



Being Love

A LENTEN GUIDE
WEEK 3

You are Essential

SUNDAY: THE NURTURING COMMUNITY

We may not always feel like we have something to offer—but God’s love for us, as we are, in all we are—demonstrates that we have a part to play. In fact, it is only when we are all together, in our diversity, united in the work of love, that we display to the world the fullness of who Christ is. You are essential—*and so is your neighbor.*

“Primary for us is the gospel understanding that all persons are important—because they are human beings created by God and loved through and by Jesus Christ and not because they have merited significance.”

—UMC SOCIAL PRINCIPLES, THE NUTURING COMMUNITY



MONDAY
MARCH 1

Connecting with the church community is an essential part of our spiritual growth all the time. But when opportunities to gather at the church building become few and far between, we have to get extra creative when it comes to making those community connections. Check out the opportunities to connect below and consider, *how is it that you are called to connect during this time?*

Opportunities for Connection

JOIN A SMALL GROUP

Try out a small group or a Sunday School gathering during the season of Lent. There are different opportunities available regularly at fumcdenton.com/groups.

BECOME A PRAYER PARTNER

You are an important member of this community and becoming a prayer partner is one simple way to remain connected during this. Prayer partners will be assigned by the church. You and another person will have the opportunity to check up on each other and pray for each other. Sign up at fumcdenton.com/prayer.

DAY 12

TUESDAY
MARCH 2
SCRIPTURE READING

Just as there are many parts to our bodies, so it is with Christ's body. We are all parts of it, and it takes every one of us to make it complete, for we each have different work to do. So we belong to each other, and each needs all the others.

God has given each of us the ability to do certain things well. So if God has given you the ability to prophesy, then prophesy whenever you can—as often as your faith is strong enough to receive a message from God. If your gift is that of serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, do a good job of teaching. If you are a preacher, see to it that your sermons are strong and helpful. If God has given you money, be generous in helping others with it. If God has given you administrative ability and put you in charge of the work of others, take the responsibility seriously. Those who offer comfort to the sorrowing should do so with Christian cheer.

Don't just pretend that you love others: really love them. Hate what is wrong. Stand on the side of the good. Love each other with brotherly affection and take delight in honoring each other.

- Romans 12:4-10 (TLB)



WEDNESDAY
MARCH 3

"In a real sense all life is inter-related. All men are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be, and you can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be...This is the inter-related structure of reality.

—REV. DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR., LETTER FROM A BIRMINGHAM JAIL

Look down at your shirt (it's okay if it's PJs; no judgement here). Look closely; try to make out each single stitch. Try to guess how many threads make up the fabric. A thousand? A hundred thousand? A million? What would happen if you were to catch the end of one of those threads and pull? *Take a moment to consider the implications of what MLK calls "the inter-related structure of reality."* What emotions arise when you consider our "single garment of destiny," an idea far more complicated than even the complexity of your shirt? How can you live out your essential part in this extreme connectedness today?

DAY 14

THURSDAY
MARCH 3

During this season of COVID-19, the word “essential” has taken on a whole new level of meaning as it has been applied to a broad section of the workforce. From grocery workers to bus drivers, teachers to healthcare workers, postal service and delivery workers to janitorial staff, and scientists to entertainers, the pandemic has dramatically altered our understanding of which jobs our community actually cannot function without. However, as the pandemic drags on, these workers who were once hailed as the very backbone of our society, risking their lives to keep the wheels turning, are being under-recognized at best and treated as disposable at worst. *Who in your life would you not be able to survive without? Let them know.*

Call to Action

APPRECIATING THE ESSENTIAL

Especially right now, it's impossible to avoid the fact that some jobs are more dangerous—physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually—than others. How can you show appreciation for the essential workers in your life this week? Some suggestions: send small gifts and/or messages of thanks and affirmation to yours or your children's teachers, leave snacks and/or encouraging notes out for your delivery drivers, serve with the church when we go to support our still-overwhelmed healthcare workers, or take action on behalf of non-healthcare essential workers by contacting the governor to request that they be included in the next round of vaccinations.

FRIDAY
MARCH 5

Today's prayer practice invites us to imagine God's interconnected, beloved community. In the beloved community, people see reality from distinct and numerous angles. But, it is the sum of all our pieces of viewing of reality that points us to God's bigger reality. Let us dream of God's reality of compassion, grace, hope and healing for all of us. As you engage in prayer today, lift up those in your family, church, and community who see reality differently than you. Jesus' words are insightful when we discern ways to respond to brokenness in the beloved community:

You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven. — Matt 5:43-45a, NRSV

Gracious and loving God, disturb us enough that we may show empathy to our neighbors and stir in our hearts your courage to dare dream big dreams beyond the seas of compassion for all your children. We ask that you give us grace, enough grace to see you in our all siblings and our human experiences. Lord, renew your gentle spirit within us and enable us to follow your humble path on earth. Amen.

— Great Plains Conference

DAY 14

SATURDAY
MARCH 6

“*Your friend is your needs answered.* He is your field which you sow with love and reap with thanksgiving. And he is your board and your fireside.

For you come to him with your hunger, and you seek him for peace.

When your friend speaks his mind you fear not the ‘nay’ in your own mind, nor do you withhold the ‘ay.’

And when he is silent your heart ceases not to listen to his heart;

For without words, in friendship, all thoughts, all desires, all expectations are born and shared, with joy that is unacclaimed.

When you part from your friend, you grieve not;

For that which you love most in him may be clearer in his absence, as the mountain to the climber is clearer from the plain.

And let there be no purpose in friendship save the deepening of the spirit.”

—KAHLIL GIBRAN, *THE PROPHET*

Something to Try

RECONNECT WITH AN OLD FRIEND

It can be easy to move through the day-to-day and realize that you haven't spoken to your closest friend in months. Is there somebody in your life that you love but haven't spoken to in a while? Consider giving that person a call today just to let them know you're thinking of them.