

August 4, 2015

Dear Grace Church Family and Friends,

In her sermon on Sunday, Rev. Amanda spoke about the recent youth group mission trip to Berkeley Springs, WV. Sunday's reading came from the Letter to the Ephesians, in which the author encourages Christians to live a life worthy of Jesus by building up others in love, and working with that text, Rev. Amanda shared her experience of watching the youth do exactly that – build up others in love.

The youth worked at three different sites on their trip. The first was the home of a man named Tony, who injured his leg at work and was in a lot of pain. Tony needed a set of stairs at the back entrance of his home and a small deck out front, additions that would provide him easier access to his house, alleviate his pain and reduce the risk of further injury. The second site was just down the street from Tony at the home of Jessica and her husband, both of whom are visually impaired. Last year, another youth group built a new staircase for them, and they needed our youth to waterproof and stain it. The last work site was the home of Vivian, an 84 year-old widow, where the youth painted a shed and deck, but also spent time talking with Vivian over iced tea and lemonade.

As I listened to Rev. Amanda preach, I was moved by the compassion of our youth. Not only did they help Tony, Jessica and Vivian, but the youth treated them with respect and dignity. The youth engaged all three with on equal terms, accepting them as they were, and thereby, acknowledging their shared humanity.

I was reminded of something Henri Nouwen once wrote:

*Compassion asks us to go where it hurts, to enter into the places of pain, to share in brokenness, fear, confusion, and anguish. Compassion challenges us to cry out with those in misery, to mourn with those who are lonely, to weep with those in tears. Compassion requires us to be weak with the weak, vulnerable with the vulnerable, and powerless with the powerless. Compassion means full immersion in the condition of being human.*

Today, live a life worthy of Jesus. Make his way, your way. His compassion, your compassion.

By building up others in love.

See you in Church,  
*Andrew*