

## 2020-11-29 Refresh and ReNEWS

Dear Church,

Some of you know that back in May I was rushed into emergency open heart surgery to repair a coronary artery dissection. In short, one of the arteries that fed blood to my heart had split like a garden hose, putting me at severe risk of immediate death. This rare diagnosis is seldom made prior to an autopsy, so I am incredibly fortunate to be alive.

As you might guess, this has made Thanksgiving especially meaningful for me this year. After all, having a second chance at life is a gift that not all heart patients get to enjoy. In the last six months I have come to appreciate everything in new and unexpected ways. I find that I am more present to life in all its expressions. I am thankful for good healthcare, insurance, dedicated doctors and nurses, and the support of my friends and family. And I am thankful for my faith, and for the God of Resurrection made known to us in Christ Jesus.

I am thankful to be able to hug my kids again. I am thankful to be able to walk my dog and look across these beautiful area lakes. And I am thankful for the opportunity to serve as your bridge pastor, if only for a short time.

I believe deeply that gratitude is an underrated but essential spiritual practice. Giving thanks draws us out of ourselves and connects us to whole of creation. Giving thanks forces us to connect with the source and ground of our faith. Giving thanks opens us to the reality of our interconnectedness with Godly existence.

It may seem hard to find gratitude in a year that's been so difficult. But we know that God wants us to give thanks in all times and in all places (1 Thess. 5:18). Therefore, I ask the perennial question: what are you grateful for this year? In spite of all the challenges, what good things has God been up to in your life?

More than just a question to toss around on Thanksgiving, this question helps us put our faith into practice. By naming our gratitude, we acknowledge our full dependence on God our creator, and open ourselves up to be a blessing for others.

Happy Thanksgiving!

Pastor Christoph