

Bellringer

Sherman Avenue United Methodist Church

February, 2015

From the Pastor's Desk

February is called the month of Love. During this month of Love, let us be sure to express our affection for one another and to show sincere acts of kindness. It is also Black History Month, a time set aside to celebrate the accomplishments of our Brother And Sister African Americans. Ash Wednesday is in this month. Also Super Bowl Sunday. Wow, that's a lot to pack into 28 days. February is the shortest month but the most power-packed month on the calendar. But two questions arise: What is love? And what kind of love do we celebrate as Christians?

According to different respectful authors, until the Good News of Jesus Christ burst onto the human scene, the word Love was understood mostly in terms of seeking one's own advantage. Loving the unlovely was incomprehensible. A loving God descending to sinful humans was unthinkable. But the Bible says that *"God is Love"* (1 John 4:8). This answers the first question.

Then what kind of Love do we celebrate as Christians? The New Testament writers chose a little-used Greek word for love, *Agape*. This word expresses what God wants to reveal about himself in Christ and how He wants Christians to relate to each other. The Christian life is all about the relationships - with God and with one another: *"This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters"* (1 John 3:16).

And this new love bond was given its fullest expression at Calvary. Those redeemed by Christ's death are able to reach out to God and to each other in a dimension never before understood or experienced. As the Apostle Paul expressed in *1 Corinthians 12:31*, *love is "the most excellent way"*. This new kind of love quickly became the indispensable identifying characteristic of the early church. They took Jesus seriously when he said: *"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another"* (John 13:34-35).

The church of today is challenged to rediscover this Agape. As the years have passed much of the true force of Agape has faded. Agape is not mere sentiment - a love that is inactive, ineffective, powerless. The active and true love is a love that says: "I respect you. I care for you. I am responsible for you" on the human plane, as on the divine. Let me conclude with an acronym about LOVE:

Let Jesus Christ's love indwell your very being

Obey His one commandment to love each other

Value as great as He loved you in dying

Ever forgiving in love for one another



May you have a blessed month of February, and have a Happy Valentine's Day!

Your Servant in Christ, Pastor Rafael

Prepare, Listen, and Carry On by Veronica Berry

“For I know the plans I have for you.” declares the Lord. “plans to prosper and not harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me, and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.” Jeremiah 29:11-13.

As Christians, most of us yearn for a better understanding of God. We study his word in our Bibles, attend Sunday School and church service to get a more in-depth explanation of the scriptures, and participate in spiritual activities with our church family to share his teachings with others. Preparation is an essential element in understanding the answers to the questions that get in the way of us truly knowing God.

Identifying spiritual practices that support our journey towards God and releasing habits, thoughts, and behaviors that hinder our process can sometimes seem like a tedious task. Releasing and changing habits aren't easy at first. But once you retrain your mind, the new habit comes naturally. When we are ready and willing to grow and press past the pain and discomfort at the beginning of our new regime, we open our hearts and minds to embrace a new way of looking at life. Continuously meditating on his word, quoting scripture to reinforce the power of his words, and praying for God to give us the strength to knowingly accept the plans he has for us, are excellent spiritual practices we need to do every day. Repetition puts us on auto-pilot and new habits replace old outdated ones.

When we pray we are assured that God listens to our prayers. The key for us is to pause between the noises of everyday life and pay attention to the Divine spirit so we can hear him. Sometimes speaking less and noticing more allows the silence to soothe our minds so we can be open to what his Spirit tells us. When we ask God to hear our prayers, we need to be willing to be still, listen, and wait for his answers. We can use this time to rest and embrace the peace of being with God and allow ourselves to feel renewed and empowered.

Through these practices we increase our faith and feel more confident to carry on his message beyond the walls of our church. We make a conscious effort to live our lives as an expression of Christian love. We realize that through God we are interconnected with all beings and strive to be kind, compassionate, and understanding of others. We begin to recognize the Spirit in ourselves and we see God's consciousness in others. This awareness fills our minds with a light of clarity and brings new understanding to our perceptions of the past.

We prepare, we listen, and we carry on with the knowledge that God has great plans for each of us. We can face every day with a sense of hope and peace. When our hearts are willing and open to seek God, we will find him and have a greater understanding and acceptance of his love and grace.

News from the Women's Groups



The next UMW Meeting is Tuesday, Feb. 3, at 6:00 PM.
Patsy McDonald will be leading the discussion on the book,
"Orphan Train" by Christina Baker Kline.
We will also discuss ideas for our programs in 2015.
Anyone interested is invited to attend.

Coupons wanted!

Please donate your coupons to the Hmong Women's mailbox.
We will use them to purchase products for gift baskets.
Contact Emma 698-2063 if you have any questions.

Happy Valentine's Day

Love is very patient and kind, never jealous or envious, never boastful or proud, never haughty or selfish or rude. Love does not demand its own way.

It is not irritable or touchy. It does not hold grudges and will hardly even notice when others do it wrong.

It is never glad about injustice, but rejoices whenever truth wins out.

If you love someone you will be loyal to him no matter what the cost.

You will always believe in him, always expect the best of him, and always stand your ground in defending him.

Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

There are three things that remain - faith, hope and love.

The greatest of these is love.

1 Corinthians 13



Connections from Craig Myrbo

Bishop Hee-Soo Jung today announced his new Assistant to the Bishop and the District Superintendents (DS) for the five new Districts within the Wisconsin Conference of The United Methodist Church. All of these appointment changes are effective July 1, 2015.

Rev. Dan Dick, currently serving as Director of Connectional Ministries, will be appointed as Assistant to the Bishop. The five District Superintendents will be Rev. Kate Croskery Jones in the North West District, currently pastor at New London; Rev. Forrest Wells in the North Central District, currently lead pastor at Janesville Cargill; Rev. Sue D'Alessio in the North East District, currently serving as DS in the Nicolet and Winnebago Districts; Rev. Deborah Thompson in the South East District, currently serving as DS in the Metro Districts; and Rev. Scott Carlson in the South West District, currently lead pastor at Sun Prairie.

In addition, he announced that, with the consent of the Conference Personnel Committee, Rev. Sam Royappa will be appointed as the Director of Connectional Ministries. Sam has served as DS in the Capital and Coulee Districts for the last eight years.

In making the announcement, Bishop Jung shared that he is very much looking forward to working with the current and new Cabinet during this important transition time and in the ongoing work of implementing the "Imagine Wisconsin Anew" plan for new congregation initiatives and revitalizing existing Wisconsin congregations. Bishop Jung said, "The addition of a District Superintendent and the configuration of the five new districts will improve our ability to connect with each other to build vital outreach to the people of Wisconsin. This team will provide both ongoing and new leadership to help guide our Conference into the future."

Rev. Ann Spindt Henschel, Heartland and Chippewa District Superintendent, will be leaving the Cabinet after seven years of service effective July 1 to take a family leave. Rev. Steve Polster, currently serving as Assistant to the Bishop, will retire July 1.

from <http://www.wisconsinumc.org/connections/conference-news/bishops-corner/announcements/1421-bishop-cabinet-announcements>

Christian Education Opportunities

The 8:30 Adult Sunday School is currently studying *Grace: More than we Deserve, Greater than We Imagine* by Max Lucado.

During the Lenten season, we will study *24 Hours That Changed the World* by Adam Hamilton. This study examines the last twenty four hours of Jesus' life, and our response to his death.

After Lent we will begin "*Unfinished*", a six week study "to rediscover the critical mission of Christ in our World today and the richness of God's calling on our lives."

On May 31st we will start a thirty-one week church wide study "*The Story*". More details will follow in the Bellringer.

Thursday Bible Study begins 4:30. The group will continue studying the Gospel of Luke.

Sunday School for All begins at 10:45 each Sunday. There are classes for children and adults. The topics vary.

The Youth Group meets on Wednesdays and Fridays. Please check the Bellringer and Bulletin for activities, topics and times.

Anyone interested in joining in for any of these studies is welcome at any time.



Tis' the Season

In the event of severe winter weather, please check TV Channel 27 or Radio WIBA FM 101.5 or WIBM AM 1310 for information regarding Sunday Service cancellations. You may also call Patsy at 608 249 0734 before 8:00 AM.

February 2015

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1 8:30 Sunday School 9:30 Worship 10:45 Sunday School 11:30 Worship 6:00 Self-defense 6:00 Ping Pong	2 6:15 Brownies	3 9:00 ELL 6:00 UMW	4 1:00 Staff Meeting 6:00 Band Practice	5	6	7
8 Scout Sunday 8:30 Sunday School 9:30 Worship 10:45 Sunday School 11:30 Worship 6:00 Self-defense 6:00 Ping Pong	9 6:15 Jr Girl Scouts 6:30 Cub Scouts	10 9:30 ELL 6:30 Trustees	11 1:00 Staff Meeting 6:00 Band Practice	12 4:30 Bible Study 6:30 Choir	13 11:00 Jabez 6:00 Hmong Youth/Women	14
15 8:30 Sunday School 9:30 Worship 10:45 Sunday School 11:30 Worship 6:00 Self-defense 6:00 Ping Pong	16 6:15 Brownies 6:30 Cub Scouts	17 9:00 ELL	18 1:00 Staff Meeting 6:00 Band Practice	19 4:30 Bible Study 6:30 Choir	20	21 10:00 Capitol District
22 Bellringer Deadline 8:30 Sunday School 9:30 Worship 10:45 Sunday School 11:30 Worship 6:00 Self-defense 6:00 Ping Pong	23 6:15 Brownies 6:15 Jr Girl Scouts	24 8:00 Faith Labor Breakfast at Good Shepherd Parish 9:00 ELL 6:30 O/M meeting	25 8:00 Copy & Fold 1:00 Staff Meeting 6:00 Band Practice	26 4:30 Bible Study 6:30 Choir	27 11:00 Jabez 6:00 Hmong Youth/Women	28 9:00 Task Force Homeless Shelter Meal

February Birthdays

CAROL	2/1
PATSY	2/1
RYAN	2/1
LUKE	2/15
LEAH	2/17
NANCY	2/21
CHENG	2/21
JOSEPH	2/22
MARLENE	2/26
MARVEL	2/28

Anniversaries

FRANK & FAITH	2/3
RALPH & LINDA	2/7
PATSY & ED	2/23

These are the dates that are in the database. If you find that your name is not included with the Birthdays or Anniversaries, please call Matt Treadaway

Please take a moment to remember our homebound members

Linda Jungbluth
c/o Avalon Assisted Living
2875 Fish Hatchery Rd, Rm 11
Fitchburg, WI 53713-3177
608-274-4350

Marvel Mapes
702 Jupiter Dr #276
Madison, WI 53718-2972
608-663-8783

Our condolences to the family and friends of Norman Bryhan who passed away on January 3, 2015

Need A Prayer?

Call
Pat Bruccoleri (576-7331)
Cyndy Hoffman (513 2280)

A Prayer for Peace and Reconciliation

Heavenly Father,
you have called us
in the Body of your Son Jesus Christ
to continue his work of reconciliation
and reveal you to the world.
Forgive us the sins which tear us apart;
give us the courage to overcome our fears
and to seek that unity
which is your gift and your will;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen

The floor covering in the office will be replaced the week of 2/9/15. The office will temporary move to Fellowship Hall. We need volunteers to move the heavy furniture out of the office Sunday, 2/8 after second service. Please let Terry know if you are available to help.