

## Thanksgiving 2020

"Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

1 Thessalonians 5:16-1

*Keeping Balanced....*

*How long O Lord?*

For what do we lament this Thanksgiving?

For what do we grieve?



For what do I grieve:

..... *those who have died, whether I know them or not – the sheer numbers hurt*

..... *people and places that I had hoped would be part of this year – seeing, touching*

..... *a growing, painful awareness that the racial divides in this country are much deeper and more institutionalized than I ever realized.*

..... *how difficult it is for us to lean into caring for the common good and not feel we are slighting ourselves*

*How long O Lord?*

"Rejoice always," Paul says, "pray continually, *give thanks* in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

For what do we give thanks this Thanksgiving?

For what do I give thanks:

..... *Amazing family, friends and staff colleagues who are always at the other end of the phone, a Zoom call and sometimes even by my side.*

..... *A church lawn and manse backyard that goes on forever, proclaiming the seasons boldly*

..... *The humbling honor of supporting Christ's church across a broad region: even when I cannot go to be with that church in person*

..... *The people who enable me to live and serve, frontline workers of all kinds who work long and hard, often behind masks all day.*

Give thanks in all circumstances.

You know, it would be so easy to stick to lament and grief this year.

Sadly, some are so focused on loss, anger and disillusionment that they have spiraled into places personally that are hard to climb out of without support. Paul's message to those in Thessalonica helps us not to go there – it is truly a message for resilience!

Here is the key: giving thanks *in* all circumstances.

And giving thanks *in* all circumstances, does not mean giving thanks *for* all circumstances.

Sometimes it is hard to remember God's blessings; our *circumstances* get in the way of clearly seeing, maybe even in the way of admitting God's care, and our spirits are tried and tired.

Such is this time!

Being intentional about remembering to give thanks and calling out that for which we are grateful – *naming that for which we have reason to be thankful* – is so important to our wellbeing – spiritual and otherwise. Think of it as a practice, perhaps a discipline for faith and life that not only speaks of our faith and trust in God, but also can force us to develop a more helpful perspective on our current *circumstances*. I believe as we both lament and give thanks, we are opened to more easily discovering ways to deal with the lament and grief, to move on to a healthier place, to heal, to renew and to come to a deeper understanding of the fullness of God and the richness of one another.

So: lament, grieve. It *is that* circumstance.

But as well: give thanks. It *is that* circumstance as well, and our God is an awesome God!

With gratitude and praise to God,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sue", with a long, sweeping underline.

Susan Faye Wonderland  
Transitional Executive  
Synod of the Trinity