

“A Faith that Lives in You”

Scripture: **Deuteronomy 6:4-9, 2 Timothy 1:1-7**

Rev. Millie Snyder

June 14, 2026



I am a Timothy Christian. By that, I mean I was raised in a family of faith. I was raised participating in the life of a church community. I was raised in a family, though imperfect (and those stories are too long to share today), that gave me the gift of faith that lives in me. Seeds were planted, nourished with warmth and care, and faith was woven into the fabric of my being.

I suspect many of us are Timothy Christians. You are here because seeds of faith were planted in the soil of your life at a very early age. You are here because you had role models of faithful living. You watched someone who was generous and you learned to give; you listened to someone pray and you learned to pray; you served alongside someone in a mission project and you learned that life is intended to be lived in service to the world. You are here because someone in your life loved the Lord with all their

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heart, and all their soul, and all their might and you were inspired to do the same.

Some of us aren't Timothy Christians. You came to trust God at a later point in your life. You had a spiritual experience or a faithful encounter that beckoned you. Maybe you hit bottom and ran out of other options and turned to God as a higher power. Or you might be on a searching path that brings you here on Sunday morning a little uncertain and maybe even a bit anxious. You might be uncomfortable and you might not want us to know about the questions or the doubts. For those of us who have done this church thing our entire lives, we are sometimes oblivious to your discomfort and we might not realize you have questions about things we take for granted. We might wonder why you stand up at the wrong time or why you don't recite the creed from memory. I apologize for all of that. I believe it's

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possible for us to be gracious and welcoming. We can remember that the journey of faith is indeed that – a journey – and no one has arrived at some imaginary destination of success. We don't graduate from faith. There are no diplomas. We are in this together. Faith is a team sport.

In writing his letter to Timothy, Paul gives thanks for Timothy's faith. Paul describes a faith that first lived in Timothy's grandmother Lois and then in Timothy's mother Eunice and now, Paul is sure, lives in Timothy. Paul spent much of his life sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with those who had never heard it before. He shared good news that planted seeds of faith in the hearts of those who listened. On his second missionary journey, Paul met a young man named Timothy in Lystra and he was impressed by Timothy's faith. Timothy became his companion and his protegee. I wonder what we might learn about faith that lives in us from the relationship these two had.

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Paul called Timothy “my beloved child” at the opening of the letter. Their relationship was warm, grounded in care and in continuous growth.

A faith that lives in you. Isn't that our hope for our journey? That along the way faith would come to be a part of us, our own. Whether we were raised in faith or came to it later in life, we want a faith that lives in us. All our questions won't be resolved. We won't love perfectly. But we will have faith that lives in us. A faith woven into the fabric of our being. A faith growing from the soil of our hearts.

For those of you are Timothy Christians, think about your church experiences. I'd ask that the rest of you indulge us for a brief moment. We went to Sunday School, we ate butter cookies (shaped like a flower and on our finger) or graham crackers, we sang songs like This Little Light of Mine.

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Some of us earned perfect attendance pins for coming every week. Or if you are younger those were probably stickers on a sticker chart on the wall. We got story handouts and we took them home to color during the long lazy hours of a Sunday afternoon. We worshiped in a pew seated with our family, sometimes bored out of our minds, squirming under a mother's embrace, drawing on the bulletin or passing notes. We might have come back to church for Sunday nights or Wednesday nights. We sang in choirs and we played instruments. The pastor knew our name – he (and long ago it was always a he) frightened us a little and once or twice a year he came over to visit at our house which made our mother very nervous as she made the iced tea. In the summer we went to Vacation Bible School. We drank Kool-Aid and did great crafts that involved burning leather or decoupage (if you don't know what that is, ask someone older than you). As teenagers we went

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to youth group. We ate a lot of spaghetti and a lot of pizza. We worked at car washes and bake sales to raise money for a retreat or a trip to the Montreat youth conference. We could make each other laugh with a silly look or a fabulous burp. Sometimes there was drama; sometimes there was a LOT of drama. Who liked who; who was friends with who; who was invited to which party. Goodness.

Just saying it out loud makes it seem like a long time ago and also like it was yesterday. Some of it happens today and a lot of it doesn't. Perfect attendance seems impossible in a world of travel soccer and chess championships and trips to the mountains and being just so so tired. Most of us would be horrified if a pastor called and asked to come over for a visit. I'm sure we would rather meet the pastor at a coffee shop. No one would pay teenagers to wash their car when they could just go to AutoBell. Social

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media has amplified youth group drama into full blown trauma. Political division and the increasing use of AI have made us distrustful of those who are “other.” The world has changed and the world continues to change. The mission of the church remains the same but the means to accomplish that mission changes. Faith formation is part of our mission but our faith will be formed differently in the twenty-first century.

In a changing world, how do we form a faith that lives in us, in our children, in our young people, in our new members, in ALL of us? Each of us and every one of us? How do we plant seeds to faith in the soil of our hearts? How does faith become woven into the fabric of our beings?

Well you can install the Reverend Lucy Baum and give her the job to do it. Only that isn't the answer. It's never been the answer. Lucy is amazing and

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she will do wonderful ministry here but remember – faith is a team sport.

And, my friends, we are all on the team.

Traditionally faith communities understood that belief came first and then behavior and finally belonging. You had faith, you acted like it and then they let you join. Now we realize that faith doesn't work that way. It doesn't magically appear. We don't get the beliefs and the behaviors sorted out on our own. Instead we belong first. We are included. We are loved. We learn our behavior in community. Faith is planted and nourished in us in community. Someone loves us, like Paul loved Timothy, and calls us a beloved child.

In his book *Simply Good News*, NT Wright notes that the good news of our faith has subtly been changed into good advice. Here's how to live. Say

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this prayer and you'll be saved. Here are tips to be a better spouse or better parent. All of that is advice. Not news. Advice doesn't plant the seeds of faith in the soil of our hearts. Faith is born from good news – from the gospel – from the goodness of God embodied in a community. Remember Paul and Timothy – a relationship of warmth and care and mentorship. Beloved child.

Faith is caught as much as it's taught. Faith is as relational as it is educational. Faith comes from belonging in community and experiencing the Body of Christ not just a single member of it. Faith is nourished with warmth and care. Community is a gift and sometimes the gift is because community is a challenge – we have different opinions, we annoy one another, we experience friction. None of that destroys faith. Instead the challenge of community is how we learn what it really means to love one another. If we leave because it gets too hard, then we lose the opportunity to

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learn love. Radical inclusion, endless welcome, boundless hospitality
encourage faith to live in us.

Faith is a team sport and we are all on the team. A faith that lives in us isn't a faith that we put on like itchy clothes just for special occasions. Faith that lives in us isn't a costume for playing pretend. Faith that lives in us isn't a moralistic list of rights and wrongs that keep us out of trouble. Faith that lives in us isn't a pietistic prescription of spiritual behaviors. Faith that lives in us doesn't deny the reality of the world around us but enables us to shine with love in the midst of it.

Faith that lives in us is a faith in a gracious God who always, always, always welcomes us no matter what mistake we have made, no matter what wrong turn we took. Faith that lives in us is a faith in a mighty God who

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will stand by us no matter what overwhelming problem we face, a faith in a Good Shepherd who walks with us through the darkest valleys. A faith in a compassionate God who goes with us to the hospital for surgery, to the funeral home to make arrangements, to school on the day of the tough test. A faith in a saving God who brings good news to bad places, who offers hope when we can't see a way forward, who offers endless second chances and unlimited opportunities for new life. A faith in a resurrecting God who creates a new heaven and a new earth, opening the possibility of life after every kind of death. A faith in a God who invites us, each of us and every one of us, to follow Jesus Christ.

Isn't that the faith you want to live in yourself? Isn't that the faith you want First Presbyterian Church to be known for? Isn't that why you've called Lucy Baum here as your associate pastor for faith formation? Faith is a team

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sport and we are all on the team. We are all on the journey together. A gracious, powerful, compassionate, saving, welcoming faith team, with a deep faith in a gracious, powerful, compassionate, saving and welcoming God. May that faith live in us, woven into the fabric of who we are, each of us and all of us together. Amen.