

## *A Message from The Pastor*



February contains two celebrations which we might consider to be opposites: Valentine's Day and Ash Wednesday, the start of Lent. Of course, Valentine's Day started as a celebration of a church saint, but it is certainly not a church holiday any longer. It is a celebration of love, primarily romantic love, but any love can be celebrated on February 14<sup>th</sup>. Ash Wednesday is the start of Lent and the day when we remember that we are mortal beings created by the almighty God. We are marked with ashes to remember that we were created out of mud and that we will one day return to the earth/mud/ashes. It would seem that there could not be two more

different holidays. Yet, both are gifts of God. Loving in its most general sense would not be possible for us without the capacity to love which God granted to each human being. Romantic love is most fully obtained as we seek to live out the nonjudgmental and generous love which we experience through God, and it is sustained as we learn forgiveness, compassion, kindness, and so on in our walk with God. On Ash Wednesday, we remember that all we have, even our very existence, is a gift from God, who loves us beyond anything we could imagine. We are God's children, created by God to love. We are to love God, one another, and ourselves with a complete and abundant love. Through Christ's love, we need not fear our mortality. We are granted eternal life through Christ, and we celebrate that death is overcome through Christ as we carry the mark of our mortality on Ash Wednesday. This February, we may or may not celebrate romantic love, but we most definitely celebrate the love of God, who created us and who grants us victory over death. Please join us on Ash Wednesday (which is also Valentine's Day) for ashes at Noon or at 7:00pm to receive ashes and partake of Holy Communion.

Blessings,

Pastor Margery