News, Notes and Revelations from St. John's Blymire's United Church of Christ

<u>February 2024</u>

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From the Pastor's Keyboard



Dear friends in this wonderful family of faith,

The American Heart Association used to designate February as "Heart Month", partly to capitalize on the fact that we can be reminded of our physical hearts' health in the same month as we have our "holiday of hearts" – Valentine's Day. I have always liked to think that Heart Month and Valentine's Day also remind us of having a "right heart" toward God and toward others.

Notwithstanding that we also celebrate Groundhog Day, Presidents' Day, and this year Ash Wednesday as well in February, let's focus on our heart, though, for a moment.

The Bible has many references to our heart. In Psalms alone, there are familiar heart passages, such as "Those who have clean hands and pure hearts,,,," (24:4), "Create in me a clean heart, O God..." (51:10), "...a broken and contrite heart, O God, You will not despise." (51:17), to name just a few.

How is your heart, and mine? Those of us with heart issues who wear heart monitors and/or pacemakers know all too well the importance of our physical hearts to our overall health. But what about keeping healthy our spiritual hearts that scripture refers to?

Oswald Chambers, who was a teacher and mentor, founder of the Bible Training College in London, and helper of military personnel in World War I, reminded us that our spiritual heart, and thus spiritual health, is a result of being born again by the Spirit of God. It is the work of God. Being born again from God is an enduring, perpetual, and eternal beginning. It provides a freshness in our thinking, talking, and living. Staleness, on the other hand, is an indication that our spiritual heart is not as healthy as it could be, that our lives are out of step with God. Do you and I feel fresh today, or are we stale, frantically searching for something to do rather than simply resting in the assurance of God's grace in Jesus Christ and being obedient to God?

Chambers reminded us that our spiritual heart is healthy when we scrupulously guard our relationship with God. Jesus prayed "that they all may be one just as We are one" – with nothing in between (John 17:22). Let us keep our whole lives continually open to Jesus Christ, not simply pretending to be open to Him. Let us ask ourselves if we are drawing freshness and strength from any source other than Jesus Christ. Being born again means having a healthy heart. It gives us new vision and keeps us absolutely fresh for everything through the never-ending supply of the life of God alone.

To be honest, I am continually awestruck by how much you as individuals and as a church keep yourselves spiritually heart-healthy and fresh in the Holy Spirit. That is evident in our worship, Bible study and Sunday School, fellowship, outreach, and mission ministries.

I am so proud of this church as I look at the February calendar and eagerly anticipate our many ministries – ranging from our spirited worship and music, hymn sing, Sunday School, Bible Study, Card and Game Group, Men's Group, Valentine Dance, Messy Church, Emmanuel's Closet, special Ash Wednesday service, and our partnership with other UCC York Association churches with an ecclesiastical council and joint Lenten worship services highlighting the next generation of pastors in our area who will be presenting "How Is God Reshaping the Church?"

And I am so proud of how many of you are developing and maintaining strong lives of faith with your weekly or frequent worship with fellow church family members, daily Bible reading and prayer, weekly Bible Study and Sunday School, bi-monthly fellowship activities, bi-monthly distribution of food to those in need, stepping out at times from your comfort zones and advocating for God's justice when you believe that that justice is not being followed in our area and world, and consistently praying for others. All of this, I am convinced, helps us to be one with Jesus Christ as He and God are one.

With all of this in mind, will you join me and many of your fellow church family members who will be praying this prayer (that I presented during my message on January 21) from now until Easter:

See you around in February. God bless, Pastor Rick

Lord Jesus Christ, I know that You have saved me and that I am born again. Thank You for that! I want to be sanctified, too – to totally identify with You and Your purposes. Help me to do that!

Help me to remember that You do not force me, but You quietly and passionately invite me to follow You. Help my heart to be open and receptive so, like Isaiah, I hear You and say, "Here am I. Lord. Send me."

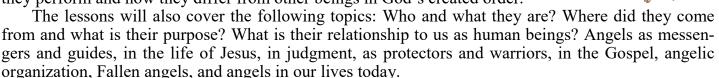
In addition to my daily prayer life, Lord Jesus Christ, help me to commit from now until Easter to:

- 1. Put You, O God, first in my life.
- 2. Seek to do what Jesus would do.
- 3. Worship online or in person once a week.
- 4. Pray for world peace and an end to senseless violence.
- 5. Do some random acts of kindness.

AMEN!

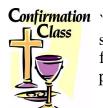
ANGELS!

Starting February 11 thru March 24, Pastor Curt will be teaching a Sunday school class on "ANGELS." He will primarily be using three study guides: <u>Angels</u> by Vinita Hampton Wright, <u>In the Company of Angels</u> by Andrew Bandstra, and <u>Angels</u> by Billy Graham. These studies will explore the numerous Bible passages that reveal the services they perform and how they differ from other beings in God's created order.



In addition, we will read stories of people who have seen angels, and, we will attempt to answer the following questions: How should I respond to angels? Will I ever see an angel? Is there a benefit to believing in angels?

If you are interested in knowing more about ANGELS, come join us during the Lenten season during Sunday school time, 10:30 AM to 11:30 AM.



Attention all youth, parents, and grandparents: If you or a family member (middle school or high school age) are interested in being part of a confirmation class to prepare for church membership (probably offered during Sunday School time on Sundays), please contact Pastor Rick (voicemail or text) at 260-519-5449.

MONTH OF SUNDAYS WORSHIP SERVICES FOR FEBRUARY 2024

FEBRUARY 4, 2024 – FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Message Scripture: Mark 1:29-39 Centering Scripture: Isaiah 40:28

Message: "We can be happy"

Theme: Happiness = the touch of the Master's Hand + the power of prayer + putting

our priorities in order Sunday School: Jeri Jones

FEBRUARY 11, 2024 – TRANSFIGURATION SUNDAY - UCC RACIAL JUSTICE SUNDAY AND SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY SUNDAY

Message Scripture: Mark 9:2-13 Centering Scripture: 2 Corinthians 4:6

Message: "Swimming with the sharks at Transfiguration"

Theme: This was a growing, stretching experience for Jesus' disciples – from being terrified to being transformed to being turned loosed to transform the world for which Christ died.

Sunday School: Pastor Curt Weber on angels

FEBRUARY 14, 2024 – ASH WEDNESDAY (AND VALENTINE'S DAY) 7:00 PM Service with Imposition of Ashes and Sacrament of Communion

Message Scripture: Joel 2:1-2, 12-17 Centering Scripture: 2 Corinthians 5:20-21

Message: "Before you start ripping your clothing"

Theme: Bad times are not times of punishment for our sins. However, when we are in a sinful state, we cut ourselves off from God's healing and helping power.

FEBRUARY 18, 2024 - FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

Message Scripture: Genesis 9:1-17 Centering Scripture: 1 Peter 3:18

Message: "Noah and the Robots"

Theme: God gave us the freedom to decide our own destiny. It's risky to give away any new creation free will. Yet God never gives up on God's beloved people.

Sunday School: Pastor Curt Weber on angels

FEBRUARY 25, 2024 – SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT - UCC SEMINARY SUNDAY – CHURCH VOCATIONS SUNDAY

Message Scripture: TBA Centering Scripture: TBA

Message: Cindy Innerst-Axe, preaching

Theme: TBA

Sunday School: Pastor Curt Weber on angels

February Humor (In Honor of Valentine's Day):

Better to have loved a short person than never to have loved a tall.

Helen: "Do you really love me, or do you just think you do?"

Jack: "Honey, I really love you. I haven't done any thinking at all."

Girl: "Do you love me?"

Boy: "Yes, Dear."

Girl: "Would you die for me?"

Boy: "No – mine is an undying love."

All of the humor above is from <u>The Best of the Good Clean Jokes</u>, compiled by Bob Phillips, Harvest House Publishers, 1989.

<u>FEBRUARY</u> BIRTHDAYS



May God Bless You on Your Birthday!

- 1. Jamie Luckenbaugh
- 3. Marlene Matthews
- 4. Gerry Geesey
- 6. Beth Herbst
- 7. Bryan Adams
- 10. Bryan Barley
- 12. Landan McKenzie
 James Klyeman
- 13. Mark Morton
- 15. Trent Hake
- 20. Allie McKinsey
 Madelynne Shisler
 Kolton Knickel
 Amber Sipe
- 22. Kathy Rayhart
- 24. Donna Hartley
- 27. Jamie Reid
- 28. Sandra Ness
- 29. Donna Busch Linda Rost Emma Boyd

CELEBRATING FEBRUARY ANNIVERSARIES

Feb. 7 - Bronley and Peggie Free - 54 years Feb. 12 - Charles and Theresa Diehl - 13 years

FINANCIAL REPORT

Undesignated General Fund

Red Brick Chapel

Cemetery

Month-2023	Income	Expense	Income	Expense	Income	Expense	
January	\$10,823.00	\$9,149.59	\$0.30	\$612.18	\$738.24	\$200.00	
February	\$7,242.25	\$9,309.43	\$0.22	\$338.98	\$0.12	\$375.34	
March	\$8,179.00	\$13,350.64	\$0.29	\$702.79	\$900.10	\$328.10	
April	\$9,009.22	\$7,960.45	\$625.31	\$351.05	\$101.05	\$1,293.75	
May	\$10,849.03	\$9,661.89	\$0.34	\$199.00	\$1,501.74	\$2,848.62	
June	\$8,587.00	\$12,552.97	\$0.29	\$471.88	\$1.50	\$2,643.54	
July	\$11,008.44	\$7,653.83	\$100.22	\$231.66	\$11.00	\$2,607.15	
August	\$8,409.25	\$8,988.85	\$0.21	\$207.87	\$200.70	\$2,703.63	
September	\$8,472.44	\$11,433.76	\$0.15	\$345.01	\$200.34	\$2,633.98	
October	\$12,061.00	\$10,615.65	\$150.41	\$503.30	\$1,801.67	\$2,851.03	
November	\$16,673.25	\$11,626.41	\$0.78	\$145.50	\$101.35	\$226.83	
December	\$8,044.01	\$14,697.86	\$563.31	\$424.65	\$1,001.32	\$643.68	
Total	\$119,357.89	\$127,001.33	\$1,441.83	\$4,533.87	\$6,559.13	\$19,415.65	

Balance of Undesignated General Fund @ January 1, 2024

\$7,317.57

Balance of Red Brick Chapel Fund @ January 1, 2024 (Includes \$58,277.24 Endowment)

\$63,151.02

Balance of Cemetery Fund @ January 1, 2024 (Includes \$866,458.66 CD's, Trusts, UCC Foundation)

\$874,693.96

Financial Assistance Given through Hand of Hope Fund - 2023

	#	Total	Monthly Donations		Available	
	Families	\$\$\$			Balance	
Beginning					\$	806.82
January	3	\$576.00	\$	151.00	\$	381.82
February	1	\$150.00	\$	80.00	\$	311.82
March	1	\$25.00	\$	30.00	\$	316.82
April	2	\$50.00	\$	28.00	\$	294.82
May	3	\$100.00	\$	27.25	\$	222.07
June	3	\$125.00	\$	22.00	\$	119.07
July	1	\$50.00	\$	61.25	\$	130.32
August			\$	18.00	\$	148.32
September	2	\$50.00	\$	98.30	\$	196.62
October	2	\$50.00	\$	171.55	\$	318.17
November	1	\$25.00	\$	205.00	\$	498.17
December			\$	458.00	\$	956.17

Total 19 \$1, 201.00 \$ 1,350.35

REMEMBER OUR SHUT-INS and those in need of PRAYER

Terry & Fran Doll

Room 346
Residence @ Fitz Farm
2200 Springwood Rd.
York, PA 17403
Terry's cell (717) 968-2454
Fran's cell (717) 968-8754

Peggy Luckenbaugh Room 704B Colonial Manor Nursing Home 970 Colonial Avenue York, PA 17403



Linda Trone

Room 604 Colonial Manor Nursing Home 970 Colonial Avenue York, PA 17403

Keeping in our prayers

Cindie McKinsey Friends battling cancer Covid 19 patients



A1C Ness, Brandon 6907 S. Camino de la Humanidad Tucson, AZ 85756

KNITTERS and CROCHETERS:

Memorial White Rose Hospice is asking for donations of handmade scarves and blankets. They are especially in need of

items for men. Veterans in particular love to receive anything in red, white and blue. If you would like to participate in this ongoing project, there is a box in the Gathering Room for you to put your donations.

EMMANUEL'S CLOSET

After trying unsuccessfully for almost a year to find a new home to accommodate Emmanuel's Closet, the decision was made to operate it out of Blymire's Church on a limited basis. We had already been storing many food products in one of our Sunday school rooms and will continue to do that.

Clients will be able to come to the door by the flagpole on the 1st and 3rd Saturdays of each month from 9:00 AM-Noon to pick up food bags. Because of space limitations we will no longer be giving out clothing or household goods. We have had many inquiries from folks in the area and hope this will help to alleviate some of their food insecurity.

If you would like to donate any nonperishable food, toiletries or cleaning products, please put them in the marked bins in the Gathering Room. Thank you for supporting this ministry.

BLANKET MAKING

On Sunday, March 3, beginning at 2:00 PM we invite you to join us to help make



fleece blankets for White Rose Hospice. No sewing talent is required for this project. We will be cutting strips around the edge of the fabric and then tying knots. The fabric will be provided, but you are asked to bring a pair of sharp scissors with you. Come enjoy the fellowship while making a warm blanket for someone in need.



Would you like to try out some new dishes during these long winter days that are ahead? Buy one of our new church cookbooks containing mouth-watering recipes from current and past members of our congregation. Check them out on the table in the Gathering Room. The cost is only \$18.00.

MEN'S GROUP

Our Men's Group will hold their next meeting

on Tuesday, February 13, at 7:00 PM at the church. Our guest speaker will be Ken Frazier, who will present a travel log on visiting Easter Island and surrounding region. All men are invited to bring their spouses along as we will celebrate Valentine's Day. We ask each party to bring their favorite dessert along to share during the program. Everyone is welcome to attend.

You are invited to join us on Saturday, February 10, beginning Valentine's at 6:00 PM for a Valentine's Day party featuring the Spring Garden



Dance Band. This is not just for couples, so come solo or bring a group of friends with you and enjoy the music. There is no admission charge, but a freewill offering will be taken. There will also be a dessert buffet and raffle baskets

We are asking for donations of desserts for our buffet. If you would like to bring something, please sign up on the sheet in the Gathering Room, letting us know what you will be donating. Thank you.

GUIDED MEDITATION AND DRUM CIRCLE

Meditation and Music are very good ways to deepen your personal

spiritual practice. Relax, let go of worldly thoughts, and sink into your soul. You are invited to join us on Saturdays, February 17, and March 16, at 10:00 AM for Guided Meditation, followed by Drum Circle, with a variety of instruments available.

A Love Offering will be received. Love Offering is a way to show your gratitude to the facilitator of the gathering. Love Offering can take many forms. I have received stones, feathers, bread, cash, etc. It is a personal expression of gratitude between you and me. Any cash received will go back into the Fun Team for future activities. Come, experience! Cindy Innerst-Axe.

On Sunday, February 18, from 6:00-8:00 PM, you are invited to join us for an old-fashioned Hymn Sing, followed by Valentine treats. The public is invited and there is no charge.

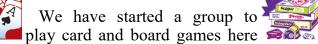
WHAT IS MESSY CHURCH?

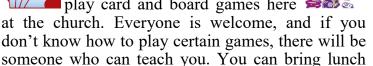
It's church, but not as you know it! Messy Church is a form of family church for children and adults. It involves creativity, celebration and hospitality! It's church for people of any age and at all stages of their faith journey. If traditional church is no longer

a part of your life, come try out Messy Church!

Our next Messy Church gatherings will be held from 6:00-8:00 PM on the following Fridays: February 16 and March 15. Meals will be provided each month. PLEASE INVITE YOUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS.

CARD and GAME CLUB





or order in. We meet the second Wednesday of each month starting at 11:00 AM and playing until people are ready to stop. Our next gathering will be held on February 14.

B - I - N - G - O

No, it's not the farmer's dog!!! Homewood Auxiliary is playing Bingo year-round with the skilled care and assisted-living patients. Bingo is played 5 times per week, according to the Director of volunteer services. Homewood is seeking your help: They are looking for Bingo prizes to give to the skilled-care patients and assisted-living residents who have outlived their resources. The auxiliary supplements those residents.

There is a box in the Social Hall for those Bingo prizes- you might have seen it—"BINGO" is on it, along with ideas for those Bingo prizes. The idea list is also in the hallway outside the Social hall, alongside the soaker pad dimensions and laundry bag dimensions. Any questions, please don't hesitate to ask!!!! Thank you very much!!!!! Steph Frey, Homewood Auxiliary rep- 717-244-5012



FEBRUARY 2024 "The mark of a great church is not how many people come, but how many people live differently for having been there." Source Unknown

"The mark of a great church is not its seating capacity, but its sending capacity." Mike Stachura

15 WAYS THE WORLD GOT BETTER IN 2023

In Lagos, Nigeria, 115 students are paying their school tuition with recyclable plastic bottles instead of cash.

Cancer fatalities in the US are down 33 percent from 1991, amounting to 3.8 million deaths avoided.

At Arizona University, 260 senior citizens are living in an on-campus retirement community. The ozone layer will be completely recovered within the next 40 years.

Curved blades in next-gen hydroelectric turbines allow 99 percent of aquatic life to safely swim through them.

Over 1,000 turtle eggs have been saved by a single former poacher.

Glass Half Full Nola has recycled 3.2 million pounds of glass in the past three years.

Five thousand students at Technological University Dublin live in toasty warm dorms thanks to excess heat from a nearby data center.

Drones are planting seeds in Canadian forests at a rate of five pods per second, helping wildfire-scarred areas recover quickly.

When given the choice to sell their farms for commercial development or continue growing crops, 94 percent of Tokyo's farmers decided to keep farming.

In an Indian village, 111 trees are planted for every newborn girl. Now, a forest is growing there.

Fifty students are currently enrolled in a program that helps trafficking survivors attain a college degree.

After New Jersey banned single-use plastic bags, 37 percent fewer ended up on its beaches.

Gas processed from New Yorkers' decaying food scraps has produced enough renewable energy for about 2,500 homes.

Amsterdam's new blue-green roofs can capture up to 97 percent of extreme precipitation, and then put the water to good use during droughts.



LITTLE LOVE STORIES TO MAKE YOU SMILE



Today, it's been 28 years since a firefighter saved my life when he rescued me from a burning condo building. In the process he suffered a leg injury that doctors said would leave him unable to walk normally for life. This evening, he put down his cane and slowly walked our daughter down the aisle.

Today, I came across my mom's old journal in the attic. I read a few entries, and they were quite depressing. My mom has always been such a positive influence in my life, so I had no idea her past was so troubled. The final entry was written the day before I was born. I told my mom I found her journal, and asked her why she stopped keeping a journal after I was born. She said, "I found happiness. I finally had something amazing to live for."

Today, at the nursing home I work at, I watched an elderly couple eat together as they do everyday. They have been married 63 years. She had a stroke and can't stand, eat, talk or do anything for herself. He doesn't need to live in a nursing home, but he does just to be with her. Everyday he eats his food, feeds her, and sits next to her looking at her like he must have the day they were married, his love unconditional, his loyalty undying.

Today, in a little African village where I volunteer as a nurse, I passed out food to hungry children. And since I knew her only food for the day was the slice of wheat bread I had just given her, I did not let her see me cry when she tore the slice in two and gave the bigger half to her little brother.

Today, I walked past a woman walking two dogs. One dog was missing a leg, but they were both limping. I asked what happened. She smiled and explained that the injured dog had lost his leg in a dog fight before she adopted him, and that her other dog oftentimes "mimics him so he won't feel alone and different."

Today, I was behind a bigger guy and his wife in line for a roller-coaster. They seemed to have come with a big group of people, but I could tell he was nervous. When he fit it into the cart tears rolled down his cheeks and the entire group started cheering. It turns out he just lost 100 pounds and hasn't been able to ride a rollercoaster for 12 years. Every person around him were his friends and they were there to support him.

GO!

Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you." - Genesis 12:1 (NRSV)

Each January, Pulitzer Prize winning columnist Mary Schmich invites her readers to pick a guiding word for the year—an idea that came from a reader named Mae. Mary is clear it is not a resolution nor a goal, but simply a word to shape the 365 days ahead. In 2016, Mary's word was "pause." As 2021 began and the pandemic continued, it was "endurance."

Mary's readers often send her their words. A class of fourth graders chose "kindness." For some high schoolers, their words ranged from "balance" and "self-acceptance" to "wanderlust" and "ataraxia".

(Mary said she had to look it up. I did, too.)

Ancient Abram's word had to have been "go," as in: "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house." Go from all that was familiar and comfortable.

But also "go" from that which no longer brought life.

Abram's father Terah had died in that land and that house.

His journey was over. Abram's wasn't. "Go," God said.

"Go." It's not as long as other words and probably not as deep or profound. Yet I want "go" to be my guiding word for the days ahead. I'd like it to guide the congregation I serve, too, as we continue to figure out what it means to be the church—to be faithful—in this time. "Go," even if we don't know where the journey will lead. "Go," even if we seldom see the way ahead. "Go," because we can trust the One who goes with us.

Prayer- Lord, thank you for the new journey ahead. Help us to trust that you go with us every step of the way. Amen.

Talitha Arnold UCC Daily Devotional

"I had rather be on my farm, than be emperor of the world"

"It is better to offer no excuse than a bad one.

"Worry is the interest paid by those who borrow trouble."

George Washington

"The best thing about the future is that it comes only one day at a time."

"You have to do your own growing no matter how tall your grandfather was."

"We trust, sir, that God is on our side.

It is more important to know that we are on God's side."

Abraham Lincoln

YOUR ASSIGNMENT

The Bible says that "each person is given something to do that shows who God is (1 Corinthians 12:7 MSG).

When God gives an assignment, he also gives the skill. Look at your life. What do you consistently do well? What do you love to do? And what do others love for you to do? So much for the excuse, "I don't have anything to offer. I can't do anything." And enough of its arrogant opposite, "I have to do everything."

Imitate the apostle Paul who said, "Our goal is to stay within the boundaries of God's plan for us" (2 Corinthians 10:13 NLT). So extract your uniqueness. "Kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you" (2 Timothy 1:6 NASB). And do so to make a big deal out of God.

Max Lucado

THE VOICE INSIDE

There is a voice inside you
That whispers all day long.
"I feel that this is right for me."
I know that this is wrong."
No teacher, preacher, parent, friend
Or wise man can decide
What's right for you—just listen to
The voice that speaks inside.

Shel Silverstein

Worry is a conversation you have with yourself about things you cannot change. Prayer is a conversation you have with God about things He can change.

Source Unkinown

THINGS TO REMEMBER IN 2024

As a child of God, prayer is kind of like calling home every day.

Blessed are the flexible, for they shall not be bent out of shape.

Do the math. Count your blessings.

Silence is often misinterpreted, but never misquoted.

Laugh every day -- it's like inner jogging

There is no key to happiness. The door *is always open*. Come on in.

God wants spiritual fruit, not religious nuts.



Make this heartfelt craft as a decoration or gift.

What you need:

- Yarn
- Scissors
- Parchment paper
- · Baking sheet
- Heart-shaped cookie cutters
- 1/4 cup cornstarch
- ½ cup water



What you do:

- 1. Cut yarn into 12-inch pieces.
- 2. Place cookie cutters atop a baking sheet lined with parchment paper.
- 3. Combine cornstarch and water in a saucepan. Heat mixture over medium heat, stirring until thick and smooth. Remove from heat and cool to form a "glue."
- 4. Dip each piece of yarn into the mixture to coat completely. Squeeze off any excess.
- Place yarn in the cookie cutters, allowing pieces to cross and loop within the heart. Add more until the cookie cutter is filled and the yarn looks like a heart.
- 6. Remove cookie cutters and bake the sheet for two hours at 150°F, or until hearts are dry and hard.



CONNECTED BY LOVE

God's Word is filled with messages about love, which connects us to God and to one another.

Directions: Draw a line from the beginning of each Bible verse (on the left side) through the heart to the rest of the verse (on the right side). Use the Scripture references for help.

- a. We
- b. Above all,
- c. My command is this:
- d. And over all these virtues put on
- e. Greater
- f. See what great
- q. There is no fear in

- 1. each other as I have loved you. John 15:12
- 2. has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. John 15:13
- 3. But perfect love drives out fear. 1 John 4:18
- 4. each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. 1 Peter 4:8
- 5. the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! 1 John 3:1
- 6. because he first loved us. 1 John 4:19
- 7. which binds them all together in perfect unity. Colossians 3:14

