The Gathering

MARCH 2025

The Lord your God is with you.
He is mighty to save.
He will take great delight in you.
In his love, he will no longer rebuke you.
He will rejoice over you with singing.
Zephaniah 3: 17

Alpha Course

Bible Study

Zion Zoomers

Guess Who?

The flowers have faded, the cards either kept or discarded, the chocolate wrappings are all that remains of Valentine's Day-except the love. Another single, special day of the year when it is almost impossible to get a restaurant reservation, has passed. The energy, thought, planning and cash we put into gift buying are all spent, but the joy remains. You are loved.

When I was a teenager in Scotland, February 14th was not the commercial success it is now. You only sent a card to somebody you "fancied" and sometimes even signed it "Guess Who?" How frustrating is that??? The recipient puzzled over who it might be, became suspicious that it might be someone playing a joke, so didn't tell anyone about it. It didn't make the person happy-it stifled you and you couldn't return the sentiment.

In my first year of teaching in Canada, I was taken aback and delighted when students in all my classes presented me with valentines. They were doling them out to others as well and even to the school principal! What a lovely feeling to be overwhelmed by such affection!

Fast forward 60 years. This time, I sent my family the newest valentine e card from my favourite Jacquie Lawson website where its availability was announced with this comment…" we noted fundamental differences between us Brits and our transatlantic cousins and one of the most perplexing of these is that, while Valentine's Day cards are generally reserved for romantic relationships here, our friends across the Pond seem to send them to almost anyone!" Hmmm, I thought. Is that a criticism? I adored the fact that Canadians were so generous and caring and taught their kids to express affection for others, but I was always nagged by the fear that some would be left out and feel rejected on that one day of the year. It would hurt and go on hurting.

The message of love that God sent us in His Son and His Word, is not for just one day, it's life-lasting and eternal. It's not signed "Guess who?" and it's not playing a joke, stifling us so that we don't want to tell anyone about it. It's for everyone, so no one is left out or rejected, no matter who we are or what we have done. And the love we are to carry for one another is wide-ranging and deep, beautifully described by Paul in 1 Corinthians, 13; 4-7

Love is patient and kind. It does not envy or boast.
It is not arrogant or rude. It is not irritable or resentful.
Love does not delight at wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth.
Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.
Love never fails.

Once, I read through this description and replaced the words that I have underlined above with the word **I**, just to see how it would sound. It was a reality check! Below is a quote by Rick Warren.

Joan Cumming.

"The best use of life is love. The best expression of love is time and the best time to love is now."

A word from Evan

Someone asked the other day when Lent would start, and I had to look it up; Ash Wednesday is March 5th this year. Ever since, I've been thinking about what the season of Lent means, both in a spiritual and a practical sense. We Christians know it as our preparation for Easter, a symbolic parallel to the forty days Jesus spent in the desert.

Many around the world will choose to participate in Lent by making a Lenten sacrifice, often something like giving up a favourite indulgence or working to squash a bad habit. The idea of giving up something as a form of worship and remembrance has stuck with me these last couple weeks, and while I won't try to talk you out of giving up chocolate or soft drinks for Lent if you so choose, I hope I might convince some of you to work on giving up fear.

It's not the small fears that I'm thinking of, not the little voice of caution that warns us to be careful on icy steps, nor the mild sense of concern that makes us double-check we've turned off the oven and closed the garage door whenever we leave the house. I'm thinking about the massive, soul crushing, life draining fears that God shields us against: the fears of plenty and want, of health and sickness, of life and death.

Indeed, there is quite a lot of talk about big fears in scripture, and it's almost always about giving up that fear. You can find reassurance in Isaiah: "So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." (Isaiah 41:10, KJV) If you'd rather, you can read King David's most famous Psalm: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." (Psalm 23:4, KJV). If the Reverends MacLeod don't mind us skipping ahead of their sermon series on the Gospel of John by a few chapters, we can read the words of Jesus from the night the Last Supper: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." (John 14:27, KJV)

Jesus is the antidote to our fears. The angels who announced his birth to the shepherds near Bethlehem said it better than I ever could: "[10] And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. [11] For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." (Luke 2:10-11, KJV)

Saviour. What a powerful word! What an incredible promise!

Lent is here, and Easter is soon to follow. We know that our fear is pointless because we know what the coming of Easter means. Jesus will die for our sins, then conquer death as living proof that we might know the truth of God's promises to us. When we see the empty tomb, we know that there is no fear in death. There is no fear of what tomorrow might bring, because we have the certainty that God has always been and will always be right beside us.

So, this year, if you're going to give up something for Lent, give up fear. Trust in God's everlasting love.

Liz's Corner!

Greetings Brothers and Sisters!

Today, as I'm watching the crows play tag on gusts of freezing wind against the backdrop of a grey sky and my ice covered yard, the lyrics of an old country music tune by Moe Bandy flit through my mind. I remember hearing it back in the 80's and have always thought of it as a prayer:

Too Old To Die Young

If life is like a candle bright, death must be the wind.
You can close your window tight and it still comes flowing in.
So I will climb the highest hill and watch the rising sun
And I pray that I don't feel the chill 'till I'm too old to die young.

Chorus: Let me watch my children grow to see what they become,
O Lord, don't let that cold wind blow 'till I'm too old to die young.

Now I have had some dear sweet friends I thought would never die;
Now the only thing that's left of them is the tear drop in my eye.
If I could have one wish today and know it would be done;
Well, I would say every one could stay 'till they're too old to die young.

Today, and every day, I am thankful the Lord has spared me to grow old and know that my loved ones are still in His care. Today as I look forward to the first sighting of a robin and the sign of a sprouting crocus or daffodil, I understand that as the creator of all things, God owes us nothing and needs nothing from us. He uses His creation to deepen our faith in His power and provision and, because of this alone, He is worthy of our praise and worship. Like Jesus told us in Matthew, Chapter 6, the birds of the air and the flowers of the field are provided for and we are far more valuable to Him then they are. Matthew 6:34 - 'Don't be anxious for tomorrow. God will take care of your tomorrow, too. Live one day at a time.'

Ecclesiastes 9 tells us we can't avoid the reality of the grave; that all of us share a common destiny. Fear and worry are comrades that can be crippling. I'm glad the Lord has His finger on the pulse of our lives. John 3:16 - 'For God so loved the world so much, that he gave us his only Son so that anyone who believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.' At this time of year, the lead up to Easter, the promises of God give us strength and peace. As we look forward to celebrating the most sacred of christian holy days, we remember that this is the time to cleanse and prepare our hearts for the blessings that Jesus wants to shower upon us.

Though I am not worthy of His peace, hope, joy, and love, I have these in abundance accorded by the grace of God. Hallelujah!! Praise the Lord!!

Thanks be to God for His tender mercies. Keep the faith my friends! You are in my prayers!

Godspeed
Elizabeth Ferguson

John's Thoughts

The Wonder of His Creation

The glimpse of geese flying overhead, the lead goose forming the front of the "v", and the rest taking their places immediately behind, completing the "v" shape; And God created this instinct!

A red fox stands still and quiet, listening intently, every muscle tight, and ready to pounce, and…wow! There he goes, headfirst into the deep snow. And God created this instinct!

The thunder rolls, the rains down, the stars glisten, and the rainbow reminds us that the Lord God is in full control, the birds sing their song, and the bees pollinate the flowers. Life goes on in an amazing and wonderful way.

And God created everything according to His plan, with wonder and amazement. How wonderful that He loves the world that He created, and He really does love each of His children, young and old. This reminds me of a gospel song written and performed by Canadian-born singer, George Beverly Shea.

The Wonder of it All

There's the wonder of sunset at evening
The wonder of sunrise I see
But the wonder of wonders that thrills my soul
Is the wonder that God loves me.

Oh, the wonder of it all, the wonder of it all
Just to think that God loves me
Oh the wonder of it all, the wonder of it all
Just to think that God loves me.

There's the wonder of springtime and harvest
The stars, the sky, the sun
But the wonder of wonders that thrills my soul
Is a wonder that has only begun.

Oh, the wonder of it all, the wonder of it all
Just to think that God loves me
Oh, the wonder of it all, the wonder of it all
Just to think that God loves you.

You can listen to him sing this song on 100 Huntley Street (go to Google search, type his name and tap "songs".. it is the first on the list). Enjoy and sing along!

Around The Church

The Alpha Group is still going strong on Monday evenings at 6pm with a delicious meal (thanks to our volunteers), a powerful video and interesting discussion groups. There's nothing you can't ask. Come and join us! Or check it out at ***https://alphacanada.org.***

Prayer Group meets on Tuesday mornings at 10am and new participants are always welcome to pray aloud with us or in the silence of your heart. We are happy to have your requests for prayer which are kept confidential unless otherwise indicated. You can also send prayer requests by using the cards in the pews.

Bible Study continues with the Gospel of John on Tuesday evenings at 6pm and Thursday mornings at 10am with a fellowship time for half and hour before each session begins. We'd love to see you there as we flesh out the deeper meaning of God's Holy Word.

The Choir and Director Faye are busy preparing music for Lenten Services, Palm Sunday, Good Friday and Easter. Members made a nursing home visit to Andrews of Charlottetown on February 6. We welcome new singers to the Sanctuary Choir rehearsals at 7pm on Wednesdays. Legato and Marcato choirs practise on alternate Wednesdays at 6.30 pm.

Zion Zoomers had a pleasant, surprisingly mild evening for their walk on February 22nd in support of the Harvest House Ministry in Charlottetown. Our cheerful contingent under the leadership of Beryl Holden collected over $8000 in sponsorships. Congratulations!

The Annual Meeting had a large turnout after church on February 16. A big thank you to those who prepared a hearty lunch for us and others who submitted informative reports on church activities and finances as well as to the office staff for the mammoth task of preparing and printing the document.

Lenten Lunches are back at 12.10 pm in Prince Street churches! Mark your calendar for March 5, 12,19, 26, April 2, 9 and plan on bringing along a friend or family member.

The Gathering connects with those who are unable to worship with us on Sundays, but who are still part of the Zion Family. It is also available on our website every month at ***zionpres.org*** *(click on Menu, then Ministries and scroll down to the last file). Comments, suggestions and contributions are welcome at gatheringinfo2025@gmail.com. Anyone wanting a visit from the pastoral team is invited to make a request through the office.*

A big thank you to all our contributors and to Kevin MacRae for his technical assistance.

Sharing Stories

It's been almost 9 months now since Kirk and I arrived on the Island, and we are starting to get to know you! Getting to know one another takes time. Of course, we have the opportunity to meet people at the doors following worship, but those encounters are so very brief and don't allow for much more than "Great to see you. Thank you for coming this morning." But over the past few months, as we have had time for longer chats and to meet some of you who worship online where you live, we are thankful for opportunities for conversations that have gone beyond the weather: sharing stories: life stories, family stories, stories of joy and concern, and stories of where God is at work in your lives.

As we have been reading through the Gospel of John together, I have become more aware of how many of the stories in this gospel are about encounters with Jesus like Nicodemus, the woman from Samaria, the royal official, the man at the pool of Bethsaida. These are not all miracle stories, but they are about conversations people had with Him and how those conversations changed their lives. Jesus made time for meaningful conversation. He didn't talk about the weather. Did you ever notice that? In the brief snapshots we get of his 3 years on earth compressed into the 4 gospels, over and over again, we see Jesus engaged in conversations with people, ordinary people like you and I.

We each have conversations everyday but how many of them are actually meaningful? So often we live our lives in a hurry, darting from this to that without taking time to slow down and really engage. We all have our own "stuff" and sometimes we are looking for opportunities to share our burdens with others. But have you ever considered that perhaps God brings people into your path so that He might use your life, your story, your experiences, to point to Him? Maybe the thought of that feels overwhelming or brings on an anxiety attack: "I wouldn't know what to say!" "I don't have enough scripture verses memorized yet!" "I don't want them to think I'm some kind of Jesus freak!"

The truth is, God not only brings people into our lives at opportune times, but He also brings us into the lives of other people so that we might, with love and gentleness, point to Him through the story of how His love changed us. This happens best not when we ramble off a list of scripture verses but when we share the way Jesus has made a difference in our lives: how He has encouraged us, comforted us in sorrow, given us peace in the face of fear, provided direction in times of decision making, how we can talk to Him in times of distress or worry. All you need is a genuine love for God, a heart that is open to listen for God's invitation to share His love and a spirit that is willing to do what God invites you to do; to share the good news that He is with us, and He is for us.

Pray, Ponder & Praise

Abundant Blessings Psalm 21- a psalm of David

O Lord, I rejoice in your strength.
How great is my joy in the victories you give.
You have granted me the desire of my heart
and have not withheld the request of my lips.
You welcome me with rich blessings
and place a crown of pure gold on my head.
I asked you for life and you gave it to me -
length of days for ever and ever.

You have granted me eternal blessings
and made me glad, with the joy of your presence.
For I trust in you, Lord, through your unfailing love.
Oh, Most High, I will not be shaken.
Be exalted O Lord, in your strength.
I will sing and praise your might.

Pause at the end of each line and think about the meaning of what you have just read.

DAYSTART – A MORNING PRAYER

Adoration

Father in Heaven and Lord of all, I praise you for your goodness and faithfulness to me and for the power of your Holy Spirit to work in me as the day unfolds.

Confession

I admit I don't always seek your will every day or serve you as you expect I should. I try not to disappoint you but don't always succeed.

Thanksgiving

Thank you for your love and your forgiveness when I stumble. I am grateful that you sent your Son, Jesus, to teach me and be my example.

Supplication

I ask you to keep working on me. Bless me today in all my activities and keep me safe. You already know my needs and those of my family and others who are dear to me. Please show me how I can help someone today to see your love through me.

In Jesus name. Amen.

This short, simple prayer for the start of your day follows the pattern of ACTS shared by Rev. Kirk in last month's newsletter. It is only a guide and is not meant to be adopted rigidly or prevent you praying spontaneously from the heart. God listens to us no matter what order we put our petitions to him in. Prayers don't have to be lengthy and in lofty language. The Lord's Prayer is not long and complicated! It's just you talking to your heavenly Father who loves to hear from you and is happy also when you are still and listen to him.

I call upon you, for you will answer me, O God. Incline your ear to me: hear my words. Psalm 17;6

March 2025 at Zion Presbyterian Church

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
USHERS March 2 Alisha, Allan J March 9 Anne, Elmer March 16 Ken, Charlotte	USHERS (Cont'd) March 23 Roylean, Eleanor March 30 Jaycee, Pam					1
2 10:30 am Worship, Children's Ministries 11:30 Fellowship	3 6:00-7:30 pm Alpha	4 10 am Prayer Group 6 pm Social Time 6:30 pm Bible Study	5 12:10 Lenten Service St. Paul's 6:30-Marcato Choir 7-8:30 pm Sanctuary Choir	6 9:30 am Social Time 10 am Bible Study 2 pm Choir Ministry at Whisperwood 6-8 pm Youth Group	7 2pm World Day of Prayer—St. Peter's Cathedral	8 10 am Knot All Knitters - Parlour
9 10:30 am Worship, Children's Ministries 11:30 Fellowship	10 6:00-7:30 pm Alpha	11 9:30 am Presbytery – The Kirk of St. James 10 am Prayer Group 6 pm Social Time 6:30 pm Bible Study	12 12:10 Lenten Service Zion 6:30 -Legato Choir 7-8:30 pm Sanctuary Choir	13 9:30 am Social Time 10 am Bible Study 1 pm Friends of Faith 6-8 pm Youth Group—Belfast	14	15
16 10:30 am Worship, Children's Ministries 11:30 Fellowship	17 6:00-7:30 pm Alpha	18 10 am Prayer Group 6 pm Social Time 6:30 pm Bible Study	19 12:10 Lenten Service Trinity 6:30-Marcato Choir 7-8:30 pm Sanctuary Choir	20 9:30 am Social Time 10 am Bible Study 6-8 pm Youth Group—Belfast 6:30 pm Board	21	22 10 am Knot All Knitters - Parlour
23 10:30 am Worship, Children's Ministries 11:30 Fellowship	24 6:00-7:30 pm Alpha	25 10 am Prayer Group 6 pm Social Time 6:30 pm Bible Study	26 12:10 Lenten Service Salvation Army 6:30-Legato Choir 7-8:30 pm Sanctuary Choir	27 9:30 am Social Time 10 am Bible Study 1 pm Friends of Faith 6-8 pm Yth Group 6:30pm Session	28	29 6:30-8:30 pm From Sea to Sea: Research on Urban Christianity in Canada Rev. Ross Lockhart
30 10:30 am Worship -Rev. Ross Lockhart Children's Ministries 11:30 Fellowship	31 6:00-7:30 pm Alpha	Easter Services ➡	Maundy Thursday, April 17—7 pm	Good Friday, April 18—10:30 am	Easter Sunday, April20—10:30 a.m.	