



Celebration News

February, 2015 - Volume 25 - Issue 1

Redeeming Love: God's Perfect Gift

It is February already, and Valentines Day is just around the corner. We have set aside this day to celebrate love. The possibilities are endless; love for that special someone you can't live without, your spouse, your partner, love for your children, parents, aunts, uncles, siblings, your boss, your cat, your dog...according to Hallmark no one is exempt from your Valentine list. The price of roses, readily available at your local supermarket for \$12.00 a dozen, suddenly jumps to double or more that amount. Jewelry sales abound. My husband gets off fairly easy since I am allergic to roses, and I am not a "diamonds are forever" kind of woman. It is enough for me to know that after 40 years of marriage he still loves me and continues to put up with me, and Hallmark will be happy to know he always finds just the right card to tell me just how much.

Looking back on those forty years of marriage, the very best gift we have given to each other is the grace that comes from redeeming love. Regardless of our differences or disagreements, it is our unconditional love that allows us to forgive and move forward. Moving forward into our "senior" years, we realize that we must accept that our bodies move a little slower, and we have to *think* a little harder, but we will remember that it is because of God's perfect redeeming love, that we are able to love as God loves, and forgive as He forgives; that love really is patient, and kind, it does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self seeking, nor easily angered. Love keeps no record of wrongs, nor delights in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes and always perseveres. Love never fails.

For God so loved the world he sent his only son to live among us and to suffer and die for the sake of redeeming us from our sins. In the blink of an eye Valentines Day will come and go, and we will begin our Lenten journey to Holy Week. On Easter Sunday as we celebrate the risen Christ with the sacrament of communion, I will be thanking God for his perfect gift of redeeming love.

Ginger Robertson

Give From the Heart

Bring a group - family and friends - and join us for a **Fund-Raiser Luncheon on Sunday, February 15**, in the **Fellowship Hall** following the morning services. We will get together in groups and then each group will be given a "budget" from the donations we have received to date and an Outreach International catalog. Donations for the meal of beans and rice will be donations given from the heart. We will be eating a meal similar to what those around us, who struggle daily to put food on their table, eat.

A B C's of Love

Use this alphabetical list of love-in-action verbs as a reminder of the many ways to reflect Christ's love:

- | | |
|----------|-------------------|
| Accepts | Notices |
| Behaves | Overlooks |
| Comforts | Provides |
| Defends | Quiets |
| Empowers | Rejoices |
| Forgives | Supports |
| Grows | Tries |
| Helps | Understands |
| Invests | Volunteers |
| Joins | Welcomes |
| Kneels | eXpects |
| Listens | Yields |
| Mentors | adds Zest to life |

Meet a New Member to Our Congregation

I, **Stephen Farris**, was born in 1953 to James and Dorothy Farris. I was the fifth of seven children, two younger brothers died at birth. My mother was a convert to the church through the witness of a very good woman. After the death of my brothers, my mother became an agoraphobic or shut in. So we rarely went to church. Never-the-less my next older brother and I never suffered for teaching. My earliest memories of my mother are of her sitting in a rocking chair reading and teaching us from the three standard books. She also testified to us of her own and others' spiritual experiences.

As I got older I began to prayerfully study and witness on my own. When I was old enough, I began to attend church and to follow preaching series in Independence, MO. I found that I was lacking social skills which held me back, but I was mentored by many good men and women.



After going to work, I found a fruitful field for my witness of Jesus Christ. All of my teaching as a child, my mother told me, was to prepare me to serve God and his only begotten. I found that witnessing had very many rewards as I became acquainted with God through the Holy Spirit and through much expanded study. I have taken nearly every Temple School class and still study constantly.

At work I was elected to lead my Union Local as its chairman. Doing this enabled me to understand how to use authority. Shortly after that I was called to the priesthood and was called three times to different offices in seven years. I was used in many different responsibilities in my congregations and was moved by the stake to another congregation to help organize it for growth with younger people. In 1993 I was severely injured at work and eventually moved to Florida because cold weather causes me a great deal of pain.

After a period of inactivity, I returned to the church but never felt comfortable there. When I started coming to the Bradenton/Sarasota congregation, I felt from the moment I entered the door that I had come home. This is a wonderful congregation, and I hope to attend and serve here for many years to come. You all are easy people to love and I do love my sisters and brothers in Christ.

Stephen Farris



New Year - New Directory

The **2015 Congregational Directory** is in the process of being distributed. If you do not receive your copy within the next couple weeks, please let **Elaine Gregg** 941.351.1072 or efgregg@msn.com know.

The black binders on your "old" directory can be recycled. The binders can be given to Elaine. Thank you.

Share Love

Welcome to the month of February, the month of love. It is so easy to send Valentines to people and share the excitement of that day with our friends and loved ones. Those little hearts with sayings on them, the cards, the heart shaped boxes of chocolates, the flowers, and teddy bears are all things that people give to each other to share their love and joy.

Why, then, is it harder to share that same kind of sincere love to people in our community wherever we meet them. I 'googled' scriptures on love and they were all over the place in the scriptures in both the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament. And then I read Mark 12:28-34, the story about the Pharisee asking Jesus which was the greatest commandment. Jesus immediately recites Deut. 6:4. This was called a Shema, a Jewish statement of faith. But then Jesus quickly adds: *"The second is this: Love your neighbor as yourself." There is no commandment greater than these."*

So what does God want from us _____ ?

Nanette Dizney, Pastor



Congregational Disciples

The Experiencing Congregations in Mission and Developing Disciples to serve have decided to join forces. We plan to meet the fourth Sunday of each month directly after church; a light snack will be provided. In our meetings we will discuss topics that impact the congregations and the development of our disciples.

Our next meeting is February 22. We will be discussing facility concerns and a proposed new children's church. The first 15 minutes of our meeting will be focused on the Sunday School classes. What went well? What could be improved? All are encouraged to come. If you would like a topic added to the agenda for a future meeting, please reach out to **Dan Willetts** or **Melinda Creel**.



The Facility Management Team has been endeavoring to give us better lighting throughout areas of the church. At long last we will now be able to turn lights on and have immediate and bright lights thanks to those who have been and continue to work on the project. A big **THANK YOU** goes out to **Larry Bell** and **Mervin Smith** who worked on each light!

A project that is difficult to keep up with is the trimming of bushes and weeds in our landscape. A few people have been going over to the church on their own time to do the trimming and such. Our **THANKS** to **Jeanette Harris**, **Wade Bryant** and **Karla Van Beek**.

Worship Begins with Love

LOVE GOD, Paul reminds us in the 8th chapter of 1 Corinthians. Paul settles an argument among the Corinthian Christians by talking about love - God's love expressed through the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. On **Communion Sunday, February 1**, Elders **Ginger Robertson** and **Bona Lee** will share with us the lesson that the Corinthians needed to learn - that God's love includes making responsible choices that support all members of the community of faith. Do we need to learn that same lesson today?

COME AND BE HEALED through the ministry of touch. We read in the writings of Mark that Jesus brought healing and wholeness through touch. Many of the sacraments in *Community of Christ* include the ministry of touch. On **February 8**, Priest **Heather Devine** and Evangelist **Bob Slasor** will remind us of our desired response to the power of Jesus' healing touch. We will also celebrate Youth Ministries Day on this Sunday.

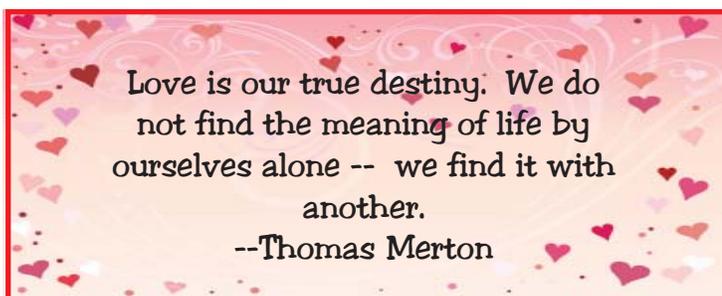
LISTEN TO THE BELOVED were the words heard by Peter, James, and John on the mountain as they witnessed the "transfiguration" of Jesus. The story of the disciples' experience will be told by the Pastor's Leadership Team led by High Priest **Nanette Dizney** as they bring insights on **February 15**. The importance of being with God to receive God's love was the lesson for the disciples and the lesson for us as we develop our relationship with God.

Ash Wednesday begins a time for personal reflection, soul-searching and repentance as we remember Christ's sacrifice. **Wednesday, February 18**, is the beginning of Lent. Have you thought about your personal preparation leading to Easter? Join us that Wednesday for the Prayer and Praise service as we begin this important season. As a congregation, we will be celebrating the next six Sundays in Lent during each Sunday morning worship service. The worship services in the month of March will lead us through Lent to the Easter celebration on April 5.

GOD IS NEAR is the Good News we are eager to hear. It is time to share the good news that the kingdom of God can be a reality today. To make this happen, we engage in Christ's mission. How? Priest **Bonnie Colburn** and Elder **Ken Colburn** will share their ideas on **February 22**.

During this Lenten season we are invited to journey with Christ. When we spend time practicing spiritual disciplines, it draws us closer to God. The above listed worship services as well as the Wednesday night Prayer and Praise services will enrich your preparation for Easter. Use them for this purpose and enjoy the leading of the Spirit of God as you share in worship with others who are travelling the Lenten journey.

Jo Fenn-Martin for the Worship Team



Birthdays and Anniversaries



February

- 1 Carolyn Deering
- 2 Jasmine Rodriguez
- 7 Penny Cramer
- 11 Dan Willetts
- 12 Nancy Brougher
- 14 Barbara & Mervin Smith (anniv)
- 14 Sally Melchert
- 15 Sandy Hunt
- 19 Karla & Jason Van Beek (anniv)
- 20 Nate Reed
- 22 Linda Mount
- 26 Dick Kramer
- 27 Margie Geiger Boettger

March

- 1 Charyn and Charlie Walker (anniv)
- 3 Sandra Rater
- 4 Fay Beers
- 8 Joan Wooderson

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"Meet the Beatles" - Pursue Peace on Earth

There are few people who can boast of being a bigger fan of the "Fab Four" than me. I bought the above titled album for \$3.49 at Bargain Fair in Mentor, Ohio, the week it first appeared in American stores. Before that I watched them on a black and white television as their taped performance was used as a "human interest" piece on the "Huntley/Brinkley Report". They sang "I Want to Hold Your Hand", and I was hooked the moment I heard their sound. Thanks to my wonderful wife, my 60th birthday was spent in the 10th row of a Paul McCartney concert in Miami!

As the years past and the four boys from Liverpool became a worldwide phenomenon, they evolved into cultural leaders encased in a world divided by war. It was the 60's. Peace became their mantra and their mission, and their music reflected that. In many ways it was John Lennon who came to represent the peace movement, especially with songs like "Imagine" and "All You Need Is Love".

Upon reflection, a recent article came to my attention and gave me pause. In considering the initiative to "Pursue Peace on Earth" something became clearer. While John Lennon led with songs that portrayed a peaceful agenda, his own life did not reflect that. It is widely understood that he was prone to violent outbursts. He could be verbally abusive to his children and both of his wives. He was moody and in many ways tormented.

This is not meant as criticism, but as a cautionary tale to those of us who would work toward a more peaceful world as our savior instructed. ***Peace begins within.*** We can go through all the motions and give strong lip service to peace, but it will ring hollow if we have not peace in our own hearts and minds.

Let us be mindful that what we reflect into the world shines most brightly when it comes from an inner glow. Let us all do the work it takes to place peace into our own lives. Just, ***IMAGINE!***

Jim Deering

Kitchen News -- VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!!

Fellowship Breakfasts

If you participate and enjoy our Sunday morning **Fellowship Breakfasts** at 9:30 am, please consider volunteering for one or more Sundays. February is booked, but help is needed for volunteers to prepare the breakfast selection for the rest of the year. The breakfast is simple and takes only about 30 minutes preparation. The sign-up sheet is on the Information Center bulletin board.

Potlucks

We had a delicious "shared meal" in January. A lot of yummy food was provided for our nourishment and enjoyment. **Our next potluck will be Sunday, February 8.** **Fay Beers** and her helpers will be organizing it. Everyone is invited to come and share in this meal. It is a wonderful opportunity to get better acquainted with our church family members.

Vera Kramer

Developing Disciples to Serve

As we continue on this journey, the Mission of Jesus Christ is what matters most, as told to us by President Steve Veasey. We need to live our lives with the spirit of Jesus in us. In today's world many great things are happening with all believers. We are encouraged to promote these great things and not dwell on all the negative things that are in the news. The Mission of Jesus Christ is very strong today. It is happening all around us, we just need to open our eyes.

It is very important to step back periodically and reflect what is happening in the congregation associated with each step of the missional process. We need to ask ourselves, "How do we embody and live the concerns and passion of Christ? How are we doing? What have I done to fulfill the Mission of Jesus Christ?" These are hard questions and we must dig deep to fully answer them. It's not an easy task to be truly honest with ourselves. But through prayer, talking to God and using holy listening, we can answer these questions. To do this, I am suggesting we put it in the form of prophetic questions (essential questions) that help us see and live God's future as individuals and signal communities of justice and peace. Once we have defined the essential questions, we can pray and discern together for the answer. A few examples are:

In the first chapter of Mark, Jesus proclaims, "The time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God has come near, repent and believe in the good news." This pronouncement, posed as a question could be: "What would it look like if the kingdom of God was to come a little closer to this place?"

In the fifth chapter of Luke, Jesus is inviting the disciples to cast their nets into the deep water after fishing all night long. This invitation, phrased as a question could be: "How is Jesus calling me to let go of some control and follow his movement into the depth of other people's lives?" Or, "How am I being called to slow down and be more attentive to the prompting of the Spirit leading me into relationships with others?"

Jesus shared many sayings and stories, intentionally, to disrupt the status quo with new insights and ways of being disciples. I invite you to find a related scripture to what we are doing in our congregation and form it into a question. Send these to me and we will introduce these at the Congregation Touch Base meetings (the next meeting is March 24). If we get enough questions, we could have a special prayer night.

Dan Willetts

Jo_dan_us@yahoo.com

we need your
feedback

We need to discuss how we, as a church, can be a presence in our neighborhood. Plan to attend the **February 17th Neighborhood Idea Meeting** that Melinda Creel discusses on page 6.



“Love
the LORD
your God
with all your
heart...soul
...mind and...
strength.”

Mark 12:30



Update

Great news - people are volunteering to serve! Thanks to **Vera Kramer** who has volunteered to oversee the kitchen and **Marcia Brougher** who will be coordinating Greeters. But there are still more opportunities to be filled. Here is a summary of the opportunities available to you: Outdoor Sign, Sunday School director, Nursery helpers, Maintenance workers, Music coordinator, and Vacation Bible School staff.

If any of these positions interest you, call or talk with **Melinda Creel** at 941.780.2486 or creativemelinda@yahoo.com for more information. It is hoped that next month the list will have shrunk once again.

Let us remember - *As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace; whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies--in order that everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*
I Peter 4:10-11

What Can We Do to Be More of a Presence in our Neighborhood?

At our last **Congregational Touch Base** meeting, we took the last portion of the meeting to begin brainstorming the theme "What can we do to be more of a presence in our Neighborhood?" We plan to continue this process on February 17 at 7:00 pm.

Who are we, you ask? "We" is our church family, our congregation. What does presence mean, you ask? This is a great question. "Presence" in the dictionary can be defined as follows: the fact of being in a particular place - the state of being present - the area that is close to someone - someone or something that is seen or noticed in a particular place, area, etc.

What is referring to as "neighborhood", you ask? This is a great question. "Neighborhood" in the dictionary can be defined as follows: neighborly relationship, the quality or state of being neighbors, and the people living near one another.

Why are we discussing this, you ask? We want to be a presence in our neighborhood. We need to begin a presence to help share Jesus' love with others. We are hopeful that by being a presence or "the neighborhood church", we will increase our attendance. Many great opportunities will arise if we can find a way to be more of an existence in our neighborhood.

How does brainstorming work, you ask? It is the process of gathering ideas centered on the topic. The sky is the limit when it comes to brainstorming. We need not to be concerned with limitations such as budget, government, man powers or logistics. Now is the time to generate ideas. All are welcome; none are too small or too big. Once we have finished the brainstorming process, we will prioritize the list and then begin to dig deeper and focus on items like cost, county laws, and man power. We look forward to seeing all of you at our Neighborhood Presence meeting on February 17. If you are unable to attend or if you think of an idea prior to the meeting, please feel free to jot your idea on a sticky note and add it to the board located in the Fellowship Hall.

Melinda Creel

A Star is Made

Suzanne Grimmer and her sister Karen Palko visited "The Price is Right" when they were out west. Suzanne was chosen to be one of the lively players. She won one of the bids and went on to play a new game they were introducing that day. And she won! Suzanne must be a good shopper, because it only took her a few seconds to put numerous items in the right category according to their price. It must have been a very exciting experience. It was a lot of fun to watch someone you know win. Congratulations, Suzanne!



CHILI COOK- OFF

A night of fun is being planned for Saturday, February 28th, the youth will be hosting a **Chili Cook-Off and Bingo Night**. The money raised will go towards this year's camperships for Deerhaven summer camps. There will be prizes for the cook-off and for bingo, so mark your calendar for a great night of fun at the church in the Fellowship Hall at 6:00 pm.



Our Deepest Sympathy

Glenn Day's sister, Doris who lived in Nevada, passed away January 19. Keep Glenn and family in your prayers.

Mervin Smith's grandson, T. J. Sagor, passed away January 27. He was 28, lived in Aurora, Colorado, and died from Hunter's Disease. Remember the Smiths and their families at this time.



A Helpful Volunteer

Tobin Cooper, shown in photo, is probably the youngest of those that volunteer at the Food Pantry. He is shown at the end of stocking shelves of the canned goods received from the Food Bank of Manatee County to be distributed to those in need. Every month food is brought to the church on Tuesday, thanks to **Brad Martin** and his truck, where Tobin and other volunteers unload the food and place them on the

shelves. On Wednesday volunteers come and fill up grocery bags with food items from the shelves. A couple of days later another set of volunteers register the clients and distribute the grocery bags. This happens the 3rd Saturday of every month. Thanks to the many volunteers who are working to abolish hunger in our community.

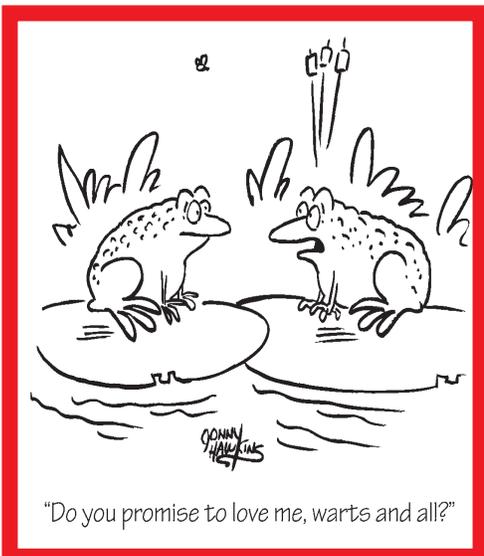
Valentine's Humor

Go ahead and chuckle at these Christian pick-up lines -- just don't expect them to be very effective!

- ♥ The Word says, "Give drink to the thirsty and feed the hungry; how about dinner?"
- ♥ I believe one of my ribs belongs to you.
- ♥ You really float my ark.
- ♥ How would you like to join my purpose-drive life?
- ♥ Now I know why Solomon had 700 wives ... because he never met you.
- ♥ For you, I would slay two Goliaths.



Congratulations to Kenny Johnson and Therese D'Agostino were married January 3rd. We congratulate them and wish many happy years ahead for them. Kenny is the son of Brad and Joan Martin.



Pure Love for Jesus

Jesus has many who love his heavenly kingdom, but few who bear his cross. He has many who desire consolation, but few who care for trial. He finds many to share his table, but few to take part in his fasting. All desire to be happy with him; few wish to suffer anything for him. Many follow him to the breaking of bread, but few to the drinking of the chalice of his passion. Many revere his miracles; few approach the shame of the cross. Many love him as long as they encounter no hardship; many praise and bless him as long as they receive some comfort from him.

Those, on the contrary, who love Jesus for his own sake and not for any comfort of their own, bless him in all trial and anguish of heart as well as in the bliss of consolation. What power there is in pure love for Jesus -- love that is free from all self-interest and self-love!

--Thomas Kempis