

Loving and Discerning: A Message from the Minister

*And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more,
with knowledge and all discernment,
so that you may approve what is excellent,
and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ,
filled with the fruits of righteousness which come through Jesus Christ,
to the glory and praise of God. (Philippians 1:9-11, RSV)*

In his letter to the church at Philippi, Paul expresses his prayer that the congregation's "love may abound more and more." Paul's prayer begins in love, for we are people made to love and to be loved, a people moved by God's love to respond through a life of love. And the love that Paul prays will "abound" among the Philippians is not limited by sentimentality or abstraction: this love is fuel for the Philippians' life together in Christ. Love leads to the disciplines of "knowledge" and "discernment," practices that guide us in the Christian life, directing us to "approve what is excellent." As Bonnie Thurston writes in her excellent commentary on Philippians, "Paul prays that their love will lead to clear perception about what, practically, they should do" (Thurston and Ryan, *Philippians and Philemon*).

It is my hope also that, here among the Calvin Family, "love may abound more and more." Beginning in the knowledge that we are each loved eternally by God in Christ, may we receive this love always as an invitation to love one another. And, as we rejoice in God's love for us all, may we commit ourselves to practices that bring "knowledge" and "discernment," seeking the leading of God's Spirit together through the spiritual disciplines of prayer and study. I am convinced that exciting days await us, as we continue to discern God's purposes for His people at Calvin Presbyterian Church. May God's love in Christ ever propel and direct our life together, all "to the glory and praise of God." Amen.

- The Rev. David Clark