



## A WORD FROM OUR PASTOR

*Written by Rev. Chris Pennington*

### Praying God's Love this Valentine's Day (and always)

God instructs us to love one another, His most important commandment to us all. What does it mean to love one another? It seems difficult, this act of offering love to all. In John 13:34, He said to us, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another."

Have you ever had a moment in your life where you tried to "look busy" to avoid having to help someone out or ignored a stranger who just kept talking to you as you waited in line together at the coffee shop? You're not alone. It is human nature for us to remove ourselves from situations that are uncomfortable, but we are called to embrace the uncomfortable and really, truly love others well. God calls us to be brave and to share His love with all who cross our paths. Scripture states that we should "not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it." (Hebrews 13:2 NIV)

When it comes to loving others, there are many, many ways to do so, but to start, pray for them. Praying for others daily is an impactful way of loving them unconditionally, just as God calls us to do. Think about the people that are present in your everyday life and ways that you could pray for them. Think about the people that you come across every so often, maybe a relative that you haven't seen in years or a friend you've drifted away from. How can you love them and serve the Lord through prayer? This year, the National Day of Prayer is on May 2, and I encourage you to ask God to help you step out of your comfort zone. Make the connection, offer encouragement, and start diligently praying for others as an act of love. After all, if we are called to truly love one another - that means we must see past outer appearances, we must see past the little annoying behaviors of others, and we must see past the awkwardness of new situations. We must look past these things so that we can get to the hearts of those who are placed in our paths.

Is there someone in your life you're feeling God placing on your heart? Maybe you have two or three people in mind? Sit down today and say a prayer for them - however you feel called, and then send them an encouraging card today or invite them to coffee. And for those whom you happen upon in the grocery store or the coffee shop line, offer them an encouraging word and keep them in mind as you talk to God throughout your day. Let's take back Valentine's Day from the commercial beast it's become and make it something really special!

Grace and Peace,  
Pastor Chris

*The purpose of Richardson Park United Methodist Church is to help people experience the amazing love of God and develop a vital relationship with Jesus Christ.*