

Trinity Times

My Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

When I was in middle school, I was on the soccer team. One of the drills that I did at home to hone my reflexes was to kick the soccer ball at the side of our woodpile. The edges of the woodpile were not smooth due to the unevenness of the wood logs, and this resulted in the randomness of the ball's return. I would kick the ball into the side of the woodpile and the ball would bounce off and return to me in a random direction. Sometimes it would bounce back to the left or to the right, sometimes straight up and sometimes over my head. But I knew that every time I kicked the ball into the pile it would always come back to me.

Thanksgiving is exactly like my soccer ball. God has given us many gifts and now is the time for us to give back to God. The ball is kicked, and it returns to the kicker. God has given many gifts to us, now is the time for us to give back something to God. In our story of the ten lepers, Christ has given the grace of healing to ten individuals burdened by an incurable skin disease. But only one, *when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice. He prostrated himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him.* The one leper recognized the gift of healing and returned to give back something to Christ. He came back to give back thanks and praise. God, through Christ, gives to us, we return to God, through Christ to give something back: thanks, and praise. Giving back thanks becomes Thanksgiving to and for God.

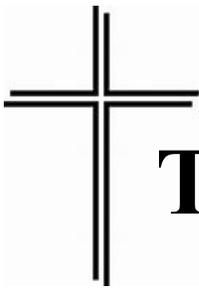
For some of us, this day finds us like the leper having been given gifts of healing from our illnesses and injuries. But for many of us, this day finds us unhealed, coping with many infirmities and difficult circumstances. Certainly, many are struggling with COVID-19, many are wrestling with financial insecurities of being in quarantine, many are combating loneliness and separation from our families in our self-made bubbles (and we should be). But we most certainly look at our situations and see the overwhelming problems. Instead of giving back thanks and praise to God, we see our difficulties and give back to God angst and anguish. Instead of giving back gratitude and words of blessing to God, we gripe and complain about our sufferings in life. We do not thank and bless God for what God has given us, we criticize God for we do not have.

I do not have much love, if any, for the old gospel songs, but the message of one of them is so dreadfully important. The song is "Count Your Blessings," and if we can get around the style of the music for just a moment, the message strikes home with us. For all the things that we can see and experience of pain, struggle, and sorrow, we can also see and count the blessings given to us by God. Instead of naming and counting our troubles we can instead name and count our blessings. If we can criticize God about what God has not done, we can certainly thank and bless God for what he has done.

Let me suggest three blessings that we all enjoy to this day, regardless of our circumstances, or the circumstances of our world around us:

1. The Breath of Life – We are all dust and to dust we shall return, but we also are animated by the very breath of God. God in His loving, freedom chose to form us from the ground and to animate us with his own Breath from his own mouth, giving us life in creation.
2. The Son of God – We have been given the life and death and resurrection of God's only beloved Son. In order that our sins may be forgiven, and we might inherit new and everlasting life. God in His loving, freedom chose to redeem us from sin and death at the great personal cost of giving over his Son.
3. The Kingdom to Come – We have been given the new creation, under the Lordship of Christ. Justice instead of oppression. Life swallowing death. Health overcoming infirmity. Communion defeating isolation. Joy destroying sadness. Peace obliterating conflict. God in His loving freedom chose to give us a blessed eternity in his new creation.

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In whatever our circumstances are, whether fair or foul, we have at least these three things and perhaps even a hundred more that we could name and count. But the point is that no matter what we are dealing with, or struggling with, or trying to carry, or being consumed by, on this Thanksgiving day we have reasons to give back to God words and deeds of gratitude and blessing. We will give back to God something this Thanksgiving, it will either be gratitude and blessing, or it will be criticism and ingratitude. What will you give back? Complaining about the pandemic or appreciation for the breath of life? Whining about politics or admiration for the Crucified and Resurrected Jesus? Moaning about what we do not have or the expectant hope for Kingdom to come? You absolutely will give something back to God this Thanksgiving season, but you have a choice of what that will be, nastiness and vitriol or gratefulness and glory. May God be given the Glory, the Honor, and the Praises of his people for all that God has given to us. Amen and Hallelujah!

In Christ,
Rev. Mark

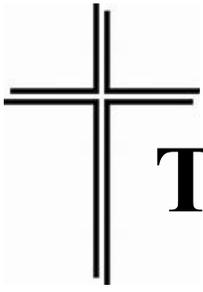
New Communion Procedure

Due to Trinity being in quarantine, we will be using a new procedure to celebrate and distribute the communion elements. On the Saturday before our scheduled Communion celebration, which would be December 5th, Rev. Mark will be blessing pre-packaged and individually sealed wafers and juice. These blessed elements will be distributed on December 5th from 11am to 12pm. On Sunday, December 6th, Rev. Mark will have a video of Communion to watch and during the distribution of the elements section of the video, you may partake of the elements during the service. When you drive through the parking lot, we ask that you remain in your cars, while wearing a mask, and roll down your window and the elements will be handed over to you on a tray. We are still the Church, and we can still celebrate Communion, even if we are socially distancing.



New Officer Ministry

Due to Trinity being in quarantine, we will be beginning a new way for our Church Officers to check on and minister to our members and friends. The entire congregation, including members and friends, has been divided among our deacons and elders. Each participating officer will be responsible for checking on and ministering to up to ten members or friends. This means that a church officer will be responsible for you. They should be contacting you and introducing themselves as your elder or deacon. They are responsible for your wellbeing and meeting any of your needs. Please feel free to contact them with any concern or any joy. In our time of separation due to covid-19, we as your Church leaders wish to adapt to our situation and learn a new way of ministering to you.



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A Note From Session

On November 5, session held a called meeting to act on recommendations from the Re-opening Committee. As a result of that meeting, regretfully, all in-church services, meetings and gatherings were suspended at that time due to the rise of COVID-19 cases in Ashtabula County.

Thankfully, Rev. Mong will continue providing worship services via YouTube. Session faces some challenges in the near future including how to conduct the installation and ordination of new officers, approval of the 2021 budget, complete audits in January, and find a way to hold our February Congregational meeting.

We will move ahead to fulfill all our duties as your session, with grace and joy and innovation. Advent season will certainly look different this year. Let us continue to worship together via YouTube with Rev. Mong every Sunday, as well as read his words of encouragement on his blogs. All are available on trinityashtabula.org. We thank Rev. Mark for his continuous work in leading us through this trying time.

Blessings for health and the hope that this season brings.
Mary Belding, Clerk



A Note From Scrip

It is December and Christmas is fast approaching!

If you will be wanting gift cards for those children and grandchildren, please order them as soon as possible. I will gladly work with you to see that you receive them. Because of all the on-line shopping and shipping logistics, it would be best to *order early*.

Thank you to all who continue to support the church by using this project.

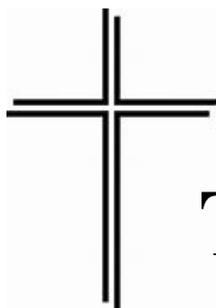
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Property and Finance

Grateful...Thankful...Blessed...

Below is an update on all the projects completed or nearing completion. Progress has been made in satisfying the needs of the building and grounds. A huge thank you to Cheryl Chiaramonte for all her help.

- The boiler system was recently inspected. No concerns were found, and the boiler system is functioning appropriately. The contractor will be back in early summer to inspect our air conditioning.
- The stove in the kitchen has been inspected and no repairs are necessary. We will be asking the gas company to return and inspect again for any leak.
- Thomas Fence has offered to remove the rest of the chain link fence with no cost to the church.
- The brick and mortar have been inspected and the contractor is in the process of putting together a presentation of needed repairs for the committee to review.

Recommendations of contractors are still needed for:

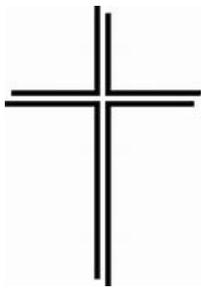
- Estimates on gutters for better drainage.
- Replacement of the double doors located in the back of the sanctuary on the east side.

In a previous newsletter Property and Finance conveyed that we were working on the 2021 budget. This process is not easy. Think of what your monthly bills are for your own home and the income you have to pay these bills. The church does not have a "regular" paycheck coming in to cover these things. It is our hopes that we have made sound decisions that will allow us to continue financially support the needs of the church. There's still time to pay your 2020 Per Capita. Amount is \$32.41 per member.

*The Property and Finance committee
would like to thank everyone for your continued support.*

***Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.
(2 Corinthians 9:6)***

God's blessings to all,
Beth Dougherty



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Community Outreach

Community Council voted to send gift cards in lieu of adopting foster families through Children Services this year. Knowing that we were unable to distribute names and ages we voted to donate a \$500 Walmart Gift Card in lieu of adopting specific Foster Families this year. The monies were taken from mission funds, so many thanks Trinity for funding such a gift!

Youth Opportunities decided it was probably best if we did not continue with lunches at this time due to the current pandemic situation. However, approximately 20 pounds of turkey was donated for them to use for a Thanksgiving lunch.

Food and blankets were donated to Catholic Charities during the month of November.

Until we can meet again, have a safe and blessed holiday season.

Community Council 2020



Note from the Ministerial Relations Committee

Dear friends,

We traditionally give the pastor and his family a monetary gift at Christmas time.

We hope to be able to do that again this year, to thank Rev. Mark and his family for the time and the energy and sacrifices they give to us throughout the year.

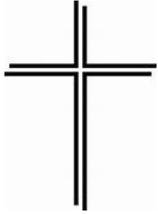
In trying to figure out the logistics of this endeavor, we have come up with the plan that any checks or cash can be sent to Pam Bloom or Dale Fassett who will gather our gifts and see that they are given to the Mong family.

Checks can be made to Pam or Dale with the notation of "gift for Rev. Mark" and mailed to Pam at 1491 Mill Creek Rd. Jefferson, OH 44047 or Dale at 2202S. Ridge E. Ashtabula, OH 44004.

Thank you in advance for your generosity.

Blessings to you and your families,

Dale Fassett, Pam Bloom, Beth Dougherty, and Mary Belding



December 2020

Website www.trinityashtabula.org

Email trinitypres04@gmail.com

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4	5 Communion element Distribution 11am to 12pm
6 2nd Sunday of Advent Video Worship and Communion Service	7	8	9	10	11	12
13 3rd Sunday of Advent Video Worship	14	15	16	17	18	19
20 4th Sunday of Advent Video Worship	21	22	23	24 Christmas Eve Video Service	25 Christmas Day  <small>shutterstock - 930830747</small>	26
27 Video Worship	28	29	30	31 New Year's Eve	January 1, 2021 Happy New Year!	