

Giving Thanks for you!  
July 3, 2020

As we enter into 4<sup>th</sup> of July Weekend, I thought I'd share some thoughts with you. I've been thinking a lot about gratitude over the last two weeks. Obviously, this weekend we celebrate with enormous gratitude all of those who won our nation's independence and have kept it free. So many have given their all for us. We're grateful.

As a nation we are going through a time of trial and tribulation. We have survived many difficulties before and we will again. We are grateful for all we have been blessed with in this country and endeavor to live up to the promises of equality and freedom for all. I'm grateful.

Last week was my birthday. I was a bit down because I knew we couldn't go out to dinner, probably would not see our son, or be able to be with friends. When the day came, I received a few phone calls from family but I was teaching all day for a ULS class on Zoom, so it wasn't a lot of fun as far as birthday plans go.

But about 4:30 my son started knocking on my office window at the church. Cindy had secretly gone to pick him up and he wore a mask and social distanced, but we had a great dinner together on the porch. I was crying it felt so good to see him. About 7pm, Shelby asked for me to go outside to check out some plants. About that time a huge caravan of church folks drove by, honking, and saying "Happy Birthday" out their windows. I was totally surprised and touched. Then I got a stack of dozens of cards, gifts, and fun notes. To say I was moved to tears is not enough. I'm grateful to each and every one of you.

I have to thank Jennifer Suit, Dana Harrison, and Betsy Maier for helping Cindy pull off the surprise. I also want to thank all of you for your love and kindness. It was amazing. I'm grateful.

Over the past few months I have felt your gratitude, love, and support so many times. When I was uncertain or feeling overwhelmed, I often received a message, a text, or a phone call from one of you telling me how worship is feeding your family or something else that gave you joy and hope. I am incredibly thankful for you. When I hear you talk about your families and your faith, I am moved. The ways you love GDC are powerful. I'm grateful.

Worship is the primary way many of you have stayed connected to Gloria Dei during this trying time. When our worship team gathers on Sunday mornings, we think about you and visualize you and your families as we sing, pray, read, and preach. Your thoughtful prayers, your amazing financial support, and your deep love of your community and our church is evident. I'm grateful.

All of that is what got me thinking about gratitude. It's often the little things that we take for granted. When we lose them for any reason, they take on new meaning. When we cannot see our friends, family, or faith community, they take on new meaning. Connections are so important. And through all of this, we've tried to stay connected. I'm grateful. And share this prayer of gratitude borrowed from a friend.

### **A Prayer for Gratitude**

*Dear God,*

*Thank you for your amazing power and work in our lives, thank you for your goodness and for your blessings over us. Thank you that you are able to bring hope through even the toughest of times, strengthening us for your purposes. Thank you for your great love and care. Thank you for your mercy and grace. Thank you that you are always with us and will never leave us. Thank you for your incredible sacrifice so that we might have freedom and life.*

*Forgive us for when we don't thank you enough, for who you are, for all that you do, for all that you've given. Help us to set our eyes and our hearts on you afresh. Renew our spirits, fill us with your peace and joy. We love you and we need you, this day and every day. We give you praise and thanks, for You alone are worthy! Amen.*

For all of you – I'm grateful.

Take care of yourselves and each other. Hope to worship with you on Sunday, which is communion Sunday. Please have your elements ready. Love you all.

Grace and Peace –

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