



Prayer: Dear God we adore you and magnify your holy name. We give thanks for your loving kindness. Soften our hearts towards others so that we may reflect your love and mercy through acts of kindness.

Connect to God:

Where have you seen God at work in your life this week?

Connect to Neighbor:

What good have you done for someone else this week?

Connect to Scripture: 1 Corinthians 13:1-7

13 If I speak in tongues of human beings and of angels but I don't have love, I'm a clanging gong or a clashing cymbal. 2 If I have the gift of prophecy and I know all the mysteries and everything else, and if I have such complete faith that I can move mountains but I don't have love, I'm nothing. 3 If I give away everything that I have and hand over my own body to feel good about what I've done but I don't have love, I receive no benefit whatsoever.

4 Love is patient, love is kind, it isn't jealous, it doesn't brag, it isn't arrogant, 5 it isn't rude, it doesn't seek its own advantage, it isn't irritable, it doesn't keep a record of complaints, 6 it isn't happy with injustice, but it is happy with the truth. 7 Love puts up with all things, trusts in all things, hopes for all things, endures all things.

Connect to Today:

On Sunday, February 13, 2022, Erin Jackson made history by becoming the first African American woman to win gold in speedskating. What many people do not know is that Erin's road to gold was made possible by an act of kindness from a friend, Brittney Bowe. During the qualifying competition for 500-meter speedskating, Erin slipped at the start of the race which cost her fractions of a second. Erin finished third but only the top two finishers were guaranteed spots at the Winter Olympics in Beijing. Brittney Bowe qualified in the 1000-meter, 1500-meter, and finished first in the 500-meter but decided to give her spot to Erin.

Here is what Erin had to say about Brittney.

"I'd summarize it like this: I've known Britt for many years. The world has long since known that she is a great athlete. With her gesture to me, the world got to see that she is a great leader of our speed skating team, a great person, and a great friend." ("Winter Olympics 2022 - From inline skating to Olympic ...")

"I'm blessed to have someone like that in my life," she added. "I'd like the narrative of the story to be less about me, and more about what she did, so selflessly, for me." ("Erin Jackson Wants Gold Medal for Teammate Who Sacrificed ...")

Brittney's actions are an example of kindness. Brittney earned the right to compete in the 500-meter speedskating race. Nevertheless, she was **able to see** that Erin was heartbroken. It appeared that one mistake would cause Erin to

lose an opportunity to compete. It was within Brittney's power to do something about that, so she gave up her spot in the race. **That act of kindness made Britney a participant in Erin's success.** Erin would not be able to win the gold medal without Britney's act of kindness.

Connect Text in Context:

In our text today the Greek word for kindness is **χρηστεύομαι** *chrēsteúomai*, khraste-yoo'-om-ah-ee; to show oneself useful, i.e., act benevolently: —be kind. Kindness is an expression of love that starts in the heart and ends in action. In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul is addressing a church that he founded. The Corinthians are a divisive group. Their central problem is that they do not know how to properly love each other. Paul's main point is that selfless love can heal their divisions. Paul then goes on to define what this love looks like. The Corinthians were not practicing kindness. An example of one of their unkind actions is found in 1 Corinthians Chapter 11.

In 1 Corinthians Chapter 11, the affluent members of the Corinthian church failed to see the needs of some of the poor members of the church. Often the poor were excluded from communion because the affluent members would eat all the bread and drink all the wine before the poor were able to attend the Lord's Supper. The poor worked longer hours gaining meager wages to support their families and would arrive after the rich. The more affluent members failed to **see the people** who were experiencing poverty. As a result, they missed an opportunity to perform a simple act of kindness: waiting on and waiting for the poorer members of the congregation. The affluent members failed to **become participants** in helping the most vulnerable among them feel included and loved.

Astonishingly, based on their actions, the Corinthians did not have a proper understanding of the Lord's Supper. The

sacrament of communion is a means of grace shared with the community of believers. The community of believers is also known as the Body of Christ. We are one in Christ regardless of socio-economic status and all members of the body are equally valuable.

The sacrament of communion reminds us that Jesus Christ gave up his own body as an act of sacrificial love. He gave up his body so that we could have a spot in the race. So, what should our response be to the grace that we receive through communion? We are called to reflect that love within the church and throughout the world by **practicing acts of kindness**. Our goal is not a gold medal, it is to spread God's love and joy to the world through words and deeds. Through that good news, we pray people will give their hearts to Jesus and accept the grace of God to live and love like Jesus.

Connect to Practice:

General Rules of United Methodist Church

- Do no harm
- Do Good (Acts of Kindness)
- Attend upon the ordinances of God which are:
 - * The public worship of God.
 - * The ministry of the Word, either read or expounded.
 - * The Supper of the Lord.
 - * Family and private prayer.
 - * Searching the Scriptures.
 - * Fasting or abstinence.

Connect Heads:

Define the word "kind" in your own words.

What are three things we can do to help us become kinder?

Is there a particular insight that you would like to share from the sermon, from the scripture, or from the small group curriculum?

Connect Heart:

Share a time when you needed help, and someone stopped what they were doing to help you. What did you learn about God? Yourself? Others?

Share a time when you sacrificed time and energy to help someone. What impact did it have on the other person?

Why do we sometimes find it so hard to be kind?

How do you know when people are taking advantage of your kindness?

Connect Hands:

Did you cause harm in word or deed to someone this week? (self-examination). If so, confess your sin to God, then seek to reconcile with your brother or sister.

Share your prayer concerns and celebrations.

Ask a member of the group to pray for the concerns and give thanks for the celebrations.

Notes Sections

Prayer Concerns:

Celebrations:

Daily Reflection Questions

Where have I seen God at work in my life today?

What is one thing that I am thankful for?

What is one thing that broke my heart today?

What is one good thing did I do for someone else today?