

# The Master's Message

## The Newsletter of the Church of the Master

### February, 2023

*Virtual Adult Bible Study*  
Wednesday, 7:00 PM  
Saturday, 12:00

2783 Lafayette Avenue  
Bronx, N.Y. 10465  
718-597-6298

*Sunday Worship*  
Sunday 11:00 am

*cotm47@verizon.net*

*Rev. Dr. Melva J. Hayden, Pastor*

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RESIDENTS, kings, and other ruling officials should be honored and prayed for. So wrote the apostles Peter and Paul, who lived under the Roman emperors. But we must never forget that the King of kings and Lord of lords deserves our ultimate honor and complete allegiance.

This hymn appeared anonymously in George Whitefield's *Hymn Book*, published in 1757. It is usually attributed to Charles Wesley, but was probably published anonymously for a good reason. Scholars think Wesley wrote this hymn as an imitation of the English national anthem, "God Save Our Gracious King." The national anthem had just been written, and it had become popular throughout England. This hymn may have been Wesley's way of keeping priorities straight.

Whether the author was trying to remind us that there is an almighty King greater than any earthly ruler, or whether he was simply writing it as a special hymn for Trinity Sunday, it is a grand and noble hymn praising our sovereign Lord.



*Oh, come, let us sing to the Lord! Give a joyous shout in honor of the Rock of our salvation! Come before him with thankful hearts. Let us sing him psalms of praise. For the Lord is a great God, the great King of all gods. . . Come, kneel before the Lord our Maker, for he is our God. We are his sheep, and he is our Shepherd. Oh, that you would hear him calling you today and come to him!*

Psalm 95:1-3, 6-7, TLB

## Come, Thou Almighty King

Come, Thou Almighty King,  
Help us Thy name to sing,  
Help us to praise:  
Father! all-glorious,  
O'er all victorious,  
Come, and reign over us,  
Ancient of Days.

Come, Thou Incarnate Word,  
Gird on Thy mighty sword,  
Our prayer attend!  
Come, and Thy people bless,  
And give Thy word success:  
Spirit of holiness,  
On us descend.

Come, Holy Comforter,  
Thy sacred witness bear  
In this glad hour!  
Thou, who almighty art,  
Now rule in ev'ry heart  
And ne'er from us depart,  
Spirit of pow'r.

To Thee, great One in Three,  
Eternal praises be,  
Hence evermore;  
Thy sov'reign majesty  
May we in glory see,  
And to eternity  
Love and adore.

Author unknown

## SPECIAL DATES\*

- African-American History Month
- Groundhog Day, February 2<sup>nd</sup>
- Valentine's Day, February 14<sup>th</sup>
- Transfiguration Sunday, February 19<sup>th</sup>
- Presidents' Day, February 20<sup>th</sup>
- Shrove Tuesday, February 21<sup>st</sup>
- Ash Wednesday, February 22<sup>nd</sup>

## \*News From the Pews\*



### Prayer Requests

Continued healing for:  
Allen Ford, Carole Mahon,  
Loretta Byrd & Alice & Alex Rivera

Everyone is invited to join our virtual **"Hour of Prayer Power"** every Friday at 7:00 PM. The conference call-in number is 605-475-4860, code: 371231#

Our virtual **Bible Study** meets Wednesday at 7:00 PM and Saturday at 12:00. Contact Ron Rivera (917-716-8273) for information on joining



## Lincoln and his Bible

A biographer of Abraham Lincoln says that Lincoln knew the Bible almost by heart. In the book, *Mr. Lincoln* by J.G. Randall, we read: "There was not a clergyman to be found so familiar with it as he. There is scarcely a speech or paper prepared by him from 1834 to 1865, but contains apt allusions and stirring illustrations from the sacred book." In fact, it is said that when Lincoln saw a misquotation from the Bible, he would correct it and write down the chapter and verse where the exact words could be found.

## \*CHURCH CHUCKLES\*

A little girl, dressed in her Sunday best, was running as fast as she could, trying not to be late for Bible class. As she ran, she prayed, "Dear Lord, please don't let me be late! Dear Lord, please don't let me be late!"

As she was running, she tripped on a curb and fell, getting her clothes dirty and tearing her dress. She got up, brushed herself off, and started running again. As she ran, she once again began to pray, "Dear Lord, please don't let me be late! But don't shove me either."

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Lynn spent the entire ride home from church inspecting the bottom of her shoe. She finally put it back on and told her mom, "I know why Reverend Ron told us to do some sole searching. I found gum, tape and a bug on mine"

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## CHURCH NOTES

We need volunteers for summer camp.  
There will be sinning and dancing

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A Rabbi said to a precocious six-year-old boy, "So your mother says your prayers for you each night?"

"Yes sir," the boy replies.

"That's very commendable. What does she say?"

The little boy replied, "Thank God he's in bed!"

## Can't pray? First rest!

Weariness can seriously hamper our attempts to pray, says Bonnie Gray, author of *Whispers of Rest*. "We are a generation who doesn't know how to express our souls to God, even though we drive ourselves exhausted, doing for Jesus." The solution, she says, is to stop and rest.

The stressed-out, despairing prophet in 1 Kings 19 is a prime example. "God knew Elijah needed physical rejuvenation first — in order to hear his gentle voice, whispering in a gentle breeze," Gray notes. Guarding against the depletion of spiritual, physical and emotional resources can improve our ability to hear God's voice, too. "When you find it's hard to pray, don't be afraid," says Gray. "You're standing at the very cusp of who God longs to connect with. The real you. Take the time to rest. You're worth it."



***“The Challenge of Re-Creating the Beloved Community in the Seeming Absence of Love!”***

February is noted for Valentine’s Day and thoughts of love and loved ones. But an enduring world-wide pandemic, the divisive November 2022 Mid-Year Elections, and the two-year Anniversary of the shocking imbroglio that occurred in the nation’s Capitol in Washington, DC, on January 6, 2021 that resulted in rioting, vandalism, and the deaths of 5 persons—one a Capitol police officer, love seems to be at best a fleeting aspiration as we enter into this February 2023!

However, as believers on Christ Jesus we must never lose hope and we must choose love at every opportunity and in the face of every challenge—especially whenever and wherever hatred, bigotry and evil rear their wicked heads!

According to the King Center, “*The Beloved Community*” is a term that was first coined in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century by the philosopher-theologian Josiah Royce, who founded the Fellowship of Reconciliation.<sup>1</sup> However, it was Dr. Martin Luther, Jr., also a member of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, who popularized the term and invested it with deeper meaning which has captured the imagination of people of goodwill all over the world...Dr. King’s *Beloved Community* is a global vision, in which all people can share in the wealth of the earth. In the *Beloved Community*, poverty, hunger and homelessness will not be tolerated because international standards of human decency will not allow it. Racism and all forms of discrimination, bigotry and prejudice will be replaced by an all-inclusive spirit of sisterhood and brotherhood. In the *Beloved Community*, international disputes will be resolved by peaceful conflict-resolution and reconciliation of adversaries, instead of military power. Love and trust will triumph over fear and hatred. Peace with justice will prevail over war and military conflict” (<https://www.thekingcenter.org>. (Accessed on January 19, 2021)).

Rev. Dr. Dave deFreese of Rejoicing Spirits writes in his article “*Together, We are a Beloved Community*” the following about King’s notion of the *Beloved Community*, “Facing the Challenge of a New Age, Dr. King wrote, ‘But the end is reconciliation; the end is redemption; the end is the creation of a beloved community. It is this type of spirit and this type of love that can transform opposers into friends. It is this kind of understanding good will that will transform the deep gloom of the old age into the exuberant gladness of the new age. It is this love which will bring about miracles.’ Dr. King wrote these words in 1956 and almost 60 years later, the message of transforming love and the beloved community is as current now as it was then” (<https://www.rejoicingspirits.org>. (Accessed on January 19, 2021)).

<sup>1</sup> Fellowship of Reconciliation USA (FORUSA) is an interfaith peace fellowship leading the charge on today’s most pressing human and civil rights issues through advocacy, activism, and educational programs. [It] is the oldest and largest organization of its kind, promoting peace and active nonviolence with a diverse membership spanning many religious, spiritual, and cultural traditions (<https://www.forusa.org>. (Accessed on 1/19/21)).

I agree with Dr. King's definition of the *Beloved Community* and Dr. deFreese's assertion that the message of transforming love and beloved community is as current now as it was then. In fact, the *Beloved Community* is needed now more than ever before! But how do we take on the challenge of re-creating the *Beloved Community* in this present moment when we seem to be bereft of love itself?

The first thing we who are believers of Christ must do to take on the challenge of re-creating the *Beloved Community* is choose to be a member of the *Beloved Community*. By choosing to be a member of the *Beloved Community*, we choose love. By choosing love, we choose to love and to be loved. For, the Bible tells us that "God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. (1John 4:16). Hence by choosing love, we choose to dwell in God. Because God is love, when we choose to dwell in love, we dwell in God and God dwells in us.

The second thing we who are believers of Christ must do to take on the challenge of re-creating the *Beloved Community* is we must reject hatred, bigotry and prejudice. Hatred, bigotry and prejudice are antithetical to love. Hatred, bigotry and prejudice are not of God! How can we say we love God whom we have never seen and yet hate our brothers and sisters? The Bible is clear that "Those who say, 'I love God,' and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen" (1 John 4:20).

The third thing we, the church, must do to take on the challenge of re-creating the *Beloved Community* is be intentional about creating a safe space for grace to be in community and be intentional about being communal. The Greek term for this concept of community is "*koinonia*." The Bible tells us in the Book of Acts, "[N]ow the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of possessions, but everything was held in common... There was no a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need" (Acts 4:32, 34-35). The notion or concept of *koinonia* does not mean that no one should own property or assets today. Rather, it does mean that those believers living in the spirit of *koinonia* in the *Beloved Community* will freely give of their substance to help those within and outside the community who are in need. Those who are living in the spirit of *koinonia* in the *Beloved Community* are committed to being their sisters' and brothers' keepers. Those who are living in the spirit of *koinonia* in the *Beloved Community* are not fearful of those who are different and are outside of the community. The Bible is clear that "[T]here is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whosoever fears has not reached perfection in love." Those living in the spirit of *koinonia* in the *Beloved Community* welcome all!

The last and perhaps most profound thing we, the church, must do to take on the challenge of re-creating the *Beloved Community* is to be the voice to cry loud and spare not

where we see injustice and oppression. This is not to say the church should be political. Let me be clear the church must be intentional—especially in the charged atmosphere and vitriol of our current state of political affairs—about keeping the church separate from politics. But, the church cannot be silent in the face of oppression, poverty, racism, bigotry and prejudice. If we, the church, are serious about taking on the challenge of re-creating the *Beloved Community*, we must speak out and stand up for Jesus where we see wickedness. As Dr. King wrote, “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere!” (“Letter from the Birmingham Jail” (<https://www.kingcenter.org>. (Accessed on January 19, 2021))).

In closing, I remind us that re-creating the *Beloved Community* will not be easy. But this should not prevent us from pursuing this challenge. The Bible tells us “[B]eloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. God’s love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another” (1 John 4:7-11).

I unapologetically choose love! The choice is up to each of us as to whether or not we will choose love. The choice is up to each of us as to whether we want to live in the spirit of *koinonia* or chaos. The choice is up to each of us as to whether we are willing to be intentional in doing our part to live and love in the spirit of *koinonia* and thereby help re-create the *Beloved Community*. Happy Valentine’s Day!

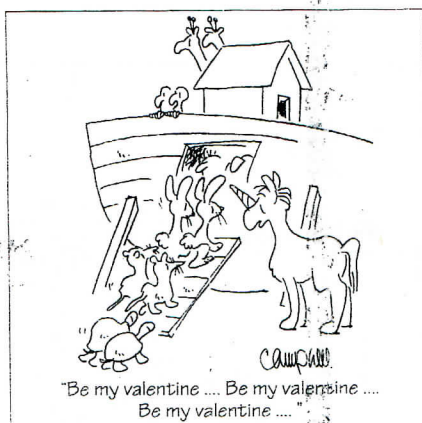
Shalom to you now,

*Rev. Dr. Melva J. Hayden*

Rev. Dr. Melva J. Hayden, Pastor  
Church of the Master



## Beyond candy hearts and roses



The first half of February seems dominated by pink and red, cards and candy. But people not in a loving romantic relationship can sometimes feel left out of the festivities. Of course, all people need love – and certainly love is not limited to the romantic kind. Author Leo Buscaglia, who became known as “Dr. Love” for

writing about the topic, said, “Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around.”

Jesus taught that loving one another is second only in importance to loving God (Matthew 22:37-40), and that when we love one another, God lives in us (1 John 4:12). There are so many ways to do that – beyond candy hearts and roses! But Valentine’s Day is as good a reminder as any.

## Two Ways to Heaven?

In John 14:6, Jesus spoke in no uncertain terms when he said, "I am The Way, The Truth, and The Life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

As Christians, the very foundation of our faith is the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ on a Roman cross and His subsequent resurrection from the dead two millennia ago. That single act bridged an otherwise unreachable chasm between a holy creator God and sinful mankind. Jesus perfectly satisfied the wrath meant to punish the rebellious and by trusting in him, our sins are forgiven and our eternity secured.

However, taking a look at specific portions of Scripture, might there be another way?

There is. Be perfect. Keep God's commandments without fail. After all, didn't Jesus lay it out for us in the Sermon on the Mount wherein He outlined all the things we must do to follow God's law? And didn't He say in Matthew 5:48, "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly father is perfect"?

The only problem is that the standard which Jesus described is not possible for any human being to achieve. Romans 3:23 tells us, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Not some have sinned. Not many have sinned. All.

So sure, I guess technically speaking there are two ways to get to Heaven. Be perfect and have never committed a sin. Or, trust in the vicarious atonement made by Jesus Christ and receive a pardon for every sin—past, present and future, so when you stand before the Judgment Seat, you will be clothed in the righteousness of the Holy One.

Ed Bungert



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### A prayer for Ash Wednesday

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O loving God, we come to the Holy season of Lent truly sorry for our sins that have often separated us from you. We confess that we need to repent of our offenses against you which we have committed by thought, word and deed. We humbly pray for your mercy and forgiveness. We pray for a new quest for holiness on our part that we may become faithful and righteous servants of Christ. In his name, we pray. Amen.

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### Doing something for Lent

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Some years ago there was the story about a family who was visited by an older aunt during the season of Lent. The aunt was a devoted Christian who liked to read mystery stories, especially murder mysteries. The family made sure there was a supply of such books in her room.

Toward the end of the aunt's stay, the family noticed that she had not touched a single book.

"What's the matter," asked a nephew, "don't you like our selection of books?"

"Oh, no, it's not that," she replied. "It's just that I've given up murder for Lent."

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### To make a long sermon short

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In the *Guinness Book of World Records* there is listed the shortest sermon ever preached. It was given by John Albrecht, an Episcopal priest in Michigan. He stood in his pulpit to preach, paused and said simply "Love!" He then sat down. Some of Albrecht's members said it was the best sermon he ever preached.

