



Lent is a season in the church calendar that invites us back into the loving arms of God. Lent is about confronting all the life-draining ways we seek cheap substitutes for God's love, grace, and mercy, by chucking them and turning to the Real Stuff. It's about allowing ourselves to receive the gift of love we crave. No matter what we may "give up for Lent," what we're really giving up is the habit of

withholding God's love from ourselves by seeking it elsewhere. We give up junk to receive treasure. May we begin by receiving this Valentine from God...

**Adapted from Steve Garnaas-Holmes, Nov. 21, 2022*

A Valentine from God

By Steve Garnaas Holmes

*Beloved,
when you pray to me
set aside your prayers.
Just sit with me.
It gives me joy to be with you.
Of all my creations
in all the galaxies,
including the galaxies themselves,
none is any more precious to me
than you.
You delight me.
Unseen, unheard, unfelt,
I hold you. I enfold you.
I know at times I come on too strong,
at times too vague,
but dearie, I'm doing my best
to be just small enough for you.
Come sit in my lap.
Just let me look at you.

Be mine.*

I pray that you might join myself and your Church family this **Wednesday, February 14th**, as we celebrate Valentine's Day by entering into the love of God as we begin this Lenten Season. Over the next six weeks, I invite you to make space for a Lenten Discipline in one or more of the following ways...

- If you give something up for Lent, think about putting aside the money you would have spent as a **Lenten offering** for the ministry of First United Methodist Church.
- Pick up a **devotional booklet** from the entry table to use throughout these 40 days.
- Stop by the **Chapel** for some time of **Artistic Prayer**. In the rear of the Sanctuary, on **Wednesdays**, beginning February 21, 2024, the space will be available for private and personal prayer between **Noon-2:00 p.m.** There will also be creative resources available to assist you in artful prayer if you desire.
- Come on Wednesday evenings for **Soup and Study**. Soup will be served at **6:00 p.m.** and Study will begin at **7:00 p.m.** in **Fellowship Hall**. You are invited to all or part. Our study will be based on two books: *Too Busy Not To Pray* by Bill Hybels and *Pray Like Jesus* by Don Underwood
- Our **Worship and Sermon Series** will explore *The Lord's Prayer*. We learn this prayer from the time we can start talking, but has anyone ever taught us exactly what we are saying? Each week we will discover what Jesus is teaching through this beloved and meaningful prayer.

I look forward to our first Lenten Pilgrimage together, *Jill*



**Ash Wednesday
Service**

Feb. 14, 2024

At 7:00 p.m.

First UMC Oakhurst