

Fincastle Presbyterian Church



February 2024

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From Valentine's Day to Easter ~ from David's Desk

This year Ash Wednesday and Valentine's Day fall on the same day, Wednesday, February the 14th. The last year that happened was 2018. The last year before that was 1945. So, it's something that occurs with some degree of rarity. (An astronomer/mathematician could, I'm sure, tell us when it happened in the past and when it will happen in the future. They're smart like that! Or you could probably *google* it also.)

Some folks may find the co-incidence of Valentine's Day and Ash Wednesday to be a conundrum, an inconvenience of mixed messages. After all on Ash Wednesday (the day after Shrove Tuesday, or Fat Tuesday, a day of Mardi Gras and feasting) many Christians around the world will observe the beginning of Lent, a 40 day period of mental and spiritual disciplines by which a believer can "renew our commitment to divine love and be reconciled by the grace of the Lord Jesus" (Bishop Richard Henning).

For our Catholic brothers and sisters Lent is a time "both to fast and to abstain from meat... (no) Catholic Christian will lightly excuse himself from so hallowed an obligation." (the National Conference of Catholic Bishops)

But, we are Protestants, specifically Presbyterians. We are free to observe Lent in whatever manner that may best "feed" our soul, our spiritual and physical life. Many of our Protestant/Reformed Tradition might choose to fast; or to read the scriptures daily that tell the story of Jesus' life and, in particular, the week of our Lord's Passion: His life, death, and Resurrection; or to devote oneself to a specific ministry of service to the poor, the hungry, the imprisoned and/or oppressed.

But, how do any of us, whether Catholic or Protestant, reconcile Ash Wednesday and Lent with Valentine's Day, a day to celebrate romantic love and the "vitalities of life"?

For my money (as in, "you pay your money and make your choices") Ash Wednesday, Lent, and any other Christian holiday, plus Valentine's Day, are all based upon God's gift of God's love to the world. "God is love" (1 John 4:8). God's love is the basis of all of God's gifts to us human beings. God's love is the foundation for all of God's ways with us human beings. When God judges us, it is because God loves us; when God forgives us it is because God loves us; and so on and so forth. All that God does begins and ends in God's love, for God is love.

So then, our human, romantic love as represented in Valentine's Day, and the infinite and sacrificial love as told in the gospel (good news) story of Jesus and His life, death and Resurrection (Easter) all began in God and God's love. Therefore, in my mind, the holiday that we know as Valentine's Day and the holy day that we call Ash Wednesday, are not at odds with one another, but are in harmony, for each displays a vital dimension of God's love for us human beings and for the world.

So then as Christians we are free to observe Valentine's Day and/or Ash Wednesday and Lent together or separately, as long as we do so according to conscience and according to God's love for us. "Love one another. As I have loved you" Jesus said, "so you must love one another" (John 13:34-35).

May our love, whether it be our love for self, spouse, family, neighbor, country, or God, be built upon God's love for the world. And if we want to know what God's love for the world looks like, look to Jesus Christ, who was given to the world because God so loved the world. May God Bless you and keep you, *David*



During February

We will Be Collecting
Canned Goods for the
Botetourt County Food
Pantry at St. Marks's
Episcopal Church

Bring Your Donations
to Church each Sun-
day in February.

There will be a
location in the front
of the sanctuary for
collection.

*Thank you, The Mission
Committee*





Congregational Covered Dish Luncheon

Sunday, February 11, 2024

After Worship Service

Chicken and Drinks will be provided.

Jim Porter, Fellowship Chairman

Men's Breakfast
At North Star Restaurant
February 17—9 am



**Remember Sunday
School 9:30 am each
Sunday Morning**

Women's Bible Study

Preparing for Easter

Every Tuesday in March

**See Lyn Burton, Christian Education Com-
mittee for details**

Lenten Services In the Area

Shrove Tuesday—Feb. 13 at St. Mark's United Methodist Church in Daleville

- * 5:30-7:00 in the Family Life Center. Donations for the meal are accepted. They will be serving pancakes, sausage and baked apples. Please sign up in the narthex Or online at stmarks@methodist.com

Ash Wednesday—Wednesday, February 14

- * St. Mark's United Methodist Church—7 pm: Community with Imposition of Ashes, Homily, and Prayers
- * St. Mark's Episcopal Church, Fincastle—Noon: Holy Communion with Imposition of Ashes
- * Buchanan Presbyterian Church—7 pm: with imposition of ashes

Lenten Services and Luncheon at Fincastle United Methodist Church

Service begin at 12:05 each Wednesday in the Family Life Center—137 S. Church Street, 20 minute service followed by a home-cooked lunch

- * **February 21**—Speakers: Tom and Naomi Powers, Daleville Church of the Brethren; Lunch—ham biscuits, potato salad, fruit, desserts
- * **February 28**—Speaker: David Dickerson, Fincastle Presbyterian Church; Lunch—vegetable beef soup, potato soup, jello salads, grilled cheese sandwich, desserts
- * **March 6**—Speaker: Samuel Plymale, St. Mark's United Methodist Church, Daleville; Lunch—chicken salad croissant, vegetable salad, chips, desserts
- * **March 13**—Speaker: Willis Logan, St. Mark's Episcopal Church, Fincastle; Lunch—potato bar, chili, green salad, corn bread, desserts
- * **March 20**—Speaker: Paul Lagco, Church of the Transfiguration, Fincastle; Lunch—sub sandwiches, cole slaw, chips, desserts

3 prayers from "Marianne Williamson's Illuminated Prayers

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Dear God,

As I wake up this morning,
may Your spirit come upon me.
May my mind receive Your emanations,
my soul receive Your blessing,
and my heart receive Your love.
May all those I meet or even think
of on this day feel better for it.
May I contribute peace.
May I serve Your purposes
with all I say and do, today and
always. Please show me how.
Amen

Dear God,

Where my body is broken, please heal it. May every
cell be filled with grace and returned to its divine
right placement, in me and in all others.
Amen

Dear God,

I call to mind the people I will see today. Please
bless them all.
May everyone in the world find peace today-
Each and every man
Each and every woman
Each and every child-
May all of them be blessed.
May the world retrieve its purpose, the divinity of
its mission, to reflect and glorify Your love forever.
Amen

In honor of Black History Month: Quotes from Howard Thurman

When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flock,
The work of Christmas begins:
...To find the lost,
To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among brothers,
To make music in the heart.

Howard Thurman. (n.d.). AZQuotes.com. Retrieved February 08, 2024, from
AZQuotes.com Web site: <https://www.azquotes.com/quote/797598>

The hard thing when you get old is to keep your horizons open.
The first part of your life everything is in front of you, all your potential and promise. But over the years, you make decisions; you carve yourself into a given shape. Then the challenge is to keep discovering the green growing edge.

Whatever may be the tensions and the stresses of a particular day, there is always lurking close at hand the trailing beauty of forgotten joy or unremembered peace.

