

# 'Char-i-ty'



By Rev. Dr. Bob Henley

We are in the final countdown to All Charities Weekend. As with all things this year, it will be a different gala experience, thanks to the necessary COVID-19 restrictions. That must be why two Janes – Jane, my wife, and **Jane Silverman**, my friend - suggested that I write about - **charity**. So here goes!

## The Background

Many of us who are older, and attended a church or synagogue when we were younger, will be familiar with the King James Version of the Bible. First published in 1611, having been authorized by England's King

James I in 1604, it is one of the most famous Bible translations in history. Its eloquent expressions have worked their way into the very fabric of our language.

These 17th century translators faced the challenge of capturing the meaning of the original Greek text of the New Testament, and giving it expression in the best vernacular of their day.

One particularly challenging Greek term was, **agape**, which is often translated today as **love**. It was the term used by the authors of the New Testament to express the unique love of God for the world - love demonstrated through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, God's Son.

This 17th century translation team ultimately chose the term **charity** to capture the essence of **agape**, or what we call love. The decision was informed by their study of early church fathers like Augustine, who identified **charity** as an ultimate virtue.

As a result, St. Paul's great chapter on **agape, or love**, found in 1 Corinthians 13, was expressed in the *Authorized King James Version*, with our English word, **charity**.

## Linguistic Development

We are all aware that language usage is dynamic, never static. Before the advent of the internet and electronic devices, the word 'text' was a noun, something you read in a book or an article. The notion of 'texting' as we use it today, was virtually unheard of, except in the imaginations of a few science fiction writers, and early Silicon Valley 'geeks.'

Similarly, it was the Protestant Reformation that brought about a change in our usage of the word **charity**. The Reformers understood **agape** as God's unmerited love for people. Therefore, "they required that **charity**, expressed as man's love for man, be based not upon the desirability of its object, but upon the transformation of its subject through the power of **agape**," or **charity**.

So, when we think of **charity** today, we naturally think in terms of its power to transform the conditions of the recipients, the 'objects' of our expressions of care and concern. But generosity, expressed through **charity**, has a transforming effect on the 'subjects,' on those who give.

## All Charities Weekend

As many of you know, the beautiful, mountain community of Ketchum/Sun Valley, Idaho,

is and has been our home for twenty years. The non-profit organizations in our community, more than thirty of them not counting churches, do great work. And, they are all dependent on the generosity of donors, on **charity**, for their support. Because of that, you can make a career of participating in charitable benefits, at least one almost every week, throughout the summer!

When we tell our friends there about All Charities Weekend at Ocean Reef, the one-and-only focused weekend of fundraising in support of worthy organizations, both within Ocean Reef, and in Miami-Dade and Monroe counties, they are immediately jealous – very jealous!

## Make It Happen – Again

It still astounds me – it shouldn't - that this Ocean Reef community has given more than \$44 million, at last count, since 2008, through All Charities Weekend. Some of the things you contribute and bid on, they still astound me as well!

My hope is that, when you contribute an item, a trip or a service; when you bid at the auction or raise your virtual paddle, you'll be mindful of the power of **charity**. Not only will your actions have a transformative effect in the work and lives of the recipients, the greatest transformation might just be in yourself. That you see, is the kind of power that **agape**, of **charity**, truly possesses.