

# Welcome!

First Congregational Church of Webster Groves  
United Church of Christ

*Seek Christ in each. Serve God in all.*

November 26, 2020

Thanksgiving Sunday



*We respond to God's call by welcoming everyone  
regardless of ability, age, ethnicity, race, gender identity,  
sexual orientation or socio-economic background.*

*To proclaim in word and deed the love of Christ, we affirm that  
all may share in the full life, ministry, fellowship, responsibilities  
and blessing of our congregation.*

*No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey,  
you are welcome here.*

## Order of Worship

WELCOME

Pastor David Denoon

TOLLING THE BELL (LIGHTING THE CANDLES)

HYMN OF THE DAY

*“Give Thanks”*

Don Moen

Pastor Joyce Haynes-McCowan, soloist

CALL TO WORSHIP (Responsive—Leader; **People**)

Pastor Denoon

*Psalm 100 NRSV*

Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth.

**Worship the LORD with gladness; come into God’s presence with singing.**

Know that the LORD is God. It is Creator that made us, and we belong to God; we are God’s people, and the sheep of the Sovereign’s pasture.

**Enter God’s gates with thanksgiving, and God’s courts with praise. Give thanks to our Creator and bless God’s name.**

For the LORD is good; our God’s steadfast love endures forever,

**and God is faithful to all generations.**

RESPONSIVE READING (One; **Many**)

Pastor Merrimon Boyd

from Deuteronomy 8:7-18 (NRSV)

The LORD your God is bringing you into a good land, a land with flowing streams, with springs and underground waters welling up in valleys and hills,

**a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey,**

a land where you may eat bread without scarcity, where you will lack nothing, a land whose stones are iron and from whose hills you may mine copper.

**You shall eat your fill and bless the LORD your God for the good land that God has given you.**

Take care that you do not forget the LORD your God, by failing to keep God’s commandments, God’s ordinances, and God’s statutes, which I am commanding you today.

**When you have eaten your fill and have built fine houses and live in them,**

and when your herds and flocks have multiplied, and your silver and gold is multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied,

**then do not exalt yourself, forgetting the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery,**

who led you through the great and terrible wilderness, an arid wasteland with poisonous snakes and scorpions. He made water flow for you from flint rock,

**and fed you in the wilderness with manna that your ancestors did not know, to humble you and to test you, and in the end to do you good.**

Do not say to yourself, “My power and the might of my own hand have gotten me this wealth.”

**But remember the LORD your God, for it is God who gives you power to get wealth, so that the Creator may confirm God’s covenant that God swore to your ancestors, as our Sovereign God is doing today.**

## **THE WORD SHARED**

Pastor Denoon

*From the Gospels*

Luke 17:11-19 New Revised Standard Version

<sup>11</sup> On the way to Jerusalem Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee. <sup>12</sup> As he entered a village, ten lepers approached him. Keeping their distance, <sup>13</sup> they called out, saying, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!” <sup>14</sup> When he saw them, he said to them, “Go and show yourselves to the priests.” And as they went, they were made clean. <sup>15</sup> Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice. <sup>16</sup> He prostrated himself at Jesus’ feet and thanked him. And he was a Samaritan. <sup>17</sup> Then Jesus asked, “Were not ten made clean? But the other nine, where are they? <sup>18</sup> Was none of them found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?” <sup>19</sup> Then he said to him, “Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well.

*Response.*

Hear what the Spirit is saying to the people.

**Thanks be to God.**

**MESSAGE OF THE DAY**      *“Giving Thanks to God”*      Pastor Elston McCowan

All over America, families are experiencing a different kind of Thanksgiving Holiday than in times past. With the advent of COVID – 19, families are practicing social distancing much like the 10 lepers had to do in this story in the gospel of Luke. We are having dinner either alone, or with family members that reside with us, or some are using Zoom on their computers or face-time on their cell phone in order to shorten the distance between them and their loved ones. Perhaps, just maybe, some Americans are just throwing all the rules out the window and are risking increasing the spread of this pandemic even more. Regardless of your circumstances, if you know Jesus and more importantly, if Jesus knows you – I encourage you to invite him into you hearts as well as your Thanksgiving celebration, because the bible says that if you sup with Jesus, he will sup with you (Rev. 3:20 NRSV).

Interesting enough the same word that is used in today’s liturgical scripture is the same word in Greek that means Eucharist. Without going into a lot of detail, the Eucharist is what Jesus instructed his followers and us to do in remembering his sacrifice for us by consecrating bread which represents his body that was broken for us and consecrating the wine which represents his blood that was shed for us. All the while giving thanks to god for these two elements (bread and wine) as we take and eat the bread and drink the wine. It was only after Jesus gave thanks to God before he performed this sacrament.

According to the Working Preacher Commentary, this story of the 10 lepers which is only found in the gospel according to Luke, draws attention to two important themes:

- 1) Jesus’ care for the marginalized and in this case ten lepers with at least one of them being doubly marginalized by a Samaritan, a foreigner and an outsider, – an other than. Someone who is shut out of society and perhaps even hated by some or even most of the majority or ruling classes. We say that we love children, but there are children starving in America every day. Although First Church welcomes all, we know that America does not. We can go down an entire list of marginalized individuals in America, such as the LGTBQ community. Even in that community there are those who like this Samaritan leper - are doubly marginalized. If you are transgendered you are more likely to be attacked than anyone else in the LGTBQ community. Asians – marginalized, Blacks – marginalized, Latinos – marginalized and the list goes on and on.
- 2) The second point the Working Preacher makes is that we find in Luke – the appropriate response to Jesus, which is a response of faithful recognition of who he is and gratitude for his mercy. In fact, it is not unusual for these to

themes to occur in Luke's gospel. It seems that Luke makes the point that it is easier for the marginalized to see Jesus for who he is just as he sees them for who they are. Personally, if one can read between the margins, I think Jesus as reported by Luke uses this elevating the status of the marginalized in order to speak to at least our prejudices toward one another if not our contempt.

So - the story opens with Jesus on the boundaries of Samaria and his hometown Galilee headed to Jerusalem. One can infer from this opening that Luke may be warning us that Jesus is going to push the boundaries and broaden the margins. But the bible does not come out and just says that. On the way, he encounters 10 lepers. They cry out for mercy. Jesus heals all 10 of them of leprosy and instructs them to show themselves to the priest, which was the custom at the time. So that the priest could verify that they were clean or better yet, that they were healed. Nine of the lepers continued on their way. The Samaritan received the outward salvation as well as an inward transformation because of his faithfulness to giving thanks to God! In three bible passage, Jesus healed people and told them, "...your faith has made you well." The one leper out of the ten that thanked him, the woman with the issue of blood in Matthew chapter 9 and a blind man in Mark chape 10. This wellness is a comprehensive wellness that not only speaks to the physical healing, but the spiritual healing also.

So in closing, when we recognize who Jesus is and are thankful, not just on this Thanksgiving Day, but each and everyday of our lives we either have that comprehensive wellness, that spiritual wholeness or even that salvific spirit that lasts eternally. When we recognize who Jesus really is, you can praise and worship Jesus by shouting,

**"Thanks Be to God!"**

For this Thanksgiving Meal

**"Thanks Be to God!"**

For my family and friends

**"Thanks Be to God!"**

Roof over my head

**"Thanks Be to God!"**

Clothes on my back

**"Thanks Be to God!"**

Shoes on my feet

**"Thanks Be to God!"**

Loving me, even when I'm not loveable

**“Thanks Be to God!”**

Water when I’m thirsty

**“Thanks Be to God!”**

Making room for me when others want to shut me out

**“Thanks Be to God!”**

Giving me the resources to help others less fortunate than myself

**“Thanks Be to God!”**

Making me a voice to the voiceless

**“Thanks Be to God!”**

Strengthening me so that I can defend the weak from the wicked

**PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

Pastor Boyd

*We Share Our Joys and Concerns*

- Our residents in assisted living and skilled care
- People we love who are living with cancer
- All those the world regards as disabled
- People with mental illness, family, friends, caregivers, and roommates
- People living with dementia, and their caregivers
- People who are grieving, especially those grieving upon the loss of a loved one
- Our relatives whom we would usually see on Thanksgiving Day
- COVID-19 patients
- Those whose employment and businesses are at risk
- First responders, frontline workers, doctors, nurses, teachers, waiters, waitress, bus drivers – just to name a few and their loved ones
- Wisdom and healing for those who have become polarized by politics, for we all know that there is more to unite us than to divide us
- Peace with justice

*Prayer of the Day*

Pastor McCowan

*Prayer of Our Savior (Unison)*

**Our Father, 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 sins as we forgive those who sin against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.**

## WE SHARE OUR BLESSINGS WITH OTHERS

Pastor Denoon

### *Invitation*

Together, we serve and support our church's ministries of love as we are able. While the health crisis continues, until a vaccine is found, we won't pass plates or collect in person. But if you are able financially, and you would like to support First Church with a monetary donation, please either send a check to:

First Congregational Church  
10 West Lockwood Avenue  
Webster Groves, Missouri 63119

or

Go to our website – [FirstChurchWG.org](http://FirstChurchWG.org) – and to our “Donate” page.

*Raising the Covenant (Unison)*

*Covenant of 1977*

*Let us affirm our oneness as the Body of Christ here in this church, by raising our Covenant together:*

**We who are called of God into this Christian community covenant together: to seek to know the will of God, to experience the joy and struggle of discipleship, to proclaim in word and deed the love of Christ, and to work for peace and justice among all people. We trust God's promise of grace and forgiveness and the presence of the Holy Spirit in our trials and rejoicing.**

## BENEDICTION

Pastor McCowan

## DISMISSAL

Pastor Denoon

That's our worship for this Thanksgiving at First Church. We're glad you could worship with us! Our worship has ended. Let our service begin.



10 West Lockwood Avenue  
Webster Groves, MO 63119  
314-962-0475  
[www.FirstChurchWG.org](http://www.FirstChurchWG.org)

## Contact Information

Moderator  
Mark Edwards  
[marke@wustl.edu](mailto:marke@wustl.edu)

Pastor  
Rev. David A. Denoon  
[DDenoon@FirstChurchWG.org](mailto:DDenoon@FirstChurchWG.org)

Office Administrator  
Debbie Tolstoi  
[Admin@FirstChurchWG.org](mailto:Admin@FirstChurchWG.org)

Director of Music & Organist  
Dr. Leon Burke  
[Leon.Burke@FirstChurchWG.org](mailto:Leon.Burke@FirstChurchWG.org)

Facilities Manager  
Chip Isringhaus  
[cti1234@FirstChurchWG.org](mailto:cti1234@FirstChurchWG.org)

Custodian  
Darrell Lakies

Assistant Custodian  
Gus McLean

Director, Center for Counseling & Healing  
Rev. Linda E. Smith, BCRN, HTCP/I  
[lesrhs@sbcglobal.net](mailto:lesrhs@sbcglobal.net)

Director of MICA  
Rev. Cliff Aerie  
[cliff.aerie@gmail.com](mailto:cliff.aerie@gmail.com)

Student Minister  
Merrimon Boyd  
[merrimon.boyd@gmail.com](mailto:merrimon.boyd@gmail.com)

Student Minister  
Elston McCowan  
[emccowan@eden.edu](mailto:emccowan@eden.edu)

*Seek Christ in each. Serve God in all.*

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