

# FRESH Start

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE PORT CHARLOTTE SDA CHURCH



**God is Love**

"The Lord's loyal kindness never ceases; his compassions never end. They are fresh every morning..." Lam. 3:22,23 NET

## **GOD = LOVE**

God is love. What statement could be more profound? All that is true about God is true about love. He is the source of all love. How do we apply these truths to our lives? If we are to emulate God, we should "be love," but is that how others describe you? Thank you to many of you who shared your thoughts on how to show God's love to others, so we can all improve on living out His love through us.

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# God's Love in Action

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*What is one powerful way you can show God's love to others?*

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**Nicci Long:** When we're in our own familiar places it's sometimes difficult to notice the stranger in our midst. Be intentional about seeking out someone who may feel alone or new to your circle, be it church, school, work or any place you're a staple and help them feel at home. They will know God's love towards them through a simple act of kindness.

**Gabriel Mercado:** Out of love, God allows me to make my own decisions and to have my own personality, so one way I try (I'm still learning) to show God's love to others is giving them the same liberty without retaliating.

**Susie Hilton:** "Kindness" - when you stop and take time to listen to someone! Do something for someone. Without kindness in you, you do not have the love of God in you!





**Millie Kelmes:** I was just reading the lesson for today regarding Cornelius the Roman centurion. The last paragraph answers your question: the two great principles of God's Law are loving God first - above everything. That implies giving my heart to Him; doing what he wants me to do that will bring glory to him. The second greatest is loving my neighbor - those that come in contact with me every day. That neighborly love can be manifested in many different ways: acts of kindness, sweet, encouraging words, friendship, etc., according to the person's need. If we ask of God, He will give us the power and strength to do that at times when we're weak and weary.

**Don Pierson:** In my opinion the short answer is to prayerfully read through the gospels, especially the book of John once a year and put in practice what we read. A few specifics might be:

1. Be kind to everyone regardless of whether they are kind to you or whether their opinions are different from yours.
2. Be positive. Do not look for and repeat what you feel are mistakes of others, especially in church. Rehearsing criticism and gossip helps no one but it can discourage others.
3. Treat everyone with respect whether you agree with them or not.
4. Consider no one inferior to yourself. Everyone has talents and we should emphasize them whether they come from leaders or "the mouse in the corner."
5. Practice the golden rule.

**Betty Dodds:** Every morning, when having my morning devotions, my prayer is "Lord, let me be able to share my love for You to someone. Most days I am able to do this. I love sharing these words with others, "prayer answered" and then explaining to them the prayer that was answered.

**Janice Swanson:** By reaching out to as many neighbors as possible, in friendship, using my smile and face as my best accessory, intentionally asking God, through Jesus Christ to send His Holy Spirit to shine His LOVE through me (my smile and face) in a mighty way. He does this EACH and EVERY time I pray this powerful prayer. I know my neighbors are seeing HIM and not me!! I pray that Christ becomes REAL to them through my nonjudgmental, open minded, friendly attitude. REAL results happen!!

**Tria Shurtliff:** We can show God's love to others by identifying their needs and working to meet them.

"Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love."

1 John 4:8

**Heidi Franks:** I think that being kind to people when they are not kind to you is powerful way to demonstrate God's love. This is not necessarily something that most people are good at. I know it's something that does not come naturally to me. It just not a part of my skill set. It is something I'm trying to be better at. I have observed that it can be a powerful tool in softening hearts and bringing people into a reconciled relationship when one person leads with kindness despite negativity from another person.

**Wayne Goffin:** Life is hard and it is easy to become so absorbed by your own problems and circumstances that you become numb, maybe even indifferent, to the suffering of those around you. As a physical therapist I meet a lot of people every day and hear their stories of what they are dealing with... but do I really hear them? I often feel the pressure of a tight schedule and sometimes when I am taking a patient's history I fight with the desire to push ahead, get the facts and move on. But I am amazed by the brokenness that people are going through and sometimes I feel the Holy Spirit say "wait, just listen to the rest of the story." I seldom have the answers for these hurting people but I know who does. Being there, loving and empathizing with others can be a powerful way to show God's love and can open one's heart on either side of the discussion to knowing God's love more fully.

**Janelle Meliti:** Vic and I were on our way in Lowes. A nice, elderly man and his wife were trying to load up their car with flooring. He was obviously having some trouble. Vic jumped right in and helped unload the rest. He made sure they didn't need anything else. They were very grateful.

# GOD IS THE ONLY SOURCE OF LOVE

BY BEN SHURLIFF, SENIOR PASTOR

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The most well-known day in February is the fourteenth, known almost universally as Valentine's Day. There is significant history to this celebration. Did you know that there are no less than three figures named Valentine associated with the historical origin of Valentine's Day? Legend surrounds each, however, the following is the generally accepted origin story of Valentine's Day.

As with most of the holidays we celebrate in the Gregorian calendar today, they represent a combination of pre-Christian paganism and Christian history or tradition. Lupercalia is the pagan festival that preceded the creation of Valentine's Day. The celebration of Lupercalia would be inconsistent with biblical Christianity. For a time, this fertility celebration was outlawed within Christianized Rome. However, by the fifth century it was refashioned, along with a corresponding story of a priest named Valentine who was killed by Rome for his support of marriage, into

Valentine's Day. The roses, chocolates, and gifts reportedly stem from the show of support that the couples he married, in defiance of the emperor's law against marriage at the time, gave to Valentine while in prison awaiting execution. Furthermore, legend has it that Valentine fell in love with the jailer's daughter and before dying wrote a note to her signed "Your Valentine."



"Be wise, think biblically, and learn love from the source of love itself - God. The first step is pursue the God of the Bible. The second is to not date or 'fall' for someone that is not also sincerely following the first step."

What are we to do when the world celebrates something? Join in the fun? Celebrate without considering further what it is we are celebrating, or why? I would like to suggest that we be wise and think biblically about everything we do and promote. The grossly pagan practices of Lupercalia do not seem to have translated to today's rendition of Valentine's Day. However, I think there are significant ways in which Valentine's Day sets well-meaning Christians and potential couples up for future sadness and disappointment.

Valentine's day and the giving of heart-shaped things are inseparable. Heart-shaped boxes of chocolates, heart-shaped balloons, heart-shaped candies with little messages like "be mine" are commercial offerings made widely available leading up to Valentine's Day. The concept of giving and receiving each other's hearts and love is synonymous with our celebration of this holiday. Does the Bible afford us any wisdom regarding men's hearts? It certainly does. Perhaps the most prominent passage is found in Jeremiah 17:9-10 NKJV

which states, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; Who can know it? I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings." We would not give our loved ones something harmful to them, would we? Then we should not give our hearts, at least not without some serious changes to them. The Bible states the human heart is deceitful above all things. That is quite a statement. More deceitful than the snake in the garden? More deceitful than Satan himself? Perhaps, our inability to see it as such is proof that it indeed is exceedingly deceitful. When we couple this biblical truth with the common understanding of Valentine's Day I think we can see a problem right off the bat. Should we celebrate the sharing and receiving of our human hearts? Not if we believe what the Bible says about them. It makes sense if you think about it. How many of us have had our hearts broken by someone who promised to love us only to find that their love was not what it appeared to be. How much

drama and pain could be avoided by gut-wrenching break-ups or devastating divorces due to the deceptions of the human heart?

Pastor Ben, what are you suggesting? Are you suggesting that we should not love and seek marriage? Are you suggesting that we give up on finding someone to love and be loved by? Hardly! I am merely suggesting that when the Bible states that the human heart is exceedingly deceitful and that God alone can search it and determine its contents we should be sober-minded and vigilant in our quest for love. Consider the term "falling in love." I am not sure that corresponds with what God had in mind when choosing a life partner. Falling is a state of being where one is out of control and bound to get hurt. This very accurately describes the dating scene we see today. It is a far cry from what God had in mind when He created the model love relationship between Adam and Eve. Christians today need to think biblically on this topic. The first biblical truth to remember is that the natural, un-regenerated, human heart is a weapon and not a gift -- a liability and not a blessing. The second biblical truth is that only God can read the hearts and minds of humanity and knows the true contents of each one. Third, because God alone knows what is in someone's heart, we cannot afford to enter a relationship without first letting God change our hearts and lead us to the one that He has prepared for us.

"We cannot give what we do not have, and unless we get right with God and spend quality time with Him, we will never have the love we were originally designed for."

The mantras "be true to your heart" or "follow your heart" are popularized by almost every romance novel, love story, or Disney movie. However, this line of thinking will lead to ruin 100% of the time. If Christians choose to celebrate Valentine's Day, I suggest we do so biblically. King David, after ruining his reputation with the calamitous relationship he pursued with Bathsheba, stated the following in Psalm 51:10 NKJV, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me." Until we have allowed Jesus to enter our hearts, minds, and lives and afforded Him the time to create clean hearts in place of our deceitful ones, we have absolutely no business "falling in love." If unmarried, take a hiatus from the pursuit of a human relationship and work on the one relationship that will beautify all others in your life.



Consider 1 John 4:16 NKJV, "And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him." Determine in your heart to abide in God. By doing so you will know the true meaning of the word "love." We cannot give what we do not have, and unless we get right with God and spend quality time with Him, we will never have the love we were originally designed for. Too many fall in love with people who, by biblical standards, do not have the first clue what love is. If you are a single individual, please take this message to heart -- determine to abide in God. By doing so you will not fall prey to the counterfeits that Valentine's Day, as celebrated worldwide, so generously provides. If you are a married individual, take this message to heart, and reconnect with the source of love that your marriage needs to survive and thrive. Many married individuals disappointingly look at their spouses

trying to be loved by them, when only God can meet their hearts' deepest needs.

Whether you celebrate Valentine's Day, or not, is not the most pressing question. Do you agree with the Bible regarding mankind's depraved hearts? Do you realize that the only source of love is God? Are you determined to not write your own love story but trust that, as you draw closer to God, He will bring into your life the one that He created just for you? These questions and how you answer them are far more consequential than February fourteenth. They will affect every day of your entire lives! Be wise, think biblically, and learn love from the source of love itself - God. The first step is pursue the God of the Bible. The second is to not date or "fall" for someone that is not also sincerely following the first step. Praying for you all, please continue to pray for me as well.



# CHURCH BUSINESS

BY LAURA DANCEK, EDITOR

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On January 29, more than thirty attended the official church business meeting.

VOTED to modify the church budget, decreasing it by \$700 per month to decrease our deficit. This is a mid-year correction, since our fiscal year begins on July 1.

VOTED to accept the position and position description for "Church Administrator." This position will be filled by Diane Sedgwick.

Diane shared an update on the church restoration. She has been working with Adventist Risk Management (ARM) since we began the first claim, from a wind event occurring on August 25, 2021. This was one claim to replace the roofs on all three campus buildings. ARM covered \$561,000 of these costs. We are responsible for the deductible of \$10,000, supplemental items, and \$40,000 for the required, designed owner representative. The roofs were not repaired before our second event and claim occurred on September 28 from

Hurricane Ian. ARM has already covered the \$1.5 million bill for mitigation done by ServPro.

We have a general contractor to complete the restoration, which will cost more than \$500,000 for drywall, painting, flooring, and electrical work.

The church pews will be replaced, rather than repaired, for a cost of \$135,000. The green chairs in the Grande Hall will be replaced for \$11,500. The building committee chose the same colors for the church, and same fabric for pews.

## UPDATE: ASSOCIATE PASTOR SEARCH

Steven Jencks, Ministerial Field Associate for the FL Conference, will meet with the search committee from our church on February 9. If you have a name to submit, please contact Pastor Ben before that date.

The school will have a new gym floor and ceiling, and new windows facing Midway Blvd.

The parking lot lights and our signs are not covered by insurance. The replacement of ten lights and poles is \$45,000. The school's sports field fencing is not covered by insurance and will cost approximately \$18,000.

Our current estimate for money our church is responsible to pay is approximately \$250,000. This number may change as we move forward.

If you would like to give toward these costs, you can use the special "Temple Restoration Funds" envelope, which will be in the church pews for the near future. You can also [click here](#) to donate online. You can give to "Capital Improvement."

The business meeting was adjourned after closing prayer.





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## Sermon Schedule

**February 4**  
Pastor Ben

**February 11**  
Pastor Ben

**February 18**  
Pastor Ben

**February 25**  
Guest Speaker:  
Alicia Patterson  
Grief Recovery



On January 1, we began a 40-day journey of virtually coming before God together. You can participate every weeknight at 7:00 by joining via Zoom online or using the Zoom phone app. This is audio only, so you don't even have to think about how you look! To connect online go to <https://zoom.us/j/91380160609>, or click **here**.

You can also use your phone and call 1-305-224-1968 or 1-309-205-3325.

Another option is to download the Zoom app on your phone.

For all of the options, use the **Meeting ID: 913 8016 0609#**

\*The Zoom prayer group began in December, and will continue indefinitely.

***During the 40 Days of Prayer, on Wednesday nights at 6:00. February 1 and 8, we will meet at the church. The service will include praise, prayer and music.***

### Contributors to this issue of *FRESH Start*:

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