

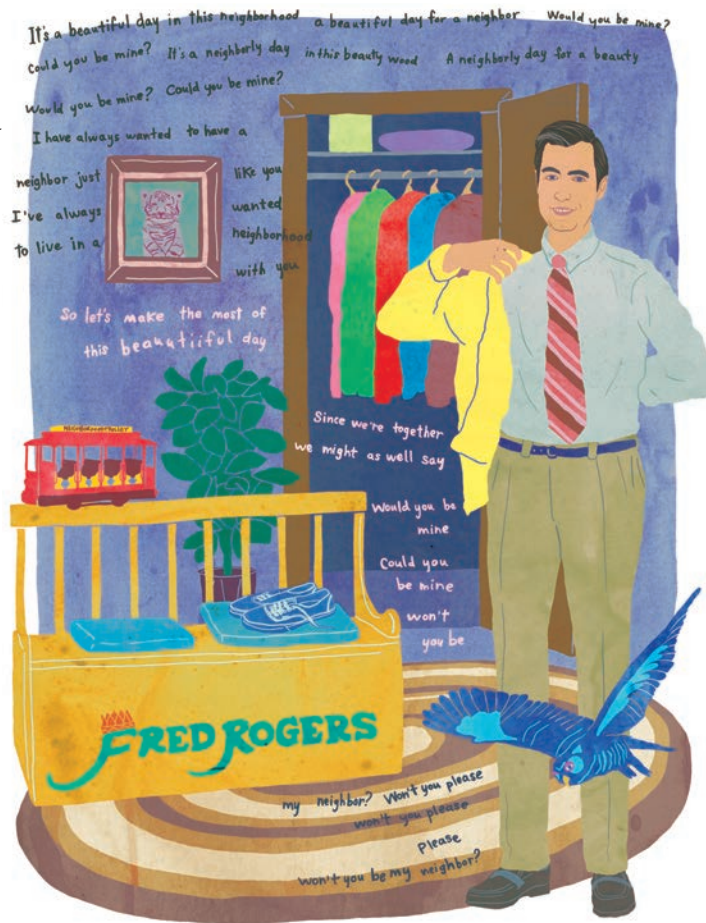
“Love”: An Active Noun



BY HILLARY MOSES MOHAUPT

I'm writing this with the theme song to *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* stuck in my head. By the time you read this article, it's likely that this (current) wave of Mister Rogers fever will have subsided. I'm not complaining—my sisters and I grew up eating mac and cheese or peanut butter sandwiches watching Mister Rogers, his real-life neighbors and the residents of the Neighborhood of Make-Believe. To this day, whenever Mister Rogers (the man himself, not the recent spin-off *Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood*) crops up in the news or popular culture, I'm reminded of some of the best moments of my childhood.

I have been thinking a lot lately about love languages. “Love languages” are the ways in which, according to Baptist minister Gary Chapman, people—particularly couples—express love to each other. The notion of “love languages” has more or less made its way into popular culture and more or less surpassed, at least in my circles, the boundaries of romantic love. I haven't read Chapman's book on the subject, but nowadays my sisters and I swap stories and schemes that capitalize on each other's preferred ways of giving and receiving love. We make plans to show up for each other, we text each other affirming encouragements, we exchange clothes like year-round gifts that need no season or



Fred Rogers, Annick Gaudreault

reason. We take care of each other. And, if by chance our expressions of love don't land in quite the way we intended them, we consider another way of expressing our feelings.

As I've gotten older, I've come to better understand the complex process of showing love for another person. In some ways I think it's more complicated now that I'm no longer in my reckless twenties, when I could believe that anything was possible, including that my path would surely cross that of any given person again. Now I find myself wanting to seize any opportunity that could be my last opportunity

to tell a person that I love them. If that sounds a little morbid, that would be right on the money. What if I never see a person again and never get the chance to express how much they mean to me?

One of the other challenges for me recently has been that words have seemed to fail me. This is a problem because I happen to like writing; I have always liked expressing myself through words. But lately, I've found that I can't always find the words I want to use to say, as Mister Rogers once sang, “It's you I like.” So, I find myself relying on the other ways of expressing my appreciation and my love—sharing hugs, giving gifts, caring for others and simply showing up. Sometimes, that last way of showing love is the most important, most powerful

way to be in loving conversation with one another. You can share a lot with another person just by being yourself, by sitting next to them and eating peanut butter sandwiches or macaroni and cheese, laughing and singing along together with your favorite television neighbor.

Hillary Moses Mohaupt is an elder at Hanover Church in Wilmington, Delaware.