

Love... and Then What? A Visit to Land of the Sky UCC

By Rev. Belinda Sledge

On Saturday evening, I had the joy of sharing a meal and meaningful conversation at the home of Rev. Sara Wilcox, pastor of Land of the Sky United Church of Christ. I was joined by Rev. Lashauna Austria, Minister of Becoming + Belonging at Land of the Sky, along with members of both Rev. Austria's family and Rev. Wilcox's family. What began as simple fellowship soon became one of those sacred moments where conversation turns into calling.

As we sat around the table, Rev. Austria offered a thought that stayed with me:

“To love is not enough.”

It wasn't a challenge to love itself, but an invitation to go deeper. In a conference as diverse as ours, we often speak of love—but rarely pause to ask what love requires of us. What comes after love?

That question stayed with me as I prepared to preach the next morning.

As I prepared for my Call to Care worship service, I found myself returning to that moment and naming what had been forming in my spirit: love cannot stand alone. There has to be an and.

For me, that word became listen.

Love and listen as I pointed out to Rev. Austria offering this as an answer to her statement.

Later, on my drive home, the phrase stayed with me so strongly that it became more than a thought—it became a framework. As Pastor Sara had shared the story of her congregation with me, I realized that if I wanted the message to be truly heard, I first had to understand the heart of the church itself.

That's when it came together: LAL — Love And Listen.

It felt especially fitting in a place known as Land of the Sky, or LOS. LAL became a way of naming what I experienced there—a theology not just spoken, but lived. A faith

community embodying what it means to live justly, love abundantly, and walk humbly.

Land of the Sky United Church of Christ is an emerging, progressive congregation seeking to follow the still-speaking God. It is a place where people of all identities and life experiences are welcomed—young and old, gay and straight and in between; single and partnered; joyful and grieving; confident and searching.

Nowhere is this more evident than in Land of the Sky's commitment to its micro-home community, created in partnership with BeLoved Asheville. The church intentionally ceded a portion of its land so that tiny homes could be built for neighbors experiencing homelessness. These homes are now complete and awaiting certificates of occupancy.

This collaboration reflects a deep commitment to justice, trust, and shared ministry. Rev. Wilcox has approached this vision with both faith and wisdom, ensuring that safeguards are in place so the land will remain dedicated to this mission for years to come.

Land of the Sky's witness extends beyond housing. Its campus at 15 Overbrook Place is home to multiple ministries and partners, including its sister congregation, Circle of Mercy. The space is shared intentionally with groups committed to creativity, care, and justice.

As I reflect on my visit, I return to the question that began it all:

What comes after love?

Listening.

Sharing.

Collaborating.

Building.

At Land of the Sky, love does not stop at intention.

Love listens.

Love acts.

Love builds.