



In Gratitude

November 24, 2021

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At our Presbytery Gathering last week, we welcomed three new ministers and asked each of them the same question: for what are you thankful? We learned about gratitude for family and pets and ministry opportunities and new connections to people and the beauty of the season. How would you answer?

On this Thanksgiving Eve, as I reflect on the question, I would include all of these. My grandchildren delight me, and my old beagle calms my spirit. The critters in my backyard amuse me – except for the one scratching around in my living room walls. I’m a little worried about that one. I’m grateful to live in a state that produces cranberries to set on my Thanksgiving table. I am thankful, too, that the narrative around Thanksgiving is evolving to become less one-sided, even as I pull out my Pilgrim and Indian decorations.

And, I am thankful for you! I am grateful for your ministries, your commitment to the church, and your faith in God. During our year-and-a-half long focus on Matthew 25, you have demonstrated compassion and love for neighbor. The Thanksgiving holiday is often focused on plentiful food, but we know that hunger is pervasive in our communities. I give thanks for all the food ministries you support, both in your congregations and in the community. At national denominational gatherings, I brag on Milwaukee Presbytery, and your reputation for faith in action is well-deserved.



Though circumstances have tried to shake us over the last two years, you are persevering. I pray that you don’t stick around out of habit, but out of a deep longing for connection to God and to one another. Sometimes our anxiety manifests itself in an over-emphasis on detail or process, or conflict bubbles up. I’m thankful for these, too, because it means you care. The church matters. We can work on process and conflict, so long as we agree that the church is important, as a reflection of God in community.

I am grateful for a God who chooses to be revealed, to be known, to be recognized, and to be understood. Not some distant, faraway authority, God chose incarnation, taking human form that we might know God through Jesus Christ. (Bonus: Advent theme, mixed with Thanksgiving message!)

In this in-between time, how are God’s intentions being revealed? What is the Spirit saying to the church? What is breaking open? As uncomfortable as a liminal season can be, I give thanks for uncertainty because it makes us more dependent on God and each other. It creates the space for something new or for a recommitment to what we value.

Have a blessed Thanksgiving holiday! May you find time to reflect, rest, and digest.