

# The Good News Gazette

The First Presbyterian Church  
94-96 Main Street Chester, NY 10918

## November 2017

I'm not sure about you, but I can't believe it's already November! With the holidays quickly approaching there is so much to start preparing for... shopping and gifts, cleaning the house for Thanksgiving or any out of town guests, or preparing to travel to visit family. If we haven't already, we will begin making our lists of everything we need to get done before Thanksgiving, before Christmas, before the New Year. But, we also need to remember to take a step back and breathe a little, remember the meaning of the holidays, especially Thanksgiving.

This time of year we are called to reflect and be thankful for the past year or years of our lives. For our loved ones, family and friends, for the roof over our heads and the food set before us, for joy and laughter even among the tears and pain, and for our great God who walks with us daily. This time that might be the only time each year we really pause in our lives to think about how blessed we are and to give thanks. But perhaps, this should be more routine than once a year. We should reflect monthly, weekly, daily, or as Paul writes, in everything we do.

In Paul's letter to the Colossians he writes, "And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." (Col 3:17 NRSV)

In everything we do, we should not only do it in the name of our Lord Jesus but also give thanks to God. We are called to be thankful, live lives of gratitude in all that we do.

A few weeks ago, at the start of October and the start of our stewardship campaign in worship, I mentioned how Dr. Charles Wiley, coordinator of the Presbyterian Mission Agency's office of Theology and Worship, states that, what makes us Presbyterian (as opposed to another denomination) isn't so much our polity (our form of government) but rather our belief in grace and gratitude. We strongly follow John Calvin's conviction that it is by God's grace alone that we are saved. There is nothing we can do to save ourselves, no works or deeds, no money or power, but our response to this deep, beautiful, wonderful grace is how we live our lives. In response to this wonderful grace, we are to live lives of gratitude, giving thanks to God in everything we do. Very similar to Paul's words to the Colossians, "do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." Give thanks, in everything you do.

However, this got me thinking, that Paul isn't just writing to individuals, he is also writing this to a group – the church. What does it look like for us as a church to be thankful? How do we reflect on this or how do we live out our gratitude?

Well, in preparing for our stewardship campaign I began to do a little research... In everything that we do, striving to do it in the name of Christ and giving thanks to God here's what I've noticed:

In 1994, we officially started the Food Pantry through registering with the state. Though this program was started even before this with holiday baskets and collections for those in need, this is our official start date for the pantry we know and love today. Over that time we've seen our numbers of those in need ebb and flow, sometimes being as low as 30 or less families and sometimes being over 100 families. Yet, regardless of the number of families, our volunteer efforts and donations have continued to rise. Rotary has been helping with stocking the shelves for a number of years, on and off we've had the high school football team and basketball teams help with carrying in the turkeys and hams, the Girl Scouts have been doing a coat drive for over 10 years. Local churches have been wonderful with taking collections and bringing them down monthly. But

what's exciting is that just in the past 2-3 years seeing even more commitment and the rise of engagement in the community. Kiwanis now helps with birthday boxes and always sends at least 2 helpers each month for distribution. The Key Club and National Honor Society come almost every month to help unload the truck and on occasion stock the shelves. Knights of Columbus have made a commitment to send at least one member to help with distribution every month. The Women's Auxiliary from St. Columba's collects school supplies each year for the pantry. Over the past 2 years we've seen our finances hold steady to now increasingly rise as the community becomes more hands on and sees the good work our church started and continues to do in the name of Christ.

Many, many years ago, too many for most to remember, we chartered the local Boy Scout troop. Hanging in our Dining Room is a plaque that lists all who have made Eagle Scout from 1974-2010, a total of 40 Boy Scouts. It should be noted that, that doesn't include our very own Austin Van Der Meulen who recently earned his Eagle Scout Badge this year with adding community garden space behind our CE building. Our support for this organization and these Boy Scouts have lead to over 40 Eagle Scouts out in the larger world today. Simply amazing what giving thanks to God can bring about... being thankful for this space we have been provided by allowing the Boy Scouts to use it, to charter them in such a way that they can flourish in this community.

Two years ago Session agreed to open up our Dining Room space to Narcotics Anonymous. We are rapidly approaching their 2 year celebration with numbers far above what anyone could imagine when the program started. We are told this has been the fastest growing group by far in all of Orange County. The numbers of individuals who come out for support has been incredible. Many will be celebrating their 2 year anniversary of being clean with others celebrating longer and shorter amounts of time. All are very thankful for the space we provide, as some wouldn't know where they might be right now without it. In living out our lives of gratitude as a church, we've again opened our doors to those who need a space. Last year a few of us we able to celebrate their 1 year anniversary with them and hope to celebrate with them again. Our offering of gratitude and thanks for what God has given us has produced so much hope, joy, and new life.

For over 15 years, we've shared our Sanctuary and CE building with KMC. Committing our mission to serving Christ with sharing our space with another congregation. Over those 15 years, relationships have grown across the congregations as we have on occasion: held services together, worked to combine our efforts, and celebrated many milestones together of new pastors and talents of the youth. We are thankful to house such a faithful congregation that is committed to serving Christ just as we are serving Christ. We recognize this space wasn't just given to us for our own use but it is Christ's church to be used in his name. In our giving thanks to God, we recognize how grateful we are to have our own space to share with another congregation.

These are certainly many more examples that could be shared about how we as a church has responded in thanks to God, responded in gratitude in all that we do as we strive to do it all in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. And if you think of any, please share them. Share them during our Joys and Concerns during worship, share them with each other during coffee hour, share them with Pastor Erin or Session, tell it around your Thanksgiving tables, and share them with the larger community around us. Let the community know just how grateful we are for all God has provided and how we strive to do everything in the name of our Lord Jesus. Tell our story, God's story of grace, Christ's love with joy and thanksgiving. Giving thanks to God always.

Pastor Erin

## **Roast Beef Dinner – All Hands on Deck**

November 4<sup>th</sup> is fast approaching. Here are a few key dates to remember for the Roast Beef Dinner:

November 2<sup>nd</sup> – 9am Coleslaw prep

November 3<sup>rd</sup> – 9am potato prep, table prep, coleslaw dressing

November 4<sup>th</sup> – all volunteers be here by 3:30pm

### **Book Club**

Pastor Erin would like to know if anyone would be interested in a book club (possibly an evening). Books she is considering for the book club: Jesus for President (Shane Claiborne and Chris Haw), The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness (Michelle Alexander), If the Church Were Christian: Rediscovering the Values of Jesus (Philip Gulley), Green Like God: Unlocking the Divine Plan for Our Planet (Jonathan Merritt), Sabbath as Resistance: Saying No to the Culture of Now (Walter Brueggemann), America and Its Guns: A Theological Exposé (James E. Atwood). Please see the bulletin board to sign up.

### **Stewardship Pledge**

On November 19<sup>th</sup> we will be finishing up our Stewardship Campaign for the year and will be asking all of our members if they would please make a pledge to support the work of our church. This pledge will include both a financial pledge and also a time and talents pledge. Session recognizes the amount of time, energy, and finances that goes into keeping our church up and running and so along with financial pledging information we will be providing information for ways you can pledge to help support the weekly to monthly activities. For example, serving as liturgist, helping at a church clean up day, help with organizing upcoming events, etc... We ask that you prayerfully consider how you can pledge this year to support our congregation and all the wonderful things we are able to do for our congregation and for our larger community.

### **Community Information:**

The Florida Presbyterian Church is having a Craft Fair on Saturday, November 4, 9am-3pm. Hundreds of hand-made items, bake sale, raffle, and a café serving soup and sandwiches. Get a head start on your Christmas shopping!

### **Looking Ahead**

**November 2 – Coleslaw prep 9am**

**November 3 – Potato prep, dressing for coleslaw, table set up 9 am**

**November 4 – Roast Beef Dinner 4-7pm**

**November 6 - Bible Study 10 am (19 Main St)**

**Music and Worship meeting 1pm**

**November 12 – Session Meeting following worship**

**November 13– Bible Study 10 am (19 Main St)**

**Food Pantry Truck (tentative)**

**November 14 – Women’s Council meeting 1pm**

**November 16 – Food Pantry Distribution 4-7pm**

**November 20 – Bible Study 10 am (19 Main St)**

**November 27 – Bible Study 10 am (19 Main St)**

If you have an article or announcement you would like to have in the next newsletter, please have it into the church office by November 23rd.

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If you are in need of pastoral care, please contact our pastor at the church office number (845-469-4877).