

Senior Newsletter

Valentines from God

By Rev. Lee Anderson-Harris



Once again this year, Ash Wednesday falls on Valentine's Day. At first glance this may seem like a conflict of interest! From conversations I have had with colleagues, churches are anticipating a lower-than-usual turnout for worship services that day. Based on conversations I have had with some of the senior members of the congregation, however, I think this might be divine planning.

I have heard many times from folks that getting old is hard. Not in the light-hearted "getting old ain't for sissies" kind of way, I mean really hard. There is loss of control over your body, loss of independence, loss of memory or cognitive functioning, deaths and serious illnesses of multiple friends and family members, including more and more of the younger generations too. There is worry and grief for the world and for future generations. I am in my 17th year of ministering to people who are much older than me. I know that this is not news. But in some ways, it seems like it might be getting harder. Maybe that's just because life seems harder for a lot of people. But having community is what helps people get through life's difficulties. So when you are also losing members of your community due to aging or death, there is even more to grieve.

The emphasis on grappling with your own mortality and "rending your hearts" that accompanies Ash Wednesday and Lent can be hard when you're already experiencing loss and sorrow. But rather than ignore the season, what if it was a way to experience deeper connection to God and others? Ash Wednesday might be a helpful reminder that you are not alone in facing mortality, that you are part of a bigger story of all humanity. The weeks of Lent leading to the cross might serve as regular reminders that Jesus, in his grief and sorrow, walks with you. But what's more, *you walk alongside him* with a greater wisdom and deeper understanding of what that sorrow is like. Your compassion is a gift to others.

The convergence of Valentine's Day and Ash Wednesday is a reminder that in all things, in all stages of life, even when you yourself might wonder what you have left to offer or look forward to, God still looks at you with complete love and tenderness. When people have gone, abilities have gone, God's love remains. We might not be able to change anything about aging other than our perspective, and I am sure there are plenty of days when even that seems out of your control. God's love is not conditional on any of that though. Believing and remembering this might be the only spiritual practice you need this season.

Looking Outward

By Rev. Lee Anderson-Harris

I have no doubt that you have heard, at least once, that a church's purpose is to be a blessing in the community. Maybe you've heard this put differently, but the intent is similar. Denominations of all kinds would agree with this, but the United Methodist Book of Discipline (BOD) puts this into greater detail. I won't take up space quoting from the BOD here (you're welcome!). In summary, the section titled "The Mission and Ministry of the Church" says that we fulfill our mission by not just welcoming people *into* the body of Christ, but also by sending people *out* to live lives that exemplify Jesus's love and do things such as heal the sick, feed the hungry, free the oppressed, and more. I have found that it is easy to forget that churches are to both bring inward and send outward. "Church" starts to refer only to the building and the worship. Think about how we speak of church, for instance. We say things like "I'll be at church this week." Technically, because you are the church, wherever you go you are at church!

FUMC is blessed with a good level of outward focus in the ways that people give to causes, serve in the community, and by the leadership of the Missions/Social Concerns Committee. You can read more about what FUMC did in 2023 in the enclosed letter written by Barry Wehrle, the current Committee Chair. And while this is a cause to feel good about the ways this church is serving the community and beyond, it is also an invitation. You are invited to join in this work, or even start something new. The BOD says that this type of work is the ministry of *all* Christians. Maybe this is the year for you to try something new, especially if your faith and spiritual practices have been inward-focused for a while!

Mission includes those who go out and do, as well as those who support the mission of the church. You can join in the work even if you can't physically build a house, or give money toward a mission trip, or drive to a volunteer shift. Sometimes shifting the way you think about mission and ministry opens up new possibilities. For instance, there are folks who live in assisted living facilities who take time to visit their lonelier neighbors down the hall. This is Christ's work!

I ask for your prayers for FUMC to be a continued and even stronger blessing in this community and beyond. I also ask that if you have any nudges by the Spirit to participate in the mission and ministries of FUMC, but you're not sure what that is or how to do it, to please reach out to me, or Rev. Leslie, or folks on the Missions/Social Concerns Committee. Sometimes just thinking through things together can generate ideas for how to be of service when the ways you used to serve no longer work for you. And this can bring new life to the church as well as you!

2023 FUMC Mission/Social Outreach - Our church is quite active in mission and social action projects, whether those are activities led by our Mission/Social Concerns Committee or efforts that members of our congregation are involved in as individuals. I looked back over 2023 to see if I could in some way measure our involvement in these efforts. In brief, this is what I found.

Pura Vida – we sponsored, in cooperation with Longs Peak UMC, 22 people who traveled to Guatemala to build a home for a family in need. Each person paid \$2,000 in personal expenses. Our two churches raised \$7,500 for the cost of the house.

Truscott School – In May and August we contributed needed school supplies and provided an end of the school year dinner for teachers. In September we sponsored “Tea and Tissues,” a reception for parents bringing their children for the first day of school. In December, we hosted the Posole Dinner fund raiser for the school.

Special Offerings are received several times a year as for asked by the UMC in support of a variety of needs here and abroad.

Christmas and Easter Offerings – Our Christmas and Easter offerings are generously given by our congregation to a variety of local, national and international projects. These offerings range between \$7,000-8,500 each holiday and are distributed equally among three selected projects.

Christmas gifts - Angel Tree and Harvest Pointe - Our congregation gave Christmas gifts to 40 children in the Angel Tree program and \$100 gift cards to our friends at Harvest Pointe.

Loveland Community Kitchen – a dozen or more church members serve evening meals twice a month for those needing to be fed in our community.

Kids’ Pack, Habitat, Postal Food Drive, County food Bank – A number of church members are active in these projects in our area. Many work in two or more of these efforts.

Youth Mission Trip – In June, 7 youth and 4 adults traveled to Kansas City to work with churches helping with gardening, landscaping, and at food bank.

Missionary Support – Florence and Emmanuel Mefor are a missionary family that FUMC helps support annually with a gift of \$2,500.

Mission Fair – On Sunday, October 15, we held a “mission fair” following worship. Eleven community helping agencies were present to inform us of their work in our area and, hopefully, recruit some new volunteers.

Mission Memo – our Mission/Social Concerns Committee publishes quarterly a “Mission Memo.” This is largely the excellent work of Mark Elliott. The Memo highlights the mission outreach of our congregation. There is much detail and wonderful pictures of the work our congregation continues to do in the name of Christ. These are well worth your attention and can be found on our church website under the heading “Publications.”

No doubt, I have missed other projects and activities in which members of our congregation participate. For a church of our current size, I am very pleased and thankful for the many ways in which we serve our local community and the world at large. I am confident we will continue to do so in this new year 2024.

Barry Wehrle, Mission/ Social Concerns Chairperson

Getting to Know You

There are several people who are new-ish to the FUMC congregation, and it's time you got to know them a little bit if you haven't already had the pleasure! This month, we hear from Gail Mills, who joined FUMC with her husband Arnie in April 2023, and Pete Hill, who began attending worship in the summer of 2023. Stay tuned for more!



Gail Mills writes:

I was born in Wilmington, Delaware and went to school there. I worked at Delaware Hospital Children's ward (when they had wards) until some friends were looking for adventure and I moved with them to Colorado. I met and married Arnie Mills and worked at Children's Denver and Aurora for 42 years. We had 2 children, lived on a small farm outside Longmont for 44 years until equipment got too old, us too. We moved to Loveland to be near the children and 5 amazing grandchildren. We transferred from Niwot UMC to FUMC.

Pete Hill writes:

I have two children: B.J., who owns an Allstate agency in Loveland that is ranked in the top twenty five in the US. He is married to a lovely lady, Sabra, who is a cardiac nurse at a local hospital. They have two children. My daughter Paula lives in Cedar Rapids, Iowa and works as a fundraiser for a local nonprofit. She has four children. I was raised on a farm in Northeast Iowa and graduated from University of Northern Iowa, taught and coached for eight years and then purchased an independent insurance agency. I operated the agency until 2008, selling it to a local bank and managing their agency until retirement. I have very much enjoyed meeting the fine people of FUMC and hope to meet more.



February/Early March Birthdays

February 1

Steve Tunesvick

February 3

Linda Schilling

February 5

Terry Gindlesparger

February 6

Sheila Berg

February 7

Ginny Angelovic

Richard Zelenka

February 8

Penny Kindred

Mary Beth Rodgers

February 9

Melinda Bart

Jo Anne Woodward

February 10

Alan Paulsen

February 11

Kay Atwood

AJ Erwine

Kim Laue

February 12

Lydetta Jackson

Kent McCloughan

Lorri Nelson-Bradley

Larry Ward

February 13

Jasper Brundage

Marlin Yoder

February 15

Bob Chambers

February 16

Nancy Baker

February 17

Marcia Kittel

February 18

Linda Giauque

Mary Hannon

February 19

Marc Messervey

February 25

Ann Eatman

Wendell Maupin

March 1

Judy Deal

Rusty Mathena

March 3

Julie Monroe

FUMC Transportation Ministry

There are a few folks who no longer drive and need help getting to Sunday morning worship. Are you able to drive one or more of these folks in your own vehicle? Are you interested in driving the FUMC bus? Volunteering your time in either of these ways will help build up FUMC's transportation ministry and "build each other up" (1 Thessalonians 5:11).

Contact Pastor Lee to learn more!

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