

The Insight

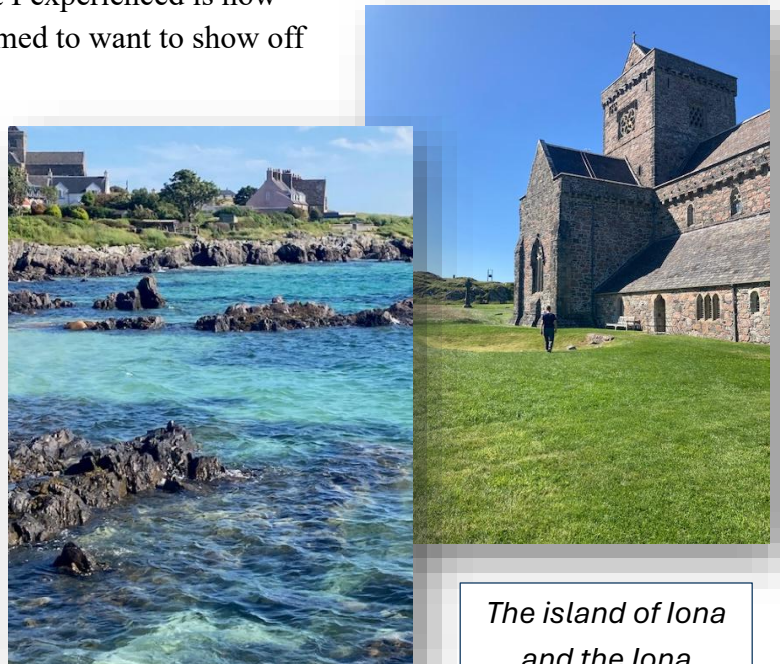
Giving *insight* into the life of FUMC Loveland and keeping our mission *in sight*.

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

During my 6-week sabbatical this summer, I spent almost 3 weeks in Scotland with my husband and mother-in-law. We had been talking about taking this trip for a long time, and a lot of planning and saving went into it. But because it was during renewal leave, it was about more to me than just seeing the sights. I wanted to listen for God's voice on this trip. I wanted to let Scotland teach me what it had to teach. I was not disappointed.

One of the life lessons I received from God pertains to the expectation I just mentioned: Because it was renewal leave, I wanted to listen for God's voice. How often have I approached "spiritual time" with the mindset that I have a set-apart time to be with God, or to be still and listen! I seem to have a deeply ingrained idea that I create spiritual moments by carving out specific time for them, being in the "right" frame of mind, and even doing something like reading from a theologian's book, a devotion, or scripture. Don't get me wrong, I think all of these things are important to do. They nurture me and my relationship with God. But the God moments I experienced in Scotland came when I wasn't looking for them. I might be better primed to notice them if I had spent time in stillness and prayer that morning. However, I got the sense that God was saying to me that renewal is not just about mountain top experiences, major new insights, or deep theological reflection. It is about reconnecting with myself and the everyday intimacy of God.

I have heard people say that Iona is a thin place, meaning the veil between this world and the spiritual world is thin there. Having been there, I don't doubt it. What I experienced is how playful creation is. I encountered a seagull who seemed to want to show off his flying skills for me. I sat on the rocks while the tide came in, and the waves splashed playfully onto me, almost as though they were trying to get my attention. I just felt more in tune with everything, and I had no reason to rush or to be lost in thought, and so I noticed these things. I not only noticed them, but I let joy come to me in these moments. I left the island with the intention to pay more attention to the *playfulness* of nature in my life. This has carried over into other aspects of life so far, not just in nature. There are many opportunities to be playful, or to notice glimmers of joy, even in the mundane, even in the midst of a difficult task. I don't think this is an accident.



*The island of Iona
and the Iona
Abbey.*

But it wasn't just on Iona that I felt more in tune with God and the universe. Jeremiah and I went on a few hikes, and on one of these hikes we decided to find a place to sit and just enjoy being in the lush green woods. In our stillness, a little bird approached me, looking at me and hopping closer as though he was curious. If we were on a picnic bench eating sandwiches in a busy setting, I would have assumed he was looking for food. But we weren't, so this encounter caught my attention! I sat for some time like this, welcoming him, inviting him closer. He spent some time getting closer and sizing me up. He flew away, but that memory will stay with me.

*On a "woods walk" as they say
in Scotland.*



Let us not forget that when we talk about God's creation, we are not just talking about animals and the great outdoors. We...humans...are part of God's creation. I didn't need to be "in nature" to experience that connection with creation. The people we encountered shaped our experience too. We met so many friendly people, people who seemed to genuinely want to be helpful. It was a contrast to encounters with strangers I so often have here in the States. Here, it's not uncommon to feel a wall come up between yourself and other people. There is a skepticism, a hesitation to help. In Scotland, I found myself, with time, letting my own guard down. And I received help that I did not expect, and could not have planned for myself.

On our return from Iona, I had planned for us to take the bus back across the island of Mull at a specific time and catch the ferry back to Oban. Yes, I made a spreadsheet for these details. Turns out, I did not look at the Sunday bus schedule. There was one morning bus, and we had missed it. Frantically, I dialed a taxi service I read about. He was booked for the day but gave me a website to look at. I got to the last name on the list, and fortunately, he was on his way to where we were with another passenger, and could take us where we needed to be. I was able to change our ferry time since we'd be arriving at the terminal later than planned, but it would mean missing our distillery tour, for which we had bought tickets in advance. But, it was a delightful conversation with our taxi driver on our way across the island! We had common interests, and he gave me driving pointers for when I ended up on single track roads as a driver myself. We arrived at the ferry terminal just as an earlier ferry was loading. He told us that if we tried to check in for this ferry, there was a good chance they'd let us on. It worked, we got on the ferry and got back to Oban in time for our tour! What's more, I think the conversation and laughs we had with our driver might have been good for his soul too. I noticed he charged me less than what the meter said, and he would not take a tip. What at first looked like a failure turned out to be even better.

There were other moments when we couldn't help but notice that there seemed to be no accidents. People intervened at just the right time. Their kindness lifted my spirits. I struggle with the theology that God gives you what you pray for, such as praying for a parking spot and then finding one. But there were many moments when I prayed for such things, and things worked out. I thanked God each time. And even if things didn't work out any differently, I felt better about it. That in itself is a gift! These moments don't just happen in seemingly magical places like Scotland. I just notice them more when I *take the time* to notice. And so, I came away with another intention for myself: Be open to "magical" moments.

I wish I could say the bus schedule mishap was the only mistake I made. I mean, I had a spreadsheet, for crying out loud! But the spreadsheet was wrong; I made mistakes. Which meant my husband and mother-in-law were impacted. They seemed to care less than I did. If it were just me, it would be one thing! But I was responsible for their enjoyment! At least, that was what I caught myself thinking, more than once. And that thinking put a damper on my own enjoyment. All of us are responsible to others in various ways. We have a responsibility to look out for one another, to give our best selves to a team, to do a job well done, and so on. I believe in doing my best for myself and for others. But I noticed God seemed to be pointing out to me how much *inappropriate* responsibility I tend to heap on myself. The cousin of this is to set high expectations for yourself and then be hard on yourself when you don't meet those expectations. Both of these habits are life-robbing energy vampires. They don't actually help you avoid mistakes, be productive, or meet your goals, they just steal joy and peace.

So often, we think we should be somewhere else other than where we are. People get so focused on the person they want to be that they have no love for the person they are now. This is heartbreaking when you think about it. This desire to be somewhere-other-than-here creeps into a lot of aspects of life. It creeps into goal setting and trying to make healthy changes and choices. I also hear this in my conversations with people who are in some phase of recovery from surgery or an illness or who are coping with the many changes due to aging. There is a longing, even an expectation, to be young again or to be restored to the way things were. It is easy and understandable to be frustrated when you aren't where you would like to be. Too easy! What I hear, however, is God's voice saying "I love you as you are. Love yourself too." What that means certainly looks different for each person and situation, but the voice remains constant.

I recognize that I freely use myself as an example in talking about God lessons. I don't always feel comfortable doing so, but I am amazed at how blessed I am each time I learn that someone else has had a similar experience to mine, and I want to give that back. I have returned from Scotland, but the gifts I received work just as well here, in my everyday life. It's a magical place, but magic happens every day. May I, and may you, be blessed by witnessing it. God certainly is in the details!



The 3 Sisters, in the Highlands near Glencoe.

Meet FUMC's Newest Members!



FUMC is delighted to welcome Jay and Tena Britt as our newest members. Jay and Tena have lived in Loveland for quite a while. Jay was born in Santa Ana, CA and has lived in Kansas and, of course, Colorado. Currently, he works for the City of Greeley as Deputy Director of IT. When he isn't working, Jay enjoys being with his family and woodworking.

Tena was born in Carthage, Illinois. Besides the Midwest and Colorado, she has lived in Texas, Arizona and California. Tena retired as an engineer from Woodward this past year. Family time is also important to her. She also enjoys horses, painting and gardening. Both Jay and Tena love to travel. In fact, the picture to the left is of them "somewhere" in Ireland right now, at the time of this writing. The Britt's have two sons. Alec, 30, lives in Greeley, while Garrett, 26, lives in Waco, TX. The Britt's joined FUMC on transfer of membership from First Congregational Church here in Loveland. Welcome, Jay and Tena!

Youth Mission Trip 2025, by Matthew Utley

This year FUMC youth and adult sponsors went to Nashville TN for their mission trip. They worked for Preston Taylor Ministries (PTM) and Ebenezer UMC. At PTM they played and interacted with young children. At Ebenezer they painted kitchen cabinets and an outdoor pavilion. The youth also enjoyed time around campfires, downtown Nashville, and at the Country Music Hall of Fame. Thank you to everyone who has donated money and/or participated in our fundraisers to help make these trips happen!



Back to School...for Adults!

We are beginning the fall season with a couple of deep-thinking theological and Biblical studies! In September, you have the opportunity to learn from a variety of teachers via online lectures in **God of Justice: Where Ancient Wisdom Meets Contemporary Longing**. The course description states, “This transformative online class brings together distinguished scholars from biblical studies, theology, history, and faith leadership to offer exactly what our moment demands: the rich, textured wisdom of multiple academic disciplines speaking into our contemporary quest for justice. Here you'll discover how ancient texts illuminate modern struggles, how theological reflection deepens social action, and how historical understanding opens new possibilities for faithful engagement with our world's brokenness and beauty.” While this course is online and you can watch the lectures and Q&A sessions at your own pace, participants from TUMC and FUMC will gather with Revs. Lee, Leslie, and Bryson for two in-person gatherings to reflect on the study together. These will be held on Sundays at 11:30, September 21 at TUMC and September 28 at FUMC. Come to both for rich discussion over a light lunch! To get registration information, contact Rev. Lee at lee@fumcleveland.com.

Then, in October, TUMC is hosting another class and warmly welcomes FUMC participants. In **Versus: A Church History Study**, you'll learn that Christian doctrine didn't just fall out of the sky. It was forged in fiery debates and real struggles over who Jesus is, how we're saved, and what truth really means. This is a four-week journey through some of the church's most important theological face-offs: from Arius and Athanasius debating Jesus' divinity, to Augustine and Pelagius wrestling over grace, to the early church's battles against Gnosticism. Each week, we'll meet the bold figures behind these debates, explore their ideas, and discover why these ancient struggles still matter for our faith today. Whether you're new to church history or a lifelong learner, Versus invites you to engage, question, and grow in your understanding of what we believe—and why. Come join the conversation and see how faith deepens when beliefs clash! These are in-person classes at TUMC, with an option for Zoom, held on October 8, 15, 22, and 29 from 1:00-2:00pm. Desserts are provided! Stay tuned for registration information.



Oh, what a beautiful morning!

Jeff Duran took this photo on June 15, which happens to be the morning that Joy Shaw preached!

Mission Memo, by Mark Elliott

Faith Build

Shout out to the fine folks from our church who came out to the Habitat for Humanity Faith Build the last Saturday in July. We met up early that morning at the Grace Gardens development. After a bit of a wait for the construction lead, who was running late, we got checked in and were blessed with a prayer from Reverend Steve as part of this year's Faith Build theme, "Feed, Pray, Build". Then it was off to a Habitat built home behind the Walmart on Hwy 34. There, we spent the day cleaning up the landscaping around the house by raking rocks, leveling the ground, laying weed barrier, washing rocks and ultimately putting the rocks back.



Loveland Habitat for Humanity retains the first right to buy back a home they've built. This was the case for the home we were working on. Habitat restores and upgrades these reacquired homes for the next owner. On touring the home, we found freshly painted walls, new quartz countertops, new appliances ready for installation, and a new air conditioner that felt great after working out in the heat.

We learned that a Habitat owner, who must qualify for the zero percent mortgage, only earns equity of about 2% per year after three years in the home. This is to discourage owners from turning around and selling

to reap any appreciation in a hot market. With this model, Habitat attempts to maintain affordable housing.

If this sounds like something you would like to support, the next FUMC Faith Build day is coming up on Saturday, Sept. 27th. Following this year's theme, lunch will be included! So sign up online by following the link below (preferred), or there will be a sign up sheet at the Volunteer Hub.

<https://lovelandhabitat.charityproud.org/VolunteerRegistration/?groupcode=Loveland27090>

Guatemala

Time to start planning for your Guatemala winter getaway. A must see is the Chichicastenago market, known as the most colorful market in Central America, also as one of the largest and most historic. Fortunately, the next Pura Vida mission trip is headquartered there at Hotel Santo Tomas, giving you the opportunity to stroll the streets packed with vendor stalls on Sundays and Thursdays. When not shopping, you can help construct a cinderblock home for a deserving Guatemalan family. As a bonus, spend a couple nights in Antigua, once the capital of Guatemala and now designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. FUMC's mission trip with Pura Vida is scheduled for Feb 13th thru 22nd. The cost is \$1475 plus airfare. The deadline for submitting applications is fast approaching, so contact Mary Small for more details at Smallmk@msn.com.



Trustees Report, by Joanne Scheihing, Vice-Chair

The Trustees have been busy with a lot of behind the scenes projects this summer, working with the Building Use Committee, Design and Décor Committee and the 5M's.

Since our last report, we have finished the flooring project throughout the church. 23,289 square feet of carpet and LVP flooring were installed over a period of about 8 months. We thank everyone for your understanding and patience while this huge project was going on.

You may have noticed some major changes in the Heart Hub (aka Coy Hall). The walls have all been painted (thank you, Jerry Yoder) and a new television has been installed, replacing the old screen. A new system is in place to make presentations much easier. Abiding Memorial Funds provided the money for this, as well as the improvement of our internet connections throughout the building and new safety glass in the balcony overlooking the sanctuary, both of which will happen in the next few months.

Trustees have been focusing on tree care and will have the large dead pine tree on the west side of the parking lot removed shortly. Ash trees not treated by the city will be treated and other trees trimmed.

Trustees has signed a contract to have the sanctuary elevator completely overhauled. We are waiting to hear from the company as to a start date. The elevator will be down for 3 weeks, and we will update everyone when we are notified.

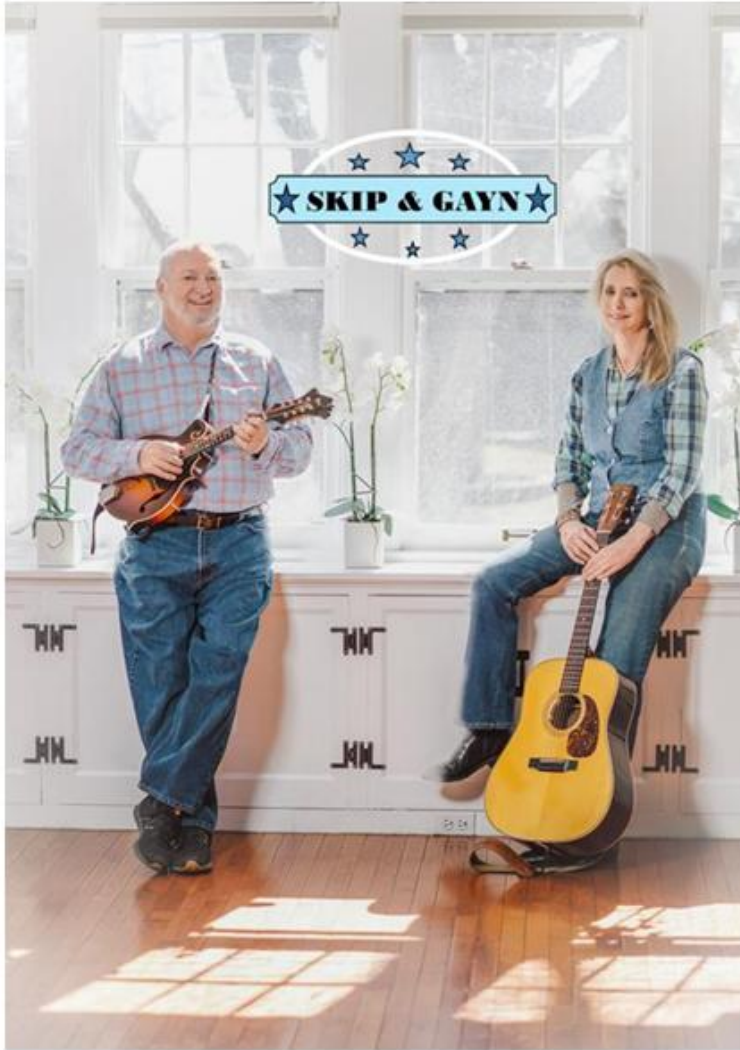
We want to thank the 5M's for putting in a new handrail on the north side of the ramp going into the sanctuary. We are always looking for ways to improve the safety of our building. Let us know if you have any concerns about anything.

Volunteers, You Are Appreciated! by Rev. Leslie Wood

Rev. Lee and I begin every day thankful. There are many things that we are thankful for, but high up on our gratitude-list are all the volunteers that make FUMC a special and sacred community of faith. The rest of your staff feel the same way.

We want to express our thanks with a **Volunteer Appreciation Sunday on September 14th**. That morning, we're very excited to welcome the music duo, Skip & Gayn, who will lead a special time of worship through word and music. Gaynor Nelson is a musician, artist and mother of one, playing guitar, ukulele and singing for the Skip & Gayn duo. Skip Strickland is a retired pastor and District Superintendent in the Mountain Sky Conference of the UMC and has been playing, singing and leading some form of music and worship all his life. For the past three years, Skip and Gaynor have also been leading worship at churches throughout Colorado, combining music with a message centered around themes of love, kindness, and acceptance.

Joining Skip & Gayne that morning will be our own Spirit Sounds Bell Choir, back from their summer break and ready to ring in their 41st year of splendid musical offerings during worship at FUMC. We will all be blessed on September 14th by our time of worshipping God together through the message and music, music, music!



To make the morning even more special, before worship begins that morning, FUMC staff want to express our gratitude to all our laity volunteers who have helped FUMC "be the church" over the past year by serving a thank-you breakfast. Those who have volunteered over the past year *at* FUMC or *through* FUMC with one of our community partners (see list below), are invited to breakfast. Come to Heart Hub (Coy Hall), between 8:15 and 9:15am to enjoy a delicious warm breakfast and warm conversation, as you're served and cared for by your FUMC staff members.

Breakfast will be lovingly prepared by our own volunteer chef, Carl Williams. His tasty fare will be sure to fill your tummies and your hearts.

If you have volunteered in any way for any amount of time this past year, you are invited to this Volunteer Appreciation Breakfast. **RSVP is required**, so please let us know if you plan to attend by contacting our office manager, Pam Day, at office@fumcloveland.com, or signing the RSVP form on the Ask-Me Desk, **no later than September 7th**. We look forward to sharing our gratitude with a delicious breakfast and nice time together, followed by a special worship experience!

FUMC ministry partners: Safelot Loveland, Angel Tree, Christmas food baskets, Circle of Life, Community Kitchen, Food Bank for Larimer County, Habitat for Humanity, Kids Pak, Mobile Laundry Truck, Pura Vida (Guatemala mission partner)

Volunteers at FUMC: Church committees, Chancel Choir, Special Music, Spirit Sounds Bell Choir, 5Ms, Y.A.R.N. (knitting group), Charity Quilt Group, Women's Fellowship, Men's Fellowship, Alzheimer's/Dementia Caregivers' Support Group, Care Team, Workout with Anita, Holy Happy Hour, Oasis study, Conversations Class, Soul Feast Book Study, Centering Prayer, Speaking of Spanish, Union Ministry, Mission & Service Teams, Youth Ministries, Children's Ministries, Bus Ministry, Prayer & Care Ministry, Liturgists/Readers, Children's Message Leaders, Altarscape/Sanctuary Decorators, AV Tech Booth Volunteers, Ushers, Greeters, Communion Stewards/Servers, Sunday School/Bible/Book Study Teachers, Ask Me Desk Volunteers, Hospitality, Bereavement Team, Facility Upgrade Volunteers, Lay Leader, Lay Delegates to Annual Conference, Devotional Writers/Contributors, Insight Newsletter Article Contributors, Delivery Drivers, and more!

A Reflection of My Korea Pilgrimage, by Matthew Utley

My experiences in Korea on the Young Adult Pilgrimage of Peace (Y.A.P.P.) brought me face to face with what has mostly been academic conceptualizations. I saw the consequences of war, violence, and oppression. I heard witness testimonies of this pain and the ongoing injustices of truth buried.

I also saw the hope of peace through justice. A peace that does not comply with the institutions of violence, but resists oppression as Jesus Christ has taught Christians to do. Peace with justice is not simply the absence of violence, but the liberation and reunification of people held captive by oppressive forces. I specifically saw that there is much more to Korea's story than the war between the North and South. There is much more to the North than the oversimplifications perpetuated by media outlets in America and other areas of the world. Rather, while I did see a variety of emotions displayed on the topic of reunification, I saw Christ-like neighborly love where there is normally only disdain.

Peace work is not simple. When done right it is messy. It is a disruption to systems that perpetuate violence for the benefit of the powerful. Yet it is the work that Christ calls us to be a part of. It is the work Jesus did on Earth. It is the work that is still needed now, in Korea and many other places within a broken world desperate for healing.



“Did I offer peace today? Did I bring a smile to someone’s face? Did I say words of healing? Did I let go of my anger and resentment? Did I forgive? Did I love? These are the real questions. I must trust that the little bit of love that I sow now will bear many fruits, here in this world and the life to come.”

~Henri Nouwen

Forgiveness: Within You, by Desiree Aragon

This season, the children's ministry is exploring the themes of reconciliation, awe, and trust. I'd like to introduce an ancient practice of reconciliation and spiritual healing, which may be familiar or new to you: Ho'oponopono.

Ho'oponopono is an ancient Hawaiian practice of forgiveness and reconciliation, designed to restore balance and harmony within oneself and with others. It involves taking responsibility for one's actions, acknowledging wrongdoing, seeking forgiveness, and ultimately finding peace and healing.

The core of Ho'oponopono lies in repeating the following mantra: "I'm sorry; Please forgive me; Thank you; I love you."



Guided Practice:

Think of someone with whom you may be experiencing difficulties, perhaps even yourself.

1. Lie on your back or sit comfortably.
2. Place one hand on your heart and the other on your belly.
3. Close your eyes and visualize the person with whom you'd like to make amends.
4. Focus on your breathing and repeat the Ho'oponopono mantra until you feel a sense of relief towards that person.

Discipleship in Divided Times: The Practice of Presence Today

By Brian Tener, from UMC Discipleship. Posted July 16, 2025 on umcdiscipleship.org.

In a time when our nation's fractures feel more visible than our shared humanity, and the noise of public discourse has grown louder than our ability to listen, the church is invited to its ancient calling: to be a nonanxious, compassionate, and faithful presence. As divisions intensify (much of which is a tactic of empire—to divide people), many of us wonder how to speak into the noise without being consumed by it. I often find myself overconsuming information and upon so feeling paralyzed, then I recognize that to move forward and take faithful action I must turn the news off, remove distractions, and utilize the tools of contemplation so that I can be more aware and more faithful to God's nudgings.

This is not the first time Christians have navigated cultural upheaval. However, we may be among the first to do so, given our immediate access to digital headlines, the seemingly ideological entrenchment of everyone, and the fragmented nature of our relationships along political lines. In this moment, community engagement and evangelism are not about programming; they are about presence. What does it mean to show up in our neighborhoods, not as combatants in culture wars, but as agents of reconciliation and hope?

The Challenge of Polarization

The U.S. is marked by deep and growing divides—political, racial, generational, and theological. Pew Research and other studies confirm what we already suspect: Americans trust institutions less, engage in conversations with one another across differences less frequently, and struggle to coexist in proximity to those with opposing views. Social media algorithms send us news and stories, not the most important ones or the ones we should see immediately, but stories that fit the narratives being built through what we've been consuming. In our divides, we often find ourselves living in an information bubble without even realizing it.

Polarization seeps into congregations, pulpit expectations, school board meetings, and even prayer requests. For pastors and lay leaders alike, this climate can create fear: fear of saying the wrong thing, fear of losing members, fear of being labeled or misunderstood. But fear is not our guide. Love is.

Jesus and the Politics of Presence

Jesus was born into an empire just as polarized as our own. His time was characterized by Roman occupation, religious infighting, and social stratification. But he refused to be co-opted by any one faction. He chose, instead, the slow, relational, embodied work of proximity. He ate with sinners and Pharisees, touched lepers and listened to Gentiles, rebuked injustice and extended mercy—all without compromising his integrity.

Jesus modeled a politics of presence. He did not avoid conflict, but he refused to reduce people to their positions. He walked among the people. He looked them in the eyes. He told stories that didn't always end with answers, but with invitations to reimagine the world.

That is our model today: not shouting matches or theological withdrawal, but faithful engagement through listening, storytelling, shared meals, and courageous conversations. The church must resist the pull to mirror the world's divisiveness. Instead, it must embody the radical center of the gospel, where truth and grace meet.

Spiritual Practices for Grounded Engagement

To resist the pull of partisanship and fear, leaders must cultivate practices that keep them rooted in Christ's peace. As John Mark Comer reminds us in *Practicing the Way*, we need a rhythm of life that makes space for silence, prayer, and listening to God. Without it, we're more likely to react out of fear instead of faithfulness, or worse, we may find ourselves untethered in our relationship with God and floundering about, trying to gain control over the information that comes across our screen but wind up in paralysis.

Joan Chittister, in *The Monastic Heart*, reminds us that hospitality is a deeply spiritual act that makes space within ourselves for the other to exist without threat. She writes, "Hospitality is the way we turn a place into a home, a stranger into a friend, and a moment into grace."

What if our churches—and our lives—could become homes like that?

Here are a few practices to consider:

- The Daily Examen with a Civic Lens – Reflect on where you encountered division or peace, where you judged quickly, and where you loved well.
- Community Prayer Walks – Walk your neighborhood weekly, praying not for your church to grow, but for your community to heal.
- Listening Circles – Gather diverse voices for intentional story-sharing without debate or rebuttal. Practice the sacred act of listening.
- A Rule of Life for Community Witness – Create shared rhythms with your leadership team that include rest, service, listening, and hospitality.

A Hopeful Witness in Divided Times

The witness of the church has always shone brightest in fractured places, not because we fix the world, but because we refuse to give up on it. Every week at the church I attend, we close our service with a benediction that includes these lines from Matthew 5:15-16 (NRSV): "*No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.*"

We're sent out to offer light and hope through our presence in the places we go, to build relationships, to be present, and to offer love and life amid an empire that works through fear, scarcity, and division. The work ahead of us is not about choosing sides but about choosing to remain faithful to God and the people and things that God loves.

As United Methodists, we are uniquely positioned for this moment. Our theology of grace, our tradition of social holiness, and our connectional nature give us a sturdy framework for both inner formation and outward engagement.

So, let us lean into this calling, not with fear, but with courage; not with cynicism, but with hope. Let us offer a different witness than what the world offers; let us witness to what it looks like to live as citizens of God's kingdom so that others may know the love of God, and this world will be transformed.