

Meadville Messenger

RAMBLING REX

1 John 4:16, 18a, 19...16 We have known and have believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and those who remain in love remain in God and God remains in them... 18 There is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear... 19 We love because God first loved us. (CEB)

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RAMBLING REX

LOVE AND LENT

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Occasionally , I would get it right. In February of 1985, a little over four months before our wedding day I sent Pam a basket of silk roses. They had clear glue placed on the pedals to look like fresh rain drops. I wasn't smart enough to know the difference but told the florist what I had in mind and she knew what to do. In February of 1993, I got it right again. I walked into the florist in Bolivar, TN on Valentine's Day morning 1993 desperately looking for something for my beautiful bride. They were out of roses but someone had cancelled an order. They were going to give them some time to change their mind and I could check back later. I checked back with them and wound up with twelve long stemmed red roses in a beautiful arrangement. In both cases, I got it absolutely right.

February is the month of love. Of course it is. It is Valentine's Day month. The day, it appears, florist's created to sell flowers and balloons and hearts and all sorts of romantic goodies. I am sure that is not how Valentine's Day came to be but it sure seems that way.. But the day of remembering love has changed for me over the years. Oh, I still try to get my wife things that make her smile and usually it is combined with her birthday and involves a meal at her favorite restaurant. But there are other times I got it right. They were called Ash Wednesdays.

The first time I experienced Ash Wednesday was while I was in seminary. We started smelling this awful rancid smoke. We later found out it was one of our professors burning palm branches for our Ash Wednesday service at noon in the chapel. He forgot to open one of the flues. The stench was wretched. That was the first time I attended an Ash Wednesday service and it felt strange going to lunch with friends with a smudge on my forehead. I could hear my Mom in my

mind telling me to wipe the dirt off my forehead.

As I began to ponder the ashes and look at the purpose and spiritual reasons for Ash Wednesday back then, I realized that this very mundane service was filled with so much love. It didn't feel that way as I was reminded of my mortality and offered signs of grace including the imposition of the ashes. I realized my place in a long line of sinners who deserved death and yet were extended the invitation to eternal life through the one who didn't deserve to die but took our sin to the Cross. That is the journey of love we begin on February 17, 2021, just three days after celebrating Valentine's Day on Sunday. Roses to ashes. Ashes to the Cross. The Cross to the empty tomb and Easter, Resurrection day. We call the ashes to the empty tomb Lent.

The love that lends one to offer beautiful flowers is important. But this love and beautiful flowers pale in the face of the love we encounter through the ashes. This year's celebration is important because it will be the first true celebration of a holy day we have experienced since Ash Wednesday of February 26, 2020. Nine days shy of a year we rekindle the love as we enter 40 days of preparation (excluding Sundays) for Easter. We will warm the engine with our Shrove Tuesday celebration in the pavilion on Tuesday, February 16, 2021 which this year will be Fat Tuesday without the end of the traditional Mardi Gras. Can we rekindle love without our finest traditions which are hindered by the pandemic?

The love of Lent is the love that overcomes all. It allows a guy who has gotten it right twice on the "love" day of Valentine's to get it right every time on Ash Wednesday, even if he puts too much or too little oil in the ashes or has to put palm leaves in the oven to dry because no one saved the previous Palm Sunday Palms. It is right not because of the guy burning, mashing, and mixing the ashes and oil but because of the one who IS love and offers mercy to hopeless sinners. Even in a COVID protocol, socially distanced setting, love reigns, not in the beautiful roses of Valentine's Day but in the drab ashes that remind us of who we are and what we deserve and the one who turns the ashes into eternal life. Happy Valentine's Day but, more importantly, I hope you experience your true love in Lent, from ashes to Easter.

Peace and Joy and Love,
Rex Wilburn, pastor
Meadville UMC

*But God demonstrates his own love for us in this:
While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Romans 5:8*

What Will It Take to Be Successful?

By Arthur Schoonveld

Scripture Reading: [Matthew 25:31-46](#)

The King will reply, “Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.” Matthew 25:40

The coming of a new year is a time to look ahead and ask ourselves, “What are we hoping for in the coming year? What are our dreams and aspirations? What will we do with our lives? Will we make a difference in this world? Will we be successful?” Some are hoping to graduate this year. Others are looking for a promotion. Still others are hoping for healing. Many are hoping to make a new start in life. And all of us are hoping for a good year ahead.

Whatever our hopes or resolutions may be for the new year, let’s take a few moments to ask ourselves, “What will we do for people who are down and out?” How do we plan to imitate our Lord in reaching out to people who are outcasts, who need help, encouragement, and a new start? Will we take the words of our Savior seriously as he tells us that anything we do for people such as these, we are doing for him?

Some people I know bring a warm meal to long-term residents in a rundown motel. Others are active in prison ministry. Others pray daily for people who are alone and in need, and still others generously share their resources.

A bookmark in my Bible says, “Success has nothing to do with what you gain in life or accomplish for yourself. It’s what you do for others!” And that is what Jesus teaches.

Lord Jesus, fill us with compassion for people who are least in the eyes of this world. Open our eyes to the needs of the people around us. Amen.

**submitted by Cindy Jones*



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SUNDAY SCHOOL & SOUPER-BOWL LUNCH

JOIN US SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 07, AS WE RESUME IN PERSON SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES!

FOLLOWING MORNING WORSHIP, WE WILL HOST OUR ANNUAL SOUPER-BOWL SUNDAY FUNDRAISER FOR LOCAL MISSIONS.

WE ARE ENCOURAGING TAKE-OUT SERVINGS AS WE REMAIN VIGILANT IN PROTECTING ONE ANOTHER IN THE FIGHT AGAINST COVID-19.

COLEMANISM

THE BEST PLACE TO FIND A HELPING HAND IS AT THE END OF YOUR ARM.

OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD

There is a box placed in the Narthex with the Operation Christmas Child display to collect gifts year round. February's suggested gift items are accessories (examples: sunglasses, jewelry, watches, hair accessories, other).

Boxes that were tracked from MUMC for 2020 were delivered to Cameroon in Central Africa.

Also, if you are interested in serving as the OCC project leader for MUMC, please contact Samantha Sivils.



Accessories

February

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February, 2021

February
2021

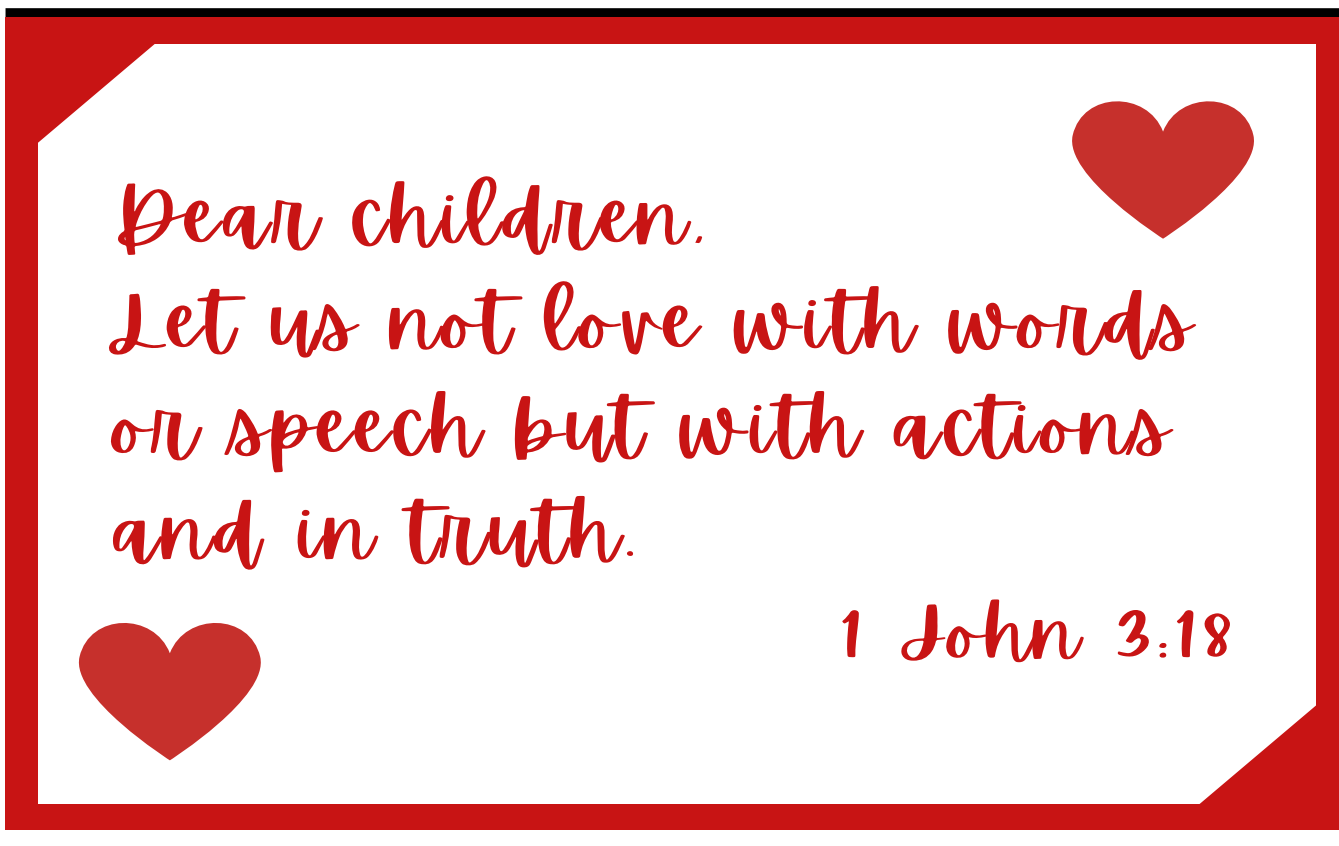
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
31	1	2	3	4 5:00 PM Prison Ministry (Meadville)	5	6 5:00 PM Prison Ministry (Liberty)
7 9:45 AM Sunday School 11 AM Morning Worship 12 PM Souper Bowl Sunday	8	9 12 PM - Grief and Loss Support Group in Fellowship Hall	10	11 5:00 PM Prison Ministry (Meadville)	12	13 5:00 PM Prison Ministry (Liberty)
14 9:45 AM Sunday School 11 AM Morning Worship	15	16 Shrove Tuesday 6PM Pancake Supper	17 Ash Wednesday 6PM Service	18 5:00 PM Prison Ministry (Meadville)	19	20 5:00 PM Prison Ministry (Liberty)
21 9:45 AM Sunday School 11 AM Morning Worship	22	23	24	25 5:00 PM Prison Ministry (Meadville)	26	27 5:00 PM Prison Ministry (Liberty)
28 9:45 AM Sunday School 11 AM Morning Worship	1 5:30 - Auxiliary League Meeting in Fellowship Hall	2	3	4 5:00 PM Prison Ministry (Meadville)	5	6 5:00 PM Prison Ministry (Liberty)

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Celebrate! February Birthdays and Anniversaries

February 1	Zach McCormick	February 13	Carol Oglesby
February 2	Susie Kimbrough	February 15	Erica Jones
February 3	Margaret Chatham	February 16	Dot Oglesby
February 4	Mitch Priest	February 18	Jean Hollinger
February 6	Bo Fleming	February 18	Steve Coleman
February 6	Mamie Ruth Halford	February 19	Pam Wilburn
February 6	Sidney Youngblood	February 19	<i>Ric & Theresa Wege</i> 
February 7	Judy McGehee	February 20	<i>Ed & Betty Youngblood</i> 
February 8	Morgan Poore	February 20	Allin Kimbrough
February 9	Avis Mullins	February 23	Shelby Smith
February 10	Kenneth Oglesby	February 23	Amber Whittington Reid
February 11	Sarah Halford		

My heart has heard you say, "Come and talk with me." And my heart responds, "LORD, I am coming." Psalm 27:8



Chosen by God to Proclaim Christ through Worship, Study, and Service

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