

November, 2011

Dear Families of Gilead Bible Church,



On Thursday, November 24, our nation will celebrate Thanksgiving. The history of Thanksgiving begins with the Pilgrims who left Plymouth, England, on September 6, 1620. For over two months, the 102 passengers braved the harsh elements of a vast storm-tossed sea. Arriving in Massachusetts in late November, the Pilgrims sought a suitable landing place.

After a prayer service, the Pilgrims began building hasty shelters. However, unprepared for the starvation and sickness of a harsh New England winter, nearly half died before spring. Yet, persevering in prayer, and assisted by helpful Indians, they reaped a bountiful harvest the following summer.

The grateful Pilgrims then declared a three-day feast, starting on December 13, 1621, to thank God and to celebrate with their Indian friends. While this was not the first Thanksgiving in America, it was America's first Thanksgiving Festival.

Pilgrim Edward Winslow described the Pilgrims' Thanksgiving in these words:

"Our harvest being gotten in, our Governor sent four men on fowling [bird hunting] so that we might, after a special manner, rejoice together after we had gathered the fruit of our labors. They four in one day killed as much fowl as... served the company almost a week... Many of the Indians [came] amongst us and... their greatest King, Massasoit, with some ninety men, whom for three days we entertained and feasted; and they went out and killed five deer, which they brought... And although it be not always so plentiful as it was at this time with us, yet BY THE GOODNESS OF GOD WE ARE... FAR FROM WANT."

In 1789, following a proclamation issued by President George Washington, America celebrated its first Day of Thanksgiving to God under its new constitution. That same year, the Protestant Episcopal Church, of which President Washington was a member, announced that the first Thursday in November would become its regular day for giving thanks, "unless another day be appointed by the civil authorities."

Much of the credit for the adoption of a later annual national Thanksgiving Day may be attributed to Mrs. Sarah Joseph Hale. For thirty years, she promoted the idea of a national Thanksgiving Day, contacting President after President until President Abraham Lincoln responded in 1863 by setting aside the last Thursday of November as a national Day of Thanksgiving. Over the next seventy-five years, Presidents followed Lincoln's

precedent, annually declaring a national Thanksgiving Day. Then, in 1941, Congress permanently established the fourth Thursday of each November as a national holiday.

As Americans celebrate Thanksgiving each year, we hope they will retain the original gratefulness to God displayed by the Pilgrims and many other founding fathers, and remember that it is to those early and courageous Pilgrims that they owe not only the traditional Thanksgiving holiday but also the concepts of self-government, the "hard-work" ethic, self-reliant communities, and devout religious faith.¹

May we remember the words of *Psalms 100* during this Thanksgiving:

"Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth. Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations."

Have a Blessed Thanksgiving,

Pastor and Helen Moy

¹ excerpted from <http://www.christiananswers.net/q-wall/wal-g007.html>

二零一一年十一月

親愛的基列教會主內一家，

11月24日（星期四），全國將會慶祝感恩節。感恩節的歷史始源於1620年9月6日，來自英國的102名清教徒，經過兩個月時間，冒著被巨大的風暴拋出海的惡劣困境，在11月下旬遠涉重洋來到美國馬薩諸塞州尋求一個合適的著陸居處。



這些清教徒在祈禱儀式結束後，開始搭建他們簡陋的居所。可是他們沒有在這一嚴寒的冬季為飢餓和疾病做好準備，差不多近一半的人在春季之前死去，然而他們堅持祈禱，並得到當地原住民印第安人前來協助，接下來的夏天他們得著非常大的豐收。

在1621年12月13日開始，這羣懷著感謝的清教徒宣布為期三天的盛宴，為感謝上帝並與印第安人朋友一同慶祝。雖然這不是美國第一次感恩，卻是美國第一個感恩節。

清教徒 Edward Winslow 這樣描述當時清教徒的“感恩”：

“當我們得著收成，總督派出四個狩獵的人去捕鳥，我們一起享受我們勞力所得的成果，他們四個人一天捕獲了很多家禽，甚至可以供應整個星期.....許多印第安人來到我們中間.....他們最大的國王，Massasoit 和大約 90 名的男子，在這三天與我們一起歡宴，他們帶來了捕捉到的五頭鹿.....雖然我們並不常是這樣的豐盛，但靠著上帝的善良... 這是遠超我們的想求。”

1789年，在美國總統喬治華盛頓發布公告，根據新憲法之下慶祝感恩上帝節的第一天後的同年，基督教聖公會，亦是華盛頓總統所屬的教會，宣布在以後每年11月的第一個星期四為感恩天，或是除非由民政當局指定另一天。”

能夠通過在以後每年度有國家感恩節應該歸功於 Sarah Joseph Hale 太太在30年來努力提倡國家感恩節的想法，不斷聯絡每個在位的總統直至林肯總統在1863年回應撥出11月的最後一個星期四為全國感恩節慶。在接下來的七十五年，每位在任總統每年都宣布該日為一個國家的感恩節。然後直到在1941年，美國國會正式永久定立每年11月的第四個星期四作為一個全國性的節日。

當每年美國人慶祝感恩節，我們希望他們能夠仍然保留著那份當時清教徒和許多其他的開國元老對上帝的感恩，去記念這是那些早期的勇敢清教徒，不是因為這是個傳統的感恩節假期，而是他們自治的理念，“辛勤工作”的職業道德，自力更生的社區，和虔誠的宗教信仰。

在這個感恩節讓我們一起去思想詩篇 100 篇：

普天下當向耶和華歡呼！

你們當樂意事奉耶和華，當來向祂歌唱！

你們當曉得耶和華是神！我們是祂造的，也是屬祂的；我們是祂的民，也是祂草場的羊。

當稱謝進入祂的門；當讚美進入祂的院。當感謝祂，稱頌祂的名！

因為耶和華本為善。祂的慈愛存到永遠；祂的信實直到萬代。

願主祝福你們

梅牧師及師母