



First Presbyterian Church of Littleton

1609 W. Littleton Blvd. Littleton, CO 80120

www.littletonpresbyterian.org ♦ fpcl@fpcl.org ♦ 303-798-1389

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Pixabay

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***19 And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of people."
Matthew 4:19***

**Join us for
Worship Every
Sunday at 10am**

A Message from Pastor Jonathan



Matthew 16:21-23, CEB (Contemporary English Bible)
Jesus began to show his disciples that he had to go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders, chief priests, and legal experts, and that he had to be killed and raised on the third day. Then Peter took hold of Jesus and, scolding him, began to correct him: “God forbid, Lord! This won’t happen to you.” But [Jesus] turned to Peter and said, “Get behind me, Satan. You are a stone that could make me stumble, for you are not thinking God’s thoughts but human thoughts.”

I suspect this is a passage you have heard or read before. Typical Peter, putting his own desires and plans before considering anyone else and certainly not discerning God’s plan. He tells Jesus, “*You’ve got this wrong!*” To me, Peter always sounded like an arrogant friend who has never considered that anyone else had something right and is ready to tell you all the ways you are wrong because what could be hasn’t been in your experience.



Having read it again, though, I hear Peter, not being sweet and protective, but being rude and controlling. I can almost see Peter taking hold of Jesus by the shoulders, pointing a finger in Jesus’ face, scolding him, and attempting to correct him (*likely in a patronizing tone*).

I don’t hear Peter saying, “*If you go you might get yourself hurt*” I hear, instead, Peter saying, “*Suffering is beneath you, Jesus, because Messiah is above that stuff; you don’t need to be hurt. Don’t be foolish!*”

And where I once saw Peter being direct and concerned, I had (also) seen Jesus respond harshly to Peter. I heard Jesus saying, “*Get in the back of the line, you devil! And let that be a lesson to you!*” What I read in the interaction as Jesus dismisses Peter, is sending Peter to the principal’s office and turning to the other disciples, asking, “*Anyone else?*”

But due to a conversation I had the other day and then reading this text gave me a reason to consider a different interpretation. When Jesus says “*get behind me, Satan*” it is commonly understood as a stern rebuke, and understandably so. But the Greek ‘*οπισσου μου*’ [oh-pi-sow mau] which is translated here “*get behind me*” is the same ‘*οπισσου μου*’ [oh-pi-sow mau] that Jesus says earlier in Matthew’s gospel as when He invites them to: “*Follow me*” (Matthew 4:19).

So, as I consider this difference in translation, I am hearing Jesus calling Peter (*and the other disciples, yes, us included*) to even deeper discipleship... a more firm ‘follow me’ in the words ‘get behind me!’ A doubling down of Jesus’ call to get


squarely behind him as he ventures onward to Jerusalem where a cross awaits, and, with it, resurrection and new life. Peter is not the only disciple (then or now) who seeks to accomplish his or her own goals or agendas. Too often we do not learn the voice of God so we do not listen (*nor know how to listen*) as God guides us to where God wants to bring us in order to achieve through us God's purposes.

- The world is changing around us, just as it was changed around the first disciples... we cannot continue forward the same way we have journeyed in the past. What is Jesus calling us to do differently? How might FPCL's discipleship, presence, mission look going forward?
- What are ways we can consider a different point-of-view when a beloved child of God shares their story with us (especially when it challenges ways we have understood God's presence and call)?

If you have not learned/heard already, one of my favorite adages – one I try to apply to myself as well as to others – is '*there's grace for that.*' And here in this passage, if we consider this interpretation of Jesus' words to Peter, I hear grace. That's what Jesus shows, *grace*. And, for me, that's the lesson we need to hear, likely again and again. Jesus never gives up on Peter even when he's acting out of fear or behaving out of self-preservation, because those actions aren't who Peter is. Jesus knows Peter, the real Peter is the one we see proclaim the gospel at Pentecost.

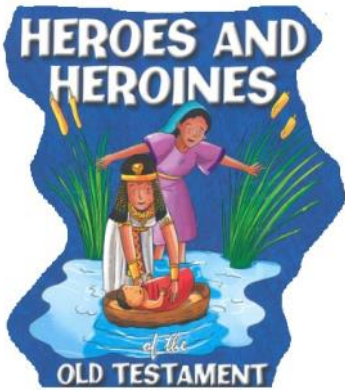
We are made in God's image and our authentic selves are always trying to do our best: *to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God and one another* (Micah 6:8). May we be reminded of that today and tomorrow and always, as we follow Jesus into the mystery of God's abundant love that never gives up on us; and may that reminder inform how we see one another, similarities and differences, and be a reminder of how we are to treat one another. That's a lesson Jesus offers through this interaction with Peter. This is a lesson we need to impress upon our behavior and actions in a world that is changing, and needs to hear grace.

Let us *double down* in our commitment as *disciples of Jesus* as we live, move, and have our being, and align our authentic selves with God's Spirit... because friends, *there's grace for that.*



The Reverend Jonathan Murray*
Pastor, First Presbyterian, Littleton

**My door is open to you.*
Blakeley



Summer Sermon Series

'Faith Leaders of the Old Testament' - Sundays in worship (starting May 26) we will explore the situation and actions of a Faith Leader from the Old Testament. This person will not always act in faithful ways, but we will see how God's grace and actions were at work in, through, and, sometimes in spite of, the person. You are also invited to join in a Bible Study during Sunday School that will explore a deeper look at each of the Faith Leaders. Come at 8:45a for Sunday School and stay for worship!

Hello from Pastor Blakeley *Welcomed back*

Hey FPCL family! Over this past month, it's been great to be back in my role as Pastor of Christian Discipleship, after taking a couple of weeks' break for family leave following the arrival of our baby Samuel! Melisa and I feel so loved and supported by the church family, and



we really appreciate everyone who has called, emailed, texted, and written to check in on our family, as well as the many thoughtful gifts we've received! When I returned in mid-March it was a very busy time around the church as we prepared for Holy Week 2024. This is always such a meaningful season at FPCL, and I thoroughly enjoyed



getting to take part in some special worship services along with you all for Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. Easter of course was a very joyful day! Welcomed by beautiful spring weather, we saw great crowds at our two worship services, and enjoyed a warm time of fellowship at the pancake breakfast in-between. Thanks to the Cub Scouts for

putting that breakfast together again for us this year! Then after the 10am service, the children gathered for our annual Easter Egg Hunt. Despite our best intentions to find more creative

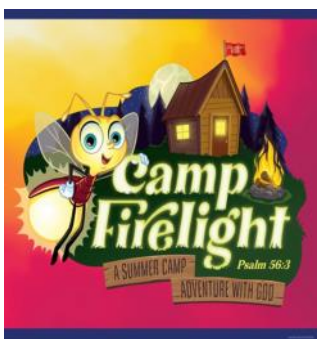


hiding places this year, all of the eggs disappeared in what seemed to be just a few minutes!

Speaking of Children's ministry, we had another special event with the kiddos on Saturday, April 6th. FPCL member Amanda Boldenow is now the co-owner of a recently-opened bookstore in downtown Littleton—Spell Books. So we took a group of children there on a Saturday morning to support her business!



Amanda provided us an outstanding selection of several different Christian-themed titles for kids. We then purchased for each child the book of their choice, and capped off our bookstore visit with a stop at everyone's favorite lunch spot—Chick-Fil-A! Also, Amanda was kind enough to donate a couple of additional titles to our children's ministry! We will definitely enjoy using them for story time with the kids in the future!



Meanwhile, as spring progresses towards summer that can mean only one thing—Vacation Bible School is on the way! This year's VBS—"Camp Firelight", will have an outdoors/summer camp theme, and will take place from **Wednesday May 29th through Saturday, June 1st, from 9am to 12pm each day**. Throughout the week, children will learn about facing their fears by trusting in God! As in years past, participants will be part of a

team rotating together through different stations including Opening/Closing Celebrations (with music), crafts, science experiments (new for this year!), Bible stories, recreation, snacks, and team time! And of course, as always, at FPCL our VBS is 100% free for your family! We do ask you to register in advance however, just so that our staff can be prepared for how many children to expect. Here is the link to our online registration form:

<https://first-presbyterian.littleton.mycokesburyvbs.com/register-child>



With the FPCL Youth ministry, our next event will be a fun-filled day together on Saturday, April 27th. This will combine our typical monthly gathering—"First Impressions" with the entertainment of an outreach event. "First Impressions" gatherings involve food, a devotional, and a group prayer time, but on the 27th that will be followed by a Scavenger Hunt! I'm also very pleased to share with you that our FPCL youth continue to set a wonderful example in their willingness to serve. In the month of May we will have youth volunteering to help out in the nursery, as Communion servers, and with Vacation Bible School. Way to go!

Pastoral notes

As I've shared with you before, one of my favorite parts of the job is getting a chance to visit with our church members in their homes and apartments. So if there is ever a specific visit you'd like me to make, whether on behalf of someone else, or for yourself—please don't hesitate to ask! I'm hoping also in the future to bring Pastor Jonathan along on some of these visits as he continues to get to know everyone in the congregation--so be on the lookout for us! Also, pastoral care doesn't always have to mean an actual visit—I'm always happy to pray for you or your loved ones, and whenever you want, we can share these requests with the rest of the FPCL

family through our weekly Joys and Concerns list. Pastoral Care at FPCL is made easier too when we look out for one another, and communicate together. Our church family already does an amazing job of that—very often one of you will reach out to Jonathan and me with concerns or prayer requests for someone, or just a request for one of us to make a visit. In addition, many times these updates are brought to me by members of our At-Home Communion teams. They faithfully serve each month, taking the Lord’s Supper to our home-bound members, and also taking the time to visit with those who they serve, thus giving them the chance to bring back information for our staff.

Thank you Pastor Jonathan!!

As you all know, we are very fortunate to have an outstanding new leader in head pastor Jonathan Murray! I hope by now that some of you have had the chance to visit with him. Speaking from a staff standpoint, we have really enjoyed getting to work alongside him over these past few months. I certainly appreciate Jonathan’s support for my ministry roles, and his giving me some opportunities to preach, and to help out more with some aspects of the liturgy, such as with the Lord’s Supper. In closing, as always, remember that as your Pastor of Christian Discipleship, I am here to serve you! So whenever you have any questions or pastoral needs, feel free to contact me! Remember also the recent changes to my church office hours. They are now on *Mondays-Tuesdays from 10:30am –1:30pm , and Wednesdays from 11am—2pm, or by appointment.* You can also always call my direct office number at the church: 720-662-7134, or email me at pastorblakeley@fpcl.org Thank you for reading, and God Bless!

In Christ,

-Pastor Blakeley

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.” --1 Corinthians 15:58

FPCL STAFF

Please call the church office for contact information. 303-798-1389

Rev. Jonathan Murray, Minister of Word & Sacrament

Rev. Dr. Blakeley Winslow, Pastor of Christian Discipleship

Mary Dailey, Director of Worship Arts

Karen Meersman, Director of Handbells & Children/Youth Music

Elinor Packard, Office Administrator

Joan Lund, Financial Secretary

Tracy Eidson, Child Care

I Thank God Every Time I Remember You!
Philippians 1:3

I believe it is important to “thank” people for doing services in this church. It exemplifies who we are — a very giving church, with very giving people.

- ♥ — Very thankful for a successful new members class with Lexy Buckley, Lukas Grohmann, Justie Ellis and Alex Holt. And thankful for Rev. Stephany Crosby for doing the religious part and history of First Pres. They will be introduced after they meet with Session.
- ♥ Thankful for Pastor Murray’s healing
- ♥ Thankful for the two awesome Easter services and Holy Week services of Maundy Thursday and Good Friday.
- ♥ Thankful for Justie Ellis calling the fire department and the police on Friday night, March 30th, when she saw a fire coming from our church lot
- ♥ Thankful for new visitors coming from unexpected places and feeling very welcomed
- ♥ Thankful for Charlie Sandahl having a great MAKE A WISH trip with Cody, Becca and Caleb to Disneyland.
- ♥ Thankful for our first “pillar of the church,” Adonna Hipple, celebrating her 98th birthday with family and for creating her new project, ADVENTURE WITH GRANDPARENTS, that she has been working on for over a year.
- ♥ Thankful for Elinor celebrating 19 years on May 1st, of “watching over us” and being our rock and “go to person.” She not only watches over us, but all who come to our door. She listens to them and prays for them. She is a gift for us all! ♥

Jesus calls us to follow Him. He calls us to keep His commandments, to love and serve our neighbors, to strive to be more like Him. And He calls us to extend the same invitation to others. He guides us to “open our door” to let Him in, as Pastor Murray preached about. God has taught us that true happiness is by doing something worthwhile for someone else, and all that can happen when we work together and pray together as a church community.

Charles Finney wrote, “*Nothing tends more to cement the hearts of Christians than praying together. Never do they love one another so well as when they witness the outpouring of each other’s hearts in prayer.*”

May we all continue to work for HIS glory and be an example of His love! God bless you all and hold you in His loving hands.



FPCL Book Club

We are a small, friendly group and we welcome anyone who likes to read for casual discussions about books. We share thoughts about the books and about our lives with no judgement.

Come join us on the second Thursday of each month at 1pm in Ayers’ parlor or Zoom in with us if you can’t make it to church.

Contact Janice Fagan if you have any questions or want to join us. JLFagan69@gmail.com
Here’s what we are reading next:

- **May 9 - Iona Iverson’s Rules for Commuting** - by Clare Pooley
- **June 13 - The Wager: A Tale of Shipwreck, Mutiny and Murder** - by David Grann (non-fiction)
- **July 11 - The Women** - by Kristin Hannah- *The Women*: Centered on one woman who goes to war in Vietnam, it is a stark reminder of the sacrifices women make for their country.



Minute for Mission

Love with Actions is sending 45 children to school across Rwanda! These children have never been to school before they met Love with Actions, and LWA has been able to sponsor them by providing school supplies and school fees. Before Love with Actions existed, these kids had no hope of ever attending school or getting an education, because of discrimination and stigma they had in the community!

Unfortunately, In Rwanda disabled children are still quite prejudiced in the community and so these kids and their families have been unable to afford a life that would allow them to go to school. Many families struggle to find food and shelter, so education gets put on the back burner. Infrastructure from Schools, untrained teachers are still big issues to send children to schools! So many disabled children seem like going to school is a luxury because of poverty!

With the help of our generous friends and donors around the world, LWA is so excited to be able to sponsor these children and we look forward to a better future where every child gets the chance to learn.

At the LWA campus, we welcomed back all our Good Shepherd Academy students! We ask that you continue to pray for these kids as they learn and grow each day with us. Through your donations, LWA is able to continue providing transportation for these children to school every day over rocky and unpaved roads. Seeing the joy on these children’s faces as they arrive for school each day is an indescribable feeling, and we thank you from the bottom of our hearts for helping us to make it possible.



Thank you and God Bless you, from all of us here in Rwanda!

A Minute for Stewardship—Planning Your Legacy pt 2

"You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God." 2 Corinthians 9:11 (ESV)

Is there a particular gift or event in your life that positively impacted you, and everything seemed to change for the better since that moment?

Have you ever thought about the legacy you will leave behind that will impact the lives of others in the future?

What kind of lasting impression do you want to leave on your church family to guide them into the future?

These are just a few of the questions we hope you consider and bring to the discussion as we **gather on May 19th after worship** to explore how each of us can plan our legacy. We invite you to share in refreshments and camaraderie as we welcome **Joseph Moore** from the Presbytery Foundation. Joseph will offer an insightful overview of the various strategies available for legacy planning. Additionally, our Stewardship team will share personal reflections and discuss the importance of creating a meaningful legacy for your loved ones.

This event will strive to give you a general understanding of different subjects that you can explore in more detail using the resources provided. Looking forward, we may organize more in-depth workshops based on your interests. We hope that you find the information shared to be valuable and would love to know more about your interests.

Our team hopes to see you after worship on May 19th as we **gather on the 4th floor (youth area) to enjoy light snacks, engaging conversation, and warm fellowship.**

See you in church!

Your Stewardship Committee:

Dave LeMay, Chair:

Trey McDowell

Sue Chandler

Dee Getzinger

Don Meersman

Nat Opperman



Planning Your Legacy Agenda (~11:30 – 12:30):

- Welcome and Introduction
- Exploring Legacy in Scripture
- Stories / Testimonials from Joseph and the Stewardship Team
- Tools Available for Legacy Planning
- Questions / Discussion / Survey
- Closing

Dollars and Sense – A Word from Finance

In December, we reported some good news for the 2024 budget – that our pledges from members had increased 15% over the 2023 Pledge budget, and that three-quarters of our members had increased their pledge. This is the first increase in a flat pledge trend which has been with us since 2017.

Against the recent background of inflation in the economy, this new level of member support is huge. Economic indicators show inflation of nearly 20% over the last three years, and we are seeing very similar patterns in First Pres’s expenses over that period. With the increase in pledges, God has truly blessed First Pres.

The ability to increase pledge income is singularly important. Pledge income is 75% of our total income, and personnel expense is 68% of our total expense; these two elements of our financial statements are clearly locked together. By increasing pledge income, it allows us to keep the compensation of First Pres’s staff healthy with cost-of-living pay increases.

This hasn’t always been the case. In 2016, 2017, 2019, and 2021, no cost-of-living increases were awarded to the staff. Year-end bonuses were awarded instead – a positive thank-you, but not an increase in the base salary. This was rectified with a “catch-up” cost-of-living increase for the staff in 2022, funded not by pledges but from other sources of income – COVID-related government assistance money, special gifts within Member Support Not Pledged, and cost savings.

Since then, it’s the strong intent of the Personnel Committee, the Finance Committee, and Session to recognize staff with annual staff cost-of-living pay increases (done in 2023, doing in 2024) to offset inflation. Our staff – the pastors, the office staff, the music team, and child care -- are always there when we need them. Our thanks to each member (and to God) for the pledge increases which support the staff with proper compensation.

Your Finance Committee -- Scott Chandler, John Ansted, Susan Strauss, Dick Graves, Charles Kellogg, Dave LeMay (ex-officio), and Joan Lund (ex-officio), Beth Opperman (co-moderator), and Bob Chapman (moderator).

Thank
you



Thank you all for the amazing outpouring of anniversary and birthday wishes, gifts and cards! Your love and support means much to me. You all make me feel so appreciated and cared for. You are all the best!! Elinor



An Easier Way to Give Online!
Scan the QR Code with your phone! It will take you directly to our website where you can give online!

Please Pray for....



The family of Donna Jean Farris who passed away in February, Phil Ansted, Betty Anderson, Jill Van Den Bos, Jan & Russ Fuiks, Taylor Ann Meersman, Jon Heggie, Joyce & Rollie Fuller, Joy Carreño, Judy & Bob Macdonald, Lonna Williams, Joan Cook, Pat & Jaime Yrastorza

In Service to Our Country

Major Ricky Casburn; Capt. Connor Venrick; Brett Wilson; Sgt. Benjamin Lund, Jordan; Bobby Johannsen; Connor McDaniel, Army; CDR. Per Rychecky, Germany; Donnie Donahue, Marines; Nathaniel Syron; Sgt. Isaiah Boehm, Ft. Carson CO; Jeremy Colwell; Cameryn McKinnell, USAF; Maj. Wm McKinnell, USAF; Ulises Serrano

Missions

Jory & Mallory Bayne; Metro Denver; Presbytery of Zimbabwe; South Asia Mission; Highline Place; Love INC, Love With Actions(Rwanda)

Financial Update

	March 2024		Year to Date 2024	
	Actual	Budget	Actual	Budget
Income	\$41,172.70	\$40,791.50	\$ 127,391.45	\$ 137,846.50
Expenses	\$42,888.78	\$41,964.15	\$ 115,347.84	\$ 131,587.36
Operating Surplus	(\$1,716.08)	(\$1,172.65)	\$ 12,043.61	\$ 6,259.14

The income in March included the Easter donations of 4934.50. This was down from 2023 Easter giving by \$2500.00. Thankfully, pledged support was generous so our deficit for the month was minimized. \$425.00 was donated for One Great Hour of Sharing. These donations are used by the Presbytery to support disaster relief projects and hunger programs. The church sent money to support the following missions in March: Uplift International, Presbyterian Disaster Relief Fund, Whiz Kids Tutoring, Adams's Camp as well as food bags and bus passes for the locals in need. Thank ou for supporting these missions. Your generosity is appreciated.

Leadership

Elders: Trey McDowell-Clerk of Session, Maggie Ashworth, Jan Hole, David LeMay, Don Meersman, Rick Wilson, Sue Chandler and Beth Opperman

Presbytery Commissioners: Rick Wilson and Kathy McDaniel

Deacons: Joy Carreño, Becky Gibson, Cheryl Baughman, Kathy Frear, Julie Johnston, Jess Karet, Jennie Staritzky and Deb Graham

Stewards: Connie Strandberg, Cheri Blanchard, Karla Ferguson, Kathy McDaniel



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Believe Beloved Belong

OFFICE HOURS

Monday—Thursday 9am to 2pm, Friday 9am to Noon, Closed Saturday

WORSHIP SCHEDULE

- 10:00 am Sunday Worship
- ♦ **FIRST WORD NEWSLETTER:** The DEADLINE for the June newsletter is **May 17**