



The On a recent Saturday, I found myself at Camp Caroline Furnace with Allison Owens and some other youth and adults from our Southern Valley Conference. We were there to spend the day planning for our first Conference Youth Event in May, modeled in part on the success of our Virginia Synod youth events. I am pleased to be able to serve as chaplain for this important retreat.

Our young people expressed a desire for the theme to be on the topic of love. They were interested in love's uses and love's abuses. They expressed a desire to hear what the Bible commands us about love and, most importantly, about the love that the Bible promises is ours through Jesus Christ.

They picked two theme verses, and I want to share them with you:

Love does no wrong to a neighbor - Romans 13:10a (NRSV)
and
Love never fails - I Corinthians 13:8a (NAS)

How interesting to place these two verses side by side. "Love does no harm to a neighbor," is a goal for us all. It does not say, "Love does no wrong to a neighbor *unless they wrong you first,*" or "Love does no wrong to a neighbor *unless they deserve it.*" Even if our neighbor is wrong and has acted badly, we are called to love. Their actions may reflect poorly on them, but our reactions too often reflect poorly on us. Our failure to love marks us as sinners. Yet, God calls us to strive for this lofty goal of love.

"Love never fails," seems to speak then of something more. We know that our love *does* fail. We too often fall short of the goal of loving our neighbor. We too often gossip. We too often say hurtful things, intentionally and unintentionally. We are quick

to anger and slow to forgiveness. So this never-ending love must be greater than us. This love must be greater than our failures. This love must come not from within us, but from without.

Christians and others recognize the source of this unfailing love. It is God. In fact, scripture tells us in I John that God is love. We thank God the Father for the never-failing love that it took to send us God the Son. We thank God for always loving us, not by our merits or worthiness but through the merits of Jesus Christ. We thank God for the gift of the Holy Spirit that gives us the power to love – the power to attempt to do no wrong to our neighbor – and the humility to ask forgiveness and start again when we fail at it.

May this be our St. Valentine's Day prayer, and may each of you abide in Christ's love.

Peace,
Pastor Chris



Worship Service
Wednesday, February 25 at 7:00 pm



Wednesdays in Lent
March 4, 11, 18, 25
April 1
We will have a Soup and Sandwich
supper at 6:15 pm followed by a worship service
at 7:00 pm