

# The Insight

Giving *insight* into the life of FUMC Loveland and keeping our mission *in sight*.

## Pastor's Pondering, by Rev. Leslie Wood

When I was young, I had a natural curiosity that, sometimes, got me into trouble. I've told the story of lighting the whole book of matches in our "old living room", while sitting under the already-old-and-sheer curtains. That was arguably my worst idiotic choice. There were, of course, more idiotic choices over the years.

One, for instance, involved the plastic knob that inserts into the center of a blender top. (I don't know the name of that piece, so I'll just call it a knob handle.) Our farmhouse had a screened-in back porch. One day, I picked up a curious piece of plastic off the kitchen counter – the knob handle. I had no idea what it was; all I knew was that it was plastic and perfectly round. Into my head popped a thought, "I bet this would punch a perfectly round hole in the back porch screen." Without thinking through the logic of my choice, I walked to the back porch and made three perfectly round holes in the back porch screen.

To make matters worse, I didn't stop there. The next thought that popped into my head was, "That was cool. I bet this plastic doohickey will make a pleasing cracking sound if I stomp on it." Without thinking through the logic of THAT choice either, I walked outside, put the knob handle on the ground, and stomped on it, enjoying the pleasing cracking sound.

My parents were not impressed. You could describe the grounding that followed as exile. I was exiled to my room, exiled to extra chores, and exiled from the things that brought me enjoyment.

For me, these days feel rather like we're in exile. I acknowledge that not everyone feels this way, so I find myself compelled to express the cautionary words of UMC Bishop Héctor A Burgos-Núñez of the Susquehanna Conference, "We are living in a time when opinions, no matter how well-intentioned, often deepen division rather than build understanding." I am not trying to deepen divisions. I am simply earnestly trying to process my deep sense of anxiety over our current realities that feel so very much out of alignment with my faith in Jesus, the Savior we're called to not just believe in, but follow in his way of living and loving.

Old Testament scholar, Walter Brueggemann, argues that exile is not the end of faithfulness but the beginning of a new kind of witness. He describes the task as not to escape but to reimagine life in the midst of displacement.<sup>1</sup>

I said in my sermon this morning that Jeremiah was the last pre-exile prophet to the people of Judah, before they were conquered by King Nebuccadnezer's army and carted off to Babylon, not knowing if they would ever see their beloved Holy Land again. Once they were conquered and displaced, Jeremiah's prophetic task didn't end. Even then, he spoke for God, and what God had to say was surprising.

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<sup>1</sup> This idea is drawn from Walter Brueggemann's reflections on exile in *Cadences of Home: Preaching Among Exiles* (1997).  
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Jeremiah's letter to the exiles in Babylon (*c.f.* Jer. 29:1, 4–7) is strikingly countercultural. Instead of urging resistance or withdrawal, he calls the people to invest in their new reality. *“Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat what they produce... seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.”* This is a theology of engagement, not – as Brueggemann explained – a theology of “escape”.

I will tackle this difficult text soon. For today, I am seeing threads of patience...and trust...in the text, of course. What I don't see, at least after a bit of pondering the text a bit, is a call to acquiescence. To “seek the welfare of the city” is a mandate for civic compassion. Compassion is disarming. In the current social ethos that seeks to control through insult and degradation of those who disagree with us, compassion inserts a new way...or rather an old way...into the equation.

Quoting Bishop Burgos-Núñez once more: “Jesus is embodied grace. His compassion, courage, and radical welcome, especially toward those pushed to the margins, are our compass for ministry and community.”

*“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me... he has sent me to proclaim release to the captives... to let the oppressed go free.”* — Luke 4:18

“Jesus taught us to love without limits. Not just those we prefer, but also those who oppose us. No exceptions. No favoritism. No excuses.

*“Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.”* — Matthew 5:44

Jesus showed that faith is not just belief, it's embodied action. Led by the Spirit, living His teachings, and loving as He loved is how we respond faithfully to the gift of God's grace.

*“Let your light shine before others... so they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.”* — Matthew 5:16<sup>2</sup> (See the link to the Bishop's full letter below.)

Embodied grace. Love without limits. Living His teachings and loving as he loved. Following in the way of Jesus feels infinitely more challenging than just following in the way of society. Back before Christians were called Christians, they were referred to as “followers of the Way”. Jesus never said following him and his way would be easy. He just said, “follow me”.

Lord, help us to do so.

Shalom,

Leslie

\*To read Bishop Burgos-Núñez's full letter to his conference, click here: [From Bishop Burgos: Jesus's Life is Not an Option - Susquehanna Conference](#)

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<sup>2</sup> [From Bishop Burgos: Jesus's Life is Not an Option - Susquehanna Conference](#)  
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## Truscott Elementary Garden, by Rev. Bryson Lillie and Mark Elliott

Held on Saturday, September 6th, the Truscott Garden Revitalization Project was nothing short of amazing! With 51 enthusiastic volunteers from FUMC, TUMC, and Truscott School, we transformed the garden into a vibrant, welcoming space that's almost unrecognizable from before. Every corner now bursts with new life, thanks to the teamwork and energy of our community. Come see the incredible results for yourself—it's just a block or more north on Grant Ave from First UMC. You won't believe the difference!



You've got to love it when churches and a plan come together. The garden located just across the street from Truscott had fallen into disrepair. The school had been using it to teach the students about caring for flowers, plants and vegetables. The benches were falling apart and the flower boxes were rotting.

Trinity UMC was aware of the situation and reached out to FUMC to work as a team to make repairs. Together, money was raised to purchase supplies and equipment for the garden. Volunteers from both churches, a total of 51 by one count, showed up to build raised beds, spread rock ground cover, assemble new convertible bench/desks, and much more.

The next day, there was a gathering to bless the renovated garden. Reverend Bryson led the blessing and people took turns pouring water on the new beds with watering cans. The hope is that the garden will provide a wonderful enrichment program for the students at Truscott Elementary.



Thank you to all of those who gave and served for this mission project!

## Insights from the Finance Committee, by Charlie Bouchard, Chair

In the early 19th century, Alexis de Tocqueville (French diplomat and political scientist) observed that the United States was the only nation dedicated to the pursuit of happiness, and also one of the least happy populations he had ever visited. Tocqueville noted, among other things, Americans' incessant busy-ness and unceasing quest for material goods as perhaps one of the reasons for this paradox. The dramatic increase in major depression among people in the U.S. in recent years suggests that Tocqueville would find this paradox little changed since his visit 200 years ago.

As we shift to the fall season, my prayer is that we can all breathe in the presence of God we see all around us. Perhaps do less *pursuing*, and more *contemplating* the wonders of our world.

A brief update on FUMC finances:

A year ago we passed a budget that anticipated a 2025 year end deficit in excess of \$120,000. Serious discussions were held regarding our ability to employ 2 pastors. After shining light on the problem, many folks have stepped up to reduce the deficit significantly. Thank you to all for your financial gifts to make this possible. We are well into budget setting for 2026 and Finance thanks you in advance for your generosity for the upcoming year.

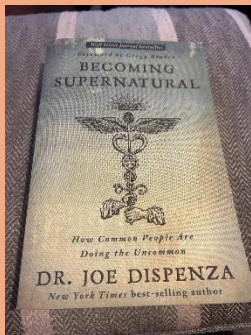
Committees have been busy this year upgrading the church property (too many names to mention, but many thanks to all who have done so much) and we are now ready for prime time. Please check out our new web site and look at the spaces we have available and help spread the word. The energy of Loveland Pre-School can be felt daily and Jen assures me that teachers, parents and kiddos are loving the new location.

Happy Fall,  
Charlie Bouchard  
Chair FUMC Finance

### WHAT ARE YOU READING? LISTENING TO? WATCHING?

This is a space where you can recommend a book, podcast, movie, and so on.

FUMC has a lot of curious learners who love to share about the things that are feeding them!



Desiree Aragon shares: Here's a book and a quote I flip through for inspiration from time to time: "Collective human consciousness where large numbers of people are intentionally focused on heart-centered states creates or affects the global information field. Therefore, elevated emotions of care, love and peace can generate a more coherent field environment that can benefit others and help offset the current planetary discord and incoherence." From *Becoming Supernatural*, by Dr. Joe Dispenza

Share your recommendation to Pastor Lee at [lee@fumcloveland.com](mailto:lee@fumcloveland.com)!



## United Women in Faith Reading Groups

Here is an idea for FUMC women: You can follow the United Women in Faith (UWF) reading program on your own, or invite your friends and neighbors to join in a book group together. Gather in your home, a coffee shop, or reserve a room at the church for discussion. Here is more information about this program from the UWF website:

United Women in Faith's Reading Program is designed to help women of faith to achieve five key goals: lean into our spiritual growth, strengthen our leadership skills, equip ourselves for local and global mission, take faithful action for the common good, and build community in ways large and small. The books are current and cover a wide variety of topics. Participating in one of the Reading Program plans at any of the four levels, or even reading just one or two books in this catalog, can help you grow. And anyone, anywhere, can participate—whether you are a member of United Women in Faith already or just getting to know us.

This year's Bonus Books, along with the other offerings in our 2026 Reading Program, are a powerful launching point for both personal reflection and meaningful conversation.

A virtual page at [bookshop.org/shop/uwfaith](https://bookshop.org/shop/uwfaith) where you can browse and purchase most of the 2026 Reading Program books while earning 10% back to United Women in Faith to support our work.

Pastors Leslie and Lee would love to help you access the full catalog and provide support if you want some guidance about creating your own book group. [Click here](#) to be taken to the catalog, or contact us to have the catalog mailed or emailed to you at [lee@fumccleveland.com](mailto:lee@fumccleveland.com) or [leslie@fumccleveland.com](mailto:leslie@fumccleveland.com).

## The Gift of Community, by Rev. Lee Anderson-Harris

The September Wednesday Mission Meal was a testament to the gift of community. Erin and Carl Williams shared that there were many moments of people coming together, from those who jumped in to help serve food and clean up, to the fun and conversations had among everyone. Erin said “I loved



everyone coming together and all the different ages and generations spending quality time together over a delicious meal! I have never felt such a deep connection to a church like FUMC, Union and TUMC. I feel grateful to have this community



of wonderful people!” In the midst of such divisive times it is easy to be disheartened, and I was moved to hear this. It is a reminder of the ways people still come together, support one another, and enjoy each other's company. This is the gift a church can give to the community. Sing it with me: “I am the church, you are the church, we are the church together!”

