

REFLECTION

Editor’s note: Op-Ed pieces and Letters to the Editor are welcome. Discussion of ideas and issues is one of our fundamental rights and duties, as well as being essential to the advancement of all people. The main requirement for acceptance is that they maintain civil discourse. Articles or letters that engage in ranting or ad hominem attacks will not be published. An extra long article or letter may be edited for the sake of space. Email your article or letter to tina.fieldsmedia@gmail.com, or send it via the USPS to Editor, Northwest Michigan Voice, PO Box 28, Rapid City, MI 49676

The strongest force

July 11, 2025

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John 13:34 “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.”

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This simple command takes a lot more strength than many people realize. It’s easy to love sometimes and at other times it is a daunting task. To love is to accept vulnerability. For it is only one you love who can truly hurt you.

Although some may consider vulnerability a sign of weakness, I maintain that it takes strength and self confidence to accept the risk of being open enough to another that the other could hurt you. Yet without that strength, without that risk, you would completely miss out on the joy of loving and being loved.

Isn’t that the essence of what each of us truly wants in life – to love and be loved?

I am grateful for the courage of my pastors who consistently preach the concept of overwhelming one’s enemies with love. Even though it may not feel to me as though the love I show to someone who does not love me, or

maybe even despises me, I keep at it. For those pastors keep pointing me to the words of Jesus about love and kindness heaping burning coals upon the heads of enemies. That’s a confusing concept to me, but I have read a possible explanation. Apparently, there was in ancient Egypt a custom of carrying a pan of burning coals on one’s head as a sign of repentance. So, the idea is that by being consistently kind to those who abuse us, we will make them ashamed of themselves and they will repent – with or without burning coals.

Usually, I get along with most of the people I meet. But, I do have in my world two people I know of who despise me. They both have said it is because I am “too nice.” I don’t know how it is possible for someone to be too nice. I get how a person can be not nice enough. But, too nice? What does that even mean? I’ve been practicing showing them both kindness and love. I don’t know if I’m softening them up at all, but I do know that I like me better as a nice person than I would like me as a mean person. And, ultimately, isn’t that what it comes down to?

Thais past week, with all the holiday celebration, and the gathering of neighbors, friends, and several generations of family,

provided ample opportunity for sharing love. I, for one, absolutely luxuriated in the snuggles, hugs, and kisses of a bunch of grandkids. They are, one by one, finding their life partners, too, and I got to enjoy welcoming them into the family.

By the time we gather again next year, there will be a couple more weddings, and maybe even a baby or two. Who knows? Circumstances change, but the one thing that does not change is the deep love I have for each of them. Family, by birth or by choice, is still family.

I’m not saying that everything went off smoothly just as planned. Of course not. There were missteps and hassles, but they don’t change the love. Love is way stronger than the difficulties and challenges life puts in our way. And that’s the whole point – it is the strongest force after all.

Well, that’s what I’ve been thinking about.
Shalom

Tina Norris Fields
Editor

Citizenship Corner

Answers to last issue’s questions

- 1) When was the Constitution signed and sent out to the states for ratification?
A. September 17, 1787.
- 2) What do we generally call the first ten amendments to the Constitution?
A. The Bill of Rights.
- 3) Why do we celebrate July 4 as the birthday of America?
A. Because the Declaration of Independence was signed on July 4, 1776.
- 4) Who was the principal author of the Declaration of Independence?
A. Thomas Jefferson.

Citizenship Corner

These questions may require some research on your part. Thank you for making that effort. The answers will appear in the next edition of the Voice.

- 1) Let’s look at flag etiquette. Where will you find the rules of respect for the flag?
- 2) To whom or what can the flag be dipped to show respect?
- 3) Why are we careful not to let the flag touch the ground?
- 4) Can we use the flag the same way we use decorative bunting?



Everything in this paper
is important
to somebody