



FAITH, LOVE AND GOOD WORKS

A tough question from the book of James rings as true today as it must have to its ancient audience centuries ago, “What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? ...If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill,’ and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that?” (2:14-16) James himself answers the question by saying, *faith without works is dead.*

James’ teaching about faith and works might seem simple and straight-forward enough on first reading. But, preachers and theologians have struggled to articulate the role of faith and works in the Bible down through the centuries. Sixteenth-century reformers, like Martin Luther and John Calvin, focused more of their preaching on the apostle Paul’s words, “a person is justified by *faith apart from the works of the law*” (Romans 3:28). “Salvation by faith alone” (Latin: *sola fide*) became the mantra of the Protestant reformation (though not exactly what Paul wrote). Many who insisted on the importance of works in the Christian life, like John Wesley, were branded as heretics or Catholics by their peers.

To be sure, John Wesley preached, and

lived, a gospel of faith-and-works as boldly as just about any Bible preacher or teacher in history. He and his followers did not name themselves, but earned the nickname, “Methodists”—a mockery designed to exaggerate their attention to religious discipline and good works. And, Wesley did preach constantly on the subject of good works: the works of mercy, the works of piety, and the means of grace. As he grew older, and the movement grew bigger, so did the negative attention he received for those efforts. Even the mature Wesley was derided as a “papist,” a “Jesuit,” a “fanatic,” and a “bigot” often enough by contemporaries. For his emphasis on spiritual discipline, sanctification, sacraments, and “working out your own salvation” (Philippians 2:12), he was accused of preaching “works-righteousness” rather than the gospel of grace.

Of course, in his own way, John Wesley was a big proponent of the Protestant reformation and the evangelical doctrine of justification by faith. But he also remembered to prioritize Paul’s further teaching, “the greatest of these is love” (1 Corinthians 13:13). To be sure, faith is essential at every moment of the Christian life. But the Bible also makes it clear that love is the goal, the reason Christ came, the “heaven of heavens,”

said Wesley. On this score, he actually profoundly agreed with Luther that “faith...*exercises and requires good works through love.*”

As Wesleyans, Nazarenes, Reformers, or Disciples of Jesus, we need not be too shy about the importance of good works of charity, religious habits, spiritual disciplines, or “working out your own salvation” as part of our expression of the Christian life. Believers who take their faith-and-works as seriously as James insists can expect to receive some negative attention in this world. Sometimes, we’re swimming against the current of a lukewarm “Christian” culture that can’t stand any exercise or hint of obligation. But, we are standing on firm foundations when we stand for a faith and a theology that works for the sake of love. As our spiritual forebears and the Lord himself suggests, it’s high time we gave more attention to those works of mercy and piety that the Spirit of Christ inspires in his people--“the works [they] did at first” (Revelation 2:5).

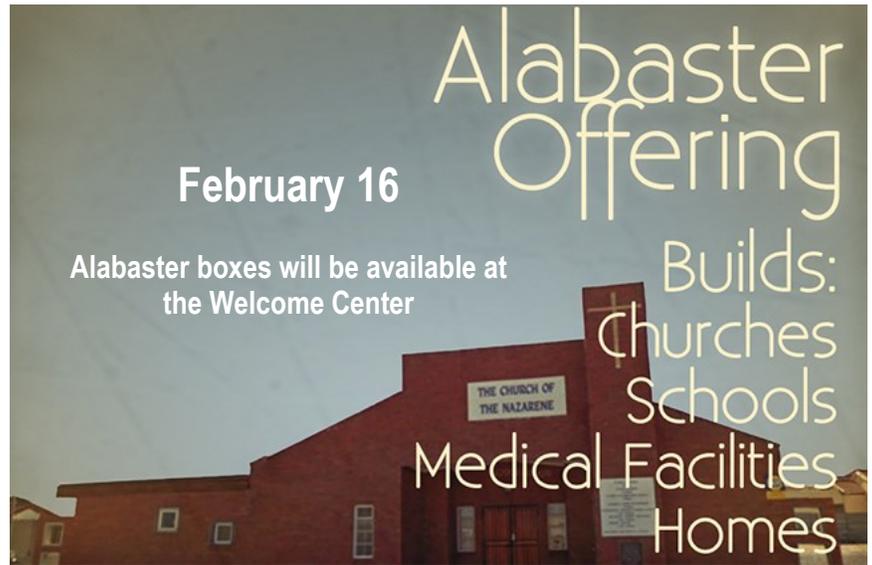
Pastor Michael

“But, we are standing on firm foundations when we stand for a faith that works for the sake of love”

Special guest speaker, February 23



w/Rev. Brad E. Kelle, Ph.D.
 Professor of Old Testament and
 Hebrew School of Theology and
 Christian Ministry



COMMUNITY REFLECTION by Diana Hagy

This year has started on a high note and I've already hit the ground running after taking a short break.

God has placed me in some very interesting places, meeting new people and making exciting connections. Sometimes I wonder what all this means, but when I get a moment with someone, that I can share a little bit of Jesus with them, I'm reminded of why and what I'm doing.

I covet your prayers and thank you so much for believing in me. Stay tuned for more exciting updates, and don't forget about coffee at State and Stetson Starbucks on Tuesday's from 4p-7p.

Love Feast



Sunday, February 2
 w/a special guest speaker from
 Valley Restart
 Dessert Sign up sheet will be at the
 welcome center.
 Everyone is invited!

This months community focus is Valley Restart. It takes about \$200.00 a month to support this ministry. 100% of your donation goes to feeding roughly 40-60 people a month. One person CAN make a difference. Thank you for your contributions to this worthy cause



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
February 2020						1 Fresh Start
2 LOVE FEAST	3 David M. Caitlynn F.	4 Coffee 4p-7p	5 NYI @6p	6	7	8
9 AJ D. Lindsay J.	10	11 Coffee 4p-7p	12 NYI @6p	13	14	15
16 Alabaster	17 Valley Restart @5p	18 Ladies Lunch @1p Coffee 4p-7p	19 NYI @6p	20	21 Coleen P.	22
23 Special guest Rev. Brad Kelle, Ph.D.	24 Stephen H.	25 Coffee 4p-7p	26 ASH Wednesday NYI @6p	27 Board mtg. @6:30p	28	29