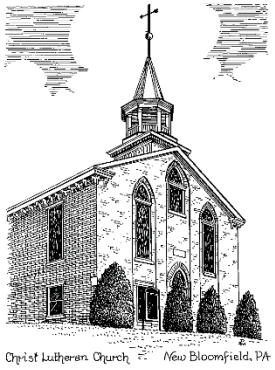


February 2021

A MESSAGE FROM THE PASTOR

Dear Friends,

I miss seeing each one of you. No one ever thought last March that the Pandemic would keep us apart for more than a few weeks. Patience remains the name of the game. I have to admit at times that I long to get in my car, with no mask, and go wherever I want. I know that time will come, but I really want it to be now!

At these times, I have to remind myself that the Scripture tells us that patience is a virtue and a fruit of the Spirit. It is also a sign of someone who trusts in God. According to 1 Samuel "lack of patience can cause you to miss blessings." Being patient is a vital part of trusting in God as our life circumstances are not always what we'd prefer. It is good to remember that even in the darkest of times there are blessings that come to each of us.

I know that it has been a long time, but I also know that we can continue to have patience a little while longer. Ephesians 4:2 tells us, “Be completely humble and gentile; be patient, bearing with one another in love.”

Please stay safe and may God bring you patience and peace until we are safe resuming our normal activities. Please do not hesitate to give me a call anytime. I am always here for you.

Many Blessings,

Pastor Linda

We received an email change for:

Richard & Betsy Riter rriter@pa.net

A PRAYER FOR

WEARING A MASK

Creator God, as I prepare to go into the world, help me to see the sacramental nature of wearing this cloth. Let it be a tangible and visible way of living love for my neighbors, as I love myself.

Christ Jesus, since my lips will be covered, uncover my heart, that people would see my smile in the crinkles around my eyes. Since my voice may be muffled, help me to speak clearly, not only with my words, but with my actions.

Holy Spirit, as the elastic touches my ears, remind me to listen carefully and caringly to all those I meet, may this simple piece of cloth be shield and banner, and may every breath that it holds, be filled with Your love. In Your name and that love, I pray. Amen

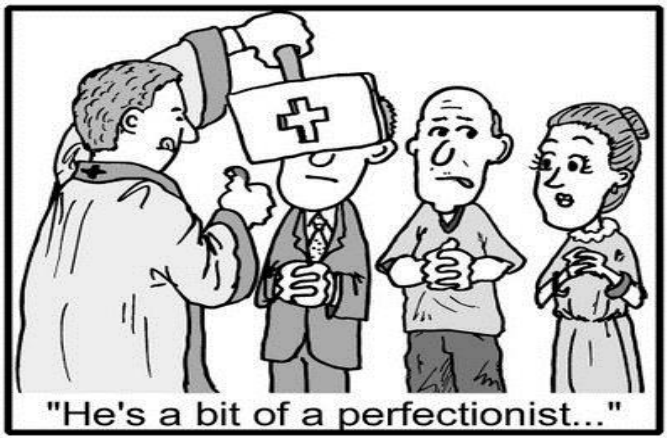
By Reverend Richard Bott, Moderator, Presbyterian Church of Canada

GOOD GIFTS PROJECT – FILL A "PIGGY"

Thank you, thank you, thank you! Your generous donations of $639 will be used to purchase animals for those in need. The Youth Group will decide what animals to purchase. We'll keep you posted on their decision.

And Thank you again for your generous donation of cookies to the Trucker and Travelers Ministry. They distributed over 11,000 bags of cookies to truck stops, trucking terminals, hotels and motels in the Carlisle area.

Thank you for your donations to our "Souper Bowl of Caring " collection. The food items will be delivered to the Food Bank.



"MORNING GLORIES" MITTENS AND CAP PROJECT FOR THE LUTHERAN MISSION

The Morning Glories are making caps and mittens that will be blessed at the beginning of September, and sending them to the Navajo Evangelical Lutheran Mission in Arizona. The hat and mittens can be for infants through adult sizes. If you knit or crochet, please join us.

The mission has Chapel Services, a small school, and a Café where the elderly came come for free lunch and a place to fellowship. They also serve the Navajo by providing many needed items. If you don't knit or crochet, we will also accept hats and mittens purchased from the store. Let's ban together and make sure the people of this community are warm next winter. Many areas of Arizona, like this one, do get as cold as it does here in PA.

DO YOU KNOW THE ANSWERS ??

1. Which one of Santa's reindeers can be seen on Valentine's Day?
2. What did the hamburger buy his sweetheart?
3. What did the two volcanos say to each other on Valentine's Day?

(*You will find the answers at the end of this newsletters.*)

BINGO PRIZES NEEDED FOR PERRY VILLAGE

Do you have small items that you could donate for bingo prizes at Perry Village? Residents look forward to playing bingo even though it is done in a different manner to keep them safe from the corona virus. They are in need of items such as small stuffed animals, small nick-nacks, large print word search books, and I am told the women love jewelry and perfume. If you have items you would like to donate, you can bring them to the church or drop them off to Gay at her home.

WHO WAS SAINT VALENTINE?

Saint Valentine, officially known as Saint Valentine of Rome, is a third-century Roman saint widely celebrated on February 14 and commonly associated with "courtly love." Although not much of St. Valentine's life is reliably known, and whether or not the stories involve two different saints by the same name is also not officially decided, it is highly agreed that St. Valentine was martyred and then buried on the Via Flaminia to the north of Rome.

St. Valentine was arrested for continuing to try to convert people to Christianity. He was sent to Rome under the emperor Claudius Gothicus (Claudius II). According to the popular hagiographical identity, and what is believed to be the first representation of St. Valentine, the Nuremberg Chronicle, St. Valentine was a Roman priest martyred during Claudius' reign. The story tells that St. Valentine was imprisoned for marrying Christian couples and aiding Christians being persecuted by Claudius in Rome. Both acts were considered serious crimes. A relationship between the saint and emperor began to grow, until Valentine attempted to convince Claudius of Christianity. Claudius became raged and sentenced Valentine to death, commanding him to renounce his faith or be beaten with clubs and beheaded.

St. Valentine refused to renounce his faith and Christianity and was executed outside the Flaminian Gate on February 14, 269. However, other tales of St. Valentine's life claim he was executed either in the year 269, 270, 273 or 280. Other depictions of St. Valentine's arrests tell that he secretly married couples so husbands wouldn't have to go to war. Another variation of the legend of St. Valentine says he refused to sacrifice to pagan gods, was imprisoned and while imprisoned he healed the jailer's blind daughter. On the day of his execution, he left the girl a note signed, "Your Valentine."

A VALENTINE PRAYER FOR YOU!

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.

ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE

Ash Wednesday is the beginning of Lent. Please join us on Facebook Live for our Ash Wednesday Service at 7 P.M. on February 17th.

PREPARING FOR LENT 2021

For over 14 centuries the season of Lent has been a time for self-examination and penitence in preparation for Easter. Lent is also an invitation to honesty and clarity. It can be our preparation for joy because it is the time that we work to root out the deceptions in our lives that prevent us from building a stronger relationship with God. It is a time to study and contemplate God's Word and what it means to us. This year Lent begins on February 21st.

READING FOR FIRST WEEK IN LENT

Read Luke 15:11-32

TO PONDER:

1. The story of the Prodigal Son is often read during Lent. How does it frame your view of the season?

READING FOR SECOND WEEK IN LENT

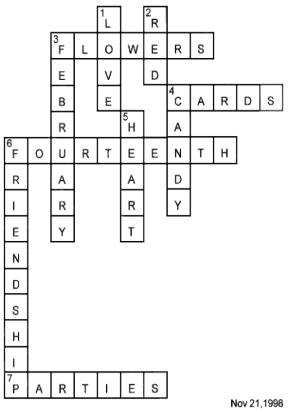
Read Ephesians 5:8-14

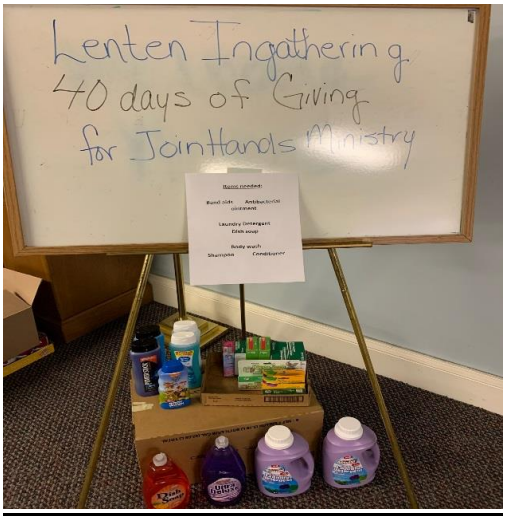
TO PONDER:

1. Define personal and national "darkness" as it exists in the world today. St. Paul says that you are light. If you could, what darkness in the world would you dispel? Is there some way you could do this on a small scale where you are right now?

There will be no Council meeting in February.

Any business that needs our immediate attention can be conducted via email.





Lenten Ingathering – 40 days of giving

Well done good and faithful servants. Thank you so much for your continued support of our congregation and our social ministry projects!

As we begin another calendar year we continue to strive to continue our service here in this place. We strive to carry out the great commission, to show and share God's love for us and those around us. Showing love to our neighbors as we show how God's love is with us.

Soon we begin the season of Lent. The season leading up to God's ultimate gift to us. The gift of his son for the remission of our sins. What better way to show and share the love he has given us than to share some of what we have been given. Every time we do we continue his mission here in this place.

Our Lenten mission this year is to collect the following items for Join Hands Ministries to share on our behalf to those in need. Please gather any of these items and bring them to the church, 46 West High Street; Gay Weller's home, 123 Barnett Street; or take them directly to Join Hands Ministry, 51 South Church Street, New Bloomfield.

Thank you for your help with this project!

Lenten Ingathering items – 40 days of giving – a tangible sign of God's gifts to us.

Band-aids Antibacterial ointment Body wash Shampoo Conditioner

Laundry detergent Dish soap

Our February Worship

FOR FEBRUARY 7th

OPENING PRAYER

Everlasting God, you give strength to the weak and power to the faint. Make us agents of your healing and wholeness, that your good news may be made known to the ends of your creation, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.
Amen.

HYMN # 1 How Can I keep From Singi ng

1 My life flows on in endless song; Above earth's lamentation, I catch the sweet, though far off hymn That hails a new creation.

Refrain: No storm can shake my inmost calm While to that refuge clinging; Since Christ is Lord of heaven and earth, How can I keep from singing?

2 Through all the tumult and the strife, I hear the music ringing. It finds an echo in my soul. How can I keep from singing? (Refrain)

3 What though my joys and comforts die? The Lord my Savior liveth. What though the darkness gather round? Songs in the night He giveth. (Refrain)

4 The peace of Christ makes fresh my heart, A fountain ever springing! All things are mine since I am His! How can I keep from singing? (Refrain)

CONFESSION OF SINS

L: God has given us the ministry of reconciliation. Therefore, let us be reconciled to God and to one another. As you reflect and examine your week, ask God to have compassion on you and forgive your sins, both known and unknown.

Silence for reflection and examination of our sins.

L: By the mercy and Grace of our Lord, we are granted pardon, forgiveness, and remission of all our sins.

READINGS FOR THE DAY

Isaiah 40: 21-31 Psalm 147: 1-11, 20c 1 Corinthians 9: 16-23 Mark 1: 29-39

THE MESSAGE

MARK 1: 29-39

Let me set the stage for you this morning. Jesus had just entered the town of Capernaum after calling the fishermen Simon, Andrew, James and John as His disciples. It was the Sabbath day and Jesus went into the synagogue to teach, where there was a man possessed with an unclean evil spirit. Jesus cast the demon out of the man, and preached with such authority that He left the people saying to each other, "Who is this man?" Our gospel reading for today picks up right after Jesus and the disciples leave the synagogue. Jesus and His disciples went to Simon Peter's house, where Simon Peter's mother-in-law was sick with a fever. In Jesus' time a fever could be life threatening as there were no antibiotics or other powerful medicines.

I am sure that all of us have experienced having a fever at one time or another in our lives. Fever alerts us that there is something physically wrong happening in our bodies. Today with the corona virus still very present in the world around us, a fever can be terrifying, for it might mean we too have contracted the virus! A fever makes us sweat, can give us chills, and feel miserable in general. It is a sure sign, that we are physically ill!

So, we can all sympathize with Simon's mother-in-law. Picture the scene in your mind. She's lying flat in bed, most likely she has put a rag dipped in water on her forehead, and she has no energy. She is most likely alone as family and friends may be afraid that she has a disease that is contagious, and of course, she cannot go about her regular activities. She is just miserable and feeling, "Blaw!"

Then we are told, Jesus arrives with Simon and the other disciples. Jesus "took her by the hand and lifted her up." Her fever broke and she was restored to vitality. With that restoration, all the other connections of her life were renewed. She was returned to her family and community, and "she began to serve them," not as an act of submission but as evidence of life and as an offering of hospitality and gratitude.

Perhaps you are listening to this message right now, and you have a fever. A fever that you have not noticed because it is not physical. Yet, it is a fever that can cause you great suffering for it is a symptom of a disconnect in your life. The type of disconnect that saps our energy, that can steal our exuberance for life leaving us in a weakened spiritual condition. It disconnects us from the joy that having a close relationship with our Lord, Jesus Christ, brings. It steals the divine elements that give meaning to our lives, content to our relationships, and direction and purpose to what we do.

Right now, many of us live a life of physical isolation. When we do go out and about, there is a nagging fear at the back of our mind that we might come in contact with someone who has the COVID-19 virus, thus taking the risk of becoming ill ourselves. It is easy under these circumstances, to disconnect from life, each other, and even ourselves. When we disconnect from ourselves, we also lose our everyday connection to Jesus. At times, we may even ask ourselves, 'Isn't there more to life than this?"

I personally call these disconnects, the deserted places of our lives. We are stuck in the mud in a dark, deserted road. We keep pressing and pressing the gas petal, but all that happens is that we dig the wheels deeper and deeper into the mud. We all seem to have these moments from time to time. Our faith is there, but it seems to wain and lets us feeling that Jesus is far away and distant from our lives.

So, what to do? First, today's reading reminds us that Jesus is there just waiting to break our fever, to help push us out of the mud. He is there to give us a hand in our daily struggles. First, we can renew our spirits by reading God's word, and really thinking about what we have read. Chew on God's word, asking ourselves what it means to us at that very moment, contemplate those words throughout the day. You will find that the scriptures encourage each of us to rejoice in the blessings of our life and give glory to God in all things.

Secondly, we can pray, even if we just take a few minutes to quiet our minds and let our hearts lift up wordless prayers. We can be assured that Jesus is there listening. Everyone loves it when Jesus shows up. His presence makes a difference. Things happen! Mother-in-laws are healed. The sick are cured, demons are cast out, and lives are changed. This is true not only for the people of Capernaum in Jesus' time but also for us here and now. He comes to our house as surely as he went to the house of Simon and Andrew.

As we seek to have our spiritual fever cured, let us remember that Christ's hand of resurrection broke the fever of death for each of us. Christ also offers each of us His hand of forgiveness for our sins that that we might have peace and eternal life. It is only Christ that can heal our lives and make us whole again.

I leave you this morning with these words from Romans 15:13, "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen

HYMN # 2 Amazing Grace, LBW 448

1 Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, That saved a wretch like me! I once was lost, but now am found; Was blind, but now I see.

2 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, And grace my fears relieved; How precious did that grace appear The hour I first believed!

3 Through many dangers, toils, and snares I have already come; 'Tis grace has brought me safe thus far, And grace will lead me home.

4 The Lord has promised good to me; His Word my hope secures; He will my shield and portion be As long as life endures.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

CLOSING PRAYER

Gracious God, you are the God of the impossible! There is nothing that You cannot do. We come to you asking for Your complete healing of our physical and spiritual needs. May the Holy Spirit guide us as we search for renewed strength in you Word, and never let us forget, that we are Your beloved children. Amen

HYMN # 3 I Love to Tell the Story

1 I love to tell the story Of unseen things above, Of Jesus and his glory, Of Jesus and his love. I love to tell the story, Because I know its true; It satisfies my longings As nothing else would do.

Refrain: I love to tell the story; I'll sing this theme in glory And tell the old, old story Of Jesus and his love.

2 I love to tell the story: How pleasant to repeat What seems, each time I tell it, More wonderfully sweet! I love to tell the story, For some have never heard The message of salvation From God's own holy Word. [Refrain]

3 I love to tell the story, For those who know it best Seem hungering and thirsting To hear it like the rest. And when, in scenes of glory, I sing the new, new song. I'll sing the old, old story That I have loved so long. [Refrain]

THE BLESSING AND DISMISSAL

May God the creator strengthen you; May Jesus the beloved fill you; and may the Holy Spirit the comforter ✠ keep you in peace. Amen.

Go in peace. Be the light of Christ.

FOR FEBRUARY 14TH SERVICE

I would like to wish each one of you a Happy Valentine Day, and remind you that you are greatly loved by our Lord Jesus Christ. May the peace and joy of the Lord be with you this day!

OPENING PRAYER

Radiant God, source of light, as you surrounded Jesus with your glory, so you come to us in penetrating brightness. You catch us off guard and expose our

weakness. We choose the limelight while you call us to explore the shadows and brighten the darkness. We seek the spectacular while you bind up the broken in countless acts of mercy. We seek to stay on the mountain or in a comfortable pew while you walk to the valleys of need. Radiant God, fill us with light and courage to carry good news into all the corners of the world and to bring back the joy of your presence. Amen

HYMN # 1 Come Thou Font of Ev'ry Blessing, LBW 499

1 Come, thou Fount of ev'ry blessing, Tune my heart t o sing thy grace; Streams of mercy, never ceasing, Call for songs of loudest praise. While the hope of endless glory Fills my heart with joy and love, Teach me ever to adore thee; May I still thy goodness prove.

2 Here I raise my Ebenezer, Hither by thy help I'm come; And I hope, by thy good pleasure, Safely to arrive at home. Jesus sought me when a stranger, Wand'ring from the fold of God; He, to rescue me from danger, Interposed his precious blood.

3 Oh, to grace how great a debtor Daily I'm constrained to be; Let that grace now like a fetter Bind my wand'ring heart to thee. Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it; Prone to leave the God I love. Here's my heart, oh, take and seal it; Seal it for thy courts above.

CONFESSION OF SINS

L: God has given us the ministry of reconciliation. Therefore, let us be reconciled to God and to one another. As you reflect and examine your week, ask God to have compassion on you and forgive your sins, both known and unknown.

Silence for reflection and examination of our sins.

L: By the mercy and Grace of our Lord, we are granted pardon, forgiveness, and remission of all our sins.

READINGS FOR THE DAY

2 Kings 2:1-12 Psalm 50: 1-6 2 Corinthians 4: 3-6 Mark 9: 2-9

THE MESSAGE

MARK 9:2-9

Today, we find ourselves just a few days before the season of Lent begins. In fact, this coming Wednesday is Ash Wednesday when we impose ashes on our foreheads to remind ourselves that we are sinners, and that our only hope is to receive salvation through Jesus Christ, alone.

Today, is also the Sunday that we traditionally focus on the "Transfiguration" of Jesus. I have to admit that "Transfiguration" is a strange churchy word, a word that most of us have never used in a conversation with someone. Most of us are familiar with the word, transformation, and transfiguration is similar except that its focus is on appearance. So, when Jesus appeared in glowing, dazzling white in our Gospel lesson today, we say that He was "transfigured." That is, Jesus appearance was dramatically changed.

Today's Gospel lesson starts out ordinary enough. Jesus invites Peter, James, and John to hike up a high mountain with Him. So far, nothing unusual in the request, after all, Jesus often went off from the crowds to pray and rest. But then, suddenly the ordinary screeches to a halt. No sooner do they arrive than Jesus is suddenly "transfigured." He "glowed." As the text has it, "his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them." Not only out of the ordinary, but absolutely out of this world, which, of course, is precisely what the story wants to convey.

And if that is not out-of-the ordinary enough, suddenly Moses, the great law-giver, and Elijah, the prophet appear at Jesus' sides. This is both literally and figuratively a "mountain-top experience." No wonder Peter, James, and John are terrified. Of course, you just have love Peter. A little bit of out of this world terror never stopped him from speaking up. He suggests erecting three shrines to commemorate the event!

As if the situation was not crazy enough, now a cloud overshadows the mountain. The damp air closes in and all the world slips away into a grayness. Then the voice of God echoes around them saying, "This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!"

Jesus, Peter, James and John then headed back down the mountain, and Jesus told them to “tell no one about what they had seen.” That made sense. Who would have believed it anyway? But the three of them believed it. They had been there, and those moments on that mountain would forever mark their lives and change the way they looked at everything.

Perhaps you are wondering, what does this story mean to us in 2021? Why would Jesus want the disciples to see His Transfiguration and all that took place at the event? Let’s take a minute and put the situation into perspective. At the time of the Transfiguration, Jesus had acknowledged that He was the long- awaited Messiah, and predicted His death and resurrection. Now He was to reveal, to a select few that day, His divine glory. The Transfiguration was the glorification of the human body of Jesus. The event reminds each one of us that Jesus was both human and divine at the same time. He walked here upon the earth, just as we do, and He experienced all that human life has to offer, the joys, the ups and downs of life, and the hurts that bring us to tears. Who can forget Jesus’ tears at the death of His friend, Lazarus? It is an assurance that Jesus is here with us today in 2021, walking along beside us, to support us in our human life, and He truly does understand what we are going through, because He experienced it himself.

Furthermore, the Transfiguration provides further evidence that Jesus was the divine Son of God. It is not coincidental that this happened soon after Jesus had acknowledged Himself to be the Christ, the one who left heaven's glory to come to earth. The voice of God the Father gave further confirmation of the calling and Sonship of Jesus. He acknowledged that Jesus had pleased Him in the things He had said and done.

This was definitely a “Wow” moment in the lives of those present that day, just as it is for us today. “Wow” events still happen every day in all of our lives. If we just look, we can see God working in others and in the world around us. God can and does turn the darkness into dazzling light.

As we begin our new week, let us remember, however, that one thing does differ. Jesus told the disciples to tell no one what happened that day, but now Jesus asks us to tell everyone! Let us resolve to look for the “Wows” in our lives and to share them and Jesus’ glory with others wherever and whenever we can. Let’s spread the good news that Jesus can and will forgive our sins if we come to Him and make each of us white as snow! Amen

HYMN # 2 **Seek Ye First**

1 Alleluia, song of gladness, Voice of joy that cannot die; Alleluia is the anthem Ever raised by choirs on high; In the house of God abiding Thus they sing eternally.

2 Alleluia, thou resoundest, True Jerusalem and free; Alleluia, joyful mother, All thy children sing with thee, But by Babylon's sad waters Mourning exiles now are we.

3 Alleluia cannot always Be our song while here below; Alleluia, our transgressions Make us for a while for-go; For the solemn time is coming When our tears for sin must flow.

4 Therefore in our hymns we pray Thee, Grant us, blessed Trinity, At the last to keep Thine Easter With Thy faithful saints on high; There to Thee for ever singing Alleluia joyfully.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

CLOSING PRAYER

Eternal God, Your Son was glorified on earth together with You, with the glory which He had with You before the world was. I thank You for sending Your only begotten Son so that we could all be saved and so that we could have an example on how to live on earth. So during this transfiguration Sunday, I thank You for the glorification of Your Son and the power that was made known in Him, because I believe that we too can experience Your power here on earth, Amen.

THE BLESSING AND SENDING

May God the creator strengthen you; May Jesus the beloved fill you; And may0 the Holy Spirit the comforter ✠ keep you in peace. Go in peace. Be the light of Christ.

SERVICE FOR FEBRUARY 17, 2021

ASH WEDNESDAY

MATTHEW 6:1-6, 16-21

OPENING PRAYER

Mysterious God, morning, noon and night, reveal your creative power; around us the whole earth cries in glory. Your presence beats in our blood, children of creation! Yet we go on our way deaf to the larks above the track, looking down into the up and not up into the clear sky. And, even then, we miss the myriad small signs of hope: the crocus opening its heart to the sun, colors of sea-washed stones, rainbows in the mist. We despair so easily. We cannot find or feel the pulse of your life in us. We put our shaky faith in things we have made, we give cringing power to the institutions. We give up on ourselves, saying: "We are no good." And the song of creation turns to dust and ashes on our lips. Forgive us. Dust we are, and to dust we shall return. But, in Jesus, we chose to share our human frailty, to enter into our mortality in all its mystery, to redeem this handful of dust. We are yours, and to you we shall return. AMEN

FROM DUST WE CAME

From dust we came, to dust we will return, ***WE BELONG TO GOD***

We gather in penitence, we gather in confidence, ***WE BELONG TO GOD***

At the beginning of Lent, at every moment of our lives,
WE BELONG TO GOD

IMPOSITION OF ASHES

This evening, Erin will come forward and receive the ashes symbolically for each of you.

P: Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.

Accomplish in us, O God, the work of your salvation, that we may show forth your glory in the world. By the cross and passion of your Son, bring us with all your saints to the joy of his resurrection. Almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us all our sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen us in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep us in eternal life. Amen

HOW CAN I FIND MY WAY BACK?

O God, where did I go wrong?
How can I find my way back?
I am weighted down by this feeling, that I have failed – you, other people, myself.
My life is a mess.
Kyrie eleison sung
You know my weakness.
You know much better than me:
I can't hide it from you.
How can I bear to face it too?
Kyrie eleison sung
Guilty as charged, however I argue my case.
It's your law I have broken;
It's you way I have lost:
It's your word I have chosen not to hear over and over again.
Kyrie eleison sung
O God, where did I go wrong?
How can I find my way back?

CONFESSION OF OUR SINS

We are here on this Ash Wednesday to repent of our sins, intercede on behalf of a sinful world, and to seek God's face in the renewal of our lives and of this world. Today marks the beginning of Lent. "Come now, let us reason together," says the Lord. "Though your sins be as scarlet I shall make them white as snow." (Isaiah 1:18) In penitence and faith in the goodness of God who wants good things for us, let us confess our sins.

SILENCE

By the mercy and Grace of our Lord, we are granted pardon, forgiveness, and remission of all our sins.

READINGS FOR THE DAY

Joel 2:1-2, 12-17 Psalm 5:1-17 2 Corinthians 5:20-6:10 Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

THE MESSAGE

MATTHEW 6:1-6, 16-21

Tonight, we begin the season of Lent. It is a time to examine ourselves to see if we are in the faith, to ask the hard questions of ourselves, and it is a time to step back and concentrate on our spiritual growth; as well as a time to repent of our sins as we move toward Easter. It is also a time to work toward constructive change in our lives, seeking to build a closer relationship with our God.

If you think about it, repentance is about recognizing that we are going in the wrong direction and the need to turn ourselves about and head in the opposite direction. It means turning away from those things in our lives that are sinful in nature, and turning toward God and the way of life He teaches us. Most importantly, Lent is a time to humble ourselves before God.

Although you received the sign of the cross virtually this evening, it still has the same meaning. The ashes themselves, possess no magic, but are a symbolic reminder of the depth of our sin. It is a sign that we acknowledge that we are not worthy of the grace of God and we are asking for forgiveness for our sins. If you think back to the gospel reading this evening, what does Christ tell us? He tells us not to be like the hypocrites in many different ways. Christ is begging us to be humble in our acts of kindness, praying, fasting and in our material objects. God does not call us to gloat or brag about the ways we glorify God. No one likes a bragger, and neither does God. Jesus wants us to look at our Christian actions not as something to be bragged about but something common and done without the need of the approval of others.

This year, I would also like to propose that Lent is a time for recognizing that everything in our lives matter, especially the people that we've forgotten, taken for granted, ignored, devalued, and perhaps set aside in our lives. What if Lent this year is not only about humbly repenting our sins, but also about rebuilding relationships with others who at one time were important in your lives. What if Lent is also about showing that you still care about them? A phone call, a cheerful card, a perky e-mail might be all they need to have a more positive, brighter day.

There is no greater gift than to really listen to someone. Many are lonely in this time of the pandemic, and just need another human to hear what they have to say.

So, as we go about these next 40 days of Lent, let us humble ourselves before God. Whether you give something up or add something to your life during this season of Lent, is between you and God. But in all our actions of Christian service, prayer and rituals let us face them with the utmost humility, remembering what Christ did for us on the cross. This evening we come before God to recognize that we are human and as such, we are sinful creatures. The sign of the cross on our forehead, although it is not black with ashes this evening, is still there regardless, and as such means that we are acknowledging that we are in great need of repentance and reconciliation with God. As we end our service this evening, let each of us begin our journey of Lent in humility, realizing that everything and every person in our lives matter. Let us reach out in love and compassion to others. Amen

HYMN Savior, When in Dust to You

1 Savior, when in dust to you low we bow in homage due; when, repentant, to the skies scarce we lift our weeping eyes; oh, by all your pains and woe suffered once for us below, bending from your throne on high, hear our penitential cry!

2 By your helpless infant years, by your life of want and tears, by your days of deep distress in the savage wilderness, by the dread, mysterious hour of the insulting tempter's pow'r, turn, oh, turn a fav'ring eye; hear our penitential cry!

3 By your hour of dire despair, by your agony of prayer, by the cross, the nail, the thorn, piercing spear, and torturing scorn, by the gloom that veiled the skies o'er the dreadful sacrifice, listen to our humble sigh; hear our penitential cry!

4 By your deep expiring groan, by the sad sepulchral stone, by the vault whose dark abode held in vain the rising God, oh, from earth to heav'n restored,

mighty, reascended Lord, bending from your throne on high, hear our penitential cry!

THE LORD'S PRAYER

CLOSING PRAYER

Father God, truly dust we are, and to dust we shall return; And truly yours we are, and to you we shall return. Help this to be a time of turning around and beginning again. Through the forty days of Lent, help us to follow you And to find you: in the discipline of praying, and in the drudgery of caring – In whatever we deny ourselves, and whatever we set ourselves to learn to do. Help us to discover you in our loneliness and community, In our emptiness and our fulfilment, in our sadness and laughter. Help us to find you when we ourselves are lost. Help us to follow you on the journey to Jerusalem, to the waving palms of people's hope, to their rejection, to the cross and the empty tomb. Help us to perceive new growth amid the ashes of the old. Help us, carrying your cross, to be signs of your Kingdom. AMEN

(*A Time of turning round, written by Jan Sutch Pickard)*

BLESSING AND DISMISSAL

May God the creator strengthen you;
May Jesus the beloved fill you;
and may the Holy Spirit the comforter ✠ keep you in peace.
Go in peace. Be the light of Christ.

SERVICE FOR FEB. 21 – THE FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

OPENING PRAYER

Into your presence we come, Father God as your children have done throughout the centuries. In vast Cathedrals, parish Churches, Chapels, homes, warehouse,

converted cinemas, in lonely isolated places. Alone or gathered together with others, your Church is wherever your people meet together in worship, in fellowship and pray. Wherever we are this morning, let us discern that your Spirit is with us. We come into your presence, mindful of our own failings, our thoughts words and actions that have shown nothing of your love. We ask for your forgiveness and guidance as we move into the season of Lent and always. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

HYMN # 1 The Lord's My Shepherd, LBW 451

1 The Lord's my shepherd; I'll not want. He makes me down to lie In pastures green; he leadeth me The quiet waters by. He leadeth me, he leadeth me The quiet waters by.

2 My soul he doth restore again, And me to walk doth make Within the paths of righteousness, E'en for his own name's sake; Within the paths of righteousness, E'en for his own name's sake.

3 Yea, though I walk in death's dark vale, Yet will I fear no ill; For thou art with me, and thy rod And staff me comfort still; For thou art with me, and thy rod And staff me comfort still.

4 My table thou hast furnished In presence of my foes; My head thou dost with oil anoint, And my cup over-flows. My head thou dost with oil anoint, And my cup over-flows.

5 Goodness and mercy all my life Shall surely follow me, And in God's house forevermore My dwelling-place shall be. And in God's house forevermore My dwelling-place shall be.

CONFESSION OF SINS

L: God has given us the ministry of reconciliation. Therefore, let us be reconciled to God and to one another. As you reflect and examine your week, ask God to have compassion on you and forgive your sins, both known and unknown.

Silence for reflection and examination of our sins.

L: By the mercy and Grace of our Lord, we are granted pardon, forgiveness, and remission of all our sins.

READINGS FOR THE DAY

Deuteronomy 4:5-9 Psalm 139: 1-24 Galatians 6:1-10 Romans 12: 1-8

THE MESSAGE

1ST SUNDAY IN LENT – ROMANS 12:1-8

Welcome to the first Sunday in Lent. In this year's calendar, Lent comes early. Lent is considered a time of mourning, solemnity and sadness. Perhaps its' falling in the dead of winter with cold, snowy and sunless days is appropriate for its' intended purpose. For over 14 centuries the season of Lent has been a time for self-examination and penitence in preparation for Easter. The name comes from the Saxon lengthen-tide, referring to the lengthening of the days and the coming of spring. This 40-day period of abstinence recalls the fasts of Moses, Elijah, and Jesus, all of which, according to scripture lasted 40 days.

In the Lenten season, self-examination is crucial. An individual's response to the call for purposeful reflection on one's need for God is an important factor in choosing a specific means with which to actively observe Lent. For some, fasting is a means of self-examination and denial. There are examples of fasting in both the Old and New testaments. In the Bible, fasting is when people have given up food or drink and spent time praying, mourning, and seeking God's will. For example, in Exodus, 34:28, Moses fasted with the Lord for forty days, leaning on God for direction, wisdom, and guidance in writing the Ten Commandments. Yet, fasting is not an appropriate discipline for all people for it can have medical implications for some.

The distinct purpose of a Lenten discipline is to strip away those things which clutter one's life or impede one from being in relationship with God. It is also a time for people to experience and reflect on the sufferings of Jesus, in light of personal sin and unrighteousness. What you decide to give up during the period of Lent, or add to your schedule during the season of Lent is a personal matter. I am sure many of you remember the Lent that I gave up chocolate, and how I fell off the wagon by drinking hot chocolate without even thinking about it. This year, I plan to add an extra hour to my morning devotions, self-examination and prayer time. For me, it really is a sacrifice, as I will need to get up earlier each morning,

"ug," which in turn means I will have to go to bed earlier to get the proper amount of rest.
As disciples of Christ, we should be in a constant state of spiritual self-examination. Yet, most of us live a busy lifestyle, and at the end of the day, instead of examining the day and our shortcomings, we just want to fall into bed and sleep. It's not that we are bad and uncaring people who really don't care about repenting our short comings, it just means that we have left worldly things push it out of our daily schedules. Our Scripture lesson for today warns us and at the same time encourages us to take the time for self-examination. In verse two and three of Romans we are told, "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is, His good, pleasing and perfect will."

Scripture assures us that God is active in every minute of our lives, and is aware of all our shortcomings. Let's take a moment and listen to the words of Psalm 139. "You have searched me, LORD, and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you, LORD, know it completely." When I read this passage of Scripture, I always say, "yikes," I really need to clean up my act. Part of cleaning up my act, means that I need to review my day, and truthfully accept the wrongs I have done, and truly repent. There is no better time than Lent to begin this practice, remembering that we are approaching the time of year when we relive those days when Jesus suffered and hung on the cross for our sins.

Perhaps you are wondering how you go about this type of daily self-examination. Let me share a few of the types of questions we might ask ourselves on a regular basis. First, you can ask yourself if you are consciously or unconsciously creating the impression for others that you are a better person than you really are. In fact, Galatians 6: 3-4 addresses this particular question. "If anyone thinks they are something when they are not, they deceive themselves. Each one should test their own actions."

Some of the other questions we might ask ourselves might include: Are we honest in our acts or words? Do we gossip or can we be trusted with what others tell us in confidence? Do we do things that make our conscience uneasy? How did I spend my time today? Did I make time to study God's word, to pray, to spend time in

relationship with Christ? Do I grumble or complain, instead of being thankful for what I have? These are just a few examples that can help us on our way.

As we begin this season of Lent, let us remember that whether or not we add or give up something for Lent, or whether we actually take the time for truthful examination of our actions, is a personal decision. The thing to remember is that we are beloved children of God, and God loves us unconditionally. Let me leave you with these words from Psalm 26:2. "Prove me, O Lord, and try me; test my heart and my mind." Amen

HYMN # 2 Take My Life That I May Be, LBW 406

1 Take my life, that I may be Consecrated, Lord, to thee; Take my moments and my days; Let them flow in ceaseless praise.

2 Take my hands and let them move At the impulse of thy love; Take my feet and let them be Swift and beautiful for thee.

3 Take my voice and let me sing Always, only, for my King; Take my lips and let them be Filled with messages from thee.

4 Take my silver and my gold, Not a mite would I withhold; Take my intellect, and use Ev'ry pow'r as thou shalt choose.

5 Take my will and make it thine; It shall be no longer mine. Take my heart, it is thine own; It shall be thy royal throne.

6 Take my love; my Lord, I pour At thy feet its treasure store; Take myself, and I will be Ever, only, all for thee.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

CLOSING PRAYER

Look in our hearts, Lord Christ, and face us with what is true when we have attempted to deceive ourselves. Help us now at this time of Lent to accompany you. If we have grown lazy, cushioning our minds with easy, thin thoughts, expose us to the rigors of your truth. As we walk, God, be our way. As we learn, God, be our truth. As we grow, God, be our life. In Jesus name we pray, Amen

HYMN # 3 **I Want Jesus to Walk With Me WOV**

1 I want Jesus to walk with me, I want Jesus to walk with me; All along my pilgrim journey, Lord, I want Jesus to walk with me.

2 In my trials, Lord, walk with me; In my trials, Lord, walk with me; When my heart is almost breaking, Lord, I want Jesus to walk with me.

3 When I'm in trouble, Lord, walk with me; When I'm in trouble, Lord, walk with me; When my head is bowed in sorrow, Lord, I want Jesus to walk with me.

THE BLESSING

You are what God made you to be: created in Christ Jesus for good works, chosen as holy and beloved, freed to serve your neighbor. God bless you ☩ that you may be a blessing, in the name of the holy and life-giving Trinity. Amen.

Go in peace. Share the good news.

SERVICE OF THE SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT – FEBRUARY 28TH

OPENING PRAYER

O God, by the passion of your blessed Son you made an instrument of shameful death to be for us the means of life. Grant us so to glory in the cross of Christ that we may gladly suffer shame and loss for the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

HYMN # 1 **What Wondrous Love is This, LBW 385**

1 What wondrous love is this, O my soul, O my soul! What wondrous love is this, O my soul! What wondrous love is this That caused the Lord of bliss To bear the dreadful curse for my soul, for my soul, To bear the dreadful curse for my soul?

2 When I was sinking down, sinking down, sinking down, When I was sinking down, sinking down. When I was sinking down Beneath God's righteous frown, Christ laid aside his crown for my soul, for my soul, Christ laid aside his crown for my soul.

3 To God and to the Lamb I will sing, I will sing; To God and to the Lamb I will sing; To God and to the Lamb, Who is the great I Am, While millions join the theme, I will sing, I will sing, While millions join the theme, I will sing.

4 And when from death I'm free, I'll sing on, I'll sing on; And when from death I'm free, I'll sing on; And when from death I'm free, I'll sing his love for me, And through eternity I'll sing on, I'll sing on; And through eternity I'll sing on.

CONFESSION OF SINS

L: God has given us the ministry of reconciliation. Therefore, let us be reconciled to God and to one another. As you reflect and examine your week, ask God to have compassion on you and forgive your sins, both known and unknown.

Silence for reflection and examination of our sins.

L: By the mercy and Grace of our Lord, we are granted pardon, forgiveness, and remission of all our sins.

READINGS FOR THE DAY

Genesis 17: 1-7, 15-16 Psalm 22: 23-31 Romans 4: 13-25 Mark 8:31-38

THE MESSAGE:

MARK 8: 31-38

Welcome to the second Sunday of Lent. As we march along with Jesus towards the cross and Easter, our Gospel lesson this morning finds Jesus trying to tell His disciples that He must suffer and eventually die. Jesus didn't beat around the bush. He speaks plainly to the disciples about the events that will soon take place in His life.

Have you ever had someone tell you something in very plain language and still you did not get what they were saying? There are times when our brain just does not compute. For some reason it can't fit what we are hearing into our normal thinking patterns. Let's go back to 9-11 for just one moment. I don't know about you, but when I heard the news that a plane had been flown into the twin towers, my mind just could not wrap itself around the fact. At first, my mind would not accept the fact. It just did not fit into any memory or idea of what happens in my world. I had to convince myself that what was taking place was really real, and not some hoax.

I think this is what probably happened to Peter that day. He had left everything in his prior life, his livelihood, his family and friends, his way of life behind to follow Jesus. Jesus was who he turned to for strength and guidance. In a sense, Jesus was his General, his King, so he just could not compute or believe Jesus' words that He would soon suffer and die.

Now comes the unbelievable in the story! Peter took Jesus aside and rebuked Him. If you are like me, I always feel a little shocked when I read this part of the Scripture, and think to myself, "Why on earth would Peter do such a thing?" Yet, if we stop to think about the situation, we can see that Peter believes that the kingdom of God can be obtained right at that moment with force. Peter's view of the kingdom of God is a worldly view, and he is clueless that Jesus is actually speaking about a heavenly kingdom. Jesus makes Peter's view perfectly clear. "Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, and he rebuked Peter. "Get behind me, Satan!" he said. "You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns."

Looking back, Peter declared that Jesus was the Christ, but what he had in mind was the commonly help image that a warrior king would come to free them from the iron grip of Roman control. What we see, is Jesus telling Peter and the other disciples that He was not a warrior king but one who had come to die for our sins.

Peter had spent a lot of time with Jesus. He knew Jesus personally. Yet, he still got it wrong when it came to Jesus telling him that He needed to die. He did not grasp what Jesus' mission here on earth was all about. Like us, Peter called himself a follower of Jesus, but still managed to get things wrong. So, we are in good company when we misunderstand or get things wrong. It is part of our

humanness to filter and interpret everything through the lenses we have acquired over our lifetime. The prejudices, our cultural values, and so forth even play a part in how we interpret God's Word. Often, we forget that it was written at a certain time in history for people who had very different lenses and cultural values than our own. Yet, we also need to remember that God's Word is timeless in that no matter what year and time we read it, there is an underlying message for each of us.

Perhaps you are wondering, "Why would Peter, who knew Jesus well and spent day after day with Him, reject the idea that Jesus had to suffer and die?" The answer lies in the culture and living situation of the people of that time. They had been conquered by the Roman Empire, lived under their oppressive rule which was restrictive and often even dangerous. Roman soldiers roamed the country side creating fear wherever they went. The people, however, had read the Old Testament prophecies and knew that a Messiah like David was to arise, a warrior king who they assumed would lead them in fighting the Romans and taking back their country. Peter, like most of the other citizens, believed and supported the general opinion of the time.

Today, we as Christians live in a world where living a life of faith in being systematically undermined. Often, Religion is blamed as a major source of discord and strife. There are those who despise Christianity, and see it as a way to curtail their individuality. So much in our culture is designed to make us think that the only things that matter are looking out for "number one" and gratifying our immediate desires. Looking out for number one, however, does not bring us in the end the peace, security and happiness that we crave.

What we really crave comes only from Jesus' willingness to obey God the Father, and go down the path that led to His death on the cross, and ultimately His resurrection. Jesus accepted His fate, knowing that in the end it would lead to forgiveness of sins and eternal life for all who believed.

As we begin our new week, the message from today's Gospel is loud and clear. Despite the pandemic, despite the lawlessness, riots and demonstrations in our country, we need to stand rooted the Word of God. We need to stand up and offer the hope that Jesus brings to those who are on the wrong path, for it is the only way that this world will ever find peace! Amen

HYMN # 2 **In the Cross of Christ I Glory, LBW 104**

1 In the cross of Christ I glory, Tow'ring o'er the wrecks of time. All the light of sacred story Gathers round its head sublime.

2 When the woes of life o'ertake me, Hopes deceive, and fears annoy, Never shall the cross forsake me; Lo, it glows with peace and joy.

3 When the sun of bliss is beaming Light and love upon my way, From the cross the radiance streaming Adds more luster to the day.

4 Bane and blessing, pain and pleasure, By the cross are sanctified; Peace is there that knows no measure, Joys that through all time abide.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

CLOSING PRAYER

Gracious God, we thank you for the gift of your Son and what He did for all of us on the cross. We also thank you that you have called us to be your workers in the field. Help us to be diligent workers who need not be ashamed or swayed by the negative attitudes around us regarding Christianity. Give us courage to stand up for what it right and to speak out about those things in our culture that bring hurt and injustice to others. Help us Lord to trust you fully in all things that come our way. Being a disciple of Jesus Christ is a great joy and responsibility. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

HYMN # 3 **When I survey the Wondrous Cross**

1 When I survey the wondrous cross On which the prince of glory died, My richest gain I count but loss And pour contempt on all my pride.

2 Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast Save in the death of Christ, my God; All the vain things that charm me most, I sacrifice them to his blood.

3 See, from his head, his hands, his feet, Sorrow and love flow mingled down.

Did e'er such love and sorrow meet, Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

4 Were the whole realm of nature mine, That were a tribute far too small; Love so amazing, so divine, Demands my soul, my life, my all!

THE BLESSING AND SENDING

You are what God made you to be: created in Christ Jesus for good works, chosen as holy and beloved, freed to serve your neighbor. God bless you ☩ that you may be a blessing, in the name of the holy and life-giving Trinity.

Go in peace. Share the good news.

<u>Answers:</u>

1. Cupid
2. An Onion Ring
3. Do you lava me like I lava you?

Valentine

E	B	C	H	O	C	O	L	A	T	E	S	V	Q
Y	D	N	E	I	R	F	L	R	I	G	T	A	H
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BE MINE
LOVE
FEBRUARY
CHAMPAGNE
BOYFRIEND
ROMANCE
RED ROSES
BOUQUET
VALENTINE
GIRLFRIEND
CUPID
SWEETHEARTS
ADMIRER
CHERUB
DATE
CHOCOLATES

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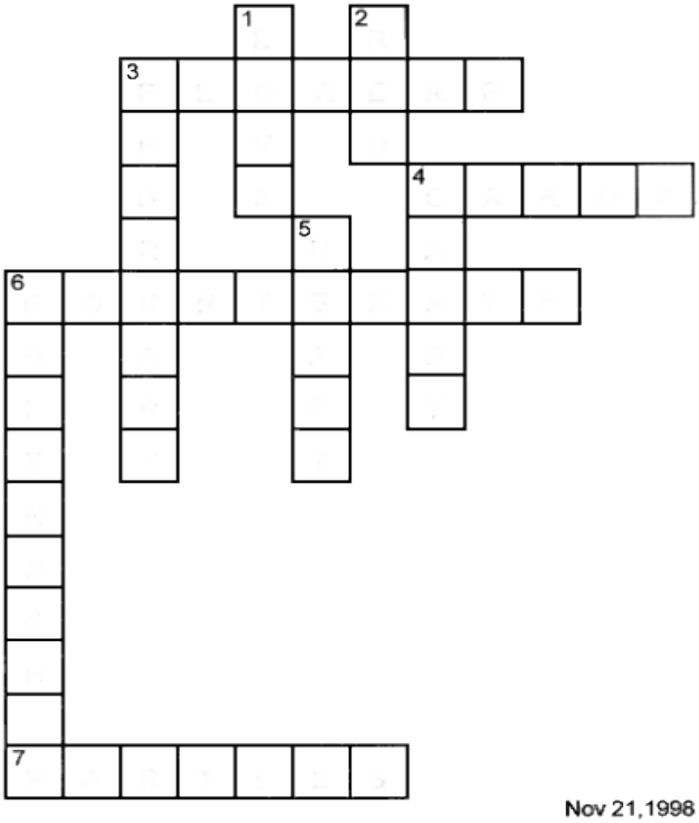
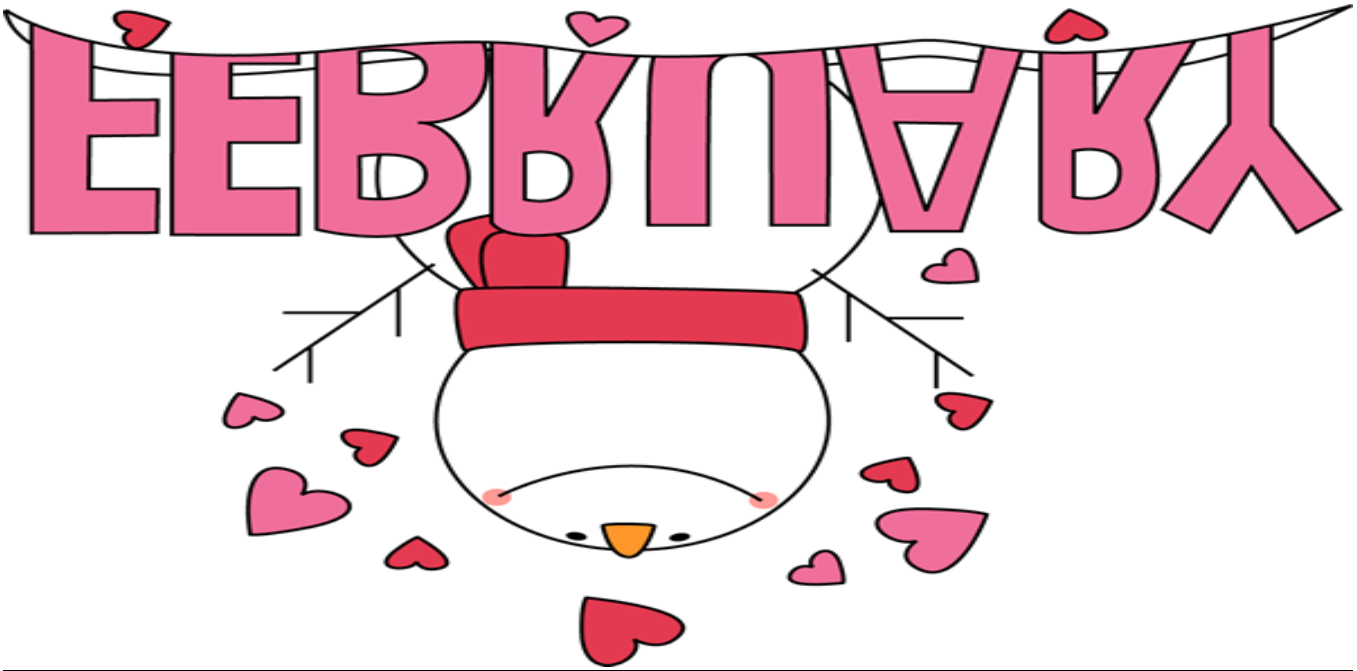
Valentines Day
by Sunnie BunnieZZ



Nov 21,1998

Across	Down
3 Pretty smelling plants given on this day	1 A heart represents this feeling
4 Piece of mail sent expressing one's affection	2 The color associated with this day
6 Date Valentine's Day is celebrated	3 Month does Valentine's Day falls in
7 Kids have these to celebrate with friends	4 Boxes of chocolates
	5 This is a symbol of the holiday
	6 Give valentines to pals to show this

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