

## FROM OUR PASTOR

### November 19, 2016

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Sabbath Greetings to everyone!

On October 3, 1863, with the nation embroiled in a bloody Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln issued a proclamation setting aside the last Thursday in November as a national day of thanks, setting the precedent for the modern holiday we celebrate today. Thanksgiving is largely commemorated today with gathering of families for a large meal, watching sports, followed by several days of shopping.

The history of our Day of Thanksgiving goes back to 1621, when the Plymouth colonists and Wampanoag Indians shared an autumn harvest feast. Some historians write that the native tribes had a tradition of a “green festival” at the end of the harvest season and simply invited the new Englishmen settlers to join with them. William Bradford, governor of the settlers, records that he invited the Wampanoag to join with them for three days of feasting and thankfulness.

One half of the Pilgrims who made the treacherous journey from England a year earlier had died from starvation and disease the previous winter, so the survivors were indeed thankful to be alive and to have a store of food for the coming cold months.

Years later, after the war with England was won and the US Constitution was agreed to, President George Washington, known as the father of our country, made the following proclamation. His words ring true today for all who will listen.

#### Thanksgiving Proclamation

Issued by President George Washington, at the request of Congress, on October 3, 1789

By the President of the United States of America, a Proclamation.

Whereas it is the duty of all nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, to obey His will, to be grateful for His benefits, and humbly to implore His protection and favor; and –Whereas both Houses of Congress have, by their joint committee, requested me “to recommend to the people of the United States a day of public thanksgiving and prayer, to be observed by

acknowledging with grateful hearts the many and signal favors of Almighty God, especially by affording them an opportunity peaceably to establish a form of government for their safety and happiness.'

Now, therefore, I do recommend and assign Thursday, the 26<sup>th</sup> day of November next, to be devoted by the people of the States to the service of that great and glorious Being who is the beneficent author of all the good that was, that is, or that will be; that we may then all unite in rendering unto Him our sincere and humble thanks for His kind care and protection of the people of this country previous to their becoming a nation; for the signal and manifold mercies and the favor, able interpositions of His providence in the course and conclusion of the late war; for the great degree of tranquility, union, and plenty which we have since enjoyed; for the peaceable and rational manner in which we have been enabled to establish constitutions of government for our safety and happiness, and particularly the national one now lately instituted; for the civil and religious liberty with which we are blessed, and the means we have of acquiring and diffusing useful knowledge; and, in general, for all the great and various favors which He has been pleased to confer upon us.

And also that we may then unite in most humbly offering our prayers and supplications to the great Lord and Ruler of Nations, and beseech Him to pardon our national and other transgressions; to enable us all, whether in public or private stations, to perform our several and relative duties properly and punctually; to render our National Government a blessing to all the people by constantly being a Government of wise, just, and constitutional laws discreetly and faithfully executed and obeyed; to protect and guide all sovereigns and nations (especially such as have shown kindness to us), and to bless them with good governments, peace, and concord; to promote the knowledge and practice of true religion and virtue, and the increase of science among them and us; and, generally, to grant unto all mankind such a degree of temporal prosperity as He alone knows to be best.

Given under my hand at the City of New York the third day of October in the year 1789.

*Rex Sexton  
Pastor, UCG Portland*