

THE COVENANT

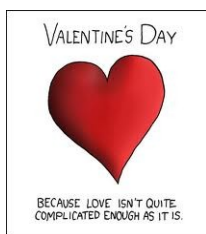
February 2012

Volume 12, Issue 2

Happy Valentine's Day

Valentine's Day started in the time of the Roman Empire. In ancient Rome, February 14th was a holiday to honor Juno. Juno was the Queen of the Roman Gods and Goddesses. The Romans also knew her as the Goddess of women and marriage. The following day, February 15th, began the Feast of Lupercalia.

The lives of young boys and girls were strictly separate. However, one of the customs of the young people was name drawing. On the eve of the festival of Lupercalia the names of Roman girls were written on slips of paper and placed into jars. Each young man would draw a girl's name from the jar and would then be partners for the duration of the festival with the girl whom he chose. Sometimes the pairing of the children lasted an entire year, and often, they would fall in love and would later marry.



Under the rule of Emperor Claudius II Rome was involved in many bloody and unpopular campaigns. Claudius the Cruel was having a difficult time getting soldiers to join his military leagues. He believed that the reason was that Roman men did not want to leave their loves or families. As a result, Claudius cancelled all marriages and engagements in Rome. The good Saint Valentine was a priest at Rome in the days of

Claudius II. He and Saint Marius aided the Christian martyrs and secretly married couples, and for this kind deed Saint Valentine was apprehended and dragged before the Prefect of Rome, who condemned him to be beaten to death with clubs and to have his head cut off. He suffered martyrdom on the 14th day of February, about the year 270. At that time it was the custom in Rome, a very ancient custom, indeed, to celebrate in the month of February the Lupercalia, feasts in honor of a heathen god. On these occasions, amidst a variety of pagan ceremonies, the names of young women were placed in a box, from which they were drawn by the men as chance directed.

The pastors of the early Christian Church in Rome endeavored to do away with the pagan element in these feasts by substituting the names of saints for those of maidens. And as the Lupercalia began about the middle of February, the pastors appear to have chosen Saint Valentine's Day for the celebration of this new feast. So it seems that the custom of young men choosing maidens for valentines, or saints as patrons for the coming year, arose in this way.

So now you know!

A February Poem

The day is ending,
The night is descending;
The marsh is frozen,
The river dead.

Through clouds like ashes
The red sun flashes
On village windows
That glimmer red."

[Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Afternoon in February]



Pastor's Corner - Rev. Danny Spears



It's Lent! Woo Hoo! (yeah, right)

We are rapidly approaching everyone's favorite season of the church year—Lent; that wonderful, uplifting season where we are reminded of our mortality—from dust we came, and to dust we shall return. In case you are not familiar with this season, Lent is a period of fasting (giving up a particular food, meal, or habit), repentance, and reflection traditionally observed by Catholics and some Protestant denominations in preparation for Easter. The season lasts 40 days, and different churches calculate those 40 days in different ways. In Western Christianity, Lent typically begins with Ash Wednesday, and ends with Holy Saturday (the Saturday before Easter Sunday), not counting the weekends.

Yep—fasting, repentance, and reflection; sounds like a party to me! Yeah, right!

In fact, the traditionally somber, penitent, and “Catholic” nature of Lent has led some Protestant denominations to avoid it altogether. After all, aren't we supposed to be repenting and giving up bad habits throughout the year? Some communities of faith comprised primarily of marginalized people (lgbtq folks, for example) also steer clear of the more traditional aspects of Lent. After all, don't we get beat up by society enough already without doing it to ourselves?

I can see the logic in these positions. At the same time, to me, they represent opposite ends of the spectrum of not only Lent, but also of life in general. That is, some people believe our time on earth is limited and we have to constantly be on guard lest we “backslide” right into Hell. Sure, God loves us—as long as we behave. For others, God's love means we can do whatever we please—eat, drink and be merry! For tomorrow we may die! To hell with all those wet blankets who preach their versions of clean and responsible living!

Here's a thought: Maybe Lent isn't either/or. Maybe Lent is both/and. Yes, we are mortal, and one day we will die. That is

not only a theological statement; it is also reality. So, rather than despair about this fact, why not be thankful for the gift of life, enjoy it, *and* reflect on what we can do to make a positive difference in the world while we are here, using the gifts God has given us?

Yes, we all make mistakes, too—not one of us is perfect. So, rather than beating ourselves up over this reality, why not accept responsibility for our actions, do what we can do to correct our mistakes, *and* begin the process of letting those mistakes go and moving on in our journeys?

Who knows? If we can begin to see Lent through this “both/and” lens, maybe one day we will all be able to really *celebrate*, rather than *tolerate* Lent. At any rate, it sure beats the heck out of sitting around in sack cloth and ashes for 40 days.

And the best news is, with this plan you don't have to give up your favorite food and/or drink.

*Grace and Peace,
Pastor Dan*

Taize Style Ash Wednesday Service - February 22nd



Our Ash Wednesday worship will be a Taize-style service on February 22nd at 7:00 p.m. What is Taizé Worship? Taizé worship includes candlelight, prayers, readings, silence, and soft music with repetitive words led by keyboard and flute, or violin, and other instruments. The service is very meditative and offers a wonderful opportunity to be silent and center on The Lord. Come as you are -- and listen. We will still offer the imposition of ashes as part of this service.

Survey on Parent Aging

Researchers at Washington University in St. Louis are trying to learn more about how gay men and lesbians get along with their families and how families are thinking about parents' aging.

The researchers are seeking families (gay/lesbian adult children, their straight siblings, and straight parents) willing to complete a confidential survey by mail. The survey contains questions about how family members spend time together and how they communicate (or don't communicate!) with each other. Each family member receives \$10 for completing the survey.

Your family may be eligible if your family includes the following people who would be willing to participate:

- 1) A gay/lesbian adult child who has been living with a partner for at least 1 year.
- 2) Both partners in the gay relationship have at least one parent alive.
- 3) Both partners in the gay relationship have a straight brother or sister, also currently living with a partner for at least 1 year.

If your family may be interested, or if you have questions about the project, please contact the research team:

Rebecca Rieger, Research Assistant

Dr. Brian Carpenter, Associate Professor Department of Psychology Washington University in St. Louis

(314) 935-6173 (call collect if needed)

Email: aging@artsci.wustl.edu

The deadline for the March Covenant is Friday, February 24th!

New Directory Available



The new January 2012 Directory is printed and copies are available in Fellowship Hall. If you know of anyone who may need a copy of the new Directory mailed to them, please contact Ian Tiele in the church office on 708-387-1611 or via his email Ian@holycovenantmcc.org.

February 2012

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat							
			1	AA Meeting 12:30	2	AA Meeting 12:30 Pilsen 7:00	3	AA Meetings 12:30 & 8:00	4				
5	Worship 9:00/11:00 Sunday School 9:00 Worship Team 10:15/12:15 AA Meeting 6:00	6	AA Meeting 12:30 Crazy Crafters 7:00 Religious Ed. 7:00	7	AA Meeting 12:30 Yoga 7:00	8	AA Meeting 12:30	9	AA Meeting 12:30	10	AA Meetings 12:30 & 8:00 Youth Group 4:00	11	<i>Mary Ann Latsaras' birthday</i>
12	Worship 9:00/11:00 Sunday School 9:00 AA Meeting 6:00	13	AA Meeting 12:30 Crazy Crafters 7:00 Religious Ed. 7:00	14	AA Meeting 12:30 Yoga 7:00	15	AA Meeting 12:30	16	AA Meeting 12:30 BOD Meeting 7:00	17	AA Meetings 12:30 & 8:00	18	
19	Worship 9:00/11:00 Sunday School 9:00 AA Meeting 6:00	20	AA Meeting 12:30 Crazy Crafters 7:00 Religious Ed. 7:00	21	AA Meeting 12:30 Yoga 7:00	22	AA Meeting 12:30 Ash Wednesday Taize Worship 7:00	23	AA Meeting 12:30	24	AA Meetings 12:30 & 8:00 Youth Group 4:00	25	
26	Worship 9:00/11:00 Sunday School 9:00 AA Meeting 6:00	27	AA Meeting 12:30 Crazy Crafters 7:00 Religious Ed. 7:00	28	AA Meeting 12:30 Yoga 7:00	29	AA Meeting 12:30						

**HOLY
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*We celebrate Christ's call to:
Care for one another
Reach out to others
Explore our faith
Worship God*

Pastor: Rev. Dr. Danny Spears

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Barb Adams, Vice Mod.
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Greg Petit

Social Action Ministry:

Laura Cleveland (Chair)
Meg Lestina (Pilsen)

Covenant Editor/Admin Assistant:

Ian Tiele

Lao-Tsu's Peace Prayer

If there is to be peace in the world,
There must be peace in the nations.
If there is to be peace in the nations,
There must be peace in the cities.
If there is to be peace in the cities,
There must be peace between neighbors.
If there is to be peace between neighbors,
There must be peace in the home.
If there is to be peace in the home,
There must be peace in the heart.

Did You Know That Pastor Danny Blogs?

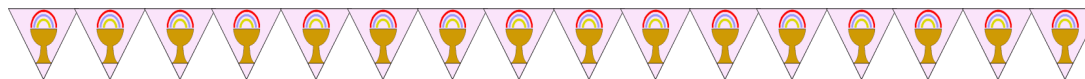
Did you know that Pastor Danny now has his own blog? You can follow Danny's thoughts in his blog " *Losing My Religion...and Keeping Faith (Musings of a Believer in Exile)*." at www.revdrdan.wordpress.com or alternatively click on the link at the top of the home page on the church website (www.holycovenantmcc.org).

Altar Flowers

The beautiful altar flowers that you see each week are donated to the church. You can dedicate these flowers to a special person or event by filling in your dedication on the Altar Flowers list that is on the bulletin board in Fellowship Hall. The cost of the flowers is \$25 which can be given to Joanie Baird or placed in the weekly offering basket. Please mark any checks or envelopes "Altar Flowers."

Church Mice

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Covenant Publications

The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the individual authors, unless otherwise indicated, and do not necessarily reflect the views of Holy Covenant MCC. The publication of the name of any person, business, or organization should not be construed as an indication of sexual orientation or political affiliation.

The Covenant welcomes new items, articles, poetry, and of course suggestions. Written contributions may be submitted to the Editor of the Covenant at the address herein or by email to ian@holycovenantmcc.org Contributions will be published at the discretion of the editor and may be subject to revision and space limitations.

The March 2012 COVENANT DEADLINE for any articles is NO LATER THAN Friday, February 24th, 2012. Late submissions will be made on an "available space basis."