



Give Thanks



PARKWAY
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
November 22, 2020

Sunday, November 22, 2020

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Limitless Love | Courageous Action | Spirited Inquiry

Purpose Statement

Parkway United Church of Christ strives to be an inclusive community embracing: spiritual nourishment, open—minded inquiry, courageous action, and interfaith partnerships to fulfill God's calling to create a just world for all.

Congregational Statement

Parkway United Church of Christ, with God's grace, seeks to be a congregation that includes all persons, regardless of race, ethnic, or socio—economic background while respecting differences of gender, marital status, age, sexual orientation, and mental and physical ability. We aspire to act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God. We invite all to share in the life and leadership, ministry, fellowship, worship, sacraments, responsibilities and blessings of participation in our open and affirming congregation.

PARKWAY UNITED CHURCH of CHRIST

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John Nourse, *Pastor Emeritus*

Welcome to Parkway

Thank you for joining us this morning. Please let us know you are here by commenting in the chat.

Welcome Children. We invite children to full participation in worship.

Bell Rung During Lord's Prayer. A tradition begun when farmers working in surrounding fields would stop their work and join in prayer.

Subscribe to our email lists: Text your email address to 22828 or sign up at www.parkwayucc.org

Communications Requests: Please use the form at www.parkwayucc.org/communications for all announcements for the bulletin/eNews/website/social media/etc. Bulletin and eNews communications request deadline is noon Monday. Bulletin announcements will generally be run for three weeks prior to the event. However, all announcements will be posted via our various publications as fits in our communications strategy and as resources permit.

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Wedding Anniversaries

11/24 STIFEL, Perrin & Alice (53)

11/28 BOWMAN, Elise & Jeremy (21)

11/28 DAVIDSON, Lisa & DJ Meyer (22)

Birthdays

11/22 BIONDO, Lana

11/24 CRAWFORD, Sean

11/22 MUCHNICK, Alaina

11/27 CONNORS, Julie

Thanksgiving Sunday

Sunday, November 22 | 10:00am | Facebook Livestream

Meditation

i thank You God for most this amazing
day:for the leaping greenly spirits of trees
and a blue true dream of sky;and for everything
which is natural which is infinite which is yes
~E.E. Cummings (syntax, spacing and capitalization as originally written)

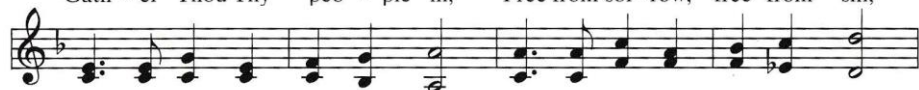
Welcome *Come, Ye Thankful People, Come, v1*



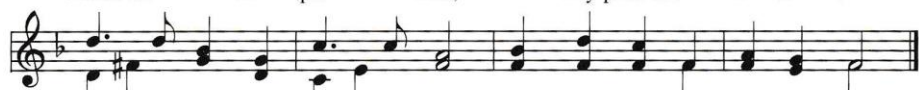
1. Come, ye thank-ful peo - ple, come, Raise the song of har - vest home;
2. All the world is God's own field, Fruit un - to God's praise to yield;
3. For the Lord our God shall come, And shall take the har - vest home;
4. E - ven so, Lord, quick - ly come To Thy fi - nal har - vest home;



All is safe - ly gath - ered in, Ere the win - ter storms be - gin;
Wheat and tares to - geth - er sown, Un - to joy or sor - row grown;
From each field shall in that day All of - fens - es purge a - way;
Gath - er Thou Thy peo - ple in, Free from sor - row, free from sin;



God, our Mak - er, doth pro - vide For our wants to be sup - plied:
First the blade, and then the ear, Then the full corn shall ap - pear:
Give the an - gels charge at last In the fire the tares to cast,
There for - ev - er pu - ri - fied, In Thy pres - ence to a - bide:



Come to God's own tem - ple, come, Raise the song of har - vest home.
Lord of har - vest, grant that we Whole - some grain and pure may be.
But the fruit - ful ears to store In God's gar - ner ev - er - more.
Come, with all Thine an - gels, come, Raise the glo - rious har - vest home.

Passing the Peace of Christ

"May the peace of Christ be with you."

(We are intentional about bringing more peace into the world.)

Prelude Variation on *Kremser (We Gather Together)*

From *Nederlandsch Gedenckclanck*, 1626

Lighting of the Candles & Ringing of the Bell

Welcome Song *Sanctuary*

Lord, pre - pare me to be a sanc - tu - ar - y, pure and
Lord, pre - pare me to be your lov - ing e - cho, kind and
ho - ly, tried and true. With thanks - giv - ing, I'll be a
gen - tle, tried and true. With thanks - giv - ing, I'll be a
liv - ing sanc - tu - ar - y for you.
liv - ing sanc - tu - ar - y for you.

Scripture *Psalms 100 Jubilate Deo*

Be joyful in the Lord, all you lands; serve the Lord with gladness and come into the divine presence with a song. Know this: the Lord is God; the One who made us and to whom we belong; we are God’s people, the sheep of God’s pasture. Enter the gates of the Lord with thanksgiving; go into these courts with praise; give thanks to God and call upon God’s name. For the Lord is good, and God’s steadfast love is everlasting; and God’s faithfulness endures from age to age.

Call to Worship

One:	As we move toward Thanksgiving, be sure to <i>be grace</i> , not just say grace.
Many:	So much talk about how this year will be so different from previous Thanksgivings.
One:	Therefore, we will need new rituals to help us find old meaning and fresh purpose.
Many:	We will need to hold more space for others to express their disappointments and longings.
One:	We can listen lavishly for the love that people need, for the love they are expressing to us.
Many:	We open all of our senses as we worship today, available to receive blessing - that we will more faithfully become blessings to others.
One:	We reach out to those who are hungry and thirsty. We live our commitment to people who are strangers, naked and vulnerable, sick or imprisoned.
Many:	We take stock of who we are and what we have – in order to be generous and gracious.

One:	As we move toward Thanksgiving, we will be sure to <i>be grace</i> , not just say grace.
All:	Let us worship our God together—Creator, Christ and Spirit.

Song *All Things Bright and Beautiful*

Refrain



All things bright and beau-ti - ful, All crea-tures great and small,



All things wise and won - der - ful: The Lord God made them all.



1. Each lit - tle flower that o - pens, Each lit - tle bird that sings:
2. The pur - ple-head - ed moun-tain, The riv - er run-ning by,
3. The cold wind in the win - ter, The pleas-ant sum-mer sun,
4. God gave us eyes to see them, And lips that we might tell



God made their glow-ing col - ors, God made their ti - ny wings.
 The sun - set, and the morn - ing That bright-ens up the sky,
 The ripe fruits in the gar - den: God made them ev - ery one.
 How great is God Al - might - y, Who has made all things well.*

Opening Prayer

Holy One, as we come to worship today, we celebrate that the fields were plowed moons ago and good seeds were planted in the earth. We thank You for the feeding and watering You do—for the snow in winter, the warmth to swell the grain, the breezes and the sunshine and soft refreshing rain. We see all good gifts around us. Thank You. We are grateful for all things bright and good, the seed time and the harvest, our life, our health, our food. So we offer our humble thankful hearts and a promise to share what we have been given. Help make us a blessing. Amen.

Response *Spirit of the Living God*

Spirit of the living God fall afresh on me;
 Spirit of the living God fall afresh on me.
 Melt me, mold me, fill me, use me!
 Spirit of the living God fall afresh on me.

Children's Time Children and Youth are invited to separate Zoom classrooms immediately following this Children's Time.

A Prayer for Thanksgiving *A to Z Thanks*

For the aardvark and the ant and all other creatures whose names begin with "A;" for the songs of birds, and honey from bees; for furry cats and swimming crayfish; for dingoes, and dolphins that swim in the sea; for elephants, and eagles who soar above the earth, let us say: we give you thanks, O God.

For frogs which keep us awake at night with their voices; for giraffes whose necks reach to the sky; for hamsters to pet and hogs who give us food; for insects who inhabit our world, let us say: we give you thanks, O God.

For jackrabbits racing across the desert; for kangaroos and katydids; for lions, lemmings, and lizards; for the mongoose, and monkeys who often remind us of ourselves, let the people say: we give you thanks, O God.

For nectarines which nourish us; for the octopus and oyster, gifts of the sea; for people, Lord, because we too are part of your creation, let us say: we give you thanks, O God.

For quartz which runs our watches; for rabbits, rats, and rainstorms; for snakes which slither in the grass; for trees that give us food and shelter; for the power of uranium, may we use it wisely and safely; let the people say: we give you thanks, O God.

For vipers and violets; for whales who swim the ocean and worms tunneling beneath the earth; for xerophytes; for yaks, and for yeast which leavens our bread; for the zebras, whose stripes are one place where black and white live peacefully together, we say: we give you thanks, O God.

Lord, all things in your creation are good. Bless all those parts of the earth which we have not mentioned. Make us faithful stewards of the gifts you have given. It is in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Blessing the Children *Jesus Loves the Little Children*

**Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world
Every child in every land, Jesus holds them by the hand
Jesus loves the little children of the world.**

Scripture Matthew 25:31-45 (NRSV – New Revised Standard Version)

"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world;

for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’ And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.’ Then he will say to those at his left hand, ‘You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’ Then they also will answer, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?’ Then he will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’

Moment of Silent Reflection

Sermon

Call to Prayer *For One Great Peace*



1. This thread I weave, this step I dance, this
 2. this pot I shape, this fire I light, this
 3. this check I write, this march I join, this



stone I carve, this ball I bounce, this nail I drive, this
 fence I leap, this bone I knit, this seed I nurse, this
 faith I state, this truth I sign, this is small part, in



pearl I string, this flag I wave, this note I sing,
 rift I mend, this child I raise, this earth I tend,
 one small place, of one heart's beat for one great Peace.

Pastoral Prayer & Prayers of the People

Lord's Prayer

sung to the tune by Nate Stout

Our [Creator/Mother/Father/Holy One] **who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the Kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.**

[A variety of names for God are welcome here – including in the Lord's Prayer.]

Song

We Plow the Fields and Scatter



1. We plow the fields and scat - ter The good seed on the land,
2. You on - ly are the Mak - er Of all things near and far;
3. We thank You, then, Cre - a - tor, For all things bright and good,



But it is fed and wa - tered By God's al - might - y hand;
You paint the way - side flow - er, You light the eve - ning star;
The seed-time and the har - vest, Our life, our health, our food;



God sends the snow in win - ter, The warmth to swell the grain,
The winds and waves o - bey You, By You the birds are fed;
Ac - cept the gifts we of - fer, For all Your love im - parts,



The breez-es and the sun - shine, And soft, re - fresh-ing rain.
Much more to us, Your chil - dren, You give our dai - ly bread.
And what You most would wel - come, Our hum - ble, thank-ful hearts.

Mission Moment

Every Child's Hope

Offering Our Gifts to God

Offertory

Interlude for the Piano

Response

Thank God

Thank God, thank God

Thanks in the morning, thanks in the noontime

Thank God, thank God, Thanks when the sun goes down!

Prayer of Dedication Brian Wren

Thank you, God, for water, soil and air, large gifts supporting everything that lives. Forgive our spoiling and abuse of them.

Help us renew the face of the earth.

Thank you, God, for minerals and ores, the basis of all building, wealth and speed. Forgive our reckless plundering and waste.

Help us renew the face of the earth.

Thank you, God, for priceless energy, stored in each atom, gathered from the sun. Forgive our greed and carelessness of power. Help us renew the face of the earth.

Thank you, God, for weaving nature's life into a seamless robe, a fragile whole. Forgive our haste, that tampers unaware. Help us renew the face of the earth.

Thank you, God, for making planet earth a home for us, and ages yet to come. Help us to share, consider, save and store. Come and renew the face of the earth. Amen.

Song of Parting Let All Things Now Living

Unison



1. Let all things now liv - ing A song of thanks - giv - ing
2. By law God en - forc - es. The stars in their cours - es,
To God our Cre - a - tor tri - um - phant - ly raise;
The sun in its or - bit o - be - dient - ly shine;
Who fash-ioned and made us, Pro - tect - ed and stayed us,
The hills and the moun-tains, The riv - ers and foun - tains,
By guid - ing us on to the end of our days.
The depths of the o - cean pro - claim God di - vine.

Harmony



God's ban - ners are o'er us, Pure light goes be - fore us,
We, too, should be voic - ing Our love and re - joic - ing

A pil - lar of fire shin - ing forth in the night:
With glad ad - o - ra - tion, a song let us raise:

Unison
Till shad - ows have van - ished, All fear - ful - ness ban - ished,
Till all things now liv - ing U - nite in thanks - giv - ing,

As for - ward we trav - el from light in - to Light.
To God in the high - est, ho - san - na and praise.

Benediction

God's Light Goes Forth

Music for Going Forth *Nun Danket Alle Gott (Now Thank We All Our God)*—organ improvisations on the hymn tune by Johann Cruger, 1648

Announcements

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Migwetch Mamogosnan *Thank you, Creator.*

A Potawatomi prayer

Migwetch Mamogosnan, for the ways you resurrect us every day when we've forgotten that even the coldest places inside of us can be resurrected.

Migwetch Mamogosnan, for people who do not give up on each other, who do not give up on you. It is there that we are truly the church.

Migwetch Mamogosnan, for two rowdy, Lego-building boys who are so full of life their bodies can hardly contain it. Were we once so young and alive?

Remind us.

Migwetch Mamogosnan, for seasons in which dreams are made reality, for seasons in which we grieve and repair what is broken. In all seasons, You are there.

Migwetch Mamogosnan, for the hammock in my front yard, from where I can see the hawks fly overhead, from where I can hear the birds talk about the universe, their chittering a sure sign of spring.

Migwetch Mamogosnan, for the gifts of activism and voice and protest, by which we shift the world one nonviolent voice at a time. And surely, you were always with us, and surely, You will always be. Migwetch, for knowing my name, my sister's name, my brother's name, the names of those we thought would never be remembered. You do not forget.

Migwetch, Migwetch, Migwetch.

Amen.

Announcements

Tuesday Evening Dialogue November 24

2nd & 4th Tuesdays | 7:00pm | via Zoom

We complete our discussion of *Gilead* by Marilynne Robinson.

Zoom Link

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89263841824?pwd=eIVDSVVUMHZZeStLZIBLeEZjWVBVZz09>

Meeting ID: 892 6384 1824 | **Passcode:** Book Club

Phone: (312) 626 6799 US | **Passcode:** 410992587

Thanksgiving Day Thursday, November 26

We will be hosting a virtual Thanksgiving gathering at noon, 3pm and 6pm for anyone who wants to come chat and/or chew with us! There will be opportunities for introductions, storytelling, sharing of recipes, trivia and other games.

Join with video at Noon:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89633973457?pwd=R0FSUHdmc3hSbC9oNmRUWFVBbi9Ndz09>

Phone (312) 626-6799 | **Meeting ID:** 896 3397 3457 | **Passcode:** 206148

Join with video at 3pm:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85238499470?pwd=ZG42SHd4L0RqMkNDYmg1QVVoODMwZz09>

Phone: (312) 626-6799 | **Meeting ID:** 852 3849 9470 | **Passcode:** 240591

Join with video at 6pm:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84165315571?pwd=VUdXd1cxYmg2VmE0dlpFWWVMN3Qxdz09>

Phone: (312) 626-6799 | **Meeting ID:** 841 6531 5571 | **Passcode:** 777610

Scouting for Food is the annual food drive that occurs in November when young scouts tie a bag around your front door one Saturday and then come to pick up your generous donations of non-perishable food items the following Saturday. It has been canceled this year. One way they are keeping their commitment to hungry people in our area is by encouraging you to send a financial contribution instead. Their promotional materials say that \$1 = 4 meals. Please consider texting 'scoutfood' to 91999 today.

Circle of Concern

Parkway UCC well exceeded our goal in preparing 100 boxes to be part of Circle of Concern's Thanksgiving handout. Only four churches in the West County area participated in providing the boxes for our 750 client families. We should be so proud! The staff of Circle joins me in expressing our sincere gratitude for your efforts. Even though we are unable to physically come together to worship as one, we are still very much connected to each other and also to our brothers and sisters in need. Blessings to all this Holiday season!

Lana Biondo

Pledge Campaign for our Mission & Ministry 2021

Just a reminder that Consecration Sunday for the Stewardship pledge campaign was November 15, 2020. If you didn't receive your pledge card and letter, call Harold Cobb at 965-4147 or Amy Yakel at 275-8039. You may also submit an electronic pledge card from our website:
<https://parkwayucc.org/giving/pledge/>

Thank you for your continuing support of Parkway United Church of Christ.



Parkway UCC 2021 Pledge

General Ministries* \$ _____
*Includes Missions

Building Fund _____

How often do you plan to give?

- ☐ Weekly
☐ Monthly
☐ Quarterly
☐ Annually

My Total 2021 Giving: \$ _____

Print name _____

Signature _____

Keep for your Records

General Ministries \$ _____

Building Fund \$ _____

Total 2021 Giving: \$ _____

**Beloved,
let us love one another,
because love is from God;
everyone who loves
is born of God
and knows God.** 1 John 4:7



Frequency:

☐ Weekly ☐ Monthly ☐ Quarterly ☐ Annually

Gems from Karen Seibert Boyd's Memorial Service

Love God. Love Your Neighbor. - Karen and Bob's brick out front of PUCC

God really only asked us to do one thing – love. - Unknown

We cannot face large-scale crises as individuals; we cannot carry the pain of this reality on our own, nor can we only look out for ourselves. The pain is communal and so too must be the response. - Barbara Holmes

Do your best to come before winter. - 2 Timothy 4:21

It is not the brains that matter most, but that which guides them, character, the heart, generous qualities, progressive ideas. - Fyodor Dostoevsky

Don't ask yourself what the world needs. Ask yourself what makes you come alive, and go do that, because what the world needs is people who have come alive. - Howard Thurman

The years, the months, the days, and the hours have flown by my open window. Here and there an incident, a towering moment, a naked memory, an etched countenance, a whisper in the dark, a golden glow these and much more are the woven fabric of the time I have lived. - Howard Thurman

Prayer List

as of November 18, 2020

Celebrations

Cherie Stolze - earned her Master of Arts in Ministry and Culture!

All the acts of kindness that are happening near and far!

The momentum toward justice and equity.

Diwali - *Indian Festival of Lights*... symbolizes the spiritual "victory of light over darkness, good over evil, and knowledge over ignorance".

Concerns

Bob Boyd and family - as they grieve and give thanks for Karen who died at home last Monday... surrounded by family and friends.

A celebration of her life took place virtually at PUCC on Sunday. Experience it here - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mjj3vI75yy4>

Also, you may want to read her obituary...

<https://www.schrader.com/obituary/karen-seibert>

<https://anesthesiology.wustl.edu/obituary-karen-seibert/>

Claire Stolze; Mary and Jenna Watson; Roseann D and Carol C - at various stages in their healing from Covid-19.

Justin Williamson - intensive care at St. Luke's Hospital (Svenson).

Healthcare workers, homeless and many others at risk right now.

Physical Distancing... if anyone needs groceries, medicine and/or other support, please reach out to kevin@parkwayucc.org; 314-330-0629

People who are struggling with their mental health.

People who aren't feeling safe at home but are remaining there.

Individuals in all levels of leadership as they make decisions today.

Healing of relationships between the public and the police.

Those affected by natural disasters yesterday/today/tomorrow

Continuing

Bill Haack and family - grieving/giving thanks for his father.

Judy Toombs and family as they grieve the sudden death of Gene.

Cherie & Mike Stolze - her health; her father's kidney disease.

Burt - rehab facility for a couple of weeks (Mona Herberg's brother).

Nelson Spencer - very serious heart condition (Ellie Svenson).

Blake - recent cancer diagnosis (Greg Schmelig).

Lori Connors - for strength, stamina through some health challenges.

Ruth Peace & Pinky Wilcoxon - PUCC sisters with health challenges.

Bill Darland - ongoing health issues.

Anthony - multiple challenges as he lives his post-incarceration life.

Gary - risky behaviors; seeking balance and stability (McKenzie).

Grateful Tran - in prison; struggles w/schizophrenia (Evelyn Buretta)

Bob - continues to struggle with Parkinson's (McKenzie).

Christopher, Gail & Bill Haack - chronic health challenges.

The extended Eggebrecht Family - healing and wholeness.

Home/Care Facility/Rehab Center

Millicent Guerri - living with cancer... 14300 Conway Meadows Ct E, Chesterfield, MO 63017 [birthdate: December 5]

Marv Herpel - *Brookdale West County*; 785 Henry Ave, #217; Ballwin, MO 63021; 636-227-5838 [birthdate: March 3]

Pat Klein - *Anthology Senior Living of Wildwood*; 251 Plaza Dr, #325; Wildwood, MO 63040 [birthdate: September 21]

Bill Klein - *Anthology Senior Living of Wildwood*; 251 Plaza Dr, #104; Wildwood, MO 63040 [birthdate: March 8]

Pearl Sellenriek - *Friendship Village Memory Care Division* #1001; 15250 Olive Blvd, Chesterfield, MO 63017 [birthdate: March 31]

Dwight Smith - *Garden View*; 13612 Big Bend Rd, Room #2407; Valley Park, MO 63088; 636-923-8693. Now Charlotte can walk from *Cape Albeon* to visit with him at his window. [birthdate: September 6]

Sue Houser - *Bethany Ctr for Rehab & Healing*; 421 Ocala Dr - #209B; Nashville, TN 37211; 615-577-2049. [birthdate: July 8]

Other

President Trump, Congress, all local, national, world leaders - those continuing, starting, returning to leadership... including **Biden|Harris**.

The “me too” Movement - shining a light on sexual abuse.

All people who live with mental illness.

PUCC Family (and others) struggling with healthcare costs and limits.

Our Missouri Mid-South Conference and St Louis Assn UCC

Variety of Parkway members/friends - employment issues.

Victims of Natural and Created Disasters around the world.

Peace and Justice near and far.

US Military around the globe.

St Louis Assn UCC Covenant Partner

Week ending November 22 - Trinity UCC, St Louis; trinityuccstl.org

Week ending November 29 - Zion UCC, Florissant; zionuccstl.org

*

The Story of Two Wolves

An old Cherokee is teaching his grandson about life. “A fight is going on inside me,” he said to the boy. “It is a terrible fight and it is between two wolves. One is evil – he is anger, envy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority, and ego.”

He continued, “The other is good – he is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion, and faith. The same fight is going on inside you – and inside every other person, too.”

The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked his grandfather, “Which wolf will win?”

The old Cherokee simply replied, “The one you feed.”

Reign of Christ

November 22, 2020

Reigning Compassion

Matthew 25:31-46 (I was hungry, and you fed me)

Thanksgiving Sunday

United Black Christians Anniversary

*We gather together to ask for God's blessing,
To live in community, seeking God's will...**

So begins a hymn that many of us will sing during the Thanksgiving season, whether we worship on Thanksgiving Day, Thanksgiving Eve or a Sunday before or after. *We Gather Together*, as the name suggests, is a hymn beloved by those of us who call ourselves congregational because it's all about, well, congregating. Written in the 16th century in the Netherlands as a hymn of celebration of freedom from Spanish rule, it is perhaps surprising that we so often sing this in thanksgiving when it is intended as an anthem to national pride.

On Thanksgiving, many will gather around the table at a feast with families and friends. These gatherings, with their familiar foods and faces can be comforting affairs. Yet, too often our Thanksgiving celebrations turn inward. Although we can take satisfaction in gathering around an intimate table with our beloveds, when we face each other, our backs are turned to the world.

Too often in congregations we do this, too. Comforted by the familiar intimacy of our private feasts and celebrations, our gatherings can become too comfortable, too insular.

The scripture reading from Matthew reminds us that when we feed, clothe and embrace the lost and alone, we are embracing Christ. This scripture in effect encourages us to turn our Thanksgiving table chairs the other way around. If your family and friends are not accustomed to facing that way, it may be uncomfortable to face out into the world and to respond to the needs we see.

So, turn around, face the world, so that we can freely and joyfully sing not just the first, but the last words of that beloved hymn.

*Empowering all by the hope you engender.
Grant wisdom and courage to follow your way.**

*Bayler, Lavon. *We Gather Together*, #421. *The New Century Hymnal*. Word adaptations Copyright © 1992 The Pilgrim Press.