

West Flamboro Presbyterian Church
Worship Service - August 23, 2020
Motivated by Love

Call to Worship

Come – now is the time to worship

Come – now is the time to give your heart

Come – just as you are to praise our God!

In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – we offer our adoration and praise! Amen.

Welcome

Prayers of Adoration and Confession

Blessed Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth. From north and south, from east and west, we gather in our homes to worship you - our Creator, Redeemer and Guide. For the gift of this new day, we rejoice; for the blessings of our lives, we offer you our thanks; for the love that you have freely given us through your Son, Jesus Christ, we are so grateful; for the movement of the Holy Spirit all around us, we are in awe of all that you do for us.

Father God, our heavenly parent, and the Bible teaches us that it is better to take refuge in you rather than put our trust in others. We know this to be true, but we still are like disobedient children who refuse to listen to this wisdom. We take refuge in our bank balances, in our comfortable homes, in the power that we hold over others, and in people who disappoint and mislead us. We take refuge in our national pride instead of using our wealth and prosperity to help the needy of our world. We do not love as you command us to love. Forgive us Lord.

Thank you, Lord Jesus, for your saving grace. By your Spirit, root us in your love. Ground us in the teachings of Scripture. Help us to be patient and kind. Remind us that love never ends.

We pray in the strong name of Jesus Christ who taught us to pray, saying...

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name.

Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

Reading - 1 Corinthians 13:1-8a

If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never ends.

Reflection

There are – and will be – many, many long-term ramifications of this pandemic. In the very fabric of our society. In all levels of government. In the economy and workplace. In how we care for our seniors and educate our young. In our leisure activities. In our gatherings. In our worship. The pandemic has also affected the mental health of so many people. It has damaged our relationships. Many marriages have collapsed during this time and the only people who are happy about this are the divorce lawyers!

One of my dear friends – who is part of that group who has had relationship issues during this pandemic – recommended a book to me called “The 5 Love Languages: The Secret to Love that Lasts” by Dr. Gary Chapman. Dr. Chapman is a relationship guru – and Baptist pastor – who identified 5 main love languages in our relationships. Dr. Chapman teaches us how to identify our own love language (how we want our partner to communicate with us) and to also identify our partner’s love language. My friend found this book very helpful as she and her husband work on the issues in their marriage. She recommended it to me for my own marriage as well as for the couples that I marry as a minister. My marriage is strong and unfortunately, I don’t officiate at a lot of weddings, so I don’t really have a lot of use for this book. As I was thinking about what to preach on for the 2 weeks while Ian is away, I thought to myself – what about West Flamboro’s vision statement, **Motivated by Love, Inspired to Mission...**

That’s why we are talking about love today. And if you look at the language of love from a Christian point of view, what does the Bible teach us? And I’m not talking about marriages here. I’m talking about ALL of our relationships. And first and foremost, this includes our relationship with our God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This part of the equation is easy. From Genesis to Revelation, the overarching theme of the Bible is love. In the Garden of Eden, God called out in love to Adam and Eve. In the Book of Revelation, Christ came again in love to redeem the world. As Christ said - for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever

believes in him will not perish, but have everlasting life. (John 3:16) God loves you and he loves me.

That is the easy part of the equation. $1 + 1$ equals 2.

Now onto the hard math – how we love each other. It should be easy, shouldn't it? Love your neighbour as yourself. $1 + 1$ still equals 2. But somehow, this equation is very hard for us. Love is – and always will be – the most important way for us to express our faith – as individuals and as a community of faith - but the reality is that human love is complicated and messy.

So what is the language of love for us as people of faith?

The apostle Paul tells us exactly how to speak this language in his first letter to the Corinthians. Chapter 13 of 1 Corinthians is called the love chapter of the Bible and it is often read at weddings. (It was at mine!) But Paul was not giving marital advice here! He was talking to a community of faith. With these words, Paul is telling a community of faith how to be **motivated by love**.

He starts off by telling us what love is NOT...

It is not envious.

It is not boastful.

It is not arrogant.

It is not rude.

It is not irritable.

It is not resentful.

It does not rejoice in wrongdoing.

And then he tells us what it is...

It is patient.

It is kind.

It is humble.

It is happy when the truth is spoken.

It is selfless.

It bears all things, believes all things,
hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never ends.

This is how we are called to love our neighbour. That is how this community of faith is called to love the community and the world. **And how do we do that?**

By taking the advice of Dr. Chapman from one of his other books – Love is a verb. The attributes of love that Paul describes in 1 Corinthians 13 are not passive. They are active. Love is not just a feeling – it is a way of thinking, a way of behaving, a way of living. It urges us to work, to serve, to forgive, to hope. It is the way in which we show others how God is active in our lives and because of his perfect love for us, we will be known by how we love others. Amen.

Prayers for the people

God of Love, your salvation and grace sustain the world and all who live in it. This is the blessed assurance that we have through you as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. When the world seems bleak all around us, you are there – loving and guiding us along the way. These long months of the pandemic have filled us with so much fear and anxiety. Be with us, O God, surround us with your unchanging goodness as we seek to live as your beloved children. Hear our prayers for the world you created and love.

Lord of Love, you astound us.

You come to us in unforeseen circumstances and in unexpected people.

We give you thanks for all the healers and heroes who have stepped forward during the pandemic to surprise us with goodness and courage.

We pray for all who still face upheaval and uncertainty because of COVID-19.

Give our leaders wisdom and holy imagination to address the fears and changes we are facing.

Fill our hearts with compassion and understanding for each other.

Spirit of Love, you reassure us.

You remind us not to be afraid when troubles arise.

Today we pray especially for the people of Beirut. Surround them with your grace and peace.

Lift up those who have fallen, give comfort to the bereaved, sustain those who are working to rescue and care for the wounded, give wisdom to government leaders. Show them with your love and strength, O God.

We pray for those who are struggling with challenges that are unrelated to COVID-19. Be with those who are ill or recovering from surgery. Give your peace to those who grieve. Be with all those who are dealing with challenging situations in their relationships. Though we are isolated from one another, remind us that we will never be isolated from you.

God of hope, you challenge us.

You come to us in the midst of trouble and invite us to stand for justice and work for truth.

We pray for all those people crying out for fair treatment, working against racism and discrimination, telling painful stories of their lives.

We pray for those who resist the stories of injustice and defend inequality.

Open our hearts with understanding and motivate us to work for change.

Open our eyes to the world around us and where you are leading us to bear the fruit of love.

Father, we are so grateful for the love that you have shown us through your Son and Spirit.

May we be motivated by love in all that we say and do. In Christ's holy name we pray. Amen.