

# Pastor's Ponderings/ From the Organ Bench

Pastor Greg Shook

Dear Flock,

It's summer, it's hot, it's (supposedly) a slower time. As Nat King Cole used to sing, "those lazy, hazy, crazy days of summer." So we look for a little easier, maybe even laid back, way of existing. So, here is my newsletter article for the summer: **God is Love**. So long until next month!

But wait, there's more! (Or is there?)

I had the pleasure of stopping in on a former congregation in Rockville. Marty Blake's mother still attends, and she and Marty recently invited me to stop in for a luncheon with some of the "old timers" to fellowship and visit. The former pastor, Kasey, was there, and the group were as alive as ever. I'll give you a bit of background. I went there as their director of music/organist while I was a graduate student at the University of Maryland. I was there from 1982 through 1989. It was a place where a lot of my spirituality came together, and that was mainly due to the love and nurturing that I received there. Kasey and the other ministers were all about "God is Love." True, they preached on a lot of topics, but the ongoing theme while I was there returned again and again to God's love for all people.

The church was very involved in outreach, but to the point that it seemed there were no limitations. We prayed for and were active in a variety of areas including (but in no way limited to) Interfaith Housing, AIDs ministry, Meals on Wheels, Crossing Racial and Ethnic lines, support for first responders, and on and on and on. Incredible involvement. The church grew, and grew, and continues to grow, and it has a vibrant ministry. It was, and continues as, a house for all of God's people. The basic premise was **God is Love**. My visit wasn't long, I was there just long enough for Tom Newpher's great potato salad and some tea and lots of hugs, reminiscing, and fellowship. What was so great about that congregation? The love, both within the walls and that was taken far beyond the walls. They truly put their money and their faith where their words went, and then some. God is love.

Driving back I was taken back to seminary days when we studied the New Testament. I had a class on the Gospels and one of our books was *The Four Witnesses: The Rebel, the Rabbi, The Chronicler, and the Mystic*. Author Robin

Griffith-Jones starts with the basic idea that if Jesus' question, "Who do you say that I am?" intrigues you, then his book is written for you. Again, with all the research and all the writing, we are back to the basic premise that God is Love. The New Testament offers us this radical guy, Jesus. God's Son turns the world upside down and calls disciples, and well, you know the rest of the story. God is Love.

Could it be that many of us prefer to live in the Old Testament, to be judgmental, to finger point, to EXclude rather and INclude? The new testament reassures us of a place with God. Jesus promised that "Lo, I am with you to the end of the age." I was questioned recently at a funeral why there was no *Continued on page 2* crucifix present. I tried my best to explain that, for us, the cross is empty because Jesus rose from the dead. After all, the point of Easter and the resurrection story is the HOPE that it brings to the Christian. God is Love.

Yes, we are in transition. Yes, we will once again go through a process. Yes, yes, yes. God is Love. I heard it over and over when I was at Rockville. I thought I would overhear it . . . but no, God is Love became a mantra of that congregation. It drove every meeting, every vote, every act of that congregation. God is Love. We need to be reminded of the basics. God is Love. I saw it, I witnessed it, and it's still going strong.

Now what? Well, we can do this. It will take work, but God is Love. We can focus on being all we can be to share the Good News of Jesus Christ. God is Love. We can be as creative, and let our imaginations run wild with possibilities. God is Love. We can pray for one another, for others, and create a true safe, spiritual, and welcoming place for God's people . . . all of them. God is Love. It will take work, it will take every ounce of strength and resources we can produce. God is Love. It will take US, God's people, the sheep, the worker bees, however you see yourself, to make it happen. However, it can happen. I've seen it and believe it. And remember, waiting, or making no decision, is a decision. God *really* Is Love! Thanks be to God. Soli Deo Gloria! —Pastor Greg