

SHARING GOD'S LOVE is a list of ways to take purposeful action; ways that you can share God's love with others. Divided into months, feel free to add them to your church news, bulletins, or email. They can be used different weeks or combined. Share them with young and old, and in between.

My thoughts are filled with what I have read and what I have experienced. Credit must be given to my Creator. As I wrote these, I imagined God rejoicing in our acknowledging and sharing of the love we have so very generously received. I hope that you will enjoy putting these ideas into action, and let it become a habit for you. Perhaps you will find more ways that we can all Share God's Love. As you do, please send them to office@wvpresbytery.org.

– Ina Armstrong, First Presbyterian Church of St. Albans

MONTH OF JANUARY

SHARING GOD'S LOVE ALL MONTH LONG!

Here are suggestions for sharing God's love with others. Take purposeful action during the month of January. Share with neighbors, friends, and family.

Sharing God's Love

In 1 Corinthians 13, we read that patience, kindness, acceptance, and respect are some of the qualities we are to have. Is this just for co-workers and business people? Showing patience, kindness, acceptance and respect should not stop when we get home. Maybe you respect your supervisor; do you respect your brothers and sisters? Maybe you are patient with your students; are you patient with your elderly parents? You will not be respected if you do not respect others, including your own children! Your children will not respect other adults if you are not respectful of your spouse, your parents, and your neighbors. Family members are not made to be argued with, picked on, or to have their faults discussed over and over. Share God's love with your family through respect, patience, and kindness.

Sharing God's Love

"You are precious in my sight and I love you." This quote from Isaiah 43:4 blew me away. I had not really heard it out loud before! Right in the Bible, God said, "I love you." I learned this a year ago, and I am still amazed. Many have heard of God's Grace, but had you heard the three little words before...from God? It is this love shared with us that gives us the ability to share it with everyone else. Go ahead, share God's love with "I love you," often, everywhere, and in abundance.

Sharing God's Love

"Two of the greatest joys in life are the joy of being different from others and the joy of being the same as others." The first is the joy of being chosen, of achievement and rewards. The second is a little difficult. Henri M. Nouwen says in his book Our Greatest Gift that the second kind of joy is "of being a part of that vast variety of people – of all ages, colors, and religions – who together form the human family. This is the immense

joy of being part of the human race.” Nouwen says that when walking with thousands of people in Alabama in a civil rights march with Martin Luther King, Jr., he felt as never before this joy. “In an instant, all differences seemed to melt away as snow in the sun.” Notice when you have joy. Which kind is it? Share God’s love by embracing the joy of inclusion.

Sharing God’s Love

Sharing God’s love sometimes includes sharing that love with yourself. It is hard to be a listener when your own need to speak freely has not been met. God wants you to speak and to be heard. This week, pay attention to your need to be heard. Find a time, a place, and a person with whom you can speak. Maybe that person will share God’s love with you by listening.

MONTH OF FEBRUARY

SHARING GOD'S LOVE ALL MONTH LONG!

Here are suggestions for sharing God's love with others. Take purposeful action during the month of February. Share with neighbors, friends, and family.

Sharing God’s Love

Growing up is hard to do. Children wish to grow up, teens think they are already grown up, and middle-agers look back wistfully. One important human need is the freedom to talk about what we think. Don’t let go of this basic freedom. As a grown-up, you understand this. You can share God’s love by helping others meet this need. You can listen patiently, waiting to speak and thinking of what you hear, rather than what you will say next. Show that you care about the person who is talking more than your own need to be heard. Share God’s love through listening intently.

Sharing God's Love

Virginia Satir said, “We need 4 hugs a day for survival. We need 8 hugs a day for maintenance. We need 12 hugs a day for growth.” Now that is a lot of hugging! Some scientists have tested the hug idea and found that touch and/or hugging is beneficial for reducing stress, anxiety, and pain. Hugs reinforce our family and community connection. Share God's love this week by giving and receiving a whole bunch of hugs! If you are not getting your daily dose of hugs, ask the next person you see for one.

Sharing God's Love

Peace is a lovely word, but can we live it? Here are some things we can all do: We can be angry without being mean. We can use words instead of fists. We can listen to another person’s opinion. We can share what we have. We can say, “I’m sorry.” We can forgive. We can speak the truth. We can be kind and show compassion. We can be keep trying. We can stand hand-in-hand with others working towards peace.

Sharing God's Love

1 Peter 4:10 - Each one should use whatever gift he/she has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. Sharing God's love is sharing God's grace. We all have abilities, know-how, voice, and actions. Try calling, walking, hugging, speaking, teaching, and sharing. Share a recipe, call an acquaintance, hug your grandchild, or share something you have learned with someone else

Sharing God's Love

Children learn about God from their parents. Sunday school teachers and pastors do their best, but who God is comes primarily from the father! Yes, mothers are important, but we still speak of God as "he." Accept the family that you are in. Become the model for your children, grandchildren, and neighbors. Share the loving grace you have received with others as God would. It is hard to talk about our feelings, but when someone indicates a feeling, say sadness, reply to them, "I understand that you are sad today," instead of saying "you're not really sad," or "how could you be sad?" All of us – fathers, mothers, grandparents, and other folks – can share God's love.

MONTH OF MARCH

SHARING GOD'S LOVE ALL MONTH LONG!

Here are suggestions for sharing God's love with others. Take purposeful action during the month of March. Share with neighbors, friends, and family.

Sharing God's Love

This week try to really notice the children you encounter. They may be next door neighbors, members of your family, or cashiers in a store. See their beauty, listen to their voices, and notice the details. Discover them, and while doing so, share God's love.

Sharing God's Love

There is nothing quite like a great big smile! This week see how often you can smile. Smile at all the children you see. The act of smiling triggers the happiness center in your brain. And smiling is contagious! Imagine God smiling at you, and share God's love with your smile.

Sharing God's Love

This week try making eye contact with people. Try this with a child you meet. Ask them something about themselves and while you listen to their response, look at them. You will be showing that you are interested in them, as God is interested in you.

Sharing God's Love

Have you ever shared a secret with a friend? Really close relationships often involve the sharing of secrets. Try sharing a secret with a child this week. "Sharing tender parts of ourselves allows others to love us, just as accepting others' secrets allows us to love them." God knows our deepest secrets and loves us continually.

Sharing God's Love

God does not demand our conformity. Instead we choose behaviors that we believe are consistent with our relationship with God. One way to react to someone's behavior that you don't like is to explain how you feel and suggest a different behavior in that situation. For example: "When you jump on the couch, I feel concerned for your safety, and I feel sad that the couch is being misused. The next time you feel like jumping, would you do it on the trampoline (in the yard, etc)?" Note that this example is not a demand; it is a question. Your body language and voice need to reflect that. In this way, you will be sharing God's love.

MONTH OF APRIL

SHARING GOD'S LOVE ALL MONTH LONG!

Here are suggestions for sharing God's love with others. Take purposeful action during the month of April. Share with neighbors, friends, and family.

Sharing God's Love

Music is a huge part of God's world. Sounds are all around us: clocks ticking, cars on the street, and fire engine sirens. The songs of birds are heard with the coming of spring. Listen to your child's favorite music. While it might not be your favorite, listening together affirms the child's (or other family member's) individuality. Make music together with jingles, bangs, bongos, and rattles, which you can devise on your own. Sing!! Remember to smile.

Sharing God's Love

Notice the people, and children, you are around. Acknowledge them with a friendly greeting. As you do so, remember that each person is part of the beauty and goodness of our Creator.

Sharing God's Love

Once when I was a child, I was reprimanded. I was caught doing something I was not supposed to do. I don't remember what I did; instead, I remember absolutely that I was loved, unconditionally. My parents did not like everything I did, but they loved me. That is what makes all the difference. Separate the actions from the person. No one can like everything you do, all of the time. Remember that God loves you, all of the time. Share God's love unconditionally.

Sharing God's Love

Prayer with and for children. Pray with and for your family, your neighbors. Find a time when you can turn off the cell phone, be free from distractions, and open your heart and mind to God. Share God's love freely.

Sharing God's Love

Our awesome God presents us with many wonderful experiences throughout our entire lives. These experiences vary from tiny to huge! Share a new experience with a friend, and share God's love.

MONTH OF MAY

SHARING GOD'S LOVE ALL MONTH LONG!

Here are suggestions for sharing God's love with others. Take purposeful action during the month of May. Share with neighbors, friends, and family.

Sharing God's Love

Everyone has a need for appreciation, encouragement, recognition, and respect. When our needs are met, we feel positive about ourselves and our world. This week, tell someone just how terrific he or she is. Go out of your way to find the perfect time, and pour on them the many ways they are *TERRIFIC!* (Do you remember the way Tony the Tiger says it?)

Sharing God's Love

Make and send postcards. Buy postcard Forever stamps to keep on hand. Check the size needed on the USPS website. Everyone likes getting personal mail. You can draw on one side and put your message and address information on the other side. Include some news and tell them you look forward to being together again. Use a heavy paper like card stock. Count the number you send this month, and let me, Ina, know (304-721-8447). If you decide to do it again, you can see if you can match or exceed that number.

Sharing God's Love

Set aside a regular time for God. Once you get into a routine, a regular time and place, it will become a good habit. Practice breathing and be aware of inhaling God's goodness and exhaling your busyness. As you make this a regular practice, share it with those in your house, or friends you talk with on the phone. With you as a model, they will begin to practice it in their own way, in their own time. The rewards are greater than your imagination!

Sharing God's Love

Share God's love of all creation. As you are able, observe the plants: trees, bushes, weeds, and flowers. The growing cycle of sprouting in the spring and resting in the winter seems miraculous. How do the plants know when to sprout? Along with the plants come insects, moths and butterflies, chirping grasshoppers, and lady bugs. Watch from your porch or window, or go out for a nature walk. Photograph what you see. If you like, you can use your photos to make postcards! Remember to thank God for all that God made – you and the whole wide world.

MONTH OF JUNE

SHARING GOD'S LOVE ALL MONTH LONG!

Here are suggestions for sharing God's love with others. Take purposeful action during the month of June. Share with neighbors, friends, and family.

Sharing God's Love

The official start of summer is June 20. (This is the longest day of the whole year! It is the moment when the sun reaches its highest point in the sky.) Summertime is often filled with "first times." Can you remember your first drive-in movie? Be aware of first experiences and make a list of all the "firsts" you, or the children you are with, experience. It might be the first time to ride a bike, pet a horse, or eat sushi. As you celebrate these firsts together, know that God is celebrating with you.

Sharing God's Love

Sunday, June 14, is Flag Day. If you have a flag, set it out for all to see. If you don't have one, you can make one with paper and tape it to a window. Taking part in a special day like Flag Day enhances our feeling of community and connection. God is all for community. God has a particular way of being in community with us. This is one of the many marvels of our God.

Additionally, Saturday, June 20 is West Virginia Day! What will you do this year to celebrate our state?

Sharing God's Love

Father's Day is Sunday, June 21. What is the history of Father's Day? Look it up on your computer. You might be surprised. Share what you learn with your father or another "dad" you know. Share God's love openly.

Sharing God's Love

Summertime is discovery time! Take delight in all discoveries. This can be as simple as helping a child dig for fishing worms or finding a new bud on a garden plant. God is with you, delighting in your discoveries. Give yourself the joy of discovery firsthand or by way of listening to the experience as told by a friend or child, as you share God's love.

Sharing God's Love

Playing includes a complete focus on having fun; it is this attitude that makes it play. While play involves rules as agreed to by the players, it is mentally removed from "real and serious life" and includes the option to stop at any time. (Adult-led games can be great for kids who freely choose them, but can seem like punishment to kids who haven't made that choice.) Children look for times and places to play and friends to play with, and one of those times is the 4th of July!

MONTH OF JULY

SHARING GOD'S LOVE ALL MONTH LONG!

Here are suggestions for sharing God's love with others. Take purposeful action during the month of July. Share with neighbors, friends, and family.

Sharing God's Love

“Let’s be nice.” Have you heard this parental request? One way to encourage others to be nice (to be pleasant or agreeable) is to model that behavior. This week, watch for times that you can be nice to children, your neighbors, and/or your parents. Speak with them pleasantly. Act and respond courteously. Use this action plan to share the love of God with people in your life.

Sharing God's Love

In the car or at home, listen to someone else’s favorite music. Other people’s taste may seem odd or extreme, but then, that’s what your parents and other people think or thought of your music. Talk about what they like about their music/ such as the melody, sounds, rhythm, or words. Share God’s love through music.

Sharing God's Love

Say “Yes!” It feels so good to be affirmed with a “yes” response. Look for times when you can say, “Yes!” to anyone you are with. What a great way to share God’s love.

Sharing God's Love

Watch for signs of excitement in someone else. See what they are excited about. Get in touch with their feelings. Let yourself share in their excitement. Enjoy it together. Relish the occasion. God’s love is for every day.

MONTH OF AUGUST

SHARING GOD'S LOVE ALL MONTH LONG!

Here are suggestions for sharing God's love with others. Take purposeful action during the month of August. Share with neighbors, friends, and family.

Sharing God's Love

Do you remember a favorite book? Or one you read as a young adult, a child, or a teen? Share a book with someone by reading together, or by exploring the book and author online. If you each have a copy of the book, you can read it “together” over the phone. Or read part of it, then call, and talk about the part you just read. I have found books at websites like Thrift Books, Amazon Books, Abe Books, and Better World Books (which has a corporate philosophy of social responsibility). Thank God for authors, illustrators, and readers.

Sharing God's Love

“Catch them doing something right.” Appreciation and encouragement come from being noticed for doing something helpful, positive, needed, caring, or constructive. All of God’s children need recognition, appreciation and encouragement. While in conversation, look for times to offer positive feedback and some of the awesome love God has given to you.

Sharing God's Love

You can share God’s love with children by including them in conversations. Some children need extra time to pull their thoughts together. Wait patiently with your listening ears on. You can share God’s love with family and friends by including everyone in the conversation. Remember to put on your listening ears and to wait until each person has contributed. Make what you hear more important than what you have to say! You will be sharing God’s love as you do so.

Sharing God's Love

The “great outdoors” is ready and waiting. You may have already turned to walking and observing nature as an alternative form of entertainment. If you work during the week, try evenings, Saturdays, or Sunday afternoons for a time of outside play. Enjoy a porch swing, toss a ball, set up a ring toss, or look intently for little creatures like caterpillars, lizards, and butterflies. Sharing the great outdoors with another is a wonderful way to share God’s love.

MONTH OF SEPTEMBER

SHARING GOD'S LOVE ALL MONTH LONG!

Here are suggestions for sharing God's love with others. Take purposeful action during the month of September. Share with neighbors, friends, and family.

Sharing God's Love

What did Jesus do? Jesus hung out with all sorts of people. He took time to hear, see, and know the person he was with. And he assured that person that he or she was a beloved child of God, and equal to others in God’s eyes. Let’s do like Jesus did and see and hear every person – big or small, young or old, poor or rich – as a “child of God.”

Sharing God's Love

Shakespeare said, “There is no sound so sweet as the sound of one's own name.” Remembering and using a person's name creates a connection between the two of you. It is a way of saying, “You are valued. Do this by giving the person your full attention and repeating their name several times in the conversation. If you did not hear the name, ask them to repeat it. They will get the message that you really do want to learn their name and that they are important. Share God’s love by acknowledging the importance of others.

Sharing God's Love

Be who you are. Become the person you want to be. Consider your natural abilities and expand what you like to do that you do well. Don't try to be everything to everyone. That is God's job and, perhaps, God doesn't appreciate your trying to take over! There are times when we need to fill our own tank with God's love. Share God's love with yourself.

Sharing God's Love

We are all the sum of many parts. Too often, we allow a negative part of ourselves to be front and center. Send the negative part of yourself backstage, and bring out your best character to be the star of you. You can use this analogy to encourage a friend by listening, reflecting, and sharing part of yourself. Ask God to provide the words you need to share God's love.

MONTH OF OCTOBER

SHARING GOD'S LOVE ALL MONTH LONG!

Here are suggestions for sharing God's love with others. Take purposeful action during the month of October. Share with neighbors, friends, and family.

Sharing God's Love

I Kings 19:12b (NIV): "After the fire came a gentle whisper." This verse follows Elijah's instruction to wait and watch for God. Small children are short! Yes, they are much closer to the floor than we adults are. To share God's love, move to their level by kneeling, squatting, or sitting. From this position, you will be ready to hear what they are saying and a gentle whisper.

Sharing God's Love

Children are hardwired to move. One-year-olds new to walking will circle, bend, tumble and roll, interpreting the feel of the music. Unashamed and unafraid to express themselves through movement, children skip, gallop, hop, sit, shake and wiggle. Scripture is filled with actions words: go up, kneel down, clap, raise our hands. But in church children are taught to restrain themselves. Perhaps we will ask God for a child-like heart so that we can begin to worship freely, without shame or inhibition. Perhaps we will lift up our hands and bow down to our maker, together with our children.

Sharing God's Love

October is a busy month with fall festivals, leaf-raking, football, and carving pumpkins. It is also a time of great beauty here in West Virginia as the plants and trees change from summer growth to winter rest. Darkness comes earlier, and fears can emerge. With God's love, we can acknowledge fear as a reality for some. Stay with anyone who is afraid, and show them compassion. Share God's love.

Sharing God's Love

Look for times you can include children and others you are with in the conversation. From the Ivory Coast comes this proverb: "Talking with one another is loving one another." Love one another in conversation this and every week.

MONTH OF NOVEMBER

SHARING GOD'S LOVE ALL MONTH LONG!

Here are suggestions for sharing God's love with others. Take purposeful action during the month of November. Share with neighbors, friends, and family.

Sharing God's Love

Take a bowl of water, and dip your fingers into it. Then cup one hand, and pour water over your other hand. Remember your baptism. God calls us by name, claims us in our baptism, and never lets go! Tell your children their baptism story or your own. Or tell a friend. Share God's love with all you are with.

Sharing God's Love

Do you like to post on Facebook? Look for ways to share God's love. Post positive statements and positive news. Remember the Good News? Add words to your photos that remind us of God's vision and good news for all. Share God's love!

Sharing God's Love

I read the phrase "heart open" in the writings of Mattie Stepanek. As you share God's love, your heart will fill up, and you will want to be "heart open" every day. The more you share, the more you will have. Try putting on the "heart open" attitude today and share God's love.

Sharing God's Love

Sharing God's love on Thanksgiving: Jesus sure did enjoy a meal with his friends. Is our vision for our holiday meal similar to Jesus' get-togethers? Or will we be hungry and cranky as we wait for the meal? Will we argue with each other, and drive home mad? Will we ignore the bounty of blessings we have, and think only of football? Will we exhaust ourselves attempting the perfect decor, food, and family event only to feel unappreciated? What do you think Jesus had to let go of, and what did he hold on to during those mealtimes? Remember to share God's love this Thanksgiving Day.

MONTH OF DECEMBER

SHARING GOD'S LOVE ALL MONTH LONG!

Here are suggestions for sharing God's love with others. Take purposeful action during the month of December. Share with neighbors, friends, and family.

Sharing God's Love

Psalm 46:10 – "Be still and know that I am God." The church is decorated with ribbons, garlands, lights, and a Christmas tree. This is a wonderful time to come into the

sanctuary and be still. While we know that God does not physically live in the church building, we can soak in the atmosphere, sit quietly and listen for that "still, small voice." Walk a friend through the sanctuary. Notice the decorations and the stained glass windows. Share God's love by telling a friend what God means to you.

Sharing God's Love

People really do want to attend a Christmas service of worship! Yes, they do, and God may be looking to YOU to share worship with them. Use every means you have: talking, asking, writing, emailing, instagraming, handing out when and where cards, and any other way you know to tell when and where. Don't keep our worship times a secret! Help spread the word: We are joyfully celebrating our God. Be sure to share God's love this week.

Sharing God's Love

Pastor and author Eugenia A. Gamble calls the Ten Commandments a "love letter from God." How long ago was it when you wrote a love letter? Share God's love by writing a love letter. Make sure you send it! Then write yourself a love note. Share God's love over and over again.

Sharing God's Love

Christmas is over. Or is it? Think of Christmas as the 12 days going to Epiphany. Epiphany is defined as 1) the manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles as represented by the Magi (Matthew 2:1–12); 2) the festival commemorating the Epiphany on January 6; 3) a manifestation of a divine or supernatural being; 4) a moment of sudden revelation or insight; 5) an intuitive grasp of reality through something simple and striking. I don't remember my family ever using this word; however, today you might hear someone say, "I've just had an epiphany!" So what will you do with the 12 days between Christmas Day and Epiphany? Continue to share God's love! Focus on who God is and what difference that makes in your life every day.

Sharing God's Love

Have you met someone new? Sharing God's love is easy with new friends. While your friendship is forming, all the positive feelings you share and the needs you meet are reflections of God's love. Taking a selfie with your new friend will indicate that you really do like them. Share God's love this week.