

## Deep in the Heart

How many of us have seen *The Big Bang Theory*? How about the prequel show, “*Young Sheldon*?” I have seen almost every episode at least twice as it comes on TBS in the mornings. It allows me to wake up without being subject to the talking heads on various news shows in the morning. Sheldon’s brother Georgie becomes a father and he and their “Mee-Maw” are singing “Deep in the Heart of Texas” to the new baby, “Cee-Cee.” Do you know it? “The stars at night are big and bright (clap, clap, clap, clap) Deep in the heart of Texas.” They even mention on the show that it is “four claps, not three.” It is a catchy tune and it gets stuck in my head, sometimes as an earworm.

When it does become an earworm, a tune that plays over and over again, I find myself changing one of the words to make it “Deep in the Heart of Westfield” or “Deep in the Heart of Southwick.” What it does is allow me to think about what it means to be deep in the heart of Westfield while at First Congregational Church (or deep in the heart of Southwick while at Southwick Congregational Church.)

I make this connection today because of Paul's first letter to the followers of "The Way" in Corinth--what they called Christianity in the beginning—who were struggling with dissension amongst themselves. Paul wanted them to show true love, not just to be a noisy gong, a clanging cymbal, or someone who just says, "Love is good" without actually showing love. Sure, it was easy for the Corinthians and other early Christian communities to try to imitate that love by caring for others, sharing what they had, etc. It appears though, that they did these things without having or showing love. This would be akin to someone working in a feeding station and telling someone, "Ok, here's your food, now get out."

I couldn't imagine any of our volunteers doing that, could you? Sometimes, though, it is the attitude that a few, not most, have when it comes to following "The Way" or the teachings of Jesus Christ. We are called upon to show that love exactly the way that Paul tells us what was to become the Church in Corinth to do so. Sure, we can offer our food, collect things for the Food Pantry, give away clothes from Blessed Buys to those in need, offer assistance with a food card from Stop n Shop or

Big Y, or even on rare occasions, help someone with a utility bill.

However, if we don't do it out of love, it means nothing. If we do things without heart, we may as well just stop.

This church has been here for a very long time. I thought about this the other night while the “ghosts” of the American Revolution spoke. Do you realize that our church was founded more than 100 years before the end of the American Revolution in 1783? We were here in 1679 or earlier, but the church wasn't “chartered” until then. First Church of Christ, Congregational, was the heart of the village, town, and now city of Westfield. The church grew and grew, split, and grew again. This church has survived 8 major wars and several smaller ones. Look at the different things that have happened in this country and...we're still here. We couldn't have done it without being the heart of Westfield. We couldn't have done it without love. Oh, they might have “done it” but would it would have met nothing without love?

February is the month when we celebrate love with hearts as the number one symbol. People will give candy and jewelry, maybe go out for a romantic dinner, and re-commit their love to spouse, partner,

children, parents, grandparents, and friends. Others won't make a big deal of the day, maybe because their hearts have been broken or "dinged." What I ask our congregations to do is to use this month of February, the month where we celebrate love, to reflect on what it means to be followers of Jesus, to do everything that we do in the name of love.

What will it take for everyone who knows our church and comes here for worship, a concert, the Thrift Shoppe, or a meal to know that we have been and are still the heart of Westfield or Southwick? If we do everything that we are called to do as Christian, that is, do it with love, then the heart beat will go on for years to come. My prayer is that we can continue to be Deep in the Heart of Westfield/Southwick for many years to come. Amen!