



“Times of Thanksgiving”

by Rev. Thomas Chryst

Deuteronomy 16:13-17

13 “You shall keep the Feast of Booths seven days, when you have gathered in the produce from your threshing floor and your winepress. 14 You shall rejoice in your feast, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant, the Levite, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow who are within your towns. 15 For seven days you shall keep the feast to the Lord your God at the place that the Lord will choose, because the Lord your God will bless you in all your produce and in all the work of your hands, so that you will be altogether joyful.

It seems natural for people everywhere to acknowledge their blessings with a special time of thanks-giving. It’s important to look back and count our blessings, even through (especially through!) the hardships we’ve endured. It may seem natural, but it is also The Old Testament people of God observed 3 great feasts, according to the instructions of Deuteronomy. The third of these was a harvest feast: the Feast of Booths (or Tabernacles). The Hebrew name of the festival, “Sukkot”, refers to the booths or tents that were set up in the fields for the farmers, temporary dwellings for them while they brought in the harvest. These tents were also meant to remind the people of their 40 years of wilderness sojourn, when they (and the Ark of the Covenant) also resided in tents. Those 40 years, I’m sure, were no picnic for the Israelites. But perhaps they made it all the sweeter when they finally could settle in their permanent home – the Promised Land.

We don’t celebrate the Old Covenant and its feasts anymore since their fulfillment in Christ. But we are still thankful, and take time to do so formally. As Christians, our whole lives are lived in thanksgiving to God. Thanksgiving is part of every Christian gathering. Christ’s redemption, Luther teaches us, is the cause for us to “thank and praise, serve and obey him”. But then there’s this thing that happens in November every year...

Thanksgiving as a national holiday can be traced back to 1864 and the declaration of Abraham Lincoln for a national day of thanksgiving. This day was declared during great hardship – in the midst of the Civil War! You should read his declaration. It’s full of humble reverence before God and recognizes him and his blessings.



Then of course there’s the “First Thanksgiving” feast in which the pilgrims shared a meal with the Native Americans. They, too had faced challenges of a hardscrabble life and rejoiced to survive the winter. One article describes it this way: Just over 50 colonists are believed to have attended, including 22 men, four married women... and more than 25

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*That you may believe that Jesus is the Christ,
the Son of God, and that by believing
you may have life in His name. —John 20:31*

children and teenagers. These were the lucky ones who had made it through a rough entry into the New World, including a harsh winter during which an epidemic of disease swept through the colony, felling nearly half the original group. Some 78 percent of the women who had arrived on the Mayflower had died during the first winter, a far higher percentage than for men or children. “For the English, [the first Thanksgiving] was also celebrating the fact that they had survived their first year here in New England,” (*Sarah Pruitt from History.com*)

Somehow I suspect Thanksgiving 2020 will be a special one for many people. We have much for which to be thankful. Even under all the chaos of the pandemic – we have food and clothing, food and drink, house and home... and abundant physical blessings. Most of us have been spared the illness, and those of us that have gotten it have almost all recovered. We have excellent medical care to aid in that, and improvements have been made even from the early days of COVID. The millions of deaths that were first predicted seem to be off the table. Thanks be to God.

But perhaps most of all, the pandemic **has not separated us from the Word of God.** We still have many opportunities to hear and receive – both in person and via technology, the gifts of God. Our church has faced its challenges, just as each of us has in many ways – work, family, friends. But God has blessed us richly. Perhaps he has even used these difficult circumstances to increase in us an appreciation of that which is most important. I know it has been that way for me.

As Christians we have **a far deeper understanding of “thanks-giving”** than anyone. For starters, we know the Giver of all good things: the Triune God, who bestows blessings of creation, redemption and sanctification. We give him thanks for our very existence – in him we live and breathe and have our being. But even more. We give him thanks for the redemption he has provided us in his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. A spotless sacrifice for sin, whose blood purifies us all. A perfect substitute who takes our place both in the punishment we deserve, but also in accomplishing the righteousness we cannot. At the top of any lists of counted blessings, for us Christians, is Jesus Christ our blessed Savior.

Messiah will offer a service of **Evening Prayer on Thanksgiving Eve - Wednesday November 25th, 7pm.** Please join us (if your level of precaution allows) for a time of reflection on God’s word and consideration of his gifts to us, for which we give him our heartfelt thanks.

Bible Studies this Fall

Board of Education

Men’s Breakfast Bible Study has resumed. Join us for the **1st and 3rd Saturdays at 7am**, at **Sunny Street Café** in Keller.

JOY group has resumed. Join every **Tuesday at 9:30am** in the Fellowship Hall.

Confirmation 1 Will continue to meet on **Sunday during the Sunday School hour** and **Tuesday evenings at 7pm for Confirmation 2.**



STEWARDS UNDER THE CROSS

Newsletter article – November 2020

Our Father in heaven has claimed us as His own. By the shedding of His Son's blood, His death for our sins, and His resurrection for our justification, God the Father has received us back into His family. By water – combined with His Word, promise, and Name – the Holy Spirit has taken up residence in us. We belong to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He is in us, and we are in Him. And, being in Him, all things are ours. In Him, we are richly and abundantly blessed.

Our true treasure is that we belong to the most Holy Trinity, and everything that is His – righteousness, peace, eternal life – also belongs also to us. Even our temporal treasures are gifts from His fatherly divine goodness and mercy.

We receive our treasures from Him, and thus, as good stewards of His varied grace, we manage them in such a way that they may be returned to Him. We bring them to Him, hallowed through prayers of thanksgiving and God's holy Word, as a sacrifice.

Thus, all our possessions, as gifts from God, are also sacrifices to Him. We eat to nourish our bodies. We share with our family, neighbors, fellow Christians, the poor, and even our enemies as holy things given by the holy God. His temporal gifts are blessings to and for us, and they bring blessings upon us even as they are pressed into His service for His kingdom.

Thus, we place all that we have into God's hands, and He never fails to remember us. He pours out the fullness of His promises upon us. We give thanks for all that He has done, is doing, and will continue to do. We give thanks by not taking for ourselves, but, giving to all even as our heavenly Father has given to us.

As we prepare for the celebrations of Thanksgiving, may we all give thanks continually for all that we are and all that we have because of God's providential care. And may we be all the more diligent in bringing everything that we have received from God to Him, so that He may bless it and employ it for the good of all – even for us. For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance.



Have you ever visited a church where nobody, or just a few people, sang?

For those who have been worshipping at Messiah for a very long time, this can be a hard thing to imagine. But, believe it or not, it happens very often. In fact, it happened a lot in Luther's day as well. For many years into the Reformation, the choir did most of the singing, even on the hymns, as the people hadn't learned to sing in church before and had to be taught the music. It wasn't until long after Luther died that they began using the organ to help the congregation sing.

A congregation of people who sing enthusiastically throughout a service is indeed a rare thing in the history of Christianity. Early Lutherans had to struggle to teach their congregations, and for many years the singing died off in Germany. In early America, the singing was so bad that many churches established special schools to help people learn to sing, solely for the purpose of enabling them to better participate on Sunday morning!

When the German immigrants who founded the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod first came to America, they quickly assembled their own hymnal from the best quality and most orthodox sources, and our founding president C. F. W. Walther himself conducted rehearsals *for the congregation* in order to teach them the German chorales. Thus, the LCMS quickly became a front runner among American traditions when it comes to actively singing congregations. We have, in the past, truly lived up to the Lutheran nickname "the singing church." Unfortunately, it is not quite as common these days as it should be.

But not so at Messiah. In an era where congregational music programs are being reduced, congregations are abandoning their glorious heritage of sacred music, and quality productions for passive observers are displacing robust communal singing, our congregation stands with the best when it comes to vocal decibels per capita. We sing all the hymns, including and especially the ones that many say are too difficult and cannot be used. And in this singing can be clearly heard an unreserved embrace of the song's message.

Why do we sing in church? What is about Christianity that causes it to be such a musical religion? What is it in the human hear that causes and needs a song? At Messiah, it is the joyful proclamation of forgiveness, life, and salvation won for us by Jesus. Singing in church is one of the most evangelistic things you can do, because it shows to the observer that these truths are firmly believed in your heart. Lackadaisical and begrudging plodding through a service bespeaks the likelihood that what is being sung about is not genuinely loved.

It has been an unspeakable and tremendous blessing to me personally to hear how well our congregation sings every week. Many are the days I struggle to hear the organ over the enthusiasm in the pews. You can literally hear the faith in people's hearts on a Sunday morning, and that simply stirs up and encourages more faithfulness in others. You are doing God's work when you sing, because his calling to us is to rejoice and be glad in the victory that He has won. Let us celebrate the hope that we have by singing as if we believe it! For as surely as the Gospel is a means of grace, when we thusly proclaim it through music, our hearts are strengthened to endure, even embrace with gladness, the trials and temptations we suffer as we follow our Savior.

And I hope that you all appreciate, as I do, how special a place Messiah Lutheran Church is, where the song of faith and hope is alive and strong.

Recent Highlights from Council and Voters

- The new organ project totaled \$67000. The Organ Fund was over \$61000. That plus some Memorial offerings will cover the cost.
- Nominating Committee will be appointed within 30 days. Please submit names to Clayton Brandt for appointment.
- \$2500 from Kitchen Fund authorized for the purchase of chairs and possibly tables for the fellowship hall. The fund has approximately \$8000.
- Information on The Texas District Convention is June 10-12. Increased 2020/2021 School Personnel Budget authorization to hire a Pre-School Director.
- First presentation of two proposed constitutional changes:
 1. Change to Call Process for Headmaster/Teacher
 2. Change to terms of office for President/Vice-President/Treasurer (Final vote on these to occur at January Voters Meeting).
- Annual election of employee health insurance plan option.
- Council will be updating the church "Recurring Calendar"

Upcoming Events and Outreaches~

◇ **BRILLE CENTER - MISSION OUTREACH**

We thank Barbara and Erasmo Pinero for their leadership and faithful service at Messiah's Brille Center during the past seven years. Ken and Carolin Blume have emerged as the new leaders. The Brille Center is located in the Messiah Activity Center (MAC) which is Messiah's building below the hill, facing Hwy 377. Teams are forming and production will start again in January 2021. Please consider being part of the important task of producing books of the Bible and Bible stories to blind people all around the world. Work sessions are typically less than 2 hour shifts. It's a great time to serve the Lord, spread the Good News and make new friends. Please talk to the Blumes in person or send an email to kenblumemail@gmail.com.

◇ **CONGRETIONAL CHRISTMAS CAROLING**

Everyone is invited to participate in Christmas Caroling on Saturday, December 19. We will Leave church at 4 PM, and return by 5 PM. We will sing at Nursing homes and Messiah member residences. If you live within a 5 mile radius and would like for us to stop by, please contact the church office.

◇ **YOUNG ADULTS GATHERING FOR OUTDOOR GAMES**

Watch announcements for our next month's Saturday evening event. The plan is to have Evening Prayer Service and Spätzle on the menu; board games will be Gin Rummy Cube and Mexican Train. Look on our Facebook page for pictures.

Pictures from MCLA's Trunk or Treat Event !!





I want to bring everyone's attention to three developments we have coming up in the music ministry at Messiah.

First: Our congregation sings so much of the music in our hymnal very well. But there is one hole in our repertoire we would like to remedy: Of the five Divine Service settings in the front of the hymnal, we only regularly use four. Divine Service setting two is arguably one of the best musical settings we have, and the time has come for us to consider and explore it. Rather than introducing it all at once, we will be gradually introducing it one part at a time over a few seasons. I look forward to exploring this music as we learn about it together! The first installment will be in Advent, as we begin to sing the new Kyrie.

Second: In order to facilitate this process, repetition is critical for effective learning. As we gradually integrate components of this new setting into our collective familiarity, new canticles will be repeated weekly for a period of time. To accomplish this, we will experiment with a temporary hiatus on our monthly service setting rotation, and while we will continue to use all the settings we know and love, we will stick with one setting at a time for a few consecutive weeks. Understandably, this is no insignificant change in our routine, and so for the month of Advent the plan is to use Divine Service setting 1, with the new Kyrie from setting two, for just four Sundays.

Loving Our Neighbor

by Deaconess Buhler



This month our confirmands are studying the second Table of the Law and learning how to love their neighbor. Our youth are searching God's Word to show them what it looks like to respect authority, to care for the needs of others, and to protect their neighbors' name, possessions, and life. The Law tells us what to do and what not to do. The Law of God is good and wise; it is God's way of protecting the gifts He has given us.

As Christians, we are to love our neighbor according to the Ten Commandments whether our neighbor follows them or not. As Christians, we cannot lead by emotions or the mere approval of friends, family, or government, but by every Word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord. We cannot avoid our sinful nature, but God tells us to turn from our sin, repent, and pray to Him.

How can we strive to accomplish Loving Our Neighbor? We meditate and act on the "do this" in His Commandment to protect the following gifts He has blessed us with:

1. **Gift of Parents and Authority:** honor them, serve and obey them, love and cherish them
2. **Gift of Life:** Help and support him in every physical need
3. **Gift of Marriage:** Lead a sexually pure and decent life in what we say and do
4. **Gift of Property:** help him to improve and protect his possessions and income; be of service to him keeping his inheritance and house; urge his family and workers to stay and do their duty

During this year of uncertainty, return to the Word of the Lord where we find a compassionate God who is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love (Ps145:8). The physical wellbeing of our neighbor according to the Second Table (Commandments 4-10), described above, is very clear. Likewise, the spiritual wellbeing of our neighbor is appropriately crucial according to the First Table (Commandments 1-3).

As Christians, we care both about the physical and spiritual condition of our neighbor, and this has been a difficult process for our church leaders this year. It is the responsibility of the church to help the Pastor administer the Word and Sacraments in its truth and purity. This does not mean they do not care about one's physical health. Spiritually speaking, we must place eternal life and salvation above this temporal broken world while simultaneously caring for our neighbor.

America protects our freedom of religion and gives individuals the right to worship how one sees fit. However, we should take care not to cause our neighbor to stumble (Romans14:13-23) because we do not hold to the same views, or make different choices based on our own circumstances. Instead, lead by example – the example of our Lord - by serving our neighbor.

Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind and also love your neighbor as yourself (Mark12:30-31). If your neighbor wears a mask, please be respectful. If your neighbor chooses not to wear a mask, put the best construction on their reasoning. Listen to your physician without ignoring the Great Physician who shed His blood for you and tells you to "take eat for the forgiveness of sins" and "do not fear, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go" (Joshua1:9). God calls His children to Him (Matt19:14) to find rest, peace, and salvation because He knows this world will pass away.



Messiah Lutheran Church & School

The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod

1308 Whitley Rd. Keller, TX 76248

Church Office: (817) 431-2345

Academy Office: (817) 431-5486

Sunday Worship: 8:00 a.m. & 10:45 a.m.

Sunday School & Adult Bible Class: 9:30 a.m.

Rev. Thomas Chryst, Pastor

www.messiahkeller.org



Young Adults gathered for outdoor games, German dinner, Evening Prayer Service and board games on Saturday, November 7, 2020. Thank you, Pastor Chryst, Pastor Bramich and Miguel Ruiz, for conducting our service.

We also thank Brad Brown for heading up the outdoor games and deaconess Elizabeth Koester and Erin McComack for hosting.

First Annual Texas College/Young Adult Conference



FIRST ANNUAL TEXAS COLLEGE/YOUNG ADULT CONFERENCE at St. Paul Austin, co-hosted with Campus Lutheran Church, UT Austin.

70 students, young adults, pastors and volunteers gathered on Saturday, October 17, 2020 at St. Paul Austin for the "Spiritual Warfare Conference".

The following universities were represented: UNM, TCC, BU, TAMU, UT, UTA, UTD, UD, UH, TXState, UNT, Victory College, CTX, NCTC, CCC, UMich. Young Adults came mainly from the DFW Metroplex, Austin and Houston areas.

THE FOLLOWING PASTORS WERE PRESENT:

Ottmers-Immanuel, Fairview (Conference Chaplain); Shey-Trinity, Dime Box; De Young - Cross of Christ, De Soto; Wolfmueller-St. Paul, Austin; Mittwede-University Lutheran Church, Austin.

