

Joyfully Sharing God's Love without Limitation, Exception, or Condition

# UNIVERSITY PRESS

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## Practicing the Way of Love

by Dustin Maddox, Lay Minister & Commissioned Ruling Elder



I've never seen an episode of the television series, *The Apprentice*, but I know enough about it to understand its appeal. Billed as "The Ultimate Job Interview," the show is a competition that pits the business acumen of people against one another to see who can make it past the intimidating gate keeper's (formerly Donald Trump, now Arnold Schwarzenegger) judgment decree of "You're fired!" and into the promised land of high-level business leadership. It's an exciting premise, rooted in the promises of the market and the American dream. This--with a bit of Reality TV magic--makes for good television.

I've been reflecting on the idea of apprenticeship recently because I think it is the most helpful way of understanding what it means to follow Jesus. However, apprenticeship to Jesus is not in any way like the TV show.

The word, apprentice, from the French *apprendre* (to learn), means a person who is learning a specific trade from a skilled master. The reality is that we are all apprentices of something. In one way or another, we've adopted a curriculum that teaches us how to be in the world in a particular way. Whether it is a career path, or educational goals, or a vision for retirement, or an understanding of the American Dream, we have each taken on specific habits and patterns which train us to be in the world in specific ways that offer to make sense of things and offer us meaning. For example, we look to the 7 Habits of Highly Effective People in order to learn how to maximize our time and become effective in our competitive, dog-eat-dog world.

It is easy to forget that Jesus was predominantly referred to as a "Rabbi" -- a teacher; a master. Jesus the Teacher called disciples, or apprentices, to learn his Way. These disciples lived every day in close proximity to Jesus, learning from him, observing his interactions, patterns, and impulses, and desiring to imitate him. Jesus wasn't offering religious teachings or ethical demands; he was offering a way of being human that aligned with God's dream for the world. Jesus invites us into a practice to enable us to become who God intended us to be--something no other curriculum can truly deliver on.

In his book, *Way of Love*, Christian ethicist Norman Wirzba (what a great last name, right?) states:

"Seeing Christianity as a school or laboratory that trains people in the ways of love is the best way to understand the work and mission of the church. When the church is faithful to its calling, it offers the most extensive curriculum imaginable, because the curriculum touches every aspect of life and this world. It is an unusual school that lasts a lifetime and from which we never really graduate, because there is so much to see, so much to learn, so much to attempt. Christian faith is really one long apprenticeship in which we work to understand and then root out the many ways we devise for falsifying or simply denying love. It is the tradition of practice in which people refine the sympathies and the skills that enable an honest and complex embrace of the world. Love is the crucial thing. Without love we lose

hope."

Our goal as Christians is to become like Jesus, our Master Teacher of the Way of Love. How do we do this? We do it, as Eugene Peterson says, by learning Jesus' "unforced rhythms of grace." What does that mean? Three things: it means being with Jesus, doing what Jesus did, and becoming like Jesus.

First, being with Jesus means adopting the lifestyle of Jesus, which was lived in constant connection to God through the Spirit, as Jesus engaged in silence and solitude, steeping himself in the Scriptures, prayer and fasting, and observing the Sabbath.

Second, doing what Jesus did means announcing that the kingdom of God is at hand, healing the sick, eating with people far from God, doing justice and mercy, peacemaking, and standing up against religious and political corruption.

Third, becoming like Jesus means living simply, living in community with others, knowing yourself and knowing God, being forgiven and granting forgiveness, and embracing grief and loss.

Apprenticeship to Jesus means doing these things because this is the blessed way to God, graciously made available to us through Jesus' life. Following Jesus in the Way of Love is the way forward in our world of division, cynicism, and hatred.

May we become apprentices of the Master Teacher of the Way of Love. Dustin

*Grace + Peace, Dustin*

## Hymn Singing: Thoughtful, Personal, Corporate

*by Cactus Harris, Director of Music & Arts and Resident Organist*

UPC hosts the American Guild of Organists Annual Hymn Festival on Sunday, February 26 at 3 p.m. This year's program, entitled Now Thank We All Our God, will be a real treat as we celebrate 500 years of congregational song since the Reformation. The program includes a few local organists, trumpets, and the Festival Choir led by Dr. Roy Klassen.

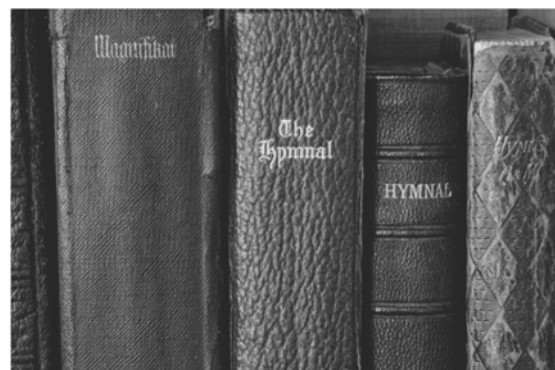
This Festival of Hymns provides us two great opportunities:

First, plan to come to the Hymn Festival and sing along, whether in the pews or in the Festival Choir. If you would like to sing at this event in the special Festival Choir, please let me know! There is a choral workshop with Dr. Klassen on Saturday, February 25 from 9 a.m.-Noon. Second, this is a great time to continue our Year of Hymns article series by looking at three benefits to singing hymns, courtesy of the Hymn Society of Great Britain and Ireland.

Hymn-singing is Thoughtful: It is, of course, all too easy to mouth familiar words without thinking about their meaning. Yet when sung properly, a hymn should engage the singer's mind and intellect. In part, this is a matter of understanding what is said; it also involves a dialogue between the singer and the text (Do I believe this? Is this what I want to pray, to praise, to admit? What should I do if this is how I see things?). The words of the hymn then become a vehicle of genuine adoration and worship.

Hymn-singing is Personal: Even though we frequently sing them together with other believers, many hymns are written in the first person singular, and their writers invite us to make a personal expression of praise or prayer. The same remains true of those hymns which are in the plural: "we" as singers comprise a number of individuals, and if "we" praise God that should indicate that each of us individually is doing so.

Hymn-singing is Corporate: This is the complement of the previous point. When we sing hymns in a congregation, we join with others to share what we have in common: our Christian faith. Together we express what we each believe and experience. Sometimes that corporate expression touches some people more than others: one hymn may enable me to stand with others in their expression of joy and celebration, while another will help those who share my sadness to join with me in lament.



## Nurturing Reflecting

*by Alissa Ellett,  
Youth Ministries*

Happy Valentine's

I've never been all February 14, a day "consumer do get very times when we to celebrate and world around us. at our finger tips around us always.

This year, in in an effort to intergenerational our faith family at opening our volunteers on who have a heart among us and who bit of play in their

One of the in the retention of they grow into presence of mentors in their in the Nursery is a

## Adult Education



### The Jesus Fatwah: Love Your (Muslim) Neighbor as Yourself

Much of what passes for information about Islam is weed-like disinformation rooted in stereotype and watered by fear. In *The Jesus Fatwah*, seventeen Islamic and Christian scholars offer reliable information about what Muslims believe, how they live out their faith, and how we all can be about building relationships across lines of faith.

This series continues on February 5 and 12. Please join us for this enlightening series in the Great Room between services.

## Children, God's Love

*Director of Children's &*

Day!

that jazzed about many call a holiday." However, I excited about the get the opportunity share love with the And really, we have ways of doing so all

Children's Ministry, create and nurture relationships within UPC, we are Nursery Ministry to Sunday mornings for the littlest are craving a little lives.

determining factors a child's faith as adulthood is the consistent faith lives. Volunteering way you can invest

in a child's relationship with God they will carry with them the rest of their life.



What so often may seem like play is actually the environment in which children learn about their world and thus about who and where the Divine is. The relationships within which we are nurtured in the church become a reflection of God's love for us for years and years to come. Isn't this true in your story?

So, now I've got you thinking and hope you will consider how this ministry might fit into your Sunday morning.

- You can only volunteer two Sundays morning a month? Great!
  - You can only volunteer during the Sunday School hour? Great!
  - You aren't available now but want to get on the list to be included in the coming months? Great!
- You don't feel totally prepared but you love children and have it on your heart to get involved? Great!

In any case, let's talk! Email me at [alissa@upcfresno.org](mailto:alissa@upcfresno.org), or call me at 439-8807 with questions and to get your name in the rotation for Nursery Ministry!

If you are one who gets excited about celebrating and sharing love, and if you want to invest in the future of a child's faith and place in the world, become a Nursery Ministry Volunteer! I promise you will receive more than you can imagine in return from the relationships you forge with children and their families.

In this month of February, may you be surrounded by love, and may it soften and strengthen you to do the work God has ahead.

*Blessings, Alissa*

## Mission Spotlight: Valley Teen Ranch

*by Betty Higdon for the Ministry of Missions*

An article in *The Fresno Bee* in December by Carmen George featured Christmas at Valley Teen Ranch, an eighty-acre ranch in rural Madera County where formerly incarcerated young men between the ages of thirteen to nineteen live in group homes for six months to a year. The teens must be ordered by a probation department to enter a group home. They are chosen for Valley Teen Ranch by ranch staff interviews led by Chief Executive Officer Connie Clendenin.

UPC Ministry of Missions has contributed to Valley Teen Ranch for years, helping to provide opportunity for growth in a safe and healthy environment for young men who need to learn to become respectful, honest, and reliable, free from substance abuse or gang issues. During their time at the Ranch, they attend an on-site Community Day School, participate in daily chores receive counseling and friendship, and take part in treatment groups. They have work to do, such as maintaining the grounds and pastures, feeding the animals, or cleaning the swimming pool. They learn food preparation and animal husbandry along with how to trust and how to become trustworthy.

While the Christian faith is at the core of this organization, Clendenin says, "We don't hammer them with that." There is prayer before every meal. George quotes Clendenin, "It's not about religion, it's about relationship." One of the young men quoted by George said, "I did not see myself becoming the person I am today before I came to this program. I wanted to change but for some reason I just couldn't do it alone. I am grateful for this second chance at life I was given." Another said, "I'm glad that I just learned a lot of things that can change my life."

Valley Teen Ranch is a 501(c) (3) nonprofit organization. For more information about the

organization UPC supports, visit their website at [www.valleyteenranch.org](http://www.valleyteenranch.org). Their address is 10535 Road 35, Madera, CA 93636. They welcome prayers and contributions.

## Coming This Lent

UPC goes to the mountain for teaching - the Sermon on the Mount in the Gospel of Matthew that is. How do these teachings of Jesus reverberate for us in today's world? What does it mean to be blessed by God as the poor, the ones who mourn, and the ones who hunger and thirst for righteousness? How can we love our enemies in the way Jesus calls us to? And how might we truly live into Jesus' teachings on judging one another?

As we ponder and pray into these themes in worship, we will also use the writings of 20th Century German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer as inspiration for our entry into these themes.

But that's not all the Bonhoeffer we will offer! Pastor Emeritus Tedd Lyons is teaching about Bonhoeffer during our Adult Education hour during the First Sunday of Lent on March 5 - so put this on your calendars now.

There is an Ash Wednesday Service on Wednesday, March 1 at 6:30 p.m. Ashes will be administered.

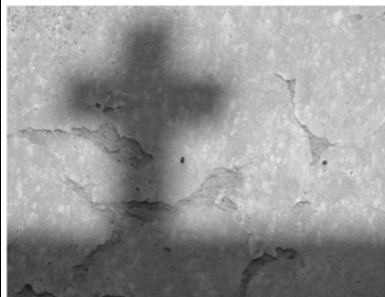
## Men's Retreat

All UPC men (and their friends!) are invited to head up to Calvin Crest in Oakhurst from Friday, March 3-Sunday, March 5 for a weekend of rest, friendship, and lots and lots of fun. This year the Men's Retreat guest speaker is Dr. Brian Ross, Assistant Professor of Pastoral Ministry at Fresno Pacific Biblical Seminary. The cost is \$145 for a shared cabin room, \$165 for a shared lodge room, and \$215 for a single lodge room.

It's guaranteed to be a great time, so make sure to register (yourself and a friend!) after the service on Sundays, register online at [www.upcfresno.org/mensretreat](http://www.upcfresno.org/mensretreat). Scholarships are available! For more information, email Dustin at [dustin@upcfresno.org](mailto:dustin@upcfresno.org), or call/text him at 288-0083.

## UPC Groups

**Sunday Night Youth Group:** This group for our teens meets Sunday nights at 6:30 p.m. in the Youth Room for fun, laughs, and Jesus. For more information, email Dustin at [dustin@upcfresno.org](mailto:dustin@upcfresno.org), or text him at 288-0083.



**Contemplative Prayer:** Come Mondays at 6:30 p.m. to the Godly Play Room (Rooms 3-4) for Christ-centered meditation. No previous experience is necessary, just a desire to spend quiet, still time with the Divine. For more information, email Cathy Wingert at [wingy104@aol.com](mailto:wingy104@aol.com).

**Women's Bible Study:** The group meets for study and prayer Wednesdays from 9:30-11 a.m. They have just started a new study: *Elijah: Living Securely in an Insecure World*. This is a great time to join the group! For more information, email Laura Lindegren at [punkin2826@yahoo.com](mailto:punkin2826@yahoo.com), or call her at 299-1838.

**Intercessory Prayer Service:** This monthly service, where all are invited to come pray for loved ones, members of our congregation, community, and world, meets Monday, February 6 at 7 p.m. For more information, email Pastor Tedd at [teddlyons@gmail.com](mailto:teddlyons@gmail.com), or call or text him at 906-1438.

**Presbyterian Women (PW):** Presbyterian Women meet Tuesday, February 14 at 9:30 a.m. in the Great Room for refreshments and a business meeting. The speaker is Karan Johnson, who will share information about companion dogs. All UPC women are encouraged to come and bring a friend. Join us! If you have questions, email Ruth Kallenberg at [rbkallenberg@gmail.com](mailto:rbkallenberg@gmail.com), or call



her at 431-7681.

**Pub Theology:** Join the discussion Tuesday, February 21 from 6:30-8:30 p.m. at Sequoia Brewing Company, on the corner of Champlain and Perrin in the Piazza Del Fiore Center. Add your voice to the discussion of a variety of topics concerning faith, religion, and God. Seating is limited so come early to ensure a spot. We meet monthly on the third Tuesday. Listening and discussion are encouraged; drinking is optional. For more information, email Dustin at [dustin@upcfresno.org](mailto:dustin@upcfresno.org), or text him at 288-0083.

**Clippers:** Clippers meet Friday, February 17 to travel the Blossom Trail. Meet at the church at 10 a.m. to car pool. We will return to have lunch at Marie Callender's (at Shaw and Cedar) at noon. RSVP as soon as possible to Donna Brady at 905-9931, or Lorna Wendt at 222-3859.

**Gals Night:** GALS' Night is February 23 at 6:30 p.m. in the Great Room. Join us for games (no experience necessary!) and laughter. Come for fun, good times, and fellowship. Newcomers are always welcome! For more information, email Andrea Smith at [asmith4160@aol.com](mailto:asmith4160@aol.com).

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## Meeting at UPC

**Sheeper Than Therapy:** Enjoy a group of knitters and crocheters whose skills range from beginner to expert. They meet at UPC the first Saturday of the month. Join them Saturday, February 7 from 8:30-11:30 a.m. For information, email Pastor Renée at [rrico@aol.com](mailto:rrico@aol.com).



### February Birthdays

1 Kristin Vencil  
2 Jan Goyette  
Jean Hoover  
Richard Pelisari  
4 Zillah Turner  
5 David Albright  
9 Jeanette Hodgson  
10 Jenni Howells  
11 Caleb Morgan  
12 Tim Cavagnaro  
Alison Gaede  
Susan Quinn  
14 Liz Dodds  
Wanda Vert  
15 Nan Barker  
Terry Lawrence  
Al Pulcifer  
Daniel Stolling  
17 Robbie Smith  
18 Beverly Daniels  
19 Ryan Commons  
20 Bob Davenport  
Moirra Harada  
21 Sally Heitkotter  
22 Craig Hitechew  
24 Ben Douglas  
Lynette Reid  
25 Jenny Jonas

### February Birthdays cont.

26 Betty Boos  
28 Rachel Fern  
Rhea Rehark-Griffith  
29 Marcus Allen

### February Anniversaries

3 Dick & Betty Gist  
Dan & Judy Scarbery  
4 Bob & Carey Berend  
Earl & Phyllis Neal  
17 Simeon & Elnora Bugay  
Winston & Laura Fuller  
20 Hugh & Elizabeth Ralston  
29 Kurt & Dana Rossi

### February Calendar

1 Women's Bible Study  
9:30 a.m.  
Choir Rehearsal 6:30 p.m.  
2 Bell Choir Rehearsal  
6:30 p.m.  
5 Youth Group 6 p.m.  
6 Contemplative Prayer  
6:30 p.m.  
Intercessory Prayer  
7 p.m.  
7 Deacons Meeting 7 p.m.  
8 Women's Bible Study  
9:30 a.m.  
Choir Rehearsal 6:30 p.m.

### February Calendar cont.

9 Bell Choir 6:30 p.m.  
10-12 High School Winter  
Retreat  
13 Contemplative Prayer  
6:30 p.m.  
15 Women's Bible Study  
9:30 a.m.  
Choir Rehearsal 6:30 p.m.  
16 Bell Choir Rehearsal  
6:30 p.m.  
17 Clippers 10 a.m.  
18 Food Distribution 8 a.m.  
19 Youth Group 6:30 p.m.  
20 Office Closed for  
Presidents Day  
21 Pub Theology 6:30 p.m.  
22 Women's Bible Study  
9:30 a.m.  
Choir Rehearsal 6:30 p.m.  
23 Bell Choir Rehearsal  
6:30 p.m.  
25-26 Hymn Festival  
26 Youth Group 6:30 p.m.  
27 Contemplative Prayer  
6:30 p.m.  
28 Ministry Meetings  
(times vary)

