

The Insight

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

A Grateful Farewell to My Sending Church, by Matthew Utley

To all the beloved siblings of the FUMC Loveland community,

As many of you have likely heard by now, Bishop Kristin Stoneking intends to appoint me to full-time pastoral ministry at Mountain Vista UMC in West Jordan, Utah, beginning this July. In related news, the Board of Ordained Ministries has voted to recommend me for commissioning as a provisional elder at this year's Annual Conference in June. Pending a final vote from the clergy session, I will be commissioned and earn the official title of Rev. Matthew Utley. While full ordination is still at least a couple of years down the road, commissioning and a full-time appointment mark two significant steps on my journey toward ordained ministry.

While this is an exciting time of change, it also carries the bittersweet reality of moving away from Loveland and the FUMC community. After the youth mission trip to Billings, Montana in late June, I will conclude my time serving as youth coordinator. And so, this letter is my official, loving, and grateful farewell to the community that raised me, provided me with critical ministry experience, affirmed my call to ordained ministry, and so much more.

As Janeen Anderson often reminds us, many of you have known me since I was a small child. My family began attending this congregation when I was in preschool. From such a young age, this church provided me with a strong foundation in Christian education that set me on the path I continue to walk today. This path was further shaped during my years in the youth program. Ann Kessler offered me and other youth opportunities to participate in conference events across the UMC. She was there for my first Annual Conference, my first tangible step toward answering my call to ministry, my first General Conference, and so much more. I am deeply grateful to Ann for these opportunities and her continued support. More broadly, this congregation has consistently shown up to support its youth and children's ministries in meaningful ways.

After graduating from undergrad, this community gave me my first opportunity to serve on staff as youth coordinator. I cannot overstate how formative this experience was for my seminary education. Nor can I adequately express how meaningful my relationships with the youth of this church have been. They will be deeply missed.

FUMC Loveland will forever be my sending church—the community that recognized my spiritual gifts and calling to ordained ministry and consistently provided resources of all kinds to support my journey. Scholarships from the Foundation. Guidance from Leslie, Lee, and past pastors. Judy Graff's faithful dedication to youth ministry in retirement. My parents, Bart and Cindy, who supported me every step of the way and who, I am sure, will continue to keep me connected to the life of this community. I wish I could name every person who has shaped my faith here, but then I would risk writing a farewell book rather than a letter. It truly took a wide and diverse community of love to raise preschool Matthew into Pastor Matthew.

And so, farewell for now. I will always be grateful to FUMC Loveland for helping pave the way to this moment in my life.

With love,
Matthew Utley

Thank You from Loveland Preschool, by Jen Kuzmich

Dear First United Methodist Church,

As we wrap up our first year in your building, we wanted to take a moment to express our sincere gratitude for the warmth, generosity, and support you have shown to Loveland Preschool. From the very beginning, you welcomed us with open arms and provided a space where our students, families, and staff could feel comfortable, safe, and at home. Transitions can often come with uncertainty, but your kindness and willingness to partner with us made this year not only smooth, but truly special.

Because of your hospitality, our classrooms have been filled with laughter, learning, and meaningful growth. Our students have thrived in this environment, building friendships, exploring new ideas, and developing confidence each day. It has been a joy to watch them flourish in a space that has so quickly become an extension of our school community. We are especially grateful for your flexibility, communication, and ongoing support throughout the year. Your partnership has made a lasting impact on our program, and we deeply appreciate the role you have played in helping us create such a positive and nurturing experience for our children and families.

Thank you again for sharing your space with us and for being such an important part of our journey this year. We look forward to continuing this partnership and building on the strong foundation we have created together!

With heartfelt thanks,
Miss Jen Kuzmich
Director and Lead UPK Teacher
Loveland Preschool



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Greetings from Finance, by Charlie Bouchard

The first quarter of the year is in the books. Winter, if one can call it that, is past and the trees and flowers are in bloom. Along with the renewal of spring comes allergies and ticks - oh and a lack of water this year.

This seems like a good metaphorical start to give an update on FUMC finances. The good news is that income for the first quarter is slightly ahead of last year. The bad news is that our income is below projections. If current trends continue, we will end the year with a significant deficit, and that is not sustainable over the long term. If anyone would like the actual numbers, feel free to contact me and I am happy to share.

One other positive note is that our building is seeing a significant uptick in usage. Pam Day, our amazing office manager, has been busy fielding calls and showing folks around our building. Two years ago, we intentionally decided to use our building to better serve our community and also be able to generate some income in doing so. We now have a bustling preschool, a full orchestra, and many other folks from our community using our building. This alone will not solve our financial problems, but it helps. We have gone from virtually no facility income two years ago, to around \$12,000 in the first quarter of this year!

Thanks to all for your continued support of FUMC!

Respectfully submitted,
Charlie Bouchard, Finance Chair

News from Trustees, by Joanne Scheihing

Trustees have been busy behind the scenes although I have not been great communicating this to our congregation.

By the time this newsletter is printed, the elevator renovation project should have begun! Debbie Tikka has been working on getting this project underway for about a year and the work is finally scheduled to begin on April 27. The elevator by the sanctuary will not be available to use for about 4 – 6 weeks, with the repairs taking about 3 weeks while the rest of the time will be spent on inspections. Thank you to the Finance Committee for finding the funding for this very costly renovation and allowing our members and visitors a safe way to get around the church.

The Trustees want to send out a huge “thank you” to the 5M’s who spend countless hours keeping our aging building going. We had a boiler issue this winter as well as a blocked air line in the air conditioning system this spring causing a very uncomfortable building. The 5M’s, especially Garry Perry, were able to find the problems and get them fixed. They also had a roofer come out to make sure our roof was in good shape, fixing a few minor issues. They will be working on diverting a pipe in the Urn Garden area that was punctured by a tree root. This group of men have saved us countless dollars and alleviated so much worry by their attention to our building and we are incredibly thankful for all they do!

You may have noticed that we have a lot more groups in our church. Pam Day, our office manager, has been doing an exceptional job scheduling event space for new groups. We now have a local concert band rehearsing two mornings a week as well as other groups scheduling parties or meetings. It is great seeing such a vibrant building now!

From The Office, by Pam Day

FUMC's vision to develop and deepen ongoing relationships with our neighbors by renting out our spaces has been an exciting process! To date we have 12 new renters in 2026, proving that we are meeting a need in our community! I have enjoyed giving tours of our beautiful building and developing relationships with our renters.

As our building is being used more often by outside guests, you may occasionally need to enter through a different door or meet in a different room than usual. We truly appreciate your flexibility!

Here is a quick and helpful way to check to see if a room is being used so you can plan accordingly.

1. Go to the church website at fumcloveland.org and click calendar. Or scan the QR code with your phone here. ----->
You can also find this QR code in the glass information podiums in the main foyer and Lobby Court, as well as the bulletin board at the top of the stairs going into Lobby Court.
2. On the online calendar you will see the following:



CALENDAR

to
 Include Past Events

3. Filter your choices by clicking the month you want to view. Then click the list button or calendar, month, week or day buttons. All the events and rooms being used will be populated based on your filters.

Thank you for checking the church calendar to be informed of all that is happening at FUMC! If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to reach out to me, Pam Day (Office Manager), at office@fumcloveland.com. I'm happy to help!

Parent's Night Out, by Charlie Bouchard, submitted on behalf of Alison Williams & the ad-hoc committee

A small but dedicated committee has been working to brainstorm ways to use our facility to better serve our community. Our goal with all of these ideas is to find ways to 1) add a service that is needed and 2) have the event at least break even financially.

I am delighted to tell you that our first endeavor was a Parent's Night Out. On Friday March 27th, Alison Williams and her two staff in childcare, Ayla and Bailey (along with two volunteers), hosted 8 energetic young kids from 6-9 pm. The kids played games, ran an obstacle course, ate pizza, and had a great time. Kids were heard saying "best night ever" on their way out.

Giant kudos to Alison and her staff for all the work and creativity put into the evening. Our goal is to be able to do this monthly. At this time we believe we have the capacity to serve up to 20 kiddos ages 6 months to 10 years old. The next Parent's Night Out is April 24th. This can also be a Grandparent's Night Out. Details can be found in the Window and on fliers. Also, contact Alison. So, come drop off the kids and have a date night, or a quiet night on the couch.

Blessed Are the Volunteers, by Rev. Lee Anderson-Harris

In the beatitudes, Jesus begins each line with “Blessed are those who...” Often the word “blessed” is translated as “happy.” The word means more than a temporary state of happiness however; rather, it describes a deeper, abiding peace or contentment. I have even heard the term “soul-joy.”

As I am writing this, it is the middle of April, which is National Volunteer Month. Volunteers are what make a church thrive. Worship services, pastoral visits, church business, and classes can carry on with pastors and staff. But for a church to really be alive, the volunteers make a difference. The church is blessed, certainly. And the volunteers are blessed as they find social connection, make friends, feel the glow of a job well done, and know that they are part of something bigger and are making a difference.

On Sunday mornings, volunteers welcome people into the building and help new guests find their way. They bring our homebound folks to the church. They help lead worship through music and spoken word, and collect the offering. They create a hospitable space for fellowship and community building after worship.

Volunteers gather to deliberate and make decisions for ministry and the health of the church. They manage our resources. They keep the building in good shape and provide a secure space for us. They provide caring support to people who have lost a loved one during memorial services and inurnments. They bake bread and deliver loaves to first-time visitors and people who just need to be reminded that the church cares about them. They send cards to, make phone calls to, and pray for those going through a challenging time. They nurture our children and youth.

Volunteers support the well-being of the staff and pastors. They create new ministry and outreach ideas. They let the community know what the church is doing and invite people to join us. They go into the community to serve and remind people that God cares about them. They coordinate ways for the congregation to give to charities and schools and more.

A church can survive without many volunteers, but volunteers ensure its survival and even better, make it *thrive*.

Volunteering with others also helps *you* thrive! People have made friends through their time serving alongside others. Teams have become cherished communities. Committee work might sound dull, but I have shared many laughs and celebrations with others during committee meetings. Even setting up tables and doing tasks in the kitchen has been enjoyable because I am doing these things with others.

A church is the people. Thank you to all those who give your time to make FUMC what it is. If you are not yet involved as a volunteer, or are looking for what’s next as a volunteer, here are some particular opportunities to consider that I am focused on right now.

- ***Congregational care and connection.*** In addition to the support that pastors provide, FUMC members/attenders benefit from knowing their church family cares about them. A simple phone call to check in and ask how someone is doing can go a long way to express care and help people stay connected during a difficult time. I would love to expand the number of people in a phone call ministry. Better yet, you do not need to join a committee or add meetings to your calendar.

- **Marketing/Outreach.** FUMC has a pretty good social media and newspaper presence thanks to the work of a faithful volunteer! As social media and online presence is frequently evolving, even more minds, hearts, and hands would be welcome in this area. And you might have knowledge and ideas that take us beyond our current channels too! We want to let the community know what a great church FUMC is.

This is not a complete list, however. If you are wondering how your own gifts, skills, and personality might fit into the bigger picture, let's talk! I would love to learn more about you and help you get connected. Please reach out to me at lee@fumcloveland.com or (970) 667-0876 to talk more.

As we are growing our fellowship opportunities, we would also like to grow in our capacity to make these valuable social times go smoothly for all. Please read on for more about this from Tom Pitts, one of our volunteers.

Volunteering for Fellowship Activities: Our members' fellowship gatherings (fellowship hours, Sunday salads mission dinners, potlucks, etc.) are extremely important in bringing us and holding us together as a church. There is definitely a very positive spiritual element to these shared social gatherings. Fellowship events also provide an opportunity for welcoming visitors and new members.

We do have a need for more volunteers to support fellowship activities. With enough volunteers, we can provide opportunities for service to many members and not just a few. Volunteering to support these events is a personal way of giving to our church and our members.

We are putting a list together of church members who may be available assist at one or more the activities listed below. Volunteers will not be expected to help at every event. Members on the list of available volunteers for specific activities will be asked if they are available to assist for a specific event.

If you could be available to help with one or more of these activities, please send an email with your phone number to office@fumcloveland.com or call 970-667-0876 and indicate the activity or activities/times you could help with.

Door greeters: 4 greeters needed each Sunday, 9:30 to 10:00 AM

Fellowship Hour – 1st and 3rd Sunday of Each Month: 2 volunteers are needed from 9:00 AM to 10:00 AM to assist in setting up tables/chairs and moving treats to the tables. 1 or 2 volunteers are needed in the kitchen from 9:00 to 10:00 AM. 2 volunteers are needed after fellowship hour from approximately 11:45 AM to 12:30 PM to help with cleanup and putting tables and chairs away.

Salad Sundays-4th Sunday of each month: 1 or 2 volunteers are needed from 9:30 to 10:00 AM to set up tables and chairs. 1 or 2 volunteers are needed from approximately 11:45 AM to 12:15 PM to help with clean up and putting tables and chairs away.

Mission Dinners: Wednesday, 5:30 PM, every two months: 2 volunteers are needed from 4:30 to 5:30 to set up tables and chairs; 2 volunteers are needed 6:15 to 6:45 PM to clean up and put away tables and chairs.

Thanks so much for supporting these important activities with your time and effort.

Greetings from Your New Pastor

The FUMC Staff-Parish Relations Committee shares this letter from Pastor Don Bird. Look for his full biography in the June issue of The Insight.

Friends of First UMC Loveland,

Grace and peace to you.

As I prepare to join you in ministry, I do so with deep gratitude for the faithful witness of your congregation. For 161 years, the people of First UMC Loveland have shown up—in seasons of growth and uncertainty, celebration and challenge—to be a living expression of Christ’s love in your community. That kind of steady faithfulness does not happen by accident. It is cultivated through prayer, courage, and a willingness to keep saying “yes” to God’s unfolding future.

I come to you with an open heart and an open posture.

Open to listening well—to your stories, your hopes, your griefs, your questions.

Open to honoring the sacred trust of what has been built across generations.

Open to discerning together what it means to be a strong, vibrant United Methodist presence in Loveland today.

Your mission—to “strive to bless and serve our local and world communities while living the teachings of Jesus...to accept people as they are and strive to live in harmony with God and all of divine creation”—is both beautiful and bold. In a world that often divides and diminishes, that kind of clarity matters. An inclusive and welcoming church is not simply a statement; it is a daily practice. It is spiritual work. It is gospel work.

As new conversations unfold about how we strengthen our shared United Methodist witness in Loveland, I believe our task is not to reinvent the church but to rediscover our courage. What does it look like now to bless and serve? Where is Jesus already at work in this community? How might we deepen our harmony with God and all of creation in ways that are tangible and transformative?

I do not arrive with all the answers. I arrive with curiosity, commitment, and confidence that the Holy Spirit is not finished with us. The same Spirit who sustained First UMC for over a century and a half is still stirring imagination, still calling disciples, still inviting us into courageous love.

I am honored to begin this journey with you. May our shared ministry be marked by trust, creativity, humility, and a deep joy in following Jesus together.

With hope for the journey,

Pastor Don Bird