

“G-Force - God’s Love in Action”

It was the hope of the creators of the G-Force curriculum, which we used for the Family Summer Sunday School, that along with the help of our Teachers our children, youth, and adults would:

“*experience an active life with God through Christian service, mission, and community.

***discover that a life with God is one of movement, both physically and spiritually.**

***model their actions and faith after God.**

***meet people from the Bible who are examples of living, moving, and existing with God.**

***live a life that honors God, by loving and helping others.**

***strive to put their minds and bodies in motion to share God’s love and experience the fullness of an active life in Christ.”**

The G-Force curriculum tells us, **“God wants us to Move! God wants us to Act! God wants us to Care! God wants us to Follow! God wants us to Share!”** In much of this sermon, I will use descriptions from the supplemental materials for the Closing Worship provided by the G-Force curriculum.

Our Family Summer Sunday School focused on five Scriptures or Velocity Verses, which are spread throughout today’s Worship Celebration. **The First of those five Velocity Verses was Micah 6:8b, “And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God.”** Our Students learned that God wants us to MOVE! They “heard about Moses. God chose Moses to bring the Israelites out of Egypt.” It was “learned that God calls on people to help those in need. ... Moses was scared at first. God promised to be with Moses every step of the way. Moses was God’s moving man.”

During this Summer, we had eight members move each week to assemble, deliver, and distribute lunches to some children and youth, who are in need. **For a good number of years, Round Grove United Church movers have participated in the Kids Eat Free Program of Christian Community Action.** I intend to recognize our Kids Eat Free Movers next Sunday, Rally Day, during Worship. However, one couple in our congregation has been involved in our Kids Eat Free Program for many years, so I feel, now, is also a good time to recognize them. I am speaking, of course, of Phyllis and Shane Murphy.

The Second Velocity Verse was James 2:18, “I’ll show you my faith by putting it into practice in faithful action.” The Family Summer Sunday School “explored how Solomon built a temple for God. ... It was a hard job and took a very long time.” Our families “learned that we can take action to express our love for God.” **“Our Action Word is Act. God wants us to ACT!”**

On January 6, Epiphany, of next year, Round Grove United Church will be 115 years old! Almost 115 years ago, German Immigrants founded this congregation. **Within the first year, they also acted to build the Original Historic Sanctuary across the highway!** Over the past 30 years, members and friends of Round Grove United Church, United Church of Christ, have acted to build this beautiful Sanctuary and Main Facility, the Christian Education Building with the ChildTime sign on it, and the Youth Room Addition to this Main Facility. A little over 5 years ago, we acted to renovate this Sanctuary. This Spring and Summer, we acted to raise funds for the purchase and installation of a new Digital Church Sign. The congregation has approved the sign’s purchase and installation and before the end of this year, we will have acted to install the new Digital Church Sign.

The Third Velocity Verse was Galatians 6:2, “Carry each other’s burdens and so you will fulfill the law of Christ.” Our Family Summer Sunday School “learned about four friends and Jesus. The four friends brought another friend, who was paralyzed, to Jesus. The four friends cared so much that they lowered their friend through the roof of a house to be with Jesus.” “Jesus cares for people. Jesus healed the friend who was paralyzed. Being like Jesus means that we care for others and help them when we can.” **“Our Action Word is Care. God wants us to CARE!”**

Round Grove United Church has put caring into action in many ways! For example, the Deacons recently created our Cooks for Christ Program to provide meals to members and friends of our church family when there is a need. Round Grove also helps member and nonmember households during other times of need. We provide funds to support CCA's Pantry and CCA's many other programs. We donate Christmas Gifts for children and youth in need with CCA's assistance in their distribution. We also financially help care for others beyond our community through Our Church's Wider Mission of the UCC and many other ministries, such as Eden Hill Ministries for senior citizens in New Braunfels, Back Bay Mission to the poor in Biloxi, Mississippi, and the Evangelical Children's Homes in Missouri.

The Fourth Velocity Verse is Matthew 4:19a, "Come, follow me." Through our sessions on this verse, our Family Summer Sunday School has "learned how Jesus helped a blind man named Bartimaeus. Jesus showed love to the man by healing his blindness. We may not be able to take someone's blindness away, but we can help others who are in need." **"Our Action Word is Follow. God wants us to Follow! When we help others, we are following Jesus."**

Round Grove follows Jesus' Radical and Extravagant Hospitality – the self-giving, agape loving of those, who are in need of comfort, support, healing, forgiveness, reconciliation, and New Life. **Frankly, Jesus' and our nonjudgmental welcome of all people brings healing for folks, who have been rejected by other religious – church people.**

The fifth and final Velocity Verse is Matthew 28:19a, "Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations." As adults, youth, and children came together to learn, "we heard one of the most important stories in the whole Bible – the discovery of the empty tomb! Jesus rose from the dead and told his disciples to share the good news! And that's what the disciples did." **"Our Action Word is Share. God wants us to SHARE!"** "Since the time of Jesus, the good news has spread through all of the disciples who have come later. We are some of those disciples, too. We can still share the good news of Jesus with everyone."

Again, our acting to build and renovate facilities and especially donating toward and installing the new Digital Church Sign are important means through which we seek to share the Good News of Jesus Christ with the whole community! **But what is even more important, is how each of us communicate the Agape Love of God in Jesus Christ to our family, friends, neighbors, coworkers, and even new acquaintances.** To facilitate our inviting of other folks, the Deacons will be encouraging us to bring – invite friends for a series of upcoming Bring A Friend Sundays.

The Lectionary Epistle Reading for today from Paul's Letter to the Ephesians reminds us of the importance of learning the lessons from Scripture in our Sunday School and other Christian Education opportunities. It reveals our need to come together frequently in Worship, Fellowship, and Service for there is much we need to practice and share, so we are able to live G-Force – God's Love in Action. **Paul told the Ephesians in 6:10-18, "build up your strength in union with the Lord and by means of His Mighty Power. Put on all the armor that God gives you, so that you will be able to stand up against" evil. "For we are not fighting against human beings but against the wicked spiritual forces in the heavenly world, the rulers, authorities, and cosmic powers of this dark age. So put on God's Armor now! Then when the evil day comes, you will be able to resist the enemy's attacks; and after fighting to the end, you will still hold your ground.**

So stand ready, with truth as a belt tight around your waist, with righteousness as your breastplate, and as your shoes the readiness to announce the Good News of peace. At all times carry faith as a shield; for with it you will be able to put out all the burning arrows shot by the Evil One. And accept salvation as a helmet, and the Word of God as the sword which the Spirit gives you. Do all this in prayer, asking for God's Help. Pray on every occasion, as the Spirit leads. For this reason keep alert and never give up; pray always for all God's people."

Let's intentionally and frequently study, serve, and Worship together, so we are enabled with God's Full Armor to live G-Force – God's Love in Action! Amen.