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April 14, 2022

God's Beloved—

With the season of Lent coming to a close, along with the first quarter of our financial year, it seems fitting that we take some time to reflect on where God has been at work in our midst.

First of all, a grateful welcome to our NEW Financial Secretary, Richard Austin. Though he is most often serving behind the scenes, trouble-shooting tech and tending to his Ministry of the Spreadsheet as our Sunday morning server scheduler, he also blesses us as a musician, singing with our Chancel Choir and Evening Handbell Choir. Richard, thank you for your YES to this role as Financial Secretary. As a reminder, per our church policy, Richard and I are the only ones who have access to folks' giving records. Thank you for your trust in us.

We began the year with in-person interviews for our final Associate Minister candidates, bringing our top choices to "the Choice City" for a chance to tour around, see our facilities, and spend time with our Search Team in breaking bread and conversation. Our Search Team presented their final candidate to the church board and then the congregation in early February. We're now eagerly awaiting the arrival of Wendy Davidson, who will serve as our next pastor beginning May 2. Thank you to our Search Team for all the ways they listened to each other and our congregation and for God throughout this process that can best be described as a labor of love. (Emphasis on both *labor* and *love*.) We believe we have found God's best for us, as our Regional Minister, Rev. Joan Bell-Haynes, says.

Our Church Board met for their "Prepare the Way" retreat in March. As our visionary and strategic leaders, they studied the 5-year strategic plan we approved at our annual congregational meeting in November to discern how to best move toward those goals. They also began to look toward our 30th anniversary year, which will commence in March 2023, and will include my second 13-week sabbatical, a refresh of the ways we tell our story through a website upgrade and an updated logo, and—we hope and pray—the ground-breaking for Heartside Hill.

Speaking of—we were thrilled to welcome Gov. Jared Polis and local elected officials on March 25 as they toured our county to learn about projects that are having an impact on our region. Heartside Hill was selected as a highlight of the tour, and we joined with our partners—CARE Housing, Fort Collins Habitat for Humanity, and L'Arche Fort Collins—to present the vision and structure of this dream we believe God has for our land.

As we continue to advance this partnership and project, it's also been an opportunity for us to tell our community about this exciting and innovative way we're putting our faith into action. When this land was purchased for our congregation by the Central Rocky Mountain Region nearly 30 years ago, it was uncertain whether or not we would ever build on it...let alone birth a whole community around us. Thanks, God, for holding space for that dream.

I write this as we are celebrating our first Holy Week fully in-person since 2019, and I am in awe of all the ways we see glimpses of resurrection as we embrace a "new normal." From baptizing 3 of our youth in January and welcoming 14 new members in March to a Palm Sunday that required extra chairs and a longer center aisle for the "cloaks" we laid down to a Maundy Thursday service with 70+ in-person and online worshippers coming to Jesus' table to experience bread broken and the Beloved being betrayed to a powerful, musically breathtaking collaborative Good Friday service with friends from American Baptist Church, we have much to celebrate. First and foremost—the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, whose story we cannot separate from our own. We are Easter people! Resurrection does come. Thanks, God.

Grace and gratitude,

Melissa St. Clair, Pastor

thank you!