

The Master's Message

The Newsletter of the Church of the Master

February, 2025

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

WWW.COTMBRONX.ORG

Rev. Dr. Melva J. Hayden, Pastor

The King of Love My Shepherd Is

The King of love my Shepherd is,
Whose goodness faileth never;
I nothing lack if I am His,
And He is mine forever.

Where streams of living water flow,
My ransomed soul He leadeth,
And where the verdant pastures grow,
With food celestial feedeth.

Perverse and foolish, oft I strayed,
But yet in love He sought me,
And on His shoulder gently laid,
And home, rejoicing, brought me.

In death's dark vale I fear no ill
With Thee, dear Lord, beside me;
Thy rod and staff my comfort still,
Thy cross before to guide me.

Thou spread'st a table in my sight;
Thy unction grace bestoweth;
And O what transport of delight
From Thy pure chalice floweth!

And so through all the length of days
Thy goodness faileth never:
Good Shepherd, may I sing Thy praise
Within Thy house forever.

Henry Williams Baker (1821-1877)

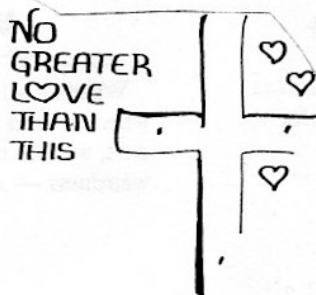
THE TWENTY-THIRD PSALM has been sung in hundreds of different forms since King David wrote the words some three thousand years ago. It isn't only because the psalm is so beautiful and expresses the Lord's handling of His sheep so well, but also because Christians have found so much to appreciate in Jesus as the Good Shepherd.

The version from the 1650 Scottish Psalter, "The Lord's My Shepherd, I'll Not Want" (January 5), has certainly stood the test of time. But when Henry Baker, an Anglican clergyman, was asked to compile a new hymnal for his church, he added this hymn, a paraphrase of Psalm 23, to the appendix of the hymnal. The fact that his hymnal sold more than sixty million copies indicates that he did his job well.

As Baker was dying, his last words came from the third stanza of this hymn: "Perverse and foolish, oft I strayed, but yet in love He sought me."



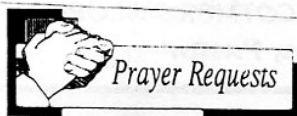
Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff—they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long. Psalm 23:4-6, NRSV



SPECIAL DATES

- African-American History Month
- Groundhog Day, *February 2nd*
- Valentine's Day, *February 14th*
- Presidents Day, *February 17th*

News From the Pews



Continue praying for:
Ellen McCullough,
Allen Ford, Carole Mahon,
Loretta Byrd, John Bruno,
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 **Online Bible Study** meets
Wednesday at 7:00 PM and Saturday at 12:00.
Contact Ron Rivera (917-716-8273)
for information on joining



Get out your calculator

- Begin with 66, the number of books in the Bible.
- Add 13, the number of Paul's books in the New Testament.
- Add 7, the number of churches in Asia Minor (Revelation 1:4).
- Multiply by 3, the Trinity.
- Multiply by 12, the number of tribes in Israel.
- Multiply by 12 again, for the Apostles.
- Add 600, Noah's age when the flood came.
- Add 3, for Noah's sons.
- Add 30 the age of Jesus when he began his ministry.
- Finally, add 33, the age of Jesus at his crucifixion.
- Now, press the equal sign, turn the calculator around and read the number upside down. You'll see the source for the solution to all of life's problems.

CHURCH CHUCKLES

An inexperienced preacher was to hold a graveside burial service at a pauper's cemetery for an indigent man with no family or friends. Not knowing where the cemetery was, the preacher made several wrong turns and got lost. When he eventually arrived, the hearse was nowhere in sight, the backhoe was next to the open hole and the workers were sitting under a tree eating lunch.

The diligent young pastor went to the open grave and found the vault lid already in place. Feeling guilty because of his tardiness, he preached an impassioned and lengthy service, sending the deceased to the great beyond in style.

As he returned to his car, he overheard one of the workers say to the other, "I've been putting in septic tanks for 20 years, and I ain't never seen anything like that."

Dear God,
I thank you for my baby brother, but what I
prayed for was a puppy.
Rachel, age 7

- "Love is that condition in which the happiness of another person is essential to your own."

—Robert Heinlein

Love gauge

In a ship's engine room, it's impossible to look into the great boiler and see how much water remains. But running up beside it is a tiny glass tube that serves as a gauge. As the water stands in the little tube, so it stands in the great boiler. When the tube is half full, the boiler is half full; when the tube is empty, the boiler is empty.

Do you ask, "How do I know I love God? I believe I love him, but I want to know." Look at the gauge: Your love for other people is the measure of your love for God.

—S.S. Chronicle

Weirdly compatible

We're all a little weird. And life is a little weird. And when we find someone whose weirdness is compatible with ours, we join up with them and fall into mutually satisfying weirdness — and call it love — true love.

—Robert Fulghum, *True Love*

Before you speak,
let your words pass thru 3 gates:
'Is it true?'
'Is it necessary?'
'Is it kind?'


Special
M.E.S.S.A.G.E

9 "verses" that aren't in the Bible

Several popular sayings can put biblical literacy to the test. For example, the phrases below aren't in Scripture — although some come pretty close:

- "Money is the root of evil." (According to 1 Timothy 6:10, "the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.")
- "Cleanliness is next to godliness." (The closest teaching to this might be in James 4:8.)
- "God helps those who help themselves." (This proverb originated in ancient Greece, not in Scripture.)
- "God moves in mysterious ways." (A verse kind of like this is Isaiah 55:8.)
- "Spare the rod, spoil the child." (British poet Samuel Butler coined this phrase, which could be a paraphrase of Proverbs 13:24.)
- "This, too, shall pass." (This occurs nowhere in the Bible but has been linked, incorrectly, to King Solomon.)
- "Love the sinner, hate the sin." (St. Augustine originally came up with a version of this phrase.)
- "Charity begins at home." (British theologian John Wycliffe is credited with this saying.)
- "God will never give you more than you can bear." (This seems to be a misinterpretation of 1 Corinthians 10:13.)

In our newsletters, we are sharing our financial reports with our readers so everyone is aware of our situation. (The financial reports for December and end of year, 2025, were not available for this newsletter.)

We're trying to cut corners as much as possible but we need the help of our members, former members and friends. **As a member, if you miss a week or two, put your weekly offering in your envelope for that week and then bring those envelopes with you the next time you come to church. You may not be here for those weeks, but our expenses don't skip a week.**

Again, we thank our generous former members and friends who send us a donation, whether it's on a regular basis, occasionally during the year or during the holiday season. We really appreciate the donations, as well as hearing from you.

Our prayer is that we can continue to keep in touch with everyone and that will only be possible with your help.

Actions speak loudly

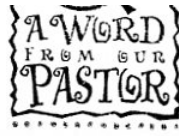
Do not waste time bothering whether you "love" your neighbor; act as if you did. As soon as we do this, we find one of the great secrets. When you are behaving as if you loved someone, you will presently come to love him.

—C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*

THE ARGYLE SWEATER

By SCOTT HILBURN





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

February is noted for Black History Month, Valentine’s Day and thoughts of love and loved ones. But enduring wars—in Ukraine and the Middle East (and prayerfully a recently agreed to ceasefire between Israel and Hamas), the divisive November 2024 Presidential Elections, and the four-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 in 2025!

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 20th Century by the philosopher-theologian Josiah Royce, who founded the Fellowship of Reconciliation.¹ 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)).

¹ Fellowship of Reconciliation USA (FOR-USA) 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. (1 John 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 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 or not we want to live in the spirit of *koinonia* or chaos. The choice is up to each of us as to whether or not 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



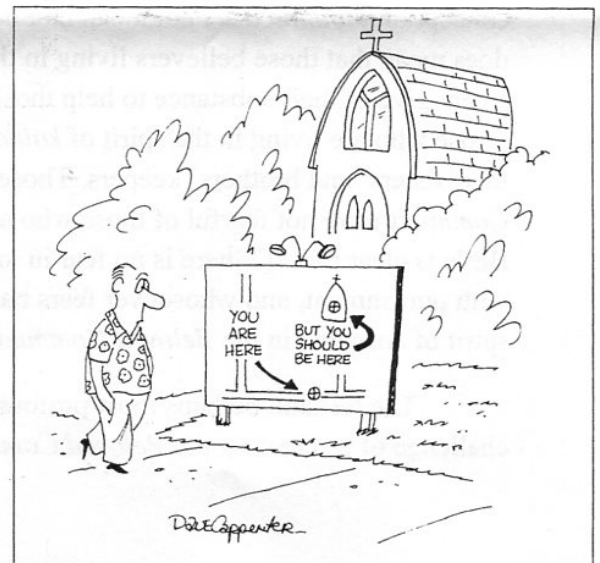
Unwrap the gift

At church one Sunday, I noticed a woman carrying a Bible neatly wrapped in colorful ribbon, like a package. My first thought was that she must be giving it to someone as a present.

Throughout the next few weeks, however, I realized it was the woman’s own well-used Bible. Whenever a worship service or Bible study ended, she carefully rewrapped the Scriptures with that shimmery strand.

What a great reminder that God’s Word is a precious, practical gift meant to be opened and reopened regularly.

—Stephanie Martin



God says, "Yes!"

St. Paul told the Corinthian church that God's message to us in Christ is not "Yes and No," but is always "Yes." "For in him," Paul wrote, "every one of God's promises is a 'Yes'" (2 Corinthians 1:18-20, NRSV).

The unspeakable horrors we see in today's turbulent world bear witness that a great many are saying "No!" to goodness and love and peace on Earth.

Even so, God says "Yes!" to the world, the proof being the promise of God fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Christ came bearing love and mercy and salvation for the entire world. Christ is God's way of saying "Yes" there is a way out of the morass of sin and destruction and death. It is through the one who came that we might have life and have it abundantly (see John 10:10).

- Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were to live forever.

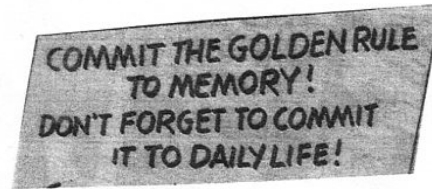
—Mahatma Gandhi

- So many of our dreams at first seem impossible, then they seem improbable, and then, when we summon the will, they soon seem inevitable.

—Christopher Reeve

Revered and read

In many churches, an ornate Bible lies open on the worship table near the entrance to the sanctuary. Someone once commented that this is an appropriate symbol for some Christians — a Bible that is revered but never read. Let us prove that observer wrong.



- "We are not here to be successful. We are here to be faithful."

—Mother Teresa

- Lord, put your arm around my shoulder and your hand over my mouth.

