

Sunday Sidebar: November 18, 2018

A Time to Give Thanks

In September of 1620, a small ship called the Mayflower left Plymouth, England, carrying 102 passengers. After a difficult crossing that lasted sixty-six days, they dropped anchor near the tip of Cape Cod, much farther north of their intended destination at the mouth of the Hudson River. A month or so later, the Mayflower crossed Massachusetts Bay, where they Pilgrims began the work of establishing a village at Plymouth Rock.

During the first really brutal winter, most of the colonists stayed on the ship, where they suffered from scurvy, exposure, and outbreaks of disease. Only half of the ship's original crew and passengers lived to see their first spring in America. In March, the remaining settlers moved ashore where they received a visit from an Abenaki Indian who spoke to them in English! Several days later, he returned with another Native American, named Squanto, a member of the Pawtuxet tribe. Squanto had been kidnapped by an English sea captain and sold into slavery. He later escaped England and returned to his homeland. Squanto taught the Pilgrims, who had been weakened by malnutrition and illness, how to cultivate corn, extract sap from maple trees, catch fish in the rivers and how to avoid poisonous plants. He also helped the settlers form an alliance with the Wampanoag Indians, a local tribe. Their relationship would last more than 50 years and sadly, it remains one of the sole examples of harmony between European colonists and Native Americans.

Our current Thanksgiving holiday, commemorates a shared autumn harvest feast, between the Pilgrims and the Wampanoag Indians in 1621. According to attendee Edward Winslow, the 3 day feast was attended by 90 Native Americans and 53 Pilgrims.

For more than two centuries, days of thanksgiving continued to be celebrated by individual colonies and states. Then in 1863, in the midst of the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln proclaimed a national Thanksgiving Day to be held the last Thursday of each November. He entreated the nation to pray for those hurt by the war, and to ask God to heal the nation. (from www.history.com)

As we prepare for our own Thanksgiving celebrations this year, we have much for which to be thankful, and we, too, need to pray for the healing of our nation. Just a few of our 2018 blessings at New Bethel UMC include: a January wedding, new members joining throughout the year, including two folks joining today, several baptisms of little ones, taking elementary students to the Light Kid's Conference in March, The Passover Experience and a wonderful Easter, a couples' experience called Fight Night in April, hosting the Lahr-Well Leadership Initiative in May, Youth Mission trip in June, Explore St. Louis Day trip in July, Vacation Bible School, Adult Mission trip to Houston, TX in September, Trunk or Treat event with over 300 neighbors attending in October, and this month, we should be paying off our Church Mortgage!! And we could go on and on and on. So many blessings. What does your list look like this year?

Presidential Turkey Pardons

Ever wonder how this practice began? Well President Abraham Lincoln first spared a turkey in 1863, after his son begged him not to kill it. But for the next 100 years, presidents continued to happily enjoy eating the birds until - despite the myth that Truman began the tradition - John F. Kennedy spared a bird in 1963 just four days before he was assassinated. After that, turkeys were sporadically saved until the first President Bush made it official in 1989. It was President Reagan, however, who in 1987 first used the word "pardon," in a joke used to deflect a question about the Iran-Contra controversy. And Presidents have been pardoning turkeys, ever since.

Unfortunately, even with the presidential pass, the turkeys don't live too long afterwards, according to poultry professor Rami A. Dalloul, of Virginia Tech's "Gobbler's Rest," which is where the turkeys are sent after their pardons. While a wild turkey may live up to five years, these birds are usually less than six months old when pardoned and live only about another year, since they've been genetically selected to grow super fast and aren't meant for longevity. They are bred to be served with a side of cranberry sauce....just sayin'.