families

As Deborah moves toward retirement in January, we will begin the search for a new Director of Faith Formation, focused particularly on children, parents, and families.

Building on the success of Arts Camp, we will explore expanding summertime experiences for children. Peace Camp, a week-long day camp for children kindergarten to 5th grade, in partnership with three other congregations, is a step in that direction.

Family Fellowship gatherings will resume starting this summer.

As the Board of Missions moves to offer opportunities for hands-on service projects, they will especially emphasize efforts where parents and children can work together, and where middle and high school youth can meet up.

We will gather parents for a listening meeting in the fall with a mental health professional to discern how we can more fully support parents regarding the mental wellness of our children and youth.

Our engagement with Vibrant Faith's 4th Soil Parenting Project will provide a variety of opportunities to equip and support parents to nurture faith at home, including providing online resources for reflection and conversation. A team has been recruited and will begin meeting regularly soon.

Middle and High School Youth

The search for a director of our Collaborative Three Church Youth Program is underway. The search team of representatives from all three congregations – Community UCC, UCC Longmont, and First Congregational, Boulder – is meeting weekly. Meanwhile, youth from all three congregations are meeting for an activity once a month so that they can get to know each other.

The Board of Christian Education will be recruiting two teams of adult volunteers to work with our youth – one team to serve on a Collaborative Youth Advisory Council and the other to directly support a new Director of Youth Ministry during youth group meetings and especially on Sunday mornings.

A support group for parents of middle and high school youth has started meeting and will continue monthly.

We are in the midst of developing social justice internships for young adults for the summer. One facet of their work will be engaging youth in hands-on service projects.

Adults and Small Groups

As part of the work of the Social Justice Implementation Team for the Strategic Plan, a support group for members in direct service and advocacy vocations is being planned.

Weekend retreats for men and for women are resuming and day long retreats, much like last spring's retreat on Sabbath, are being considered.

An Adult Faith Formation Team will be recruited to strengthen coordination of our small group learning and to find ways to engage the involvement among those who have not participated in our many opportunities.

An emphasis on teaching prayer and devotional practices is being planned for the fall.

Independent Study

We plan to make much greater use of online platforms to create, curate, and share “on the go” resources to enhance learning, devotional practices, and create opportunities for meaningful conversations.