

Be kind and
compassionate to one
another, forgiving
each other, just as in
Christ God forgave
you.

Paul the Apostle



Welcome

Hymn “More Like You” (FWS #2167 twice)

Scripture Ephesians 4:31-32 (CEV)

Stop being bitter and angry and mad at others. Don't yell at one another or curse each other or ever be rude. Instead, be kind and merciful, and forgive others, just as God forgave you because of Christ.

Message “Getting Rid of Cranky”

What makes you cranky? You know what I mean – feeling out of sorts, irritable, mad at the world (or at least some of the people in it). Last week, I woke up after a choppy night's sleep and got out on the proverbial “wrong side of the bed.” I was just mad at everything, and I wasn't sure why. So, I worked at not taking it out on my husband because I also knew it wasn't his fault. Of course, he knows me well enough to know when this is happening, so he just does his own thing, waits to see if I need to talk about something, and knows that I'll eventually get past it.

The thing about “cranky” is that we seem to get in our own way, and then a lot of things become magnified. Once I was up that morning, I stepped on the scale – probably not a good thing to do at that point! It made me angry with myself, and I knew I only had myself to blame for the weight increase. Then, I kept dropping things – probably because I wasn't paying enough attention to what I was doing. After breakfast, I drove to my favorite Dunkin Donuts location to buy iced tea, and there was a line. Normally, I have patience with lines, but not so much that morning. By the time I arrived home again, and, having spent the trip talking to myself about what was going on, I started to relax, and the crankiness eased until I was feeling better.

Our scripture lesson from Ephesians tells us that God knows we will be cranky, angry, and upset, both with ourselves and others. It really IS all right to feel that way, but it isn't all right to dwell on it or act disrespectfully toward ourselves or those around us. Galatians 5:13-14 says: ¹³ For you have been called to live in freedom, my brothers and sisters. But don't use your freedom to satisfy your sinful nature. Instead, use your freedom to serve one another in love. ¹⁴ For the whole law can be summed up in this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." (NLT)

Too often we think that we aren't supposed to be angry, that anger is a sin. But anger is a normal part of being a human being. Jesus understood that; he became angry at times, but most of the time it was about how human beings treated others or separated themselves from God. If we look more closely at the Ephesians passage, we can also understand that it isn't about the anger we are feeling but about how we act when we are feeling it. Verse 26 reads, "Be angry, but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger."

In the letters of the New Testament, we often read about how congregations are called to behave, following the example of Jesus. Jesus consistently offered grace, acceptance, and forgiveness to others, and he taught all of us that we should love others as Jesus had loved us. "Love your neighbor as yourself." Sadly, churches become caught up in destructive behaviors that stem from anger, hurt feelings, disagreements, and many other situations that are left unresolved and no reconciliation.

Years ago, I read a story about two men who were leaders in a church and who constantly argued with each other. They rarely agreed on anything and often were engaged in bitter fights. Finally, they stopped speaking to each other and avoided one another at all costs. The pastor of the church knew that both men had good intentions, but they let their own opinions become more important than finding a way to work together. One day he struck up a conversation with one of the men - I'll call him Henry - and eventually brought the topic of the conversation around to the other man,

whom I'll call Amos. Henry said something like, "that jerk." The pastor's response was, "But you have to admit that he is a good family man." Henry reluctantly agreed that, yes, Amos was a good family man.

Later, in a conversation with Amos, the pastor brought Henry's name came up. Amos angrily said, "That guy! What a dummy!" The pastor said, "Well, I wouldn't know about that, but did you know that he said you were a good family man?" Amos was surprised and rather speechless. Finally, he said, "Huh! What do you know!" Then the pastor said something positive about Henry and Amos finally agreed. So back and forth, the pastor gradually helped the men to see the good things in the other man. One day after church, the pastor saw the two men approach each other, shake hands, smile, and begin talking with each other.

When we see the whole person, all of who they are and try to understand the entire picture, we can let go of anger and bitterness. Often, our reaction to people stems from some of our own issues in life, or because we feel defensive which puts up barriers to being able to listen and understand. Sometimes we make assumptions or believe gossip about the other person. And guess what! It is something we all experience at times.

Ephesians 4 tells us, as the Church, that we are called to be imitators of God. Of course, we can't totally be like God, but we can imitate God, and we do that through learning about Jesus who tells us that he and God are one - those who see him, see God. Jesus teaches us about how to live faithfully as his followers.

Martin Luther wrote: "This life . . . is not godliness, but the process of becoming godly, not health but becoming well, not being but becoming, not rest but exercise. We are not now what we shall be, but we are on the way. The process is not finished, but it is actively going on. This is not the goal but it the right road. At present, everything does not gleam and sparkle, but everything is being cleansed." (Quote found in a commentary by Brian Peterson, found at *Text This Week* for this week's scripture passage.)

1 Corinthians 13 reminds us that we cannot know everything in this life. Verse 12 says “In the same way, we can see and understand only a little about God now, as if we were peering at his reflection in a poor mirror; but someday we are going to see him in his completeness, face-to-face. Now all that I know is hazy and blurred, but then I will see everything clearly, just as clearly as God sees into my heart right now.” (Living Bible)

God accepts us, knowing we are a work in progress. God forgives us and asks us to forgive others. God loves us and wants what is best for us. God calls us to be the Church, to act with respect, kindness, mercy, and forgiveness toward others instead of behaviors that hurt and destroy. As the Church, we are called to model this for others and to interact this way with each other so we can live it in the world. It is a process, and it is how we move on to perfection, as John Wesley, the founder of Methodism says. That means that we live into perfection of God’s love and God’s grace which is offered to us and to all.

We are part of the Body of Christ, renewed by the Spirit, named, and claimed by God, and called to be imitators of Jesus, our teacher, example, and redeemer. We are a work in progress, so let’s work through our cranky times; let’s recognize that they will happen; let’s keep working at it; let’s be gentle with ourselves; let’s find ways to reconciliation with those who irritate us; and let’s be kind, forgiving, and offer grace to others. We can set an example and make a difference in our own lives and in the lives of those around us as we live faithfully following Jesus. Amen.

Prayer

Oh my goodness, God! We can be cranky at times, can’t we? Your wish for us is that we would learn to handle the stresses and conflicts of life in loving, kind ways. You haven’t told us that we should keep from disagreeing, and you recognize that we will be angry at times. What you **do** tell us is to be respectful, listen, and try to understand the other person’s point of view. The gifts we give others and ourselves in those situations are kindness, mercy, and forgiveness, and that happens

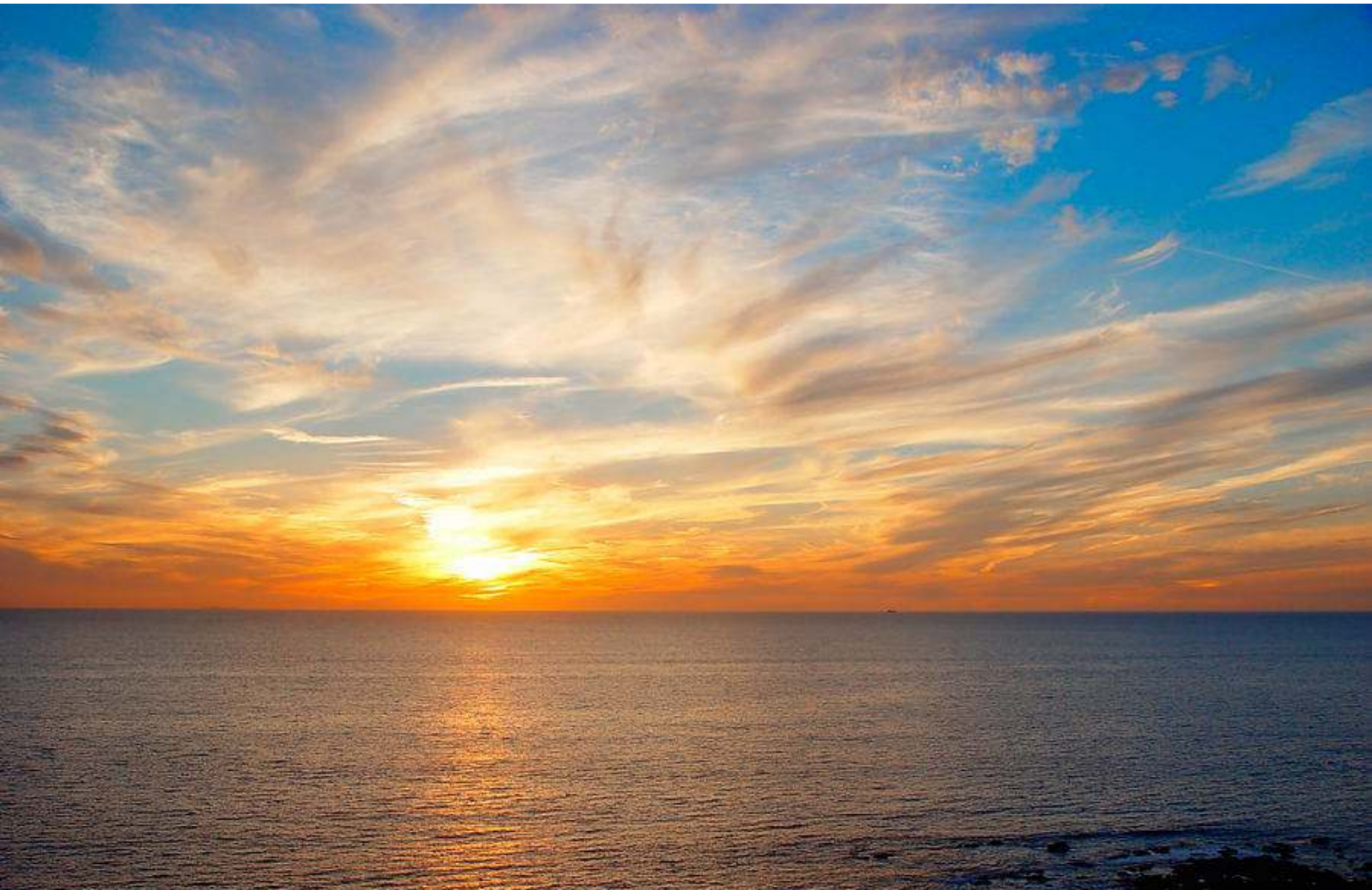
because of your grace and mercy. Help us to care for one another, honor who the other person is, and be patient and respectful as we strive to interact with each other in healthy, productive, and caring ways. Thank you for your patience and your forgiveness. Amen.

Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

Hymn "Lord, I Want to Be a Christian" (UMH #402)

Sending Forth





WE LIFT UP IN PRAYER

Juliann
Joan Allen
Naomi
Erin Frane
Madeline
Charles Gilman
Josh Jones
Jenn
Gary
Joyce

Harry Junkins
Marilyn & Gil
Donna Smith
Sophia
Bobbie Noble
Dan Strange
Danny Westbrook
Marion Collishaw
Mark & Sarah
Delores

Christine & her parents
Those in nursing and assisted living care
Our Church family



WHO WE ARE

FUMC PORTSMOUTH A RECONCILING CONGREGATION

We, the congregation of the First United Methodist Church of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, are dedicated in worshipping, learning, and serving with all people as we embrace Jesus Christ's message of love and acceptance. As a United Methodist Church we stand fully behind the statement "Open Hearts, Open Minds, and Open Doors". We celebrate our diversity and invite all persons regardless of age, gender, racial or ethnic background, sexual orientation, marital or socioeconomic status, nationality, physical or mental ability into full membership and participation in the life of this community of faith.



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