



ONE VOICE



Churches: ♦Bethany ♦Immanuel ♦Lunder ♦Silver Lake ♦Winnebago

Pastor Randy Baldwin & Pastor Bill Peters

Volume 13, Issue 11

November 2020

From the Pastor's Desk

"Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you. The earth has yielded its increase; God, our God, has blessed us. May God continue to bless us; let all the ends of the earth revere him."
Psalm 67:5-7



When I think of November, a variety of images come to mind. The first is birthdays. We have a number of November birthdays in my family, including my Grandpa Gentz, who lived to celebrate his ninety-seventh birthday and my Uncle Bob who is two years older than me. My family would gather on the farm and we would eat a hearty meal. Then we would play football while my Grandpa took a nap. Then we would come in for cake and ice cream.

The next image that comes to mind is the harvest. I remember helping my Grandma and Grandpa with the harvest into November a number of times. My Grandpa had a 1945 two-row pull McCormack corn picker. We put boards upon the wagons so we could hold more corn. When the wagon was full, we would unhook the wagon and my Grandpa would pull ahead with the picker. Then we would pull in with another wagon as close as we could and work to get hooked up with the corn picker. Then we would give the go ahead and my Grandpa was off and running with the picker. We would race back with the wagon to the corn crib, where the elevator was set up. We would start up the tractor with the belt to run the elevator and slowly raise the wagon as my Grandma would open and shut the end gate letting the corn fill the elevator and it would bring it up into the corn crib slowly filling the sides and finally the top. Then we would race back with the empty wagon, ready to repeat the course again. It was slow, but we would work at it until the corn was picked, the stalks chopped, the fields plowed.

The next images that come to mind is that of Thanksgiving. We would travel on the morning of Thanksgiving to my Grandparents farm, with a couple of dishes of food to pass packed into the trunk. A smile would break across my face as we would see the cars parked in the farmyard. I recognized the cars and could tell who was already present. When we carried in the food, we could smell the turkey baking in the oven mixed in with scents of beans, dressing and more. When we turned from the hallway into the kitchen, we were always greeted with a number of pies sitting on the counter. There were calls of greetings and hugs and laughter filling the house. We would move around to different circles of relatives catching up with each other's lives. After a wonderful meal, we would play some football, watch some football, play some cards and eat again.

Living in rural Minnesota and Iowa, I imagine many of these images are familiar. Only the combines have become a lot bigger than a two-row corn picker and the fields are left no till, protecting the land. Family gatherings, catching up with family members, celebrating life and giving thanks to the Lord for the many blessings are some memories most of us have in common.



It is good that we carry on the tradition started by Abraham Lincoln, to set aside a day for prayer and Thanksgiving to the Lord for the many blessings God bestows upon us and our nation. When we stop to give thanks to the Lord for the bounty of the harvest, it should bring to mind the prayers that were said when the seeds were planted. We asked the Lord to bless the seeds to bring a bountiful harvest. During the spring and the summer, we asked the Lord to provide the rain and the sun for a harvest. The bountiful harvest is a clear answer to our prayers lifted up. *"The earth has yielded its increase; God, our God, has blessed us."* The Lord has heard our prayers.

On the Day of Thanksgiving, somewhere along the day of gathering, cooking, eating, playing together and creating memories, we stop to give Thanks for God's blessings. When we begin to think of the blessings God has blessed us with throughout the year, the list begins to grow and grow. We



we can give thanks for our family and friends. We can give thanks for love and joy. We can give thanks for laughter, for enduring difficult times, good health. We can give thanks for the food on our table, day after day. We can give thanks for warm coats for cold days, and cool shorts and t-shirts on hot days. We can give thanks for the furnace making our homes warm on a cold day and air conditioners cooling us from the summer heat. We can give thanks for our cars and trucks giving us the freedom to accomplish tasks, transporting us where we need to be for work and play. We can give thanks for schools and the administrators, teachers, staff, custodians providing a safe and learning environment for our students to learn and help them develop their skills and talents. We can give thanks for our brothers and sisters in Christ, who walk beside us, lift up prayers together, strengthen one another in faith as we worship together. We can give thanks for the seasons. We can give thanks for the sun and the rain.

As you see, when we stop to give thanks to our Lord, we begin to see the Lord's fingerprints all over our lives, blessing us in abundance over and over again. Some of the blessings we asked for as the Lord answered our prayers. We discover other blessings God just decided to bless us with as signs of his gracious love. Every day we can give thanks to the Lord for sending his Son, God Incarnate, in the flesh to come and reveal God as our loving heavenly Father. We can give thanks for a love so deep as to go to the cross and grave to bring us the gifts of forgiveness and reconciliation. We can give thanks for the Holy Spirit creating faith. The Lord is loving and gracious, full of steadfast love. So let us praise and thank our Lord in abundance for the abundance of love and blessings. Happy Thanksgiving!

Pastor Randy



WANDERINGS AND WONDERINGS



I want to, need to, say “Thank You” to so many, to everyone for that matter. It was 6 months when I found myself in the hospital with heart failure. Never saw that coming, but now it is part of my reality. Briefly, I want to tell you I’m doing OK – still working back into things, discovering what I can and can’t do. Not wanting to overuse a common theme these days, but it is and will be a “new normal.”

Thank you. You have taken care of me better than I knew how to take care of myself. Thank you for your prayers ... your concern ... your patience. Thank you for stepping up and stepping in – for ministry and things I could not do. Thank you for the meals that many of you provided, at first, I didn’t think that was necessary, but very soon we were looking forward to those days when meals were coming. Thank you to those who were willing to drive me around – I know that I didn’t use everyone who volunteered, but it was a great assurance knowing that their were many willing give of their time to do that. Thank you to those who mowed and trimmed, and did a number of other chores around the parsonage and in our churches that I was used to just doing myself. There are some things that you did that I didn’t even know, only now beginning to realize – thank you! **Thank You!**



November is going to be an exciting, busy month in the midst of our parish – baptisms, First Communion, confirmations, Mission Sunday, Thanksgiving Eve worship, and even more that will surprise us. And that leads us to the season of Advent Christmas. Yes, it is coming and is now around the corner. There is some concern dealing with all this – we were not able to celebrate Easter together and now we concern ourselves with our Christmas celebrations. We know that we can’t do



Christmas like we are use to and we wonder what we have to put aside this year.

In spite of that concern, let it be known – We Will Celebrate Christmas! And, in some new ways. So, let us “Prepare the Way.” We plan to encourage everyone to lift up Advent in some more intentionally ways this year, We will work around the theme “Prepare Ye” with the weekly themes of “Ponder” ... “Pray” ... “Praise” ... “Proclaim” ... with the Christmas themes of “Place” ... and “Paradise”. Besides highlighting these themes on Sunday when we are gathered together, we

will provide some study materials, devotions, and resources to life these themes up daily at home.

If our faith is to have a backbone, it does not come from our church, but from our homes. Our church, church family, our worship experience – are important. But our backbone is our homes. Not meaning to accuse anyone, but I’m afraid that we have let that piece of our faith development slide a bit. I do not believe we have been as diligent and faithful at home as we want to be. So here is one of those opportunities that this Covid mess has provided us – we have been under “house arrest” for months – but have we used to make our homes stronger? Let’s use the opportunity that we have been given this Advent in our homes.

We will be providing pop-up Advent calendars for our families that have children. Everyone will eagerly await each day to see what symbol of the Christmas season we literally raise up and how God’s word speaks to that theme. We will be providing all families with a set of “Daily Tear-Off Trivia Cards – What do I Wonder about Christmas?” Use this for your devotions. Each day you will have 5 questions about Bible characters, decorations, places & events, songs & carols, and a “true-false question.” All ages will be able to participate, and I believe that you will either be able to answer the question or at least know that you once knew the answer. 😊 If the question/answer is something you didn’t know, dig a little deeper and find out a little more – you and your household and your faith will grow. Pull out your Advent wreath ... and be intentional with it. If you have never used or seen an Advent wreath – look it up – they are available on Amazon (use Amazon Smile – every one of our congregations has an account and will receive a percentage of the cost), light the candle(s) (everyone likes lighting candles), talk about the weekly theme, read some of the Biblical prophecies/stories. Don’t make it overbearing, but let it make a difference!



When we get done with this Advent season, let it be like no other. Let’s take advantage of what God has given us. Let’s not grumble (there will be a few moments, but ...), but let us celebrate all that God has done and all that God is doing.

Wanderings and Wonderings, Pastor Bill Peters