Dear Friends,

The Thanksgiving season is a time for both tradition and new experiences depending on your personal circumstances. There is a distinct possibility that you are planning a gathering of family or friends during the next several days. You may have also considered a number of phone calls that you would like to make to friends, family and even old neighbours, all of whom have provided you with extraordinary memories of the Thanksgiving season.

Some of the most important questions each of us can ask during this season is, What are my priorities for this Thanksgiving weekend? With whom do I want to spend time? How would I prefer to celebrate? Do my celebrations include worship, a meal, a conversation, a patio visit? Who are the top ten people I want to spend time with this weekend? All of these priorities are very important. But might I suggest that there is something more significant and even more meaningful than all of these?

What will you do for you this Thanksgiving weekend? Will it be a long walk or watching a favourite movie? Perhaps it’s looking through an old photo album. This is the time of year that we plan for the future but we also celebrate the past. It’s a chance to give thanks for all the blessings that you have received in previous years. This may include family, friends, neighbours and those in the broader community, all of whom have touched your life and brought you hope, love and joy. May I encourage you to carefully and cautiously plan your Thanksgiving weekend? Some say that success at anything is about patience, persistence and perseverance. May I add “a plan”.

Some of my favourite memories about Thanksgiving are associated with food. For years our family enjoyed a turkey, mashed potatoes, squash, boiled corn, gravy and far too many carbs. Sounds marvelous, doesn’t it? The only problem was that too many members of our extended family had three to five meals of turkey. Everywhere they went everyone was serving a big bird. I discovered many years later, that many of them prefer ham. Maybe your home could be the one that mixes it up a little. Try something new and different.

I’m aware that this may be a year that requires, “new and different”, but not just because of the food. Some of you will have an empty chair at your Thanksgiving table this year. Some of you will find it difficult to host an event. Some of you might even find it difficult to go anywhere outside your house. So may I offer this thought? If you are missing a loved one this Thanksgiving, try “new and different”. Your meal may be Chinese food and you may need a long walk in the forest by yourself. Please listen carefully to your soul and respond to the needs that it is whispering to your conscience.

Whatever your decision might be, let me encourage you to be intentional with a plan that suits your needs this Thanksgiving. It’s really OK to respond to a new situation with a new response.

One of the most helpful things we can do this time of year is sit down and make a list of all the things and people you are grateful for this year. Take the time to make a list of your favourite life experiences, your favourite homes over the years, your favourite communities you have lived in and of course a list of your favourite people, (those are the ones you want to phone or see this weekend) for sure. A list of all the good stuff in our lives, the favourite memory, the extraordinary people, indeed the people, places and experiences that have lifted us to great joy are helpful to have on hand when times are tough.

At this point in the letter you have probably begun to ask yourself the question, if this letter is from my pastor, shouldn’t he be saying something about God? Of course! I believe that each of us needs to be profoundly grateful for all the bounty and blessings that we have received during our lifetime. I believe that this is a time to be grateful to God for our lives and for all the opportunities that He has given us especially in the last few years. I believe that this is the time to give thanks to our Lord for the salvation provided through Jesus Christ and I believe that we owe God a great debt of gratitude for the gift of the Holy Spirit that sustains us every day. So this coming Thanksgiving day let me encourage you to send a few emails, write a few cards, type a few texts and make a few calls. Let me encourage you to sit quietly and listen to your favourite music and eat your favourite foods and enjoy your favourite people. All these things and people are God’s blessings in your life.

Above all, may I invite you to take a few moments in prayer to thank the God of creation for all your blessings, indeed to express your appreciation to Jesus Christ for the process of sanctification in your life. And of course to thank the Holy Spirit for those moments of extraordinary wisdom, insight, love, compassion and tenderness that are poured into us as gifts from God.

May I invite you to join us for worship this Thanksgiving weekend. We are hosting services at 8:15, 9:30 and 11:00 am. Call the office to reserve your seating. We also broadcast the service via Livestream and that address will be sent out to you later this week. May God bless you and those you love. Please be assured of my thoughts and prayers for you and your family as we celebrate God’s extraordinary creation and the abundant harvest that our farmers work so hard to ensure that we can enjoy.

Happy Thanksgiving

Yours in Christ

The Rev Dr Stephen Hendry

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