

FOCUS ON



FAITH

Volume 53, Number 2
2023

OUR VISION STATEMENT

United with Christ, we are committed to sharing the transformative love of God's grace and peace through service to our neighbors.

February

10:15 a.m.—WORSHIP
9:00 a.m.—SUNDAY SCHOOL

Watch us on [YouTube](#)

LEAD PASTOR: Rev. Dr. Bruce C. Stevenson
DIRECTOR OF MUSIC/ORGANIST: Dennis J. Duda

Faith United Church of Christ

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Center Valley, PA 18034

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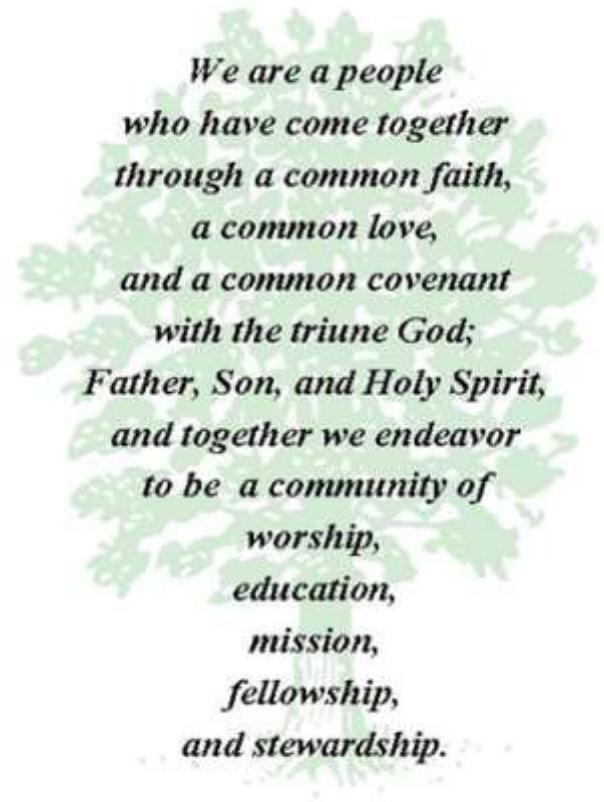
faithchurchcv@gmail.com

www.faithchurchucc.org

We are an Open & Affirming Congregation



No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey you are welcome here.



*We are a people
who have come together
through a common faith,
a common love,
and a common covenant
with the triune God;
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
and together we endeavor
to be a community of
worship,
education,
mission,
fellowship,
and stewardship.*

2023 Consistory

Officers:

President: Tom Hovis

Vice President: Jerry Trexler

Secretary: Joan Hassler

Elders:

Mike Ford
Jerry Trexler
Tom Hovis

Deacons:

Ken Koehnlein
Cindy Talaber
Avery Koser

Kim Ritter
Joan Hassler
Donna Schudel-Barone
Melissa Shafer

Church Treasurer: Deb Herstine

Liaisons:

Christian Ed: Kim Ritter
Fellowship/Outreach: Tom Hovis
Enduring /Mem. Gifts:
Property: Ken Koehnlein
Staff Relations: Joan Hassler

Mission: Cindy Talaber
Budget/Finance: Jerry Trexler
Day Care: Pastor Bruce
Fundraising: Tom Hovis
Worship: Joan Hassler



A NOTE FROM THE PASTOR

Dear Friends,

BABY IT'S COLD OUTSIDE!!! I know that is a song written by Frank Loesser in 1944 then popularized in 1949 in the film *Nep-tune's Daughter* and sung by more vocalists than I can list. We often hear it playing around Christmas time but the “cold outside” around the Stevenson household has been finding its way INSIDE quite a bit, in particular in our bedroom. You see, this summer our roof leaked just above our bedroom. The ceiling and insulation above had to be torn out and our contractor wasn’t able to put this project on his calendar until January. With the extremely cold weather just before Christmas, **BABY, IT'S BEEN COLD IN THE BEDROOM!**

We’ve been toughing it out. Extra blankets and a down comforter have made it manageable. I LOVE my heated mattress pad but as we had to pack up and move out of our house for renovations this summer, while the heated mattress pad has emerged out of storage the controller had not making it inoperable. I was having a hard time sleeping at night!

However, my wonderful wife went online and found a replacement controller. It took a long time to arrive but it finally did and now I can say ... **BABY, IT'S WARM IN THE BEDROOM! ☺**

This isn’t the first article that I have written with the theme of “lost items” and I suspect it won’t be the last but I don’t mean to focus on the lost but rather warmth vs. cold. I’ve always thought that I’d rather be too cold than too hot because if I am too cold I can always put on a flannel shirt, a sweater, a warm coat, a heavy blanket, or turn up the heat. But during those really cold nights nothing seemed to help. Only when I got out the goose down comforter did I start to feel

warm again.

In some translations of the Bible, the Holy Spirit is referred to as the *Comforter*.

But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

I was reminded that I always need the Comforter and not just on a cold winter night. There are always new lessons to learn. I always need to find a guide on my spiritual journey as I seek a deeper understanding of God and a relationship with Christ. Just as my comforter keeps me safe from the cold, the Holy Spirit keeps me safe from the temptations I face in this world. Whenever I am searching for an answer, feeling confused or uncertain, frightened, threatened, or unsure, I can always look to the Holy Spirit, God's "Comforter," to see me through. But I don't want to make it sound as though the Comforter is only present in difficult times. The Holy Spirit of God is there to celebrate life's greatest moments with us.

Our bedroom ceiling is not repaired yet. Oh, it's not leaking, that much has been done but as I write this article it will be several more weeks before the ceiling is repaired and many more cold nights. Until then I have my comforter to keep me safe and warm at night as well as I have God's Comforter to guide me through my days.

Peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Pastor Jim".

Be part of the
miracle



***"Love never fails."* - 1 Corinthians 13:8**

When difficult times happen, a kind and loving response can make all the difference. That's why the CWS Blankets program was created—to give a kind, loving and tangible response to someone facing a difficult time, reminding them that they are not alone.

Through the generosity of CWS partner organizations, congregations and individual supporters, our most vulnerable neighbors around the world can feel safe and keep warm with fresh linens and clean sleeping quarters.

When our neighbors are in need, even \$10 for a single blanket goes a long way.

FEBRUARY IS BLANKET MONTH
at FAITH UCC

Please prayerfully consider how you can help as we
work towards our goal
of \$1000 to purchase 100 blankets.

Puzzle Answer: walk, light, fellowship, blood,

The Warm Miracle of Love

CWSJanuary 10, 2023[Blankets Stories](#)

Every time a community of friends and neighbors come together for a good cause, a miracle happens. For First Congregational Church of the United Church of Christ (also known as First Church), and St. John's United Church of Christ, this is a common occurrence. Once a month, these two churches come together at an event titled The Largest Table where they welcome anyone and everyone to come to share a meal and celebrate the miracle of community.

This event, which is blessed with abundant meals and supplies to distribute to guests, recently received another gift: CWS Blankets and Hygiene Kits. Pastor Gini, who helped organize the event, explained, “these are the kind of blankets that people carry with them. They pack them up in their roller suitcase or their backpacks. They take them with them all day long and they use them that night and the next night because they become a permanent belonging.”

Our community engagement manager, Andrew Gifford, attended the event to help distribute blankets. He shared, “we have the heavy-weight wool blankets which are especially useful for those who call the outdoors home, who need to stay warm.” For our friends and neighbors who are experiencing homelessness, these blankets will provide warmth and comfort, and a soft reminder that they are known and loved by their community.

When you donate to the CWS Kits and Blankets ministries, you are helping us love our neighbors in a both generous and practical way. As Andrew explained, “without your support, we would not be able to do this good work, be the boots on the ground or really help our neighbors in need.”

Reverend Timothy Ahrens, another one of our partners at the event, expressed to us, “it’s a miracle what Church World Service does, and you’re a part of that miracle.” We invite you to join us as we blanket the world with love.



*Andrew Gifford organizing
Hygiene Kits with volunteers*

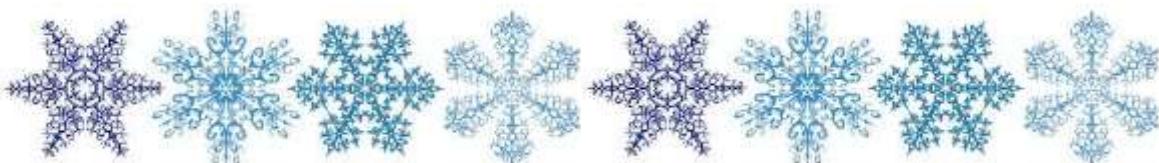


CWS Blankets



*Andrew Gifford,
Matthew Stevens
and Pastor Gini*

Should we need to cancel worship due to inclement weather you will receive a recorded phone message by 8 am on Sunday morning. Please be sure that the church office has your correct phone number if you've made any changes in the past year.



ASH WEDNESDAY

worship

February 22, 2023
7:30 PM

The service will include Imposition of Ashes and Communion.

The service will also be live streamed on [YouTube](#).



Our Lenten theme this year is
SEEKING: honest questions for deeper faith

The program format is similar to last year's—there will be no weeknight gatherings and each individual completes the weekly lessons at their own pace.

The program offers us many stories of Jesus encountering people who are seeking: Nicodemus comes to him in the veil of night, he approaches a Samaritan woman at a well, he heals a man born without sight. In these stories, each person is seeking a new beginning, a different life, a deeper faith. What unfolds is an

exchange filled with questions and exploration. Often, an unveiling occurs—assumptions are disrupted, a new perspective is revealed, mystery grows.

And so, we've crafted a Lenten series founded on questions. Many of our weekly questions feel restorative ("Can these bones live?"). Some feel like a charge or challenge ("Who will you listen to?"). Some questions are hopeful and curious ("How do we begin again?"). Our questions won't necessarily lead to answers, but they can help us find clarity and a new perspective. Ultimately, we pray they lead to a new beginning, a restoration, a wider grace.

Like the characters in our Lenten scriptures, we are also seeking many things: clarity, connection, wonder, justice, balance. We are seeking our calling, the sacred, and how to live as a disciple. Throughout the turbulence of the past few years, many of us are asking big questions about our lives and our faith. We hope this series will help us unpack some of those big questions in ways that are honest and faithful. Throughout this season, we hope you will continually ask yourself: what am I seeking? What is God seeking?

This Lent, we invite you to engage in the spiritual practice of seeking. We encourage you to stay curious, open, and nimble. We hope you will soften your assumptions and expand your perspectives. We pray that these questions will create a safe space to explore—to be drawn more deeply into the fullness of life, into the heart of God.

Printed and Digital Materials for the Lenten Program
will be available beginning February 12th in the narthex and in
our weekly emails.

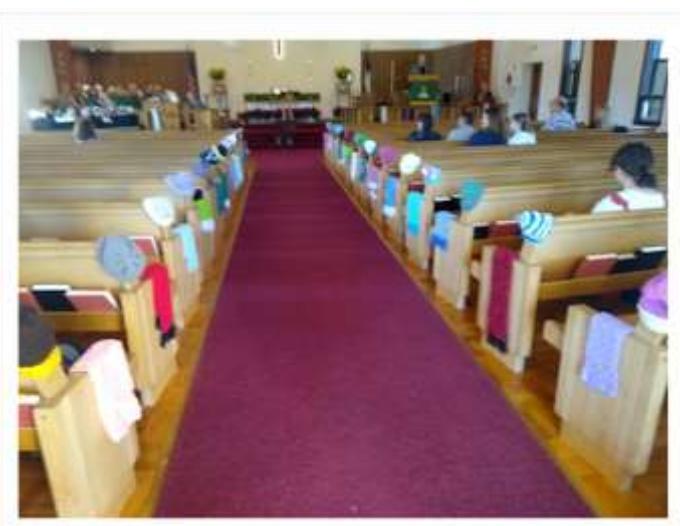
On Sunday, January 15, 2023 the sanctuary was decorated with hats and scarves made by the members of *FAITH IN STITCHES*.

More than 50 scarves, 90 + hats, and 50 winter coats (donated by our members) were delivered to The Caring Place the following week.

The scarves, hats, and coats will be distributed to the school age children who spend their time before and after school at the Caring Place and to others in the neighborhood who are in need.

Thanks to all of you for your continued support of our missions.

-photos courtesy of Bruce Keeler



Dear Friends at Faith Church,

Thank you for the prayers and get well cards I received during my recent surgery. I am feeling much better and improving every day. The Lord was watching over me and saw me through a difficult time. I Appreciate everyone's thoughts and kindness.

Doris Horwath



Dear Friends,

Wow, I am truly overwhelmed with your generosity of gifts during this special season. Thank you! I am humbles by all of your gifts in my Santa stocking, the cards and letters and USPS deliveries. Thank you for thinking of me and sending such wonderful treasures. I celebrate my 41st Christmas with you serving our congregation. What a wonderful experience for me and I hope to last a few more years of such reward and music making with you, Faith Church. Thank you all for your kind words and gifts as we look forward to a new, special year in 2023.

*Peace to you all,
Denny*



To our Friends at Faith Church

As an organization, we at The Caring Place would like to express our deepest gratitude for your donation. It has allowed us to keep trying to transform the lives of the children in our community.

*Thank you,
Mary Griffin*

Members and Friend Faith,

I again thank you for filling my Christmas Stocking. I enjoy keeping your church clean and working for a very nice group of people. Wishing you good health in 2023.

*Your Sexton,
Dorothy*



Dear Friends,

Thanks to all who shared Christmas cards, gifts, and holiday wishes with me this year. Special thanks to those who generously supported the Samaritan Fund or a charity of your choice. I appreciate your continued support throughout the year and hope your New Year will be a healthy and happy one!

Sandy



Dear Friends,

Sincere thanks for my “Christmas Stocking” full of the many wonderful treats with which you filled it! Christmas ornaments, cards, gift cards to some of my favorite places ... I will enjoy the contents of the stocking for a long time!

Your generosity reflects the generosity of God by sharing his Son with the world and the Magi who presented their gifts before the Christ child. May this Season of Epiphany be full of new discoveries as you journey forward in faith in the seasons that follow Christmas.

*Peace,
Pastor Bruce*

FEBRUARY VOLUNTEERS
Head Usher: Ken Koehnlein Fin. Sec.: Bob Shelly

Date	Ushers	Lay Reader	Altar Flowers
02/05	Bob & Patti Shelly	Barb Maursky	Available
2/12	Cindy Talaber Linda Torrence	Cindy Talaber	Talboo
2/19	Donna Schoenberger Kim Ritter	Donna Schoenberger	Schantz
Ash Wed	Mike Ford George Rau	Joan Hassler	n/a
2/26	Tom & Brenda Hovis	Rose Mirth	Friend



December	Month	YTD
Receipts	\$30,705.70	\$24,7724.72
Disbursements	\$23,986.46	\$241,220.16
	\$6,719.24	\$6,504.56

SPECIAL OFFERINGS:

Joyful Noise—\$25
 Christmas Fund—\$282
 NIN—\$25
 Helping Hands—\$68
 Samaritan Fund—\$810



The 2023 Altar Flower Schedule is hanging in the Narthex. Upcoming open dates include March 19, 26, April 16, 30. Please check the schedule or give the office a call for more dates. The cost is \$40 for 2 arrangements which are yours to take with you after worship.



Many thanks for your continued support of Betty Lou's Pantry! Our donations for the last three Sundays of November and the first Sunday of December included 264 items.

ITEMS CURRENTLY MOST NEEDED:

Baked Beans

Canned Pasta

Spaghetti Sauce

Items stocked at the Pantry include:

Pork & Beans

Chili

Spaghetti Sauce

Canned Pasta

Peanut Butter

Canned Tomatoes & Canned Sauce

Kidney Beans

Chunky Soups

Canned Fruit

Macaroni & Cheese

Beef Stew

Canned Chicken and Salmon

Dry Pasta & Spaghetti

Monetary donations are a particularly effective way to help the Pantry. A donation of \$10 will buy over 60 lbs of food through Second Harvest. If you are in need or know of someone in the area who is, please call **610-282-2838** and leave a message, or email **bettylouspantry18036@gmail.com** —Mike Ford



**The church office will be closed on
Monday, February 20th
in observance of
Presidents' Day.**

Mission News for February

That's a Wrap for Holiday Hope Chests for 2022!

The Volunteer Center of the Lehigh Valley was able to make the holidays happier for over 8,000 children with the help of donors throughout the Lehigh Valley. Again this year, Faith Church made a contribution of 56 beautifully wrapped and gift-filled boxes. Once again, we thank you for taking part in this wonderful mission.

The Caring Place Coat, Hats, Scarves Drive

All donations have been delivered to **The Caring Place!** We delivered well over 50 coats, 95 hats and 50 scarves, along with some sweaters and boots. Miss Mary and Miss Rose have reported that these winter weather items will be shared with the children who use the after-school program and the homeless who visit their place for assistance. Your much appreciated donations will go a long way to make the winter a little warmer for all who are in need of cold weather protection.

The Souper Bowl of Caring

Our current mission is a **Soup & Sandwich Food Drive** for Betty Lou's Pantry. The collection is underway and will last until the end of February.

What items are we collecting?

100 Cans of Soup
(Chicken Noodle is needed most)

50 Jars of Peanut Butter

50 Jars of Jelly for Sandwiches

BLP is also in need of **Canned Pasta & Beef Stew & Chili.**

We will be happy to accept these donations as well.

Soup and Chili Cook-off

On February 19, after a 2 year break, we will once again be holding a Cook-off Lunch after Worship. Maybe **you** will make the best soup or chili this year! Everyone will be able to vote!

If you can't make soup for any reason, please join us to enjoy some social time with friends and family. There is always plenty of food.

Or if you really want to bring something then bring some crackers or cookies to share with all.

Mark Your Calendars for these Upcoming Mission Events:

Jan 22- Feb 26: Souper Bowl of Caring Collection
(Benefits Betty Lou's Pantry)

February 5-26: Church World Services Blanket Month

February 19: Soup & Chili Cook-off Lunch
(Benefits Samaritan Fund)

March 12: Pie Sunday with a light lunch after Worship
(Benefits Samaritan Fund)

April 2: Palm Sunday after Worship Brunch
(Benefits One Great Hour of Sharing)

April 23: Spring Bingo Mission Fundraiser
(Supports Mission Projects)



FEBRUARY BIBLE READINGS

February 1

Isa. 52:13–53:12
Gal. 4:21–31
Mark 8:11–26

February 7

Isa. 58:1–12
2 Tim. 1:1–14
Mark 9:42–50

February 13

Isa. 63:1–6
1 Tim. 1:1–17
Mark 11:1–11

February 2

Isa. 54:1–10 (11–17)
Gal. 5:1–15
Mark 8:27–9:1

February 8

Isa. 59:1–21
2 Tim. 1:15–2:13
Mark 10:1–16

February 14

Isa. 63:7–14
1 Tim. 1:18–2:8 (9–15)
Mark 11:12–26

February 3

Isa. 55:1–13
Gal. 5:16–24
Mark 9:2–13

February 9

Isa. 60:1–22
2 Tim. 2:14–26
Mark 10:17–31

Isa. 63:15–64:9
1 Tim. 3:1–16
Mark 11:27–12:12

February 4

Isa. 56:1–8
Gal. 5:25–6:10
Mark 9:14–29

February 10

Isa. 61:1–9
2 Tim. 3:1–17
Mark 10:32–45

Isa. 65:1–12
1 Tim. 4:1–16
Mark 12:13–27

February 5

Isa. 57:1–13
Heb. 12:1–6
John 7:37–46

February 11

Isa. 61:10–62:5
2 Tim. 4:1–8
Mark 10:46–52

Isa. 65:17–25
1 Tim. 5:(1–16) 17–22 (23–25)
Mark 12:28–34

February 6

Isa. 57:14–21
Gal. 6:11–18
Mark 9:30–41

February 12

Isa. 62:6–12
1 John 2:3–11
John 8:12–19

February 18

Isa. 66:1–6
1 Tim. 6:(1–5) 6–21
Mark 12:35–44

February 19

Dan. 7:9–10, 13–14
 2 Cor. 3:1–9
 John 12:27–36a

February 20

Deut. 6:1–15
 Heb. 1:1–14
 John 1:1–18

February 21

Deut. 6:16–25
 Heb. 2:1–10
 John 1:19–28

February 22

Jonah 3:1–4:11
 Heb. 12:1–14
 Luke 18:9–14

February 23

Deut. 7:6–11
 Titus 1:1–16
 John 1:29–34

February 24

Deut. 7:12–16
 Titus 2:1–15
 John 1:35–42

February 25

Deut. 7:17–26
 Titus 3:1–15
 John 1:43–51

February 26

Jer. 9:23–24
 1 Cor. 1:18–31
 Mark 2:18–22

February 27

Deut. 8:1–20
 Heb. 2:11–18
 John 2:1–12

February 28

Deut. 9:(1–3) 4–12
 Heb. 3:1–11
 John 2:13–22



Children of the Light

This craft celebrates that now we are light in the Lord (see Ephesians 5:8).

What you need:

- A gallon zip-top plastic bag
- Permanent markers (dark colors)
- Black construction paper
- White cardstock
- Scissors

What you do:

1. Draw a self-portrait on the outside of the bag. Add details.
2. Insert the black paper and set the bag flat on a table. It should be tough to see your picture now.
3. On the white cardstock, draw a picture of a flashlight with a long beam of light coming out. Color the flashlight but leave the beam white.
4. Cut out the flashlight and light beam. Place them in the bag, over the black paper. When the white beam covers the black background under your picture, you can see your self-portrait clearly.

February

- | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| 04 Darin Jellison | 22 Nancy Gollie |
| 04 Griffin Koch | 22 Dana Kernick |
| 05 Brett Dill | 22 Monica Gunkle |
| 05 Karlee Allison | 22 Elisa Talboo |
| 06 Tracy Adams | 23 Brenda Hovis |
| 06 Bob Campbell | 28 Donald Koch, Jr |
| 07 Ben Keeler | |
| 10 Ethan Stevenson | |
| 13 Grace Koch | |
| 13 Susan Hardy | |
| 14 Jade Stoffey | |
| 15 Joe Smith | |
| 15 Molly Grammer | |
| 17 Richard Shelly, Jr | |
| 18 Steve Fosbenner | |
| 18 Eric Hite | |
| 19 Sandy Sosnowsky | |



Please call the church office with any omissions or corrections.

PUZZLE

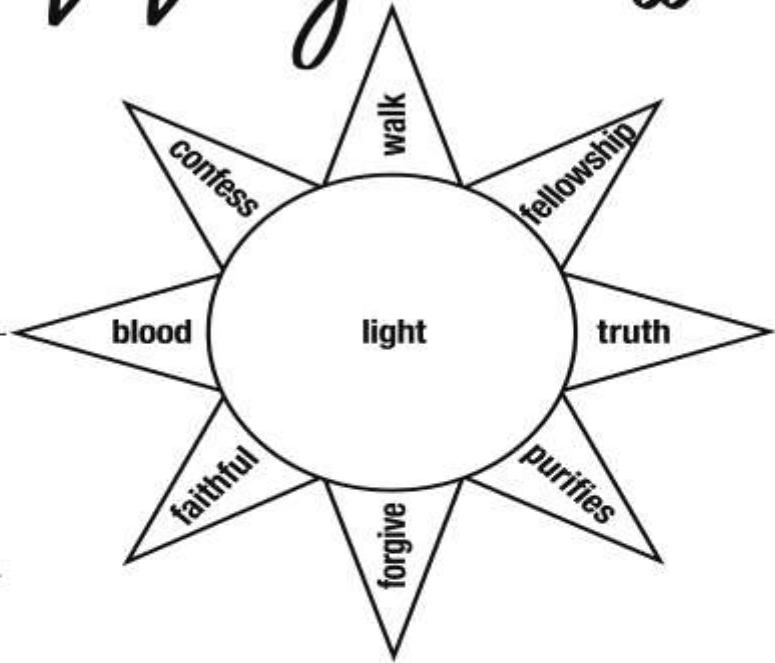


The light of forgiveness

The Lord is full of mercy and light. What happens when we confess our sins to God?

Directions:

Use the coded shapes to fill in the blanks and complete 1 John 1:7-9, NIV.



But if we _____ in the _____, as he is in the _____,
we have _____ with one another, and the _____
of Jesus, his Son, _____ us from all sin. If we claim to be
without sin, we deceive ourselves and the _____ is not in us.
If we _____ our sins, he is _____ and just and will
_____ us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

1 JOHN 1:7-9, NIV