

FAITH LUTHERAN CHURCH
753 N. CALUMET AVE.
VALPARAISO, IN 46383

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WWW.FAITHLUTHERAN.ORG

*Embraced by God through Jesus Christ our Lord, we share this gospel of hope and healing
within and throughout our community*



Never-Ending Love Story

What do people look for in a love story? Is it those gushy over-the-top love stories we see on the Hallmark Channel? Is it the epic love-conquers-all stories like the *Princess Bride*? Is it the intense passion of romance novels? Is it the kind of love that transcends tragedy and even death, that we see in *Romeo and Juliet*? Is it the patient pursuit of an unrequited love, as described in several other Shakespeare plays? Is it the steady day-by-day love, that weathers good times and bad, which I hope we have seen played out at least somewhere in real life? Maybe it is all these things.

Whether you are single, in a relationship, married, or divorced, having all these things in a relationship may seem like a fairy tale. All human relationships have their ups and downs. However, there is one love story that is perfect in its composition, and whose main character's love is greater than we can comprehend. Whatever we may be looking for in a love story, this is the one love we truly need.

It is hard to pick just one scripture for an article like this, because the entire bible is a love story. Want to hear passionate songs of God's love for us? Read the Song of Solomon or David's Psalms. Some of the material is enough to make one blush or at least remind us that God's love is better than life! (Ps 63:3)

Talk about a story that is epic. God parts the water, speaks through multitudes of angelic choruses, walks on water, raises people from the grave, and more, all out of love. For anyone who has wanted someone to make a grand gesture for them, it is hard not to read the bible and think "What will God do next?!"

Even when God is not displaying his power through signs and wonders, He is still continually reaching out to his beloved creation time and time again. Want to get a sense of God's patience in the face of unrequited love? Hear the longing in Jesus words, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! (Matt. 23:37)." Want to know the length to which he was willing to go to win His love? Hear his cries of love from the cross and see His arms outstretched to gather His beloved to Him.

At times, God may seem too forgiving, too loving, so much more than we deserve. Yet there on page after page, God gives his people, including us, one second chance after another. And just when you think he has finally done enough, God reaches out to touch his creation once more. I like the way the author of an article on *Pates Parables*, describes the story of this epic, passionate, pursuing, transcendent, day after day eternal love. He says:

"As God reaches out to his people, he begins to appear as this greater pursuer. He is deliberate, patient and tenacious. But what exactly is he pursuing?"

One of the things God seems pretty keen on is getting his people to recognize his love for them. In the scriptures God keeps sending all of these reminders that he is close to his creation, cares for them, and has their best interests at heart. His love is so grand that uniformity alone would not do it justice. God could have chosen to make every person reciprocate this love automatically. He could have made us robots. But forced love, is not really love at all. Love is a choice. God chose to love us and allows us to choose to love him back. However, his love is never contingent on our love. In fact, his love cannot be defined in our own limited understanding of what love should be. His love is infinite, pure and unending. God is a patient lover who has made the first move. He waits for us to return the gesture, all the while showing us that His love is eternal and will never fade out. Brennan Manning puts it this way: 'Human love will always be a faint shadow of God's love. Not because it is too sugary or sentimental, but simply because it can never compare from whence it comes. Human love, with all its passion and emotion, is a thin echo of the passion/emotion love of Yahweh.'

I wonder if that is why the psalmist can cry out "Your love is better than life." Or why he can pray to God: "Satisfy us in the morning with your unfailing love, that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days." *Satisfy us with your unfailing love?* That is a bold request. Could it be that God's love is so good and so strong that it can do just that? That it can satisfy us?

Satisfaction. That is a word we don't hear very often. It seems like most of us are very unsatisfied. We keep searching for the next thing, the next love or the next relationship that will finally give us peace. It's a Never-Ending Story—and not a cool one that has mythical far away places and giant flying dogs.

God's love is not far away or distant. His love has no contingencies. It is real. It is unfailing. And it is all-satisfying. I wonder if God is really a hopeless romantic at heart and he delights in wooing and awing his creation. Perhaps he is the greatest romantic that exists. And maybe every time we take part in a little romance or choose to show some grand gesture of our affection to someone we love, we are, in fact, acting like our creator. Perhaps romance is a sign that we are partnering with God in an epic love story that has existed since the beginning of time. We are choosing to love and be loved. We are embracing the hopeless romantic inside all of us."¹

So for all you hopeless romantics, as well as those who are struggling to love or feel loved this season, let's all remember, celebrate, and share the great and never-ending love story of our God who loves and pursues us all.

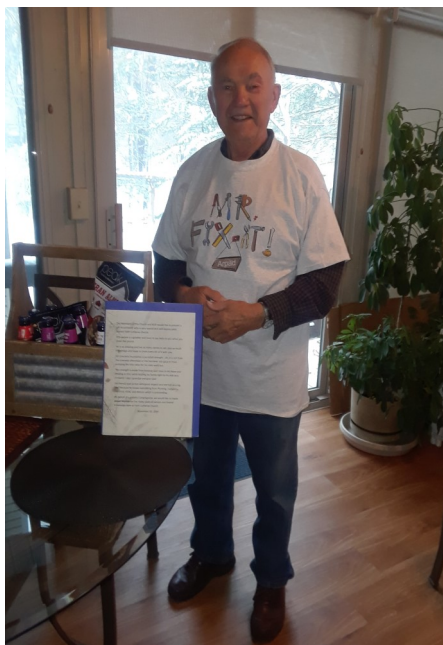
In Christ,

Pastor Eric Schoech

Pastor Eric Schoech

¹ This quote and material for this article come from:

God-A Hopeless Romantic <https://pateparables.blogspot.com/2011/02/goda-hopeless-romantic.html>



At the Voter's Assembly last November, the Board of Directors presented Arpad Marton with a gift in thanks for all the hard work he has done and continues to do around our church:

"The members of this church and BOD would like to present a gift to someone who is very special and well -appreciated around Faith Lutheran Church.

This person is a greeter and loves to say hello to you when you enter the church. He is so amazing and has so many stories to tell plus so much knowledge; and loves to share every bit of it with you.

His concrete foundation is so full of strength. Oh, it is not from the concrete aftershave or the hardener old spice or from pumping the iron rebar for his daily work out. This strength is made from keeping God close to his heart and trusting in him while holding his family tight to his side as a husband/dad/grandpa and grand-dad.

His friends look at him with great respect and see him as a big stud because he knows everything from plumbing, carpentry, electrical, HVAC and motors, which is outstanding.

On behalf of a grateful congregation we would like to thank Arpad Marton for the many years of service and shared knowledge here at Faith Lutheran Church."



Laura Allwardt helps daddy spread salt on slippery walks before church.

GRAPE CLUSTER VALENTINE'S PARTY

Everyone is cordially invited to the annual Grape Cluster Valentine's Party, held at Bruce and Marilyn Lindner's home.

When: Saturday, February 15 beginning at 7:00pm.

Where: 459 E. 900 N., Valparaiso (for directions see Marilyn or Bruce or call 730-0190.)

Details: Casual dress, high school age and older munchies and beverages provided by Cluster members. Come alone or feel free to bring a friend!

Please join us for fellowship and fun!



Birthdays

Alexis Brandt	February 6
Patsy Berndt	February 7
Anna Price	February 7
Deb Porter	February 12
Beth Underwood	February 13
Carroll Morris	February 15
Kenny Frank	February 22
Frank Morris	February 22

If we have left out your birthday please call the office at 462-7684.

KEEP ON ROLLING!

Join us for an afternoon of bowling fun at Inman's Bowling & Recreation Center on Sunday, February 9. The pins will be set at 2 pm, so we hope to see you there!



THOUGHTS FROM THE DEACONESS

"I Am the Door"
John 10:9

Sheep were a part of everyday life for the Israelites. Food and wool came from these animals. Shepherds, either male or female, had the task of caring for the sheep. Sometimes, they owned the flock; at other times they were hired help. After a day of grazing in the pasture, the sheep were brought home to a corral. There was only one opening into the corral. The shepherd would do a head count as the sheep entered and check for any injuries. Once all were secure, the shepherd would sleep in the doorway. That kept the sheep from escaping and prevented predators from entering.

Jesus calls himself the door. "I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture." The phrase 'go in and out' meant far more to the Israelites than just a physical description of movement. To an Israelite, if you could come and go from a place, it meant you had total safety and peace. It indicated that your daily living was free of worries and concerns.

Scripture uses this phrase over twenty times; most in the Old Testament. As Moses nears death, he says that he can no longer go out and come in. He could not lead the Israelites to safety and peace. Before David became king, Israel already saw him as one who could provide safety and peace – "But all Israel and Judah loved David, for he went out and came in before them." In the book of Acts, we read of Paul's visit to Jerusalem after his conversion. "So he went in and out among them at Jerusalem, preaching boldly in the name of the Lord." And now we read of Jesus calling himself the door to his corral. If we enter through him, we will go in and out, finding pasture and salvation.

However, we can't stop here with our own comfort. When we go out, we must find others to go in with us. They, too, long for the same safety and peace that only the Door can give.

"The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forevermore." Psalm 121:8

WINTER CHOIR SCHEDULE

Sunday, February 2	11:35am-12:05pm rehearsal
<i>Sunday, February 9</i>	<i>Sing during 9:00am service</i>
NO REHEARSAL ON FEBRUARY 16	
Sunday, February 23	11:35am-12:05pm rehearsal
Sunday, March 1	11:35am-12:05pm rehearsal
Sunday, March 8	11:35am-12:05pm rehearsal
<i>Sunday, March 15</i>	<i>Sing during 9:00am service</i>



VCA VALENTINE'S DAY DANCE AND SPAGHETTI DINNER

All Faith members, friends and family are invited to Valparaiso Christian Academy's Valentine's Day Dance and Spaghetti dinner on Friday, February 14 from 6:30-8:30pm.



DJ LJ will be playing some tunes. Come and join our VCA kids and their parents to get acquainted and have some fun!

Faith Lutheran
Church

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**NEWSLETTER EMAIL
OPTION**

Beginning with this issue we are offering a new way to receive your newsletter: via email. This saves on paper, ink and postage and it is also a convenient option.

There is a sign up sheet in the Narthex. Give us your email address and your newsletter will come to your in-box rather than your mailbox. You may also call us at (219) 462-7684 or email us



(office@faithmemorial.net.)

No changes will be made unless you sign up for email or otherwise notify us.

FAITH WORSHIP SCHEDULE

The Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany, February 2, 9:00am Holy Communion

The Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany, February 9, 9:00am Word & Prayer

The Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany, February 16, 9:00am Holy Communion

The Last Sunday after the Epiphany, February 23, 9:00am Word & Prayer

Ash Wednesday, February 26, 7:00pm Holy Communion

The First Sunday in Lent, March 1, 9:00am Holy Communion

The First Wednesday in Lent, March 4, 7:00pm Evening Prayer

The Second Sunday in Lent, March 8, 9:00am Morning Prayer

The Second Wednesday in Lent, March 11, 7:00pm Evening Prayer

The Third Sunday in Lent, March 15, 9:00am Holy Communion



*How great is the love
the Father has lavished on us,
that we should be called children of God!
1 John 3:1*

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