

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. 21 – “*Crazy Love*” – Song of Songs 1:15-2:7
5. Feb. 28 — “*Waiting for Love*” – Song of Songs 2:8-17
6. Mar. 7 – “*Looking for Love*” – Song of Songs 3:1-5

**More to be added at a later date

Welcome to First Christian Reformed Church!
Pastor John Knoester
February 21, 2021

* Please stand in body or in spirit

"Arise my love, my lovely one come"

Prelude

Sung Call to Worship: *"How Can I Keep From Singing"*
— *Sounds Like Reign*

Welcome/Announcements

* Call to Worship:

Leader: Sing a new song to the Lord,
who has worked wonders,
whose right hand and holy arm
have brought salvation.

**People: The Lord has made known salvation;
has shown justice to the nations;
has remembered truth and love
for the house of Israel.**

Leader: All the ends of the earth have seen the
salvation of our God.

**People: Shout to the Lord, all the earth,
sing out your joy.**

Leader: Sing psalms to the Lord with the harp,
with the sound of music.

**People: With trumpets and the sound of the horn
acclaim the King, the Lord.**

—based on Psalm 98:1-6

* 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!

Song of Response: *"O Lord, My Rock and My Redeemer"*
– *Sovereign Grace*

"The winter is past and the rains are gone"

Call to Confession

Prayer of Confession:

Leader: Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your unfailing love;

**People: according to your great compassion blot out
my transgressions.**

Leader: Wash away all my iniquity

People: and cleanse me from my sin.

Leader: Surely you desire truth in the inner parts;

People: you teach me wisdom in the inmost place.

Leader: Create in me a pure heart, O God,
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

**People: Do not cast me from your presence or take
your Holy Spirit from me.**

Leader: Restore to me the joy of your salvation

**People: and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.
Amen. —from Psalm 51:1-2, 6, 10-12, NIV**

Words of Assurance:

Leader: “Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.

People: He was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities.

Leader: Upon him was the chastisement that makes us whole,
And with his stripes we are healed.

People: He will feed his flock like a shepherd and gather the lambs in his arms.”
—based on Isaiah 40:11; 53:4-5

Leader: May God the Father, who does not despise the broken spirit, give us contrite hearts.

People: May Christ, who bore our sins in his body on the tree, heal us by his wounds.

Leader: May the Holy Spirit, who leads us into all truth, speak words of pardon and peace.

God’s Will for our Lives:

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters,
by the mercies of God,
to present your bodies as a living sacrifice,
holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.
Do not be conformed to this world,
but be transformed by the renewing of your minds,
so that you may discern what is the will of God—
what is good and acceptable and perfect.
For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you
not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think,
but to think with sober judgment,
each according to the measure of faith
that God has assigned. —Romans 12:1-3, NRSV

Song of Thanksgiving and Preparation:

“My Worth is Not in What I Own” – Getty/Ortega

*(At this time children ages 3 – 3rd grade
are excused for Children and Worship)*

"The flowers appear, it's the season of song"

Scripture Reading: Song of Songs 2:8-17

Brooke: ⁸Listen! My beloved! Look! Here he comes,
leaping across the mountains,
bounding over the hills.

⁹My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag.
Look! There he stands behind our wall,
gazing through the windows,
peering through the lattice.

¹⁰My beloved spoke and said to me,
"Arise, my darling, my beautiful one,
come with me. ¹¹See! The winter is past;
the rains are over and gone.

¹²Flowers appear on the earth,
the season of singing has come,
the cooing of doves is heard in our land.

¹³The fig tree forms its early fruit;
the blossoming vines spread their fragrance.
Arise, come my darling; my beautiful one,
come with me."

Pastor John: ¹⁴My dove in the clefts of the rock,
In the hiding places on the mountainside,
show me your face, let me hear your voice;
for your voice is sweet, and your face is lovely.

¹⁵Catch for us the foxes, the little foxes
that ruin the vineyards,
our vineyards that are in bloom.

Brooke: ¹⁶My beloved is mine and I am his;
He browses among the lilies.

¹⁷Until the day breaks and the shadows flee,
turn, my beloved, and be like a gazelle
Or like a young stag on the rugged hills.

Prayer of Illumination

Message: **"Waiting for Love"**

Time of Prayer

"My beautiful one, arise and come with me."

Song of Application: *"Arise, My Love"* – Michael Card

* We Profess our Faith: Our World Belongs to God St. 41,43,45, and 46

Leader: Joining the mission of God, the church is sent with the gospel of the kingdom to call everyone to know and follow Christ and to proclaim to all the assurance that in the name of Jesus there is forgiveness of sin and new life for all who repent and believe.

People: **The Spirit calls all members to embrace God's mission in their neighborhoods and in the world:**

Leader: to feed the hungry, bring water to the thirsty, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, care for the sick, and free the prisoner.

People: **We repent of leaving this work to a few, for this mission is central to our being.**

Leader: Jesus Christ rules over all. To follow this Lord is to serve him wherever we are without fitting in, as light in darkness, salt in a spoiling world.

People: **Since God made us male and female in his image, we respect each other as equals, not flaunting or exploiting our sexuality.**

Leader: While our roles and capacities may differ, we are careful not to confine God's gifts and calling to the shape of our cultural patterns or expectations. Sexuality is disordered in our fallen world—brokenness, abuse, pornography, and loneliness are the result— but Christ's renewing work gives hope for order and healing and surrounds suffering persons with compassionate community.

People: **We are the family of God, serving Christ together in Christian community.**

Leader: Single for a time or a life, devoted to the work of God, we offer our love and service to the building of the kingdom.

People: **Married, in relationships of lifelong loyalty, we offer our lives to the same work:**

Leader: building the kingdom, teaching and modeling the ways of the Lord so our children may know Jesus as Lord and learn to use their gifts in lives of joyful service.

People: **In friendship and family life, singleness and marriage, as parents and children, we reflect the covenant love of God.**

* God's Blessing:

Parting Praise: *"Facing a Task Unfinished"* – Gettys

Postlude

A sincere **welcome** to all who have come to worship the Lord! May each of us have our faith increased, our love enhanced, and our courage strengthened. May God's presence be very real as we approach the throne of grace.

	Today 2/28	Next week 3/7
Sound:	Henry Van Zanten	Tim Hibma
Video:	Devin Van Zanten	Hannah Van Hofwegen
Projection:	Tim Hibma	Brandon Speck
Offering:	General Fund	General Fund

First CRC Announcements

Sunday, February 28, 2021

OUR CHURCH FAMILY

The March/April edition of the Today has arrived and is available in your church mailbox.

Classic Pacific Northwest will be meeting for a Zoom Classis Meeting March 4.

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

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 by Zoom 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://youtu.be/7CT_FtSTekg

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.firstcrcmv.com> for more information on these and other giving options.

ORGANIZATIONS WE SUPPORT

New letters from some of our missionaries – are on the new revamped Missionary Bulletin Board in the hallway.

The winter issues of “**Breaking Barriers**” and “**Forum**” have arrived and are available on the shelf under the Missionary bulletin board.

Pregnancy Choices sends their sincere thank you for the Thanksgiving offering they received from our congregation.

REQUESTED ANNOUNCEMENTS

At-Home Faith Formation Tip - The Practice of Justice and Mercy: Cornel West said, “Justice is what love looks like in public.” How might you share the love of Jesus by practicing justice in public this week in your workplace, your neighborhood, or your city? (For more on faith practices from Faith Formation Ministries, visit crcna.org/FaithFormation/Practices.)

GROUNDWORK: A NEW FAMILY - In his second word from the cross Jesus shows deep compassion for his mother. Join our Groundwork conversation on John 19:23-27 to discover what Jesus' great concern for his family shows us about his humanity and uncover the profound theological implications that arise from this earthly concern. Listen now at GroundworkOnline.com and subscribe to Groundwork's weekly emails for future episodes.

GIVE WITH A WILLING HEART - Check out this week's kids' devotion at www.kidscorner.net. As a kid, you don't have a job that pays you loads of cash. So, how can you give? Once you begin looking for ways to give, you will find many opportunities! Listen now at kidscorner.net and subscribe to KC's weekly emails for all the new content.

FAMILY FIRE - FAMILY FIRE is an online community exploring Spirit-led family, marriage, parenting, in-laws, blended families, and intimacy. Find encouraging articles and devotions at familyfire.com. Subscribe for regular email updates and connect with our Family Fire community on Facebook.

Join Us for DRS Sunday 2021 - Next week, consider joining our church to give a gift to the work of World Renew in responding to disasters like Hurricane Harvey. Thanks to World Renew, communities impacted by such storms have the support required to respond to needs after the storm, create a plan of repair, and rebuild together. When we give to this work, we remind beloved children of God that they never walk alone.



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

NEW REQUESTS:

Chris Vander Wekken has now entered into Hospice care. He is still in good spirits, yet, his body is growing weaker and there is nothing more the doctors can do. We give thanks to God that Chris is assured in his faith and is at peace with what lies ahead. He is grateful for your prayers and we trust that you will continue to pray for him in the days, weeks, and months ahead.

Praise and thanksgiving! **Jerry Ekkelkamp** has been released from the hospital to Birchview Memory Care center in Sedro-Woolley. **Jerry and Marion** are settling in well in at Birchview.

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.

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

SHUT INS:

Nell Annema and Jerry & Marion Ekkelkamp at Birchview Memory Care in Sedro-Woolley; 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)

February 28, 2021 - (Resonate: East Asia) A Resonate missionary serving as a teacher in East Asia asks for prayer for a former student who is not a believer. The student is struggling with some personal challenges, and the missionary asks for prayer that the student will “want to learn more about the One who is sovereign over his life.”

February 27, 2021 - (World Renew: Disaster Response Services (DRS))

Our DRS staff recently made extended driving trips to check in with existing and potential partners across the Gulf Coast and other areas hit by hurricanes and tropical storms in the past year. The needs are extensive, but the storms received limited media coverage, so response has been minimal. Please pray for wisdom on how best to proceed with disaster response in these areas.

February 26, 2021 - (Raise Up: TLTI: New manual) As a new Timothy Leadership Training manual, Do Not Fear, is field-tested internationally, please pray for effective learning and insightful feedback. Pray that church leaders may be equipped to respond wisely and with assurance in the face of spiritual influences such as witchcraft, curses, and demonic activity, sharing the message of Jesus’ lordship and freedom from fear.

February 25, 2021 - (ReFrame: English ministry) Pray for Paul, who recently retired from pastoral ministry and shared this prayer request with our English ministry team: “Please pray that I use my time wisely. Pray for my marriage, that I give my wife the attention, the time, the interest that she deserves. Please pray for my family members who do not seem to be walking with Christ.”

February 24, 2021 - (Resonate: Philippines) Asian Theological Seminary, a Resonate partner in the Philippines where Resonate missionary Stan Kruis teaches, equips students to serve as pastors, youth leaders, missionaries, and other ministry leaders. Pray for the students, faculty, and staff as they equip leaders and spread the gospel.