

WESTERN SPRINGS CRC

A Joyful Word

November 2023

FROM THE ELDERS

A Commitment to Communicate

The purpose of this monthly communication is to focus on the joy we share as members of WSCRC. Without a pastor, it is the responsibility of the Elders to communicate about worship ministry and the search process. We believe that by doing so, transparency is promoted and trust in leadership is built as together we grow in Christian fellowship. ***"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope."*** (Romans 15:13)

A Joyful Word – Gratitude

On November 23, we celebrated Thanksgiving Day, in remembrance of the Pilgrims, who were eager to thank God for the bare necessities of life. By modern standards, they were deep in poverty — but they were rich in gratitude. At our Thanksgiving service, we once again had the opportunity to write down on "Thanksgiving Leaves" what we're thankful for and those heartfelt expressions of gratitude to God were included in the morning prayer.

The practice of gratitude is about recognizing, trusting, and responding to God's goodness and abiding presence with us. Gratitude forms us as a people who look with confidence toward God as the One who loves us, and who saves us in Jesus Christ. Rev. Hamstra, in his Thanksgiving message, shared with us the important relationship of God's care and grace and a grateful heart. Practicing gratitude trains us to recognize and celebrate the Spirit's work in us so that we can more fully and more faithfully love the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength.

In Radical Gratitude, Mary Jo Leddy extends this perspective further: "In recognizing our original and radical dependence on our Creator, we become freer to live in interdependent ways in which we become more truly who we are." In other words, gratitude forms us to give and

receive love more freely with each other so that we become the people God created us to be." Expressing gratitude to God is most fully evident in a community of God's people who love each other. This was one of the predominant themes that came out of all the listening sessions with Rev. Hamstra. In spite of the challenges we face in being vacant, it is still evident in the glory of our community of believers and the love that we share with each other.



For all of us at WSCRC, cultivating a spirit of thankfulness is more than a good idea; it's a direct command from God. Rev. Boswell said, "Everything we do in gratitude to God in a way that would honor Him." Promoting and nurturing a spirit of thankfulness honors God and strengthens our faith.

Gratitude also strengthens our relationships with others.

We can't be in a right relationship with God or with anyone without a spirit of thankfulness and gratitude. As Rev. Hamstra concluded his Thanksgiving Sermon, "Praise the Lord!

Gary Smit

A Joyful Word - Worship

Pastor Ben has coordinated this year's **Advent Sermon Series**. During the four Sundays of Advent, our guest ministers will preach from the prophets who spoke of Christ's arrival. Guided by the theme of **"Voices of Waiting,"** we will let the prophets' words become ours as we prepare for Jesus' birth at Christmas.

Music has always been an integral part of our worship, particularly during this season. Joy comes to us from music and we are grateful for the work of Renee DeJager and Becky Walstra by enhancing our worship experience each week.

The Sing for Hope Pianos is the country's largest annually recurring public arts project, placing

artist-designed pianos in parks and public spaces for anyone and everyone to play. Sparking impromptu music-making and connections, they create spontaneous moments of joy and community, bringing people together.



ask God to enlighten them in the preparation of this profile. Please also pray for Sam Hamstra as he prepares to seek candidates to share with our committee that are compatible with our profile.

A Joyful Word - Leadership

This artistic project is analogous to the way in which followers of Christ are exhorted to “teach, admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.” (Colossians 2:16).

A joyful worship is evident in Word-centered teaching, fellowship and singing, all to be done by our congregation to give honor and glory to God.

In case you missed a Sunday morning worship service in November, here are the links to our Church YouTube channel:

November 5 - Rev. Ben Snoek
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bpw1ex8Y9_k
 Sermon: Blessing in Disguise

November 12 - Rev. Marcus Mininger
https://youtube.com/live/_nv0BqylOtM
 Sermon: Perfect Sympathy

November 19 - Rev. Marcus Mininger
<https://youtube.com/live/HR2WVpA-drs>
 Sermon: Unity through Heavenly-Mindedness

November 23, Thanksgiving Day Service
 Rev. Sam Hamstra
<https://youtube.com/live/0S2RkKaS17s>
 Sermon: "Where are the Nine?"

November 26 - Rev. Ted Boswell
https://youtube.com/live/tw_1brAb9_4
 Sermon: "Thanks-living: For? When? How? Why?"

A Joyful Word - Pastor Search

A heart of joy is one of the primary identifying characteristics of a believer. It stands in stark contrast to pride, selfishness, and worry. And it helps fortify our trust in the Lord and reliance on His provision. No matter the challenges we face, in seeking a Pastor, we should be uplifted with constant praise and gratefulness to the Lord.

The members of the Search Committee request your prayers for wisdom to discern God's leading in the process. At this time, the committee is going through the results of the survey and the listening sessions in order to prepare a profile for our church that will be viewed by potential candidates. They would

The Search Committee has a singular focus and as you can see from their work, exemplify leadership on behalf of the congregation. During our time of vacancy, our elected Council members as leaders are striving with God's help to fulfill the needs of our church while meeting the challenges of bringing the Gospel message to our community of believers.

To fulfill our calling, Council members serve on various committees: Administration, Worship, Education, Building. This is in addition to their respective roles as Deacons and Elders.

On December 11, the Council will be meeting. Our agenda will include reviewing the draft of the Church Profile, reviewing the reports of various church committees and planning of new office bearers for the 24-25 church year. Our leaders, covet your prayers and encouragement.

What We Can Do To Be Joyful

There are many ways to nurture gratitude in our lives, and we are invited to experiment with different ways that will cultivate gratitude within us, our homes, our church, and our communities. Rev. Boswell provided a small notebook for a **“30 Day Challenge” to developing a grateful heart along with follow-up scriptures on thankfulness.** Copies are available on the kiosk or can be downloaded from the following links

Follow up Scriptures on Thanks
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1x...>

A Thanks Giving Notebook Experiment
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1p...>

If you have any questions, pastoral concerns or spiritual care needs, please contact your District Elder or reach out to Gary Smit as Chair of Council.

