Dear Central Members and Global Friends,

As we approach Thanksgiving this year our hearts are flooded with all types of emotions that we could individually highlight and write about. By all standards this has been an unusual and challenging year for us all. Especially, the unexpected pandemic that has rearranged numerous aspects of all our lives this year!!

Despite the emotional turmoil this virus has taken on all of us, my heart is still filled with Thanksgiving. What does it mean to have a heart filled with Thanksgiving? A heart filled with Thanksgiving means to have a grateful heart even when it is difficult, and you might be experiencing an extremely challenging time period in your life. This requires intentionality on our part.

**“I give thanks to you, O Lord my God, with my whole heart, and I will glorify your name forever.”** *( Psalms 86:12) This verse is a constant reminder to us that giving thanks to God with our whole hearts and glorifying His name forever requires intentionality on our part regardless of the difficulties we might be experiencing at the moment.*

When things look especially dire, it’s tough to muster up a whole lot of gratitude. We sometimes need help turning our frowns into smiles. That help can come in a variety of forms as we are all aware of. It might come in a wonderful quote that we read, a virtual story from a friend, a movie, or a comment from a family member. This year has been challenging to put it mildly—-so it’s nice to be reminded that there is a God who loves us, walks with us, hears our prayers, and has saved us. That’s why the Bible is so important—- it’s a reminder and comfort to us in dark times. It can speak to us in these hard times with uplifting Bible verses regardless of what we might be experiencing.

I have been learning through the sermon series I have been teaching on for the last month titled “Matters of the Heart and Soul” how to give thanks to God with my whole heart and be grateful regardless of my emotional state.

I pray you also will experience this same joy of gratefulness as you celebrate this upcoming Thanksgiving holiday.

Remember giving thanks and being grateful is an intentional decision we all can make despite what we might be experiencing emotionally. Allow me to leave you with several key verses that I have learned to lean on during difficult seasons in my life. These verses help to give me stability and **allow “my heart to be filled with Thanksgiving.” I pray that they minister to you also:**

*Praise the Lord, Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; His love endures forever. (Psalms 106:1)*

*Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire. (Hebrews 12:28-29)*

*Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—-the fruit of lips that openly profess His name. (Hebrew 13:15)*

*I will praise God’s name in song and glorify Him with thanksgiving. (Psalm 69:30)*

*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. (Colossians 3:16)*

*Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise: Give thanks unto Him and bless His name. (Psalms 100:4)*

*Grace & Shalom!!!*

*Pastor Perry Stuckey*