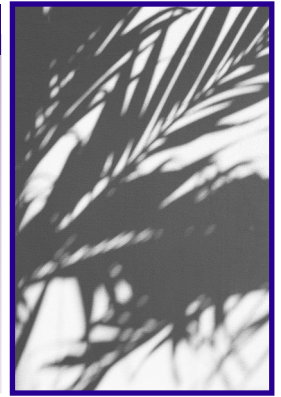




March 2024

Senior Newsletter

From Lent to Easter...winter to spring...dark to light.



Same Space, New Life?

By Rev. Lee Anderson-Harris

On February 3, 2024, Church Council members gathered for another leadership retreat to vision for FUMC's mission and ministries. The overarching question for leadership is "How do we BE the church today and into the future?". Examining building use is a part of that conversation. To help ensure the church's viability in the future, re-thinking how we use (and aren't using) the building will be crucial, and not just for financial reasons. Putting the building to use to serve the community and share this gift with others will bring new life into the church, as people in churches who are already generously sharing their building have stated.

It's important to understand that "new life in the church" does not necessarily translate to new worship attenders. This is a hard mental obstacle to overcome, especially if you believe that the sole purpose of a church is to be a worship space. But when you understand the purpose of a church...meaning the people as well as the building...is to be a blessing to the community and share the love of Christ in the world, it's easier to see all the wonderful places and ways that we can do this beyond worship services!

Building use is a big topic among churches everywhere. It's true that the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on in-person worship attendance has heightened the sense of urgency around this topic for many, but this trend started even before the pandemic. In an episode of the podcast *Future Christian*, PCUSA clergy, author, and entrepreneur Mark Elsdon talks about this shift (episode 161, "Navigating the Coming Wave of Church Property Transition with Mark Elsdon" dated January 23, 2024). He states that there is a massive change in the way that people are engaging with their faith and connecting with God, and that translates into a different use of buildings and property for many churches. He draws an analogy from the shift from going to a video rental store and renting a video, to getting DVDs in the mail through Netflix, to streaming them at home. People still want the experience of watching a movie, but the physical spaces in which people access those movies changed dramatically. The same has happened in people's spiritual lives. They still want to connect with God and with each other, they want meaning and purpose, but it's not happening *as much* in Sunday morning worship services and Christian education classes, which is what churches are built for. And he states that berating ourselves for this is not helpful. It would be like telling a Blockbuster manager that they just need to try harder, or put a new sign outside, or do something better, and then people will come back into the store. It's just not going to happen. This dynamic is happening a lot in the Church today. Of course, *not for everyone*, he emphasizes. Therefore there will always be worship and classes, there will always be traditional church buildings and experiences, just not much of it as we had in the past.

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Our task before us at FUMC then is to navigate the both/and: To continue the traditional use of our space and ways that people connect with God *and* ask how we can use the space in new ways in addition to these things. At the leadership retreat, there was agreement that it's important to keep the mission of the church at the forefront of decisions, and use the building for ministry and service to others, not just as a revenue source. Further, leadership is invested in being responsible stewards of the gift of the building, which includes abiding by laws and regulations, including property tax codes.

As we move from Lent to Easter, winter to spring, isn't it interesting how we are in conversations about how to move from a building that can often feel empty to a building full of activity? Resurrection...new life...is frequently happening all around, and God invites us to notice it. And not just notice, but be a part of it!

Pura Vida Mission Trip

The FUMC team worked hard on two homes again this year in Guatemala during February, alongside a group of veterans and one member of Longs Peak UMC. Thank you to all those who donated money to help cover construction costs. Between the giving, and the volunteering of time, expenses, and labor, FUMC is making a positive impact in the lives of rural Guatemalans!



Starting work on the walls.



Work complete!



Youth Ski Trip

21 youth from FUMC Loveland and Fort Collins enjoyed their annual ski trip to Glenwood Springs in February. Though we had to leave a morning late due to weather, we still had a great full weekend of skiing, swimming, and fellowship. A big thank you to the 5Ms for getting the van and trailer ready for the trip!

FUMC **Women's Fellowship** will meet
Thursday, March 28 at NOON in West Coy
Hall. Any questions or comments, please
contact Darlene Lowe at aldarlowe@gmail.com

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 Janet Wood, who began attending FUMC in 2022, although she had already been connected with the building and community somewhat before that. Janet has been serving as a fellowship volunteer for some time, and we're grateful for that! *Janet Wood writes:*

Having been born in the "Crossroads of America" (Indianapolis, Indiana), I can say that I ventured forward and made my way to Denver in 1969. There I stayed until I moved here to Loveland in 2009--by the encouragement of my son who wanted me to be closer. My best years (other than my years here in Loveland) were those years growing and changing with my two sons. Teaching was special too. I joined FUMC in 2010, I think. Because of a conversation with a teacher, I joined Al-Anon and stopped going to church. At some point--maybe a year or two ago--I got a "nudge" to go back to church. After quite a few visitations, I knew that FUMC was my church home. So now I go to Al-Anon and FUMC. Getting a friendship circle here, getting involved with activities has facilitated my getting to know folks here. And benefiting from Sunday service has added a new dimension to my spiritual life.



Holy Week, by Ann Weems

From Kneeling in Jerusalem: Poems for Lent and Easter

Retrieved from nyapcseekinggodblog.wordpress.com on February 20, 2024

Holy is the week...
Holy, consecrated, belonging to God...
We move from hosannas to horror
with predictable ease
of those who know not what they do.
Our hosannas sung,
our palms waved,
let us go with passion into this week.
It is time to curse fig trees that do not yield fruit.
It is time to cleanse our temples of any blasphemy.
It is time to greet Jesus as the Lord's Anointed One,
to lavishly break our alabaster
and pour perfume out for him
without counting the cost.
It is a time for preparation...
The time to give thanks and break bread is upon us.

The time to give thanks and drink of the cup is
imminent.
Eat, drink, remember:
On this night of nights, each one must ask,
as we dip our bread in the wine,
"Is it I?"
And on that darkest of days, each of us must stand
beneath the tree
and watch the dying
if we are to be there
when the stone is rolled away.
The only road to Easter morning
is through the unrelenting shadows of that Friday.
Only then will the alleluias be sung;
only then will the dancing begin.

March Birthdays

March 1

Judy Deal
Rusty Mathena

March 3

Julie Monroe

March 5

Lois Beers
Jerry Yoder

March 7

Bob Freeman

March 9

Jeannine Gosso

March 10

Toni Perry

March 12

Marcia Yoder

March 14

Janeen Anderson

March 16

Sue Cox
Phyllis Geis
Judy Pearson
Judy Sieltman

March 19

Paul Williamson

March 20

Kurt Adams
Lynn Hammond
Jane Wright

March 22

Rick Tessean

March 23

Betsy Elliott
Jacci Mullison

March 28

Marjie Tessean

March 29

Cees Morgan
Terry Ogilvie

March 31

Susan Williamson

Resource for Aging Well

Larimer County Office on Aging provides **Chore Vouchers** to anyone age 60 and over to provide financial assistance with household chores you are unable to do on your own. You find the provider, but the county will help with the cost. Contact the Larimer County Office on Aging at the contact information below for details and to begin the process, or visit

www.larimer.gov/humanservices/aging/ooa

970-498-7750
ADRC@larimer.org

[Contact Us]

Pastor Leslie:

leslie@fumcleveland.com
Office: (970) 667-0876
Cell: (719) 650-9449

Pastor Lee:

lee@fumcleveland.com
Office: (970) 667-0876
Cell: (303) 506-6724