



Message from Pastor Bill Vincent

Sometimes it's harder than others. Especially not wanting to sound flippant, or superficial.

Scenes from the Israeli/Hamas war are devastating. Knowledge of the fear of the Israeli hostages, and the fear of Palestinian civilians, is overwhelming. News of anti-Semitism and anti-Muslim sentiment in this country is disheartening.

And then another mass shooting occurs. And the nasty political rhetoric continues. And the stock market heads south. And... And... And...

And it's November, and we're supposedly thinking of Thanksgiving: giving thanks. For what? That 'our side' has the bigger bombs? That our stocks are safe(r)? That the anger's not directed at me (at least for now)?

(Not the most uplifting start, is it?)

In times like these – especially in times like these – I am reminded of words from the prophet Habakkuk:

*Though the fig tree does not blossom,
and no fruit is on the vines;
though the produce of the olive fails,
and the fields yield no food;
though the flock is cut off from the fold,
and there is no herd in the stalls,
yet I will rejoice in the Lord;
I will exult in the God of my salvation.*

(Habakkuk 3:17-18 NRSV)

Not exactly mirroring our present-day situation, but, I believe, pointing us in the right direction.

For we can give thanks that God is still God...even if we sometimes question what God is doing or how God is acting (or *if* God is acting).

We can give thanks that God still cares. We see evidence of that in our own lives...and in the acts of compassion and care exercised by others, even in the midst of horrors and deprivation.

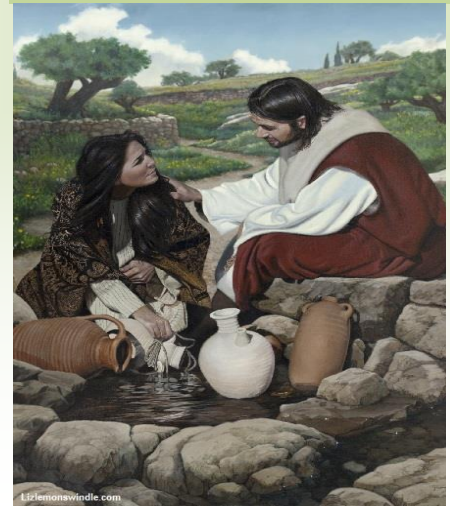
We can give thanks that God hears our prayers – and we are praying, aren't we?

We can give thanks that God understands. God has seen – and experienced (remember the cross?) – the pain and anger, the isolation and rejection, the... God has seen it all. God understands.

This does not answer all our questions or all our agonizing cries of 'Why?' This does not solve all the complex issues that face us and the world. This does not relieve all the anxiety or take away all the fear.

But it does give us our grounding and our foundation – our *sure* foundation – from which to start and out of which we live...in hope.

For we can give thanks that God will guide us in our actions and decisions and responses: to do what we can with what we have to live out our faithfulness before God...and the world.



We can give thanks that God will be with us as we seek to respond with compassion and choose with wisdom and act with courage.

We can even give thanks when God directs us down paths with which we may feel uncomfortable...because God has promised to equip us for every challenge we face.

We can give thanks because we know, even in such times, God has not abandoned us and God still cares for us and God will go with us...and with others as well.

So let us give thanks to God...always.

And let us give ourselves into God's hands...always.

And let us trust God...always.

For God is good...even when it's difficult to see that.

And God is love...even when we might not feel that.

And God is with us – always – as we seek to follow God's way and share God's abundance and embody God's love...for all...for always.

Thanks be to God!

*With gratitude in Christ,
Bill Vincent*

Worshiping and serving God, loving, and accepting all



A reminder:

Prayer concerns can be shared with me via email or phone before worship (preferably by Saturday evening); or you can write them down (legibly, please) on a piece of paper and place them in the basket that will be located near the entrance to the sanctuary.

Pastor Bill

Sunday Worship service will be Streaming live on Facebook on Sunday at 9:00 am. The bulletin will also be available on Facebook and the church website (www.unionfirstpresby.org), posted by 8 am Sunday morning.

Link to Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/firstPresbyterianChurchUnion/>

Bulletin can be found here: <http://www.unionfirstpresby.org/church-bulletins/>

SAVE THE DATE:

The Presbyterian Women will celebrate their Christmas Party on **December 8, 2023**, at 11:15 A.M. We will meet at Millers Grill in Washington for lunch. Following the luncheon, we will go to the Church to decorate and set up tables for the Christmas Event on December 9, 2023. Please let Betty or Dorothy know if you plan to attend.

There will be a joint Christmas Celebration with Pacific Presbyterian Church on Saturday, **December 9, 2023**. It will be held at the Union Presbyterian Church beginning at 2:00 P.M. The program will be presented by Melissa Fry which will include singing Christmas Carols. Refreshments will follow the program in the Northex

We will be starting our observance of Advent on Sunday, November 26th (including communion) Also, the hanging of the Greens will occur on **November 26, 2023**, following the Worship Service. Everyone is invited to help prepare our Sanctuary for the Advent and Christmas Season.

The Session has called a Congregational Meeting for immediately following worship on Sunday, **December 3rd** for the purpose of acting on the Nominating Committee's report (officers for 2024), approving the Pastor's Terms of Call for 2024, and receiving the 2024 budget.



The 2023 Franklin County CROP Hunger Walk was a success! Donations from churches and individuals totaled \$6,070, most of which will go toward helping relieve food shortages around the world, as well as assisting with clean water accessibility. One fourth of the total donated funds will be equally divided between two local food pantries - the Union Food Pantry and Second Blessings Food Pantry here at our church. Each pantry will receive \$759. Thank you for your prayers and donations!

Day Light savings time ends on November 4, 2023. Don't forget to change your clock back the weekend of Nov. 4th-5th.



SHARE YOUR ABUNDANCE

This is the list of food and other items needed from Second Blessings for our Share Your Abundance project.

We are asking the congregation to bring the food and other items on November 5, November 12, and November 19. The items will be dedicated on November 19, 2023 during the Church Service. There will be a table in the Sanctuary for the contributions. There will also be a basket for money donations. Make checks out to Second Blessings.

Second Blessings Food Pantry could use the following items

Jelly--any kind
Boxed/envelope side dishes.
Canned Pasta, i.e. Ravioli
Pasta Sauce, no jars please
Pancake Mix
Syrup
Baking items, i.e. brownie mix, muffin mix, cookie mix
Canned Potatoes
Canned chili beans
Tomato Sauce/Paste
Instant Mashed Potatoes boxed or envelopes.
Gravy Packets

