

Joy Letter - FEBRUARY 2026

First Presbyterian Church of Abbotsford

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Sunday Service @10:30am weekly

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"February: Valentine Month — How God Instituted Love"

February is often called "Valentine Month," a season when hearts, cards, flowers, and expressions of affection fill our culture. Yet long before love was commercialized, romanticized, or reduced to a single day, love was **instituted by God Himself**. Love did not originate in human emotion, attraction, or poetry. Love began in the very nature of God.

Love Begins With God's Nature. Scripture does not say that God *has* love; it declares that **God is love**. "Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love." - 1 John 4:8 (NIV) Love is not an invention of humanity—it flows from God's eternal character. Before there was creation, before there were people to love one another, love already existed within the Godhead. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit lived in perfect, self-giving, sacrificial love. When God created the world, He did not create love; He **revealed** it.

Love in Creation. The first explicit picture of love in Scripture appears in creation itself. God formed Adam and declared that something was "not good." "The Lord God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone.'" - Genesis 2:18 (NIV) God then created Eve—not as an afterthought, but as a divine expression of companionship, unity, and love. Marriage was God's idea, not humanity's experiment. The union between husband and wife was designed to reflect God's love: mutual, faithful, and life-giving. "That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh." - Genesis 2:24 (NIV) Valentine's Day often celebrates romance, but Scripture shows that love is deeper than attraction. God instituted love as **commitment, unity, and purpose**.

Love Distorted by Sin. When sin entered the world, love became distorted. Selfless love turned into selfish desire. Faithful devotion turned into broken relationships. Humanity began to redefine love according to feelings rather than truth. Yet even in a fallen world, God did not abandon love. Instead, He pursued humanity with a greater love—a redeeming love.

Love Revealed Through Covenant. Throughout the Old Testament, God repeatedly describes His relationship with His people using the language of love and covenant. Israel was often unfaithful, yet God remained steadfast. "I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness." - Jeremiah 31:3 (NIV) This love was not based on Israel's performance, but on God's promise. It was loyal, patient, and forgiving. God's love was shown not only in blessings, but in correction, restoration, and mercy.

Love Fulfilled in Jesus Christ. The fullest expression of God's instituted love is found in Jesus Christ. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son..." - John 3:16 (NIV) God's love is not merely spoken—it is **demonstrated**. Jesus did not come with flowers and cards; He came with a cross. True love required sacrifice. "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." - Romans 5:8 (NIV) This is the love God instituted: a love that gives, a love that suffers, a love that redeems. Valentine's love often asks, "*What do I receive?*" God's love asks, "*What can I give?*"

Love Defined by God, Not Culture. In a culture that often equates love with emotion or desire, Scripture offers a clearer definition. "Love is patient, love is kind... It does not insist on its own way." - 1 Corinthians 13:4-5 (ESV) God's love is not temporary, conditional, or self-centered. It is enduring, holy, and purposeful. When God instituted love, He defined it by **character**, not chemistry.

Love as a Calling. Those who belong to God are called to reflect His love. "Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another." - 1 John 4:11 (NIV) Love is not just something we feel in February—it is something we live every day. Husbands and wives are called to love sacrificially. Families are called to love faithfully. Believers are called to love even when it is difficult. Jesus Himself said: "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." - John 13:35 (NIV)

A Better Valentine Message. As February reminds us of love, let it also remind us of its true source. God instituted love—not as a fleeting emotion, but as a divine gift meant to reflect His glory. Roses will fade. Chocolates will be eaten. Cards will be forgotten. But the love God instituted endures forever. "Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good. His love endures forever." - Psalm 136:1 (NIV) This Valentine season, may we look beyond the celebration and rediscover the Creator of love Himself—the God who loved us first.

Submitted by: Pastor Don Everhard

🎂 FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS: Happy Birthday Blessings!!!

- ★ Mary Nikolay - 5th
- ★ Ardith Fischer - 9th
- ★ Fran Oliveri - 10th
- ★ Carol Mantik - 11th
- ★ Dennis Koch - 19th
- ★ Lilianna (Lily) Boschma - 22nd



📅 Mark Your Calendars:

First Presbyterian Church of Abbotsford offers a variety of classes for youth and adults. Here is a brief overview of the available classes: Weekly - Sunday School for youth in grades 4-8 is at **9:30am**-(please check with Gloria in advance, to see if there will be class, until March 15th, then regular schedule will continue with a new curriculum), and for children in grades K-3 it's **10:30am**. There is also a nursery available for children under 4 and a comfy cry room for infants if needed.

Upcoming Bible Studies: Feb. 9th & 23rd - Teen Group at Dorchester Library, 5pm; Feb. 13th - Ladies Group at Gloria's home, 3pm; Feb. 17th - Group Bible Study at the Church, 6:15pm. (ALL classes are coordinated by Gloria, please contact her for additional information.)

Annual Meeting of the First Presbyterian Church of Abbotsford will be Sunday, February 8th, after regular Church service. Greg Braatz will be our guest Pastor for the Sunday service and a potluck meal will follow, hosted by the Presbyterian Women (PW). Booklets are now available at the Welcome Table (1 copy per family, please). Bring with you for the meeting with any questions, comments or concerns. Thank you. 🙏

Extra Requests: Do you have a hymn request, a favorite you would like to see in the rotation? Please leave a note in the office or offering plate, noting which hymnal and hymn number(s). We would love to have a list of favorites to work with. We have been blessed with Sunday music accompaniment from Matthew Fischer playing the organ, Sharwin Gosse playing piano and organ and now Bonnie Weideman also stepping in to play piano. Thank you!!! 🙏

"Recipe for love for the Church"

Ingredients:

- 1 Whole Heart Devoted to God
- 4 Cups of Love (Agape love, the highest and most charitable form)
- 2 Heaping Cups of Patience
- 3 Cups of Forgiveness
- 1 Cup of Kindness and Tenderheartedness
- 2 Cups of Sacrifice (putting others' needs before your own)
- 4 Cups of Prayer and Faith
- A Dash of Gentleness, Trustworthiness, and Cheerfulness
- An Abundance of Laughter and Praise

Directions:

Tenderize your heart with trials, understanding that challenges can build spiritual strength.

Blend love, kindness, and appreciation thoroughly, making sure to speak good things and avoid corrupting talk. Sift out negativity, bitterness, rage, and anger, discarding any record of wrongs kept in the past. Fold in prayer and faith to lighten all other ingredients, lifting the community to a higher spiritual level. Pour this mixture into clean, open hearts and minds, letting it mature with tender care. Bake well in the warmth of human kindness, allowing it to transform the community. Serve daily in generous helpings to everyone you encounter, both within and outside the church, sharing the message of redemption and salvation. This "recipe" requires daily application, not just an occasional effort, to ensure a strong and vibrant church family. It reflects the biblical teaching that "by this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35).