



ELEMENTS

DECEMBER 2023 NEWSLETTER



Patti's Ponderings

The angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for see, I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." Luke 2:10-12 NRSVue

Advent is a season of waiting for Jesus to break into our lives and our world again. We wait with hope. Hope stands at the intersection of our vision for what can be and the mess of what really is and calls us to collaborate with one another and God to make the world a better place. A place ruled by love which has the power to overcome evil.

This advent season we are expanding our vision, recognizing that Christian faith today tends to focus on individual souls. However, Jesus invites us to expand our vision not only to all people but also to all of creation. All earth is waiting for the good news of Jesus to break in. We have created a winter woodland in the sanctuary to remind us to open our eyes beyond ourselves to all of creation. Join us each Sunday as we explore how we can put our faith into action and make the whole earth a more loving and just place this Christmas season. It is my prayer that each of you experiences hope anew this season. May God bless you and all those you care about with hope, peace, joy, and love.

Note: our Christmas Eve schedule is a little different this year because Christmas Eve is a Sunday. We will have Family worship with our children's program at 11:00 AM. Our traditional service will be at 7:00 PM. And at 11:00 PM we will have our communion service. Each service will include carols, the Christmas story, beautiful music, and candlelight.



WORSHIP

Worship With Us

Sundays 8:30 AM & 10:00 AM

Livestream at 10 AM on Facebook & YouTube

Sunday School ~ 9:00 & 10:00 AM



CAN'T BE HERE? Catch the 10:00 AM Service online:

[Livestream on Facebook](#)

[Livestream on YouTube](#)

or watch the service when it's convenient for you!

Christmas Eve Services December 24th

Family 11:00 am

Children's Program

Traditional 7:00 pm

Communion 11:00 pm

Smoky Hill United Methodist Church

19491 E Smoky Hill Rd

Centennial, CO 80015



Coffee Time

Let's connect with coffee & treats between services



If your last name begins with V, W, X or Z, please bring a snack to share on Sundays in December ~ *Thank You!*

Healthy Refreshment Ideas for Gathering Space on Sunday Mornings

Remember to consider those who are trying to maintain a healthy weight and also be a good example of healthy eating for our children! Also, provide sanitary (reduced handling) servings.

- Fruit bites on toothpicks or colorful fruit kabobs
- Veggie tray with bite size cherry tomatoes, baby carrots, etc.
- Bowl of nuts with a spoon for self-serving
- Small portion sweets such as donut holes or mini muffins, small cookies or bars, bite size wrapped candies



CHILDREN & FAMILY

Children and Family Ministry

Christmas spells out LOVE, HOPE, PEACE, and JOY.
Pass it on to everyone in your life! Have a great Christmas.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

We will be doing an Advent Study (Now In Flesh Appearing) on December 3rd and December 10th, during Sunday School 10:00 -11:00 am.

Here you will find our daily advent you can do as a family. Starts on December 1st.

<https://acrobat.adobe.com/id/urn:aaid:sc:US:095b9da3-b6e5-4e4a-a35a-b70761c1ab41>

You are invited to Breakfast with Santa



**Breakfast with
Santa
DECEMBER
9TH**

9 am to 11 am

Free to all

Bring your camera for pictures

**Saturday, December 9th
9:00 -11:00 am in
Celebration Hall**

Join us for Breakfast,
Storytime, and pictures with
Santa & Mrs. Claus.

This is a **FREE** All
Community event. Invite
friends and neighbors!

Christmas Cantata – December 17th 8:30 am and 10:00 am

Please join us in watching or singing with the Children's Choir in the "All Earth is Waiting – A Melodious Christmas!" Cantata. If you haven't already joined, it is not too late. Rehearsals are Sundays 9:30 am to 9:55 am.

Christmas Eve is on a Sunday this year!!



**Join us on December 24th at 11:00 am
for our Children and Family Christmas Eve
service/Children's Christmas Program.**

This will be a very interactive program where the kids will help tell the story. Kids will sit up front during the entire worship hour.

- If your child would like to sing with the children's choir on Christmas Eve, (one song during the program) they can join in on Sundays at 9:30 am in the choir room. Please email [Becky](#) for more information.
- If your child would like a speaking part, please let your child's Sunday School teacher know or email [Crystal](#).

Other Christmas Eve Services at 7pm and 11 pm. Candlelight and glow sticks at all services



Hope you all
have a wonderful
Christmas!!

**We will have one Worship Service
on New Year's Eve, at 10:00 am.**
Worship as a family.
No Sunday School.
The nursery will be open from
9:45 -11:15 am.



JOIN US ON SUNDAY MORNINGS

8:30-9:30 AM WORSHIP, NURSERY, CHILDREN'S
MESSAGE AND CHILDREN'S CHURCH.

10:00 -11:00 AM WORSHIP, NURSERY,
CHILDREN'S SUNDAY SCHOOL FOR AGES 3YR
TO 5TH GRADE.

**NOTE, THE LAST SUNDAY OF
THE MONTH WILL BE WORSHIP AS
A FAMILY, NO CHILDREN'S
CHURCH, OR SUNDAY SCHOOL.



We are looking for one more volunteer to help in Sunday School one Sunday a month. You do not have to plan curriculum!! Please reach out to [Crystal](#) or [Len](#).

A MONTH IN REVIEW--NOVEMBER:

November was a busy month for our Children and Family Ministry!



On **All Saints Sunday**, Rachel read a book to the kids about the loss of a pet, and we made paper candles for the ones we have lost.

On **November 12, 2023**, our Sunday School children were busy! We sang a song to honor our Veterans at the 8:30 and 10:00 am worship services.



Then the children went to Sunday School where they listened to the story, *Jesus Feeds the 5000*, and then they helped the Mission Team pack the Outreach of Love sandwiches, cookies, and a banana into a lunch bag. We had a great conversation about missions and our responsibilities to others as Christians. The children were then able to have a fish-shaped rice crispy treat for a snack!



If kids want to make the sandwiches at home as a family: We need 2 pieces of bread, bologna and cheese only and put in a sandwich bag. Then bring to church and place in the kitchen room off the back of Celebration Hall. We need 140 a week. You can contact Wendy Hanson, Dale Hanson, or Sharon Davis for more information. You can also find information in each Wednesday e-blast.

Turkey Trot

Our first ever, and maybe annual, Turkey Trot was held on **Saturday, November 18th**! This was a joint event with Abundant Health and Sparkle Llamas. We gave away 4 turkeys (real, but not live!)! Our Turkey Trot winner was Oscar with Dad, Michael, and pup in a close 2nd! We also had a “pumpkin dessert” walk where lots of pumpkin desserts were given away.



On **November 19th** in Sunday School, the kids colored paper shoes that will hang on a tree in the Gathering Space for Wholly Kicks New Shoe Drive. They also decorated stars to hang in the Gathering Space.

The children listened to “We Are Grateful: Otsaligeliga” by Traci Sorell. The children learned about how Native American people express gratitude. They discussed what they are grateful for and learned different ways of expressing gratitude to God for God’s provisions, and how God calls us to be grateful for all we have.

November 26, 2023, Worship as a Family Day!

Youth Group in November was fun, busy and very heartwarming!

We spent a Saturday morning at long-time church member JD Cohen's home moving some rock for her in exchange for a mission trip donation. What I LOVE best about these youth is that they want to be together and work to help people – regardless of the benefit to them. (That's good Jesus stuff right there!)

Our BIG THING for November was collecting for – and attending – the “Food For All” event at Highlands UMC. We can't thank our amazing church family enough for your help in this unusually tough collection challenge! (I think we'll choose an easier task from the list next year.) But even as it was, we reached the goal with your help and couldn't have come close without your generosity!

We happily hauled all of those boxes and cans to our afternoon event and made assembly-line style Thanksgiving boxes for 250 families in need this year. It was a beautiful day to work alongside other Denver area UMC youth groups to help others! (See pics below.)



We've had a few “Fellowship & Faith” nights (with games, snacks, a lesson & small group discussion) this past month where we hung out in our updated Youth Room, watched some pertinent video clips and had some good life discussions. (If you haven't checked out the Youth Room in a while, come take a peek! Challenge a church friend at

ping pong. I hear Len Brass used to be a ping pong champion...)

We've talked a lot about gratitude and how **IT MAKES LIFE BETTER – no matter WHAT you are going through!** We made gratitude journals for a 21-day challenge given to them, ate LOTS of pie, played some fun games, and some of the youth are singing in the Youth Choir that Becky recently kicked off!

God is 110% at work with this Youth Family! We're excited for the Advent season blessings ahead.

Let's Talk About...

"Let's Talk About..." is a column in our monthly newsletter where we will learn one thing at a time about how we can love others the way they want to be loved. We will learn something each month that helps us understand and respect people who are different from us a little more deeply.

Let's Talk About History

This November, let's talk about history. Wouldn't it be great if we could just leave the past in the past? Although there's something powerful to be said about not letting the past determine the future, we cannot ignore how the past has created our present circumstances. This time of year, the prime example is our American Thanksgiving Day.

Although plenty of other countries celebrate a Thanksgiving Day at some point during the year, the history of our particular holiday is unique in some unflattering ways. The federal holiday began during the Civil War, in the hopes of boosting public opinion of the administration a year after our government intentionally went a long way towards wiping out the Dakota people. The lore of Thanksgiving is based on something that happened between the colonists of Plymouth and the Wampanoag people, which occurred less than 20 years before the English began massacring the very tribe who first shared this thanksgiving feast with them.

As citizens of the nation that occupied this land and genocided its original inhabitants, we have a responsibility to be honest about our history. First graders in many American schools today already understand that the story of pilgrims befriendng Native Americans is a mythologized tale that masks the dreadful truth of interactions between European colonists and indigenous peoples.

But we don't have to be miserable and guilt-ridden to be responsible for our history. We cannot deny what has happened to create this holiday and its story, and at the same time, we have an opportunity to live into something more authentic and beautiful than the myth so many of us learned as children. The indigenous peoples of the area we now call New England celebrated autumn feasts of thanksgiving long before Europeans found their way here. Gratitude to the Creator for the fruits of the earth has deeper roots than propaganda or shallow promises between peoples.

So on Thanksgiving Day, if you have the opportunity to gather with family or friends and share food, do it wholeheartedly. Let it be a day of embracing neighbors with free grace and hospitality, with awareness of how much unearned grace and hospitality has already been offered to us and our ancestors. Let it be a day of deep gratitude for all that God has created, and for all the peoples across the globe who have known for millennia how to thank the Divine for the gifts of the land.

Our "Let's Talk About..." column is one place where we can help one another learn how to be better allies for all our neighbors. If you have a question you'd like answered, or if there are things you wish others in our congregation better understood about your own marginalized identities or those for whom you are already a strong ally, please submit suggestions to <https://forms.gle/E9eRqZJGLqVaqbDZ9> or email me directly at virginiaq@smokyhillumc.org.

The church wants to thank everyone that helped with the gardens this past summer.

John & Deb Craig

Jana Jones

Bob Krech

Mike & Sally Pula

Mark & Mary Brinton

Siobhan Kelley

Fred & Diane Thompson

Lee and Donna Winters

Wendy Hanson

Michelle Grupe

Wes and Vi Andrews

Tom Dosch

Joe & Robbie Korte

Becky Stevens



MISSION

December is a busy month for the Mission Team. We try to offer several ways to help those in need. Please pick the ones which speak to you and thank you for your generous support. If you have any questions, please contact Sharon Davis at stdavis21@comcast.net

THREE GIFTS CAMPAIGN

Each year during the Christmas Season, the Missions Team offers an opportunity to give to a local, national, or international cause. This year we have chosen:

LOCAL: Pastor Lucia and her congregation have started providing support to immigrants who have recently arrived in the Denver area. Your donation will help her provide food, clothing, and financial support as they start their new lives here.

NATIONAL: Pine Ridge Reservation is in the poorest county in the United States. Unemployment is near 85% and teen suicide numbers are astounding. The life expectancy is the lowest in the United States. SHUMC has taken teams to Pine Ridge to learn more about their culture and life on the reservation. Your donations will go directly to support programs on the Pine Ridge Reservation.

INTERNATIONAL: Support for the Mefor Family. SHUMC has sponsored the missionary work of Dr. Emmanuel and Florence Mefor in Zimbabwe Africa for many years. One of their major projects is the mother and child survival program. They house 40-60 at risk pregnant women each day. Your support allows them to continue to offer prenatal care and improve the survival rate of mothers and children.

Financial gifts can be made out to SHUMC, with "Three Gifts" or the specific organization name in the memo.

The Heifer Project

Are you looking for a different type of gift this holiday season or a gift for that person who has everything? Are you looking for a way to do something good and honor a loved one at the same time?

Once again, Smoky Hill will support the Alternative Gift program for the Heifer Project. Heifer International is a global nonprofit working to eradicate poverty and hunger. Heifer distributes animals along with training to families in need around the world as a means of providing self-sufficiency. Recipients must agree to “pass on the gift” by sharing animal offspring, as well as training with other impoverished families.

You may “purchase” an animal in honor of a loved one this holiday season. The Mission Team has holiday cards available indicating your gift. We will be in the Gathering Space during the month of December. Stop by, help a family in need, and do some holiday shopping.

The Giving Tree

This Christmas we will be collecting **NEW** tennis or athletic shoes for our unhoused friends. We are working with Wholly Kicks, a local nonprofit organization, which provides new shoes to those experiencing homelessness as well as kids in Title 1 schools and women in shelters. Please pick a shoe tag from the tree in the gathering space, buy a **new** pair of athletic shoes, tie the shoes together with the shoe tag, and place them unwrapped (no boxes, please) under the tree by Christmas Eve. Our goal is 50 pairs of shoes. If the tags are all gone, you can still buy any size of shoes and leave them under the tree. If you don't want to buy shoes, you can also donate online by going to Whollykicks.org.

Christmas in the Park

Marta Nielsen is the table captain for one of the tables for Christmas in the Park. She is collecting GENTLY USED adult boots and shoes, NEW socks (remember the people are living outside, so heavy socks are appreciated), men's insoles, shoe/boot laces, and foot powder. There is a box in the Mission Corner to collect these items. If you have any questions, please contact Marta at martanielsen@yahoo.com Let's make Christmas a little brighter for those who may not have any other Christmas.



Music Newsletter December, 2023

Bells are ringing! The choirs are singing! Drums are drumming, the strings are strumming! The brass sounds are bright, and the woodwinds are clear and light! It's Advent! A time to prepare our hearts, souls and ears for the coming of Christ!

New and exciting things are happening! Our children's choir and youth choir has started! Both choirs will be singing in the Christmas cantata this year! **We have welcomed new choir and praise team members, and handbell ringers to our groups – We welcome you and thank you for joining us in our music ministry!**

CHILDREN'S CHOIR: Kindergarten through and including 4th grade (5th graders are welcome).

Sunday morning, 9:30 – 9:55 a.m. in the Choir Room. Contact BeckyS@smokyhillumc.org for more information.

YOUTH CHOIR: Fifth grade, middle and high school. Due to the cantata on Dec. 17 and Christmas Eve. we have different rehearsal schedules. Please contact BeckyS@amokyhillumc.org for more information.

ALL EARTH IS WAITING

– A MELODIOUS
CHRISTMAS



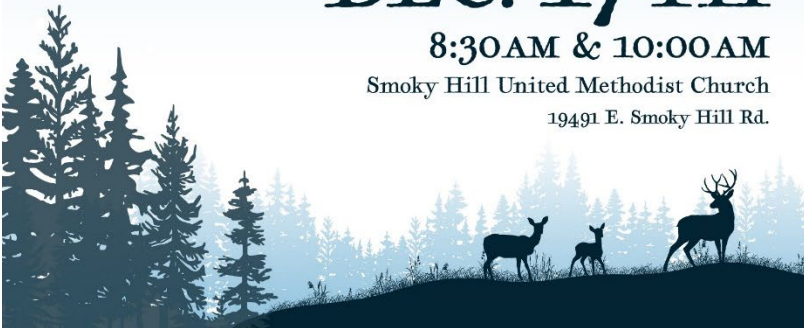
A CHRISTMAS CANTATA

with Chancel Choir, Praise Band,
Youth & Children's Choirs, Handbells & Orchestra

DEC. 17TH

8:30AM & 10:00AM

Smoky Hill United Methodist Church
19491 E. Smoky Hill Rd.



We hope you'll join us on December 17 at either 8:30 or 10:00 a.m. Sunday service for "All Earth is Waiting – A Melodious Christmas," a Christmas cantata presented by our Music Department. A story of God's creation in the season of Advent, finding peace and hope, joy and love in this glorious season leading us to Christmas Eve. and Christmas.

Bring your relatives, friends, neighbors or co-workers for a morning of inspirational words and music and fill your hearts and souls with the hope of peace in the world, our communities, and within ourselves!

Christmas Eve. happens to fall on a Sunday this year! Our children from Sunday School and our Children's Choir combine to help lead traditional Christmas carols at the **11:00 a.m. service.**

The **7:00 p.m.** service will be filled with music from our instrumentalists, Chancel Choir, and Crystal Bells in addition to singing traditional carols and lighting candles as we share in singing "Silent Night."

At **11:00 p.m.** we will celebrate communion together. We will enjoy music from several of our musicians and sing carols together.

As we enter this month of December, no matter if you're too busy or not busy enough, it is time to pause and remember this season, this season of awe pausing to realize God's wonderful creation surrounding us and his most wonderful gift, Jesus Christ.

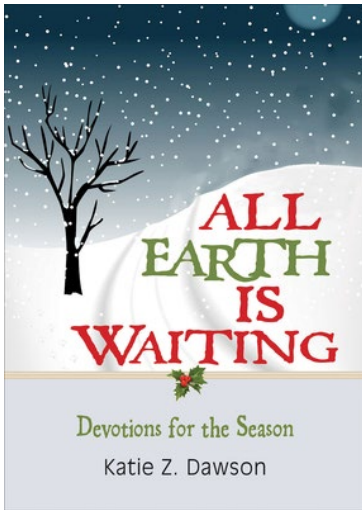
May you find peace in some way this season and feel the many blessings of God all around us.

Merry Christmas!

DISCIPLESHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Connect with God and others
on your spiritual journey





Tuesday Lunch Bunch Advent Study

You are very welcome to join Lunch Bunch as they read "All Earth is Waiting, Devotions for the Season" by Katie Z. Dawson.

The class will be discussing the book on Nov. 14th and 28th and Dec. 5th and 12th at 11:30 in room 214. They will skip Thanksgiving week.

"All Earth is Waiting, Devotions for the Season" will be following the Advent Sunday sermons. There are seven daily devotions for each week, and Lunch Bunch will discuss all seven when they meet. They will be a little ahead of the Sunday sermons.

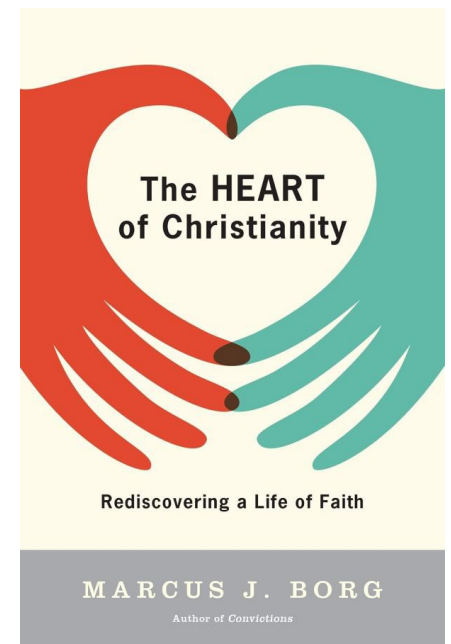
The devotions call us to consider how all creation longs for the coming of Christ, highlighting our responsibility to care for this earth in preparation for Christ's return.

For more information, contact Kathy Tedrick at kathytedrick@me.com

Tuesday Morning Theologians New Book Study

All are welcome to join Tuesday Morning Theologians for our next study beginning January 2, 2024. Our next book will be **The Heart of Christianity: Rediscovering a Life of Faith** by world-renowned author Marcus Borg. Borg wants to show us, as today's thinking Christians, how to discover a life of faith by reconceptualizing familiar beliefs. Being born again, for example, has nothing to do with fundamentalism, but is a call to radical personal transformation. Talking about the kingdom of God does not mean that you are fighting against secularism, but that you have committed your life to the divine values of justice and love. And living the true Christian way is essentially about opening one's heart—to God, and to others. Above all else, Borg believes with passion and conviction that living the Christian life still makes sense.

Tuesday Morning Theologians meets at 9:00 in room 214 on Tuesdays. Ready to journey with us? For more information contact John Tedrick at johntedrick@me.com.

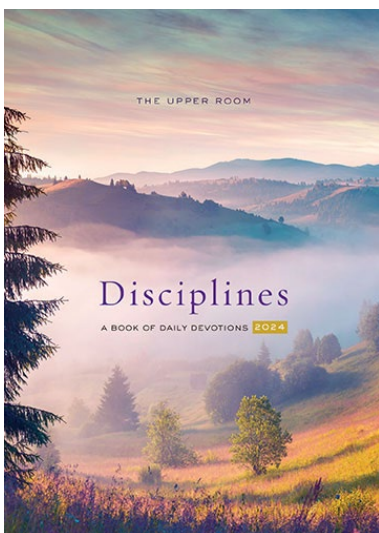


UWF Tuesday Lunch Bunch will be starting a new book on January 2. It is *The Upper Room Disciplines 2024, A book of Daily Devotions*.

The back of the book says:

“Pause for a few minutes each a day to center your heart and mind on God with The Upper Room Disciplines. Reading in this yearlong devotional book will help you find peace, comfort, and strength to the challenges of life and find hope for the future. Each week, a different Christian thought leader offers daily reflections and guides you to engage more deeply with scripture.”

We will be reading devotionals from the book and discussing them on Tuesdays from Jan. 2 to Feb. 6 at 11:30 in room 214. For information contact Kathy Tedrick, kathytedrick@me.com



For other adult discipleship opportunities, see the digital newsletter.

SOCIAL JUSTICE



GUNS TO GARDENS

www.gunstogardensdenver.org

Firearm Safe Surrender Event

- 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM
- Westwood Community Center
- 1000 South Lowell Boulevard, Denver, CO 80219

www.gunstogardensdenver.org/events/firearm-safe-surrender-event-dec-9

Do you want to do more about reducing gun violence? Join me as a volunteer at this Dec. 9th event: <https://gunstogardens.givepulse.com/event/406977-safe-surrender-event-with-southwest-vida>

Please contact me with any questions. Kathy Brennan pakorah@hotmail.com

Smoky Hill UMC Abundant Health



MIND

Blue Christmas?

Our memories of Christmases past are likely filled with joy and togetherness. Because the songs of the season tell us this is "the most wonderful time of the year," we feel pressure to be jolly. But sometimes we're not. If you or someone you love is struggling with the holiday blues, you are not alone. Many people find the season difficult. Read more about tips for coping with the holiday blues from the UMC at [Coping with holiday blues - UMC](#)

December 2023

Focus: The Holidays

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. James 1:17 KJV

It is the season of giving, as we celebrate the gift of Christ given to us that we might have abundant life. You, who are composed of mind, body and spirit are a gift from God. You are wonderfully made. Here are some seasonal resources as you navigate the Christmas season.



Domestic Violence Education

Did you miss the training? “Understanding the Dynamics of Domestic Violence”. From Sheltering Wings. You can still see the video at: Video Sheltering Wings presentation 10.23 [Sheltering Wings on Vimeo](#)

BODY

Join us on Facebook! [\(20+\) Smoky Hill UMC Abundant Health | Groups | Facebook](#) . This is the place to connect about hikes, bowling, kayaking, fishing, and new recipes!

Health Resources:

Healthy Holiday Eating tips [pdf insert](#)

How to Make Time for Fitness during the Holiday Season [Make time](#)

27 Healthy Christmas Recipes for Kids [All Nutritious kid recipes](#)

Health Resources: (Pdf links in electronic newsletter or on bulletin board outside Celebration Hall)



Recipe of the month: No Bake Coconut Truffles

Looking for Christmas treats that won't pack in the sugar? These sweet treats are made without any added sugars or fat! <https://www.eatright.org/recipes/desserts/no-bake-coconut-truffles-recipe>

Exercise on Zoom!

Looking for exercise that requires no money, no travel, and fast access to your shower? Join the Zoom exercise community on Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings at 9:30, as well as Wednesday evenings at 6:30. Contact Susan Hora at cusaqlass@gmail.com

Abundant Health Hiking Group



Keep an eye out for future hikes by watching the weekly e-blast or our [Smoky Hill Abundant Health Facebook page](#) or contact Marta at 720-271-0691 with questions.



SPIRIT

Learning to Receive

Giving? Yes, we get that. But receiving the love, care, and help of others? That's more difficult for many of us. One explanation could be the reigning mythology of Western culture: It's good to stand on our own two feet and never be dependent. As Protestant preacher William Sloane Coffin once put it: "Many of us overvalue autonomy, the strength to stand alone, the capacity to act independently. Far too few of us pay attention to the virtues of dependence and interdependence, and especially the capacity to be vulnerable." Read more at [Spirituality & Practice](#)



UNITED WOMEN IN FAITH



WARNING! THIS COULD GET UGLY

Smoky Hill United Women in Faith Annual Christmas Party

Friday Dec 1, 7 PM
in Celebration Hall

Ugly Sweater contest!
White Elephant Gift Exchange
A-M bring sweet treat
N-Z bring savory treat

ALL WOMEN WELCOME TO COME JOIN THE FUN!



Calling all Bakers!

WE NEED YOUR COOKIES!

The more cookies the merrier at the Cookie Jamboree!
If you would like to help, please bake several dozen cookies and drop them off at church on Saturday, Dec. 9th from 9 AM to 2 PM



Smoky Hill United Methodist Church
19491 E Smoky Hill Rd
Centennial, CO80015
303-690-9816
www.smokyhillumc.org

Email all information and updates for church communications to churchsecretary@smokyhillumc.org

Following Jesus together to make the world a more loving and just place.