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## *From the Pastor's Keyboard*



Dear friends in this wonderful family of faith,

I regularly get postings from Convergence, formerly The Center for Progressive Renewal, which supports the reshaping of organizations, congregations and leaders engaged in an age of movement from “organized religion” to “organizing religion” driven by the values of an inclusive theological vision for a more just world for all.

Recently Convergence posted an article by Rev. Dr. Anna Hall entitled “Helping Rural Congregations Thrive”. I think what she says pertains a lot to us since we could say that St. John's Blymire's UCC Church is at least semi-rural, although we are literally a “stone's throw” from the pretty thriving municipality of Dallastown.

Rev. Dr. Hall comments that rural congregations are often overlooked. Newspaper articles on religion most often focus either on mega-churches or congregations that are closing. Denominational events and systems can be easiest to access usually for those in urban areas, close to airports, or with excellent digital connectivity—all of which can be challenges for those in rural areas.

Even though work at Convergence involves supporting many rural congregations through coaching, consulting, and congregational assessments, Rev. Dr. Hall claims that their blog has only rarely featured articles or research on rural congregations. Yet many rural congregations are cornerstones of their communities. They add much more to the well-being of their neighbors than we can imagine. They are a bulwark against loneliness and disconnection from those who live far from neighbors. Frequently the sites of first and student pastorates, rural congregations are developing the faith leaders that will carry us into our future.

So what makes the rural congregation different than those in other settings?

Research suggests that rural congregations share certain characteristics.

- They are intensely relational –everything revolves around relationships
- They tend to measure success by strength of relationships and the well-being of their surrounding community
- They emphasize belonging above all
- Decision-making can be less formal and highly relational
- They have a long social memory of their congregation and surrounding community
- Almost every member is also a volunteer
- They can be weary from meetings and congregational administration
- They can be lay-led in many ways, even if they have paid pastoral leadership
- They often contribute exponentially to their surrounding community in social support and space sharing



Does any of that sound like Blymire's Church? I think so! Rev. Dr. Hall goes on to say that rural congregations' highly relational and connected nature can be their strength and a source of challenges. If differences of opinion arise, they can feel highly threatening, leading to unhealthy conflict behaviors. When surrounding communities are stressed or strained due to decline, growth, or local politics, the congregation is inevitably drawn into these dynamics. And when relationships are strong, communities are harmonious, and the congregation is unified in its mission and energy. Rural congregations make an impact that stretches far beyond those gathered to worship each week.

So how can rural congregations, such as ours, thrive since each is as unique as its context and gathered people? First of all, we can celebrate our history, stories, relationships, and how we connect to our surrounding community. We can recognize that our highly intertwined and relational ways are assets rather than limitations. We can also celebrate the gifts that our congregation brings to our members and our surrounding community and our impact of love. We can highlight each and every volunteer and staff member who makes worship and church life happen every single week.

Second, we can name those situations that feel threatening, such as financial pressure, anxiety about numbers of participants, entanglement with community conflicts, and pray about them. We can teach and build healthy communication behaviors that will serve the congregation and our surrounding community.

Third, we can continue to design new programs and change initiatives that fit the relational and historical fabric of our congregation. Rather than importing a formulaic program written for other contexts, we can continue to seek collaboration from those in our congregation to design any new initiative.

Above all, we can continue to celebrate who we are and where we are. We don't need to look like an urban or suburban setting to be a gift in our own right. We can continue to listen to how God is calling us as a particular group of people to be Christians in our particular community.

We are doing just that as we look at events that are coming up in September and this fall. A small group of us is beginning to meet with two other UCC churches in our area to discern if and how we can share ministry, given the current reality of a shortage of mainline pastors and the increasing importance of raising up lay minister leaders in our congregation. We don't know how this will take shape, but we want to be open to how the Holy Spirit continues to move among us.

Our mission outreach remains healthy as we continue to host in our own church building ecumenically-supported Emmanuel's Closet. After hearing Andy Stump this summer, we re-commit to support ASAPH Teaching Ministry in Haiti. After hearing Keith Dyke this summer, we are starting to partner with the Dallastown Area School District's Caring and Sharing Fund which helps local students and their families who are in special need (this includes bringing clothing to Community Aid where DASD gets a certain amount of money per pound of clothing to go toward the Caring and Sharing Fund). Our Men's Group and FUN Team continue to financially support mission efforts locally and overseas. Our Hand of Hope Fund continues to help local families with particular needs.

Our community fellowship endeavors are going strong with our summer outdoor (or indoor when weather is inclement) concert series now winding down, our women's luncheons, our spring-summer-fall chicken barbecues, our year-round hymn sings, our continuing book sale, our recent dinner and movie evening, and the activities we host in our church such as gentle chair yoga and A Matter of Balance.

Our spiritual growth and fellowship for our members is also thriving. A huge thanks to our musicians, sound room persons, and worship leaders who faithfully offer meaningful worship services each Sunday (a special thanks to those who helped make our two summer outdoor services possible). In October, we have planned an outdoor Blessing of the Animals service and a traditional Harvest Home worship service. Sunday School resumes the Sunday after Labor Day with several teachers slated to teach – Nelson Leader and Jeri Jones in September, Terry Stein with a familiar series in October, and Peggie Free with a new series in Advent. In November we are slated to have several sessions featuring "hard to understand and often overlooked Bible passages" with a group of teachers presenting individual sessions.

We have our Silent Auction and Picnic/Pig Roast scheduled for September. There are monthly gatherings for our Guided Meditation and Drum Circle, our Card and Game Club, Men's Group and W.O.W. Bible Study will resume in the fall on Tuesday mornings.

I would be remiss if I did not mention the thorough floor cleaning and the new hallway flooring installation that took place this summer. Coming up soon will be needed HVAC improvements and Sound Room expansion.

Thanks to you all who have helped to make all of this happen and will continue to do so. You folks continue to be committed to our church's vitality and continue to discern God calling us to thrive and to make in impact on people's lives in every way we can, as we continue to ask during this interim period: **Who are we as St. John's Blymire's United Church of Christ? Who are our neighbors? Who is God calling us to become as we journey into God's future? What is our unique niche here in Dallastown?**

See you around during the month of September!

God bless, Pastor Rick

Dearly Beloved,

Grace and Peace to you.

*When many of his disciples heard it, they said,  
"This teaching is difficult; who can accept it?"*  
—John 6.60

Jesus,

I am not so weak as to need platitudes,  
though I savor them.

Give me the difficult sayings—  
hard to understand,  
harder to trust.

Wedge my heart out of its ruts.

Free me from my smug understanding.

Threaten my sure disbelief.

Unbalance me so I have to lean into you.

I know you'll catch me when I fall.

(Faith is not the high-wire; it's the falling.)

Beloved, teach me to accept what is hard,  
to trust what is given,  
and to keep at it.

Deep Blessings,

Pastor Steve Garnaas-Holmes

*Unfolding Light*

[www.unfoldinglight.net](http://www.unfoldinglight.net)

## EMMANUEL'S CLOSET

We are now getting settled in our new home here at Blymire's Church. Past clients are coming back and we are registering some new ones. Due to space limitations we are no longer giving out clothing or household goods.



If you would like to donate any nonperishable food, toiletries or cleaning products, please put them in the marked bins in the Gathering Room. Right now we are especially in need of **scalloped potatoes, mashed potatoes, gravy, boxed mac and cheese, rice/pasta sides, and detergent.**

Thank you for supporting this ministry.

## ***NEW PARTNERING WITH DALLASTOWN AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT***

Following up on Dallastown Area School District Supervisor of Auxiliary Services Keith Dyke's message and informal sharings with us on June 23rd, we at Blymire's Church will partner more closely in two ways with DASD.

The DASD has a fund called the Caring and Sharing Fund which helps students and their families who have urgent needs for heat, food, clothing, housing (some students and their families are homeless or are living in crowded conditions with other families because of evictions), and other necessities which they are not able to obtain. We as a church will contribute to that fund. You may write out a check to the church and earmark it for DASD Caring and Sharing Fund. We will also have a special offering the first Sunday of each month for the Caring and Sharing Fund with a plate on the table in the Gathering Place. When there is available money in our Hands of Hope Fund and it's needed, we will add money from our Hands of Hope Fund to supplement what we give to DASD for their Caring and Sharing Fund.

Secondly, you are encouraged to bring good, gently used clothing to Community Aid, Queensgate Towne Center, 2001 Springwood Road, York. When you bring in clothing to Community Aid and mention the Dallastown Area School District, DASD receives a certain amount of money per pound of clothing. That money goes into the Caring and Sharing Fund. If you cannot bring used clothing into Community Aid, you may bring used clothing to church and put it in the bins in the Gathering Place. Periodically that clothing will be brought to Community Aid and DASD will get credit for it and receive some money to go toward the Caring and Sharing Fund.

Giving directly to the DASD Caring and Sharing Fund and giving used clothing to Community Aid are wonderful ways for us to help those in need who are literally in our back yard.

## **MONTH OF SUNDAYS WORSHIP SERVICES FOR SEPTEMBER 2024**

### **SEPTEMBER 1, 2024 – FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST LABOR DAY WEEKEND SUNDAY**

Message Scripture: Song of Solomon 2:8-13    Centering Scripture: James 1:19-20

Message: "Listening (or is it Virginia?) is for lovers"

Theme: Song of Solomon may be the raciest book in the Bible. But can it offer some wisdom for better relationships? With help from James, we learn that listening may be one of the greatest gifts we can offer to those we love.

### **SEPTEMBER 8, 2024 – SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST UCC FAITH FORMATION SUNDAY**

Message Scripture: James 2:1-17    Centering Scripture: Proverbs 22:8-9

Message: "Poverty, by Jesus"

Theme: Jesus challenges His followers to see the actual poor as people who are worthy of justice, fairness, compassion, honesty, respect, and support.

### **SEPTEMBER 15, 2024 – SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST UCC JUST PEACE SUNDAY**

Message Scripture: Mark 8:27-38    Centering Scripture: Psalm 19:7-10

Message: "Don't Be Chicken; Instead, Pick Up Your Cross"

Theme: Following Jesus can lead to criticism from others. But disciples of Christ who serve courageously and sacrifice status, money, and/or power will find their lives saved by taking up the cross.

### **SEPTEMBER 22, 2024 – EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST CHURCH PICNIC FOLLOWING WORSHIP**

Message Scripture: Psalm 1    Centering Scripture: Mark 9:36-37

Message: "Where Are Your Roots? Can They Be Uprooted?"

Theme: We're under pressure to acquire more earthly possessions, financial and professional success, and personal happiness at all expense. But when was the last time we made meditation and reflection a priority? It's not too late to do so!

### **SEPTEMBER 29, 2024 – NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST UCC INDIAN MINISTRY AND UNITED SAMOAN MINISTRIES STEWARDSHIP SUNDAY**

Message Scriptures: Psalm 124, Mark 9:38-50

Message: "Courage for Community", Cindy Innerst-Axe, preaching

#### ***September Holy humor:***

"Did you hear the one about the pastors who formed a bowling team?"

They called themselves the Holy Rollers.

The groom, who was in a horribly nervous condition, appealed to the presiding minister at the wedding in a loud whisper at the close of the ceremony:

"Is it kisstomary to cuss the bride?"

The minister replied, "Not yet, but soon."

*The excerpts above were taken from The World's Greatest Collection of Heavenly Humor, compiled by Bob Phillips, Harvest House Publishers, 1982.*

## **SEPTEMBER** **BIRTHDAYS**



***May God  
Bless You  
On Your  
Birthday!***

- |     |                    |     |                     |
|-----|--------------------|-----|---------------------|
| 1.  | Brent Barley       | 23. | Tim Sleeth          |
|     | Kimberly Dilling   | 24. | Beth March          |
| 2.  | Connie Hays        | 25. | Andrew Mickey       |
| 3.  | Susan Knaub        | 26. | Michele Leader      |
|     | Linda Eichelberger | 27. | Shyanne Luckenbaugh |
| 4.  | Anjuli Shane       | 28. | Joan Henry          |
| 5.  | Debra Forbes       |     | Linda King          |
| 6.  | Beverly Troop      | 30. | Lou Ann Jones       |
| 10. | Eric John          |     | Aiden Bowen         |
|     | Orion Valentino-   |     |                     |
|     | Charlton           |     |                     |
|     | Timothy            |     |                     |
|     | Luckenbaugh Jr.    |     |                     |
| 12. | Joyce Horning      |     |                     |
| 14. | Sally Bosley       |     |                     |
|     | Braydon Picking    |     |                     |
| 18. | Landon Contino     |     |                     |
| 22. | Meagan Bowen       |     |                     |
|     | Bodie Barley       |     |                     |

## **CELEBRATING SEPTEMBER ANNIVERSARIES**

Sept. 21 - Jaron and Caitlin Picking- 5 years  
Sept. 22 - Nicholas and Tina Innerst - 17 years  
Sept. 24 - Troy and Jane Picking - 30 years  
Sept. 26 - Mike and Cindy Axe - 26 years

# FINANCIAL REPORT

## Undesignated General Fund

## Red Brick Chapel

## Cemetery

Month-2024	Income	Expense	Income	Expense	Income	Expense
January	\$10,102.00	\$9,943.43	\$600.89	\$319.65	\$784.93	\$0.00
February	\$7,747.00	\$10,447.49	\$1,200.83	\$318.91	\$1,652.89	\$500.00
March	\$8,402.00	\$10,244.71	\$0.91	\$556.38	\$26.59	\$792.24
April	\$13,187.00	\$11,317.37	\$0.81	\$258.87	\$2.74	\$3,187.50
May	\$9,242.00	\$9,355.00	\$0.71	\$178.64	\$438.87	\$3,159.28
June	\$9,161.00	\$10,126.11	\$0.84	\$390.96	\$907.30	\$3,840.02
July	\$10,860.18	\$18,635.10	\$0.78	\$126.04	\$15.71	\$2,742.49
August						
September						
October						
November						
December						
<b>Total</b>	\$58,701.18	\$80,069.21	\$1,805.77	\$2,149.45	\$3,829.03	\$14,221.53

Balance of Undesignated General Fund @ August 1, 2024

(\$4,050.46)

Balance of Red Brick Chapel Fund @ August 1, 2024  
(Includes \$61,554.06 Endowment)

\$66,084.15

Balance of Cemetery Fund @ August 1, 2024  
(Includes \$875,504.97 CD's, Trusts, UCC Foundation)

\$898,347.77

## Financial Assistance Given through Hand of Hope Fund - 2024

	#	Total	Monthly	Available
	Families	\$\$\$	Donations	Balance
Beginning				\$ 956.17
January	1	\$25.00	\$ 48.00	\$ 979.17
February	1	\$50.00	\$ 192.00	\$ 1121.17
March			\$ 93.00	\$ 1214.17
April	3	\$420.00	\$ 404.00	\$ 1198.17
May			\$ 265.15	\$ 1463.32
June	2	\$100.00	\$ 110.04	\$ 1473.36
July	4	\$300.00	\$ 84.00	\$ 1257.36
August				
September				
October				
November				
December				
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>\$895.00</b>	<b>\$ 1196.19</b>	



## **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 710B  
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**

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**Remember  
and pray for  
Our Members  
in the  
Military**

### **A1C Ness, Brandon**

6907 S. Camino de la Humanidad  
Tucson, AZ 85756

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## ***B - I - N - G - O***

September is here—school is in session, choir is singing, Bible study is studying and BINGO prize donations starts again! Homewood Homes is so thankful for your generosity and they hope it continues.

Please place BINGO prize donations in the box in Fellowship hall—they will be given to Homewood Homes.

Thank you. God loves a cheerful giver!!

### **KNITTERS and CROCHETERS**

Memorial White Rose Hospice is asking for donations of handmade scarves and blankets. If you would like to help with this ongoing project, there is a box in the Gathering Room for you to put your donations. They are especially in need of items for men.



Tired of always eating the same food? Buy one of our 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.

A cordless drill was donated to use on any project at our church. Two packs of drills were also donated. One drill index is for wood and metal. Another for drilling in cement. The tools are located in the shed in the DeWalt tool bag. Feel free to use it."

## **STICKY BUNS**

The FUN Team is now selling Sticky Buns as a fundraiser. These delicious buns are made by Mr. Sticky's and are the same ones that attract long lines at the York Fair each year. The cost is \$4.00 each or 6 for \$20.00. If you would like to place an order, sheets are available in the Gathering Room or you may call the church office at (717) 244-0655. The deadline for orders is Sunday, September 29. The buns may be picked up on Thursday, October 10, from 4:00-6:00 PM at the church.



Our next chicken BBQ will be held on Saturday, September 14, from 11:00 AM-1:00 PM. You will get a 1/2 chicken, baked potato, applesauce, roll and butter all for \$10.00. To place an order, please call the church office at (717) 244-0655. We sold out early nearly every month so far, so to be guaranteed a dinner, it is best to pre-order.

We are also planning to set up a bake sale table and would welcome donations of homemade cookies, cupcakes, candy, and other goodies. Please put individual portions in baggies or plastic wrap. They may be dropped off at the church the day before or the morning of the BBQ. Thank you.



## **MEN'S GROUP**

You are invited to join the Men's Group on Tuesday, September 10,



at 7:00 PM. Our special guest will be Catherine Stoner reporting on the Uganda Project. She will be giving us an update on the Innocence family which we support.



The FUN Team is hard at work planning a day of old-fashioned fun. Join us after the worship service on Sunday, September 22, for delicious food, games, and fellowship. Pick up a flyer from the Welcome Table for more details. There is also a sign up sheet for you to let us know how many will be coming and what you plan to bring. In addition to food, you are asked to bring an inexpensive, wrapped item for a Bingo prize. Hope to see you there!!



## **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 Saturday, September 21, at 10:00 AM, for Guided Meditation, followed by Drum Circle, with a variety of instruments available. We have moved the meeting place from the church to the home of Cindy Innerst-Axe, 2285 Swamp Road, Dallastown. Questions, call Cindy (717) 855-6330.

W.O.W (women's discussion and support group) has begun meeting again at 11:00 AM in the Gathering Room on the 4th Saturday of each month. Our next meeting will be held on September 28. Our time together will include informal discussions of things we've read, heard about, or have questions about. We will also share joys and concerns. Lunch afterwards is optional. Everyone is welcome. Text or call Ginny (202) 549-4358 for more info.



The Fun Team will be holding a Silent Auction during the month of September. Please check out the items displayed in the Gathering Room and bid on those that interest you. The bidding will end on September 29. Good luck!!



## **MESSY CHURCH**

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 gathering will be held on Friday, September 20, from 6:00-8:00 PM. Other upcoming Messy Church gatherings are scheduled for October 18, November 15, and December 20, also from 6:00-8:00 PM. Meals will be provided each month.



## **CARD and GAME CLUB**



We have started a group to play card and board games here at the church. Everyone is welcome, and if you don't know how to play certain games, there will be someone who can teach you. You can bring lunch or order in.

We will meet the second Wednesday of each month starting at 11:00 AM and playing until people are ready to stop. September's meeting will be on the 11th.

If you have any questions, please call Janie Montgomery at (717) 891-3607 or Diana Myers at (717) 855-4752.

## **CHAIR YOGA**

Are you looking for some gentle, easy exercise? Come check out our Chair Yoga classes! These classes are especially good for beginners. No equipment is necessary. Yoga is one of the most highly recommended forms of exercise for seniors! You can come occasionally, once a week, or twice a week. Just come and give it a try! It's easy! Men, this is not for women only!



Classes are Mondays and Wednesdays from 10-11 AM here at the church. There is a \$10 fee for each class. Hope to see you there!





Christianity should sound like, “my beliefs continue to deepen my love for others” not “the depth of my love for others is contingent on how deeply they conform to my beliefs.”

Reverend Benjamin Cremer



### HOW AM I DOING?

*“Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.” - John 13:34*

On the last day of Bible study class before summer break, after months of rich conversation and seemingly endless theological debates, a critical question remained before us: If you had the opportunity to ask Jesus one question, what would it be?

The first two responses picked up themes of earlier conversations: “What is the most important thing to teach our children?” and “Does someone have to believe in you to be a good person?”

There was a pause before a third person vulnerably offered, “I want to ask Jesus, ‘How am I doing?’” The rest of the group quickly proclaimed, “Yes, that’s it! That’s what we all want answered!”

How am I doing? This is the question prophets called out on high while trying to get their people to turn toward God. It’s the one I imagine the disciples pestered Jesus with each time they came back from the harvest. It’s the one that is the foundation of my middle-of-the-night ruminations on the past and my daytime anxieties about the future.

None of us got a direct response from Jesus that day, and we certainly weren’t bold enough to answer for ourselves by bragging, “I’m totally winning at life!” but something else did happen.

Moments later, we looked back on our season together and spontaneously began affirming one another. We named the courage of the person who came for the first time and then kept coming back. We reflected on the commitment someone had for passing on his values to his children and grandchildren. We celebrated the person who approached health challenges with strength and determination.

We gave each other the answers we longed to hear from Jesus, loving each other exactly the way that Jesus loves us.

**Prayer** Thank you, Jesus, for the people who remind us that together, we’re doing okay.

Liz Miller—United Church of Christ Daily Devotional

**MIRACLES:** You do not have to look for them. They are there, 24-7, beaming like radio waves all around you. Put up the antenna, turn up the volume - snap... crackle...

Hugh Elliott

### LIFE IS FOR LIVING

Open the windows.  
Dance in the kitchen as you cook.  
Play that music loud.  
Turn off the news.  
Check in with someone you love.  
Get some fresh air.  
Watch the beautiful show nature puts on.  
Leave the negative online discussions.  
Unfollow the chaos.  
Feel alive again.

Lori Deschene

### SNACK EMERGENCY

After moving to the country, my 3-year-old daughter and I were often alone in the house. Because we lived in a rural area with no close neighbors, I wanted to make sure she would be able to call 911 in the event something happened to me. After instructing her, I decided to test her. “OK, what would you do if you found me on the floor and you couldn’t wake me up?” I could see her little brain working. To my surprise, she said, “I would go into the kitchen and eat anything I want.”

Laura Albrecht

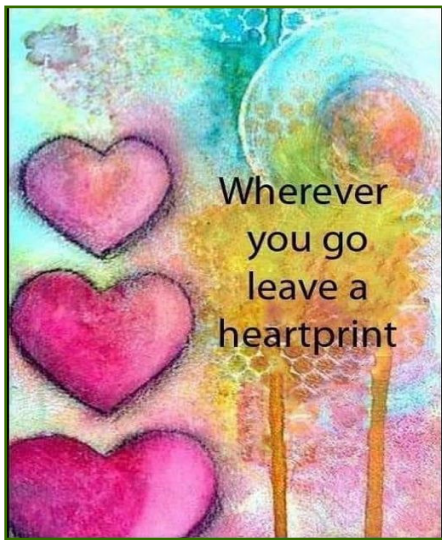
Lord, make me a blessing to someone today. Give me the words. Give me the gift of companionable silence. Give me grace enough to show grace to those most in need of it. Make me your blessing to someone this day.

Patricia Ramsden

Don’t just “be the church” inside the four walls of a church building, be the church when the service is over. Be the church on the streets, be the church in your own home. Stop defining CHURCH within the four walls of a building. Be the church outside the walls.

Unknown





Wherever  
you go  
leave a  
heartprint



*If you, like me, have been feeling wearied and completely disheartened by the state of our country and our world, maybe you too, will be inspired and comforted by the words of this song by Jeremy Camp. In this song, I find a different perspective on this roller coaster life we are currently living and the role we might play in it. Kathi Sterling*

### **MAYBE WE WERE MADE FOR THESE DAYS**

These days my heart's always on the run  
These days the world's spinning out of control  
These days are fast and they're furious  
Feels like the worst is ahead of us  
Sometimes it's hard to feel at home,  
But I believe that you and I  
Are in the right place, at the right time  
God called us by name  
And He doesn't make mistakes  
I know we were born to shine bright  
In a dark world that needed some light  
Don't have to be afraid  
Maybe we were made for these days  
  
What if the beauty isn't crushed?  
It just needs the hope that's inside of us,  
What if it's more than a destiny?  
What if we're part of a masterpiece?  
Until our Father brings us home  
I believe that you and I  
Are in the right place, at the right time  
God called us by name  
And He doesn't make mistakes  
I know we were born to shine bright  
In a dark world that needed some light  
Don't have to be afraid  
Maybe we were made for these days

**Jeremy Camp**

### **ENGAGE THE WORLD WITH LOVE... GOD'S LOVE**

"The United States took a devastating hit when airplanes flew into the World Trade Center. I remember rushing home from work to explain to my kids what had happened. I didn't want them to hear it from anyone else. As we held hands, trying to process this tragedy together, I told them it was okay to be feel sad, but we shouldn't be overcome by fear.

A lot of rhetoric quickly started to sound like fear. People feared other countries and other religions. Some of us feared the refugees who had been driven to the United States by violence in their homelands. Tragedy can incite major fears in us—sometimes irrational fears. I have friends in some countries where a great deal of violence continues to happen.

These friends are not extremists or criminals. They're kind-hearted and hard-working people. They love their kids and love their neighbors. They're a lot like us.

While our country has recovered from the tragedy of 911, we tend to find reasons to fear one another still. Some of this is well placed, but most of it isn't. God doesn't want us to live in fear;

He wants us to engage with the world with love.

God's brand of love casts out fear."

**Bob Goff**

Next time you find yourself fearing an entire group of people who are different from you, try to find a way to connect, if even in a small way. Find out who they really are, you may discover they're a lot like you. Embrace love, not fear.

We must not only give what we have; we must give what we are.

**Desire-Joseph Mercier**

### **HERE BY GRACE**

When I realized my daughter and I weren't seated together, I asked the fellow sitting next to her to swap seats with me. *Surely he'll understand*, I thought. But he didn't.

And so I was left separated for a long, transatlantic flight from my daughter. I began to plot how I'd trip him if he dared walk to the restroom during the flight. I turned to intimidate him with a snarl and saw, much to my surprise, Jenna offering him a pretzel. What? My daughter fraternizing the enemy! As if the pretzel were an olive branch, he accepted her gift and they both leaned their seats back and dozed off.

I learned the lesson God had used my daughter to teach me. All of us are here by grace and, at some point, all of us have to share some grace. So the next time you find yourself next to a questionable character, don't give him a hard time—give him a pretzel!

**Max Lucado**



