

The LINK



UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF PATCHOGUE

Since 1791

February 2018

Love of God and Love of Neighbor

As I write this February Link article, I am reminded of two celebrations we recognize this month: Valentine's Day and Black History Month. And, I am going to somehow attempt to tie the two together.

When we think of Valentine's Day, the first word that comes to mind is LOVE, right? This day is traditionally celebrated on the 14th day of February.

But did you know that there was once a pagan fertility ritual that was held each year in February and the Pope abolished this festival and eventually proclaimed Feb. 14 as Saint Valentine's Day?

So, before Hallmark got a hold of it, it was actually established as a feast day on the Roman Catholic Calendar of Saints.

It is an annual festival to celebrate love, friendship and admiration. And, every year on this day people celebrate by sending messages of love and affection through cards, boxes of chocolate and flowers. However, why do we call it Valentine's Day?

Valentine's Day is named after Saint Valentine who was a Roman Catholic priest who lived in Rome in the 3rd Century. At the time many people were converting from paganism to becoming Christians.

However, the Roman emperor at the time, Claudius II, was a pagan and created strict laws concerning Christians. One law he created was that Roman soldiers should be completely devoted to Rome and therefore he prevented them from marrying. He thought marriage would distract

them from carrying out their duties.

So, St. Valentine began to marry these soldiers in secret Christian ceremonies and thus the theme of love and devotion was attributed to him down through the years.

He would eventually be discovered and imprisoned for his crimes against the State of Rome. And while he was in prison, Valentine cared for his fellow prisoners and also his jailer's blind daughter.

Continued on Page 2

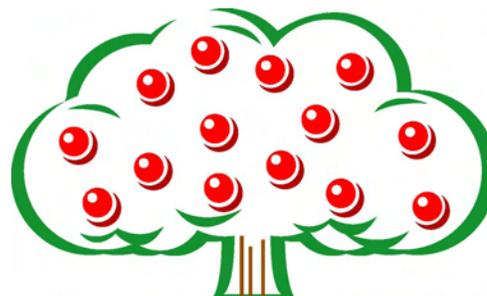
WORSHIP IN FEBRUARY

Feb. 4—Barbara Becker
Matthew 2:1-12

Feb. 11—Communion, The
Rev. Dr. Charles Ferrara,
Mark 9:2-9

Feb. 14 (Ash Wednesday)—
Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

Feb. 18—The Rev. Dr.
Charles Ferrara,
Mark 1:9-15



And may the Lord
make you increase
and abound in love
for one another
and for all ...

1 Thessalonians 3:12

Circle of Concern

Bereavement:

Cecil Herb family

For Guidance and Healing:

Henry Prince, Mary Smith, Paul Falvey, Frank Carroll, Len Ricchi, Tommy Saltalamacchis, John Zimmerman, Lisa, Steve Shadbolt, Alan, David Henson, Kiristen Elliot, Fran Knoedel, Dave Winthrop, Larry, Gary Kron, Jean Miller

These at Home:

Bruce Kirschner, Lee Hollowell, Viola Schwartz

These in Rehab or Nursing Care

Facilities:

Geri Sheridan in Brookhaven Health Care Facility, 801 Gazzola Dr, East Patchogue

Alice Zahnd in Gurwin Jewish Nursing Facility, 68 Hauppauge Rd., Commack, NY

Ed Dew in Sunrise Assisted Living, 320 Patchogue Holbrook Rd, Holbrook, NY

Len Ricchi, in Medford Multicare, 315 Horseblock Rd., Medford, NY

Pray for our church and her future directions!

Prayer cards are located at the usher's station at the rear of the sanctuary.

Make a prayer request at
PatchogueUMC.com

Love (From Page 1)

Legend even has it that he cured the



young girl of blindness—his final act before being executed.

Just before he was put to death he wrote a love message to the girl and signed it "From you Valentine". Valentine was executed on February 14, 270. Therefore, it eventually developed into Valentine's Day as we know it.

The second celebration in February we recognize the entire month—that being Black History Month. And I would like to extract and highlight one story of Black history from our illustrious Methodist history.

Robert Strawbridge formed the first Methodist class in America in Maryland around 1763. In that first class was an African-American woman named Annie Sweitzer. The fact that she was also a slave did not stop her covenant group from welcoming her and embracing her as an equal member of the group.

Today there is a Methodist Shrine where this first class took place and the curator of the shrine, Helen Kemp, says:

"The Methodist Movement has always been a movement of diversity. It was open to anyone who would come to listen. And Annie Sweitzer, 'Aunt Sweitzer' we call her, who was part of that meeting class that met at the John Evan's house, was a person of a very unique situation. Here was a slave woman of color who was invited to be as much a part of that class as any

other member...And the class that met there was what we would call a covenant class in that they not only studied the word of God, but they held each other accountable for how they were living out that word of God.

So, to think of a woman in her setting being allowed to even be part of that class is very extraordinary, I think for those times."

What a beautiful testimony of a community of faith being lived out as Jesus would want it to be—open to all people, not just some.

Of course, it is thoroughly documented that John Wesley, himself, was opposed to slavery from the very beginning. Thus, one of his appointed preachers, Robert Strawbridge, must have preached a likeminded message from the pulpit many times leading to the welcome of Annie Sweitzer not as a slave, but as a fellow believer in Jesus Christ.

So, how do I connect the two events we celebrate in the month of February. I connect the two by simply reiterating a basic principle shared by Christ in the two greatest commandments: Love of God and Love of others.

Both St. Valentine and Rev. Strawbridge's Methodist Class put these two commandments into practice.

What fantastic moments in history we can emulate in our lives. If we do, we will certainly please God and grow the church.

In His Grip,

—Pastor Chuck

United Methodist Church of Patchogue

February 2018

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Office Hours Tues-Fri 9AM-2PM Closed Monday				1	2 7-9 p.m.— Pentecostal MF 7:30 p.m.—NA	3 7:30 p.m.—AME
4 10:00 a.m.— Worship/Sunday School 1:00 p.m.— Pentecostal MF 5:00 p.m.—AME	5 7:00 p.m.—AA	6 9:30 a.m.—Al Anon 10:00 a.m.— Noon—Food Pantry 7-9 p.m.— Pentecostal MF 7:30 p.m.—AA	7 7:30 p.m.—AME Service	8	9 7-9 p.m.— Pentecostal MF 7:30 p.m.—NA	10 7:30 p.m.—AME
11 10 a.m.— Communion Worship 11:30 a.m.— Finance 1:00 p.m.— Pentecostal MF 5:00 p.m.—AME	12 7:00 p.m.—AA	13 9:30 a.m.—Al Anon 10:00 a.m.— Noon—Food Pantry 7-9 p.m.— Pentecostal MF 7:30 p.m.—AA	14 7:30 p.m.—AME Service	15	16 7-9 p.m.— Pentecostal MF 7:30 p.m.—NA	17 7:30 p.m.—AME
18 10 a.m.— Wor- ship/Sunday School 1:00 p.m.— Pentecostal MF 5:00 p.m.—AME	19 7:00 p.m.—AA	20 9:30 a.m.—Al Anon 10:00 a.m.— Noon—Food Pantry 7-9 p.m.— Pentecostal MF 7:30 p.m.—AA	21 7:30 p.m.—AME Service	22 5:00 p.m. Wesley Dinner	23 7-9 p.m.— Pentecostal MF 7:30 p.m.—NA	24 7:30 p.m.—AME
25 10 a.m.— Wor- ship/Sunday School 11:30 a.m.— Trustees 1:00 p.m.— Pentecostal MF 5:00 p.m.—AME	26 7:00 p.m.—AA	27 9:30 a.m.—Al Anon 10:00 a.m.— Noon—Food Pantry 7-9 p.m.— Pentecostal MF 7:30 p.m.—AA	28 7:30 p.m.—AME Service			

Bishop's Response To President's Offensive Remarks

Dear Friends and Colleagues,
Today on the front page of *The New York Times* there were two articles at the top of the page. These articles were about President Trump's hate-filled words about people in Haiti and Africa and Senator Lindsay Graham's response to those words.

These were the headlines.

On the back page of *The New York Times* there was a story about the detaining of the executive director of the New Sanctuary Coalition of New York City, Ravi Ragbir, the threat of his deportation, and the attempts to secure his release.

It was on the back page.

The front-page stories drive the back-page realities. Each and every week we are faced with offensive, inappropriate, and derogatory comments that are deemed as being unacceptable, racist, and insensitive. And, each and every week, there is someone, somewhere in the world who feels as if those comments from the highest-ranking leader of our country gives them permission to feel the way they do, act the way they choose, and say whatever they want to say.

There is power and influence when persons in leadership speak. When those words are filled with grace and compassion, hearts are touched. When those words are filled with insensitivity and disregard for others, they cause harm. In response to these recent racist comments, Rev. Jesse

Jackson put it simply, "A misinformed man with power is a weapon of mass destruction."

The front-page stories give permission for the back-page actions.

In a statement to the church from the President of the Council of Bishops, Bruce Ough writes, "We call on all United Methodists, all people of faith, and the political leadership of the United States to speak up and speak against such demeaning and racist comments." On this weekend before Martin Luther King Day, it would do us well to remember the words Dr. King wrote from a Birmingham jail. Dr. King said, "We will have to repent in this generation not merely for the hateful words and actions of the bad people but for the appalling silence of the good people."

Friends, I am writing today to ask you to use the power of your voice to speak out against words that have caused others to be demeaned and devalued. If you stand in a pulpit, speak out. If you work in a factory, speak out. If you walk the streets of your community or eat in a local diner, speak out. There must be a coalition of goodness and justice, informed by the example of Jesus Christ and inspired by the presence of the Holy Spirit, that rises up and settles for absolutely nothing less than that which is good, and right, and holy in the midst of actions that are evil and wrong and misguided.

The response to the front page guides the response to the back page.

I have never met Ravi Ragbir but I know people that have. I trust those

people. They tell me that Ravi Ragbir is gentle man, a loving husband, and a passionate advocate for the justice and fair treatment of immigrants, people from Africa and Haiti and beyond. Ravi has been one of our ministry partners in the NYAC Immigration Task Force. But now, Ravi is being treated unfairly. In reflecting on Mr. Ragbir's detention, Mary Small, the policy director for an immigrant rights group recently said, "It seems really clear to us that this is an escalation of retaliation, not just against individual rights leaders, but against the right of the movement to exist."

Friends, I am writing to ask you today to use the power of your voice in a way that can impact the stories that only find their way to the back page. Call the NYC ICE Field Office (212-264-4213). Ask them to release Ravi Ragbir. If you are from New York, call Senator Chuck Schumer's office (212-486-4430) and Senator Kirsten Gillibrand's office (212-688-6262). If you are from Connecticut, call Senator Chris Murphy (860-549-8463) and Senator Richard Blumenthal (860-258-6940). Ask them to work for the release of Ravi Ragbir from detention and deportation.

The power of our voice cannot be underestimated even when we are frustrated by the lack of accountability for the words spoken by our own President. We are a people of grace. A people of hope. A people of justice. A people of the gospel. These beliefs have impacted people to change the world. It is time for those beliefs to find their way to the front page of human history once again.

It is time for the headlines to change.

Last week, CNN reporter Anderson Cooper, spoke about the people of Haiti. “Haitians slap your hand hard when they shake it. They look you in the eye, they do not blink. They stand tall. They have dignity.”

On behalf of the church I have been blessed to travel to dozens of states, territories, and countries. I have seen the poorest of the poor, witnessed the effects of killer diseases, and observed people who have suffered the effects of political injustice and natural disaster far more than anyone ever should. But in those places, in each and every one of those places, I have also seen the resiliency of the human spirit, the faith of the human soul, and the dignity of the human being. These are good people, people who long for and deserve the same kind of rights and privileges that we take for granted. They are a part of God’s creation, and have been given heartbeat and breath just as we have. They do not deserve to be treated any less than we are and, most certainly, do not deserve to be categorized with harmful, offensive, and racist words.

There is space on the front page for another headline. It is a story about justice, loving kindness, and walking humbly with God. It is a story that can change the story on the back page. It’s a story that can change the world.

Let’s write that story together.
The Journey Continues, . . .
Peace & Joy,

—**Thomas J. Bickerton, Resident Bishop**

Seeking Deeper Purpose in Contentious Times

These are contentious days. The meaning of justice is contested in our public spaces. Hard-won rights and freedoms are threatened while the expansion of rights and freedoms is demanded and due. Social media allows us to learn from each other directly, unmediated by textbook publishers, newspaper editors or a small number of news broadcasts, but some of these direct sources are not reliable. The lack of dignity with which persons of color and persons who are poor are treated, heated rhetoric and violence all strike like pressure on a deep wound. The role of our country in the community of nations is being restated and the capacity of international institutions to achieve their highest purposes is under heavy critique.

We are also contending with each other within The United Methodist Church. We want to love each other well. We want to read the Bible well and live in accordance with all that we learn from it, being conformed to the image of Christ. We do not all come to the same conclusions about how to do this. We hurt each other, and our hurt is unequal.

Even now, in the middle of this contentious time, we know that God is at work. Jesus’ life is a declaration of God’s presence and continuing work, of love made visible.

Jesus lived in contentious times as well. His family fled to a neighboring country to avoid violent persecution. He lived in occupied territory, in racially conflicted spaces where Greeks

and Jews and Samaritans viewed each other as “less than.” In adulthood he demanded much more of the religious establishment than they were offering. He got angry and engaged in at least one public demonstration involving the destruction of property, overturning tables in the Temple. He engaged in public disputation with the authorities. But Jesus also lived differently, speaking directly to women, healing—by touch—even those who were unclean, honoring children, often going away by himself to pray, participating in the religious life of the community, investing himself in a small group of followers that never seemed to “get it.” He lived the love that is God’s deep call.

Last January, I decided that I needed to open myself to more images and art alongside the scripture to keep myself rooted. I’ve been reading some poetry; reading slowly, allowing the poets to help me take another look at the world, at God and at myself. Sometimes the images and the rhythms of language and imagination help me see beyond the surface of anxiety and anger and disrespect, just as the poetry of the hymns or the psalms help us to see God at a deeper level.

What if, this year, we reflected on the life of Jesus in a similar way? Jesus is much more than a poem or an image, of course, but his life—fully God and fully human—calls us to see beyond the surface. We can be alert to seek out God’s purposes, the way of love, the offer of repentance and reconciliation, the commitment to justice to which each of us is called.

—**Harriett Jane Olson, UMNS**

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The deadline for the March issue of **The Link** is February 23
Please email your copy to gbhoag@optonline.net.



"The heart-shaped communion wafers were a nice touch for Valentine's Day."



February Birthdays

Feb. 2 Kody Miller

Feb. 4 Juliana Wright

Malachi...Standing Firm In The Faith

It is very difficult in this day to stand firm in the faith because the very nature of society as it is, places obstacles and challenges in our paths.

The people of Malachi's time had been restored to Jerusalem and the temple and walls were rebuilt. They sought instant gratification and had become neglectful of their duties to God and each other. They had been misled into believing that the Messianic kingdom was theirs immediately upon their return. They became discouraged because things had really not changed.

The harshness of life, the unfairness and inequalities that they still saw and that the people endured led them to doubt the value of faith and God's place in their lives. They, like us today allowed the pressures of life to allow a spirit of worldliness to reduce their commitment to God and their worship had become mere formality.

Because of this attitude they had also allowed the sins and vices of their world to enter into the heart of their faith. I have written about Malachi in another post but was drawn back because of a devotional I read in the *Our Daily Bread*. It was written by Pho Fang Chia and the verses it centered on are the basis of this article.

There are only fifty-five verses in only four chapters, Malachi is the last book in the Old Testament. Malachi was the last of the Old Testament inspired prophets. When read in the context of a letter in one sitting and allowing the flow of his words to build

on each other, it is remarkable he said so much in so few words.

He certainly held nothing back. God through the prophet addresses his love for his people, and follows that with accusations against

the Priests and the unfaithfulness of the people. He is a God of justice and then accuses them about the giving and use of the tithes.

We are all at one time or another discouraged when we see all around us the injustices of life and that many times those responsible are left to prosper.

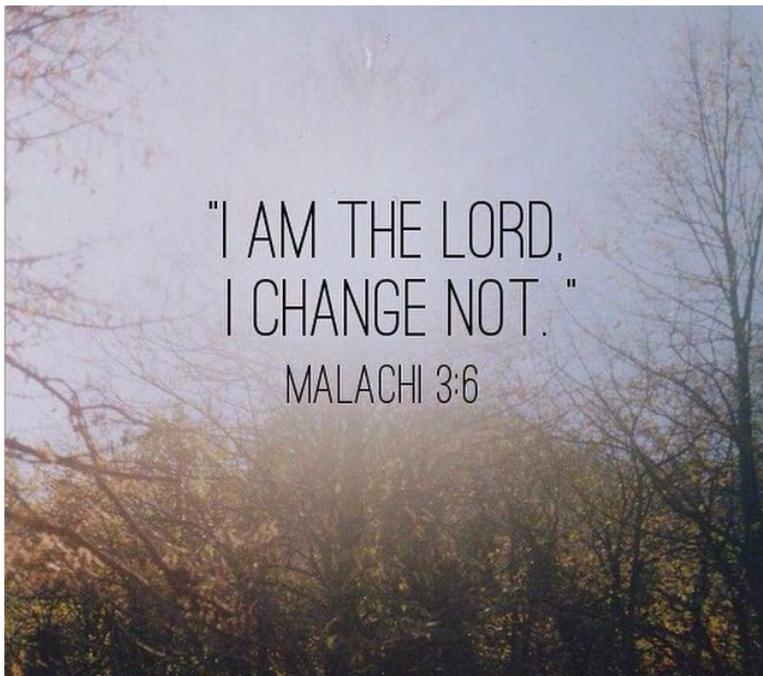
Malachi 3: 13-15 says this better than I.....

13 "You have spoken arrogantly against me," says the Lord. "Yet you ask, 'What have we said against you?'"

14 "You have said, 'It is futile to serve God. What do we gain by carrying out his requirements and going about like mourners before the Lord Almighty?'"

15 "But now we call the arrogant blessed. Certainly evildoers prosper, and even when they put God to the test, they get away with it."

Malachi paints a picture of the righteous and the wicked, it is when we reach chapter 4 in verses 2 – 3 that we are given a reason to stand firm in the faith and in verse 4 a re-



minder of what God expects of his people.

Malachi 4

4 [a] "Surely the day is coming; it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble, and the day that is coming will set them on fire," says the Lord Almighty. "Not a root or a branch will be left to them. 2 But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its rays. And you will go out and frolic like well-fed calves. 3 Then you will trample on the wicked; they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day when I act," says the Lord Almighty.

4 "Remember the law of my servant Moses, the decrees and laws I gave him at Horeb for all Israel.

Poh Fang Chia in his devotional speaks to a fear that many Christians share but never really talk about. Being different, fearing we will lose out if we don't blend in.

Continued on Page 8

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Worship Video Live Streaming at PatchogueUMC.Org

Sunday Worship—10 AM | Sunday School—10 AM
 Fellowship Coffee Hour—11 AM
 Hearing assistance provided



Standing Firm In The Faith (Continued From Page 7)

He asks How can we stand firm for God in a culture that tells us we will lose out if we don't blend in?

Malachi answers that question in this way in 3: 16-18

16 Then those who feared the Lord talked with each other, and the Lord listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the Lord and honored his name.

17 "On the day when I act," says the Lord Almighty, "they will be my treasured possession. I will spare them, just as a father has compassion and spares his son who serves him. 18 And you will again see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked,

between those who serve God and those who do not.

The Lord heard his people (v-16), God notices and cares for all who fear and honor Him. We are not called to fit in but to draw closer to Him each day as we encourage each other. (Poh Fang Chia) Malachi is also unusual in that we read a conversation, if you will, between God and the people.

The thing I take away from these verses is that God will recognize those who stand firm in the faith, we are never alone or forgotten.

Standing Firm in the faith means we will be different, we may not fit in with the norms of the day but He has promised that we will be His special possession in the great day of the Lord.

—John Kurt Carpenter, UM Reporter

A Valentine Prayer

I said a Valentine prayer for you
 and asked the Lord above
 to fill your heart and bless your soul
 With the precious gift of love.

I asked Him for sincere love
 The kind that's meant to stay
 Just like the generous love
 You give to those you touch each day.

I prayed for love from family
 And from every cherished friend
 Then I asked the Lord to give you
 His love that knows no end.

—Author unknown