

Greetings to the Avoca Methodist Church Family:

November 2024

We have a choice! We are entering the last two months of the year, and we can decide how we experience them. Thanksgiving and Christmas offer us a lot to choose from—maybe too much to choose from! There is plenty of potential for stressful travel, huge banquets to prepare, too many gifts to purchase—with not enough time or money. There is also potential for peaceful time spent with family and friends, gatherings that are remembered for the time together—rather than the menu.

Holiday traditions are beautiful. I have some Christmas ornaments that have been in my family longer than I have. There are certain Thanksgiving foods that just seem “right.” I love to give someone a gift they’ll love but would never buy for themselves. Each possibility becomes an opportunity for either joy or stress.

I think back to what we learned about the first Thanksgiving, temporarily ignoring the rewriting of history that is taking place today. It was a simple, thankful gathering. Joyful for survival and cooperation, people celebrated together. Why has it become such a stressful holiday? We think we have to make everything “just right.” The day will never be perfect, but isn’t it really about giving thanks to God, from whom all good gifts come? Do we really think we’re so important that we can ruin the day just because the relish tray is still in the refrigerator when we start to put away the leftovers? We need to remember that it’s the attitude that makes the day. Are we thankful? If so, we have done well.

I’m reminded of a little book my sister-in-law gave me several years ago, “Don’t Sweat the Small Stuff” and its subtitle “It’s All Small Stuff!” Oh, if only we could remember that!

We will celebrate Christmas before the next newsletter comes out, and I think that the same attitude can make for a much more pleasant celebration of Jesus’ earthly birth. The first Christmas was certainly a simple affair. Unable to find a guest room, Mary and Joseph settled into an animal stall for the birth of the most important person in all of history. Away from the noise and commotion of the descendants of King David, who were all crammed into little Bethlehem for the census, a child was born who changed the course of history. That tiny, beautiful baby was destined to change the lives of everyone who came after him. Some would harden their hearts and deny that he is the Christ. Some would have their lives lifted, lightened, forgiven, and freed for eternal life with God. That tiny, dependent, crying infant changed my life, and I hope He has changed yours, too.

Not because of a gift under a tree, a meal with family, or the beautiful decorations. Don’t get so caught up in the details that you lose the meaning. Don’t forget that LOVE came down at Christmas. Don’t forget that God sent YOU the very best. Don’t forget that your faith can heal everything wrong in your life, and forgive every sin. And don’t forget to **Bee A Disciple!**

Have a blessed Thanksgiving, and a Merry Christmas!

Pastor Barre

