

WITH *Gratitude*

A Christmas Gift Idea

Giving Thanks by Nellie Howard, Resource Center Director

How are you thankful? What do you say when you want to show gratitude? Sometimes when we want to thank God, the words come easily, but there are times when it is hard to find the right thing to say. Here is a Resource Center book that will help you express your gratitude to God and, as a bonus, might also be a perfect gift idea for someone to whom you want to say, "Thank you." This could be your pastor or your Clerk of Session. It could be your Sunday school teacher or your mail carrier. More than merely a "Thank you" gift, this is a whole book full of "thank yous."



Often we know that we are thankful, but it is hard to remember who to include. **Giving Thanks: Poems, Prayers and Praise Songs of Thanksgiving** by Katherine Paterson is a book that should sit beside every dining room or kitchen table. Perhaps you should have two — a copy by your meal table and also one by your front door, where it is convenient to read each morning before you step outside to face the day. Wouldn't that be nice? Wouldn't it be nice to start each day with gratitude rather than a sense of foreboding?

For each new morning with its light,

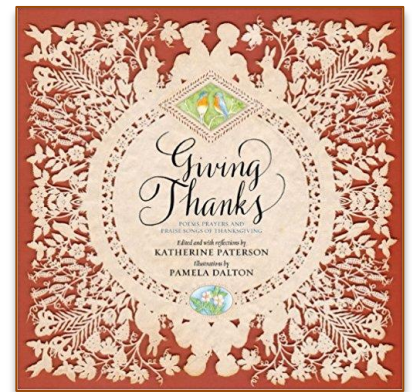
For rest and shelter of the night,

For health and food,

For love and friends,

For everything Thy goodness sends

(Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Thanksgiving")



There are pages of this beautiful book that remind us of people for whom we should be grateful, offering simple ways to thank God for their service.

When eating bamboo shoots,

Remember the man who planted them.

(Chinese proverb)

In these pages, we are asked to remember where our food comes from. Think of the farmer who planted. Remember the animals who provide our meat, our butter, the cream in our tea.



People from the beginning of time and in all parts of the world have known to give thanks. **Giving Thanks** draws on ancient words and various cultures, then offers those words to us so we may use them to express own gratitude.

*May your life be like a wildflower, growing freely in the
beauty and joy of each day (Native American Proverb)*

Have you been chosen to open up your Presbyterian Women's meeting? Or do you want to open up your committee meeting with words of inspiration and let people know what God expects from us? Then how about these words from John Wesley:

*Do all the good you can
By all the means you can,
In all the ways you can,
In all the places you can,
To all the people you can,
As long as ever you can.*

Or these from E.E. Cummings:

*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.*

According to Willis P. King in "**Pulpit Preaching**," "Gratitude is from the same root word as 'grace'... thanksgiving is from the same root word as 'think,' so that to think (gratitude) is to thank."

Think of what we have been given and be grateful for it. Then, when it is time to end your day, when you are thinking of all you have to be grateful for, remember to ask God to bless others. When Albert Schweitzer was a child, he wanted to pray for more than just God's people. When his mother left after sharing his bedtime prayers, Schweitzer always added this simple but all-encompassing blessing:

*O heavenly Father, protect and bless all things that
have breath: guard them from all evil, and let them
sleep in peace.*

All blessings and words of gratitude and thanksgiving in this article are from the book **Giving Thanks: Poems, Prayers, and Praise Songs of Thanksgiving**. The pages of this book are beautifully illustrated by Pamela Dalton. Words have been gathered by and reflected upon by Katherine Paterson. You may find this book in the Resource Center.

To check out this book or for more information on other resources at the Presbytery of West Virginia's Resource Center, please contact me at 304-744-7634 or resourcecenter@wvpresbytery.org.

