

Faith Working Through Love

Galatians 5:6b (and 1 Corinthians 13)

One of the core values of the Annual Conference is to continue building loving relationships with one another despite any differences we have. Love is having a hard time in our world and in the church community today. We are called to love and respect others even in the divisive times we find ourselves. At times, agape love, a love embodied by God's love for all humankind in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection seems impossible. Theologian, Rabbi Harold S. Kushner, shares "if we are brave enough to love, strong enough to forgive, generous enough to rejoice in another's happiness, and wise enough to know there is enough love to go around for all of us, then we can achieve fulfillment that no other living creature will ever know."



God works in mysterious ways. Since last July at the end of our Annual Conference in Cincinnati, I have prayed and read scripture. I spent time in silence and being intentionally quiet, and for those who know me, that is not easy. Years ago, it became my main discipline as a Bethany Theological Seminary student. For this entire year, I spent time discerning what I believe God would have me lift up in our year together. What is it that God might want us together to focus on in the Church of the Brethren? Last year before the start of Annual Conference in Cincinnati and a couple of days before the ballot was presented, I had an encounter with a stranger that blew me away, and folks that is not easy to do. A fellow Christian informed me if I loved everybody, I would not, could not, should not get their support. I was taken by surprise. Just the statement, "I love everyone" could be interpreted as a threat, an agenda, or taking a particular side of an issue. It made me sad. I only responded that I prayed that all of us allow the Holy Spirit to guide our decision, and as willing and available servants of God, each have been called to love God and love our neighbors in whatever capacity. As I walked away, I said to myself, "Really, God?" "What are you preparing me for next?"

As the call of Moderator-elect was realized, the ominous task of choosing scripture and a logo for 2025 began. Throughout the year, I thought I had found just the right one and then an e-mail, a Facebook post, or a letter would appear, and I thought to myself, that is not the right one. Yet time and time again, the word "love" kept appearing. Then, came the words in Galatians 5:6B and it reads, "For the only thing that counts is faith working through love." (NRSV). Do we really understand true love, agape love? This leads me to 1 Corinthians 13 as the supportive scripture. A chapter used frequently for weddings and even funerals, but Apostle Paul wrote in response to a divided church in Corinth. Paul declared love as the greatest power in the church community and they are lacking a lot of it. The Corinthian Church is not even close to a love fest. The members were divided and yet their diversity generated both benefits and challenges. It was Paul's call to action. Apostle Paul describes this "work of love" in positive and negative terms. On the positive, love is patient, kind, and selfless. What love is not includes love is not self-seeking, short-tempered, and offensive. In other words, love does not hurt people! This agape love has feet to carry the Gospel, and is a tool-in-hand, serving kind of love like Jesus in the Neighborhood. Apostle Paul's love language unifies.

Designed by Debbie Noffsinger, our logo begins with the cross, reminding us of Jesus Christ ultimate love for us in his death on the cross and his resurrection. The middle of the cross reminds us of the Holy Spirit of God that dwells in us and in the heart as we live out examples of our faith working through love, feeling welcomed and worthy as we love and serve God and love and serve all our neighbors. It is my prayer for our dear Church of the Brethren, that we continue to learn more about God's love and sacrifice for us and our mission to carry the Gospel of Jesus Christ into all parts of the world in love.

2025 Daily Scriptural Themes

Wednesday July 2, 2025 - Faith Working Through Love

Theme Scripture: Galatians 5:6b

Supportive Scripture: 1 Corinthians 13:1-3; 8-13

Gospel: Matthew 27:45-54; Matthew 28:1-10 (Jesus' death and resurrection)

Love is having a hard time in our world today and we are being reminded that we are to love with God's agape love that has been demonstrated for us through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.

Thursday July 3, 2025 - Faith Working Through Love: Love is Patient

Theme Scripture: 1 Corinthians 13:4a; Galatians 5:6b

Supportive Scripture: Ephesians 4:1-3; Psalms 27:11-14

Gospel: Matthew 26: 36-46 (Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane)

We find ourselves in a world divided by deep differences and the church is not immune from divisiveness, grief, and loss. Forbearance is urged as we patiently listen and respect each other in our differences without attack or separating ourselves from each other.

Friday July 4, 2025 - Faith Working Through Love: Love is Kind

Theme Scripture: 1 Corinthians 13:4a; Galatians 5:6b

Supportive Scripture: Ephesians 4:31-5:2

Gospel: Luke 19:1-10 (Jesus and Zacchaeus)

True kindness comes through the work of the Holy Spirit in us. Our kindness needs to reflect the heart of the One who lives in us, and we share true kindness in word and deed.

Saturday July 5, 2025 - Faith Working Through Love: Love is Not Envious, Boastful, or Arrogant"

Theme Scripture: 1 Corinthians 13:4b-6; Galatians 5:6b

Supportive Scripture: Philippians 2:1-8

Gospel: Luke 15:1-7 (Jesus and the Lost Sheep)

Humility is a must in nurturing harmonious relationships. It is a building block for deepening our relationships in pursuit of unity.

Sunday July 6, 2025 - Faith Working Through Love: Love Never Fails

Theme Scripture: 1 Corinthians 13:7-8a; Galatians 5:6b

Supportive Scripture: Romans 8:38-39

Gospel: John 18:25-27; John 21:15-17 (Peter's denial and forgiveness)

We are born with a need to love and be loved. There is a longing in each of us to be welcomed and worthy in a world that judges where love should take residence. God's agape love is extended to all, and God's love never fails even if humankind takes exception. May we as followers of Jesus Christ, our example of unconditional love, learn to love like Him.