

## Gifts of Gratitude Terry Hanna

*“Gratitude can change common days into Thanksgivings.”* -William Arthur Ward

We are now entering the season of gift giving. On Black Friday, the day after Thanksgiving, the frenzy will begin. We will stand in front of the store doors in the wee hours of the morning waiting for them to open, and we will “shop til we drop,” trying to find the perfect gift for family and friends. Even before our Thanksgiving meal has settled and the leftovers are barely put away, we are thinking about our Christmas lists, who is naughty and nice, and planning our attack on the stores for the next day.

I hate to shop. It is sheer torture to try to figure out what to get family members that have everything they need. When my husband was managing large shopping malls, we made it a tradition to go out to dinner the night before Christmas Eve and do all our Santa shopping in one evening. The mall was open til midnight. The crowds were gone. We may have gotten the leftovers, but it was less stressful that way. Now that our children are adults, they get their own Christmas presents, wrap and put them under our tree, and tell us how much we owe them. But what fun is that?

As our tradition changed, my favorite party is not before Christmas but after Christmas. It is our book club re-gifting party. We take all the gifts we received that we do not need or want, wrap them over again, and re-gift them. We pull a number out of a hat, pick a gift, not knowing what lies behind the wrapping, and open it. Sometimes “one man's junk is another man's treasure.” However, a word of caution: be careful that you don't re-gift something someone in the group has given you. It could be embarrassing when a friend ask, “You did not like my gift?!”

Here is the point of my rambling: gift giving is about gratitude. It is about being thankful for friendship and family and community. The Presbyterian Church is thankful for you, our community. We are thankful for all the ways we have worked together for good. We are thankful for all the ways you helped and encouraged us when we were rebuilding our sanctuary. So, we are giving you a gift- a meal cooked by our favorite chief, Julia Hunt, and a special show and music with storyteller Donna Marie Todd. You can receive our gift on the first Sunday in Advent, December 3, a little after noon. We will have enough food for about a hundred people. There are no tickets to buy, no donations to give. It is our free gift to you. Just like the free gift that God gave to all of us when he sent his Son to live among us.

Please join us in sharing a meal, hearing a story and singing a song, as we start off the Christmas season together, remembering that our worship is a gift of gratitude that we give God for all the blessings God has given to us.

*“We always give thanks to God for all of you and mention you in our prayers constantly remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ....”* -First Thessalonians 1: 2, 3