

THE COMPASS

Family Devotional for November 2023

An Attitude of Gratitude

Activity

A Gratitude List

At the end of the month we will celebrate the Thanksgiving holiday. Many families have the tradition of taking a moment before they eat to go around the table and share what they are most grateful for. Imagine if you made a list all month long and simply took turns reading items on the list; or printed them out and placed them on everyone's plate, or place, at the table. Rather than trying to think about something on the spot at your Thanksgiving meal, there would be a whole list of gratitude to inspire you, warm your heart, and help you focus on the reason for this unique holiday that is both secular and religious. A time to stop and give thanks amid the busyness of the world we live in and all the negative energy we suffer in this modern day and age.

What is a gratitude list? A gratitude list is a way to remind ourselves of what we are grateful for. Creating a list is an act of mindfulness that places our focus on something positive and constructive rather than negative and destructive. Gratitude is an emotion that carries the power to help us right-size ourselves when we are lost in our grief and suffering. An **attitude of gratitude** can ground us in a right relationship with God and



each other that allows us to appreciate what we have instead of lamenting what we do not. Gratitude reminds us as followers of the way of Jesus of who we are and whose we are. We are children of God. Everything belongs to God. No matter how much we may get lost in our despair or distracted by our suffering, there are, when we are ready to see it, so many things we can be grateful for. Our hope is that this list will help your family to begin a conversation about what you are grateful for, and that this gratitude shared between you will

draw you closer to God and each other. We expect the gratitude you share to inspire and empower you to see the world as good and holy regardless no matter who you are or where you are on life's journey. A gratitude list is often cited as a tool in the recovery community that everyone can benefit from. You can do this by yourself or as a couple or a family or even as an extended group of family and friends. Go ahead, try it, and see what happens.

We suggest leaving a notebook or a journal out on the kitchen table or counter, or the coffee table in the living or family room, wherever you most gather as a family. Every time you think of something you are grateful for, write it in the book. There are other ways. Have some fun with it. Every time you think of something you are grateful for you could write it on post-it notes or small piece of paper and put it on the refrigerator, a bulletin board, or even tape it on the wall or kitchen cabinet. You could ask everyone in the family to write their own gratitude lists all month long and then share them at the appropriate time the week of thanksgiving.



You could do at home what we are going to do at church. All month long we are going to be handing out long strips of paper, (say 1" x 6"), for you to write what you are grateful for on, then we are going to use some tape to create a paper ring chain that you can watch grow throughout the month. At the end of the month, we will take the paper ring chain that represents everything we as a faith community are grateful for and use it to decorate our Christmas tree in the sanctuary. At home, you could use the paper chain to decorate your Thanksgiving table and take turns reading what you are all grateful for written on the rings, then even keep the paper chain intact and use it as a part of your Christmas decorations. Our goal is to create a visual reminder that helps us to keep our focus on an attitude of gratitude as we move from Thanksgiving into the seasons of Advent and Christmas.

Prayer

This month we are sharing different Thanksgiving prayers for you to meditate on and share with your family. You may want to use one of these or even let them inspire you to write your own.



“God, there are days we do not feel grateful. When we are anxious or angry. When we feel alone. When we see and know injustice. When we do not understand what is happening in the world, or with our neighbors. We struggle to *feel* grateful.”

“But this Thanksgiving, we choose gratitude. We choose to accept life as a gift from you, from the unfolding work of all creation. We choose to be grateful for the earth from which our food comes; for the water that sustains us; and for the air we breathe.”

“We choose to see our ancestors, those who came before us, and their stories, as a continuing gift of wisdom for us today. We choose to see our families and friends with new eyes, appreciating them for who they are, thankful for our homes whether humble or grand. We will be grateful for our neighbors and strive to love them as we love ourselves. We choose to see the whole planet as our shared commons, the stage of the future of humankind and creation. God, this Thanksgiving, we do not give thanks. We choose it.”

“We will make thanks with courageous hearts. When we see your sacred generosity, we become aware that we live in an infinite circle of gratitude. We all are guests at a hospitable table around which gifts are passed and received. We will not let anything opposed to love take over this table. Instead, we choose to open our eyes to see grace and the gifts of life everywhere. In this choosing, we will share gratitude in the world. Thus, with you, and with all those gathered here, we pledge to make thanks.”

“We ask you to strengthen us in this resolve. Here, now, and into the future. Around this table. Around the table of our nation. Around the table of the earth. Amen.” – Diana Butler Bass

“Heavenly Father: we thank Thee for food and remember the hungry. We thank Thee for health and remember the sick. We thank Thee for friends and remember the friendless. We thank Thee for freedom and remember the enslaved. May these remembrances stir us to service that Thy gifts to us may be used for others. Amen.” - “Dear Abby” Columnist

*For flowers that bloom about our feet,
Father, we thank Thee.*

*For tender grass so fresh, so sweet,
Father, we thank Thee.*

*For the song of bird and hum of bee, for all things
fair we hear or see,*

Father in heaven, we thank Thee.

*For blue of stream and blue of sky,
Father, we thank Thee.*

*For pleasant shade of branches high,
Father, we thank Thee.*

*For fragrant air and cooling breeze,
for beauty of the blooming trees,
Father in heaven, we thank Thee.*

*For this new morning with its light,
Father, we thank Thee.*

*For rest and shelter of the night,
Father, we thank Thee.*

*For health and food, for love and friends,
for everything Thy goodness sends,
Father in heaven, we thank Thee.*

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

“Grateful for each hand we hold gathered round this table. From far and near we travel home, blessed that we are able. Grateful for this sheltered place with light in every window, saying welcome, welcome, share this feast come in away from sorrow. Father, mother, daughter, son, neighbor, friend and friendless; all together everyone in the gift of loving-kindness. Grateful for what's understood, and all that is forgiven; we try so hard to be good, to lead a life worth living. Father, mother, daughter, son, neighbor, friend, and friendless; all together everyone, let grateful days be endless. Grateful for each hand we hold gathered round this table.”

- Mary Chapin Carpenter - Thanksgiving Song Lyrics

Sunday Scriptures

Look for our November Scripture Puzzler. We used the New Revised Standard Version (updated edition) to create the crossword. Read the texts for the month of November and find the answers to the puzzler.

Nov. 5 – Matthew 23:1-12 – Be Humble (*This will be our annual All Saint's Day service.*)

Nov. 12 – Matthew 25:1-13 – Ten Bridesmaids!

Nov. 19 – Matthew 25:14-30 – Parable of the Talents

Nov. 26 – Matthew 25: 31-46 – Sheep & Goats

Did You Know?

Did you know our free standing bell tower holds eight bells originally from Plymouth United Church of Christ (UCC)? Plymouth UCC used to be located at the corner of Sheboygan and Marr Streets in Fond du Lac. Plymouth UCC merged with St. Mark's UCC in 1979 to create what we know of today as Pilgrim United Church of Christ. Our bells were originally installed in the west tower of the Plymouth building in December, 1927, the gift of Mary D. Whittelsey, in memory of her husband, John C. Whittelsey. A carillon is a set of bells in a tower, played using a keyboard or by an automatic mechanism similar to a piano roll. Our bells are now electric and the largest two bells of the set no longer function. While we used to play the bells at the beginning of worship services we now toll them at the beginning of funerals and the end of weddings, and to mark solemn occasions of remembrance such as 9-11. We anticipate a cost of \$2,500 to have them fixed and have added this item to a wish list.

THE BIG QUESTION: For those of us who have been attending services at Pilgrim for a minute: Do you miss the tolling of the bells at the beginning of worship?

CONTACT:

For questions about the youth group activates or the 2024 mission trip to Knoxville TN, please contact **Rachel Wicichowski** for more information at ra.burns@hotmail.com or 1-920-238-5919.

For questions about our Sunday school or Family Fun Nights, please contact **Karen Goodacre** for more information at karen.goodacre@pilgrimuccfdl.org or leave a message at PUCC at 1-920-921-0415.

For questions about confirmation, The Compass Family Devotional, or any other reason, please contact **Rev. Rob Van Ess** at rvaness.pilgrim@gmail.com or 1-920-273-9794.

YOUTH GROUP EVENTS

- Friday, November 17 – Sunday, November 19 – Knock-Knock Middle School Retreat at Daycholah Center.
- December 2023 – Make food to serve at the new Fond du Lac warming shelter. Time/date TBD.

YOUTH GROUP EVENTS FOR JANUARY - MAY WILL BE ANNOUNCED NEXT MONTH.

MISSION TRIP TO KNOXVILLE, TN - JULY 7-13, 2024

Steven and Rachel Wicichowski, and Deb Wamser are chaperones. All youth 6th grade and older eligible to attend this life-changing spiritual journey. We are signing up youth now.

FAMILY FUN NIGHT ACTIVITES - 6:00PM-7:30PM

- Friday, November 17 – Chili Cook-Off and Game Night – Nikki Lipke: Defending Champion
- Friday, December 15 – Intergenerational Christmas Caroling – Jingle BINGO with cookies and hot cocoa



2023-2024 YOUTH MINISTRIES AT PILGRIM UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

SUNDAY SCHOOL – We have a wonderful program for children offered after worship on Sunday mornings! Each class focuses on a Bible story, a lesson, or a way of living faith. We use art, music, prayer, and group activities to share stories that connect us with our God and our understanding of community.

CONFIRMATION – A small group that meets for approximately nine months of confirmation preparation during which young people participate in church activities and reflect on questions of faith and life, both alone and together with their peers.

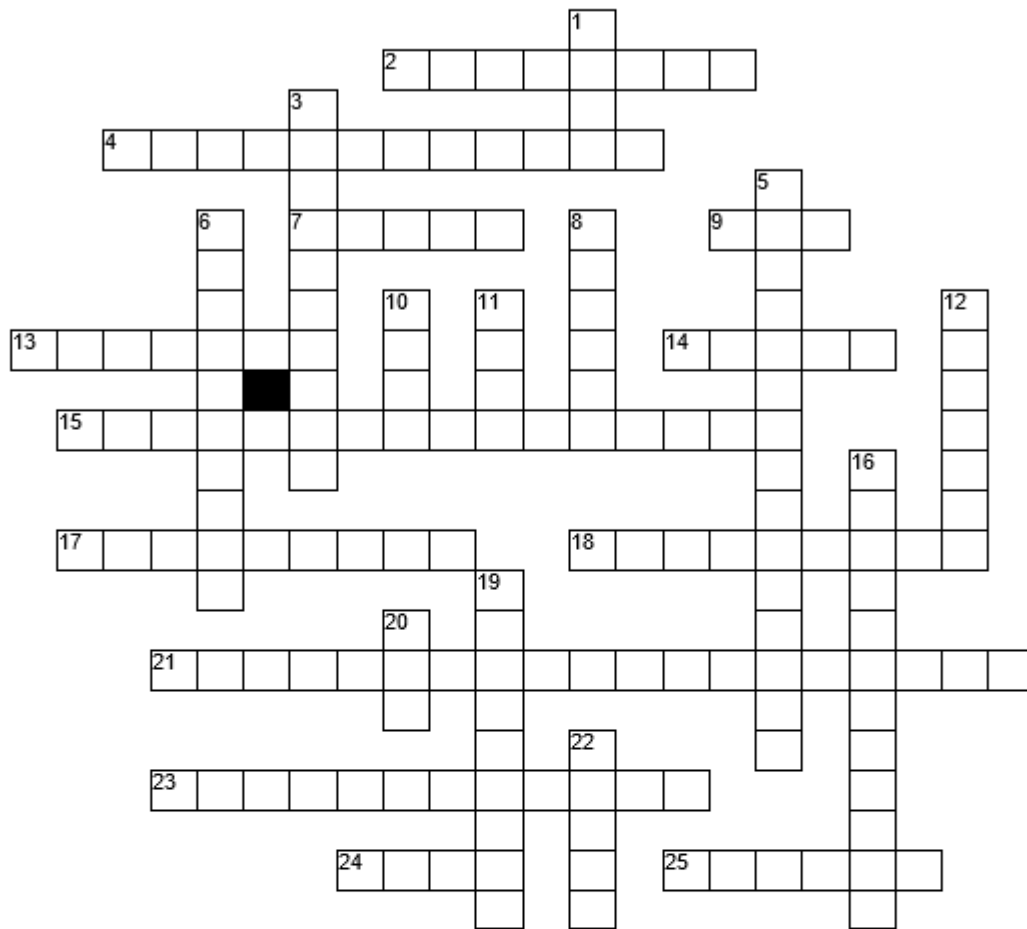
MISSION TRIPS – Our mission trips provide opportunities for students to explore their faith, experience God, and extend service to others. This is a transformational experience by which our youth get to know themselves by getting out of their comfort zones while being the hands and feet of Jesus. Last year we went to Cleveland, OH and next year the youth will choose between Knoxville, TN or Kansas City, MO.

FAMILY FUN NIGHTS – Intergenerational activities for the entire family. The entire church family is invited to come together for card or board games, a chili cook off, movie night, Christmas caroling, etc. Time to relax as a family and get to know each other better.

YOUTH GROUP – Our youth gatherings are designed as a "respite" from a socially pressured world for teens, and an opportunity to participate in the justice and fellowship ministries of the church. We strive to help our youth experience Pilgrim United Church of Christ as a supportive, trust-worthy, and loving community – a place that is safe and enjoyable to explore and respond to the spiritual side of being human, by building relationships and creating community.

THE COMPASS – A monthly family devotional to grow your faith and draw you closer to God. Each devotional has a theme and activity for the family to come together while learning more about our faith.

November Scripture Puzzler



Across

2. What time does the bridegroom arrive?
4. A small leather box containing Hebrew texts on vellum, worn by Jewish men at morning prayer as a reminder to keep the law.
7. How many bells are in our bell tower?
9. "When the foolish took their lamps, they took no _____ with them..."
13. "... for you have one instructor, the _____.
14. The Son of Man will sit on the throne of his _____.
15. Where does the one who received one talent hide his master's money?
17. "_____, therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour."
18. "... he will put the sheep at his _____..."
21. Who does Jesus denounce in Matt. 23?
23. "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the _____ brothers and sisters of mine, you did it to me."
24. "I was hungry and you gave me _____."
25. A unit of currency in the Bible.

Down

1. How many bridesmaids were foolish?
3. What are we going to make out of our gratitude at church this month?
5. "Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you _____"
6. What did the young women take with them to meet the bridegroom?
8. "... for you have one _____, the one in heaven."
10. he will put the goats oh his _____."
11. How many bridesmaids went with the bridegroom to the banquet?
12. All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be _____.
16. A public acknowledgment or celebration of divine goodness.
19. An attitude of _____.
20. How many bridesmaids?
22. "... but do not do, for they do not practice what they _____."