

Dear Fellow Members,

As I write you today, I think of the many opportunities I've been given to live out God's love through the lens of another one of our UCC's 3 Great loves, LOVE OF CHILDREN.

First as a child myself: having three beautiful younger sisters; cousins, childhood neighbors, friends and school classmates; Sunday School, cherub and junior choir members, fellow acolytes, youth fellowship and church camp friends, fellow Boy Scouts and Little League baseball teammates, to name a few.

Then as an adult: in leadership & teaching roles with many of the same groups I participated in as a child; summer playground supervisor, having three beautiful daughters, nieces, nephews and eight grandchildren; a 35-year career as a public elementary school teacher; and the love I share with friends and neighbor's kids.

I'm very grateful for these opportunities and look forward to many more once we are able to return to what we'll come to know as the new normal after this pandemic has ended, if only in part.

Since the 3 Great loves are our UCC's mission initiative I pulled our congregation's 2019 Annual report from file to look again at the ways we as a congregation have loved children last year and here's what I found: children's participation in worship, the children's message during worship w/ treats followed by children's Sunday School; Hoffman Homes for Children with birthday cards that included money, Christmas gifts, and donating to their silent auction; sponsoring Nelwin Adling of the Philippines through Global Ministries Child Sponsorship Program semiannually and also with cards, pictures and a T-shirt from our anniversary celebration, notes, candy, and all kinds of school supplies with a backpack; Waynesboro Human Services ACT Fund for their Weekend Backpack Food Program; Back To School supplies collection; Christmas tree stockings collection; Waynesboro Homeless Shelter slightly used shoes collection for their fundraiser; Crop Walk, NGA In-Gathering; Habitat For Humanity special offering; canoeing/kayaking/fishing trip and butterfly program with free monarch nurseries.

To think of the love that has been shared with children through our ministries is truly uplifting and I trust it is for you too! In addition, one of the Worship Team's objectives for this year is "to develop and deliver more children's programming" which is hindered now by the pandemic, but exciting to see that more activities for children are being created!

As we conclude today's focus on one of our denomination's 3 Great loves, the Love of Children, I leave you with a memorable scripture, a memorable song verse, and a memorable prayer.

Matthew 19: 13-15 Then children were brought to him that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples rebuked the people; but Jesus said, "Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven." And he laid his hands on them and went away. (RSV)

"Jesus Loves the Little Children (Enjoy the whole song with great videos online!)

Jesus loves the little children

All the children of the world

Red, brown, yellow

Black and white

They are precious in His sight

Jesus loves the little children

Of the world"

(Words by Rev. Clare Herbert Woolston in late 1800s, music by composer George Frederick Root in the 1864 as stated on website hymntime.com)

A bedtime prayer

"Now I lay me down to sleep,

I pray the Lord my Soul to keep;

If I should die before I 'wake,

I pray the Lord my Soul to take."

(This is a later version from "The new England Primer" according to Wikipedia)

Take good care!

Bob