

the Informer newsletter



MONTHLY NEWSLETTER | PARAGON CHRISTIAN ALLIANCE INT'L (PCAI)
NOVEMBER 2020 – VOLUME 11

WHERE DOES YOUR THANKSGIVING COME FROM?

By Dr. Jan Harbuck / PCAI Vice President



"In 1636, amid the darkness of the Thirty Years' War, a German pastor, Martin Rinkart, is said to have buried five thousand of his parishioners in one year, an average of fifteen a day. His parish was ravaged by war, death, and economic disaster. In the heart of that darkness, with the cries of fear outside his window, he sat down and wrote this table grace for his children: 'Now we all thank our God with heart and hands and voices; What wondrous things He has done, in Him His world rejoices. Who, from our mother's arms, has led us on our way, with countless gifts of love and still is ours today.'" Here was a man who knew thanksgiving comes from love of God, not from outward circumstances.

First, our thanks should come from knowing the time of His second coming is drawing near. That is a promise we can know is true. When Jesus said He was going to prepare a place for us and that He would come back to get us so we could be with Him, I'm pretty sure He meant it.

Secondly, our thanks should come from knowing He answers prayer. That is a promise from His Word, but like so many of His promises it has certain conditions that have to be met. Those conditions are always on us – things we must do or believe or trust God for in order to see our prayers answered.

Thirdly, our thanks should come from knowing God has given us His peace; the peace of mind for eternal life and the peace to believe His revealed Word for the here and now.

If you look in Webster's Dictionary the word "give" means, "to offer as a present; to hand over; to put in someone's hands." "Thanks" means, "gratitude, or is an expression of gratitude." So "give thanks" means to offer gratitude.

I looked in Strong's concordance at the phrase "give thanks" and the word "thanksgiving." They occur a total of forty-six times in the Old Testament and fifteen times in the New Testament. In the OT it means, "to hold out the hands or to worship with hands extended." In the NT it has more of the English meaning. It means, "to be grateful or to express gratitude – to God"

So when we celebrate "Thanksgiving Day" in this year of 2020, no matter what is going on around us personally or in this world, we can do so with a much bigger picture in mind. ♥♥♥

Happy
Thanksgiving



What Has Your Focus?

By Rev. Lynn Burling / Christian Faith Church Senior Pastor



If anyone experienced personal tribulation it was Paul. Because he would experience it Acts 9:16 ESV records, “For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.” How would you respond to Christ if you just had accepted Him, and He said to you what He told Paul? Many of us would say “let me think about it first!” Before I get too far along, please note the last six words of that verse “for the sake of my name.” So you want to be a Christian? So you want to be in the ministry? The Message Translation says, “And now I’m about to show him what he’s in for—the hard suffering that goes with this job.” In John 16:33 (same red letters as Acts 9:16) (AMP Trans) “In the world you have tribulation and trials and

distress and frustration; but be of good cheer....” This sort of helps explain what following Christ and being in ministry is all about and what it includes. Don’t misunderstand my point. For me personally I always see the glass as half full and in much of my life overrunning...but sooner or later truth be told, Jesus is right on.

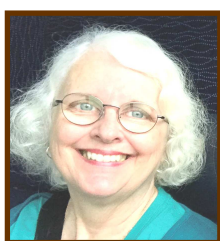
Again my point is “What Is Our Focus?” Let’s delve a little deeper into Paul’s life. Paul gets these tremendous revelations in Christ; way beyond what the original Apostles received and so...Jesus said, “So that you won’t be puffed up about this incredible spiritual knowledge and revelation, I’m giving you a thorn in the flesh.” (Hold on, it gets better.) You all know the story. He asked three times to have it removed but was told no, “My grace is sufficient for

thee.” Now this same Paul says in 2 Cor. 11:26 as he describes his eight perils: I was in Perils in waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, and in perils among false brethren. And if that’s not enough in vs. 27, “...in weariness and painfulness, in watching often, in hunger and thirst, in fasting often, in cold and nakedness” and then adds in vs. 28 besides that... Paul, includes “the-daily-care-of-the-church.” SELAH. (you get the picture?)

How many of us could remain focused on our calling and ministries? In the very next chapter following the “perils” (2 Cor. 12:9) “...Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest

upon me.” Without thorns, without tribulation there will NOT be this power Paul speaks of. So now, we come to his focus and ours...his words give it away. If it worked for Paul, it will accomplish the same in us. Listen to his words, while keeping in mind all of these tribulations. (Some say too much for any one person.) (2 Cor. 4:16 CJB) “This is why we do not lose courage. Though our outer self is heading for decay, our inner self is being renewed daily. (17) For our light and transient troubles (light afflictions) are achieving for us an everlasting glory whose weight is beyond description. (18) We (focus) concentrate not on what is seen but on what is not seen, since things seen are temporary, but things not seen are eternal.”

Continued on page 3



Signs and Seasons: Be Ready

By Rev. Susan Nickerson



In New England my family resided in a log home overlooking a natural pond. Surrounding this property were green bushes that were hardly noticeable most of the year since they blended in with the trees. However, a transformation would normally take place in the fall when the leaves turned red (Mat. 24:32). This anticipated sign would sometimes arrive earlier than expected (Mat. 24:43) posing a problem since we were not yet prepared for winter.

When the foliage appeared with its bright colors we were drawn toward it. In Jn. 12:32 Jesus said, “If I be lifted up from the

earth, I will draw all men unto me,” speaking of His impending death and His precious blood shed for the sins of mankind; a sign that would change the world! Likewise, the blood on the doors of the homes of Israel during the exodus from Egypt signified the saving of those inside. According to Ex. 12:13 “When I see the blood I will pass over you.” The Children of Israel in obedience to God, got ready to leave Egypt; and they did (Ex. 12).

Be prepared, therefore, and watch (Mat. 25:13) for we know not when the Lord will return. Warn those who do not know Christ, those who do not have salvation, explaining that seasons pass quickly (Jer. 8:20). ♥♥♥

Hebrews 4:12
“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”

Are Small Groups Held to Confidentiality

SOURCE: Church Law and Tax Magazine

We strive to maintain strict confidentiality within our small groups at church. Recently, though, a woman who was considering joining one of our groups told me that members of her previous church's small group got called into court to testify against her in a lawsuit based on information she had shared with her small group. Before joining us, she wanted to be assured that sort of thing would not happen again.

So my question is, how private are small groups really? We typically get information secondhand and are not usually witnesses to things that happen in people's homes or in their personal relationships. So can we—should we—be required to appear in court about things we might know about from small group sessions? Are we able to assure people that our groups are in fact safe for them? Is there any case history that addresses these issues?

The law recognizes that certain conversations should be—and should remain—confidential. For example, a private conversation between an individual and their attorney, minister or health care professional remains confidential under most circumstances, and a court may not require that the attorney, minister and/or health care professional tell about the conversation. In legal lingo, that is called a privileged conversation. A privileged conversation is one where only two people are present—the person seeking advice and the attorney, minister and/or health care provider. The presence of third party, such as a friend, will void the privilege.

Since the small group involves multiple individuals, the conversations that take place in small groups are not privileged conversations for legal purposes. Anyone present can be compelled by a court to tell what happened. There is nothing you can do to prevent this possibility.

This does not mean that one cannot create an agreement among the group members where the members agree to keep the conversation private except when compelled by a court order to share the conversation. In this case, the group members would have the right to sue if a member of the group shared the contents of the conversation with anyone outside the parties to the agreement.

What has Your Focus... from page 2

Even our beloved Peter began to share with us his focus as well as Paul. (I Peter 1:6&7 NIV) "...though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. (7) These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed."

Father, thank you for finding a man like Paul to show us how it's supposed to work. May the Lord Jesus encourage you in completing your callings and gifts, may you rise above and focus on the eternal "...in this life you shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer I have overcome the world." ♥♥♥

Holiday Recipes

Please share your own favorite holiday recipe!!!



Mississippi Sin Dip...

Ingredients:

- 24 oz cream cheese softened
- 1/2 cup mayonnaise
- 8 oz chopped green chiles
- 2 cups cheddar cheese
- 16 oz sour cream
- 12 oz deli honey ham, very finely chopped.

Instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 250
 2. Mix all ingredients together
 3. Bake for 30 minutes 'til hot and bubbly
 4. Serve with corn chips or any type of cracker you like.
- Serves 20+

Orange Crème Slice Cake

Ingredients:

- 1 cup butter (softened)
- 1/2 cup shortening
- 3 cups granulated sugar
- 6 Large eggs
- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- 1/2 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup milk
- 4 teaspoons orange zest (divided)
- 2 teaspoons lemon zest (divided)
- 1/4 cup fresh orange or lemon juice
- 2 cups powdered sugar (sifted)
- 4 tablespoons orange juice
- 1 teaspoon vanilla

Instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 325°. Cream butter and shortening together at medium speed with an electric mixer until creamy. Gradually add granulated sugar, beating at medium speed until light and fluffy. Add eggs, 1 at a time, beating just until blended after each addition.
2. Sift together flour, baking powder, and salt. Add to butter mixture alternately with milk, beginning and ending with flour mixture. Stir in 2 teaspoons orange zest, 1 teaspoon lemon zest, and 1/4 cup fresh orange or lemon juice. Pour batter into a greased and floured 10-inch (12-cup) Bundt pan.
3. Bake for 60 to 70 minutes or until a long wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean. Cool in pan on a wire rack 10 minutes; remove from pan to wire rack, and cool completely.
4. For the glaze, whisk together powdered sugar, 4 teaspoons orange juice, vanilla, and remaining 2 teaspoons orange zest and 1 teaspoon lemon zest until smooth. If necessary, add more orange juice, 1/4 teaspoon at a time, until the glaze is a pouring consistency. Spoon over cake. Garnish with orange slices and powdered sugar, if desired.

✓ Year-End Checklist for Ministry Bookkeepers

1. Housing Allowance. Church Boards and/or Congregations should designate an annual 2021 housing allowance for ministers who own or rent their home (and for ministers who live in a parsonage and pay some of their housing expenses).

2. W-4 forms. All employees should complete new W-4 forms to ensure accurate withholding.

3. Notice of donors. Donors should be advised in a church bulletin, newsletter, or by letter from the church, not to file their federal income tax return before they receive their Contributions Statement from the church. Some people may not be able to deduct certain contributions if they file a tax return before receiving their church contributions receipt.

4. Christmas gifts. Be sure to correctly handle Christmas gifts made by the church or congregation to a minister or staff member. In most cases, these gifts represent taxable income and must be reported as income on the recipient's W-2 or 1099.

5. Handling end of year contributions. The general rule is that a contribution is effective when delivered. This means that a check deposited in the church offering in January of 2021 becomes effective that day even if it is backdated to 2020. **It is not deductible for 2020.** One exception: **Checks postmarked in 2020 are deductible in 2020 — even though not received until 2021.**

6. Business Expenses. If your church reimburses some or all of a minister's business expenses, reimburse these year-end business expenses NOW.

7. Reclassification of workers. Now is the time to decide if you

want to reclassify any of your workers for tax reporting purposes. If you have a minister or lay worker who is treated as self-employed for federal income tax reporting purposes, and you would like to reclassify the person as an employee, the ideal time to make the change is on January 1st of the new year.

8. Voluntary withholding. Ministers' wages are exempt from tax withholding. This means they use the quarterly estimated tax procedure to prepay their federal taxes. Ministers who report their income taxes as employees can enter into a voluntary withholding arrangement with their employing church. Under such an arrangement, the employing church withholds income taxes as it would for any other employee; and it can also withhold an additional amount of income taxes to cover the ministers' self-employment tax liability.

9. Order tax publications and renew subscriptions. December is a good time to order your new 2021 copy of IRS Circular E (withholding table) and copies of Forms W-2, W-3, 1099, and 1096 that you will be issuing for compensation in year 2021. To order forms simply call the IRS toll-free number at – 1-800-TAX-FORM (1-800-829-3676) or visit the IRS website (www.IRS.gov).

10. NEED HELP? If you need assistance on good tax information for churches and ministers, please contact the PCAI office at 1-866-268-5600.

BLESSINGS!

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ANNOUNCEMENT

DID YOU KNOW???

Over the past years many have adopted the convenience of using PayPal to send their monthly offering. It gives the certainty your giving arrives each month in a timely fashion. We appreciate that thoughtfulness.

One thing you may not have considered is the loss to ministry funds that giving online creates. We get a lower percentage held out due to being tax exempt but over a month's time and many users it normally adds up to \$500-\$600 a month that PayPal keeps.

Please pray about adding a few dollars to your offering to help offset this loss. We understand everyone is hurting these days with the decline in our economy but we wanted you to be aware of this so that you might be able to help.



The INFORMER Newsletter is a free monthly publication of P.C.A.I. (Paragon Christian Alliance International) & PCAI Clergy Association

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