



welcome home

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are
heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

MATTHEW 11:28

**SEPTEMBER 15, 2019
FUMC PORTSMOUTH, NH**

Prelude & Entrance of Christ's Light

Gratitude Moments

***Call to Worship**

L: There are times in our lives when we feel lost.

P: Jesus seeks us and finds us.

L: We gather together as Jesus' flock to worship him.

P: We remember that even though we may stray, God brings us together again.

L: We are part of God's family.

P: Because of Jesus, we are named and claimed as God's beloved children.

ALL: Hallelujah! Let us praise God together!

***Hymn:** "Amazing Grace," v. 1,2,3,4 UMH #378

A Time for the Child in All of Us

Prayer (unison)

Good Shepherd, help us to keep our eyes on you. We know it is easy to wander off, to be distracted by the world's demands and to move away from your teachings and guidance. Remind us that you call to us, seek us out, forgive us, and always bring us back to your loving arms. May we do the same with our brothers and sisters and remember that they are also your beloved children. Amen.

Sung Response: "Fill My Cup, Lord" UMH #641

Ministry of Music

We Proclaim the Word

Reading the Word: Luke 15:1-10

L: The Word of God for the People of God.

P: Thanks be to God.

Message: "Welcome Home" Rev. Dr. Debra J. Hanson

***Hymn:** "Seek Ye First" UMH #405

Prayers of the People

Silent Prayer and Pastoral Prayer

The Lord's Prayer (unison)

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not in temptation, but deliver us from evil, for Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

Gratitude Moment

John VanReenen

Giving of Our Tithes and Offerings

***Doxology:** (*Please join in singing the following*) UMH #94

Praise God from whom all blessings flow; Praise God, all creatures here below; Alleluia! Alleluia! Praise God, the source of all our gifts! Praise Jesus Christ, whose power uplifts! Praise the Spirit, Holy Spirit! Alleluia! Alleluia!

***Prayer of Dedication** (unison)

These gifts are meant to honor and glorify you, O God. May they be used to make a difference to those who are lost or struggling to make ends meet. Receive them with our gratitude and joy. Amen.

We Go Forth to Serve

***Hymn:** "Love Lifted Me" Insert

***Choral Benediction** (*Congregation encircles the Sanctuary*)

May the Lord, gracious God bless and keep you forever. Grant you peace, perfect peace, courage in every endeavor. Lift up your eyes and seek His face, and His grace forever. May the Lord, mighty God bless and keep you forever.

***Pastor's Charge**

Postlude

**Please stand as you are comfortable*

*TFWS = The Faith We Sing UMH = United Methodist Hymnal
Large print bulletins are available from the greeters*

Welcome!

Whether you are joining us for worship for the first time or after many years of attending here at First UMC, we want you to know that you are welcome!

We are an inclusive community that invites everyone to be part of our church fellowship. Thank you for being here, and we hope that you have had a meaningful experience of worshiping our God so you leave this place feeling that you have been blessed to be a blessing. Please join us again!



Rev. Deb Hanson

Pastor - Rev. Dr. Debra J. Hanson

Pastor's Assistant - David Richards

Liturgist - Marilyn Stebbins

Lay Leader - Susan Sarosiek

Acolyte - Alexa Langs

Director of Music - Bevan Bloemendaal

Greeters - Steve & Kellie Langs

Ushers - Art Munson & Nancy Chesser

Sound Tech - Sue Sarosiek

Worship Service Tech - Dave Richards

Photographer - Dave Atkinson

Sunday School - Aerial Silanpaa & Kaya Sarosiek



**Come join us for coffee hour
after church service in
Sanborn Hall. We'd love to
catch up with you and see
how your week has gone.**



WE LIFT UP IN PRAYER...

Ken Young

Rev. Bill & Gayle Gardei

Marion Collinshaw

Sylvia Bartlett

Gil Stebbins

Woodie Lange

Jim New

Bobbie Noble

Barbara Glidden

Judy Doyon

Charles Gilman

Ruth Griffin

Jim Slater & Family

Barbara Sylvester

Barbara Millar

Barbara Clement

Rev. Charles & Anona Hartman

Our Denomination

Our Church Family



UPCOMING EVENTS

9/15, Our new D.S. Rev. Taesung Kang will be worshipping with us today. Please join us in welcoming Rev. Kang. **SPRC** will meet after service in the Randall room with Rev. Kang.

9/17, Church Council meeting will be at 6 pm at FUMC.

9/21, Pumpkin Patch set up us at 9 am. Help is needed!

9/28, Pumpkin Delivery will be at 9:00 am at FUMC. It's time to sign up on our "Pumpkin Patch Booth Schedule". Please sign up online or see schedule on counter. Thank you so much for helping! We couldn't do it without you!

10/19, This will be our second Pumpkin Delivery day.

9/1 - 10/31, Need an excuse to clean out your “stuff” and have the church get paid?! Bag or box up your good, clean, working, sellable condition items and put them on Sanborn Hall stage (stage available *after* 9/1). We need to deliver everything all together to Savers on Nov. 6th., for weighing. Here’s an example: 14 lbs. of “Soft Goods” = about a 13 gal. trash bag and a black garden leaf bag from 30 to 40 lbs. Our goal is 10,000 pounds which equals approximately \$2000.00.

11/9, Our annual turkey supper takes place, more details will be coming but if you have questions before then please see Dave Richards.

FRIENDLY REMINDERS

FUMC thanks everyone for all the school donations. We had a very successful campaign. The October Beacon will have more information.

Just a friendly reminder, please try to keep your pledge up to date so we can meet our financial obligations as a church. Thank you for your faithful giving!

We continue to celebrate those in Senior Living. Please send a card from the table in Sanborn Hall to brighten their day. Stamps are available in the office or leave on counter for mailing. Thanks!



**In Memory of
Gertrude Parkhurst**

Love Lifted Me

I was sinking deep in sin, far from the peaceful shore,
Very deeply stained within, sinking to rise no more;
But the Master of the sea heard my despairing cry,
From the waters lifted me; now safe am I.

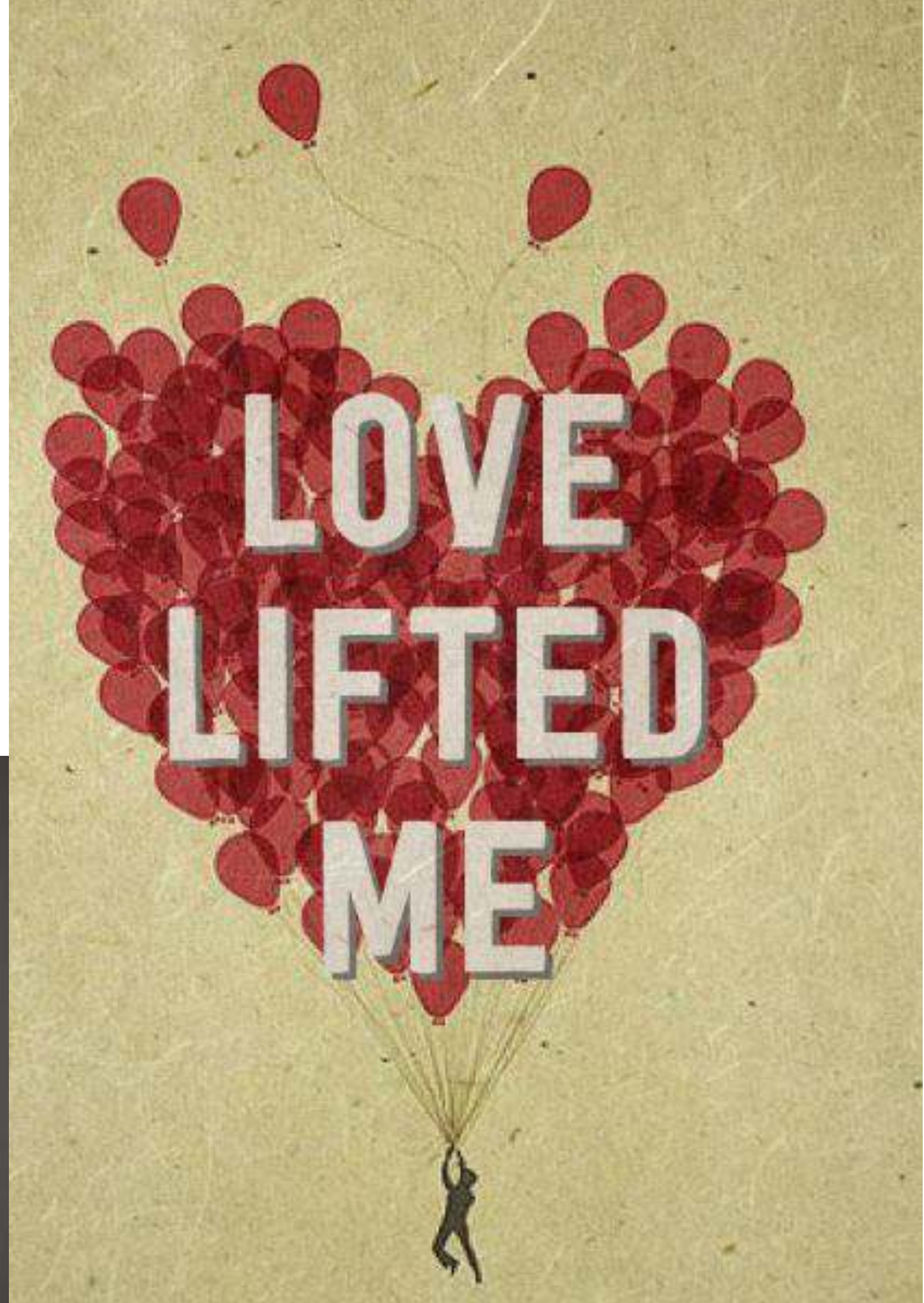
REFRAIN:

Love lifted me! Love lifted me!
When nothing else could help. Love lifted me.
Love lifted me! Love lifted me!
When nothing else could help. Love lifted me.

Souls in danger, look above, Jesus completely
saves; He will lift you by his love out of the angry
waves. He's the Master of the sea, billows his will
obey; He your Savior wants to be – be saved today.

REFRAIN:

Love lifted me! Love lifted me!
When nothing else could help. Love lifted me.
Love lifted me! Love lifted me!
When nothing else could help. Love lifted me.





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.



New England Annual Conference Tri-State District
The Rev. Sudarshana Devadhar, Bishop
The Rev. Taesung Kang, District Superintendent

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
129 Miller Avenue - Portsmouth, NH 03801
Office Phone 603-436-6038 office@fumcportsmouth.net
Pastor office hours - Tuesday and Thursday 9 am - 12 pm
[call to ensure availability]
Pastor - Rev. Dr. Debra J. Hanson

Check out our website at www.fumcportsmouth.com

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SERMON TRANSCRIPT GIVEN BY
REV. DR. DEB HANSON

“Welcome Home” – 9/15/19
First UMC – Rev. Dr. Debra J. Hanson

SCRIPTURE: Luke 15:1-10

THEME: God’s love includes everyone.

Have you ever lost something that you really needed? One of my colleagues suggested that there are many things we can lose: direction, faith, faculties, a friend, focus, hair, hope heart, head, keys, mobility, perspective, respect, teeth, temper, calendar, or any number of things that affect our ability to function well. Another colleague was at a meeting on Indian Island in Old Town, Maine and her car was stolen. Although she had her purse and keys with her, she left her calendar in the car. She said her life was in that calendar, and she was lost. I understand that!

Losing something can be frustrating, and, if you are like me, you do a lot of housecleaning and straightening to find it. When the item is finally discovered, we feel such a sense of relief. Although, I’m not sure many of us have thrown a party because we found our keys or our calendar or whatever, but when we do find them, we are much happier! In our two parables today, the lost sheep and the lost coin, we have a picture of how God seeks the lost.

Both parables present a reversal of what we would expect, something Jesus often did when he told parables – with God expect the unexpected. The shepherd leaves ninety-nine sheep in order to find one – something that would not necessarily be the case in Jesus’ day. Most shepherds were not the owners of the flock, but they were hired to care for the flock. For them to leave the entire 99 sheep of the flock in jeopardy would have been dangerous and foolish.

And the woman lost one of her ten coins. First of all, most of Jesus’ listeners would have been very aware that ten coins meant a lot to the woman. Maybe we can understand her need to find it since so many people were poor then, and losing one coin could affect their ability to care for their families. But then, after much searching and clean, the woman finds it, and she ends up spending it on a party for her neighbors!

This message from Jesus pushes the boundaries about what people believed about God and how God interacts with human beings. These two parables, plus the third that follows them - the Prodigal Son – all speak of the radical love of God and God’s desire to find those who are lost. When they are found, there is great joy and celebration! God seeks out the lost, and that can include us, so we get the message - God loves us, God longs to be in relationship with us, and God goes looking for us when we have strayed. Perhaps we understand it better when we remember the panic that sets in when one of our children or grandchildren disappears, even for a moment.

Right after my freshman year in high school, my parents took us on a two-week vacation from Iowa to California and back – to see the sights and visit relatives out there. My dad loves history and national parks, so we were able to travel a loop around to see the Black Hills, Grand Teton National Park, Old Faithful, the Grand Canyon, Hoover Dam, Disneyland, and many parts of our country that were just so beautiful. We were a family of six, pulling a borrowed pop up camper and stopping at grocery stores to buy food, often eating in a little park or rest stop since this was the most frugal way we could even take this trip.

One of the places we camped overnight was a small-town park where we had permission to set up the tent. It was quiet and a great place for us to be. In the morning, we were all packed and ready to go, but we couldn't find Jack. My younger brother was an explorer, and he was around twelve at the time we took this trip. All of us started hollering for him and looking all over the park. Mom and Dad were getting really worried until one of us heard a snicker from overhead. Looking up, we saw Jack sitting in a beautiful climbing tree, grinning at us. He had been enjoying the show below, not realizing what a scare he gave everyone. Now we can laugh at it, but at the time, it wasn't really all that funny. Even though he wasn't lost, it felt like he was.

At times we all are lost. This parable, when we look at it more in depth, is about spiritual lost-ness. It's about our God who goes looking for us – for anyone who is lost – even more fervently than we all looked for my brother. There are many who feel lost, and there often ways when we feel lost. The Good News is that God seeks out and welcomes EVERYONE into the family of God, welcomes them home to God. God calls our names – God calls their names – God wants them to know that home is with God.

The church is a place that offers that sense of “Welcome Home,” and the church is where we live out the teachings of Jesus and welcome EVERYONE to our home. The church isn't just for those who, like the Pharisees and Scribes in our scripture passage think that they can decide who is welcome and who is not. They criticized Jesus for eating with tax collectors and sinners saying that he should not associate with them or eat with them or touch them. But Jesus came to teach a different way of living in God's love. He welcomed everyone, and he went out seeking them in the towns and cities where he traveled.

The church doesn't have a calling to judge people, but a calling to welcome people. There is no place for self-righteousness in the church because Jesus teaches that God isn't exclusive. There are those who have left churches, and many who avoid entering a church because they perceive that self-righteousness from some who are part of the church community. What they and we need to remember is the that old saying, “The church isn't a haven for saints, but a hospital for sinners.” We all are sinners and fall short of the grace of God, except that in Jesus we have been given that forgiveness and grace, and as his followers, we are asked to offer the same to each other and others.

Rev. David Lose shared a story about September 11, 2001 – eighteen years ago (hard to believe). Welles Crowther went to work like every other day to his job as an equity's trader in the World Trade Center. After the second tower was hit, the one he was in, Welles led everyone he could find down the steps to safety, and then he went back for more. And after leading more people to safety, he went back again, and again, and again, until the tower collapsed. On that day, this talented, athletic, good natured, but in so many ways ordinary person did an extraordinary thing, giving his life to make sure others could live. On that day, God used Welles Crowther to find people who were lost.

He writes, “I know we won't often find ourselves in those kinds of circumstances, yet God can also use us to find others. Not only can God use us, but God does, and will. At work, at home, at school, through our congregations, in our places of volunteering, God regularly uses us to find others.”

We don't have to be "in your face" witnesses, which is what so many people avoid when they are asked to witness to their faith. Remember, St. Francis of Assisi said, "Preach the gospel to all the world; use words if necessary." Our actions speak louder than words. They often open doors to conversations or someone's interest in who we are and why we are kind or generous or giving of our time. All we need to do is reach out to someone to offer a helping hand, be a friend, make a phone call, send a card, visit the sick or homebound, check in on people who are going through a tough time.

What about being patient and kind to the harried clerk in the store who has a long line of people? Maybe we could thank them for their service or compliment them on something. It's surprising how often their faces transform from upset to smiling. I was so impressed this week when I heard the story of a boy in Florida who had designed his own University of Tennessee t-shirt but was shamed and bullied into feeling embarrassed because he didn't have a real shirt, only a drawing that he had made.

His teacher, Mrs. Snyder stepped in when she saw how devastated he was. *In hopes of raising his spirits, Snyder said she planned on buying him an official University of Tennessee T-shirt, and asked friends if they had contacts with the school who could "make it a little extra special for him." By Thursday, her Facebook post had gone viral among Volunteers fans, with lots of people leaving supportive comments. And it wasn't long before the University of Tennessee reached out wanting to send the student a care package full of swag and apparel.*

"You all have taken this above and beyond what I had ever imagined," wrote Snyder. Snyder updated the Facebook post on Friday to let everyone know how excited the student was to receive the care package. "My student was so amazed at all the goodies in the box," she said. "He proudly put on the jersey and one of the many hats in the box. All who saw had either goosebumps or tears while we explained that he had inspired and touched the lives of so many people."

What's more, University of Tennessee said it was turning his "U.T." design into an official T-shirt. "Share in a Florida elementary student's Volunteer pride by wearing his design on your shirt too!," the university's official campus store said on Twitter. According to the university, a portion of the proceeds from every shirt sold will go to an anti-bullying foundation.

"When I told him that his design was being made into a real shirt and people wanted to wear it, his jaw dropped," said Snyder. "He had a big smile on his face, walked taller, and I could tell his confidence grew today!" (<https://www.cnn.com/2019/09/07/us/bullied-student-university-of-tennessee-shirt-trnd/index.html>)

Finding the lost is being who we are called to be as God's children. It takes being kind, finding ways to look for the ways we can make a difference in someone else's life by offering grace and acceptance. Jesus reached out to those whom the Pharisees and Scribes avoided. I'm grateful that this congregation is so welcoming. The environment invites people to be part of the congregation. I think we always need to remember that we present the love of God to others – either here at church or in the community, to our family and friends, and wherever we are. Being a follower of Jesus isn't an accomplishment but a gift, a calling, and a blessing.

There are times when we touch the lives of others who are lost, and, even though we may not know it, we may have opened doors for them to find their way to God. There are times when WE are lost, and it might be an unexpected act of kindness and caring that reminds us that God loves us through others and draws us into the fold again. Part of reaching out can also include inviting people to come to church, offering to pick them or meet them here and sit with them. It's also befriending those who are part of the congregation who may seem alone, engaging in conversation with visitors, inviting them to come to fellowship.

And then we go out through those doors – the servants' entrance to the world – and enter our mission field, remembering again and again, we don't just represent the church – we ARE the church of Jesus Christ. We are his hands and feet, his voice and his disciple. It's like the time I had a "clergy" sticker on the back window of my car – I was very aware of how I drove and acted with that there! We have the love of God in our hearts almost like that sticker – let's be very aware of how we share it with others and the message we send as we minister wherever we are called to be.

Let us pray:

Find us, O God, and welcome us home to your love and care. Help us to rejoice in all who are lost and find their way back to you. May we be part of making that happen. We pray in Jesus name. Amen.