



Nene Valley Methodist Circuit

Planting Faith,
Nurturing Disciples,
Growing God's Kingdom

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February has arrived, and for many people it is a month of measurement. For lovers of numbers, it is the only month that neatly divides into 4 equal weeks (except on a pesky leap year) and at its midway point it also celebrates a festival of love and in terms of quantifying that love, the rule of thumb was that an engagement ring should cost at least one month's salary, the wedding budget to be set at around 6 months' salary and the honeymoon to be 5% of that cost. The cost to the rest of your life? Priceless.

Within the church calendar we too have a festival of feasting, that of Shrove Tuesday which leads us into Ash Wednesday as we begin us to measure the cost of lent, whether that be fasting from habits or taking up a new spiritual practice.

Quantitative measurements are those of facts and figures – sometimes referred to as 'hard data.' Think of those intentional decisions you have made within the church. Have I joined a study group? How long do I spend in prayer? Do I hold a day for fasting etc? Hard data will also look to what our level of giving is, and whilst the church doesn't often talk about money finances are part of the quantitative world, not only in what you and I give to the church, but also how the church then uses it resources. Kingdom shaped decisions made outside the church may include: Do I talk about my faith in my work life? Am I engaged in my community with foodbanks, environmental issues, or other local concerns?

Qualitative measurements are all the intangible feelings – or 'soft data.' Think of John Wesley's heart being 'strangely warmed.' How has my perception changed, or been challenged through the study of scripture? How deeply am I engaging with worship? What 'fruits' am I currently cultivating etc? Again, these discipleship endeavours should reach beyond our church walls. On any given day it is good to ponder these two questions: who is no longer a stranger to me? Where have I experienced 'heaven in the ordinary'?

Both quantitative and qualitative measures are valid and are needed as we make our individual and collective response to "love the Lord our God with all our heart and with all our soul and with all our mind and to love our neighbour as ourselves."

So, I end my Minister's Monthly Musing with this reflective poem: **How Much Do I Love?....**

How much do I love God?

Do I delight in worship, a delight that is bigger than style or place?
Do I wish to please God more than anyone else? Even myself
What would I be prepared to give up or do for God?
Am I happy to share my love for God with other people?
Do I accept, truly, that God is desperately in Love with me?



How much do I love my neighbour?

Do I take trouble to be kind and helpful to the people I meet?

Do I rejoice in the right, or to my shame find satisfaction in other people's faults?

Am I prepared to be put out for people not for the sake of reward, but out of love?

How much do I love my enemy?

Do I know who my enemies are?

Why are they my enemies? Is it through unhappy experience, fear, anger, misunderstanding?

If they have made me feel horrid – how have I made them feel?

Can I forgive them? Do I understand why they have hurt me?

Do I wish only the best for them, even if I actually dislike them as people?

How much do I love myself?

Do I love myself with the same Love that God has for me? Patient, understanding, caring, hopeful Love?

Or do I despair quickly and put a down on myself?

Does my love know when to challenge and correct – or is it the poorer love that is self-indulgent?

Do I love myself enough to take risks in faith and so follow Jesus more?

HOW MUCH AM I IN GODS LOVE?

Blessings

Kim Shorley

