

“Thankful”  
1 Chronicles 29:10-13  
September 17, 2017  
(Sunday, Post Hurricane Irma)  
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My daughter posted the following on Face Book this last week. I think she posted from someone who posted it, from someone who posted it...and it's on Face Book so it IS true:

Please be nice to post-hurricane people. For last week, we feel like we have packed, moved, camped, built a house, done major relandscaping, spent money on stupid bunker food, and found new ways of cheating death, all the while being told we might die very, very soon. We haven't slept. During this time, everyone in other states call, messages, and texts with helpful advice that we knew already. Some lost income and some were robbed, or worse. The low pressure gave us headaches. Also our kids have been out of school for DAYS and looking at us like we are insane. Tread lightly. We are one taco short of a combination plate and it's....Monday? Tuesday? What day IS it?

I don't know about you I've been mixed up on what day it is. But I do know that today is Sunday...woo-hoo!!!!!-- a time to gather God's people for worship.

Beloved I have heard the phrase “too blessed to be stressed.” Well this week was stressful. A week ago today I sent the following text on a group text to our Senior Leadership Team here at church. Each of them have staff-team that they were to check on. So last Sunday at 8:52 am. I texted this:

Almighty God, thank you for your love, your care, and your presence. We confess that we need your help with all of our feelings as we ride out Hurricane Irma. Feelings of anxiety, fear, nervousness, are real—and yet we know that you are with us. We seek your protection and ask that you keep us safe. We know that you will be with us. Help us to feel your abiding presence, your calm and your love. Be with our family, our friends and our church family. In Jesus name we pray. Amen

Thankful.

For me I'm using the word Thankful not blessed. It may be just me, but if I say I'm blessed does that mean people with no roofs, no homes, no food, no power and electricity not blessed. However most of us can say with perspective that we are thankful. Beloved I am thankful to have a worship space to praise God in this morning.

We have very very minor damage to the church campus. The Robin's Nest playground tarp was ripped and torn by the wind, the light panel in the Multi-Purpose Room was and is messed up, the electric curtain behind the cross wont' work---and that's it. Thankful. And again I say---Thankful.

A main concern was safety for lives. Property can be replaced, buildings can be rebuilt, but a life is eternal. One our earthly life is gone---it's gone. I'm thankful we are here this morning.

I heard the wind in the middle of the night went Hurricane Irma went through. We were in Dunedin with my daughter, son-in-law and 2 grands. They were in a non-evacuation zone. Where we live was Zone D, but since they boarded up and we could be together we went there. They had yard debris...a small portion of their fence down, and no power. Thankful.

Now concerning no power...confession time. How many of you had no power, had a flashlight, or the light on your phone on, and yet you would still go by a light switch and flip it on. Power. Thankful!

In the middle of the storm, even with no power, God is with us.

Lord, I will lift mine eyes to the hills  
Knowing my help is coming from You  
Your peace you give me in time of the storm

You are the source of my strength  
You are the strength of my life  
Amen, Amen, Amen, Amen ----(Song: Total Praise, lyrics by Richard Smallwood

Amen means=It is so, so be it, Truly. You are the source of my strength, you are the strength of my life...It is so. It is so, It is so. You are the source of my strength, you are the strength of my life....truly, truly, truly. So be it!

In this storm I realized that I take many things for granted. Curling irons...okay that's not on my list...but I think they are taken for granted. Power, water, bread, hot meals, hot water. Thankful.

It is a big reminder not to take family for granted. Our family from out of state were worried, praying and checking on us. I got notice of friends and family praying for us from Illinois, Kentucky, South Carolina, Oregon, Virginia, Texas, Georgia. Thankful.

We were concerned and worried for our son Andy who was working the news in Ft. Myers and as of Friday was still without power at his apartment.

Andy works as a production assistant for a newstation that is the major TV feed for the Ft. Myers area. I realized that if were not for Production Assistant there would be no newscasts. Then I realized of all the people 'behind the scenes' that help us during these times. Thankful.

Yes, thankful. Perhaps you will want to show your appreciation for the following.  
Thankful for the First Responders.  
Law Enforcement. Thankful.  
Nurses and doctors. Thankful.  
For those in Waste Management. Thankful.  
County pick up of debris. Thankful.

And last, but certainly not least...For the lineman and power companies---- not just locally, but from several states and even from Nova Scotia.....thankful, thankful, thankful. And the list could go on and on!

Rev. Cathy posted this scripture and short message on FaceBook earlier this week. I asked her permission to share it.

### **Philippians 4:11-13 New International Version (NIV)**

**<sup>11</sup> ... I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. <sup>12</sup> I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. <sup>13</sup> I can do all this through him who gives me strength.**

“I am learning the meaning of this verse. I am so thankful and rejoicing in my Lord each day. I am finding contentment in my current circumstances. Though I don't have electrical power, I have the power of the Holy Spirit. I know that God is with me through this storm recovery process. I know that I am surrounded by family and friends and they are all safe. I can live with a little inconvenience of no power. I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength.”

Amen? Amen. Thankful.

The Senior Leadership Staff team of the church have been phenomenal checking on each other. We had a group text of Senior Leadership Team who would then check on other staff team members. For the PHUMC ministry team. Thankful.

George Agisotellis our Facilities Manager and Maintenance Team---thankful. As he and Dana Roeling kept in contact about facilities. Thankful for them. George had already looked at facilities and we had been in conversation but he showed me around on Monday. On Tuesday we let Senior Leadership Staff Team know of a work day on Wednesday, and they passed the word on. We kept it low key as we knew that people had their own property to take care of. So it's okay if you didn't know. However word got out. And what George thought would take 2 days took one long day. Somehow---30-50 people showed up from The Robin's Nest, Stars and Comets, Westlake, church staff and volunteers. Many coming to help out before they even had finished at their own homes to clear debris and limbs. Guess what I am....THANKFUL.

On Wednesday with people still without power, Rev. Cathy called me about opening up the church for a place as a place to cool off and charge up (their phones). We had talked about this prior to the Hurricane. Thanks Jessica Petot our Public Relations Coordinator for getting word out. Marilyn King, Congregational Care Coordinator and Judie Crume for hosting. And for the Burkhart family for bringing homemade cookies. Thankful.

Pinellas County schools and Westlake out until tomorrow and with parents perhaps going back to work Thursday...Chris Sterugnagel Director of our Stars and Comets After School Program was able to find staff (some who had evacuated) to come in Thursday and Friday to staff the program so K-8 students could have a place to come while parents went back to work. For Chris Steurngael and staff. Thankful.

**<sup>11</sup> Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and you are exalted as head above all.**

So thankful.

Thursday morning at 8 am I received an email from our District Superintendent, Dr. Candace Lewis. The Bishop had already visited some of the hard hit areas of Irma and was asking what our District, the Gulf Central District, could do for immediate relief. Candace sent the email to pastor in our District of large churches. I told her that we would do whatever...a resounding YES to Love God and Love All! To GO serve the community and the state. Rev. Cathy had already been in contact with the local United Methodist Disaster Relief Coordinator. At the request of the Bishop through the District Superintendent they asked what we could do to get supplies to a hard hit area Friday. So with word getting out on Facebook, Email, Instagram and Twitter we let people know we were collecting up until 8 p.m. that night. Time we got the word out it was probably less than 8 hour notice for people.

We took some money designated for missions for this sort and got supplies. We were thinking of maybe taking 1 van and trailer. We were asked to go to the United Methodist Church in Lake Placid. About 2 and half hours away...about 150 miles. Jayanne Roggenbaum, Principal of our Westlake Christian School also sent out an email blast to parents to get the word out about collections. A Campus wide mission imitative to help those in need. For our Westlake School. Thankful.

Well, supplies started coming in. Thanks to Jamie Hammond and George and Jan Agisotellis for helping load the trailer. Our Superintendent came for about an hour and helped out and cheered the people on. She posted this on FB last night at 7:48 p.m. 10 minutes before the drop off cut off time. She said, "This is a miracle in the making!!!! Water is multiplying and people are still dropping off supplies. Thanks Dave Baldrige and Cathy Hart and the Palm Harbor family and school."

We were overflowing...what were we to do...We didn't have another trailer. Jayanne Roggenbaum sent out a personal appeal to parents of Westlake Christian School if they had an SUV to help caravan down. Jayanne told within 5 minutes she had 2 vehicles. The Banlowe family, The Hashim family---Thankful.

So---around 8:45 on Friday morning Rev. Cathy, Jessica Petot, Mission Director Jamie Hammond, Terry Avery, and the Banlowess and Hashim's took off...1 church van and trailer, another church van and 2 personal vehicles. I texted the District Superintendent to let her know.

Part of her text back to me was... “It was fun being there with them...the leaders were great!!! They brainstormed and reached out to get the SUV’s going too...it’s awesome what God does through people when we get out of the way...” You know what I say....THANKFUL.

For the United Methodist Connection that can coordinate and communicate is such a quick way. Thankful. For you who had quick donation time. Thankful.

When arriving in Lake Placid Rev. Cathy and Jessica said there were cheers when they opened up the van and brought out the water and bread. So many thank you’s for bread, water and Styrofoam plates and cups. THANKFUL. The Bishop responded when he saw the pictures with one word....Amazing.

Less than 2 hours after the caravan dropped off the supplies and donations....Rev. Cathy received word from the pastor that all the supplies had been given out.

**12 Both riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might, and in your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all.**

Riches and honor come from you. Thankful. Give strength to all! You my friends helped give strength to those in need. Thankful.

There are many stores you will here. Stories like people posting...hey, those without power I have a hot breakfast buffet out in front yard...ready for you. Stories of need something heated...just knock on my door. People invited neighbors and friends without power to stay with them until they had power.

I’ve learned a lot during this time, and will continue to learn.

**2 Corinthians 4:9**New Living Translation (NLT)

**9 We are hunted down, but never abandoned by God. We get knocked down, but we are not destroyed.**

Some say when will we get back to normal. What is normal? If not being normal is helping your neighbor, offering assistance, caring for one another...then I don’t want to go back to normal.

Scripture says we are knocked down, but not destroyed. Woo-hoo!!! #floridastrong #Godneverabandons #Godiswithus #idon’t usemytwitter account #idon’tknowwhyi’m #ing. But I do know that although we may get knocked down...we are not destroyed. And again I say THANKFUL.

**1 Chronicles 29:13<sup>13</sup> And now we thank you, our God, and praise your glorious name.**

And now we THANK YOU. OUR God. And praise your glorious name.

In the dead of night  
I'll lift my eyes to You  
Though the waters rise  
I'll lift my eyes to You  
While there's hope in this heart  
I will praise you Lord

When I cannot see You lift my eyes  
Let faith arise to You  
When I cannot feel Your hand in mine  
Let faith arise to You  
God of mercy and love  
I will praise you Lord  
The joy of the Lord is my strength  
In the darkness I'll dance  
In the shadows I'll sing  
The joy of the Lord is my strength (from Joy of the Lord, Rend Collective)

And now, we thank you, our God, and praise your glorious name. THANKFUL!!!