

**First United  
Methodist  
Church  
of Fort Lupton  
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Fort Lupton, CO  
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**7.30.26**

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### **Message**

**“Hitting Pause,  
taking stock of our  
lives”**

**Rev. Lee Anderson-  
Harris**



### **Scripture:**

**Haggai 1:5-7 (NIV)**

**5 Now this is what the Lord Almighty says: “Give careful thought to your ways. 6 You have planted much, but harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it.”**

**7 This is what the Lord Almighty says: “Give careful thought to your ways.**

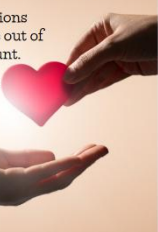


## WAYS TO SUPPORT OUR CHURCH

### NO HASSLE GIVING

Have your donations automatically come out of your bank account.

Contact Church Office or Church Treasurer for information

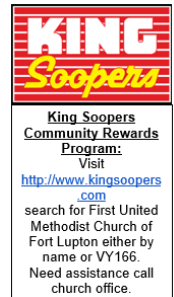


Safeway cards -available downstairs after worship

**SAFEWAY**



[DONATE TO THE CHURCH ONLINE.](#)



## What's Happening

8.3.26 6:00 pm

UMW Meeting

8.4.26 5:00 pm

National Night Out, Location: Fort Lupton Middle School (201 S. McKinley Ave, Fort Lupton, CO

### Wednesdays

9:30 am

Wednesday Bible Study

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



## Silent Auction: Brand-New Traeger Grill

A brand-new Ridgeline XL Traeger Grill (still in the box) has been generously donated to the church, and we will be offering it through a silent auction.

If you'd like a chance to bid on this item, signups will be available starting this Sunday, 8.2.26. A silent auction sheet will be located in the dining room following the worship service.

The last day to place a bid is 8.23.26.

All proceeds will go directly to our operational fund, which supports the day-to-day ministries of our church.



**UMW – United  
Methodist Women  
Meeting**

**Monday – 8.3.23  
Time – 6:00 pm**



United  
Methodist  
Women



**Listening for the Future**

**Matthew 28:16-20 (NRSV)**

<sup>16</sup> Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. <sup>17</sup> When they saw him, they worshiped him, but they doubted. <sup>18</sup> And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup> 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 <sup>20</sup> 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**

<sup>25</sup> "I have said these things to you while I am still with you. <sup>26</sup> 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. <sup>27</sup> 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.

At the beginning of this short sermon series, I stated that when we listen for where God is leading us into the future, this discernment is built on a healthy relationship with the past and present. A healthy relationship with the past involves sifting through the things of the past to discern what we want to bring with us into the future, and what we want to leave behind. We can't take everything with us, and there are things that no longer serve us, or that weigh us down, keep us stuck. In the present, we wait, but not passively. We listen to how God might be shaping us and calling us, and we tend to what needs to be nurtured for a bright tomorrow. In his book *Discernment*, Henri Nouwen states, "Active waiting is being open to the promise yet to be fulfilled. Patient waiting is staying fully in the present moment. Expectant waiting is trusting that this long process will bear fruit" (p. 153). Expectant waiting means trusting that God will deliver on God's promises, that God will meet your deepest needs and is laying a path for us.

There are days when I am more trusting that God is in control than others. When I am waiting and working for the kingdom of God, there are times that I wonder if I am spinning my wheels. But something in my always gets revived, and I remember what it's all about. As we wonder about the future of the church...this church, and the Church in general, we have to remember why we are here in the first place. We are here fully embody God's love in the world. Not to just exist and survive as a building or an institution. And by embodying God's love, we form more followers of Jesus, who also transform the world.

As we look to the future as a faith community, we have our mission already in place to guide us. While the future itself may be unknown, because it is always unknown, it's not a complete blank slate. This is wonderful news...we don't have to start from scratch or rediscover our purpose. Sure, we will always need to take an assessment of what we are doing or how we are doing it. We reflect on this to make sure we are operating in alignment with the mission, or to ask if we are reaching people with the message as effectively as we can. This is good practice. But when trying to discern where God is leading next, we have some parameters that help us narrow our focus. We start with our mission as Christians, a large part of which comes from the Great Commission, which is found in the passage from Matthew that I read: "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything that I've commanded you." We are to spread God's word, share the teachings of Jesus, welcome all people into the fold. And we look to our mission and vision in the UMC. The United Methodist mission is to "make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world," and the vision statement is: "The United

Methodist Church forms disciples of Jesus Christ who, empowered by the Holy Spirit, love boldly, serve joyfully, and lead courageously in local communities and worldwide connections.” See that connecting thread so far? Creating disciples, who then transform our communities and the world. And of course, we drill down even further and look to the mission of this church. The church’s website states this: “We desire to bring the Word of God to the world as we seek Christ, join in worship, embrace others, share in community, reach out in love, serve with compassion, and journey with hope and faith.” So no, there is no blank page here. There may be new ways of living out your calling...and in some cases, you’ll keep doing what you are doing. But the framework is already there. I find this hopeful. God is doing a new thing, but hasn’t thrown out the old thing entirely. The mission hasn’t changed, and we still follow the same Jesus. To keep reaching people, churches always need to adjust to new ways of reaching out and meeting people where they are. And to keep being disciples of Jesus, we have to understand the world we live in now, and how we respond to our current setting through the lens of the faith. Therefore, there is always movement, there is always something new, but the foundation remains the same. The purpose and mission remain the same.

We have a powerful story to tell of God’s love, compassion, grace, forgiveness, invitation to new life and abundant life, and deep peace and true joy. This message is available to all, and this is the core message that Jesus wanted to get across. And yes, along with this message, Jesus calls us into a way of life that reflects God’s extravagant love. He was pretty disruptive to the ways the Jewish religion had become structured, and the larger society was structured, because it didn’t reflect God’s love. It had become a hierarchy that overlooked the “least of these.” His message isn’t just a feel-good one, it comes with a challenge. But in every way that he challenged people, it all goes back to this core message that he taught and lived.

The words that are known as the Great Commission are only found in Matthew’s gospel. In Luke’s gospel, Jesus tells the disciples that “a change of heart and life for the forgiveness of sins must be preached in Christ’s name to all nations” (24:47, CEB). In Mark, we hear him say “Go into the whole world and proclaim the good news to every creature” (16:15, CEB). And in John’s gospel, Jesus’s instructions to them are to love one another as he has loved them, and that as long as they keep his commandments, they will stay in his love (from John 14). None of these gospels are more correct than the others; they each provide a piece of the whole picture. Notice how all of these instructions are about sharing the message with more and more people, and *showing* them God’s love. This should be guiding star. It’s important to hold onto this, because we are going to hear other messages about being a Christian that actually detract from this. There are a lot out there. Here are some things that we *won’t* hear in Jesus’s message and teachings: Jesus didn’t teach that the way to follow him is to have all the right answers or be the smartest Christian in the room. Or be the ideal fill-in-the-blank for whatever ideal is currently being held up among Christian pop culture. Jesus’s message is never about pinpointing who is to blame for our problems or getting rid of those people or eradicating or defeating anyone. It is never about lifting up some people as better than or more superior to other people. Jesus never taught that if you did everything right, you would be blessed by lots of money and no troubles, or that the goal of life is to prosper. These are some of the things I have heard being associated with the Christian faith, I am sure you can add your own. When we hear such things that don’t line up with Jesus’ message of love or forgiveness or sharing the *good* news, we are given a clue that they might be distractions pulling us from the right path. And friends, I know it’s not easy. We all get distracted, I am not here to put anybody down. That’s why God’s grace is such good news.

The way this church’s mission statement is detailed on the website echoes what I also understand to be what Jesus hoped for his disciples. We seek Christ...we seek Christ for ourselves and our faith journey, we seek Christ to shape each of us. But we don’t stop there. That’s not what Jesus directed us to do. We then look outward, and share the love of Christ. We do this through service as the hands and feet and heart of Christ.

We don't have to use words. We show what God's love looks like, with the hope that it draws people in, draws them closer to God to experience God for themselves. But we can also do this through words. Sometimes the words are simply an invitation. Invite people to worship or another church group or activity so they experience the community for themselves. Sometimes the words are about sharing your own personal testimony with someone, sharing what Christ means to you and what God has done in your life. If you're thinking all this sounds similar to what the apostle Paul said are spiritual gifts, you're right. We don't each need to be all things to all people in order to carry out the mission. In 1 Corinthians 12:4-12, Paul wrote:

"There are different spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; and there are different ministries and the same Lord; and there are different activities but the same God who produces all of them in everyone. A demonstration of the Spirit is given to each person for the common good. A word of wisdom is given by the Spirit to one person, a word of knowledge to another according to the same Spirit, faith to still another by the same Spirit, gifts of healing to another in the one Spirit, performance of miracles to another, prophecy to another, the ability to tell spirits apart to another, different kinds of tongues to another, and the interpretation of the tongues to another. All these things are produced by the one and same Spirit who gives what he wants to each person. Christ is just like the human body—a body is a unit and has many parts; and all the parts of the body are one body, even though there are many."

Each of you is a vital part of this church. There are a variety of spiritual gifts, a variety of roles, a variety of activities and ministries. Paul also says in this passage, even though we didn't read the verses, that if the foot says it doesn't matter because it is not a hand, it doesn't mean that it isn't a part of the body. He is emphasizing that all parts of the body of Christ are necessary. All work together for the mission of the whole. All are needed, even if some are more behind the scenes than others. Being unified does not mean being uniform. We can be unified in our mission and vision, and there are many ways to live out the mission and vision.

So, if our foundation is rooted in Jesus' directive to us in The Great Commission, we need to understand it so that as we move into the future, we are truly guided by it. I don't think it is as simple to understand as it seems. Let's pause and reflect on each phrase:

*Go and make disciples:* First, *go*, as opposed to sit there and wait for them to come to you. Second, *make*...the emphasis is often on our actions of teaching and baptizing. But how can we effectively teach about things we ourselves are not doing? Jesus taught his disciples to do as he did, not just repeat what he taught and tell other people to do it. The disciples have undergone formation with Jesus; now it is their turn to form new disciples. Like Jesus, they teach not just with words, but with their actions and their very lives. We can't give what we don't have.

*Of all nations:* Throughout his ministry, Jesus was rejected by many he came to teach and bring closer to God. And so now, the ministry expands to the Gentiles. To people who do not know God. For us to do the same, we have to stretch our imaginations a little bit. You would be hard pressed to find someone these days who has not heard of God or Jesus. But who does not know God the way you know God? Who might have heard about God in ways that turned them away from God?

*Baptizing them in the name of the Father and Son and Holy Spirit:* First, when someone is baptized, they are brought into the community of believers. This is important. But baptism is more than an initiation rite. To be baptized into the name of the three-in-one-God is to be brought into that same divine-human connection. More important than the words that are used at baptism is what it represents. This is the moment that we are given new life. In Wesleyan thought, we will continue to be given new life and continue in the process of

salvation, not just once. But baptism is a powerful moment all the same as it marks that divine-human connection and the imparting of God's grace.

*Obey everything I command:* The root of the word obey in Latin means to go in the direction of. Other translations of this scripture include "teach them to do all the things I have told you," and "teach them to follow". What did he command? Well, he said that the greatest commandments are to love God with all your being, and love your neighbor as yourself. All other commandments hang on these. But this isn't all that he taught. Jesus taught with words. But he also taught with his actions. All that he did was to model for his followers how to be in right relationship with God and others. In Jesus' actions, we see care for the vulnerable and overlooked in society. We see an expanding understanding of with whom we are to be in relationship, or the answer to the question "who is my neighbor?" We see healing, and not just physical healing but restoration and reconciliation. Through Jesus' words, we hear that the kingdom of God is an upside-down version of the kingdoms of this world. Where the least are lifted up and the powerful are brought down. We hear that all are valued in God's eyes, not just some. Jesus was a living example of God's mercy. And so, when Jesus says to obey everything I have commanded you, we have to look at all of this, and do likewise, with God's grace.

Are you overwhelmed? Remember Paul's words. We don't each have to do all of these things. We are one body working together to carry out the mission. All are needed, but none have to do it all.

I imagine the disciples were also overwhelmed. And this is why what Jesus says next is so valuable: Remember I am with you always. But Jesus also gives the disciples the gift of these words in John's gospel: The Holy Spirit will teach you everything and remind you of all that I said. The Holy Spirit will continue to help them understand, and to carry out the work. And he says to them "don't be afraid." It's as though he is acknowledging that this is not easy, but there is no reason to fear. He will remain with them through the Spirit. They will be given what they need. And he gives them another gift when he says "My peace I give to you. I do not give as the world gives." When you think about what the world gives when you have a task or job before you, what do you think of? Performance reviews? Grades? How about scrutiny? And in the Church, metrics such as filled pews. But we don't need to be worried about performance or success by the world's standards. Jesus does not give as the world gives. And when we are continuing the ministry of Jesus, we do not give to people as the world gives either. And that is the point. People have plenty to deal with in this world. We need to give them something different, not more of the same.

Now, I am sure that this church is no different than a lot of churches right now: You are concerned about the future, wondering if this church will survive, and you want to see growth. Understandably so. I want us to avoid the trap of trying to grow out of fear though. It's an easy trap to fall into. We will need to work together on that and encourage one another. Remember Jesus's words to not be afraid. Just do what we are called to do; carry out the mission. And leave the growth and the outcomes to God.

When we listen for the future, we must remember the core message, the mission as Jesus gave it, and that this is our guiding star. We pray that we are not led into temptation or distractions. And we pray for the kingdom to come, but this it is not passive waiting; we have a role with God. And we remember that Jesus came not to condemn the world, and came so that we may have abundant life. His peace is given to us. His presence is with us. We do not need to be afraid.

**Carol's Corner**  
**By Carol McDermott**

Another hot week! Several days of triple digits here and in the area. It's crazy – in hot summer weather we can't wait for colder weather, and when we have colder weather, we can't wait for summer! Today in church the sanctuary was just comfortable – not too hot and not too cold! We had a good group there to worship and sing praises – I love the way it feeds my soul. Gwen Ceretto had the Children's sermon today and gave the kids drink containers that had rolls of stickers in them with encouraging messages, like "I love you" or "God loves you". They ran around the sanctuary and passed them out for everyone. So sweet. Sue Hubert gave "The Mission Moment" and talked about the Counseling office here in Fort Lupton that serves a lot of teens and others who seek guidance. Our church contributes money to help this service stay viable. Marilyn Bangert sang "People Need the Lord", what a beautiful song with such a great message.

Pastor's sermon was titled "Listening for the Future", the third sermon in her series including "Listening to the Past" and "Listening to the Present". She said we build on a healthy relationship from where God has led us in the past and present and that helps us discern what we have learned and want to carry forward into the future. That is so true – we don't want to just muddle around in regrets or unfulfilled hopes, but want to bring a positive expectation of what God has for us tomorrow and beyond. Some days it may seem like we are just spinning our wheels and can forget what our true goal is. We want to embody God's love to the world. As we model God's love we can draw others into a loving relationship with God, followers of Jesus, and transform the world. She said our major mission is outlined in The Great Commission which reads "Go make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything that 'Jesus' has commanded you". Pastor pointed out that the United Methodist mission is to make disciples of Jesus...for the transformation of the world." This is also a part of the Fort Lupton United Methodist Church Mission statement. God is doing a new thing, but hasn't thrown out the old things entirely. All Christian churches need to adjust to new ways of reaching out and meeting people where they are. We have to understand the world we now live in – think of A1 for example and the challenges and opportunities - that lie in that. The foundation remains the same but the building "materials" may change. We have such a powerful story to tell of God's love, grace, compassion, forgiveness, invitation to new and abundant life and deep peace and joy.

She reminded us this is not a "health and wealth" gospel that we are promised. We offer it to all who are able to listen and follow. Sometimes we may invite someone to come to church and sometimes we can share our own personal faith journey with someone. Paul said in I Corinthians 12:4-12 that there are different gifts, but the same Spirit. Just as the human body has many parts with distinct qualities, so the Spirit gives each believer gifts that draw from their individual natural gifts and their personalities and fashions them to draw "all men and women" to Jesus, the Christ. Pastor Lee acknowledged that while we are concerned about the future of our church and want to see growth, we should not proceed with fear and trepidation but rather with confidence that the Spirit will guide us all the way. Jesus came, not to condemn the world, but to bring abundant life to us – to bring peace and His presence. What a promise! What a challenge!

## Pics to E njoy!



Sue sharing a mission moment. This mission money goes to North Range Mental Health.

Gwen letting the youth experincing being disciples.



Marilyn sharing special music.



Praise Team closing out the service.



Pastor Lee, "Jesus taught his disciples to do as he did, not just repeat what he taught and tell other people to do it. The disciples have undergone formation with Jesus; now it is their turn to form new disciples. Like Jesus, they teach not just with words, but with their actions and their very lives".

**I DESIRE JESUS**