

Another Word November 22, 2021

To our family and friends of First Christian Church

I realize it is a little early for our letter to be sent, but we mail quite a few and we want them to be delivered before Thanksgiving. And speaking of Thanksgiving; I'm sure you have heard that Benjamin Franklin wanted the turkey to be our nation's symbol. If that had happened, what would be the main dish on our tables this Thursday? Kinda gives you the shivers, doesn't it!

A big thank you to everyone who helped decorate the Sanctuary yesterday. It looks beautiful and is the perfect backdrop for our Advent and Christmas worship.

We still have a few Advent daily devotional books available. You can pick one up next Sunday, or let me know and I will drop one off to you.

As a reminder, our support for "The Lord's Pantry" in West Salem is in full swing. I sent a picture to Pastor Mike of what we have collected so far, and he sends a big thank you. I will be taking some of the urgently needed items to him next week. I also thank you for your willingness to selflessly, help others.

Our annual congregational meeting will be Dec. 5th, immediately after our service. We will be voting on our budget and slate of officers for 2022.

Our Bible Study begins Nov. 30th. Be sure to sign up and take a study guide. Classes are at 10:30 and 6pm each Tuesday.

During Advent, our worship will look deeply into the rich tapestry of prophecy that was fulfilled. We also will examine the lives of 2 unsuspecting mothers to be, as well as 2 fathers, and their roles in the lives of John the Baptist and Jesus, our soon to be “New Born King.”

Our scriptures for the first Sunday of Advent are: Jeremiah 33:10-16, read by our Elder, Lana Bell. Also, Mark 13:32-37, and Luke 1:5-25. “The Birth of John the Baptist foretold.”

Please keep the families of Pat and Larry Lazer, Lana Bell, and Amy Shakley, in your prayers for the loss of their mother and grandmother. Also, remember Karen and Stu Light, as Karen starts her treatments. May we pray:

Eternal God, we come to you with love in our hearts, and a song of Thanksgiving on our lips. But we also come to You in need of comfort, healing, and assurance. At times, life tumbles in on us, overwhelming us with burdens that distract us and weigh us down. But then we realize, that these are the times when we look to You for strength and courage. What a wonderful feeling to know that You are always there to guide and support us with Your word, and to comfort us with Your love. Please protect those frontline workers who live their lives in the service of others. May we also reach out to a neighbor, passing on to them the compassion, grace, and love that You have blessed us with. In Jesus’ Holy name we offer this prayer, Amen.

Brian played an old “Shaker” song yesterday during communion, and it reminded me of many cherished, childhood memories.

Growing up, we always went to our Uncle Harold and Aunt Betty’s farm in Polk for Thanksgiving. It wasn’t far away, but it was like a different world, especially to a “Big City Boy” of Ashland, like me. There were as many as 30 people crammed into a small, turn of the century farm house; a house without indoor plumbing. By today’s standards, everyone there would be considered as poor as a church mouse. (Whatever that means.)

The dining room table would be opened to its maximum size, and of course, the children were relegated to card tables in the living room. Each family brought a dish or two, so the burden of feeding such a crowd wouldn’t fall on just one or two people. My great Aunt Lulu always brought the cheese plate. It was lovingly, but also kiddingly called, “The Tradition.” I fondly remember the closeness and the laughter and the joy that filled that little house all day.

One special Thanksgiving that I remember was when I was 8 years old. At school, we made Pilgrim hats to wear, and big silver buckles that you could tie on to your shoes. I can still recall the excitement I felt in the back seat of the old Buick, as we drove down Route 89 on the way to the farm. It was as if I was representing all the Pilgrims who stepped out on that rock in Boston Harbor. I couldn’t wait to get there, and to “Tell the Story” of that first gathering. Yep, I was a story teller even then.

The song Brian played during communion was “Simple Gifts.” As I reflected on the song later that day, memories came flooding back and

I began to remember all the simple gifts that came together to make those gatherings so special.

There were no fancy dishes, no crystal glasses, no store-bought rolls; there was nothing catered. Not even anticipation of football games to be played. And of course, no plans were being made to get the best Black Friday deals.

No, what we all experienced in that crowded house were simple gifts. Each brought a dish from their heart, to share. Each brought themselves, along with their joy and contentment. Each came with their simple lives, including all the ups and downs that were then shared with each other. Each came with a story, each with a memory, and each with a dream for the future. And all these simple gifts were placed upon and around the table, a table filled with love.

But the best part, was when Uncle Charlie was asked to give the blessing. We were reminded that all the simple gifts laid before us, were God's wonderful bounty; a bounty to be thankful for, and shared with others.

So maybe, this Thursday, whether you are with a large gathering or home alone, take a moment to thank God for the wonderment of our lives, and the simple, yet priceless gift, of His love.

'Tis the gift to be simple, 'tis the gift to be free,
'Tis the gift to come down where we ought to be,
And when we find ourselves in the place just right,
'Twill be in the valley of love and delight.

In His Gracious Peace,

Rich