

Bike to Church Sunday appeals to cycling community Colorado church's spiritual sprockets

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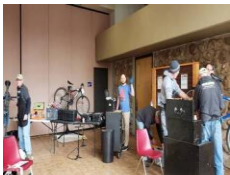


First Presbyterian Church of Fort Collins, Colo., is a mecca for cycling enthusiasts. During June, which is Bike Month in Colorado, the congregation encourages cyclists to pedal to church the last Sunday of the month. **It's only fitting that a state whose official motto is "Nothing without the Deity" would invite residents to take in God's handiwork from the vantage point of handlebars.** While the monthlong

promotion of biking for health and recreation features festivals and safety awareness seminars, the highlight of the celebration is its **Bike to Work Day.**

And with the Bike to Work Day route running adjacent to First Presbyterian Church of Fort Collins, Colorado, it seemed only natural for the congregation to get involved. **"We're right on the main bike and pedestrian way through the downtown area,"** said Miriam Nelson, director

of welcome and fellowship at First Presbyterian. **"It seemed like the perfect opportunity to be a presence in the community for a positive good."** When it participated in Bike to Work Day last year for the first time, the number of volunteers willing to help, coupled with the overwhelming response from the community at the church's rest stop, was a clear sign that the church should more fully live into the city's vision of being a cycling community.



First Presbyterian Church of Fort Collins hasn't ignored its community's passion for cycling. The congregation has been a drop-off hub for the city's yearly Bikes for Tykes donation drive. A makeshift bike repair shop has also been set up near the church's fellowship hall. With Fort Collins annually listed among the best bicycle cities in the United States by cycling enthusiasts, **First Presbyterian certainly hasn't ignored its city's passion. But when nearly two dozen bakers agreed to prepare muffins for the church's Bike to Work stop in 2019, attracting about 350 cyclists that morning, it was obvious that First Presbyterian needed to keep the momentum going.** "We ran out of muffins and got great reviews," said Joseph Moore, the church's parish associate for mission and outreach, adding, "It became clear that we needed to inspire more people to ride to church."

That's when its Bike to Church Sunday was born. Held on the last Sunday in June 2019, Bike to Church encouraged worshipers to leave their cars at home and travel to church in a healthier, more eco-friendly way. The result was several dozen members who rode their bikes, traveling as far as 10 miles, to participate in the church's new initiative.

Since the Bike to Church Sunday, First Presbyterian now has people "who regularly ride their bike to church," which is a blessing in many ways, Moore adds, explaining that the church's parking lot is not big enough for all the cars. **This movement has caught new energy surrounding cycling at First Presbyterian, as a new bike rack was recently installed front and center of the church building.** "We had a bike rack for years around one of the sides of the church," said Moore. **"But what you put in front says this is what we value. So,** we put the bike rack by the front doors to the sanctuary, in part to say we think this is important. There as something symbolic about the front doors to the church being the best parking spot for bikes."