



GRACE NEWS & NOTES



February 2025

Love in Action: Becoming a Church That Truly Loves

By Zach Davis, Associate Minister of Youth & Families



Valentine's Day is just around the corner—a time filled with flowers, chocolates, and heartfelt notes. Love is in the air, but it's worth asking: What is love, really? For many, love is an emotion—feelings of affection or desire. But is that all love is? Does love only exist when it feels good or when we hear what we want to hear?

True love is far more than just an emotion. If love were only about how we feel, it would be subjective. And if we only expressed love when it was easy or convenient, it would be selfish, not selfless. Love is complicated. It's something we all crave, yet it asks something of us.

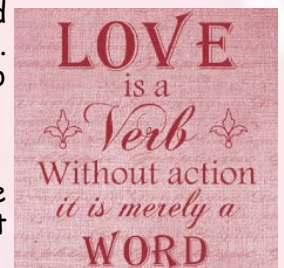
As a new dad, I'm learning this in ways I never expected. Changing diapers isn't fun, but I do it because I love my son. Even though Elias doesn't enjoy it, my love remains active in that moment. This is a glimpse of how God loves us. His love doesn't always come in easy or comfortable ways, but it's always for our good. God challenges, pushes, and helps us grow because He loves us too much to leave us where we are.

In our culture, love is often seen as fleeting, especially around holidays like Valentine's Day. But the Bible paints a different picture. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 13 that without love, even the most noble actions or sacrifices are meaningless. Love isn't about us—it's about others. It's not just a feeling but a commitment to act selflessly. Paul describes love as patient, kind, humble, forgiving, and persistent. It's not about seeking our own comfort; it's about putting others first—even at personal cost.

Jesus showed us the ultimate example of this kind of love. He healed the sick, fed the hungry, washed His disciples' feet, and ultimately laid down His life for us. He calls us to follow His example by denying ourselves and taking up our crosses for the sake of others.

As a church, we're called to serve one another—not just on Sundays, but in everyday, meaningful ways. It means stepping into people's lives, even when it's messy or inconvenient. It could be teaching a Sunday school class, offering a kind word, or lending a helping hand. Love looks like caring for the elderly, visiting the sick, and supporting those who are struggling.

Jesus didn't come to be served; He came to serve, giving us the perfect example of love in action. And He calls us to love like He loved—not just when it's easy, but especially when it costs us something.



Love isn't just a feeling—it's an action. If we want to be a church that truly loves, we must step out, serve one another, and make a real impact in our community. Let's love like Jesus, and let that love transform both our lives and the world around us.

An apology to Tim Chambers whose birthday was listed as January 1st of this year. His birthday is April 3rd, but if you would like to send him more than one birthday card, I'm sure he would not object.

True Love

Many of us celebrate Valentine's Day in both fun and serious ways. Children exchange treats and humorous cards with classmates and friends; some bring home hand-made cards for the adults in their lives. Romantic partners may go out to eat and present each other flowers, chocolate, a fancy card — maybe even an engagement ring!



As playful as Valentine's Day can be, it's also a great time to remember the serious side of love, as indicated by these quotes:

- "When you love someone, you love the whole person as he or she is, and not as you would like them to be." —Leo Tolstoy
- "You don't love someone because they're perfect; you love them in spite of the fact that they're not." —Jodi Picoult
- "Love ... is quiet understanding, mutual confidence, sharing and forgiving. ... It settles for less than perfection and makes allowances for human weaknesses." —Ann Landers

We can do the difficult work of true love — actions, not just feelings — only because God loved us first. He did (and does) so despite our imperfection, and in Jesus, God shows us how to share true love with others. This Valentine's Day, if you don't remember any other profound quotes, hold this one in your heart:

"We love because God first loved us."
—1 John 4:19 (NCV)

Register now for Illinois Great Rivers Camp & Retreat Ministries for 2025!
A flyer is on the bulletin board outside the church sanctuary.
More information coming in the March 2025 newsletter!



BIRTHDAYS

Feb. 1	Phyllis Pillow
2	Dawn Reeder
5	Mike Schaeffer
6	Becky Hallock
7	Mike Hawkins
9	Beverly Terveer
10	Suzanne Clark
12	Sara Sallee
15	Arlene Sensel
20	Marilyn Pingsterhaus
21	Jarrett Ceglinski
	Lauri Heckert
22	Cliff Hake
27	Mary Barrett
28	Nancy Janowski
	Susan King

ANNIVERSARIES

No church members' anniversaries this month.

Congratulations everyone on your milestones! If your name was not included in our list, please inform the office so that we can update our records.

January Report

Date		Offering
12-22		\$4,455.42
12-24	Christmas Eve	\$ 2,370.25
12-29		\$1,013.00
12-29	Online (Vanco)	\$ 199.21
01-05	No Service Due to Weather	
01-12		\$6,051.09
01-12	Online (Vanco)	\$ 498.88
01-19		\$2,678.00
01-26		\$3,100.00

Online Giving is a total amount given for each week.

*The Christmas Eve offering, which goes to Chaddock, was \$2,370.25.

Total SPPR Budget* for 2025 is \$226,399. Weekly giving requires \$4,354 per week to meet the total budgeted amount for 2025.

*"Try to be a rainbow in someone's cloud."
—Maya Angelou*

Thoughts from Pastor Leanne

Facebook. Snapchat. YouTube. Blogging. Many of us utilize these forms of social media or at least know someone who communicates in one of these ways. Online communication has reached a point that now makes it completely acceptable for people to publicly post statements to millions of cyberspace strangers that are more intimate, more personal, than any one of my own private journal entries.

It is as if society as a whole is screaming, “Hey! Hey YOU! Are you listening to me? Are you REALLY listening to me...noticing me...understanding me...*appreciating* me?”

This desperation, this plea to feel valued, is not only evident online. We see this need for understanding in the young child who continuously acts out. We see this need for closeness in the person who, in an attempt to communicate with others, uses negative comments or gossip as conversation starters.

To be noticed...to be loved...to be accepted...to be truly heard. Wouldn't that be amazing? Thankfully, we have a God who does all of that and more. God doesn't have to accept our “friend request” on Facebook to be our biggest advocate, nor does God have to hit “follow” to always be by our side.

Psalm 66:19-20 says that God listens to us and truly hears us. Not only does God hear us, but God accepts what we have to say while always loving us. No “de-friending” there. Psalm 139:13 explains that God understands us because God created our inmost being...we've been knitted together in our mothers' wombs. Wow.

The Psalms describe a God who knows us intimately, who understands our hearts, who recognizes our accomplishments. God sees us for the truly remarkable creations we are. God values YOU for the incredible gift that you are to this world.

You can never have a TMI (Too Much Information) moment with God. God can never “block” you, and anything you do to glorify God will always be “liked/loved” by the Creator of us all. God is portable, always available to chat, and is never “logged off.”

As we continue to dive into this year, please remember that the love, validation, and admiration God provides us are available 24/7...and you don't even need an App for that.

But truly God has listened; he has attended to the voice of my prayer. Blessed be God, because he has not rejected my prayer or removed his steadfast love from me! Psalm 66:19-20

Faithfully,

Leanne

All the Ways God Helps Us

When young adults land in difficult situations and desperately call home, parents respond in various ways. They might remind their son or daughter of guidelines learned years back — behavior and problem-solving skills to get back on track. Or maybe parents direct their kids to a mentor, expert or resource for assistance. But if the crisis is severe, no doubt these loving parents hop in the car, or even on a plane, and go to their child. They embrace and support them, perhaps even taking initial steps to bring them through the chaos to a new beginning.

WAYS THAT GOD HELPS US IN DIFFICULT TIMES

- GOD STRENGTHENS US
- GOD GIVES US HOPE
- GOD GIVES US AN INNER PEACE
- GOD REMOVES OUR BURDENS
- GOD HELPS US TO BE CALM
- GOD COMFORTS US THROUGH PEOPLE

When the people of Israel were in the wilderness, exile and countless difficulties in between, God lovingly used each of these strategies. God reminded Israel of the Ten Commandments and other laws he gave to guide their life together. Sometimes he sent prophets and other leaders to direct the people into better ways and times. God does the same today, reminding us of Scripture's guidance and sending us prophetic voices and wise leaders.

Above all, when nothing less would save people, ancient and modern, from the dangers of sin and death, God came to us as Jesus. God's only Son walked with us, lived through our troubles alongside us, taught us new ways directly and brought us out of the problematic place where we were trapped and into a new beginning.

—Heidi Hyland Mann,
based on a sermon by Pastor Dave Sonnenberg

All About Attitude

“The way you say ‘representative’ to an automated system reflects the real you,” a friend told me. After we laughed at that truth, I realized *everything* I say matters. Someone is always listening, whether the words and tone are positive or negative.

Ephesians 4:29 (NLT) says our language shouldn’t be “foul or abusive” but good, helpful and encouraging. Whether I’m peaceful, hurried, joyful, empathetic, frustrated, celebrating or hurting, I can carefully choose my words (and the attitude behind them). When I’m not ready to speak wholesomely, may God shut my mouth. When a friend needs encouragement, may I listen to God’s prompting. When I need to confront, may I do so lovingly.

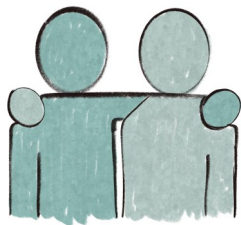
Changing how we think — that is, how we speak to ourselves — can be tough. But God wants to transform our reactions and motives, dispelling pride, a lack of confidence and anxiety. In this new year:

- *I’m alone* can become *God is with me*.
- *I can’t do this* can become *Anything is possible with God*.
- *I’m failing* can become *Just because I’m struggling, it doesn’t mean I’m failing*.
- *I’m not enough* can become *I’m God’s beloved child*.
- *I’m tired* can become *God will give me rest*.



Don’t stop there. Consider the concerns in your heart and let God give you new words and attitudes.

“I Am Here”



In *Bread for the Journey*, theologian Henri J.M. Nouwen calls consolation — from “to be with” (con-) “the lonely one” (solus) — “one of the most important ways to care.” He writes, “Life is so full of pain, sadness and loneliness that we often wonder what we can do to alleviate the immense suffering we see.”

Although consoling doesn’t necessarily remove someone’s pain, Nouwen notes that it serves a deeper purpose: To console means “to be there and say, ‘You are not alone, I am with you. Together we can carry the burden. Don’t be afraid. I am here.’ That is consolation. We all need to give it as well as to receive it.”

Love Makes Us Worthy

Unlike God, who loves unconditionally, humans often make choices and set limits when doling out affection. But Thomas Merton reminds us, “Our job is to love others without stopping to inquire whether or not they are worthy. That is not our business and, in fact, it is nobody’s business. What we are asked to do is to love, and this love itself will render both ourselves and our neighbors worthy.”

As for how to develop and maintain that type of love? Merton shares, “It is in deep solitude that I find the gentleness with which I can truly love my [neighbors].”



Jesus, this Valentine’s month and all year long, help me live in love so that, whatever else I do, I will not be “a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal” (1 Corinthians 13:1, NRSV).

Hymn Focus: “My Jesus, I Love Thee”

As we enter the month of February, I always think about it being the month of love, I suppose because of Valentine’s Day. Sometimes I will look at a hymn that we might sing for Ash Wednesday/Lent, but this year Lent doesn’t start until March. So, love it is!

There are so many different kinds of love. I’ve never really thought about that until now! The love we have for special people in our lives, pets, places we’ve traveled to, food that we love to eat. I love the snow and being cozy in my home. We use the word “love” a lot! So maybe it gets “watered down” a bit?

In this article, I’d like to reflect on the most special love of all, the love that God has for us and the love we feel for Him. Our Hymn study this month is on the beautiful song “My Jesus, I Love Thee”. It was written in the mid 1800’s by William Ralph Featherston of Montreal, Canada. One of the remarkable things about it is that Mr. Featherston was only 16 years old when he wrote the lyrics. It was written as a poem for his Aunt who lived in Los Angeles. Somehow, the text appeared anonymously in an English hymnal, The London Book, a few years later.

Several years after that, a famous American Baptist pastor, Dr. A. J. Gordon, discovered the hymn and decided it needed a better melody! With it’s new tune, the hymn spread rapidly and has since been included in nearly every hymnal created and has been sung all around the world.

How amazing are the workings of God that this beautiful hymn has been sung for nearly 200 years and has helped guide Christians to a deeper relationship with their Lord. May these words cause all of us now to renew our love and devotion to God.

*My Jesus I Love Thee, I know Thou art mine. For Thee all the follies of sin I resign;
my gracious Redeemer, my Savior art Thou: if ever I LOVED Thee, Lord Jesus, 'tis now.*

From 1 John 4:19: “We love Him, because He first loved us.” May you all feel the love of God, not just in February, but all year long!

Becky Styninger, Director of Music and Worship



Join Us for a Super Bowl Watch Party at Grace UMC!

DUN-dun-dun-dun, dun DUNNN!
DUN-dun-dun-dun, dun DUNNN!
DUNNNNNNNNNNNN dun-dun-dun DUNNNNN!



Are you ready for some football? We’re excited to invite everyone to an all-church Super Bowl Watch Party! This is a perfect opportunity to come together as a community, enjoy some pizza and snacks, play a few games, and have great conversations—all while watching the big game on the big screen.

The watch party will take place in the **Fellowship Hall at Grace UMC**. We’ll provide pizza and drinks to keep your energy up as you cheer on your favorite team. Please bring a snack to share with others.


There will be games for all ages, whether you’re a football fan or just along for the fun! We encourage you to bring a friend or family member to join in the excitement. Whether you’re here for the game, the halftime show, or just the fellowship, there’s something for everyone.

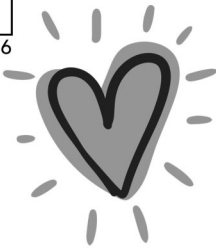
Date: February 9th
Time: 5:00 p.m.
Location: Downstairs in the Fellowship Hall, Grace UMC

Mark your calendars and spread the word! Let’s make this a fun and memorable evening together. We hope to see you there!

Puzzle!

Use the clues to fill in the boxes. Then write those letters on the correct numbered lines below to complete 1 John 4:16 (NIV).

A place to live 

Opposite of dark 

Companion

Hand greeting

Male adult

8 2 16 13 4 6 2 19 5

17 9 2 5 19 5 12 6 7 19 5 4

13 15 6 2 19 20 6 7 19 14 4

13 15 8 2 16 18 15 16

8 2 16 13 23 10 1 14 21

1 John 4:16, NIV

Answers: house; light; friend; wave; man; God is love; Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. 1 John 4:16, NIV

Bible Quiz

The short Old Testament book of Lamentations is a set of communal laments (sorrowful songs) about the destruction in 587 B.C. of which city, by which people?

- A. Babylon; the Assyrians
- B. Jerusalem; the Babylonians
- C. Rome; the Greeks
- D. Caesarea Philippi; the Romans



Answer: B (See Bible commentaries.)

Valentines for Kids

Valentine's Day isn't just for schoolchildren and sweethearts. Loving parents should strive to give their children these life-changing gifts during February and beyond.

- **Acceptance:** Say and show that you love children for who they are. Give this gift with a kiss.
- **Self-confidence:** Help boost kids' trust in themselves. Give this gift with a hug.
- **Peace:** Model how to give your worries to God. Offer this present with laughter.
- **Gratitude:** Help children be genuinely thankful for each new day and for all of life. Give this gift as they go out the door.
- **Faith:** Introduce children to Jesus, the best friend they'll ever have. Do this by taking them to church and Sunday school regularly.

VALENTINE'S DAY



Love All You Do

Blogger Rachel Macy Stafford gained a following by admitting she'd acquired the "disease of distraction." Her children and family paid the price for her dependence on technology and a super-packed schedule.

In *Hands Free Mama* (Zondervan), Stafford describes how she made room to live, breathe and appreciate each day. One step involved changing the slogan on the front of her planner from "Do It All" to "Love All I Do."

Now Stafford encourages others to take a Hands Free Pledge, "letting go of distraction, disconnection and perfection to live a life that simply, so very simply, consists of what really matters."



On Valentine's Day, we remember that God is the source of all love in the world. His perfect love for us has made all human love possible.

February 2025



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<p>Church office hours: M—Th 9 am-12 pm; 1 pm-3 pm 327-8407</p>						1
<p>2 Small Groups- 9:15 am Worship-10:30 am</p>	3	<p>4 “The Chosen” Bible study-6:00 pm</p>	<p>5 Handbells-5:45 pm Chancel Choir- 6:30 pm</p>	6	<p>7 Church Office closed every Friday Pastor’s Sabbath Day</p>	8
<p>9 Small Groups- 9:15 am Worship-10:30 am</p>	<p>10 Happy Days Board-6:00 pm Worship-6:00 pm Education-6:30 pm</p>	<p>11 Grace’s Food Pantry Distribution in Nashville-6:00 pm</p>	<p>12 Handbells-5:45 pm Chancel Choir- 6:30 pm</p>	13	<p>14 Church Office closed every Friday Pastor’s Sabbath Day</p>	15
<p>196 Small Groups- 9:15 am Worship-10:30 am</p>	17	<p>18 Women’s Bible Study in the church library-11:30 am “The Chosen” Bible study-6:00 pm</p>	<p>19 No Choir Rehearsals this evening</p>	20	<p>21 Church Office closed every Friday Pastor’s Sabbath Day</p>	22
<p>23 Small Groups- 9:15 am Worship-10:30 am</p>	24	<p>25 Grace’s Food Pantry Distribution in Nashville-6:00 pm</p>	<p>26 Handbells-5:45 pm Chancel Choir- 6:30 pm</p>	27	<p>28 Church Office closed every Friday Pastor’s Sabbath Day</p>	



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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

We're on the Web
Nashvillegrace.net

Dated Material Do Not Delay