

Belmont Beacon

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Belmont Baptist Church 830 Monticello Avenue Charlottesville, VA 22902

Tel: 434-296-7111 Fax: 434-296-0509

e-mail: mail@belmontbaptistcville.org or gma2anderson@gmail.com



In just a few weeks the holy season of Lent begins. Ash Wednesday signals the beginning of the church's forty day journey with Jesus to the cross. This year Ash Wednesday lands on February 14th. Though the date

of Ash Wednesday fluctuates from year to year with the date of Easter, the majority of us will more likely associate February 14th with Valentine's Day and Ash Wednesday might be an afterthought.

Please note that your church council has thought about this unique predicament with the calendar. Belmont Baptist commemorates Ash Wednesday in the most Baptist way possible. We host a potluck meal. Following the food and fellowship around the table we share a service of communion that includes the traditional ashes that lead us into the Lenten season.

Belmont Baptist also celebrates Valentine's Day with a dinner and some type of entertainment that follows. During church council, plans were made for such an event on Saturday, the 17th. Look for more information on that in this issue of the Beacon. How is the church to signal the beginning of Lent on Valentine's Day? This seems like quite the challenge because Lent and particularly Ash Wednesday are associated with all things somber. The reminder, "Remember you are dust and to dust you shall return," leads us in that direction.

Valentine's Day holds a more celebratory tone as love is proclaimed. Chocolates and sweets are often shared. Ironically, those kinds of treats are often the object of fasting that is associated with giving something up for Lent. If you are considering giving something up for Lent, the shared date of Ash Wednesday and Valentine's Day could provide ample practice on the

temptation front from the very beginning.

Are these two dates so exclusive? Should they be contradictory of one another? As I have pondered this question, I have read the thoughts of several writers. The most amusing one suggested offering ashes in the form of a heart instead of a cross. My vote is that we stick with the image of the cross on that one.

I am grateful for Julia Clawson's reminder about the life of Saint Valentine. Though this particular day did not become associated with romantic love until Geoffrey Chaucer and the 14th century, the day is named for Saint Valentine who lived much earlier. The legend with St. Valentine is that he performed weddings for soldiers who were not permitted to marry and he aided Christians persecuted under the Roman Empire. He was martyred on February 14th.

St. Valentine's Day and Ash Wednesday are all about love. The love we recognize on Ash Wednesday is the love of Jesus who gave his life that we would be redeemed. Valentine's Day is clearly about the romantic love that Chaucer promoted. I am sure that you are aware how Hallmark and the like continue that fine tradition.

St. Valentine's story serves to remind us of doing for others. Jesus declared that the world would know we are his disciples by the love we show for one another. St. Valentine did that and so can we. Lent does not have to be about giving something up. We can add things to our lives. If you must link Valentine's Day and Lent this year, then commit to intentional loving acts for your neighbors. Find specific ways to love those you encounter as we allow Christ's love to shape all that we might become through him.

I look forward to sharing these significant days with you.

Blessings,

Greg



" A Nonjudgmental Presence"

By Henri Nouwen

We spend every day in a crazy world, which is full of criticism of others.

Whether it's a newspaper, television, internet, social media, or friends talking over a cup of coffee, we are confronted by personal assessments of others. To engage in behaviors that our culture practices is not always Christian behavior. Henri Nouwen suggests the following:

"To the degree that we accept that through Christ, we ourselves have been reconciled with God, we can be messengers of reconciliation for others. Essential to the work of reconciliation is a nonjudgmental presence. We are not sent to the world to judge, to condemn, to evaluate, to classify, or to label.

When we walk around as if we have to make up our minds about people and tell them what is wrong with them and how they should change, we only create more division.

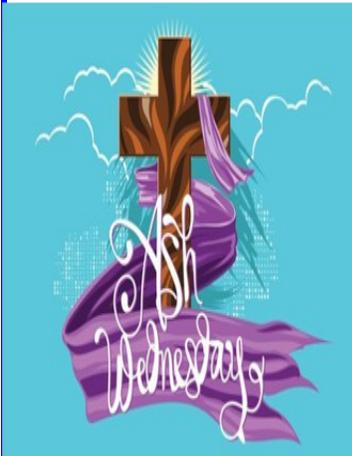
Jesus says it clearly, "Be compassionate just as your Father is compassionate. Do not judge; ... Do not condemn; ... forgive" (Luke 6:36-37)

In a world that constantly asks us to make up our minds about other people, a nonjudgmental presence seems nearly impossible. But it is one of the most beautiful fruits of a deep spiritual life and will be easily recognized by those who long for reconciliation."

It is important that we engage in scriptural admonitions that make us stand out in the world with forgiveness toward others.

Remember, the Old Testament emphasizes the Ten Commandments, but the New Testament emphasizes God's grace and forgiveness. His followers have the job of communicating this to the world on a daily basis.

SPECIAL EVENT IN FEBRUARY



Ash Wednesday begins February 14, 2018, at 6p.m. Belmont Baptist commemorates by hosting a potluck meal, followed by a sharing of communion service that includes the traditional ashes that lead us into the Lenten season. Please come join us in this occasion with fellowship and the beginning of our church's forty day journey with Jesus to the cross.

In CHRISTIAN Sympathy

Sympathy is extended to the family of Phyllis Ingalls, daughters, Pam Ingalls and Kim Mitchell as well as the Sprouse family. Also to her many friends.



Sympathy is also extended to the family of Hazel Cason, Virginia Melton's sister.

Sister in law of Hunter Melton, Barbara Cason and Frances Cason. Aunt to Randy Melton and Sue Wharam.



The office is looking for extra outside door keys. We are down to one key in the lock box.

If you borrowed a key for a function or temporarily, please return the key to the office as soon as you can.

Call the office, if any questions:

(434)296-7111.

Comcast Channel 13 will Rebroadcast the Worship Service Sunday at 7:00 pm.

**CHARLOTTESVILLE
PUBLIC
ACCESS**



MUSIC
MINISTRY

I am writing this month's Beacon at a time that follows a very wonderful event that was marred by a very tragic event. I would like to tell you a little bit about this. There are things I will need to leave unspoken due to confidentiality and respect. What I want to share is how God can shine through in every situation, no matter what.

On January 19th and 20th I was asked to conduct the Tri -County Honors Band. This event is held once a year for the top middle and high school band students from three counties surrounding Culpeper. It is an exciting and challenging weekend. The students work hard to get here, and it is amazing the talent in the 200 students involved. I had the privilege of working with 100 of these middle school students and a wonderful colleague worked with the high school students.

As the day started, we had the first chair tuba student missing. He happened to be from Culpeper and we all knew this was unusual.

We reported his absence to the office and we watched his friends become concerned by his absence. During lunch time the adults were informed of a tragedy; the young man had taken his life. This was not a student who was bullied or made fun of. This is a young man with good grades and good friends. He was someone in JV football and involved in band, choir and other activities. This was a person whose future was bright and promising.

As we all know, the power of prayer is not a word to be spoken on public school grounds. However, as we told the other students of this terrible loss, I saw many groups crying and consoling each other. I also saw prayer circles, students in silent prayer, and some on their knees. I heard questions to God on the reason for this event. I also saw the reactions of the students who were praying for a why, when they found part of the answer.

It was today that this happened for the very reason they were all praying together. It was today, so they could hold each other and be with God together. I am in no way saying the young man chose this day knowing his friends would all be there. I am saying God knew they would all be together to comfort each other, pray together and love one another.

As long as we believe, there will be prayer in schools.

BELMONT BAPTIST CHURCH
830 Monticello Avenue
Charlottesville, VA 22902



DEACONS SPONSORED:

**VALENTINE'S DAY DINNER WILL BE ON SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2018
AT 6:00PM. COME JOIN YOUR CHURCH FAMILY AND FRIENDS FOR
A BANQUET AND FELLOWSHIP.**

The menu is: **Chicken Divan with Broccoli
Rosemary Roasted Potatoes,
Herb stuffing, Baked Apple,
Gelatin Salad and Hot Rolls.**