

DECEMBER
2019

REV'S RAMBLINGS

My stomach is full as I begin this, because just a little while ago I was sitting with the kids from our After School program sharing in their annual Thanksgiving Feast.

According to our Thanksgiving story, the holiday began as a harvest festival. While the story has certainly been romanticized a bit, pilgrims who'd fled religious persecution in Europe did have a feast to celebrate a successful harvest as they realized that they'd be able to make it here in their new home.

All through human history, society after society has held celebrations of the harvest time. In fact, many societies have held two such celebrations, one early as a "First Fruits" holiday, expressing both faith and loyalty toward the God who would provide the upcoming blessing of the growing season, and then the second at the close of the harvest in gratitude for that blessing. (In ancient Judaism, Pentecost/Weeks was that early harvest festival, while Tabernacles was the later harvest festival.)

Our harvest festival is unique in a couple of ways. It's unique because, for many of us who live in America's cities, we are so separated from actual farming that the literal harvest is quite removed from us. We remember it through cultural symbols, but it's not a part of our ordinary lives. With this, we've generalized the concept, such that we're not just grateful for the harvest. We use this time as a time to remember to be grateful for all sorts of blessings.

And following in that, we actually named our harvest festival, not with thoughts of the harvest or of any particular rituals, but by the sense of gratitude that we believe should be central to the celebration. We call it "Thanksgiving."

Gratitude is right. It's right because we really do receive far more help and support than we typically realize. It's in everything from supermarkets and indoor plumbing to the support of friends and families to the simple experiences of living in a country that is generally free and in communities that are generally safe. We rely on others almost constantly. And we are richly blessed to be living at this time and in this place. Gratitude is right.

Gratitude is also profoundly good for those who give thanks.

We live in a world of arrogance and self-centeredness. We see it in sports, in entertainment, in politics... But the God who made us, the God who knows what is right and who knows what is best for us, has told us in Scripture that pride is not good for us and that we should be humble instead.

Gratitude promotes humility in us. It does so because, by acknowledging a gift or a blessing, we also acknowledge need in us. We admit that there was something that we didn't have on our own and that someone other than ourselves has provided it. Gratitude acknowledges our limits and gives us a better perspective on self, on others, and of life in general.

Expressing our gratitude also benefits our relationships.

Gratitude is always personal. In fact, I do not believe that it is even possible to be thankful unless that gratitude is toward another person. We might feel fortunate generally. We might feel relieved generally. We might feel joyful generally. But gratitude must be toward a person. More specifically, it must be toward that person who is responsible for the blessing that we have received. Even saying something like "Thank my lucky stars" attributes choice and personhood to the imaginary "lucky stars."

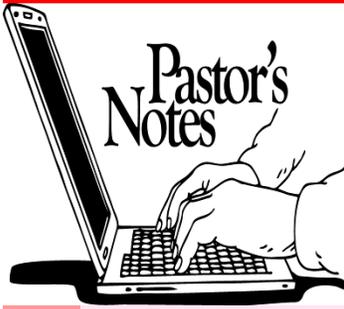
Because this is the nature of gratitude, when we express our thanks, that strengthens the relationship. We recognize that a person has helped us. Our grateful response is good for that relationship. It brings us together.

Gratitude also motivates us to become better people. When we are feeling grateful, we are more likely to be generous, more likely to be peaceful, more likely to be joyful, more likely to be loving... Gratitude promotes virtue in us.

And gratitude makes us stronger. For when we feel that we've been supported by blessings from others, then we are better able, in ourselves, to deal with adversity.

All of this become especially powerful for us when we recognize the One toward whom we should feel most grateful. It is God who has given us life. It is God who had given us a beautiful world in which to live. It is God who has given us family and friends with whom to live. It is God who has provided for us in every way. And especially, even when we rebelled against Him, God sent us a Savior who gave His life to offer to us forgiveness and the promise of life eternal.

Our gratitude toward God ought to permeate our being and show up in us in every moment, for God's blessing toward us is that great.



THE ENCOUNTER

EWPC

And, in fact, our Thanksgiving started as a specifically religious holiday. In the story of those “Pilgrim” settlers, they recognized God’s helpful presence and blessing as the real reason for their survival, for a fruitful harvest, for all they had. So their three-day festival was intended to thank and to honor God.

And that says one more thing about gratitude. It’s not enough for us to just feel gratitude. We need to express it. We need to respond. We need to say so.

This response can come in words, either directly to the one who has blessed us or to others in praise of the one who has blessed us. It can also come in actions. It can be that, just as we’ve been blessed, we bless others, looking to lift them up and to spread the joy and blessing.

It begins by seeing the truth that we have been blessed. Take the time to look at your life and see your blessings.

Next, be sure to see who it is that has blessed you. In many cases, our blessings come through people, such that our gratitude should go in more than one direction.

But ultimately, everything that we have and everything that we are comes from God. So we should always be grateful to Him.

Then respond. Don’t hold it in. Say something to another person. Say something in prayer and worship. Do something that is good toward someone else. Let your gratitude be seen and known.

And as we do this, God will be honored, and our lives will be enriched as well.

Psalm 107 begins, “Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good. His love endures forever.”

It’s true.

May God bless us all this Thanksgiving, and may we respond in ways that honor Him.

In Christ,

Rev. Jeff W. Rumble



A Message from the Presbyterian Women....

Thank you so much for the **90!** beautiful dresses that you made for Little Dresses for Africa. **90!** What a wonderful gift for 90 little African girls who will be proudly wearing our creations. Thank you for your time, your effort, and your artistry.

FROM THE DEACONS' BENCH

Tis the season to bless each other and all those in need....

Acts 20:35 - I have showed you all things, how that so laboring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

As Christmas approaches there are 25 families we can all bless and help.

The Deacons have brought in 25 boxes from the Salvation Army to be filled.

They are in the narthex please take one home and fill it.

Let us all bless the 25 families and feed them as God feeds and blesses us every day.

There is more information with dates in the bulletin or talk to a deacon.

Also there is a way to honor one you cherish.

We are also bringing in 36 Poinsettias you can get to honor the family or to decorate your own home.

Sign up list and all info in the bulletin.

The Deacons send our thank you and our love for all of you.

May God bless you all and your families.

Ruben Miranda, Deacon Moderator.

The
Deacon's



Fount Team
December 2019

It is the **Holiday Season** for those all around the world who believe in Jesus Christ. HE is the reason for this Christmas.

First off on the calendar is the Pot luck dinner on December 1st, at 5:30 @ church. Please bring a dish to share and sign up with the office to let us know who will be coming.

“HANGING OF THE GREENS” December 3rd, Tuesday @ 6:30 pm . Please bring your children, grandchildren and friends to the church to decorate it. Please bring some Christmas Cookies to share with all.

December 21st is the Parents Day off at 1pm to 4pm. This way for the parents to have some time to do Christmas Shopping without the children.

Please call the church office for more details.

This brings us up to Christmas Eve service that will be held at 7:30 pm. Hopefully the weather will cooperate so we can go out and sing Christmas Carols on the Patio in the front of the church.

May God grant you peace and love!



Presbyterian History *Did you know*

There's a lot of buzz about the new movie starring Tom Hanks as Mr. Fred Rogers. I know I definitely want to see it! What does the Presbyterian Historical Society have to say about Fred Rogers and how the popularity of Mister Rogers' Neighborhood came to be?

While a senior at Rollins College in Winter Park, Florida, Fred McFeely Rogers (1928-2003) became "appalled by what were labeled 'children's programs'—pies in faces and slapstick." As Rogers later told Eva Stimson, editor of *Presbyterians Today*, "That's when I decided to go into television.... Children deserved better."

In 1953, the music composition major and Latrobe, Pennsylvania, native was hired by Pittsburgh's WQED to co-produce *The Children's Corner*, a half-hour television program hosted by Josie Carey. Rogers worked behind the scenes as organist and puppeteer, recording episodes that emphasized creativity and self-esteem. Around the same time, he began taking classes at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary and graduate courses in child development, "to deepen what I could bring to television."

Carey's lyrics and dance, running weekly alongside Rogers' music and puppets from 1953 to 1961, gained national attention after *The Children's Corner* was syndicated by NBC. Rogers continued attending classes at Pittsburgh Seminary—sometimes during his lunch hour—and in 1962 was ordained with a charge to work with children and families through the media. *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*, with the Reverend Fred Rogers appearing on camera sporting his iconic sweater and sneakers, began broadcasting on public television in February 1968, fifty-one years ago.

As Stimson wrote, Fred Rogers "never served in a traditional role of pastor, but through television [brought] his simple message of affirmation and acceptance to a 'congregation' of millions."

Becky Campos, Elder, and EWPC Commissioner to the Presbytery



Our Church School Christmas Program is coming up. We are all invited to come out and support our school, the children, and meet their families! Our church school is a very important outreach mission of our church! We guarantee you will feel warm and fuzzy inside that they will make your hearts smile. They have all worked very hard on their programs. Please try and come to one or all of the programs, whichever works best for you. The schedule is as follows:

Tuesday, December 10	School Age	7 pm
Monday, December 16	Preschool Yellow & Red Rooms	9:15 am
Monday, December 16	Preschool Purple Room	11 am
Tuesday, December 17	Pre-K	6:30 pm

²⁶ In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, ²⁷ to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

²⁹ Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. ³⁰ But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. ³¹ You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, ³³ and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end." ³⁴ "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

³⁵ The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. ³⁶ Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. ³⁷ For no word from God will ever fail." ³⁸ "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled." Then the angel left her.

Luke 1: 26-38

The above passage is the New Testament lesson for the first Sunday in December. With Thanksgiving so late this year Advent is upon us with a bang. I'm not sure how I would react to an angel visiting me and telling me about God's plans for me that would seem literally impossible. Blessing the idea seems much more graceful than I'm sure I could muster. I think there is a better chance I would pass out first.

God's plans are usually much more than I can fathom or understand. Sometimes much later in time I get some clarity for what it is all about and why things need to happen that way. I just try to be open to the possibility that God knows just what we need and we just need to suit up and show up. He will take care of the rest. Especially this time of year when things get hectic and crazy busy just remembering to suit up and show up is all I need to do. He will take care of the rest. That gives me peace. I hope you find peace and tranquility this December as well.

In His Service,

Jennifer Cormack



**DON'T FORGET.....MOVIE, PIZZA AND SANTA!
FRIDAY, DECEMBER 13TH 6:00 PM PURDY HALL**

Our annual Christmas outreach will feature the Disney Movie Santa Buddies. We will have Pizza, Drinks and Christmas Cookies. Santa Claus will also pay us a visit. Last year we had a lot of guests (100+) from our school, MOPS, and the Scouts that meet at our facility. Purdy Hall was full of children and families. Please pass the word on to anyone you know that might be interested. Of course, all of you are invited as well for a fun night.

We hope to see everyone at Movie Night! Merry Christmas Everyone!

The Ambassadors



- | | |
|----|------------------------------------|
| 1 | Miriam Mehrle |
| 2 | George Reed, Sue Walker |
| 12 | Joanne Neel |
| 13 | Patrick Reece |
| 17 | Jane Warner |
| 21 | Al Gonyer |
| 23 | Valentina Mansuryan |
| 24 | Miguel Hernandez |
| 28 | Jane Rucker |
| 30 | Jim Neel, Aimee Sones, Colin Sones |

FOR UNTO US
a child is born,
unto us a son is given:
and the government shall be upon his shoulder:
and his name shall be called
WONDERFUL,
COUNSELLOR,
THE MIGHTY GOD,
The everlasting Father,
THE PRINCE OF PEACE.

Isaiah 9:6

Presbyterian Mission: *Christmas Joy Offering*

GOD IS WITH US

What was the most perfect gift you ever received? A bike or doll when you were a kid? A video game, perhaps? Maybe it was the day you met your spouse — or looked into the eyes of the newborn baby that someone laid in your arms. For most of us, the most perfect gift is not necessarily a thing, but something else. Something bigger, deeper, more meaningful.

One of the most powerful things that Christians claim is that God saw the great needs of the world and offered a perfect gift, a gift that brought God and humanity closer together. God's perfect gift to us, Jesus Christ, offered the power of being with us. According to Matthew's Gospel, one of the names given to Jesus is Emmanuel, which means "God is with us."

In Jesus, we receive the perfect gift of God being with us, and of being with those who are often overlooked, left out, vulnerable, or in need. "God is with us," we proclaim. What a powerful gift, a perfect gift, the gift of ... being with. Being with ... think about it. This is one of the reasons we share gifts during Christmas. We, too, want to share the power of being "with" those we love and those in need, by offering gifts like those we give to the Christmas Joy Offering.

When we give to the Christmas Joy Offering, we step forward to be with the young people attending Stillman College, Presbyterian Pan American School, and the Menaul School, recognizing their potential and rejoicing in their talents. We offer the gift of being with them in support of their education and leadership development, knowing that the students of color who attend these schools will soon lead the church and world, receiving our gifts and offering their gifts in return.

We also step forward to be with church workers and their families who have faithfully served the church but find themselves in critical financial need because of changing health situations or an emergency. We offer the gift of being "with" them by giving a gift to the offering to help restore hope through the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions.

How can you give, you ask? **At worship on December 22nd, use the special offering envelope provided in the December 15th bulletin. Alternatively, you can text JOY to 56512 to donate; or go online at presbyterianmission.org/give/christmasjoy.**

We give these gifts because God shows us how powerful it is to "be with." The power of "with" is the power God shows us in Jesus Christ. God's perfect gift: Emmanuel, God is with us. Let us share our gifts and celebrate our church leaders — past, present and future.

