Noisy Gratitude…

The writer Gertrude Stein once said, “Silent gratitude isn’t much use to anyone.” That is why saying “Thank you” when someone has done something for us is so important. Our gratitude can be for really big and important things that happen in our lives or it can be for something simple like having a door opened for us when our arms are burdened down.

We tend to think more about gratitude in November because of Thanksgiving. The question is for us if we really feel gratitude for all we have or if it is merely something obligatory, something we are supposed to feel. Unfortunately, in spite of Norman Rockwell’s famous painting of prayer before the Thanksgiving meal, many people supply sit down to eat, watch a game, and push the children out of the way rather than giving thanks verbally—usually called grace.

Grace, or giving thanks, before meals, is rarely practiced in our Anglo culture these days. In previous times, it was. In some of the immigrant communities I work with, people give thanks before every meal, whether it be breakfast, lunch, or supper. This noisy form of gratitude is important because it includes others present at the meal as part of the statement of gratitude.

Saying “thank you” is just one way of expressing gratitude. There are many ways to express our gratitude in less noisy ways. Although we may not think of it as gratitude, volunteering is a form of gratitude. Volunteering for organizations such as the Monmouth County Animal Shelter, or St Marks’ Kitchen shows our gratitude for God’s creatures and our bounty.

This past week was the seventh anniversary of Hurricane Sandy, or as it was called by almost all insurance companies, “Superstorm Sandy.” Flooding along the coast was severe; inland damage included trees and electrical poles. Old First suffered some damage but not as bad as the hurricanes of the 1880s which brought down the tall steeple which had previously graced the church. The flat, squat one was constructed so that it would survive a strong hurricane.

Fortunately we now have weather forecasts that can predict the storms so we can batten down the hatches, so to speak, and properly prepare for them, something that did not exist when that old steeple ended up on King’s Highway. We don’t think much about the importance of our modern conveniences, such as electricity, clean water, or even paved roads except when they are not present. It may sound strange, but we should say “Thank you” for them as a way of showing gratitude.

We also show gratitude in other ways. Within the week we will all be asked to make a pledge to Old First for the year 2020. Old First is at a crossroads. Through death and the relocation of previous members, our numbers have dwindled, but we still are called as a community of faith to bear witness to the Gospel, not an easy task with small numbers. Most of the funds from our pledge goes to the maintenance of the building, to be sure, but our building is also a form of gratitude—gratitude for the more than 332 years this church community has worked for the betterment of the community and the world. Through your pledge you will be saying “Thank you” for the many gifts this church has given in the past and will continue to give in the future.

—Rev. Joyce
Missions

The Deacons sent $250 to the Calico Cat Back-to-School Mission!

Social Media

**Website:** Please check out our website: [www.oldfirstchurchnj.org](http://www.oldfirstchurchnj.org). Here you have links to the prayer and thoughts for the week, prayers for our denominational missionaries across the globe, Pastor Joyce’s sermons, and the calendar. There is also a **DONATE button** to make your pledge or other donation with your credit card or bank transfer.

**How to set up your account via the DONATE button on the website.** Click on DONATE, then “sign up”; new page opens where you add your contact information; proceed to the next page to enter your credit card or bank account and routing numbers. Then enter donation amount and SELECT FUND (general fund or One Great Hour of Sharing).

Barbara Withers
Church Clerk

Calendar:

*The schedule is subject to change. For the most up-to-date information please view the OFC calendar online: [oldfirstchurchnj.org](http://oldfirstchurchnj.org)*

For information on office hours check twitter: [twitter.com/old1stchurchnj](http://twitter.com/old1stchurchnj)

**Sunday, Nov. 10:**

- **12:00 PM:** Deacons Meeting
- **2:00 PM to 4:00 PM:** Dealing with the holidays when you are grieving loss

**Sunday, Nov. 17:**

- **11:30 AM to 1:30 PM**—Pancake Brunch – Cost $10, to benefit missions at Old First Church
- **12:00 PM:** Trustees Meeting
- **2:00 PM to 3:30 PM:** Riotous Readers book club meets to discuss *The No. 1 Ladies’ Detective Agency* by Alexander McCall Smith

**Sunday, Nov. 24, 12:00 PM:** Church Council

**Sunday, Dec. 1:** Hanging of the Greens
Please remember these people in your prayers:

† Margaret Ann & Bobby B.
† Gretchen & Jim H.
† Jean H.
† Ruth J. & Family
† Sandy K.
† Elaine L.

If you would like someone added to the Spirit Soundings prayer list, send an email to ofc@oldfirstchurchnj.org with “DEC Prayer List 19” in the subject line.

Reminder from the Deacons: We are planning our calendar three months in advance. If there is something special you think the deacons should include, please contact Pastor Joyce or a Deacon. (Deacons are listed on the hallway bulletin board.)

AAUW Bookstore: Open Saturdays from 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM September through June. Call 732-275-2237 or visit their website http://www.aauw-nj-nmcb.org/Booksale.html for additional information.

Shop at smile.amazon.com/ch/22-2974220 and AmazonSmile donates to Old First Church.

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