

PRE-MARRIAGE RETREAT



Saturday, March 10th, is the date for our Annual Retreat for engaged couples. This retreat is required of any couple getting married at Trinity over the course of the next year and is also open to engaged couples of any circuit congregation. Registration @ 8:30am. Retreat begins @ 9am in the SLC. Lunch is provided and topics include finances, communication, and children, among others. There is a \$45 fee for any non-Trinity couples. For further info., please call the office @ 715-842-0769 or email Pastor Schultz @ schultzg@trinitynet.org. Deadline for registration is Monday, March 5th.

I LOVE YOU!



One of the best known days in February is Valentine's Day. Some people are tempted to call February 14th, "Hallmark Holiday." Little wonder because in our country over 7,000,000,000 valentine cards are purchased each year. Most of these cards say "I love you" in one way or another. But what does "I love you" mean?

Some would say that "I love you" refers to being physically attracted to a person of the opposite sex. While it is true that physical attractiveness can draw people together we need to remember that physical attractiveness changes over time. Yes, it is an impor-

tant kind of love, but it does not have the same lasting power as other forms of love.

Others would say that "I love you" means you are my special friend. Good friends are sweet blessings in this life as we find things that we enjoy doing with certain people we like and with whom we have so much in common. A friendship kind of love is very special but, sadly, we know from experience that friends come and go.

There is a deeper understanding of what it means to say "I love you." The word that comes to mind for many Christians is "**agape**" which we call God's kind of love. It is unconditional and keeps reaching out to other people even when they may not return this kind of love. That is certainly true of God's love for us sinners. Even when we say and do sinful things God's love reaches out to us. As the Scriptures teach, "*while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.*" (Romans 5:8 NIV). Jesus Himself said in John 15:13 (NIV): "*Greater love has no one than that he lay down his life for his friends.*"

1 Corinthians 13:4-8a (NIV) describes agape love in this way: "*Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.*"

The Apostle John wrote in 1 John 3:1 (NIV): "*How great is the love the Father has lavished on us that we should be called the children of God! And that is what we are!*" Good and godly children imitate the positive characteristics of their good and godly parents. As the children of God through Jesus Christ we imitate the love of our Father in heaven. "*We love because He [God] first loved us.*" (1 John 4:19 NIV) What does our Father in heaven delight in doing? John 3:16 (NIV) says it so well: "*For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.*"

God delights in loving and giving. Empowered by the Holy Spirit we are God's children, God's disciples, God's stewards. There is no better witness to what it means to be a child of God than for us to use all of life and life's resources in a way that brings glory to God and blessings to those whose lives we touch. May our "I love you" always be God's kind of love, God's agape love. *Taken from the Faith Aflame Portal LCMS February 2012*