

+ August 2015+

GOOD NEWS

FOR OUR MEMBERS & FRIENDS

FIRST EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH • ALTOONA, PA

FROM YOUR PASTOR AUGUST, 2015

Saint Paul's letter to the Ephesians, chapter 3 contains a wonderful prayer which in part reads: *I pray....that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith as you are rooted and grounded in love... Eph.3:17.* These words mean I can expect to experience Jesus in times that are difficult as well as good times, as I notice Christ's Love. Are you wondering if God is near? To notice God in Christ Jesus, then you can look for signs of Love. Ask Jesus to give you the gift of Faith which can open the eyes of your heart to notice Love in action. As you know Saint Paul also exclaimed – *Love never ends* - Corinthians 13:13. You and I can expect to notice Jesus' presence where and when Love is present.

One experience recently that is about Love, was when I waited to have a blood test and was engaged in a conversation with a person, who as I later learned, was in a late stage of cancer. The day we met she was going to have a chemotherapy treatment. One aspect of our heart-to-heart talk, centered in her desire to find a church to get back to God. Of course, I told her that First Lutheran Church, Altoona was a good choice. She said she would attend.

The day was Tuesday, and on the following Sunday Suzie was in attendance. Janet pointed her out to me. I talked with her. Janet sat with Suzie and helped as a new friend in Christ. The Love of Christ was at the center of all that happened. She was at First Lutheran Sunday Worship for three weeks. The last Sunday, Suzie told me, *I will not be here next week I have a decision to make about my treatment. So, pray for me.* And I said *yes.* A *yes* to pray, was my last communication, because the following Saturday Suzie died.

Can the eyes of your heart notice Christ's Love? I hope you can. I believe Suzie experienced Christ's Love through you and me at First Lutheran. She was seeking Jesus, during what turned out to be, the very last weeks of her life. Her presence with us was exactly right. Suzie was seeking Jesus and, I believe, as you do, that Jesus was seeking Suzie. She was open and Jesus was fully available to Suzie through our community of faiths' worship: confession of sins, strong hymns of faith, the Word heard and preached, prayers, sharing the sign of peace, offerings, the sharing of Jesus' body and blood, and concluding blessing, and sending off in Love. We all receive gifts of Grace, and Suzie received with the eyes of her heart opened wide. She experienced a deep abiding thanksgiving, which Christ's Love evokes. A Love which is beyond imagining, and kept her heart and mind in Christ Jesus. Suzie died in Faith and now experiences the gift of heaven, open to all believers. Saint Paul's prayer is worthy of our continued use. Pray that, *Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith as you are rooted and grounded in love.* A Love enduring through all eternity and through all ages to come.

In Christ' Love,
Pastor Folmar