

Reflections

by Alta Nye Oxendine

Today, in the old, "mainline" Protestant churches, at least, we keep hearing about *Loving One Another*, an extremely Good idea.

Back when the popular song came out: "What the world needs now, is Love, sweet love", there were likely a lot of people who looked at this concept of love as something *new*, at least as new as the 1960's and the "flower children" who were attempting to promote "love" including "Free Love".

Last Sunday First Methodist preacher Robert Ray talked with us about "A Couple of Things". He reminded us that we are often willing to do "a couple of things" for a good friend. But that we too often overlook the "couple of things", that our *Very Best* friend has asked us to do in the New Testament.

God, through His son, Jesus, has asked us to (1) love Him and (2) love one another. Although those two

responses are inter-linked, we sometimes try to do one without doing the other.

Forgiving And Being Forgiveness
Also, I believe that to really love we must be willing to do something *else* that a lot of us resist doing a lot of the time. We must be willing to *forgive* and to *be forgiven* (by God and by others).

True *Loving, Forgiving*, and desiring to be *Forgiven* all go together, if we are to get sins and misunderstandings resolved to the point where we can go on living a joyous, productive life.

I know.
My parents and I had some serious misunderstandings back in the '50s. We never really got things resolved. They felt that I had deserted them. And I felt that they had deserted me.

After Daddy's first stroke, he seemed to have a positive attitude

toward me once again. That helped me a lot when he died.

But I still held a grudge toward the mother who had once been my closest friend and confidante. Others still saw her as a sweet person. I saw her as someone who had become cold and uncaring.

I kept yearning for the unconditional love she had shown toward for first child for the first three decades of that daughter's life.

After I followed her in becoming a widow (seven months later) she was constantly worried about me. But she no longer seemed proud of me, and plans, or my actions (including spending money taking pictures and spending time writing). I did not feel like showing love or affection toward her.

Then one day while I was at her house in 1986 (when she was 89) I decided maybe I should at least try to look at that old situation of misunderstanding from Her point of view.

When I started to do this, I began seeing what I believed She must have been seeing all those years.

I decided *one* of us had to make the first move. And I could not wait together. They need to be practiced

any longer for her to come to me. So I began right there silently trying to forgive her.

It turned out to be a process that took several years. But, by the time she was sorely in need of me (as the only person available) to stay with her in her mid-nineties, I had begun appreciating her again.

During the more than two years we lived together we once again felt the kind of bond that had been so strong during our earlier years.

When Mother died, I was So Very Thankful that we had been able to start over and truly enjoy a new, and in some ways, an even deeper friendship than the one that began when I was her only child.

In the "Lord's Prayer" that Jesus taught to his disciples as a prayer model, we are to pray: "Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us."

All the actions of loving, being loved, *Forgiving* and Being *Forgiven* By *God* And *Others* are bound up as a *Package*.

With true love, must also come forgiveness, and the desire to make a *Fresh Start* in living the rest of our life *Upon This Earth!*

Senate approves million-acre preservation bill

RALEIGH-The Senate's approval of a bill to preserve 1 million acres of open space in the next decade is an important step in the effort to protect North Carolina's natural resources. Sen. David Weinstein said today.

"North Carolina is growing rapidly, and our open space is at risk," said Weinstein, D-Robeson. "We must protect our forests, mountains and beaches before it is too late to preserve them for future generations and setting a goal to preserve 1 million acres will help us focus on that effort."

Wednesday, senators overwhelmingly approved Senate Bill 1328, which writes into state law the goal of preserving 1 million acres of North Carolina open space by 2010. The bill, sponsored by Sen. Fountain Odum, D-Mecklenburg, now goes to the House for consideration.

About 2.9 million acres or about 8 percent of the state's total land now is permanently protected in state and

national parks, state and national forests, game preserves and other forms of open space. By reaching the 1 million acres goal, North Carolina would preserve 11 percent of its land.

Weinstein said the next step in preserving 1 million acres is to increase funding for the Clean Water Management Trust Fund. Since 1996, lawmakers have provided at least \$30 million a year to the Fund to protect more than 32,000 acres in some of North Carolina's most important watersheds. A new proposal now being considered in the legislature would boost the state's investment to \$100 million over the next three years.

"The Clean Water Management Trust Fund is the most important tool we have for preserving open space in North Carolina," Weinstein said. "We simply will not be able to reach the million-acre goal without increasing our investment in the fund and its work."

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