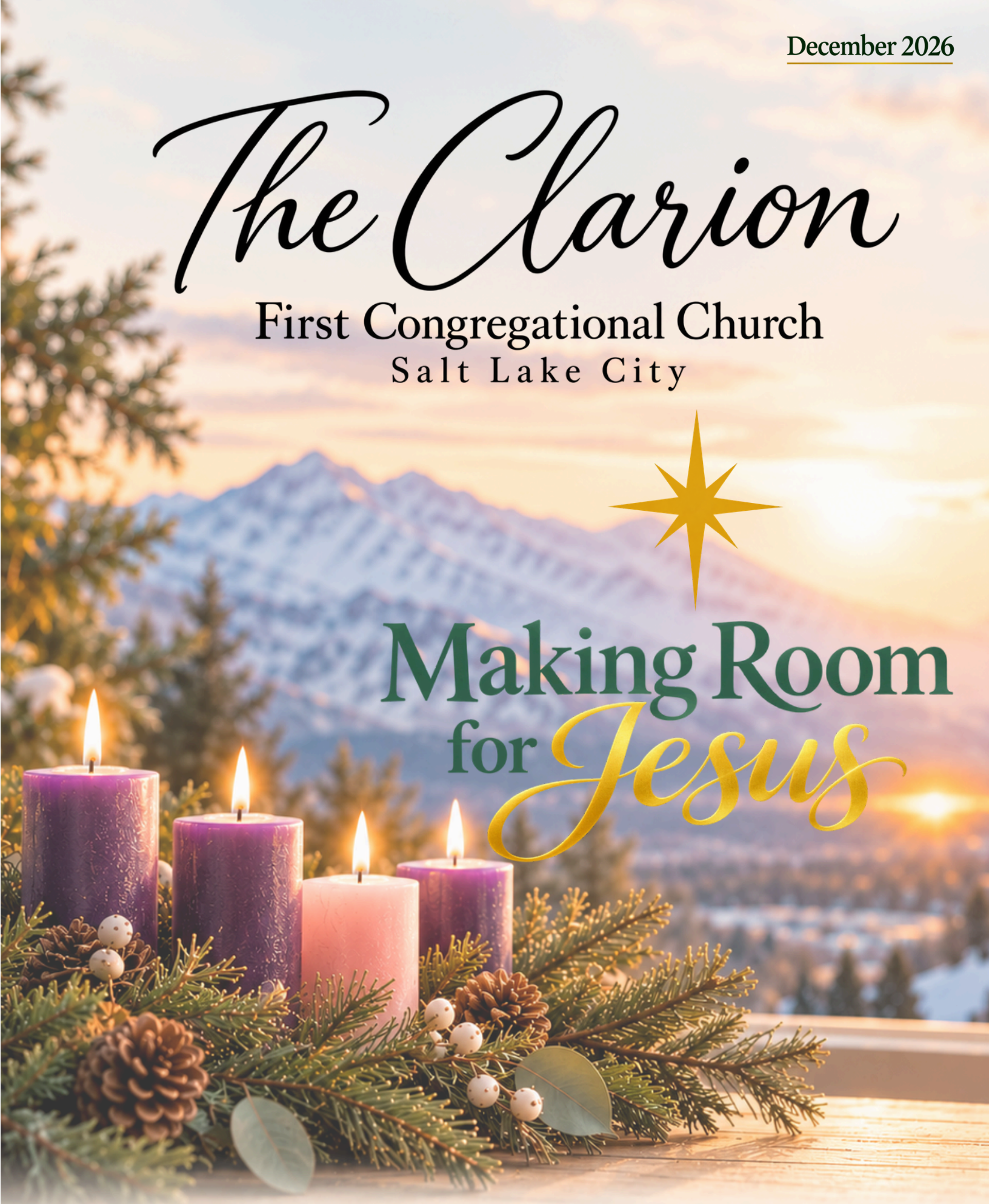
December 2026

The Clarion

First Congregational Church
Salt Lake City



Making Room for Jesus

Gather • Connect • Transform

Gather Connect Transform

Gather…

- We gather together because we need each other and we are better together.
- We gather for worship, for fun, for service, for whatever, and when we gather, God comes!
- Jesus said, "Where two or three gather in my name, there will be in the middle."

Connect…

- When we gather, we connect to each other and to God.
- We discover we are not alone.
- We are blessed by each person's perspective and story.
- We are all seekers, all on a journey, and God wants to be there with us!

Transform…

- Sure, we all want to find transformation, the key to better love and life…
- But we also want to help God transform our world.
- The brokenness of our world and our politics cries out for transformation.
- We think Jesus shows us the best, clearest way forward for ourselves and our world.

The way forward for each of us and all of us is to gather, connect and transform!

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Making Room for Jesus

Rev. Doug Gray

"Martha had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, 'Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!'" — The Bible, The Good News according to Luke 10:39–40

Ha! You were expecting something about the manger, right? Or shepherds? Or angels? Or some cozy image of the Holy Family? Nope! I'm talking about a different family gathering entirely! Of all the people in the world who were not the Twelve Disciples, three siblings had a really special place in Jesus' heart—Martha, Mary and Lazarus. Whenever Jesus was in or near Jerusalem, he often stayed with them. Martha was all about getting things ready, filling out the checklists, making sure people had what they needed—all those things. I see all you "Marthas" out there nodding your head! You know how much preparation, thought and hard work go into Christmas. And God bless you for it! Thank you for being the wizards and architects behind a beautiful and meaningful season!

Martha and Mary have some things to teach us about Christmas:

1. **Let your preparations add meaning to your life**. If you like being a wizard of an architect for Christmas, enjoy what you have chosen!

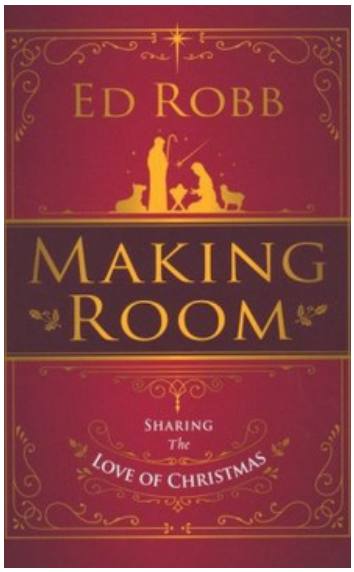
2. **Always ask for the help you need**. Remember Christmas is a team sport! So don't try to do the heavy lift all yourself…others may find doing/helping part of what makes Christmas meaningful for them!

3. **Make room for Jesus and joy**. As the quote below suggests, Jesus gets our tendency to make our lives so busy, to "eat" Christmas so fast we can't even taste it. At the end of the day, if we are too busy to find time with God, too distracted to let the gift of Jesus work in us, then perhaps we might want to rethink our schedule and effort. Jesus says there's only one needful thing…have you found it?

We all have things we like to do at Christmas—age-long traditions and new ideas for fun, family gatherings and time alone. By all means, do what makes Christmas better, but I have good news! When we tackle the questions of what makes Christmas meaningful, and what Jesus is trying to show me this year—like Mary does—then Christmas will be locked in for us, and no one can take that away.

"Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her." —Jesus*, The Bible*, The Good News According to Luke 10:41–42





Advent Is Here!



December brings familiar traditions, full calendars, and the anticipation of Christmas. In the midst of it all, Advent invites us to slow down and consider what it means to make room for Jesus.

Throughout Advent, our worship and Bible studies will draw on Ed Robb's *Making Room: Sharing the Love of Christmas.* Together, we'll explore how the Christmas story invites us to practice hospitality, generosity, love, and joy in everyday ways. Making room might look like inviting someone to share a meal, calling a friend who's having a hard time, or taking a few quiet minutes to pray and reflect.

Whether this season feels joyful, complicated, or a little of both, there's a place for you here. Join us this December as we prepare for Christmas and look for ways to share Christ's love with one another.

Date	Sermon	Scripture
Dec. 6	**2nd Sunday of Advent** Making Room for Jesus: Welcome Strangers	Deut. 10:14–19 Matthew 2:1–3, 9–15
Dec. 13	**3rd Sunday of Advent** Lessons and Carols Shared service with ASEC	Isaiah 60:1–7 John 8:12
Dec. 20	**4th Sunday of Advent** Making Room for Jesus: Walk Each Other Home	Matthew 2:13–15, 19–23 John 17:20–24
Dec. 20	**Blue Christmas Service at 7pm (Shared Service with ASEC upstairs)**	Isaiah 40:1 Isaiah 53:3–4 Matthew 11:28
Dec. 24	**Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship at 7:30pm (Upstairs) Festive Coffee Hour Following**	John 1: 1–5
Dec. 27	**First Sunday of Christmastide Rev. Deanna Anderson**	Isaiah 61:10–62:3 Psalm 148 Galatians 4:4–7 Luke 2:22–40

Sunday Worship Schedule

Join us each Sunday during Advent as we prepare our hearts and make room for Jesus. Together, we'll explore how we can share the love of Christmas by making space for hope, peace, love, and joy in our lives—and extending a welcome to others.

Come as you are, find connection, and experience the beauty of Advent in a welcoming community.

All are welcome. You belong with us!

Holiday Breakfast – Ebelskiver Extravaganza!

Wednesday, December 2 | 8:00am

First Congregational Church would like to invite all of you and our friends from All Saints Episcopal Church to join us upstairs in the ASEC Fellowship Hall for this favorite holiday tradition. All are welcome!

Want to help Bob Baird cook? He'll be here starting at 6:00am and would love some extra hands.

Christmas Eve Coffee Hour

Thursday, December 24 | Following the 7:30pm Candlelight Service

Join us for a festive Coffee Hour following Christmas Eve worship! Help spread Christmas cheer by bringing treats to share or volunteering with setup and cleanup. Please bring treats to church on Christmas Eve.

Looking Ahead to Advent – Making Room for Jesus

As we prepare for the beautiful season of Advent, we invite you to join us at First Congregational Church and reflect on this year's theme, "Making Room for Jesus." Our Advent journey will be guided by the book *Making Room: Sharing the Love of Christmas* by Ed Robb. Let's explore how we can open our hearts, make room for God's love, and prepare for the joy and hope of Christmas.

Full Advent Worship and Events Schedule

- November 28 – Hanging of the Greens@10am
- November 29 – First Sunday of Advent@10:30am
- December 6 – Second Sunday of Advent@10:30am
- December 13 – Third Sunday of Advent: Lessons & Carols@10:30am
  - Shared Service with All Saints Episcopal Church (upstairs)
- December 20 – Fourth Sunday of Advent@10:30am
- December 20 – Blue Christmas Service@7:00pm
  - Shared Service with All Saints Episcopal Church (upstairs)
- December 24 – Christmas Eve Candlelight Service@7:30pm
  - Festive Coffee Hour following – Help with treats appreciated!
- December 27 – First Sunday after Christmas, Rev. Deanna Anderson



We hope you'll join us throughout this special season as we gather in faith, connect in fellowship, and celebrate the gift of Christ's love. All are welcome!



Blue Christmas Worship ~ Shared Service with All Saints

Sunday, December 20@7pm • ASEC Sanctuary (Upstairs)

The holidays often sparkle with joy, celebration, and togetherness—but for many, this season can also be tender, difficult, or heavy. Experiences of grief, loss, change, or loneliness can make the darkness of winter feel especially deep.

Our Blue Christmas Service is a gentle, contemplative time of worship for anyone who is hurting, grieving, or simply needing a quieter space this season. Through prayer, scripture, music, and silence, we create a space of comfort and grace—where all feelings are welcome, and where God meets us with compassion.

- "Comfort, comfort my people," says your God. — Isaiah 40:1
- "Surely he has taken up our griefs and carried our sorrows." — Isaiah 53:3–4
- "Come to me, all you who are weary and heavy burdened, and I will give you rest." — Matthew 11:28

Many of us discover, at some point in life, that Christmas can hold both joy and sorrow. Sometimes memories surface—beautiful and painful all at once. Sometimes the people we long for are no longer with us. Sometimes life simply feels fragile. This service is for those moments. Whether you come for yourself or bring someone who may need a place of comfort, we invite you to join us as we seek the peace, hope, and gentle presence of God. May this Christmas bring not only joy and wonder, but also comfort, healing, and rest.

Faith in Action for Outreach

December Outreach Project: Guadalupe Center

The Outreach Board has decided to extend our support of the Guadalupe Center in Rose Park through the remainder of November and all of December!

Since 1966, the Guadalupe Center has been dedicated to supporting immigrants, refugees, and underserved families in our community. Through its educational programs and essential services, the Center reaches more than 1,000 adults and children each year.

Following a recent visit, our Outreach Board learned about several programs needing additional support, including:

- **Early Childhood Education.** Helping preschool children build a strong foundation for learning.
- **After-School Programs.** Providing educational enrichment and support for school-age children.
- **Family Support Services.** Offering in-home education for parents on nutrition, infant care, and home safety.
- **Adult Education.** Helping adults improve their English language skills and develop skills for employment.

By extending this outreach project through December, we have a golden opportunity to make an even greater impact during the holiday season. Your donations will help support these valuable programs and strengthen families in our community. Thank you for your continued generosity and for helping make a difference!

Learn more about the Guadalupe Center: www.guadschool.org

October Outreach Recap: YWCA Utah Candy Cane Lane

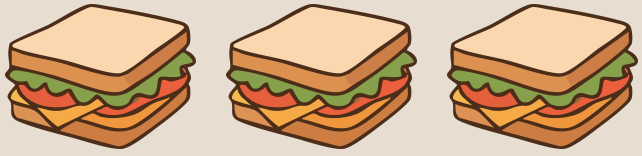
Thank you to everyone who supported our October Outreach Project, YWCA Utah's Candy Cane Lane! This special holiday program helps bring Christmas joy to women and children served by YWCA Utah, providing gifts and holiday support to families experiencing difficult circumstances. **Thanks to your generosity, we raised $1,360! The Outreach Board voted to increase our donation to $1,500 and proudly presented YWCA Utah with a check for the full amount.** Thank you for your continued support and for helping make the holiday season brighter!

Sandwich Making

FCC members and friends are welcome to join with All Saints Episcopal Church in this act of service. Whether you've volunteered before or are helping for the first time, your contribution is invaluable.

Here are the details: (3rd Sunday of each month)

- **Date: Sunday, December 20 - After Worship**
- **Location: Upstairs Parish Hall**
- **What to Bring: A willing heart and hands ready to help!**





We are excited to announce the return of many of our regular ministries and opportunities for fellowship, learning, music, and worship. Whether you've participated before or are looking for a new way to get involved, we invite you to join us!

- **Men's Breakfast – First Wednesday of the month 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. ***Note for December we will be joining the women for a shared breakfast on December 2, upstairs in Parish Hall. FCC and our friends at ASEC are invited to join us.** *See article on page 4.*

- **Women's Breakfast – Second Friday of the month at 9am at Delice** – Ladies, mark your calendars! We are thrilled to invite you to a Women's Breakfast at 9am, we meet 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 meet every second Friday, so if you can't make this month, we hope to catch you next month. Please RSVP by email to firstcongregationalslc@gmail.com. ***Note for December we will be joining the men for a shared breakfast on December 2, upstairs in Parish Hall.** *See article on page 4.*

- **Adult Formation – Sundays at 9:15am (Across the hall from offices) *See calendar for schedule.**
  Father Trace from All Saints Episcopal and Rev. Doug lead the weekly discussion and together we explore scripture, theology, and how faith connects with daily life. All are welcome—bring your questions and curiosity!

- **Taizé Service – First Sunday of the Month at 7pm**
  First Congregational Church and All Saints Episcopal Church invite you to a shared Taizé Service on the first Sunday of each month at 7:00pm. This contemplative service of song, scripture, and silence offers a peaceful space for reflection and prayer. All are welcome.

- **Bell Choir – Tuesdays at 6:30pm**
  We are excited to have a shared bell choir with All Saints. Rehearsals are held every Tuesday from 6:30–8:00pm. All are welcome to come ring with us! If you are interested in joining, let the church office know and we will get you in touch with Cynthia Gray, our Director.

- **Choir – Thursdays at 7pm and Sundays at 9:30am**
  Rehearsals are held every Thursday at 7:00pm and again every Sunday morning at 9:30am before worship. Whether you're a seasoned singer or simply love making a joyful noise, the choir welcomes you. If you are interested in joining, please let the office know and we will connect you with Devon Bettolo, our director. Come share your gift of music and help lead us in worship.

- **Bible Study – Fridays at Noon via Zoom**
  Join us Fridays at noon on Zoom for Bible Study Lunch Bunch. Come as you are, bring your lunch, and enjoy a thoughtful, welcoming conversation—no homework required! The Zoom link can be found in our weekly email.

Please Join Us!

There's a place for you at FCC! Whether you come to worship, learn, study, grow, or simply connect with others, we invite you to join us and be part of all that's happening in our church community. Come as you are, bring a friend, and discover something new. We look forward to seeing you!

Stewardship Campaign for 2027 – A Big Thank You!
Faithful Here. Hopeful Ahead!

On Sunday, November 22, we gathered for our annual Thanksgiving and Stewardship Sunday celebration, reflecting on our many blessings and looking ahead with faith and hope. This year's theme, **"Faithful Here. Hopeful Ahead!"**, reminds us of the importance of supporting First Congregational Church and the many ways our generosity helps us serve our community and share God's love. During worship, we offered our Estimates of Giving (EOGs) for 2027, showing our commitment to the future of our church. A special thank-you to our Board of Trustees for their leadership and for hosting a wonderful Thanksgiving Coffee Hour following worship!

Thank you to everyone who has submitted an Estimate of Giving! You may turn in your Estimate of Giving at any time! Cards are available at the church or online. As we look toward 2027, may we continue to be faithful here and hopeful ahead! Please see below a quick glance of our financial report submitted by Mike McIntire, our Treasurer. If you have further questions pertaining to his report or want more detailed information, reach out to him and he is happy to help.



Operating Portion For Period Ending October 31, 2026

Category	October Actual	YTD Actual	FY26-27 Budget
INCOME	$14,312.00	$96,373.00	$331,164.00
EXPENSES	$34,720.00	$142,694.00	$486,450.00
Surplus or (Deficit)	($20,408.00)	($46,321.00)	($155,286.00)

This report shows the current month's actual Income and Expense totals rounded to the nearest dollar as well as the Year-to-Date (YTD) figures. These figures are showing the operational portion of the budget and ignore the amount set aside for Next Steps Outreach since that portion's expense is offset by the amount drawn from the sale principal. Calculations project that in order to have a balanced budget, we will have to use approximately $100,000 of the Sale Principal by the end of June 2027.

Marketing Campaign Updates

The Marketing Campaign Team, in partnership with Crunchy Lemons and SLJ Consulting, continues to make exciting progress in strengthening FCC's presence within our church and the wider community.

- **Social Media Keeps Us Connected** – We published 12 posts throughout October, sharing church activities, sermon highlights, community involvement, and opportunities for connection. We'll continue building a consistent posting schedule to keep our congregation and community engaged.
- **New Website Almost Live!** – Our new FCC website is nearing completion! We're making final adjustments and adding Newsletter and Upcoming Events pages under the News section. Once everything has been reviewed and approved, we'll be ready to publish.
- **Marketing Materials** – Our marketing materials are still a work in progress. We have our new tablecloth and sign, and we're working with the boards to identify their marketing material needs. **On Stewardship Sunday we handed out fun surprise gifts to our members and friends. It was a great fun way to show our gratitude to YOU!**

We're excited about the momentum being building for FCC's future. Every connection, invitation, and interaction helps share our story and reminds others that they belong with us!

DECEMBER
2026

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
		1 Bell Choir@6:30pm	2 Holiday Ebelskivers Shared Breakfast@9am with all those from FCC and ASEC	3 Choir Rehearsal@7pm	4	5
6 **Second Sunday of Advent** **Adult Formation@9:15am** **Choir Rehearsal@9:30am** **Worship Service@10:30am** **Taizé Service@7pm**	7 Moderators Meeting@10am	8 Outreach Meeting@10am Deacons Meeting@1:30pm Bell Choir@6:30pm	9	10 Trustees Meeting@2pm Choir Rehearsal@7pm	11 Bible Study@Noon via Zoom	12
13 **Third Sunday of Advent** **No Adult Formation** **Choir Rehearsal@9:30am** **Worship Service@10:30am** **Lessons and Carols Shared with ASEC Upstairs**	14	15 Council Meeting@1:30pm Bell Choir@6:30pm	**16** **Newsletter Article Deadline *Due to the holiday all articles need to be in by today. Thank you!**	17 Choir Rehearsal@7pm	18 Bible Study@Noon via Zoom	19
20 **Fourth Sunday of Advent** **Adult Formation@9:15am** **Choir Rehearsal@9:30am** **Worship Service@10:30am** **Sandwich Making following Blue Christmas Worship Service Shared with ASEC@7pm Upstairs**	21	22 Kristi Remote Hours today in the later afternoon as needed. Availabe via cell phone most of the day.	23 Kristi in person hours to prepare for Christmas Eve as needed	**24** **Christmas Eve Worship Service@7:30pm (upstairs)** **Festive Coffee Hour Following** **Office Closed**	**25** **Merry Christmas** **Office Closed** 	26
27 **First Sunday of Christmas** **Rev. Deanna Anderson** **Adult Formation@9:15am** **Choir Rehearsal@9:30am** **Worship Service@10:30am** **Rev. Doug on Vacation through the New Year**	**28** **Office Hours are limited this week to an as needed basis. Enjoy your holiday week!**	29	30	31		January 2
January 3 **Epiphany Sunday** **Adult Formation@9:15am** **Choir Rehearsal@9:30am** **Worship Service@10:30pm**						

Mark Your Calendars – Anniversary Sunday!
Join us on Sunday, January 24, 2027, as we celebrate Anniversary Sunday! Please save the date and watch for more information in the January Newsletter.

Stay Connected



We're glad you're part of our community! Whether you're looking for information about worship, upcoming events, ministries, or ways to get involved, or want to know more about what FCC is all about, we'd love to hear from you. ***Click on images above to take you to our social media platforms.**

Contact Us
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Salt Lake City, Utah 84108

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Email: firstcongregationalslc@gmail.com
Website: firstcongregationalslc.org



Worship With Us
Sunday Worship | 10:30am
Join us in person or worship with us online. Services are streamed live on Facebook.

Church Office
Rev. Doug Gray
Senior Minister
Email: dgray1620@gmail.com

Kristi Hanson
Office Manager / Executive Assistant
Office: 801-487-1357
Email: firstcongregationalslc@gmail.com

