On February 14th, it has become a tradition to give your partner gifts that show them your love and affection. Perhaps these gifts come in the form of a lovely card or note, professing the deepest and purest of loves or ridiculously expensive and sparkly jewelry, or maybe even some chocolates that were grabbed on the way home because you forgot about this special day (how could you). But this was not always how February 14th was celebrated. The origins of this day of love haven’t always been so romantic.

The love filled holiday has its origins in the Roman festival of Lupercalia. This festival was held every mid-February to celebrate the coming of Spring and included fertility rituals that involved animal sacrifices and allegedly wearing the animal skins for a race around the Palantine Hill. Gross. During the festival, young men and women would be paired off using a lottery system with the hope that by the end of the festival it would result in marriage. Still kind of gross. It is in the 5th century that Pope Gelasius I allegedly denounced this rowdy festival and incorporated the pagan holiday into Catholicism as a day to peacefully celebrate St. Valentine. According to the Acta Sanctorum or Lives of the Saints there are actually three Saint Valentines that were all allegedly martyred on February 14th. The earliest mention of a Valentine or Valentini comes in the third century as a priest who was killed along with 24 soldiers in the Roman province of Africa. Not much else is known.

Then, another Valentine or Valentinus pops up during the reign of Emperor Gothicus. The story goes that this Valentinus put his hands over the girl’s eyes and prayed. Miraculously the girl could see again and the whole family was baptized. Unfortunately, Emperor Gothicus heard about what Asterius did and had him, his whole family, and Valentinus executed, but with Valentinus being the only one beheaded. His head is now allegedly buried under a chapel near the ancient highway of the Via Flaminia.

The last Valentine was a bishop of Terni in Umbria, Italy. His story is very similar to Valentinus, except this time it was the son of a potential convert that he cured. And he too was also beheaded by Emperor Gothicus and was buried along the Via Flaminia. As the Acta Sanctorum suggests these two similar stories maybe of the same St. Valentine just different versions. In any case from Africa to Umbria these Valentines lacked the romance that we associate with the saint.

It’s during the medieval period that we get the lovely and most well-known story of St. Valentine. The medieval legend says that St. Valentine was arrested and executed by Emperor Gothicus for being caught performing Christian marriage rituals for Roman soldiers who were forbidden to marry because Emperor Gothicus either thought it made them weak or there was a law that spared married men from war, the details are not clear. But whatever the case, the take away is Gothicus really didn’t like love. In other versions St. Valentine is caught passing notes between Christian lovers while they are in jail. In one version of the jailbird story St. Valentine falls for the jailer’s daughter and before he is executed gives her a note signed “from your Valentine”.

Medieval lovers went wild with love notes that were from their Valentines and that tradition continued on to the Industrial Revolution, where cards and love notes began to be mass produced. Hello, Hallmark!
We will hold our Annual Congregational Meeting on Sunday, February 23, at 10am, in our social hall. It will be preceded by a potluck brunch at 9:30am. This will be a time for us to come together to celebrate the wonderful things God’s Spirit has done at Westminster in 2019 and anticipate God's work here in 2020. Our celebration will spill over into the worship service at 11am, as we dance and sing for Transfiguration Sunday’s jazz worship service. Students from the award-winning Rio Americano High School Jazz Band will provide the musical accompaniment to our joyful praise.

During and after the service, we will be honoring the ministry of our longtime Faith Community Nurse, Jean Harlow, who retired at the end of last year. It will indeed be a joyful day filled with gratitude.

Later in the week, on Wednesday, February 26, at 6pm, we will have an Ash Wednesday dinner and worship service in the social hall. This day marks the beginning of Lent, a time for a quieter reflection and self-examination that lasts for six weeks, ending with Easter Sunday. During this time, we mourn for our sins and engage practices that promote transformation, for ourselves and the world.

This will be a quick emotional and spiritual transition from dancing to mourning, but one that our scriptures and liturgy call us to participate in, so that we might live more fully as Christ’s disciples.

Cheers,

Wes

Scripture readings, sermon titles & themes for February 2020

February 2
Micah 6:1-8
Matthew 5:1-12
Living Honorably

February 9
Psalm 112:1-9
Matthew 5:13-20
Salt and Light

February 16
Deuteronomy 30:15-20
Matthew 5:21-37
Happy Thoughts

February 23
Transfiguration/Mardi Gras Sunday
9:30am brunch and 11am jazz worship
Exodus 24:12-18
Matthew 17:1-9
Bright Cloud
Valentine’s Day with Equal Exchange

Remember your special someone this Valentine’s Day (February 14) with Equal Exchange coffee, tea, or bars of yummy chocolate! On Sunday, February 9, PWOW will be offering these fair trade items (and more) for sale after both church services. How about a bag of flavored coffee – Hazelnut Crème – to help curb that craving, or just a few of our dark chocolate minis – very tasty and perfect size for a small treat! In addition, Dark Chocolate with Lemon Ginger bars are on sale for only $2.50 each. Delight your sweetheart while helping to improve the lives of small farmers in Central America and elsewhere.

Enjoy a winter reprieve at Movie Night - PWOW

On February 7th, 2020, PWOW presents a warm and happy winter retreat of soups, bread and desserts along with a stimulating movie. Last year we watched RBG...this year the movie will be “On the Basis of Sex”. Arrival time 5:15, cost is $10 at the door, and call the office with reservations. If you are inspired to contribute your favorite soup to the meal, please join in. We have crock pots to keep the soups warm but I you bring a soup please bring it warm.
Youth Ridiculousness
The Annual Youth Ridiculousness will be held on February 21 – 22 at the Rocklin California Family Fitness Center, 2511 Warren Drive, Rocklin, CA. The cost is $25 per person and includes: food, t-shirt, and prizes.

Last day of sign up is Sunday, February 2. RSVP to Mark Hargreaves.

Youth Collecting Items for Active Duty Service Members
Beginning today the Youth will be collecting playing cards, cross word puzzles, word searches, protein bars, hard candies, gum, note paper, and pens for our active duty service members. You can bring any donations to the boxes that will be on the pew outside the Cameron Room.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS
“The Knights of the North Castle” Vacation Bible School will run Monday, June 15 through Friday, June 19. We hope you will join us on an exciting quest as we discover different pieces of God’s protective armor found in stories from the Old and New Testament!

PARENT'S NIGHT OUT
February 7, 2020
FREE childcare... drop the kids off at 6 p.m. and pick up at 8:30 p.m. Enjoy a night out on the town while your kids eat yummy snacks, play games, do crafts and watch a movie. Parenting is a challenging job and providing childcare is our gift to you. Plan now to enjoy some time for yourself and leave the rest to us!
Session Appointments for 2020

Christian Education - Jan Stefanki and Michele Hobza
Administration - David Cody and Mel List
Stewardship - Peter Tiedemann
Worship - Judy Foote
Mission Outreach - Mark Swanson (Dick Waugh to chair)
Membership - Allyson Sage
Personnel - Chris Knowdell and Mark Swanson
Nominating Committee - Mark Swanson
President of Corporation - David Cody
Treasurer of Corporation - Debbie Davis
Secretary of Corporation - Sharyl Stevens
Presbytery Commissioners - Sharyl Stevens, Gordon Zerkel

WESTMINSTER CHURCH RETREAT SCHEDULED

Hello all! Are you looking for a fabulous family adventure, and time for beautiful lake Tahoe? If so, consider attending the All church retreat. The all church retreat will be happening May 1-3, 2020. We will be staying at Zephyr Cove retreat center in beautiful Lake Tahoe. This will be a time for families to spend time together, in addition to each group being part of their own amazing program. Adults will have retreat time, led by Pamela Anderson, focusing on the areas of social justice, while children and youth will participate in their own programs! We will have music, fellowship, worship, and a whole lot of fun! Please consider joining us, sign-up forms will be in the office, as well as after both services on a number of Sundays leading up to the event. Lakeview rooms are a first come first served situation, so get your registration and payment in early to guarantee yourself a spot and a Lakeview! If you have additional questions, please email Jen Cox at jaceysac@yahoo.com. We hope everyone is able to attend, we hope to see you there!!

EQUAL EXCHANGE MISSION PROGRAM THANK YOU’S

Four PWOW members are dedicated to our Equal Exchange mission program – Lynne Stevenson, Marcia Smith, Maryann Hopson, and Sharyl Stevens – and they deserve our thanks and appreciation. They have grown this part of the PWOW mission. Lynne reports congregational support continues to be strong. This was our sixth year of offering Equal Exchange fairly traded coffee, chocolate and teas. The especially popular offerings continue to be French Roast coffee beans and ALL types of dark chocolate. New offerings this year included hazelnut flavored coffee, dark chocolate, coconut milk bars and dark chocolate minis. They are grateful to the church office staff who assist with order deliveries and newsletter articles. Please feel free to contact them with questions, requests, suggestions and appreciation at LStevenson249@gmail.com.
Westminster’s Children’s Education staff will be recertified in CPR on February 11, 2020 at 5pm in the Club Room.

This certification course is also open to the members of Westminster as well. The cost will be $50/ per person. You can signup at the office.

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This year’s congregational meeting will be preceded by a Congregational Potluck Breakfast at 9:30 am in the Social Hall. The food assignments are as follows for families with surnames:

A-H bring fruits or yoghurt  
I-P bring a main dish  
Q-Z bring baked goods

Please make an identifying card for your food listing ingredients & especially noting anything that is gluten free, vegan, or contains common allergy triggers such as blue cheese or peanuts. And please remember to put your name on serving dishes & utensils so we can make sure they go home with you!

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Join us as we begin Lent at our Ash Wednesday service on February 26, 2020. At 6pm there will be a dinner in the Social Hall followed by a 7pm service. This service will include the imposition of ashes and feature the Chancel Choir. Deacons will also be in the front of the church at various times during the day to impose “Ashes to Go” for those who cannot make it in the evening.

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On Saturday, February 15, 2020 a memorial will be held for Cappy Young in the Sanctuary at 1:00 pm. The reception will be held offsite.

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Phillip Reese will be leading with a collection of parables, grounded in scripture. Rollins' premise is that Jesus' parables shocked their audiences when they heard them, but that it is often hard for a modern, western audience brought up with familiar parables from childhood to feel that same sense of shock. So he’s written about 30 parables in an attempt to jar readers out of their comfort zone and see Jesus’ teachings in a fresh way. The class format will be simple: Phillip will read on of Rollins’ parable to the group. We will take a moment to think about it. Then we will discuss it. No need to buy the book - just come to class ready to reflect and discuss.
MISSING AND MURDERED

BY ALICE GINOSAR

The Taiko drums were booming, then vibrated into my body and soul. The audience was moved, often to tears, by the story of one of thousands of missing and murdered indigenous women, Khadija Britton, kidnapped in February 2018, as spoken by her grandfather. This was the scene, on Saturday, November 23, as the All Voices Choral Project (AVCP) presented “Listen to Herstory: Missing & Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW)” at Westminster.

Violence continues happening to our Native American women. Four out of five native women (84.3 %) experience violence in their lifetime and the perpetrator is more than likely to be non-native.

Most Americans (including myself) have been completely unaware of these atrocities. Awareness is our first step toward action. Legislation is pending, AB 1653, introduced by Assemblyman Frazier (Fresno); his Legislative Director, Marc Engstrom told the audience of about 250 that were gathered for the concert at Westminster Presbyterian Church downtown. This bill would establish the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women’s Task Force to collect data and organize more effective data collection and coordination of resources.

Songs were sung by All Voices Choir Project* under the direction of Lee Hoffman: "Say Her Name", "Let It Matter", "All things are connected", and "When Thunder Comes" along with the taiko drums.

How troubling it is that so many of us ‘progressives’ have been so unaware of the magnitude of this recent genocide against Native American women. Of course we know the history of the United States government genocide over our 243 years. In “The Peoples History of the United States”, Howard Zinn documents the facts and estimates the numbers. He also notes that the renowned historian Arthur Schlesinger in his writings about Andrew Jackson, did not even mention the atrocities President Jackson committed against Native Peoples, especially the ‘Trail of Tears’ in 1830. We can begin changing our shameful history by individually following and supporting AB 1653.

Contact Marc Engstrom at 916-319-2011.

*All Voices Choral Project (AVCP) seeks to Harmonize the Divide: educate, inspire, and mobilize people for peace and justice.
A NOTE FROM DIANA WRIGHT

To My Westminster Family,

Words can never begin to express my appreciation to my Westminster Family for your prayers, cards, gifts, and the over-the-top retirement party, which I shall remember always. My appreciation extends deep and wide to all the people responsible for this gala event, especially to Michele Hobza and Michelle Mosnier (and your cadre of helpers). You transformed the Club Room to a comfortable and beautifully decorated reception room. Your graciousness and attention to detail, including a gluten-free cake will never be forgotten. I have been blessed by knowing you both and look forward to continued years of friendship.

Thank you to my Westminster Family for believing in my work and your support for children and youth. Thank you for presenting me with an impressive and beautifully framed Resolution from the City of Sacramento, for your lovely cards and warm sentiments, flowers, and especially for my beautiful Celtic cross necklace. Every time I wear it, I will think of you and all the years God has blessed me with having spent them with you. A special thank you to all the families and to the children and youth that I have been privileged to serve over the years. It was good to see so many of your at the party. Each of you has left an indelible print in my heart that will stand the test of time.

I will be devoting my retirement to taking up worthy causes, starting with nurturing and prioritizing my own three grandchildren, Xander, Holden and baby Gwen. Besides that, I intend to volunteer for the many worthy causes that tug at my heartstrings, such as: Gender wage gap, affordable childcare, free preschool, immigration issues, affordable sports programs for youth, Habitat for Humanity, Mission and Advocacy for seniors in residential care homes. God is calling and I’m listening...

Thanks again for the memories, for the wonderful, God-filled moments, and for family.

In Christ,

Diana
Ash Wednesday - February 26, 2020

Join us as we begin Lent at our Ash Wednesday service on February 26, 2020. At 6pm there will be a dinner in the Social Hall followed by a 7pm service. This service will include the imposition of ashes and feature the Chancel Choir. Deacons will also be in the front of the church at various times during the day to impose “Ashes to Go” for those who cannot make it in the evening.

Handel’s Messiah Part 2 - The Easter Portion

The Kerygma series, HALLELUJAH, began last October with Part 1. The series will continue this spring. March 4th begins the new class. This is in conjunction with Connecting On Wednesdays (COW). The Chicago Symphony presentation of the Messiah is the central element of the course. The Resource book, HALLELUJAH, chapters 6-10 will be our guide. It will not be a problem if you missed the Christmas portion from before; our summary will catch you up. Resource book available at registration. Mark your calendar now.

The church office will be closed on Monday, February 17, in observance of President’s Day.