

COMMON GROUND

Newsletter of United Campus Ministry

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A Few Thoughts:

Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus,

To all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons:

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart; for whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me. God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.

And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.

--Philippians 1:1-11

The openings of New Testament letters always overwhelm me. They are so full of concept and superlative; they remind me of a trumpet fanfare and they make me feel small and selfish. I read the words Paul wrote to the Philippians and I am taken aback; Paul seems to have purity of love and clarity of understanding that I have never seen able to reside peacefully with each other in my own heart.

Lisa Reber said these verses aloud to me today when I asked what her favorite scripture is. She has been working to memorize these verses, and when I watched her as she said them I could see that she was concentrating on remembering them. But when I listened to her, I heard her speak them sincerely, from the heart. Paul, or someone very like him, was in the room with me. When I think of this days later, I will think of it in terms of that moment, of her speaking love and me hearing it. I hugged Lisa before she left. She's a good hugger.

I don't want to explicate Paul's words here. I just want to marvel at something I don't understand or have in me—purity of love. Paul rejoices in Christ Jesus; Paul rejoices in his brothers, the Philippians. It's not complicated but it's not easy. There are very few people (if any) that I truly love and care about in this way, joyful to see them grow to know God and to be well. To the extent that God lives in me, I stifle His love; it does not pour out purely to others. I seek self.

Except with my little sister, Cassie. Somehow I have a corner of relief from selfishness in my love for her. In her I hope and desire earnestly. I want her to be well. It makes me happy to see her happy. It makes me cry or smile when she says, "I love you" or brags shyly about her big brother. I am not her big brother. She is an inch and a half taller than I am, but I look out for her with a fierce and passionate love. Hurt her and you've hurt me.

That's the kind of love Paul has for the Philippians, only purer, it seems. Part of my love for Cassie is that she's mine: she's my little sister and don't you dare mess with her. I hear in Paul's words the echoes of something greater. He loves fiercely and passionately because the Philippians are God's, not his. His prayer: that they would know God and give Him glory, through Christ Jesus.

To know God is to know love. To know love is to be full to overflowing.

I pray that God would teach each one of us what I am so slow to learn. Let Him love us. Love Him. Rejoice in the truth.

Charlie

WEEKLY EVENTS

MONDAY: "Ra-Mon-Day"--Have a free Ramen lunch with friends in the UCM office (306 Constitution Hall). Drop in anytime between 11:30 and 1:30 P.M..

Music Practice--Come to the office at 6 P.M. to sing, play guitar or just listen as we practice the music for Tuesday's Vespers service

TUESDAY: Vespers--Casual worship service, Upper Lola Tilly Commons, 7:30 P.M.

THURSDAY: Lunch Bunch Bible Study--Bring your own lunch; we'll bring snacks. 307 Gruening @ 1 P.M.. This semester we are discussing 1 Peter.

SUNDAY: Leadership--Open to anyone interested in planning UCM activities and willing to make a commitment to leadership. 307 Gruening @ 3 P.M..

SPECIAL UPCOMING EVENTS:

SINGING at First United Methodist Church. We will meet in the UCM office (306 Constitution Hall) at 9 A.M. on Sunday, March 5th, where we will practice the songs we will be singing. We will sing at the 11 A.M. service and go out for pizza afterwards.

SINGING at Fairhill Community Church. We will meet in the UCM office on Sunday, March 12th, again at 9 A.M. to practice songs for the 11 A.M. service, but this time we will be doing the whole service, including perhaps a few testimonies. Lunch WILL be provided.

FOOD BANK We will meet at the office at 10 A.M. on Thursday, March 16th and go to the food bank to help out for a few hours. This means sorting, making food boxes, and a lot of enjoying others' company. Come along! We will return around 4 P.M.

ICE SKATING! Meet at the office at 3:30 P.M. on Saturday, March 18th. We will caravan to the Big Dipper, and afterwards we will go out for some food (like always). Bring money for dinner and skate rental if you don't have your own pair.

SINGING at St. Raphael Catholic Church on Sunday, March 26. Their mass (service) is at 9:30 A.M. and the singers meet at 8:30, so we will meet in the office at 8:00 A.M. sharp. So that we don't have to get up any earlier, we will practice the songs earlier in the week. Anyone for breakfast afterwards?