

Pastor Anne's Message, December 2025

Advent Greetings to Everyone!

The days are surely coming says the Lord, when I will cause a righteous Branch to spring forth. "Advent" ~ Watch and wait for Christ's coming.

As always, in a loving community and church community of faith, there are so many people to thank. As we move into the Season of Advent I would like to share thoughts about gratitude.



Gratitude isn't just something you have; it is something you learn and develop. It is a life skill. You can grow your capacity for gratefulness. You can cultivate your ability to pause, to look around, to be surprised and delighted by the world around you. When you slow down, you can better honor and feel the gifts from God in each moment, and the opportunity that comes with it.

Life is a gift from God. And it is for you. The best things in life often are not things at all. They are experiences lived, emotions felt, and connections made. These are the things that sparkle in our memory. And it is when we are feeling grateful that we can perform our most beautiful acts and appreciate our most treasured moments.

Look closely. The extraordinary is hidden in the ordinary. Where have we heard that before? Scripture. It is in the appreciation of something ~ that we really begin to see it. Think of what makes you smile. A hug from a friend. An act of compassion. Contagious laughter. A blooming flower. So many of life's delights are available to you. Be present for your life and keep hold of small joys. *You can miss "what is" while regretting "what could have been;" or worrying about "what could be."*

Love freely, openly, and abundantly. The more love you share, the more love you have. *Simplify*. Not much is needed for happiness. Share your God given gifts and help others to unwrap their own gifts from God. None of us make it through life alone. Take time to pause and reflect on those who have helped you along the way. Look for what you admire and share a sincere compliment. Everyone appreciates being appreciated.

Be the reason someone believes in the goodness of God and the goodness of people. Every kind thing you say or do for another, becomes a part of them, and you!

God wants us to reach out and be willing to welcome connection. What an honor it is to be counted on. The most meaningful things in life are meant to be shared: Stories, memories, love, even sadness. When you look back and remember situations, be proud of your resiliency. Give yourself credit for making it through tough times when it felt like you might not. And God was there either in the shadows or broad daylight.

There will be struggles, there will be fears, and it won't always be easy. You know that, and God knows that. At times it will feel really difficult. And you might make a mess of things. You may fall down. You may fail. Yet; you will also "get back up" and you will rise a little stronger and a little "taller." Because there really is more inside you than you know. God knows. And this world needs your gifts, your "God given gifts," your ideas and God Given endless potential.

And with God's support, and the encouragement and support of this congregation and community, anything is possible. Amen

With love and gratitude,

Pastor Anne

Women's Fellowship

Women's Fellowship began the Fall season with the long practiced traditional Turkey Dinner on November 15th.



The women of the valley came together to prepare, cook, and serve the meal. A special thank you to **MARIGOLD MARKET** for the generous donation of seven large turkeys! Rosa's support is always greatly appreciated.

Loi Hittle's old fashioned dinner rolls, the master potato peeler, Clara Mae's dressing recipe, prepared by Cindy Melendy and the crew, and a full team of helpers make this event the celebration that it is. Ashley Jo and Bridget are happy to provide help wherever needed.

It is estimated 140 meals were prepared making this one of the most successful fundraisers for Women's Fellowship.

Thank you to everyone who supported us,
Pres. Sue Bellotti, Julia Cox, and Loi Hittle

TRUSTEES REPORT

The grounds are prepared for winter.

A new heating unit was installed in the dining room in an effort to heat the space more efficiently and much quieter. We realize the roar of the heater fans made conversation impossible when the room was in use. Thank you, Mike Loftus

Trustees Sue Bellotti, Julia Cox, Tilda Evans, and Mike Loftus



Caring Hands and Hearts

By Ceola McDonough

In June of 2002, my husband, John, was diagnosed with cancer, multiple myeloma. At that time, he was so sick that the doctor told me he couldn't possibly make it more than 30 days, and only if he was lucky. God and I had a lot of heart to heart talks, many times every day. I promised God that if he would give me more time with my husband, I would find something to do to help people, and when the time came that He needed my husband, I would accept it with grace.

Over the next few months, at every appointment, the doctor would say, "Wow, I can't believe it. I never expected him to improve." I kept thanking God and asking what I could do to help people.

In May of 2003, at my husband's appointment, there was a young lady there for her first chemo treatment. She was, of course, terrified. Her husband didn't even know, yet, because he was working in a remote location where she only saw him or talked to him once a month. Her employer was there for support, and all I could do was hold her hand. I don't even know her name. One the way home that day, my husband and I talked about what I could do. He told me to make quilts for the cancer patients, as most of them were terribly cold during their treatments.



The following week, I took three quilts to Oncology to be given to patients. The response was amazing. I didn't think anyone would care about a quilt from a total stranger. I know God approved of what I was doing because every time I went to buy another roll of batting, there was the exact amount of money that I needed for it. I got my batting from Quilter's Corner, which was owned by Bill and Johnna Keith. They had both lost family members to cancer and wanted to help and sold me the batting at their cost.

I received amazing notes and letters from cancer patients telling me their stories and asking, "How did you know that was my favorite color," and telling me how the quilt made them feel. I know all these things were God's way of telling me that he approved of what I was doing. Plus, He gave me 13 additional years with my husband, not the 30 days that the doctor predicted!

I thought this was something I had to do by myself, because I'm the one that made the promise to God. For the first six months, I did it by myself. Then one day, my daughter, Gwen, got my attention. She told me if I didn't let others help make the quilts, I was denying them the opportunity to help people. The light bulb came on! My quilting friends started approaching me asking if they could be part of this project. I had as many as seven people helping me during the next 12 ½ years. People started calling and asking if they could donate fabric. Quilter's Corner became a drop off point for a lot of donated fabric. One gentleman called and said that his wife had received one of the quilts, and she had said she wanted all her fabric to be donated to my project. He delivered three pickup loads of fabric to my garage!

My group met once a month to sew and chat. We decided we needed a name for the project and came up with Caring Hands and Hearts, and the wording for the labels.

THE MUSTARD SEED
THE NEWSLETTER OF THE
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Christmas Eve Service
Lessons and Carols
Wednesday, December 24
7:00 pm