Fall 2026

LIGHT YEARS

WELCOME AT THE TABLE

Abby is a sophomore studying Psychology with a minor in Law, Justice, and Social Change. After taking AP Psychology in high school, she became very interested in how people's brains work. "I wanted to find the intersection of law and psychology, and forensic psychology combines all of my interests," she says. "I either want to be an expert witness or potentially do profiling."

Abby grew up in a large non-denominational church and attended a Catholic high school. Her family didn't really go to church on Sunday, so her main experience of church was in youth group and camps. "I always felt disconnected," she says, "but I didn't know why. When I figured out my own values, I realized they didn't align with the church I was in. I didn't stop going because I had a lot of friends there, but as I got older, it got harder to be in that space."

Abby's friend, Leah, invited her to check out Lord of Light and LCM when she arrived at UM last year. That was when she realized that church didn't have to be the way she'd experienced it. "I never even really explored other options," she says. "It was like, 'this is the one!'"

At LoL/LCM, Abby feels like she's found a community where she can be authentic. "I'm proud of what I believe in," she says, "rather than feeling shamed for it. I feel more open to express myself in true ways, like I don't have to pretend."

Abby is now serving as a student leader. "Helping people is a big motivator for me," she says. "The thought of being able to show up for other people motivates me to be consistent."

For Abby, the open Communion table at LoL/LCM, which is different from her experiences both at her old church and at high school worship services, has been really powerful. "You don't have to go through a bunch of steps to receive it," she says, "and I really appreciate that everyone is welcome at the table."

So deeply do we care for you that we are determined to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you have become very dear to us.

-1 Thessalonians 2:8

DEEP COMMUNITY

Pastor Elizabeth Friedman

Earlier this year, I had the jarring realization that, wherever we go, there is no guarantee that we will find a good community there. For students, of course, that's even more imperative, since they are leaving the support systems they know and have to redevelop new ones out of whole cloth.

And what do I mean by a good community? I mean a healthy, authentic, open community that treasures the people both within it and the people outside of it, a community that is constantly looking and reaching outward in love while also sustaining and strengthening its people. Those of us who grew up in healthy church communities may take them for granted; but it turns out that we are not guaranteed a good community. So, we must make it ourselves.

It isn't easy to do that, to essentially focus on two things at once. After sending so many graduates out into the world last spring and summer, I knew it was inevitable that we would need to be even more intentional about reaching out and rebuilding - but that this rebuilding could not get in the way of care for the people who are already right here in our midst.

Fortunately, we have centered our community around worship, around the good news of God's table that is open to all, around Sunday dinner, and around Wednesday night Bible study for both undergrads at 8pm and Gather (young adults and grad students) at 6pm. This rhythm creates the sense of authentic community and deep care that allows students to develop enough trust to have real conversations, ask difficult questions, and even come away together for retreats.

Thank you so much for all of the ways you continue to support our ministry and our community!

Blessings,

Pastor Elizabeth

Above: Leah, Hannah, Nat, Noah, Remi, and Ella during Wednesday night Bible study.

Right: Noah, Helena, Abby, Leah, Jack, Pastor Elizabeth, and Maya at our student leader retreat

I BELONG

Jack is a sophomore studying Sociology and Spanish. Both of Jack's majors are rooted in a desire to pursue a deeper understanding of the people around him. "I love getting to speak another language and grow my understanding of the world," he says, "and I love studying aspects of society with a deeper perspective."

Jack grew up in a religious family and attended a Christian school. "The churches I've gone to were always welcoming," he says, "but not necessarily accepting. As I got into middle school, I started to realize that their values didn't reflect mine. I knew that if I did find somewhere in college, it would be somewhere where everyone was accepted no matter what, and I wouldn't have to tiptoe around certain topics or certain Bible verses or interpretations."

Jack's friend's roommate, Abby, was the one who invited him to Lord of Light/LCM, and here he found the community he was looking for. "It's so beautiful and relieving," he says, "to have a community where I know everyone will be not only welcomed but accepted. Being invited downstairs for dinner afterward made me feel like part of the community, but being told I was welcome at Communion made me feel like I belong."

Interestingly, LoL/LCM is more traditional than churches Jack had experienced in the past, but he's found the structureof the liturgy helpful. "In other churches, it's a bunch of singing and a bunch of talking, and then you just kind of go - and I can get lost in that. With the liturgy, it's broken up into sections, and I know what to expect." Jack was particularly moved when he attended last year's midnight Easter Vigil, with its pattern of reading and silence by candlelight followed by Communion. "The Gospel reading with Mary Magdalene not recognizing Jesus really connected with me," he says, "and that was such a beautiful and emotional experience."

Having a consistent and trusted space to explore faith and ask questions is important for Jack. "I think it's easier to incorporate Christianity and God into my life," he says, "when I don't have to be wary and I know it's a safe community. We focus on showing God's love to others, and I feel like I always take away something from the service that I can live out during the week. I get to connect with people I otherwise wouldn't get to connect with. I see them consistently, Sunday after Sunday, and it's a blessing to have in my life."

Jack is now serving as a student leader. For anyone who might be looking for a new church, Jack has some advice: "Don't be intimidated. As soon as I came here, I knew that this was the place and that it was going to be great - and then I wasn't intimidated anymore."

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GENUINE

Ella is a sophomore studying neuroscience. After watching a documentary in her high school anatomy class and a subsequent conversation with a professor, she was inspired to pursue her field: “I like how versatile the major is, how it encompasses science, and how it means I will have an opportunity to really have an impact on people’s lives.”

Ella attended a big non-denominational church before Covid, but after the pandemic, she and her family tried a bunch of churches but never really landed anywhere because it was hard to find a place that fit everyone’s preferences. So, when she came to college, Ella attended FestiFaith to check out her options and found the table for Lord of Light and LCM. “I started coming to LCM,” she says, “and I felt like I’d found a place where I could really live out my core values in a faith community. I also liked that there was dinner afterwards. It gave me an opportunity to meet and socialize while keeping the worship aspect meaningful.”

Lord of Light's practice of eating together as a community is particularly important. Even last year in the dorm cafeteria, Ella says, “we would sit at big tables, but if you weren’t there with someone, everyone was just on their phones and that was the expectation. You don’t really talk to people even if you’re sitting with them. This year, I live in a big house, but we all have different schedules and so I eat alone a lot. Here, people introduce themselves and sit down and eat together. It feels genuine. People really care.”

Ella also makes a point of coming to Bible study on Wednesdays. “The conversations feel very real,” she says. “I don’t feel like there are any expectations to have certain interpretations of the text. It feels like a very safe space.”

For Ella, LoL/LCM is a community she can rely on. “I think it provides a safe and calming space,” she says, “especially during times of stress. I know that church on Sunday afternoon is a constant, and it’s a very relaxing and joyful place to be in the midst of stress from exams, other relationships, or class.”