

Opus Christi Works of Christ

St. James United Methodist Church
646 Daniel Webster Highway
Merrimack, NH 03054
Rev. Annie Baker-Streevy, Pastor
Robin House, Office Administrator

Contact Us:
Office phone: (603)424-7459
Email: stjamesmrmk@gmail.com
Stjames-umchurch.org
Facebook: St. James UMC
Prayer Request email: sjprayerchain@gmail.com

Building Christian Community Within and Beyond the Church

I HAVE
CHOSEN THE WAY
of faithfulness;
I HAVE
SET MY HEART
on your laws.

Psalm 119:30, NIV



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Pastor's Message

*And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,
"See, the home of God is among mortals.
God will dwell with them;
they will be God's peoples,
and God Godself will be with them and be their God;
God will wipe every tear from their eyes.
Death will be no more;
mourning and crying and pain will be no more,
for the first things have passed away."
And the one who was seated on the throne said, "See, I am making all things new."
Revelation 21:3-5*

I don't know about you, but every year I make New Year's Resolutions at the end of December or beginning of January and by February I've already "failed." There is so much pressure to "be better", "do more", "be healthier", "accomplish more", and "be successful". So I am here to say that if you are feeling yourself in that space of failure or shame or guilt over impossible and improbable resolutions you made, welcome to the club...we have cookies!

The real point I'm trying to make here is that we are human. We are messes. We succeed AND we fail. In the words of Miss Frizzle from the kid's show *The Magic Schoolbus*, "let's make mistakes and get messy!" We put on this false mask that somehow this year will be different; that magically our humanness won't show up and life won't get in the way. This is what we remember during Ash Wednesday and the season of Lent: that we are HUMAN, we are messy and full of mistakes, we aren't perfect, and we aren't God (thank God). Through this yearly ritual and practice we are reminded that we are dust and to dust we shall return. It's like a big reality check that we need every single year. Oh yeah, I'm human.

This year Ash Wednesday falls on Valentine's Day which at first seems really odd. Let's mark this holiday of love by going to church and being told we are human and we are going to die...sounds so fun! And while it might not be as fun as going out on a dinner date with your loved one, I actually think the irony of the two holidays being on the same day is perfect and so very human. Because our daily human lives are not all completely happy Valentine's Days and they are not all solemn Ash Wednesdays, but rather a bit of both and all the in-betweens.

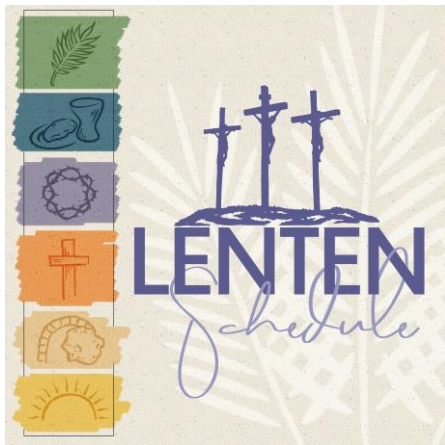
Theologian Frederick Beuchner wrote, "Here is the world. Beautiful and terrible things will happen. Do not be afraid." There is so much truth to that and so much truth to the human messiness of two "opposite" holidays falling on the same day. So my prayer for you as we embark on this Lenten Season is that you let go of the guilt of failed resolutions and the facade of perfection, so that you may embrace your authentic messy, beautiful humanness. After all, that's what God does with us each and every day.

Pastor Annie

WORSHIP



Fred Huber passed away peacefully on January 5. Fred was predeceased by Edna, his loving wife of 56 years. They both attended St. James church regularly and Fred continued to worship with us online in his later years when it was more difficult to leave home. His memorial service was officiated by Rev. Annie Baker-Streevy at Rivet Funeral Home on January 13 with burial at Last Rest Cemetery.



Ash Wednesday is February 14

Join us for worship at 6:30 pm in person and online.

Taizé Worship

6:30 pm on Wednesdays throughout Lent (February 21-March 27)

In-person and online

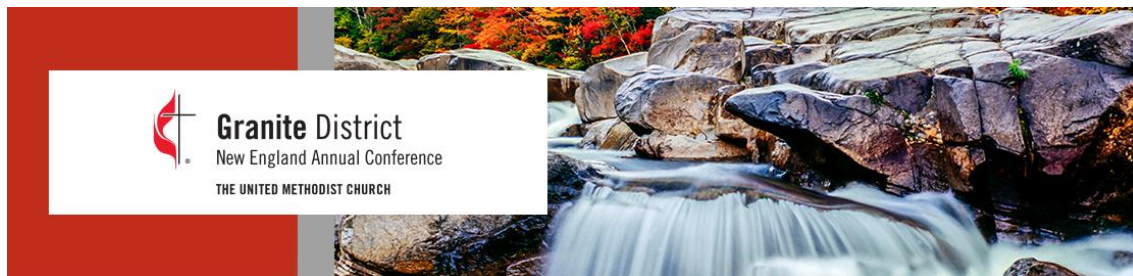
Come and find a quiet center for this meditative/contemplative midweek worship service. We will pray, read Scripture, have some time for silent meditation, and song.



Lenten Worship Series *Wandering Hearts: Figuring Out Faith with Peter* by Sanctified Art

"This Lent, we are focusing on the life and faith of one of Jesus' most famous disciples. In Peter, we see a person who is both steadfast and unsteady, a dear friend and a betrayer, a follower and a wanderer. In Peter, we often see ourselves. By following Peter's journey, we watch the story of Jesus unfold through the eyes of a very normal human trying to figure it all out – just like us. Like many of us, Peter has a wandering heart. His journey is not polished, or linear, or perfect, but he is always tethered to the love of God."

Watch your email inbox for a Lenten Devotional booklet to help you dive deeper into this series. You can also request a printed copy from the church office.



Bishop Announces Cabinet Change

January 21, 2024

Bishop Peggy Johnson is pleased to announce the appointment of the Rev. Dr. Jackie Brannen as the interim District Superintendent of the Granite District. Her appointment will be from July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025.

With the transition in episcopal leadership happening in September 2024, Bishop Johnson is making this an interim appointment to give the new bishop an opportunity to assess the needs of the districts and choose a new superintendent. This will also allow the Cabinet and Conference greater flexibility in 2025.

"I am so grateful to Jackie for her willingness to return to the Cabinet at this critical time in the life of our Church," said Bishop Johnson. "This interim appointment will offer the Granite District a leader with experience and a pastoral heart while allowing the next bishop to make important decisions about the Conference's future leadership."

Dr. Brannen will follow Rev. Taesung Kang, who will be completing seven years of ministry as the District Superintendent in the Granite District. He will begin serving as the pastor of the South UMC in Manchester, Connecticut beginning July 1, 2024.

An elder in the New England Conference, Dr. Brannen served for 19 years before retiring in 2023. She served local churches throughout New Hampshire and Maine in addition to serving as Katahdin District Superintendent. She is currently serving the First United Methodist Church of Portsmouth, NH.

She is a spiritual director with a passion for helping folks connect with God. Dr. Brannen, her grandson Matthew and her two beloved Yorkies live at Wesley by the Sea, the Preachers' Aid Society community for retired clergy in Wells, ME. She loves to travel, read, and write.

Dr. Brannen said, "While my retirement plan had not originally included serving once again as a District Superintendent, I am thrilled to be able to serve God and the churches and people of New Hampshire, where I grew up and began my ministry."

Please join us in praying for Dr. Brannen and Rev. Taesung Kang and their families, the congregations of First UMC and South UMC and the entire Granite District during this time of transition.



CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

No Wednesday Book Study During Lent

Rather than have a book study during Lent, everyone is welcome to attend the Taizé worship at 6:30 pm on Wednesday evenings February 21- March 27. You are also invited to use the Wandering Heart Lenten Devotional booklet for further spiritual enrichment.

Sunday School News


During Lent, the St. James Sunday School will also be learning about Peter's journey with Jesus. The Wandering Heart worship series described on page 3 includes a curriculum for children and youth.

Bible Quiz


Use one word (perhaps in different forms) for all the blanks to complete this Scripture passage:

"Dear friends, let us ____ one another, for ____ comes from God. Everyone who ____ has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not ____ does not know God, because God is ____."

- A. believe
- B. help
- C. love
- D. forgive




Answer: C (See 1 John 4:7-8, NIV)



Bishop Peggy A. Johnson's 2024 Days on the Districts

Learn about what's coming up
in this important year for our Church

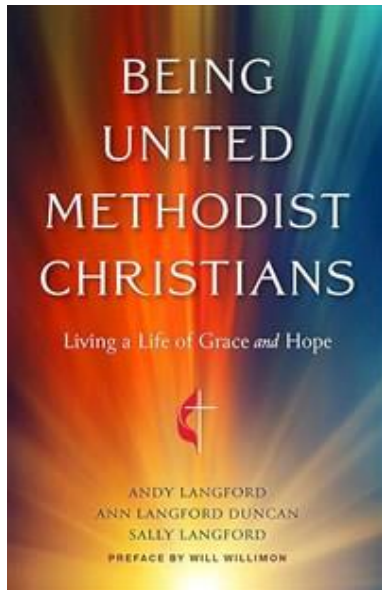
Includes a report from the
General/Jurisdictional Conference Delegation



Bishop Peggy A. Johnson and members of the General/Jurisdictional Conference Delegations will visit each district to share information as we begin this important year in the life of the New England Conference and The UMC.

Lay and clergy are urged to attend one of these events to learn about proposed plans for the New England Conference and for the denomination. The General/Jurisdictional Conference delegation will offer its report.

The Granite District event will be held at 1 pm on Saturday March 2 at First UMC, 18 Wesley Way, Gilford, NH 03249 and will be followed by a light reception. All events will be in person, but there will be virtual options. In case of inclement weather, the event will be held exclusively online via Zoom. Information about such plans will be disseminated closer to the time.



Suggested Reading for Bishop's Days on the Districts

Those attending Bishop Peggy A. Johnson's days on the districts are encouraged to read [*Being United Methodist Christians: Living a Life of Grace and Hope*](#) by Andy Langford. Bishop Johnson said, "In this time of change, The UMC needs to move forward with renewed commitment to our core beliefs, values, and practices." This book includes our United Methodist story and beliefs, our Biblical story, how we share with other Christians, how we nurture our Spiritual lives and serve God and our neighbors.

NEWS FROM COMMITTEES AND TEAMS



Trustees News

We will not have an all-church work day in February. The St. James Board of Trustees members will use the day to assess the needs of the building and make a plan for 2024 maintenance projects.

A Note from the Financial Secretary

Submitted by Brenda DuLong

2023 Giving Statements will be available on Sunday February 4th. If you do not receive it after Church, it will be mailed to you. I have made any correction that I may have seen. If you find any errors, please email me bsdulong@gmail.com and I will take care of it and reprint for you.

For 2024 if you are in need of giving envelopes let me know and I will get them for you. I have sent out confirmations to everyone who has pledged for this year. If you have not received yours, please let me know and I will reissue it.

Thank you to all who have pledged for 2024.

Brenda DuLong your Financial Secretary.

OUTREACH



In celebration of Valentine's Day, a time of year when much of the holiday food pantry donations have been depleted, the Finance Committee is providing you the opportunity to honor loved ones by making a monetary donation to the food pantry. Your name and that of your loved ones will be included in the bulletin on a special insert on Feb. 11th.

Place your donation with this form in the offering plate during Sunday worship or mail it to St. James UMC, P.O. Box 895, Merrimack, NH 03054 no later than 2/4/24. Make your check payable to Merrimack Community Food Pantry with "Valentine FP gift" in the notation section. Please include the following information with your donation:

Given by: _____

In Honor of:

In Memory of:



News from the St. James Sewing Group

Submitted by Dianne Tate

180 dresses from the St. James sewing group were delivered to Maine on Friday, Jan 12. From there they will be included in a shipment to Peru, Panama and Ecuador.

We made 480 dresses in 2023 adding to the total of 2,291 dresses sewn since the St. James sewing group started in 2017. We have had a huge outpouring of donations to keep us going. That has made a huge difference.

FELLOWSHIP

Monthly Breakfast



The St. James United Methodist Men (UMM) would love to have you join them for breakfast on the first Saturday of every month. RSVP to George Fisher at fishergf@comcast.net so he knows how many people to expect.

Date: Saturday, February 3

Time: 8:00 am

Place: Mary Ann's Diner, 1 Craftsman Lane, Amherst

Pancake Supper

Tuesday, February 13 from 4:30 to 6:00 pm

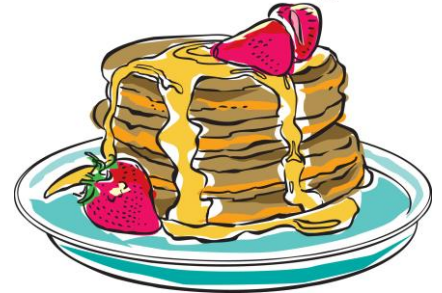
Shrove Tuesday has many customs pertaining to food. Pancakes are traditional because eggs, sugar, and fat, commonly forbidden during the Lenten fast are used up so they will not go to waste.

Everyone is welcome to join us for a Shrove Tuesday pancake supper, free of charge, here in the St. James Fellowship Hall on Tuesday, February 13 at 4:30 pm.

We'll need volunteers to help set up tables and chairs on Tuesday afternoon and clean up after. Contact the church office if you are interested in helping.

RSVP on the bulletin board outside the church office so we can be sure to have enough food.

Shrove Tuesday



2024 Coffee Schedule

Thank you to the following committees and teams for providing beverages and goodies following worship throughout the year. Please note that we will need volunteers to make coffee during the month of May in addition to the summer months June, July and August. A sign-up sheet will be posted on the bulletin board starting in April.

Coffee Making Schedule - 2024

MONTH	COMMITTEE/TEAM
January	UMM
February	Worship & Lay Leadership
March	Finance
April	SPRC
May - August	Volunteers
September	Nurture Team
October	Outreach Team
November	Church Council
December	Trustees

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Troop 401 News

Congratulations to the newest Troop 401 Eagle Scouts. Drew Johnson (near right photo) earned the rank of Eagle Scout on July 26, 2023. His Court of Honor was held here at St. James Church on December 30, 2023. Austin Mendrala (far right photo) earned the rank of Eagle Scout on June 28, 2023. His Court of Honor was held here at St. James Church on January 6, 2024. Photos from BSA Troop 401 Facebook posts.



Dine Out Club

The Dine Out Club is a donation-based meal program for anyone 60 and older, with a suggested donation of \$4.00 per meal.* After registering, you will receive a Dine Out Club card which can be used for meals from a specially curated menu. Menus comply with the Older Americans Act standards by providing one-third of the Recommended Dietary Allowances for adults.

Partnered restaurants are the Village Eatery in Merrimack, the White Birch Eatery in Goffstown and Francoeur's Café in Manchester. You may use your card up to 8 times per month. On the first day of each month, 8 new meals will be available to you. Meals do not carry over month-to-month. Dine Out Club cards that have not been used for 90 days will be deactivated.

Register at hcmow.org/dineoutclub or take an application from the envelope on the bulletin board in the office hallway.

New applications, replacement cards, or requests for cards to be reactivated may take up to 8 weeks to process due to the programs tremendous popularity.

*For your convenience, the restaurants have wall mounted donation boxes for cash and checks. You can also mail donations to P.O. Box 910 Merrimack, NH 03054 or on the website hcmow.org/dineoutclub. No eligible person will be denied a card based on their inability to contribute.

VITA/TCE Program Offers Free Tax Preparation Services to Qualified Taxpayers



Free tax preparation services are available starting in early February 2024 for Greater Nashua residents through a partnership led by United Way of Greater Nashua, the IRS and other community partners and volunteers.

Tax preparation will be done by trained and IRS-certified volunteers at four sites in Nashua and Hudson.

All sites require that the taxpayer **schedule an appointment in advance** to have their return processed. Details on how to make an appointment for each site, along with dates and times when the sites will be open, is included at right.

Those wishing to have their taxes prepared by the volunteers are asked to have all their documents available when making their appointment. Information on which documents are needed are listed at the bottom of **IRS Form 3676-B** located at <https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p3676bsp.pdf>

Volunteers have been trained to assist taxpayers for both the **VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance)** and the **TCE (Tax Counseling for the Elderly)** Programs. They will assist taxpayers in identifying any credits (Earned Income Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit, etc.) they may be entitled to.

The VITA Program offers free help to people who generally earn \$64,000 or less, people with disabilities and limited English-speaking taxpayers. The TCE Program is generally for people aged 60 or older and focuses on tax issues unique to seniors. While there is no income limit on TCE prepared returns, priority is given to low-to-moderate income households. The sites in Nashua and Hudson can prepare tax returns for both programs.

IRS Form 3676-B also contains information on the specific types of returns the trained volunteers are able (or not able) to process in the VITA and TCE programs; please refer to this list to see if you qualify.

Additional information about the tax preparation services available in Greater Nashua through the United Way of Greater Nashua-sponsored program will be provided as it becomes available. Anyone with questions can contact United Way at (603) 824-0205 or email vita.uwnashua@gmail.com.

For information on tax preparation services available in other New Hampshire communities, call 2-1-1 or go to <https://nhtaxhelp.org>.

NASHUA SITES

United Way of Greater Nashua

20 Broad St., Nashua

Call 2-1-1 to make an in-person appointment

Opening Date: Thursday, February 1, 2024 (in-person); Tuesday, February 6, 2024 (drop-off)

Appointment Day & Times:

Tuesdays: 10am-1:30pm / Thursdays: 9:45am-12:45pm

Final Appointment Date: Thursday, April 11, 2024 (in-person); Tuesday, April 9 (drop-off)

Nashua Senior Activity Center

70 Temple St., Nashua

Call 2-1-1 to make an in-person appointment

Opening Date: Wednesday, February 7, 2024

Appointment Day & Times:

Wednesdays, 9:00am-12:45pm

Final Appointment Date: Wednesday, April 10, 2024

HUDSON SITES

Rodgers Memorial Library

194 Derry Rd., Hudson

Call (603) 886-6030 during library hours beginning January 30 to make an in-person appointment

Opening Date: Saturday, February 3, 2024

Appointment Days & Times:

Mondays, 9:15am-2:00pm

Saturdays, 9:15am-12:00noon

Hudson Senior Center

19 Kimball Hill Rd., Hudson

Call (603) 578-3929 Monday-Friday beginning January 30 to make an appointment to drop off your tax forms

The Hudson Senior Center will allow taxpayers to drop off their tax forms to be processed, then return later to pick up their completed return.

Opening Date: Friday, February 2, 2024

Drop Off Day & Times: Fridays, 9:30am-12noon

Rodgers Memorial Library and the Hudson Senior Center will not accept any walk-in clients.



February 2024



New England Conference
The United Methodist Church

Connected is a publication of the New England Conference of The United Methodist Church. This monthly insert is designed put Conference news directly into the hands of our local church members.

Find more at www.neumc.org.

Bishop Johnson will visit each district

Don't miss Bishop Peggy Johnson's visits to the districts in February and March.

Folks attending are encouraged to read Being United Methodist Christians: Living a Life of Grace and Hope by Any Langford.

Attend any session that's convenient.

Find the schedule at www.neumc.org



Pre-Lenten webinar topic is 'ableism'

Bishop Peggy A. Johnson invites the laity and clergy of the New England Conference to a Pre-Lenten webinar focused on "ableism" at 7 pm on Monday, Feb. 12, 2024.

Like racism and sexism, ableism is a bias; in this case against people with disabilities. There is much we in the church can do to improve our outreach and inclusion of people with disabilities.

The evening, which is sponsored by the Conference Commission on Religion and Race and Conference Disabilities Committee, will begin with a short devotional followed by a presentation by Rev. Justin and Dr. Lisa Hancock.

The Hancocks are co-founders of The Julian Way (<https://thejulianway.org/>), an organization focused on empowerment and discipleship with, for, and by persons with disabilities.

Justin is the Lead Instigator of The Julian Way and spends his days en-



gaging with the members of The Julian Way through one-on-one discipleship and advocating with the church and the wider community for the integration and participation of disabled persons.

Lisa is the Director of Worship Arts for Discipleship Ministries, an agency of The United Methodist Church where she writes liturgy and creates resources to help local churches engage in and make disciples through worship.



GET DETAILS AND THE ZOOM LINK AT
www.neumc.org/events

Fourteen churches complete disaffiliation process

As of Jan. 11, 2024, Director of Administrative Ministries Kerry Patles reports that all churches that had been approved for disaffiliation by the Annual Conference in June 2023 had completed the process and made the required payments.

In 2023, 14 churches sought to disaffiliate under the provisions of Book of Discipline ¶12553. The total of disaffiliations under this paragraph in New England is 18 (see list at right). As of the last statistical report in Dec. 31, 2022, there were 561 churches in the Conference.

"As a connectional covenant community, the whole is most certainly affected when any part chooses to separate," said Bishop Peggy A. Johnson. "But we, as United Methodists in New England, trusted the discernment process. We acknowledge that we remain connected in Christ and

sought to engage in a process that was prayerful, offered grace, and minimized harm."

See full story at neumc.org/news

2020

Brackett Memorial UMC, Peaks Island, ME

2021

Chebeague Island UMC, Chebeague Island, ME

Hope Gate Way, Portland, ME

Tuttle Road UMC, Cumberland, ME

2023

Ballardvale United Federated, Andover, MA

Brownsville (VT) Community UMC

Bryantville UMC, Pembroke, MA

Christ UMC, Lawrence, MA

Cressey Road UMC, Gorham, ME

CT Central Korean UMC, East Hampton, CT

Exeter (NH) UMC

Faith Community Church, Plymouth, MA

Lyndonville (VT) UMC

North Woolwich UMC, Woolwich, ME

Nueva Vida UMC, Chelsea, MA

South Middleboro UMC, Middleboro, MA

Vida Abundante, Providence, RI

Wesley UMC, Wareham, MA

Build your church's stewardship muscles

The Conference Board of Discipleship is pleased to offer congregations in New England "A Year of Stewardship with Ken Sloane." The series of online sessions began in January and continues through August 2024. Sloane, Director



of Stewardship and Generosity at Discipleship Ministries, will be leading monthly online workshops on stewardship that will be available to our church leaders (Use the QR code below to see the schedule and topics).

The Board is pleased to offer some additional benefits to those churches that participate in the workshops: Those who attend two of the first five workshops will be able to have lunch with Ken during the

2024 Annual Conference session in June. Attend four of the eight workshops and receive a free copy of three great books on stewardship:

- Generosity, Stewardship and Abundance: A Transformational Guide to Church Finance
- Money Talks: A Biblical Take on Earning, Saving, Spending, and Giving
- A Spirituality of Fundraising by Henri Nouwen



Let's Connect

Do you have a story to share? A feature idea? A question to ask? Contact Beth DiCocco, Conference Director of Communications, at communicate@neumc.org or (978) 682-8055 ext. 150

Special Sunday

The UMC will celebrate UMCOR Sunday on March 10, 2024. The UMCOR Sunday offering underwrites UMCOR's administrative costs. This offering allows UMCOR (United Methodist Committee on Relief) to use 100% of all funds given to humanitarian response

and recovery efforts directly to communities in need. These gifts ensure UMCOR can respond swiftly to disasters around the world and as a source of hope and healing for those left most vulnerable. Get resources at umcgiving.org

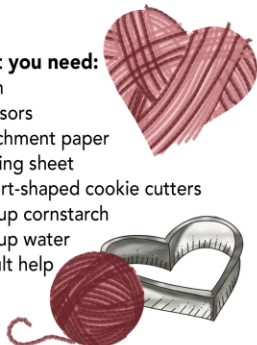


HEART strings

Make this heartfelt craft as a decoration or gift.

What you need:

- Yarn
- Scissors
- Parchment paper
- Baking sheet
- Heart-shaped cookie cutters
- ¼ cup cornstarch
- ½ cup water
- Adult help



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.
5. 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
- g. 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



Answers: a 6, b 4, c 1, d 7, e 2, f 5, g 3

FEBRUARY 2024

Thank you to the Worship Team and Lay Leadership Committee for providing refreshments following worship during the month of February.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
28 9:30am Worship 10:30am Pick up Heaven Sent Meals 5:30pm NH Table Tennis Club	29	30 8:00am Fit & Strong 9:00am Clothes Closet 9:30am Food Pantry	31 7:00pm Lord's Prayer book study	1 8:00am Fit & Strong	2 7:30pm Choir Rehearsal	3 8:00am Monthly Breakfast
4 9:30am Worship 5:30pm NH Table Tennis Club	5	6 8:00am Fit & Strong 9:00am Clothes Closet 9:30am Food Pantry 7:00pm Finance Committee Meeting	7 7:00pm Lord's Prayer book study	8 8:00am Fit & Strong	9 7:30pm Choir Rehearsal	10 9:00am Church Council Leadership Retreat
11 9:30am Worship 5:30pm NH Table Tennis Club	12 7:00pm Ableism Pre-Lenten webinar	13 8:00am Fit & Strong 9:00am Clothes Closet 9:30am Food Pantry 4:30pm Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper 6:30pm Church Council Meeting	14 Ash Wednesday Statistical Reports Due 6:30pm Ash Wednesday Worship	15 8:00am Fit & Strong 1:00pm Dress sewing group	16 7:30pm Choir Rehearsal	17
18 9:30am Worship 5:30pm NH Table Tennis Club	19	20 8:00am Fit & Strong 9:00am Clothes Closet 9:30am Food Pantry 6:30pm SPRC Meeting	21 6:30pm Taize Service	22 8:00am Fit & Strong	23 7:30pm Choir Rehearsal	24
25 9:30am Worship 5:30pm NH Table Tennis Club	26	27 8:00am Fit & Strong 9:00am Clothes Closet 9:30am Food Pantry 6:30pm Trustees Meeting	28 6:30pm Taize Service	29 8:00am Fit & Strong	1 7:30pm Choir Rehearsal	2 12:00am Church Work Day 8:00am Monthly Breakfast 1:00pm Bishop's Day on the District