



November is a time of thanksgiving and this year I have much to be thankful for. Both of my daughters have begun new lives with all the potential and pitfalls of starting out especially in this economy. The death of my wife and mother helped me afford to give them the best start I could which would not have been possible but for the generosity of the United Methodist clergy death benefits and wise investing by my mother. All that plus generous scholarships helped them start a new life debt free and me back to where I started. That is a lot to be thankful for. God provides!

I am also thankful for the opportunity to serve in Sonora. Through years of ministry, I have found that a rule of thumb is that it takes seven years to adjust to major life changes like marriage or becoming a widower. The first three and half years are spent grieving the loss of what was and the second three and half is spent figuring out what could be. In January, my seven years is over, and Sonora has provided the space and grace to be ready for that next phase of life. This space was needed because it really is a very new phase of life.

I met Leighanne my freshman year of college, so I went from being a dutiful Eagle Scout son to a faithful boyfriend and then husband for thirty-five years. When Leighanne died, I was suddenly a single dad with two teenage daughters who left home for college in 2021 and 2022. When I moved to Sonora, it was the first time in my life I had been by myself. Now that the girls are starting their lives, I am truly alone with no one. My brief adventure in dating ended in January so I am truly alone and it is okay. Sonora allowed me to discover the peace and joy of solitude without loneliness. That is truly a blessing. I give thanks for this community and my time here. Sonora was and is a means of God's grace in my life. Having lived in various small communities, it is difficult to describe what a special community this is. Sure, it has the same problems as most rural towns but y'all deal with them constructively as a community and come together when it matters most. And that is another reason to give thanks.

David encourages us in Psalm 100 to "Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him; bless His name". While this is often viewed as referring to song sung by pilgrims when they came to the Temple in Jerusalem during the holidays, I believe it is so much more. If the temple dwells within each of us as Paul writes because of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, then "His gates" is the gateway of our soul. To enter into that communion with God through prayer, we enter with thanksgiving and praise. Thanksgiving opens us up to the presence of God in our lives. Every day in this world, we experience the pains and trials of life which we bring to God. These burdens can overwhelm us and bury us in stress, sadness, and loneliness even among friends. But Jesus says to come and lay those burdens down and find joy in thanksgiving. Just as the world is trying to bury us with burdens, God's blessings are lifting us up to new life and joy. When we release the burdens and instead embrace the blessings, we find thanksgiving and praise. That is what it means to enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise.



Finding a reason to give thanks should not be a burden. In fact, I would argue that most people have a reason to give thanks for something in life, but that reason is often buried by worries and fears. When we give those worries and fears over to God, we find reasons to give thanks like shells being uncovered by the receding tide. They were always there but the sands of the world covered them up. When God's blessings wash over us, those reasons for thanksgiving shine forth. It is just a matter of slowing down and letting go. It may take time like my years here in Sonora, but new and abundant life will come even after the floods and fires of life.

As you approach this Thanksgiving, let go of the trying to recreate the perfect memory of past Thanksgiving's and simply embrace the blessings of today. When you let go of the plans and the expectations you just might find that this becomes one of those perfect memories of Thanksgiving.

Have a blessed and happy Thanksgiving!

Pastor Mark

November Birthdays

11/3 Larry Chalk

11/3 Laura Chalk

11/4 Ben Pool

11/6 Madalyn Fisher

11/12 Silas Araujo

11/13 Erica Berry

11/17 Jimmy Holman

11/24 Emory Jones



Methodist Day School

Fall is in the air and MDS is full of fall activities. We had our local VFD bring out a fire truck and teach us all about fire safety. They showed us all the equipment they use for fighting fires and taught us to call 911, keep doors closed and stay low in case of a fire. As always, they did a great job and we appreciate them so much. Next up was the Pumpkin Patch which is always a treat with lots of fun and games. We will finish off the month with Red Ribbon Week and Halloween Parties. Busy, busy but so much fun and learning!



***“Serve the Lord with gladness; come into his presence with singing”
Psalm 100:2***

LOOKING FORWARD TO NOVEMBER

SUN	MON	TUES	WEDS	THURS	FRI	SAT
1. Open Door @ 9:45AM Worship @ 11AM	2. No MDS & SISD UMW @ 5PM	3. Elementary Picture Retakes & Class Pics	4. MDS Bible Study @ 5PM Team Jesus @ Episcopal - High School Only	5. SMS Football @ Forsan SHS JV Football @ Sonora	6. SISD 3PM Dismissal SHS Football @ Forsan SHS XC @ State Round Rock	7. SHS Girls Bball @ Sonora
8. One Board Mtg @ 9:30AM Worship @ 11AM Youth Group @ Episcopal Church	9. MDS SMS Bball @ Sonora SHS Band @ Alamodome	10. SHS Girls Bball @ Iraan	11. MDS Bible Study @ 5PM Team Jesus @ Episcopal - High School Only	12. Ladies Night Out	13. SHS Girls Bball @ Sonora SISD 3PM Dismissal	14.
15 Open Door @ 9:45AM Worship @ 11AM Church Luncheon Youth Group @ Episcopal Church	16. MDS - Thanksgiving Feast SMS Bball @ Sonora	17.	18. MDS Bible Study @ 5PM Team Jesus @ Episcopal - High School Only Last Awana & Youth @ FBC	19. SHS Girls Bball @ Ozone Tournament	20. SHS Girls Bball @ Ozone Tournament SHS Boys Bball @ Ozone SISD 3PM Dismissal	21. More the Merrier
22 Open Door @ 9:45AM Worship @ 11AM Youth Group @ Episcopal Church	23 No SISD & MDS Thanksgiving Break SHS Boys Bball @ Grape Creek	24 No SISD SHS Girls & Boys Bball @ Sonora SHS Boys Bball @ Sonora	25 No MDS & SISD Church Office Closed	26 No SISD Church Office Closed	27 No SISD Church Office Closed	28
29 Open Door @ 9:45 AM Worship @ 11AM	30 MDS & SISD Resume SMS Bball @ Christoval					

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SUNDAY SCHEDULE

OPEN DOOR SUNDAY SCHOOL	9:45AM
WORSHIP SERVICE	11:00 AM

*WEEKLY WORSHIP SERVICE IS BROADCAST AT 11:00 A.M.

FUMC SONORA STAFF

REV. MARK BRECHIN— PASTOR
VIRGIL BURGE— ONE BOARD CHAIR
PATTI BARKER— MDS DIRECTOR
DARRELL BARKER— CUSTODIAN
KENDRA VYVLECKA—
FINANCE SECRETARY AND
COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR