

The Insight

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

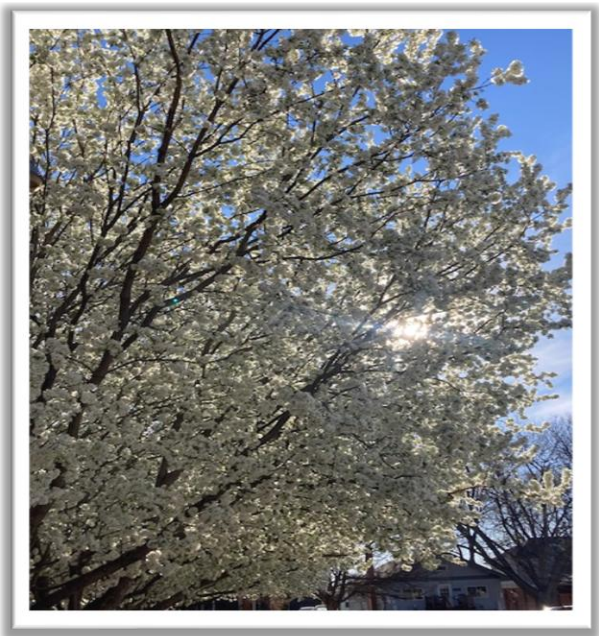
Pastor's Pondering, by Rev. Lee Anderson-Harris

If you have been in my office, you know that I have a thing for trees. I have pictures of trees, curtains printed with various tree leaves, even my Scentsy pot looks like the stump of a tree. One of the pictures I have on my wall is an old framed photo that the music director at one of my previous churches gave me. She liked the way the tree began growing sideways, twisted by the forces of nature, but ultimately found its way to grow straight upward. It spoke to her about resilience and the path of life for so many of us, and that there are forces beyond our control that can misshape us early on, but that doesn't have to be the end of the story. Judith gave it to me, and I cherish it for its meaning, and that she saw in me someone who could appreciate and relate to her story.

Trees have stories to tell too. They have inspired people across the ages in art, poetry, folklore, and spirituality. Research has shown that trees do communicate, especially to one another but not exclusively. In J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, the Ents were "trees" that moved and spoke to one another and other creatures. The Ents had their own distinct sense of time. They walked slowly, they deliberated slowly and carefully, and what to them felt like only moments were days to the hobbits. While Tolkien's books were published in the 1950's, since then even more research has been conducted and analyzed that reveals that trees indeed have a different perception of time than humans do. And like the Ents, trees have a very long memory.

Some trees have been called silent witnesses due to an event or series of events that took place underneath their branches. There are trees on Civil War battlefields that have scars and bullets still embedded in them, for instance. I had the privilege of sitting in the olive grove thought to be the same Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus implored his disciples to stay awake with him. These trees are also referred to as silent witnesses, as some of them date back to the time of Jesus. And I had the very interesting experience of falling asleep on the bench where I sat and pondered this moment and the trees that had such a story to tell. Maybe the disciples were more willing than we realize, but the trees lulled them to sleep.

There is so much about trees that are fascinating. But what speaks to me the most are the life and faith lessons I glean from what we can see. For instance, the natural rhythms and seasons that trees go through remind me that there is a natural rhythm to our own seasons, and that a time to let go and then rest is necessary before a time of new life and growth. Or that trees are more resilient when their roots go deep enough to stay connected to the water and nutrients deep underground. Recently, I had a conversation with one of the members of Trinity UMC at FUMC's March Mission Meal in which we noted that despite the fact other plants were struggling after the dry winter, the trees were looking beautiful, and right on schedule. She commented on the advantage that they have due to the depth of the roots. It immediately reminded me of my relationship with God. If my roots are deep enough...meaning that if I stay connected with God as my source of life through the practices I know keep me connected with God...then I, too, can withstand the storms and droughts of life.



The trees outside of the church are robed in white flowers right now. The sight has been a blessing after such a long stretch of so much brown as far as the eye can see. They bring the promise of new life and beauty. I took this picture one morning when the sun was peeking through the branches. It is an image of the promise of Easter. The falling petals are like heavenly showers.

When you read this, the trees will likely be green instead of white, and you will be preparing for Easter or will have celebrated Christ's rising once again. Perhaps trees will provide inspiration for you in some way as you reflect on the meaning of new life, especially in the midst of the heaviness of the world right now. I have included some poems about trees that might help with that!

When Autumn Came

by Faiz Ahmed Faiz, 1911-1984

*Faiz Ahmed Faiz was born in Sialkot, India. This poem came from his book *The True Subject*, translated by Naomi Lazard and published in 1987 by Princeton University Press.*

This is the way that autumn came to the trees:
 it stripped them down to the skin,
 left their ebony bodies naked.
 It shook out their hearts, the yellow leaves,
 scattered them over the ground.
 Anyone could trample them out of shape
 undisturbed by a single moan of protest.
 The birds that herald dreams
 were exiled from their song,
 each voice torn out of its throat.
 They dropped into the dust
 even before the hunter strung his bow.
 Oh, God of May have mercy.
 Bless these withered bodies
 with the passion of your resurrection;
 make their dead veins flow with blood again.
 Give some tree the gift of green again.
 Let one bird sing.

The Sacrament of Waiting

by Macrina Weiderkehr, 1939-2020

Sister Macrina Weiderkehr, O.S.B., was a member of the St. Scholastica Monastery in Fort Smith, AR. She published a number of books.

Slowly
she celebrated the sacrament of letting go.
First she surrendered her green,
then the orange, yellow, and red
finally she let go of her brown.
Shedding her last leaf
she stood empty and silent, stripped bare.
Leaning against the winter sky
she began her vigil of trust.

Shedding her last leaf
she watched its journey to the ground.
She stood in silence
wearing the color of emptiness,
her branches wondering;
How do you give shade with so much gone?

And then,
the sacrament of waiting began.
The sunrise and sunset watched with tenderness.
Clothing her with silhouettes
they kept her hope alive.

They helped her understand that
her vulnerability,
her dependence and need,
her emptiness,
her readiness to receive
were giving her a new kind of beauty.
Every morning and every evening they stood in silence
and celebrated together
the sacrament of waiting.

To Be Like a Tree

by Carrie Newcomer, 1958-

Carrie Newcomer is a songwriter and recording artist who lives in Indiana.

See how the trees
Reach up and outward
As if their entire existence
Were an elegant gesture of prayer.
See how they welcome the breath of spirit,
In all its visible and invisible forms.
See how the roots reach downward and out,
Embracing the physical,
The body and bones
Of its soul of earth and stone,
Allowing half its life to be sheltered
in the most quiet and secret places.
Oh, if I could be more like a tree on this Sunday morning,
To feel the breath of invisible spirit
Touch me as tenderly as a kiss on the forehead.
If I could courageously and confidently
Dig down into the dark
Where the ground water runs deep,
Where shelter and sanctuary
Can be had and held.
Ah, to be like a tree
With all its bent and unbent places,
A whole and holy thing
From its topmost twigs
To the deepest taproot
To all the good and graceful
Spaces between.

An Easter Egg-stravaganza! by Rev. Lee Anderson-Harris

March 29, Palm Sunday, was a day for children. During worship, children processed down the aisles waving palms before settling down for the Littles Message. Later that day, these same children and many, many more hunted for eggs outside the building, and came inside to cool off, turn in their eggs for prizes, hear a story, and play games or have their faces painted. Snacks and lemonade were provided for all ages.

With the success of last year’s event, the planners were prepared for a large crowd. This year’s event involved a lot of organizing to help *everyone* have a good time. The work was not in vain. The guesstimate is that about 500 people turned out!

In an email to thank the volunteers, Desiree wrote, “What an incredible turnout this year for our Easter egg hunt! Heart Hub was buzzing with excitement—packed full of families and fun—and the line for the prize table stretched right out the door and along the west side of the church. It was truly wonderful to see our community come together in such a big way. A heartfelt thank you to everyone who volunteered and lent a hand. Your time, energy, and support made all the difference, and we’re so grateful. And to those who donated snacks and prizes—thank you for your kindness and generosity. You helped make the day extra special for so many.”

I add my gratitude for the help and donations. It was truly an exciting day. I was touched by the joy on the little ones’ faces as they showed me their baskets of eggs! I hope these photos bring a smile to your face too.



Alison Williams waiting to give prizes.



The crowds!



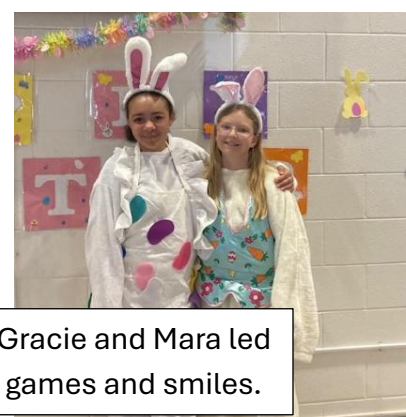
3 happy but hot bunnies.



James Clegern greeted every single guest with enthusiasm.



Sarah Clegern soothed the kids’ souls.



Gracie and Mara led games and smiles.

United Methodist Corner

Do you want to know more about the missions, ministries, beliefs, and principles of the United Methodist Church? Whether you are new to the UMC or looking to deepen your understanding, there are many great resources for learning across the UM web of websites. Of course, it helps to know where to look!

ResourceUMC provides a wide array of information. Go to resourceumc.org and start by clicking the drop-down menu titled Topics. Click on anything that interests you and you'll find more information. You might also be interested in the **UMC Handbook**. You can access this as a PDF from the home page of ResourceUMC, or contact Pastor Lee at lee@fumcloveland.com or (970) 667-0876 to have a printed copy mailed to you.

What are the UMC's stances on various social and world issues?

The UMC has a long history of concern for social justice, beginning with Methodism's founder, John Wesley. The Social Principles name many topics and provide a faithful response and reflection in these areas. The Social Principles are not church law, but "represent the prayerful and earnest efforts of the General Conference to speak to issues in the contemporary world from a sound biblical and theological foundation that is in keeping with the best of our United Methodist traditions" (from the Preface to the Social Principles). To learn about these Social Principles, [click here](#). You can also purchase the booklet from Cokesbury.com.

What is an agency in the UMC?

From umc.org: "Agencies provide resources and services that equip local congregations and provide a connection for ministry throughout the world. These organizations (councils, boards, commissions, committees, divisions or other units) can be found at all levels of the connection (churchwide, regional and local). General Conference establishes general agencies (or churchwide agencies) to provide essential services and ministries beyond the scope of individual local congregations and annual conferences, and they are important for providing a common vision, mission and ministry for the entire global church."

The UMC agencies are: Archives & History, Communications, Finance & Administration, Church & Society, Discipleship Ministries, Global Ministries, Higher Education & Ministries, Religion & Race, The Status and Role of Women, United Methodist Men, United Women in Faith, United Methodist Publishing House, and Wespith (Benefits and Investments).

To learn more about any of these, [click here](#) or go to resourceumc.org, click on Churchwide, then Agencies.

How can I find out the latest news or read about what's going on in other churches and communities?

For National and global UMC news, [click here](#) or go to umcnews.org.

For news from our conference (Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, Utah), which is called the Mountain Sky Conference, [click here](#) or go to mtnskyumc.org/news.