

Dear Friends,

I suspect that when most of us first attempted to read the Song of Songs one of our initial reactions was, “*What in the world is **this** doing in the Bible!?*” No doubt a second common question was “*What on earth is this about!?*” When it comes to reading this particular book of the Bible most of us can probably identify with the confusion of the Ethiopian eunuch when Paul asks him, “*Do you understand what you are reading?*” (Acts 8:30).

Yet, in a world that often both worships sex and also treats it as something dirty – the Song of Songs provides a much needed corrective. It seems to communicate that passionate physical love is a beautiful gift from God. Not only does it demonstrate that the Bible is not ‘anti-sex,’ but it also demonstrates that biblical sex is to be celebrated with gratitude to God who made us in His image.

In short, the Song of Songs is not only a beautiful love poem, but also a parable about human love that invites us to also reflect deeply on the relationship between Christ and His followers. In other words, it gives us the opportunity to reflect on our own intimate relationship with Jesus. And therefore, certainly one practical question we should keep in front of us throughout the weeks ahead is simply this: “Are we striving to love the Lover of our soul (Jesus) with the same kind of eagerness, anticipation, and passion as we see expressed here in the Song of Songs?”

Listed below is a *tentative* outline of our study. As always, I encourage you to read the texts ahead of time. May God continue to bless us with both grace and truth as we travel this road together.

In His Love, Pastor John

1. January 24 – “*A Theology of Human Sexuality and an Introduction to the Song of Songs*” - Song of Songs 8:6-7
2. January 31 – “*A Desire for Intimacy*” – Song of Songs 1:1-1:4a
3. Feb. 7 - “*Love Returned*” - Song of Songs 1:4b-14
4. Feb. 14 – “*Crazy Love*” – Song of Songs 1:15-2:7

**\*\*More to be added at a later date**

***Welcome to First Christian Reformed Church!***  
***Pastor John Knoester***  
***January 24, 2021***

\* Please stand in body or in spirit

*"Jesus, lover of my soul,"*

Prelude

Sung Call to Worship:

*"All Creatures of Our God and King" – Sovereign Grace*

Welcome/Announcements

\* Call to Worship: Psalm 89:1-2

I will sing of the LORD's great love forever;  
with my mouth I will make your faithfulness known  
through all generations.

<sup>2</sup> I will declare that your love stands firm forever,  
that you have established your faithfulness in heaven itself.

\* Opening Response:

**Leader:** The eternal Father, who loved us and set us free  
from our sins, who loves us still with that love  
that will not let us go, and who will love us forever,  
calls us to worship him today as the only true lover  
of our souls.

**People:** **The Lord stoops to receive the love of our poor  
hearts. He calls us to remember the depth  
of his love for us in Christ. God seeks our love!**

\* God's Greeting:

**Leader:** The Lord be with you.

**People:** **And also with you.**

**Leader:** May the love of God the Father,  
and the grace of Jesus the Son,  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit  
be and abide with us all.

**People:** **Amen!**

Opening Song: *“Jesus, Lover of My Soul” – Fernando Ortega*  
(At the end of this song children ages 3 – 3<sup>rd</sup> grade  
are excused for Children and Worship)

*“Let me to Thy bosom fly,”*

Prayer for Wisdom and Understanding

Introduction to our New Sermon Series: The Story of God and our  
Human Sexuality

Prayer for our Study of God’s Word

Sung Prayer of Illumination: *“Holy and Anointed One” – Vineyard*

*“While the nearest waters roll,”*

Scripture Reading: Song of Songs 8:6-7

<sup>6</sup>Place me like a seal over your heart, like a seal on your arm;  
for love is as strong as death, its jealousy unyielding as the  
grave. It burns like blazing fire, like a mighty flame.

<sup>7</sup>Many waters cannot quench love; rivers cannot wash it away.  
If one were to give all the wealth of his house for love, it would  
be utterly scorned.

Message: ***“An Introduction to the Song of Songs”***

Time of Prayer

*“While the tempest still is high:”*

Song/Video of Reflection: *“His Eye is On the Sparrow” - Selah*

\* Call to Service: Matthew 22:36-40

Someone asked Jesus, “Teacher, which is the greatest  
commandment in the Law?” Jesus replied: “ ‘Love the Lord  
your God with all your heart and with all your soul and  
with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest  
commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor  
as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two  
commandments.” —from Matthew 22:36-40, NIV

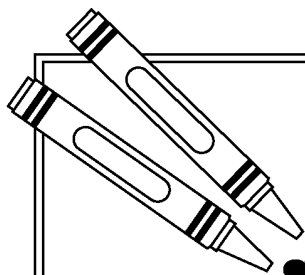
\* God's Blessing:

\* Parting Praise: *"The Blessing"* – Kari Jobe

Postlude

**Welcome!** A hearty welcome to all who have come to worship. We gather in gratitude before our loving Creator and Sustainer. Let us approach God with purity of heart and reach out to each other with care and joy.

|             | Today 1/24    | Next Week 1/31      |
|-------------|---------------|---------------------|
| Sound:      | Mardy Stevens | Henry Van Zanten    |
| Video:      | Tim Hibma     | Hannah Van Hofwegen |
| Projection: | Devin VZ      | Tim Hibma           |
| Offering:   | General Fund  | General Fund        |



Just for

**KIDS**

LOVE

In the Bible, Jesus says there are two greatest commandments. Below is a heart with continuous words around it. With your pencil, draw lines between the words. Then copy the words onto the lines below to complete Luke 10:27, NIV.

LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL AND WITH ALL YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF. LUKE 10:27

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Answer: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind," and, "Love your neighbor as yourself."



How can  
we  
**PRAY**  
for you?

People to be remembered with prayers, cards, letters & words of encouragement. Call the church office at (336-2405) or e-mail: [secretary@firstcrcmv.com](mailto:secretary@firstcrcmv.com) by 9:00 am Thursday of each week with your prayer items.

#### **NEW REQUESTS:**

Please keep **Rich Knight** and his family in your prayers today and throughout the days ahead. Rich's father, Richard Knight, passed away suddenly and unexpectedly due to heart failure. May God grant each one of the family the kind of internal peace that only He can provide.

We express our condolences to **Hank and Anjean Vander Veen**.

Anjean's 95 year old sister, Freda Visser, passed away at a nursing home in Lynden. For many years Freda was the organist at the Sumas CRC and is now enjoying the music of her heavenly home. Please commit to upholding all of Freda's loved ones in your prayers throughout the days ahead.

#### **CONTINUING REQUESTS:**

Please continue to pray for **Adelaida Vega**. Adelaida is taking some new medication pills with hope that they can control the cancer in days to come. Please continue to pray for her and her family.

**Chris Vander Wekken** Is still continuing rehab at The Bridge. His course of radiation is complete. Please pray that it has eradicated all of the tumor and thank you in advance for your continuous commitment to pray for Chris.

Continue to pray for **Ryanne Vander Pol** as she continues with her IV therapy and some radiation treatments.

#### **SHUT INS:**

**Nell Annema** at Birchview Memory Care in Sedro-Woolley; **Jerry & Marion Ekkelkamp** and **Mary Koopmans** at Where the Heart is in Burlington; **Case Lanting** at Olympic Place in Arlington, WA; **Wilma Paul** at Life Care Center in Sedro-Woolley; **Andy Pippel**, **Adrianna Swanson**, and **Lona Vander Griend** at Home Place in Burlington; **Sally Reehoorn** at Creekside in Burlington; **Bev Van Slageren** at family in Grandview, WA.

## **OTHER REQUESTS: (CRC Communications)**

**January 23, 2021 - (Diaconal Ministries Canada: Growth)** Our network of diaconal coaches across Canada is one of our most valuable tools! They help deacons grow as leaders in God's kingdom by providing coaching, support, encouragement, and accountability for diaconates. Please pray that our team of coaches will keep growing in order to keep this important work going.

**January 22, 2021 - (Resonate Global Mission: Japan)** Resonate missionaries Ken and Jeannie Lee, who work with young adults in Japan, ask you to pray for Japanese believers to look for ways to utilize their gifts and talents to build up churches in the country.

**January 21, 2021 - (ReFrame Ministries: India)** Prasun is new to the Christian faith and reached out to our Hindi ministry team to share his appreciation for their radio program and social media groups. He asks for prayers because he is the only believer in his family, and he wants to share his faith with his loved ones.

**January 20, 2021 - (World Renew: Cambodia)** In October extensive flooding affected 20 provinces in Cambodia, killing 44 people and affecting nearly 600,000. Around 50,000 people were evacuated, and more than 134,000 homes were damaged. May God provide the resources needed to rebuild and help everyone feel his hand of love, comfort, and mercy.

**January 19, 2021 - (Resonate Global Mission: Worldwide)** Many young people throughout the world are learning how to be servant leaders through Resonate-partner IMPACT clubs. Ask the Holy Spirit to work in and through these young leaders as they serve their communities.

**January 18, 2021 - (Leadership Diversity: Martin Luther King, Jr. Day)** As we all reflect on Martin Luther King, Jr., let us pray for the day that racial justice will further the kingdom of peace. Let us pray we will no longer tolerate racism but recognize it as a sin to eradicate for the sake and efficacy of the gospel of Jesus. Dear Jesus, steady our wills, minds, and bodies to let us march on until victory is won. In your name, Amen.

# First CRC Announcements

## Sunday, January 24, 2021

### OUR CHURCH FAMILY

**Happy Belated 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary to Hank and Sylvia Van Zanten!**

“There is no more lovely, friendly or charming [relationship](#), communion or company, than a good marriage.” ~ Martin Luther

**2021 Synod - Human Sexuality Report:** Due to the rapidly changing sexual mores within our culture today – the 2016 Synod (the annual general assembly of the Christian Reformed Church) commissioned a study committee to articulate a “Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality” to be used as guidance for churches in our denomination. Five years later (not so ‘rapid’) this report is completed and will be presented at the 2021 Synod. Recently the elders have been reviewing this report and for the most part have been encouraged by the tenor and wisdom of the report itself. It’s also one of the main reasons for our current sermon series on the Song of Songs. If you are interested in reading the entire 175 page report you may do so by clicking on the following link: [https://www.crcna.org/sites/default/files/human\\_sexuality\\_report\\_2020.pdf](https://www.crcna.org/sites/default/files/human_sexuality_report_2020.pdf) If you would like to read the 12 page executive summary of the report or the 4 page Banner article about it – these are currently available on the walkway shelf in the breezeway between the sanctuary and the church fellowship hall. If you have any questions/concerns/expressions of gratitude about the report itself – please don’t hesitate to contact Pastor John or your district elder.

***The elders met briefly by Zoom*** recently and with the spike of cases and the recent announcement of more restrictions we will be adding the link to the past week’s service to the bulletin announcements and as well to the announcements sent by email each week. **Last week's Sunday service link:** The link to watch last week's Sunday service online is as follows: Last Sunday’s Service: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SISY\\_tjQK1l&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SISY_tjQK1l&feature=youtu.be)

*To further aid simplifying giving when we can’t all be at church, First CRC now provides options to give your tithes and offerings electronically. This means you are now able to donate using a credit or debit card, as well as give directly from a bank account. Check the church’s website: <http://www.firstcrmv.com> for more information on these and other giving options.*



## **ORGANIZATIONS WE SUPPORT**

### ***Pregnancy Choices 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Quilt & More Auction: Sat., February 6:***

**WHERE:** Mount Vernon Church of the Nazarene, 2710 E. Fir Street  
Mount Vernon, WA. 98273

**WHEN:** February 6th, 2021

**TIME:** 9:00am Doors open; 10:00am Auction begins; 12:00pm Event ends.

This year they have a donor who will do a matching grant for the auction, up to \$8,000.00. If you have new or antique items, gift certificates to your business, or want to make a donation towards the Quilt Auction, please contact **Pregnancy Choices at 360-428-4777** or **Marnie Fox at 360-941-5821**.

**MISSIONARIES** – Check the hallway bulletin board for Christmas letters and updates from the missionaries we support all over the world!

## **REQUESTED ANNOUNCEMENTS**

***Disability Concerns Winter Book Club*** is starting soon! - Join us Tuesday evenings from February 2 through March 9 at 7pm EST for the Disability Concerns winter book club, where we'll explore John Swinton's new book: Finding Jesus in the Storm. To find out more information on the club and to sign up, check out the network article: Disability Concerns Winter 2021 Book Club (<https://network.crcna.org/disability-concerns/disability-concerns-winter-2021-book-club>)

***At-home Faith Formation Tip*** - The Practice of Engaging Scripture: Phil Reinders writes, "Through the Holy Spirit, the Word shakes off ink, paper, and pixels, stepping out of the page or screen and into our daily lives. That comes through patient attentiveness, a listening that is slow and savours." Invite the Spirit to bring God's Word alive to you in ever deeper ways. (For more on faith practices from Faith Formation Ministries, visit [crcna.org/FaithFormation/Practices](https://www.crcna.org/FaithFormation/Practices).)

***BIG AND SMALL TASKS*** - Check out the new kids' devotion at [www.kidscorner.net](http://www.kidscorner.net). Do you sometimes feel like what you do for God doesn't seem very big, or that what others are doing is too small to matter much? Listen now at [kidscorner.net](http://kidscorner.net) and subscribe to KC's weekly emails for all the new content.