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# The Good News

February 2023

PASTOR K.C.



The month of February is simply graced with Valentine’s Day. I use the word *graced* because while there are people who don’t partake in any celebration for various reasons, there remains the opportunity to use our eyes and watch the many responses to giving love and receiving love. Furthermore, there’s

also the opportunity to use our hearts to both give and receive.

While we often focus on the words of Jesus and his inclusive example of love, let’s remember the words of God spoken in the book of Jeremiah: “I have loved you, my people, with an everlasting love. With unfailing love, I have drawn you to myself.” (Jeremiah 31:3) When we contemplate the depth of unconditional love—*Almighty God is that source*. When we contemplate the love of Jesus—the Lamb of God—*he is God’s one and only Son*. (John 3:16)

In context of the liturgical church year, we remain in the season of Epiphany until Ash Wednesday on February 22. As a congregation, we’ve walked alongside the Magi and dug deep into our heart’s treasure to reveal what we would offer the Newborn King. Now as we walk alongside Jesus as he chooses his disciples and reveals his divinity to both the Jews and Gentiles, we bear witness to God’s unfailing, everlasting love through Him.

Do you have a favorite moment or two in the Old or New Testament that moves—even *transforms* your heart? The Lord has done such great wonders through love. It’s difficult to choose just one or two moments that stir the depth of our souls! God’s love is a theme from Genesis through Revelation—from the Garden of Eden to the New Jerusalem. Don’t let a day go by thinking you’re not embraced by the Author of Life...” for God is love.” (1 John 4:8)



Worship Service  
 February 22, 2023  
 7 pm



- 7 Dick Schuster
- 9 Andrew Schwartz  
Nick Hicks
- 11 Ellen Fox
- 14 Rose Schroeder
- 16 Beth DeVlaminck
- 22 Lorri Berry
- 24 Steve Popyk

## ERICH



St. Paul held its monthly Consistory meeting on January 10. Where has the time gone! Don't forget we will be holding our Annual Meeting on January 29<sup>th</sup> in the Sanctuary. After service, we will take a 10-15 min. break and then start the meeting. We will also be voting on a few updates to the constitution. The

group to update the lobby continues to meet. We have been continually upgrading lights and lighting in and around the church. Some lobby lights have been replaced. We also are looking at replacing lights in the resource room and the lights under the balcony in the sanctuary. The Mound Road project is continuing. I have been in touch with a company, Shadow Team VFX, that is working with MDOT that has been to the church taking pictures and video of the outside of the church. They would like to do the same inside. This is for any possible damage that might happen during the project. If any damage happens during the project, we can use the photos and video as help with any costs in repairs. The damage must happen, however, in between the two times that photos from this company were taken. I want to keep people updated on what we have planned for the coming years. Here is a quick list that Consistory and members of the church have brought up that they would like to see done:

- Repaint gray metal railing outside - SPRING 2023
- Remove green Plexiglas and repaint windows on Educational Building - SPRING 2023
- Remodel lobby with new furniture, flooring, etc. - SPRING 2023
- Update lighting in rooms - ONGOING
- Fix and repaint ceiling in the Fellowship Hall
- Repaint and fix plaster in sanctuary - AFTER MOUND ROAD PROJECT
- Look at the possibility of a covered vestibule that will block the wind when entering the educational building

Please remember if there is anything that needs attention (building, service, etc.), let a member of Consistory know, so we can address it at our meeting.

Dear Members of St. Paul UCC,

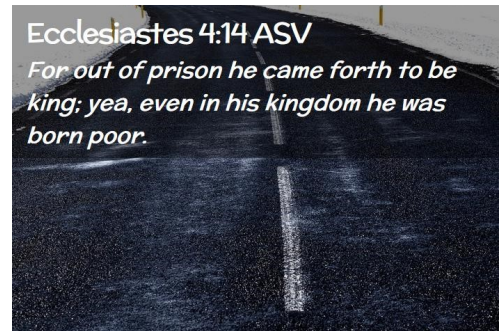
The most incredible occurrence throughout these past thirteen years for me has been having a relationship with God. Being so graciously welcomed into the kingdom of God has been the stemming point of everything good that has ever entered my life. I can still put myself right back to when I was 16 and facing this amount of prison time; the fire that burned in me to discover what my faith was capable of is a time I am fulfilled from. The decisions I made then were so pivotal to what has transpired in my life for the rest of this time. And that's not to say I haven't had my struggles with my faith, that goes without saying. But, as I've seen ample times, a young mind can go down and stay down many bad paths in prison. But it has honestly been easy to abstain from that when my focus has been on positive transformation.

As I've said throughout this whole time; God, who is so rich in mercy, works everything together for the good. God has taken my worst moment I'll ever experience in life and created good out of it. I have been able to affect change on so many levels and in so many lives. I know it will be difficult to reach the volume of people I have in here, but my life will always be committed to taking this same faithful method and apply it as a free man. So whomever I encounter when in society and a chance to speak life into a young life, I know I'll flourish with that responsibility.

I have everything set up for success and all of the tools to navigate inevitable tough times. I am beyond excited to finally be beyond this barbed wire and see the route in which God wants my life to go.

I have thanked all of you numerous times and it has never felt enough of course. I think the only way for you to feel the true gravity of my gratitude is to put yourself right where I am. Please feel how thankful I am for all of your support and words of encouragement. It all has brought joy & hope in my days of a lot of sleepless nights.

Thank you & I cannot wait to update you on what my life looks like in the early days of being free!



SUE



The rummage room is empty and ready for your donations. The sale is only successful if we have something to offer. Get busy and clean out those closets, drawers, sheds, basements, and nooks & crannies where we save stuff we don't need—someone else is looking for those things. Let's share our treasures and make everyone happy.

“And now faith, hope and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.” (1 Corinthians 13:13 NRSV). So ends one of the most well-known and beloved chapters in the Bible, 1 Corinthians 13, the so-called “love chapter.” In February, the month of St. Valentine’s Day, it is natural for our thoughts to turn to love. This subject of this chapter is not unique in scripture, however, for love is woven throughout both testaments. In the First (Old) Testament, the theme is God’s love for the Israelites. In the New Testament, the theme broadens to include God’s love for all humankind. When I look in my concordance, a kind of super index of words in the Bible, there are literally hundreds of entries for “love.” Don’t worry - we won’t discuss most of them here!



Jesus lays out the framework for our interaction with others in the Sermon on the Mount. (Matthew 5-7). He gets very specific. “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven...” (Matthew 5:43-45 NRSV). And lest we think that we should only love our enemies, he also says “...You shall love your neighbor as yourself...” (Matthew 22:39b NRSV). So the basis of our interaction with all others is love. It is also the basis of our interaction with God, “...you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind...” (Matthew 22:37b NRSV). Here he echoes the ancient statement of belief of the Israelites, called the “Shema,” from its opening words, “Shema Yisroel,” which means “Hear O Israel.” The Shema is the most basic statement of belief of the ancient Israelites and includes this statement about loving God.

How far should our love for our fellow humans go? Again, Jesus is quite specific. “No one has greater love than this, to lay one’s life for one’s friends.” (John 15:13 NRSV). Jesus himself is the primary example of this, laying down his life for us by dying on the cross to save us from our sins.

Well known as the “love chapter” is, most people don’t realize there is another passage in scripture which can justifiably be called a “love passage.” It appears in an epistle of John, specifically, 1 John 4:7-21. The beginning of this passage sets the tone for the entire passage. “Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love.” (1 John 4:7-8 NRSV). That’s it. A simple, three-word definition of God. No theological interpretation. Just “God is love.” In knowing love, we know God.

The passage goes on to describe how God loves us so much that he sent his Son as the Savior of the world, and that we may “have boldness on the day of judgement” because love has been perfected among us. There is no fear in love, because perfect love casts out fear. Inherent in the passage is the concept that we testify that God “sent his Son to save the world.” Finally, the passage states that we must love our brothers and sisters. If we cannot love our brothers and sisters whom we have seen, how can we love God whom we have not seen? John says that anyone who says he or she loves God but hates their brothers or sisters is a liar! Everyone who loves the parent loves the child. Our obligation toward other people is clear and unambiguous: love. In fulfilling that obligation, we fulfill our obligation to God. If we cannot fulfill that obligation to love others, we cannot fulfill our obligation to God.