

Westover Reflections - November 2024



William's Wanderings

"And one of them, realizing that he had been healed, returned, glorifying God in a loud voice; and he fell at the feet of Jesus and thanked Him."

-Luke 17:15-16

Do you remember when in the first grade you did Thanksgiving themed creations? You made a pilgrim's hat, or an Indian headband with a feather in it? Or you colored a Thanksgiving cornucopia? I am not very artistic. My granddaughter, Malia, is, but not me. In truth, I disliked coloring because it kept me from reading, which I preferred from the time I can remember.

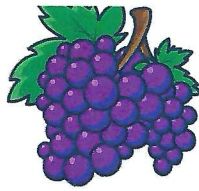
I suspect that our collective memories of childhood Thanksgivings would prove to be rather... messy. Much like my coloring. Much like that first Thanksgiving with the Pilgrims and the true Native Americans. Much like...the Ten Lepers from our Gospel passage. The reality in this passage as a whole-Luke 17:11-19-is that it would have been scandalous for Jesus, a Jew, to even be in Samaria. Then, on top of that, Jesus upholds the Samaritan leper who, having been healed with nine others, was the only one who gave thanks for the healing. This foreigner, this centuries-old enemy. Can you in this moment see the breath of God's merciful love in His healing touch? Did you see the Samaritan's sheer gratitude in return? He is not the outsider whom you suppose; he is your teacher.

Can you imagine that in this year 2024? All the ones that others tell us we should despise, have nothing to do with, have, in fact, something to teach us about God's love? About thanksgiving for the long reach of God's kindness, generosity, and mercy. And let's not forget that all of us who gather around these Thanksgiving tables are foreigners. We are standing on land that once belonged to Indigenous people.

In that great hymn, "For the Beauty of the Earth," we sing "For the joy of human love, brother, sister, parent, child..." It is a verse for those who gather around the table of thanks; for those who are present and for the many who mourn the loss of a beloved. It is a verse for those who we have walked with us as family and for those who come seeking that which we have. Look this is not our home! We are all residents of heaven, pilgrims trying to find our way back home to God. And our task is to be bearers of grace and mercy, reconciliation and peace. We all have received the love of the Holy One and, so, we come rushing back, knowing that we have been made whole-justified by faith and God's grace-and we fall at the feet of Jesus, giving Him thanks for all that He has done, and now being sent forth to share His love with the world around us.

Still in His Peace,
Pastor William





"The Attitude of Gratitude"

"Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts." Colossians 3:16

What are you thankful for? Think about it for a moment...then tell God about it! Let Him know how much you feel you are blessed. Tell Him specifically how much you appreciate His blessings. Why? Does God need to hear us telling Him how much we appreciate Him? Does He have some cosmic inferiority complex and needs someone to tell Him He's done a great job? Of course, no. Has He forgotten what He's done for you and me and needs reminding? Again, of course, no. Then why is gratitude such an important part of our worship experience? Why do we focus so much on praising God and being thankful people? Because, it's good for us. We need to say again all the blessings He's bestowed on us. WE tend to forget what God has done in our lives. Our busy lives lead us to take Him and His blessings for granted.

By stating them openly and with joy, we are reminded again and again of what He's done, how He has intervened in our lives - and here's the important part - our perspective and our hearts change as a result. Think about the way your heart changes about a person you discover has been doing nice things for you behind your back. You have a new appreciation for that person, a new warmth for their generosity and giving spirit. You are "endeared" to that person. Isn't that the beginning of worship (tell God how much we love Him)? That's why scripture encourages us to begin our services of worship with thanksgiving.

"Enter His gates with thanksgiving, and His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him and praise His name" Psalm 100:4

We begin this way in worship because that is the starting point of "loving God". We remind ourselves of not only how good God is and was, but how good He is and was to us in our personal life. When we sing songs like...

"O happy day, happy day - You washed my sin away. O happy day, happy day - I'll never be the same." ("Happy Day" - Hillsongs)

...we are celebrating something specific - he not only washed my sin, but he forgave me this specific sin I did yesterday... as a result, I will never return to that and I have a new understanding of God's love and my behavior. When we sing hymns like...

"My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness" ("My Hope Is Built - UMH #368")

...we are declaring a truth about God - that in the midst of our chaos and troubles - He has a plan to prosper and bless us. He has offered us HOPE! Hearing that, singing that, believing that draws me into a special place of love and adoration to God. Why? Because I need hope so much and He offers it to me free of charge because He loves me!

When we adopt the attitude of gratitude in our worship time - which means as we are singing "Great Is Thy Faithfulness" we aren't just singing the words on the screen, but we are reminding ourselves of His specific acts of faithfulness in our lives - we are drawn closer to God so we can hear His voice, understand His plan for us, and share more deeply in the presence of Christ with our family here at Westover.

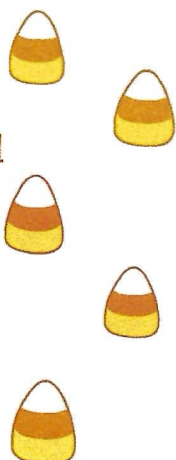
So this Thanksgiving (and always!), make sure you put on your attitude of gratitude - this Sunday and every day. When you do, you won't regret it - God will make sure of that!

"Come, let us sing for joy to the LORD; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before him with thanksgiving and extol him with music and song." Psalm 95:1-2



Trunk or Treat & Blessing of the Animals

We have passed out lots of flyers for our event on Thursday, October 31. We need lots of cars and treats! Please come decorate your car (a little or a lot) and bring treats to share with the children. We hope to have lots of kiddos in costume. Come join the fun!



Fair parking to flood buckets

During a few days of the NC State Fair, Westover parked cars in our lot and, wow, the results exceeded our expectations! With about a dozen volunteer traffic controllers, we raised \$5,503. Much of this money will be spent to purchase items for 40 flood buckets. We'll pass the buckets on to UMCOR to use in the Hurricane Helene relief efforts in western North Carolina. Thank you to the volunteers who made this possible!



UMM Breakfast for Dinner and movie night

Please join us on Friday, November 8 for a special evening of fellowship. At 6:00 PM, the United Methodist Men will be serving a pancake and sausage dinner. Cost of the dinner is free, but donations for more flood buckets to be sent to UMCOR for Hurricane Helene relief are welcome and encouraged.

At 7:00 PM, we will enjoy the movie *Heaven is for Real*. As usual, there will be snacks and a door prize.



If you would like to carpool, please contact Kent or Sharron Gibson.

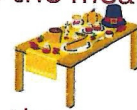
Thanksgiving



On Sunday, November 24, we're having our Thanksgiving Meal together after 11:00 worship. This will be a pot luck meal so please fix sides and/or desserts to share with others. If you're willing to furnish turkey as part of the meal, please let Sharron Gibson or Clara Worsley know.

Our Homecoming meal together was so special – so we know that this time together right before Thanksgiving will be special, too.

Join us! Please bring your food contributions to the Fellowship Hall before the worship service so all will be ready when it's time to gather to share the meal.



NOTE: Arise and Shine

Worship at 9:00 on Nov. 24 will be held in the sanctuary as the Fellowship Hall will be set up for the meal.

Help needed to set up for the Thanksgiving Meal! If you can help out with setting up tables and decorating, please join us in the Fellowship Hall at 10:00 on Saturday, November 23. It won't take long and will be fun!

Craft Circle and United Women of Faith

Craft Circle and UWF is scheduled a bit differently this month. Craft circle will meet in Wesley Hall at 10:00 AM on November 9. We have a fun dried flower craft planned! Please bring a small, clean (no sticker or sticky "stuff") glass jar and tweezers if you have them. If not, no worries we have a few to share! At 11:00 we will have our UWF meeting.

At about 11:45 everyone, including the menfolk, are encouraged to join us to enjoy more fellowship and a pizza lunch-pizza will be provided!

After lunch, we'll be filling the buckets with cleaning items to be sent to UMCOR. ALL are invited to this great morning of fellowship, crafts, food and service



Time to decorate for Advent and Christmas season!

We need help with decorating the Sanctuary and Fellowship hall for the Advent and Christmas season! Yes, it's getting close to that time of the year.

If you can help out, we'll meet in the Sanctuary at 10:00 on Saturday, November 30. Trees to decorate, wreaths to hang, Advent wreath to set up – there's something for you to do! Lots of hands will mean that it won't take long.

Adult Sunday School Class

We are now studying 1 and 2 Peter. We're just getting started on this so please join us each Sunday at 10:00 in the Education Building. It's a special time of fellowship and learning more about God's Word. There's a seat for you!

Children's Room and Sunday School

We are in the process of updating the "nursery" in the education building to be a room for children's activities.

Meanwhile, If anyone brings a child to church during the Sunday School hour, just ask in the Adult Sunday School room and a volunteer will happily come to teach Sunday School for the young ones. We're all set for them, even while we plan the room update.



Passings

Don Cherry and Judy Tudor, both long-time members of Westover, went on to Glory in October.

Judy's service will be at Westover on Saturday, November 2 at 11:00 AM.

Please keep their loved ones in your prayers.



Mark your calendar

Oct 31 Trunk or Treat and Blessing of the Animals 5:30-7:00 PM
Nov 3 All Saints Day
Nov 8 UMM pancake & sausage dinner 6:00 PM
Nov 8 Movie Night 7:00 PM
Nov 9 Craft Circle 10:00 AM
Nov 9 UWF 11:00 AM
Nov 9 Pizza lunch and bucket filling 11:45 AM
Nov 23 Set up for Thanksgiving 10:00 AM
Nov 24 Thanksgiving 12:00 PM
Nov 30 Decorate Sanctuary and Fellowship Hall for Advent/Christmas 10:00 AM

Happy November birthday to:

7 Duke Ray
10 Betsy Wolicki
10 Jeremy Marshburn
13 Dom Ksor
16 Rick Price
17 Adelle Todd 1
17 Susan Denny
18 Diane Allen
20 Wayne Dillard
22 Stephen Adebisi
23 Ray Bennett
28 Jona Medlin
30 Gary Wilson
30 Kyle T Carter

*HAPPY
Birthday*

