



Stewardship III: Love Looks to the Future
 Rev. Dr. Glenda Hollingshead; September 27, 2026
 Stewardship Dedication Sunday
 Deuteronomy 6:4-9; 2 Timothy 1:3-7; Acts 2:42-47

For the past two Sundays, as part of our stewardship campaign, we've considered what it means to *love this place enough to share it*. We began by remembering the table and the people who welcomed us. Most of you probably have a story about the moment this place began to feel like home. Maybe it was your first Sunday when someone noticed you and came over to introduce themselves. Maybe it was a particular sermon or a hymn or a conversation after worship. Maybe you don't remember exactly when it happened. You simply know that somewhere along the way, this stopped being a building where you attended worship, or a church into which you were born, and became a place where you belonged.

Last Sunday, we moved from *love remembers* to *love makes room*. We heard Jesus challenge the ways we think about hospitality and were reminded that love does not simply wait for people to find their way to the table. Love goes looking. Love notices who's missing. Love pulls up another

chair and prompts us to consider a question: *If we love this place, why wouldn't we share it?* Why wouldn't we tell people about the way this place and these people help us live into the good news of God's grace, God's mercy, and God's love?

Here at the end of our stewardship campaign, we have one more step to consider: *Love looks to the future.* When we think about what it means to look to the future, the reading from Deuteronomy gives us a beautiful place to start. It begins with words familiar to generations of faithful people: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone." And then comes the invitation to love God with heart and soul and strength—and to keep these words in our hearts and teach them to our children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. Bind them to your hands. Write them on the doorposts of your house. I love the ordinary, almost everyday quality of this passage. Moses doesn't say, "Build a monument," or "Create a committee." Instead, he says: Tell the story. Talk about it around the table. Talk about it on the road. Talk about it at the beginning and ending of the day. Let the faith you've received become part of the very fabric of your life.

The truth is that faith has always been something we receive from others before we are able to carry it ourselves. That's what Paul is talking about when he writes to Timothy: "I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that lived first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, lives in you." Notice how Paul remembers the names. Lois. Eunice. Timothy. Faith has a family tree. And while not all of us inherit our faith from our biological families, most of us can name people who helped plant something in us. Someone who answered our questions without making us feel foolish. Someone who showed us what compassion looked like. Someone who taught us a hymn. Someone who brought us to church—or perhaps someone who simply lived in such a way that we began to wonder about the Jesus they followed with all their heart, soul, and strength.

Every congregation has a history, but the most important parts of that history aren't necessarily the things written in the minutes of Session meetings or recorded in the church archives. The real history of a congregation lives in its people. It lives in the stories we tell, the hymns we sing, the meals we've shared, the prayers offered over generations, the children who have grown up here, the people who found their way through our doors when they were hurting, the weddings and funerals and baptisms and Christmas Eve services, the conversations that changed someone's life. The history of a congregation lives in the ordinary faithfulness of people who showed up and kept showing up.

Now, whether we realize it or not, we are the stewards of that story. That is what stewardship asks of us. We're not the owners of First Presbyterian Church. We're its caretakers for a little while. Although that might sound like a burden, I don't hear it as a burden. I hear it as an invitation, because there is a difference between being responsible *for* something and being

responsible *to* something. We are not responsible for making sure First Presbyterian Church survives long into the future. (That's in the hands of God and that, my friends, is way above our pay grade!) But what we are responsible to is the love that has been entrusted to us. We are responsible to the people who came before us and to whoever comes after us. We are responsible to the gospel that calls us to welcome, serve, seek justice, love our neighbors, and make room at the table.

That means we have to be willing to look beyond ourselves. For a snapshot of what that should look like, there's no better place to look than to the early church described in Acts. There we find how those in the early church devoted themselves to teaching and fellowship, to breaking bread and prayers. They shared what they had and worshiped together. They ate together with glad and generous hearts, and day by day, their community grew. What strikes me about that passage is how much of it is about shared life. They didn't simply attend the same worship service. They shared meals, resources, and one another's joys and sorrows. Along the way, they were creating a way of life—a way modeled after the Jesus they had come to know and love.

That is what we've been talking about these past three weeks. *Love remembers. Love makes room. And love looks to the future.* Because if we love this place, we will care about what happens here after we enter into our eternal rest. And that brings us to the question I want us to hold today. It is a simple question—but an important one: *Who will love this place after us?* Not, “Who will replace us?” And certainly not, “How do we save the church?” But “Who will love this place after us?” It's a question of hope. Who will sit in these pews? Who will sing these hymns? Who will find a community willing to welcome them without requiring them to have everything figured out? Who will experience the kind of welcome that so many of us have experienced?

Even though we cannot know the answers to our questions, we can know this: The future of this church will not look exactly like the past—nor should it—for the people who come after us will bring their own gifts, their own questions, their own music, their own ways of understanding what it means to follow Christ. They will shape this community in ways we can't imagine. Our task is not to determine their future for them. Our task is to make sure there is a future for them here.

This is where our stewardship becomes an act of faith and this is why our financial commitment matters. When we make a financial contribution to this church, we are not only paying bills. We are helping keep a table open. We are supporting worship that might be meaningful to someone who hasn't walked through these doors yet. We are making possible ministries that may touch a life we will never know about. We are caring for a building where someone may someday find refuge, friendship, or a sense of belonging. We are investing in a community that can continue to serve others who will call this place their spiritual home.

And our stewardship isn't just financial—it's also time, prayers, creativity, energy. It's our stories, our invitations, our willingness to notice someone sitting alone and asking them to pull up a chair—or a pew as the case may be. It's our eagerness to try something new. It's giving our lives to something larger than ourselves. All of these are acts of stewardship.

In a moment, you'll be invited to bring forward your pledge card. If you forgot it at home or need one for any reason, there are extras along with envelopes here at the communion table. Additionally, I'm sure you noticed that you have a card in your bulletin with a picture of a chair and the words, "Come____, pull up a chair." Please take a moment to think of someone in your life with whom you would like to share something about our church. It could be details about an upcoming event. It could be an invitation to Coffee & Conversation at 60 Beans next Sunday. It could be a story about how someone showed you the love of Jesus in a special way and you just can't keep it to yourself any longer. Take a moment to jot down a first name or the initials of someone—so that during our morning prayer—we can lift up all these "someones" to the Lord. (Pause to allow folks time.) In just a moment, when you come forward with your pledge, I invite you to bring your card with you and place it in the bowl as well, offering that "someone" into God's care.

As this stewardship campaign comes to an end, let us give thanks for what we've received and let us look with hope to the future. Because the God who has brought us this far is not finished with us yet. There is still room at the table. There is still work to be done. And for First Presbyterian Church, there is still a future unfolding. In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.