***From Our Conference Minister***

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***Love and Joy Restored*** (John 1: 6-8,19-28)

As we listen to this Sunday’s readings, we will hear words which remind us that no matter what happens to us, God is faithful.

In Psalm 126, the psalmist insists that God will ensure that we who sow in tears will reap with joy. We are reminded that even as we endure pain and loss, better things await us -- with joys we can scarcely imagine.

The epistle writer encourages us to be thankful and to pray always, no matter what. Test everything and hold fast to what is good.

In John’s Gospel ~~i~~s a story that begins with, "There was a man." Not just any man, but one "sent from God, whose name was John." He came as a witness to Jesus as the Word made flesh… the Word who would come to live among us (v.14). God’s only Son who is close to his Father’s heart (v.18), through whom the love of God is revealed to us:

*“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but have eternal life”* (John 3:16)

If there is ever a time when you feel unlovable, remember God loves you. If there is ever a time when you want to give up on someone you think is unlovable, do not.  Even when people disappoint us, do not write them off as unlovable. Remember, God loves the whole world – no exceptions!

This Advent season, and always, may we give thanks to God in all circumstances (I Thess. 5:18). May we pause to thank God for *love and joy restored* through Jesus, our coming Messiah.

Prayer:

**Come Lord Jesus, come. Fill our hearts with your joy and love that we might become more like you. Amen!**

*In Christ,*

*Monica*

Rev. Dr. Monica Dawkins-Smith

Conference Minister and President