

“Basics of the Faith: Belonging & Blessedness”

B Pentecost 7, Ephesians 1:3-14

July 11, 2021; 10:00 am

Congregational UCC, Buena Vista, CO

Rev. Rebecca K. Poos

**Start of Worship –**

**We explore** Ephesians 1:3-14 today, in a conversation. The passage invites Christian believers to sing a spiritual hymn, to worship together and to consider what are our “spiritual blessings.”

Theologian Israel Kamudzandu, says of this passage:

“The church in Ephesus, and the church of the 21st century, are not just about buildings, but rather God’s domain where a new humanity is being created. This new creation called the church is called to be hospitable to all nations, races, ethnic groups, rich and poor, people of all genders and persuasions. In a world so polarized, Ephesians 1:3-14 reminds believers that the Church is to be the heart of all humanity. Everyone must feel welcomed into the church, because it is a place where God molds, forms, and shapes us into Christ-like image.

So, welcome to worship, where all are truly welcome and we explore the spiritual blessings of God together.

**Spiritual Blessings in Christ (NRSV)**

<sup>3</sup> Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, <sup>4</sup> just as he chose us in Christ<sup>[a]</sup> before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love.

<sup>5</sup> He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, <sup>6</sup> to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

<sup>7</sup> In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace <sup>8</sup> that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and insight <sup>9</sup> he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, <sup>10</sup> as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

<sup>11</sup> In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance,<sup>[b]</sup> having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will, <sup>12</sup> so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory.

<sup>13</sup> In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit; <sup>14</sup> this<sup>[c]</sup> is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God’s own people, to the praise of his glory.

**What spoke to you in the passage?**

What jumped out at you from this passage? Written so long ago to a wholly different community, but speaking to us today?

What are some of the spiritual blessings in your life? (sharing)

How can we, as a community, grant permission to revel in Nature, enjoy rest and renewal, to one another? How might we share an encourage word with others—not taking on more “human doing” activities, but by endeavoring to help each other practice Sabbath and be “human beings” instead!

An affirmation that goes so very far:

“Rebecca—Enclosing a check as an affirmation of your ministry and the progressive theology in evidence at Congregational UCC. We are proud to call BVCUCC our Buena Vista church home and pray for your ministry and outreach to thrive.”

A teacher librarian shares a real life story of the amazing connection experienced with a year plus of zoom learning:

One day, after reading a book about sheltering in place to a group of 5th grade students, and discussing how love in our hearts was something we all shared,

one of the boys said,

**“During this time of staying inside, I’ve realized how connected I am to everyone in the world.”**

### **7 Ways to Live in Love, Every Day!**

This is a good moment to connect to the abundance of love, to its energy, and to strength and kindness, and to remember that we’re capable of growing in love. I experienced that all year with my students, each of them a gift to me with their open-heartedness, curious minds, and playful intimacy.

As we embark on this collective journey from fear back to love, can we offer each other inspiration and encouragement along the way? Hope is knocking on our door, and love is waiting. Let us welcome it in and rebuild our sense of community together with love.

Love is the most generous and healing energy we experience as human beings. When we’re anchored in the source of love, we can find a way to move forward with greater happiness and hope.

#### **1 Find Quiet Moments**

Find quiet moments throughout the day to drop into the depth of the love that holds and sustains us. Pause and take a few deep breaths. Breathe in the energy of love and then breathe out the energy of love.

#### **2 Practice Listening**

Listen to yourself or someone else with a compassionate and caring heart. Listening is everything—give yourself and others the space to truly be heard. Being heard is healing, so don’t feel like you have to rush in and give advice or try to fix anything.

#### **3 Delight in the Joys of the Season**

Notice the gifts of the season that are all around us—the flowering trees, the singing of the birds, the surprise of new buds. Pay attention to how you can water the seeds of joy in your

life and the lives of others, even during difficult times.

#### **4 Be Kind to Yourself and Others**

Practice the gentleness of acceptance and enfold yourself with love, whatever you may be feeling, right now. Place your hand over your heart and breathe in compassion for yourself and others, remembering that most of us are feeling some level of stress and strain these days.

#### **5 Cultivate Gratitude**

Remember to find gratitude for all that is sustaining and supporting you, even in the midst of fear and loss. You may want to start your day with a simple expression of gratitude by saying, “I am thankful for this new day.” During the day, make a habit of noticing the things you are grateful for.

#### **6 Nurture Your Heart**

Identify what can anchor you in your heart during these uncertain and shifting times—is it being in nature, finding moments of peace in meditation or prayer, talking to someone you trust? You could make a list of these to help you remember.

#### **7 Value Connection**

During this last year, we’ve come to realize how important connection is for our well-being. Find ways to stay connected to life by interacting with people, animals, and nature. Share a meal with the people you live with, spend time in nature, or connect with your pets. Recognize how interconnected we all are with each other and with all of creation.

(Colette Lafia in, *Love Connects Us: 7 Ways to Live in Love, Every Day!*)

So, reach out—practice love. Daily. That in itself is a spiritual blessing. Allow some space and time to “languish,” “lie fallow” to let your soul be nourished and restored. Soak in the beauty of nature and find your creative center that is ready to join in the dance down the road. You.Are.Enough. Amen.