

**First United
Methodist
Church
of Fort Lupton
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7.23.26

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Message

**"Listening to the
Future"**

**Rev. Lee Anderson-
Harris**

Scripture

Matthew 28:16-20 (NRSV)

16 Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. 17 When they saw him, they worshiped him, but they doubted. 18 And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit 20 and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

John 14:25-27

25 "I have said these things to you while I am still with you. 26 But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all that I have said to you. 27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid."

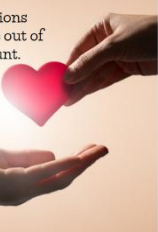


WAYS TO SUPPORT OUR CHURCH

NO HASSLE GIVING

Have your donations automatically come out of your bank account.

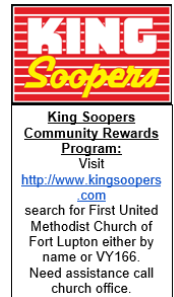
Contact Church Office or Church Treasurer for information



Safeway cards -available downstairs after worship



[DONATE TO THE CHURCH ONLINE.](#)



What's Happening

7.27.26 Monday 4:00 pm Many Blessings Meeting
6:00 pm Mission/Congregational Meeting
7:00 pm Ad Board Meeting

Wednesdays

9:30 am Wednesday Bible Study

Jan. 1 - June 30, 2026 Financial Update	
Income	\$ 97,556.64
Expenses	\$ 102,719.33
Revenue/(Loss)	\$ (5,162.69)

*Income includes \$9000 interest from Endowment

We now have a lock on the dumpster.
The code is 2011.



"Worship Together This Summer!"
This summer, we're asking all kiddos to sit with their families.

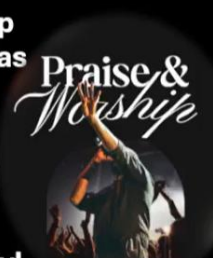
We love having kids in worship — you bring joy to our church family.

By sitting with family helps kids learn how worship works by watching their grown-ups. Every family has their own special ways — and that's wonderful!

There are activity folders in the Cry Room for all youth to use during worship.

Thank you for worshipping together as one big family!

Worship together this summer.





Listening to the Present

Philippians 4:4-9 (NRSV)

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. ⁵ Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. ⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

⁸ Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about ^[c] these things. ⁹ As for the things that you have learned and received and heard and noticed in me, do them, and the God of peace will be with you.

Paul wrote this letter to the church in Philippi when he was imprisoned. Throughout the letter, he encourages them to continue preaching the gospel, and said that his time in jail has actually emboldened some people to teach the Christian message even more because of it. He writes “Most importantly, live together in a manner worthy of Christ’s gospel” in 1:27. He tells them to imitate Jesus, and reminds them of what is most important as a community working together to bring the message outward and set an example. From someone who is imprisoned and who knows the persecution the early Christians are facing, it is surprising to hear the phrase “rejoice in the Lord always”! And then he goes on to write what sounds like a platitude: “Think about all the good stuff.” So is he glossing over his own suffering? Is he telling his siblings in Christ to ignore the hard stuff? I don’t think he is. I think Paul felt more deeply than that.

His directive to “not be anxious about anything” can be misunderstood as an impossible standard to which we hold ourselves. This does not mean that if you pray and trust God, you will never have anxiety. First, we know that true anxiety is real and affects many people. But even the day-to-day stressors in our lives, new and uncertain situations, just turning on the news, will lead to anxious thoughts. It’s impossible to never be anxious about anything. And Paul must have known this; he must have known that the uncertainty of the future of the followers of Jesus was enough to keep them awake at night, let alone possible imprisonment or death. So rather, he offers a reminder of what can help alleviate the worry: Take it to God. Take it all to God, *name* what is on your heart. And also, look for the things for which you are grateful and name those too. Give thanks to God. If you do this *often*, the peace of Christ will grow within you.

Last week I spoke about listening to the lessons of the past. Today we are listening to the present. Whether the present feels good or feels bad, there are things we can glean from it to shape us in our faith journey. We can learn from the situations in the present moment...and our responses to them.

First, when the present moment or present season is hard, we want to escape. When the covid pandemic hit, and the reality was sinking in *and* I watched people being ugly to one another and politics getting involved, I started thinking about Disney World. A lot. I daydreamed about my childhood trips there, and imagined what it was like to be there as an adult. Before long I realized what I was doing... I wanted a pure, childlike escape to “the most magical place on earth.” A true fantasy land with no worries. (Now, in 2024 Jeremiah and I did end up going and I thought I would get it out of my system. Instead, we both got bit by the Disney bug as a result, and we’re going again in October.) If we can sit with the present moment, however, rather than trying to escape from it, we might hear some useful whisperings of our soul. You can listen to what is keeping you awake at night and why. What is underneath or behind the worry, or stress, or anger? Is there something you could be doing differently? Or is it all out of your control? And if it is beyond your control, like world events or how other people are treating one another, what is in your power to do? Usually the answer is about how you will manage the stress, or treat people the way you want to be treated, and so on.

Listening to what the present moment is stirring up in us can teach us about ourselves. Rather than just reacting to a situation, if we slow down and get curious with ourselves...without self-judgment...we might discover more about our values, what matters to us. And if we can keep going with that curiosity, we can even ask ourselves “Why does that

matter to me? Where did that come from?" And you don't have to wait until the present feels stressful to do this, you can even wonder these things when life feels good too. What is going well, and why do things feel aligned for you?

Science tells us that our brains are wired to conserve energy, to use the least amount of energy necessary. This is why when we're stressed we tend to resort to old habits, they take less energy. Also, change takes energy. Even positive change. During a change, you are trying to learn new things, process how you feel about the change, you're on alert and trying to problem solve; even seemingly simple tasks become challenging. So, we can give ourselves grace in the midst of this. We are humans, after all. Yet as Christians, we are called to a higher way. Doing what comes easy or natural is not always the right way when it comes to being followers of Jesus. While it may take more effort, I think looking to Christ to guide us during current tension will be more life-giving in the long run.

Paul writes to the church to think about whatever is true, honorable, just, pure, pleasing, commendable. The Message translation of this is "You'll do best by filling your minds and meditating on things true, noble, reputable, authentic, compelling, gracious—the best, not the worst; the beautiful, not the ugly." Again, I don't think Paul is advising people to ignore suffering or sugarcoat bad news. Rather, what we dwell on matters. This is similar to the story of the two wolves, which I am sure some of you are familiar with: A man has two wolves, one represents the good within him and one represents the bad within him. The two wolves are frequently fighting. His grandson asks him "Which one usually wins?" The grandfather replies "Whichever one I feed." Whatever we fill our minds with will feed us. If we let anger, fear, or hate fester within, we will be driven by these things and stray from God's path. And if we let ourselves be surrounded by negativity, or fear-driven messaging in our news sources, and so on, we will absorb that. Our minds are not as impenetrable as we think they are. So, this is another way to listen to the present: Pay attention to your thoughts and words, and your feelings. Guard yourself. You can acknowledge your own suffering, which is a good thing, without *dwelling* on the bad. Notice the best in people, the beauty that you see, the ways God's light shines through a situation. Listen for stories that surprise you, that tell you a different narrative than what you have been hearing. Listen for what you have in common with someone with very different views from you. Fix your mind on what brings you joy and peace, and make time for these things in your life. Be alert to the God moments and God's presence all around.

Something else we can listen for is how God might be shaping us through the present. Now, this one is harder to understand, because it is often only with the gift of hindsight that we can see the ways we are being shaped. But it is an interesting question to ask. I want to be clear that I do not believe that God causes bad things to happen to us or causes hardships in our lives so that we learn or grow or become closer to Him. Hard times happen; bad things happen, and it is not part of God's plan and it is not something we deserve. God grieves with us. But I do know that God can *use* these situations for good; God can make something beautiful out of even the ugliest situation. Perhaps you can relate to this...maybe you have experienced financial hardship and as a result, you have better appreciation for the things money can't buy, or more compassion for the poor. Or you were devastated by a loss of career and ended up finding yourself. And of course, new perspectives, new skills, new life can be found all along the way, not just through the hard times. Whatever the present moment is like, if we are curious about how God can use the present to shape us, we might be more willing co-creators with God. To do this, we need to keep open the channels for the Holy Spirit to work in us by staying in those practices that God can use to shape us, such as prayer, studying scripture, and being in loving and healthy community. This week during the Bible study, we talked about how to discern if the guidance you are receiving is coming from the Holy Spirit as opposed to your own thoughts. One of the ways God speaks to us is through other people, and when we stay in community to hear the perspectives of others, it helps us in checking out what we are thinking, or what we think we have heard from the Spirit. It's too easy to get stuck in an echo chamber of our own thoughts!

Paul talks about the present struggles in other letters too, and in his letter to the Romans, chapter 8, he wrote "I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. ¹⁹For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God," He goes on to talk about creation groaning in labor pains, and one of my favorite verses comes from this passage: "If we see what we hope for, that isn't hope. Who hopes for what they already see? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we don't see, we wait for it with patience." This is a future oriented passage of course, but it also speaks to how we deal with the present. In the present,

something new is always waiting to be born. The seeds in the earth are becoming the harvest of tomorrow. If we are alert to what might be growing, we can be attentive to what needs to be nurtured now. We can take an active part in our waiting; we can take part in creation with God. Where in your life, or in this church, do you see seeds that need to be nurtured for a bright future?

A friend of mine shared some tips on being in the present moment from a golf enthusiast, and I want to close with these tips. Whether you are a golfer or not...even if you are someone like me who likes to watch golf on Sunday afternoons and take a nap with it going on in the background, what I like to call a “golf nap” ...I bet you can get some good pointers here. Here is what he wrote:

“Golf tips for better living:

1. Resist the urge to add up your score as you go along. If you anticipate your score, you'll be distracted from the task at hand. In other words, live more in the present. Clear your mind of past mistakes and even past successes, and try to think only about the here and now.

2. Focus. Concentrate on hitting great shots rather than worrying about bad ones or what others will think if you miss. Visualize the ball going to your target.

This is a terrific technique for daily living. Focus. Concentrate on doing the present task well rather than worrying about what others will think if you should “mess up.” And get a picture in your mind's eye of succeeding at the thing you are doing right now.

3. Keep your mind on the hole you're playing. Don't think about how you are going to play the last hole.

This is about resisting the urge to think ahead. If we pay close attention to the present, the future will take care of itself. Our present moment is full of power and wonder. It deserves our full attention.

Now, did you notice what all of these tips have in common? They are not about understanding the past or setting goals for the future. They are simply about living in the present moment.

Writer H.G. Wells once noted, ‘Man must not allow the clock and the calendar to blind him to the fact that each moment of life is a miracle and a mystery.’ Anybody can get more out of life who concentrates on and cherishes the here and now – and we’re not talking about golf.”

My appreciation to Rev. Steve Goodier for this. (You can find this at <https://stevegoodier.blogspot.com>).

Cherish the here and now, because it is precious. And remember that the kingdom is even more precious. God’s presence is near in every moment. So keep your eyes, ears, and hearts open. You might have to look for the seeds of goodness, but they are there; when you see them, nurture them, with God’s help.

Closing prayer: Gracious God, thank You that You do not abandon us to our worries or leave us to navigate the tensions of this world on our own strength. Forgive us for the times we try to escape the present rather than sitting with You inside of it. Holy Spirit, break open our hearts this week. Help us to guard our minds, to feed what is good, and to actively nurture the seeds of hope You have planted within our lives and within this church. May Your overwhelming peace, which surpasses all understanding, guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Send us out now to live lives worthy of Your gospel. Amen.

Carol's Corner
By Carol McDermott

Mart and I spent the last week in Estes Park where Mart took part in a Continuing Education week at the YMCA of the Rockies. I stayed at our trailer and relaxed – just what I needed. It was warmer up there than usual, but still not as hot as it was here. When he was not in classes, we took some short drives into the Rocky Mtn National Park – what beautiful scenery! We feel so blessed to be able to see the mountains nearly every day – something people from all over the world come to enjoy. We got home yesterday and have enjoyed being home! Today Sue Hubert had the Children's sermon – she gave each child a little see-through bag of M&Ms. She asked the children to list descriptive names of Jesus that begin with the letter "M", like Majestic, Merciful, Maker, Miraculous. Then she had them turn their M&M upside down so the letter on the candy was "W" and listed descriptive names like Wise, Wonderful, Worthy, Warrior, and Welcoming. I will never look at an M&M the same again! It was great. I played "His Name is Wonderful" (a "W" word)!

Pastor Lee's message last week was based on looking at the past and the lessons we can learn from that, but this week her message was titled "Listening to the Present." The scripture was Philippians 4:4-9. Verse 8 has the recipe for living a blessed life when it says: "Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise". It is such a rich reminder of taking control of what we put into our mind and heart. Pastor reminded us that Paul wrote these words when he was in prison. He acknowledged that we will probably never be able to live life free of anxiety, but says take all your cares to God, name them all to Him, and thank Him that He cares for you. She said our brains are wired to conserve energy. That's why, in times of stress, we resort to old habits because they take less energy. "Doing what comes natural" or easy isn't always the right way when it comes to following Jesus. Pay attention to your thoughts and words throughout your day. Guard yourself. Fix your mind on what brings you joy and peace and make time for these things. She acknowledged that bad things do happen to us, but God does not cause these bad things, but is with us to help us learn to grow closer to Him. He grieves with us when we walk through deep waters. Staying in fellowship with other Christians is helpful when we share our concerns with them and they can share a different perspective. "Something else we can listen for is how God might be shaping us through the present. Where in our lives or in our church do we see seeds that need to be nurtured for a bright future? Cherish the here and now, because it is precious." Pastor borrowed from some "golfing tips" to help illustrate that grieving past mistakes or worrying about the future is distracting for living now in this moment. You will be blessed and challenged if you take the time to listen to the message.

Pics to Enjoy!





Birthdays



Rajean Tijerina	08/01
Brandon Ceretto	08/02
Landon Kokoszka	08/02
Iris Memmer	08/05
Sarah Asebedo	08/07
Noah Bucher	08/07
Kathy Kvasnicka	08/08
Boston Rosales	08/08
Hidi Fankhauser	08/09
Cindy Hood	08/09
Richard Lee	08/10
Mary Jean Brewer	08/11
David Irsik	08/13
Evelyn Viken	08/15
Ashley Howard	08/16
Diana Tomoi	08/21
Vicki Ceretto	08/22
Kai Neely	08/24
Desmond Viehland	08/25
Michael Bettger	08/26
Sue Hubert	08/29
Anthony Bucher	08/29
Charlotte Jones	08/29
Keri Roedel	08/30
Iva Thiesen	08/31

Anniversaries

Mark Barry & Kate Schilling	08/05
John & Diana Howard	08/10
Ino & Carol Duarte	08/13
Kevin & Michelle Gross	08/29
Joseph & Teri Kopfman	08/13
Richard & Rebecca De LaVega	08/12
Debbie & Penny DeMille	08/11
John & Debe Dent	08/19



August

SUN 26	MON 27	TUE 28	WED 29	THU 30	FRI 31	SAT Aug 1
● 9am Worship Servi	● 4:30pm Many Bless 2 more	● 9am Stephens Mini	● 9:30am Bible Study			
2 ● 9am Worship Servi ● 9am Communion	3 ● 6pm UMW	4 National Night Out ● 9am Stephens Mini	5 ● 9:30am Bible Study ● 12pm Worship Plan	6	7	8
9 ● 9am Worship Servi	10	11 ● 9am Stephens Mini ● 7pm Trustees Meet	12 Office Closed ● 9:30am Bible Study	13	14	15
16 Office Closed ● 9am Worship Servi	17	18 ● 9am Stephens Mini	19 ● 9:30am Bible Study	20	21	22
23 ● 9am Worship Servi	24 ● 6pm Mission/Cong ● 7pm Ad Board Mee	25 ● 9am Stephens Mini	26 ● 9:30am Bible Study	27	28	29
30 ● 9am Worship Servi	31	Sep 1 ● 9am Stephens Mini	2 ● 9:30am Bible Study ● 12pm Worship Plan	3	4	5

For full calendar – click the link

<https://fumc-fortlupton.org/calendar/>