

Newsletter

A NEWSLETTER FOR MEMBERS AND FRIENDS OF ELMHURST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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PASTOR'S + CORNER

REV. TRACI SMITH

Three Thoughts About God's Love For February

Walk into any store in the US in the month of February and you're bound to find a display designed to remind you how you can show your sweetheart your love and affection via chocolates, stuffed animals, flowers, or cards. As soon as the Christmas decorations are packed up, it seems that Valentine's Day is "next up" in the seasonal aisle.

While the over-commercialization of the holiday can be irritating, Valentine's Day can be a great time to reflect on love. Here are three simple thoughts about God's Love for you to think about this month.

- There are many different types of love in the Bible, and different Greek words to express it. The highest and holiest form of love is *agape* love. Agape love is perfect, and sacrificial. Agape love is more than just mere sentiment. Agape love is shown through *action*. **Something to try:** write the word *agape* on a paper heart and put it somewhere you'll see it as a reminder to practice and share God's love with all.

- The Bible tells us that God and love are inseparable. The book of 1 John, chapter 4, verse 16 says this *God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. (NRSV)*. God and love are the same. If we feel love, we feel God and if we feel God, we feel love. If you're having trouble discerning whether something is from God or not, ask yourself if it feels loving or not. **Something to try:** Try to memorize 1 John 4:16. It's short and easy to remember. Try saying it every morning when you wake up and every evening when you go to sleep. If you do it every day for a week, you will have the verse memorized!

- The famous "love passage" in the Bible is 1 Corinthians chapter 13. It begins "Love is patient. Love is kind." Though it is often read at weddings, it's a passage less about romantic love and more about the holy and pure *agape* love we mentioned earlier. It's a beautiful passage to think about and to practice. **Something to try:** Write down all of the qualities of love, in addition to patience and kindness. Put your list somewhere you can see it to remind you of God's love.

Happy Valentine's Day, Friends! God loves you! Have fun as you consider ways to share God's love today and every day.

 Pastor Traci



UPCOMING» EVENTS

STARTING OUT THE NEW YEAR »»»

CONFIRMATION CLASS 2022



"Asking Questions"
Youth Ages 13-18

Your teen or tween is invited to attend our Confirmation class!

Through the lens of discussion and not assumption, we will discuss faith, life, and scripture. If you're interested in attending, please contact Emily Culella.

All faiths and non-faiths are welcome!

Pastor's Bible Study Wednesdays 12-1 PM

What does the text say?
What does it mean?
How does it call us to live?

Drop in when you can! bit.ly/LPCZoom

Starting February 9th we'll be studying Mark 1:1-15 the first week.

Come as you are! Even if it's last minute, you're on break, or walking and just want to listen!

The passage you'll study is going to be available for you to read and think about in advance for those who wish to do so.

BIBLE STUDY SCHEDULE:

12:00-12:05 - Drive in to the parking lot! -- I'm giving you five whole minutes to get logged in to this zoom. I'm going to start talking at 12:05!

12:05-12:15 - Reading the passage and a little introduction to it, Pastor Traci

12:15-12:45 - Looking at the passage in three parts: what does the text *say*, what does the text *mean*, how are we called to *live* because of it.

12:45 - 1-minute check-ins and closing prayer.

Directory Update!

We need your help updating our directory!
Please contact us with the following info:



EMAIL US: EPC@ELMHURSTCHURCH.ORG
CALL US: 630-834-7750

Please contact us if you or your family's information has changed or you would like to check what information we have on file.

***The deadline for our new directory is March 1st!**

**LIVE STREAM
SUNDAYS
10:30 AM**

COMMUNITY PHOTOS



THANK YOU TO EVERYONE WHO PARTICIPATED!

BY SUSAN SMEN TEK

James 4:8 begins, “Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.”

Programming music for Worship during the season of Lent is a contemplative process. What lyrics and melodies will speak to us and support our journey towards Easter? One song that I have come to appreciate in recent years is the contemporary hymn, *Jesus Draw Me Ever Nearer*.

Written in 2002 by American singer-songwriter, Margaret Becker and, Irish composer-conductor, Keith Getty, it is from a collection of original hymns created with the intention of embracing the life and ministry of Jesus, in a way that relates to modern people.

Getty said, “I was excited about creating the modern hymn and the chance to integrate up-to-date language and styles in a fresh way. I wanted to focus on the characteristics of God as the central concept of the collection and to write with a strong biblical background. I feel this emphasis is clearly evident in the 10 hymns which cover themes such as Christ in creation, Christ in perseverance and Christ in suffering; this last moving subject notably apparent in 'Jesus Draw Me Ever Nearer'.”

When asked about her work on this project, Becker said, “I believe these hymns are a modern day interpretation of active faith. They manage to embody both the

time honoured principles and language, while subtly introducing modern language that points to relevant faith experience - I hope they become standards.”

As both a Christian living in the present day and a musical artist, I am grateful for thoughtful composers who provide us with poetic, scripture-based lyrics set to lovely tunes. Now that I researched its origins, I like this hymn even more! Listen for it on a Sunday during Lent. If you have a favorite hymn or worship song, please let me know. I pray that you will enjoy this hymn and more during the coming months .

JESUS DRAW ME NEARER

Jesus draw me ever nearer.
As I labour through the storm.
You have called me to this passage,
And I'll follow, though I'm worn.

Refrain: May this journey bring a blessing,
May I rise on wings of faith;
And at the end of my heart's testing,
With Your likeness let me wake.

Jesus guide me through the tempest;
Keep my spirit staid and sure.
When the midnight meets the morning,
Let me love You even more.

Let the treasures of the trial
Form within me as I go -
And at the end of this long passage,
Let me leave them at Your throne.

By Emily Culella

WHAT HAS CHANGED?

In working with kids and youth, I have an up-close view of “kids these days.” I’m struck by their kindness, introspection, openness, and willingness to change the world. They are incredible and I get to work with them! They face unprecedented challenges; cost of college, climate change, social upheaval, student debt, massive wealth gaps, pressure to succeed, and rising healthcare costs. They face them as children and young people, with less ability to change the outcomes of issues that will affect them the most. Mostly, this has made them bold and passionate about the issues. They are less inclined to care about differences in orientation, culture, or religion and more inclined towards change, partnering with anyone who is willing.

What these traits show me is that the needs of our young people are different than what our needs were when we were their age. These kids have grown up in the age of misinformation about the nature of God and Jesus. If one were to watch cable news only, one could be persuaded that God dislikes the stranger and blesses the rich, when the opposite is preached by Jesus. While God doesn’t need a PR team, it is our job to model what the gospel means in a world sick with bad info and choked with money.



My question and challenge to you, as parents, grownups, guardians, and godparents is to consider what questions your children and young people raise. Those questions are holy. They are fertile ground. If they question if God exists, who can blame them? Certainly, there is precedent for disbelief and despair in our scriptures and tradition. If they question the use of church attendance, maybe the question isn’t one to disavow, but one to sit with. What will church be for these people when they are your age? What will/should it look like or model? This struggle with difficult questions is the basis for growth in faith.

It can be tempting to disregard our children and youth as mere kids; people who don’t know what they’re talking about. But this generation is fierce and truthful. They want something better for everyone. How can church assist them in this goal? How can church change to better serve their needs?

If these questions make you uncomfortable, I’d invite you to sit with them anyway. I’ve heard the church talk about young people being the future, this is true in some ways, but conveniently forgets that they are present right now. How is the church missing them? How is the church failing them? Maybe the best way to know, is to ask them.