**February 2022**

**Matters of Faith**

**Faith United Church of Christ**

**1001 5th Street, PO Box 1113**

 **International Falls, MN 56649**

**218-283-2486**

**Sunday Worship 1:00 p.m.**

**Pastor’s Ponderings**

I love, love. I hope you do too! February, Valentine's Day specifically, can help us put a microscope on all things of love. I'm going to write a “love letter” to each of my kids this year. I'll time it to arrive, in the mail, (yes a handwritten letter that I actually send in the mail) a couple of days before V. Day. I'm going to write about specific things I love about them! Maybe I'll send each a couple of store-bought cards too, between the 1st and 10th of February, as sort of a primer. (I'm thinking as I write) This is great! As a lover of love I guess I'm getting excited about February. Which makes me notice, I suppose I take love for granted the rest of the year.

 If I truly believe in God's unconditional love, and call myself a person of faith, I suppose I need to be more mindful of holding a microscope to love the other 11 months of the year as well. The February kind of love is so fun, untethered, and sometimes involves chocolate! The rest-of-the-year love can be so much harder. I’m still thinking as I’m writing, so I will challenge us **all** to read 1st Corinthians chapter 13 now and reread at the beginning of each month this year. Maybe it will make a difference in our lives, the lives of others we interact with, and the life of our church.

 I'll close with an invitation to join in the upcoming Bible study, February 8th and 15th on the book of the Bible called *Song of Songs*. My commentary says, in explaining this unique book,

 “In ancient Israel everything human came to expression in words: reverence, gratitude, anger, sorrow, suffering, trust, friendship, commitment, loyalty, hope, wisdom, moral outrage, repentance. In the *Song*, it is love that finds words – inspired words that disclose its exquisite charm and beauty as one of God's choices gifts."

Blessing, Pastor Kris

**A Few Notes**

**Elephant Eaters – Next Meeting is 9th February 2022 at noon**

**Men’s Club -- Next Meeting will be 10th March, 2022**

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**Pastor Kris will be on retreat from 11th February until 13th February**

**with 10th and 14th February off**

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**Reminder: Readers can pick up scripture at noon on Wednesdays**

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**Anyone who would like a copy of the Financial Statement please contact the office by email or letter to receive one. Thank you!**

**March Newsletter Deadline:**

**Please have info in by Wednesday, February 23rd (or sooner, if possible)**

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**If you are receiving our Newsletter via mail (USPS), and would like to receive it through your email account instead, let the office know your email address. Call the office at 283-2486 (and leave a message if no one is working that day), drop a note on the secretary’s desk or drop a note in the mail to:**

**Faith United Church at:**

**PO Box 1113 International Falls, MN 56649**



**Winter Reading**

**More favorites to read!**

**Prodigal Summer by Barbara Kingsolver**

 **Brunelleschi's Dome: How a Renaissance Genius**

# **Valentines day clipart clipart cliparts for you - ClipartixReinvented Architecture by Ross King**

**East of Eden by John Steinbeck**

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**Mornings on Horseback by**  **David McCullough**

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**The Inimitable Jeeves by P.G. Wodehouse**

**Stones From The River by Ursula Helgi**

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**The Inimitable Jeeves by PG Wodehouse**

 **Waters of the Dancing Sky by Janet Kay**

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**If anyone out there has their own favorites to share, please email the titles and authors to the church. We’d love to include them here!**

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**Happy Valentines Day!**

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Happy Groundhog Day!

Or if you are British, and a traditionalist about these things, Happy Hedgehog Day!

About two thousand-odd years ago, when all those egotistical Romans were attempting to conquer Britain, - HA! – there was a pagan Festival of February celebrated at this time of year. Everyone was a bit fed up with winter by then, and needed cheering up because nobody had thought to invent Christmas yet, and there’s nothing quite like gluttony and debauchery to take your mind off your frostbite.

Anyway, it was noticed that hedgehogs – don’t ask me why – meandered out at about this time, and so were thought to herald the coming of Spring. Actually, the hedgehogs couldn’t care less about the weather, they were looking hopefully for saucers of milk left out for them by kindly British housewives, but they had a long wait because nobody started doing this until around the middle of the twentieth century.

However, all this took a back seat for the next few hundred years or so, because the early church decided that cavorting with hedgehogs in the name of Spring wasn’t Christian, (let alone a comfortable experience given all those prickles).

But the practice didn’t die out altogether. The church decided to change the Festival of Spring to the Feast of Candlemas, (heavy on the gluttony, not so hot on the debauchery thing, lose the hedgehog angle), and everyone all but ignored it from then on. No point to it, was there?

Everybody except, that is, the bunch who went over to colonize the New World. They carried on the tradition of looking for the hedgehog, undaunted by the fact that hedgehogs are not native to North America, and are therefore hard to find. But, Americans are nothing if not resourceful. A quick substitute with a convenient, All American Groundhog, and no one was any the wiser.

And there you have it. The story behind Groundhog Day. Two thousand years on, it is a Hollywood movie, a tourist draw for Punxsutawney, and an excuse for every TV weatherman in the country to get excited about something other than a fluctuating barometer.

All that’s missing is the hedgehog, the gluttony, and the debauchery. And no one has yet left a saucer of milk out for the groundhog. No point, is there?

**Faith United Church**  **We’re on the Web!**

 **1001 5th Street Visit us at:**

 **PO Box 1113 www.faithuccifalls.org**

 **International Falls, MN**

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*Matters of Faith is published by Faith United Church, UCC for its members and friends*

