

Worship Together

There is still some candy left in the basket by the door. The trick or treaters have gone. Nobody's knocking. But in time large and small hands of passer by's will help themselves leaving nothing behind. Yet, I love it when "Halloween" gives way to "Thanksgiving". Dressing up and getting candy gives way to being with people you love, giving thanks, and being generous.

I'm not a Hallmark Calendar guy, but I can't ignore the signpost moments in time of the cultural air of the West. This is a great time of year to breath the air of gratitude. You can live any where in the world and breath this air, especially when you're not in want because the Lord is your shepherd. For the Christian, gratitude is the air you breath, and generosity is the path you walk. The two are inseparable. Listen to the Psalmist,

*Praise the LORD! Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever!
Who can utter the mighty deeds of the LORD, or declare all his praise?
Blessed are they who observe justice, who do righteousness at all times! - Psalm 106:1-3*

Doing justice and walking in righteousness flows from giving thanks to the LORD. Those who know the generosity of their covenant God serving them everyday respond in gratitude and overflow in a generous life toward others.

It's not a great time of year just because we live in a land that celebrates Thanksgiving. Thanksgiving Day celebrations in the West look more like worship ceremonies to the gods of gluttony and gaudy. But because we live in a land that makes time for celebrating Thanksgiving, we should renew ourselves in the worship of the True and Living God by gratitude that walks in generosity. When we give thanks for all the good things we have received for ourselves, we are the gods we worship at the cost of others. But when we give thanks in all circumstances, situations, relationships, and surroundings, because we "know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich" (2Corinthians 8:9), then we are true worshipers expressing our love to God and man in generosity.

In the coming weeks of our Sunday morning worship we will be focusing together on gratitude and the generosity that flows from it. We will be thinking about gratitude and generosity in the familiar and difficult places of life.

- ❖ November 11th - Gratitude in an Age of Cynicism
- ❖ November 18th - Gratitude in an Age of Plenty
- ❖ November 25th - Gratitude in an Age of Loss

Worship at 3100 Covenant Road

We have enjoyed several weeks of worshipping together at 3100 Covenant Road in Peterson Hall. It has been a rich time of singing, praying, reading, and hearing God's Word. Each Sunday night we are looking at the key tenants of the Christian faith. It is a great time to invite friends and neighbors who have questions about the Christian faith or those who do not have a church home, but need to knitted together with a community.

Peterson Hall is the location of the original sanctuary at Covenant Road. It is named for the Presbyterian minister who lead the Presbyterian US to purchase the land in 1951 as the sight for a church plant. Please join us there as we worship together and as we trust the Lord to build his church in this community.

Life Together

Last week I was in Lowes looking for a small rod iron table for my back deck. It was too late. Even though it's Fall and there's plenty of great weather to be enjoyed out on my back deck, according to Lowes, we don't have time and place for that outdoor furniture stuff. It's Christmas Time!! Where all the outdoor furniture stuff was is now filled with everything "Christmas". I just wanted a little table to sit around on my back deck with those I'm being sharing time with. But there's no room in the Inn. Tis the season to be tinsel.

In this season of Thanksgiving and Christmas let's continue to make the time and room in our lives to build community with one another. One of the ways you can do this is by making an effort to participate in a Growth Group. They meet twice a month during the week. If you are not a part of a Growth Group then contact Scott Dinkins at the church or sign up at church. He will get you into one that is in the area you live.

We desire to build 'thick community' in our body at Christ Covenant Church. This requires spending time together, and spending time together learning how to share our lives with one another. Our Growth Groups are learning to do this by reading and discussing *Caring for One Another, 8 Ways to Cultivate Meaningful Relationships*. One editorial reviewer of this book writes,

Nearly every Christian has experienced awkwardness in the local church. At one time or another, we have felt ignored, misunderstood, or out of place. The church may be the body of Christ, but we don't always function as well as we should. In Caring for One Another, Ed Welch gives us thoroughly biblical and entirely practical direction to facilitate more meaningful interactions in our churches. In the space of eight short lessons, we learn our need to move toward people and find ourselves equipped to reach out to them in loving and genuinely helpful ways. Whether you read this book alone or study it in a group, you will close the last page with renewed energy for building relationships in your church.
—Megan Hill, author, *Contentment and Praying Together*; Editor, *The Gospel Coalition*

Ministry Together

'My home is my castle and my time my own'. These words echo in our heads when we're done with our day or our week and we're ready to be left alone. But when we look upon the mercies of God in Christ and offer ourselves to him these words echo in our hearts, "*Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.*" - Romans 12:13 The life of the Christian is a public life. It's a life of contribution. Contributing to the needs of others, whatever they may be, and welcoming others into our 'castles' and 'time', to know them and love them.

We want to encourage you to open your home to the sojourner among you this Thanksgiving. There are over 2000 Internationals representing more than 100 countries studying at USC and other colleges and universities in the Columbia area. Most of them would be spending their Thanksgiving Day in their own apartments or dorm rooms, while most American students are gone to their homes or to their friends' homes for the Thanksgiving holidays. Would you welcome an international student or family into your home for them to celebrate this great American celebration with your family and have them experience Christian hospitality and God's love through your family and relatives? It will be a mutually blessed experience. Please let's us know if you can be a part of this special opportunity to welcome a stranger into your home (Matt. 25:35b) by register online at www.ifmusa.org under the "About Us" tab, or contact us by phone or email and we'll send you a registration form. Thank you for being a part of what God is doing among Internationals here in this city!

International Friendship Ministries

Ministering to International Students since 1981

Dr. Raj Aluri, President (USC Alumni 1976, 1982 & 1989)

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