

From This Corner
A More Thoughtful Thanksgiving
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What is your ideal Thanksgiving? Perhaps like mine it would include the gathering of loved ones and a full course turkey dinner. Yes, and cranberries and lots of stuffing are necessary also. This all wrapped in the consciousness of the abundance God has given us. It occurs to me this year, however, that our thankfulness often changes with our life's circumstance. Take for instance last month's surprise lake effect snow storm and the catastrophic aftermath. In those circumstances people were thankful to have modest food, and be able to keep water from flooding their basements. A can of Dinty Moore beef stew seems like a Thanksgiving banquet when you are wondering what you can find to eat. The sound of a sump pump starting again can seem like a holiday concert when your feet have been wet and the Christmas decorations have been floating.

I also recall a phone call from my wife returning to Buffalo after escaping the storm by coming to Jamestown. We exchanged cell phone calls as we approached Buffalo. I will never forget the emotion in her voice as she observed the landscape and the dramatic damage to the trees that abound in that park area where our apartment is located. Sometimes circumstances can cause us to weep for the trees. How often do we give thanks for the beauty of the trees that surround us every day?

It occurs to me this year that most of the time our observances of Thanksgiving are limited by what we usually assume. What we usually assume in our world is that we will be warm, well fed, and comfortable. Many in other parts of the world cannot assume any of these conditions. What is basic and modest for us would be a profound blessing for many. Perhaps our basics would seem like a miracle for many others?

It is interesting to me what I often hear when our churches are challenged to improve their stewardship and help their church proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ and meet their world service fair share. You would think many times that we are those in the world who struggle for the basics of shelter, food, and modest comfort. I guess sacrifice also is seen

in the context of a person's reality. What we think we have to have when we have a lot is different from what we think we have to have when we are truly going without.

I suspect that you like I will again observe Thanksgiving Day in a somewhat customary fashion. That I realize is our lot being typical United Methodists in the United States of America. Before we partake of the feast, however, perhaps we can remember the last time the electricity was out and we had to think about what to do to be comfortable. Then let us bow our heads and give thanks, and get out the check book to share what in reality is our customary superabundance. To do so might be good for our souls and a genuine kind of thanks and giving.