



Dear Friends of Southeast Michigan,

Grace to you and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ!

"I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now." (Philippians 1:3)

That was St. Paul, writing from his jail cell while he waited for his trial. The words came to my mind for two reasons: first, because of the sense of thankfulness that runs through the whole letter; and second, because it was a helpful reminder that God's people have been in challenging situations before this. And I say that, dear friends, not to gloss over what we are experiencing now, but simply to observe that our history is filled with challenges, both big and small. The good news is that, by God's grace, we keep finding a way forward.

This Thanksgiving will have its own particular challenges. Familiar routines will need to be changed. Our best medical advice says that large family gatherings should be avoided. Meanwhile, all the ways that we are used to connecting with those we love: the hugs and kisses, sharing space and laughter, are discouraged in order to help stop the spread of the virus that is filling our hospitals and overwhelming our heroic medical professionals. For most of us, it's going to be a very strange holiday.

Still, and just like St. Paul, we have much for which to be thankful. We can connect with those we love. Most of us will have a roof over our heads, and a great deal of food on the table. There is reliable news of effective vaccines that have been developed with astonishing quickness. We can be assured that life will resume its regular rhythms in the not-too-distant future, if we can be patient with each other a little while longer.

So what shall we do until that time? Be thankful, dear friends. And as you are able, please be generous with the gifts that you have to share with others. All of our congregations and our leaders have been doing ministry during this time; it looks different than it has in the past, but it still requires resources (that's money and supplies) to accomplish what is needed. Reach out to your local food pantry; find out whether they need dollars or non-perishable items to meet the needs of those they serve. And just like St. Paul, pray with joy as you remember your fellow saints and the gospel that we share.

I thank God for you. Have a blessed and safe Thanksgiving.

Grace and peace,
Bishop Don Kreiss
