

November 2021 – Pastoral Message

“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” – Philippians 4:4-7 NRSV

Beloved Neighbors in Christ,

Grace and peace be with you, my blessed siblings in the resurrected Christ! Amen.

Welcome to November, one of my favorite months of the calendar year. The leaves have nearly fallen by now, sweaters and sweatshirts have been changed out in our closets, and the sounds of zippers remind us of the chill in the air as we step outside of our homes. The harvest is nearly complete, the daylight is getting shorter, and the holidays are just around the corner. I do not want to get all sentimental and cliché, but I do want to remind all of us that the wonderful and magical time of the National Day of Thanksgiving is just a few weeks away.

This year, 2021, has again been a trying time for so many of us. Like last year, we expected to come out of this COVID pandemic better than before and with more than we had asked for. Well, that didn't happen. If anything, some of us even added an extra lock on our doors and turned off the ringers on our phones. We have become even more secluded and sheltered than was expected. Personal relationships have suffered. Professional relationships have faltered. And spiritual relationships have distanced. I know this – you have told me. But we are getting through it, my dear friends and family. We are seeing the light through the end of the tunnel. I know we are because it is there and whatever light is there, it is getting brighter each day.

I remind you of the wonderful and beautiful things in our lives to be thankful for: The giggle of a child chasing another. The cheer of the crowd coming from a volleyball or football game. The sight of a combine cutting corn and the seed being placed into a truck. The leaves rustling in the wind. The birds chirping in the air. The sound of a crowded café during dinner. A trimmer cutting hair at a barber. Shotgun shells being discharged in the distance. Hymns being sung in Winthrop, Bismarck, and Gibbon. Hearing a voice say, “The body and blood of Christ given and shed for you.” Readings the names and dates on polished marble in a cemetery. And there are so many, many more.

The Apostle Paul wrote these thanksgiving verses to the people of Philippi as a way of reminding them that even in the midst of troubling times, the presence of Jesus Christ was still clear in their lives. Saying a simple “thank you, Lord” would help them in that God would

take care of their needs and guide them forward as a joint people of faith. In their practice of prayer and thanksgiving, just as we are called to, the Philippians were to live humbly together as servants of Christ and citizens of heaven imitating the example of Jesus Christ as serve our Lord obediently, rejoicing always for the gifts we have been given.

So there it is...rejoice and give thanks always, for the glory of God. We do indeed have so much to be thankful for and I really do mean it. So let us continue to do so: let us give thanks on Sunday mornings during regular worship services; let us give thanks at NICWoW! on Wednesday evenings; and let us give thanks as a combined parish on Wednesday, November 24th at St. John's Lutheran Church in Bismarck Township at 7:00 pm for the Thanksgiving Eve service.

I wish you all to be well, to have great health, and to stay safe, and I look forward to seeing you soon. God bless you and take care!

In Christ,

Rev. Erik Karlson

Pastor, Neighbors in Christ Parish