In 2017, on Celebrate the Gifts of Women Sunday, we are encouraged to live with an “attitude of gratitude.” Though Celebrate the Gifts of Women Sunday is March 5, 2017, your congregation or women’s groups may use this resource on any day that you choose.

Living life with an “attitude of gratitude” means showing appreciation, returning kindnesses, saying thank you and giving thanks with a grateful heart. Because of what God has first given us, we respond in gratitude.

When we are filled with gratitude, we acknowledge the goodness and the blessings in our lives. The source of that goodness is God. We give thanks to God, for God is good, for God’s steadfast love endures forever.

Growing in gratitude begins by being grateful to God for what God has done for us. It is recognizing where we used to be and where we are now and being thankful. The best way to be grateful is to literally thank God for our daily bread. Most of us are blessed to be able to eat everyday! “We thank God, that when we arose this morning, our bed was not a cooling board and our sheet was not a winding shroud. We thank God that we were clothed and in our right mind.”

The gift of living a life filled with gratitude is the recognition that everything in life—even the bad things—leads us to be thankful to God for the things that are just so good.
Being Grateful is a Lifestyle Choice

Research has shown that gratitude is strongly associated with greater happiness. In 2 Timothy, the apostle Paul expresses gratitude for the good gifts that God has given to him: “I am grateful to God—whom I worship with a clear conscience, as my ancestors did—when I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day. Recalling your tears, I long to see you so that I may be filled with joy. I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that lived first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, lives in you. For this reason I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you . . .” (1:3–5).

The writer reminds us to rekindle the gift of God within us, the gift of faithfulness that he says “lived first in your grandmother and your mother.” My paternal grandmother, Ivernia C. Hunter, and my mother, Annie Mary Alexander Hunter, instilled deep faith in their children and grandchildren. I carry their faithfulness, love and grace in my heart every day. I celebrate these dear women with deep affection and gratitude, particularly for their sacrifices for me and for their witness. We are reminded in the 2 Timothy passage to rekindle our faith, to nurture it, tend to it, activate it, ignite it and to be grateful!

Gratitude is a lifestyle choice: Because the earth belongs to God and all therein, I will share everything I have with God.

Gratitude is a response to being set free: One time I was enslaved. Because I have been given the gift of freedom, I can’t help but be thankful.

Gratitude is also a reason that we give: We respond to God’s saving grace by giving of our time, our talent and our labor.

We give to God, because, ultimately, everything belongs to God.

A Service in the Worship of God

Call to Worship

One: Grateful to God, we worship.
   We worship the God of Grace.

All: In God, we are ever thankful;
in God we will rejoice!

One: Look to God. Do not be afraid.

All: Lift up your voices. God is near. Lift up your voices.
   God is near.

One: Grateful to God, we worship.

All: We worship the gifts of God this day.

Suggested Hymns

“Give Thanks” (GtG 647)

“In the Lord I’ll Be Ever Thankful” (GtG 654)

“Why Should I Feel Discouraged” ("His Eye Is on the Sparrow") (GtG 661)

“For Everyone Born” (GtG 769)

Call to Confession

God calls us, feeds us and sends us forth. God provides for us and loves us still. Out of our profound gratitude, and in faithful witness to God’s grace, we confess our sins to God.

Prayer of Confession

O God, we confess that we have not always spoken up for justice. We have not stood with the oppressed. We have walked the other way, sometimes immobilized by fear and sometimes not knowing what else to do. Rekindle the gift of God within us and remind us of our faith, a faith that first lived in our grandmothers and our mothers, in our Sunday School teachers and our choir directors, in our elders and our
ministers. God of Grace, forgive us and transform us into whom you would have us to be, so that we delight in your will and walk in your way.

Assurance of Pardon
One: God acts with justice and mercy. In everlasting love, God redeems us and sets us free.
All: God forgives us, frees us and gives us peace. To God, we are ever thankful. Amen.

Scripture Readings
Psalm 107:1–9
Lamentations 3:19–26
2 Timothy 1:3–10
Matthew 6:25–33

A Litany for Women with Grateful Hearts
One: God of Grace, thank you for tranquil, reflective moments when we are able to recognize you in the world. For all your beauty and your wonder, we give you thanks.
All: For the breath in our bodies, for our hearts and souls, for our connections with one another, we give you thanks and praise.

One: God of Reconciliation, be present with us when conflicts arise. Remind us that we have a higher calling: to forgive those who wrong us, to pray for those who persecute us, and to seek peace in the midst of strife.
All: For women with grateful hearts, who have shared their faith with us and responded in kindness and service, we give you thanks and praise.

One: God of Love, we offer our gratitude to you for those women and men who have comforted us and carried us in their hearts in prayer. For the grace that they have given us day after day, thank you for guiding the way for lives filled with gratitude.
All: For women, young and old, who do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with you, O God, we give you thanks and praise.

One: Creator God, be present with us as we sing and serve, remember and celebrate, your daughters who, with your help, have lived lives of gratitude, reflecting your love and grace.
All: Give us your peace, which surpasses our understanding and watch over our hearts and our minds, as we rest in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Charge and Blessing
One: Go from here with grateful hearts.
All: Go with love and compassion.

One: Let your gentleness be known to everyone.
All: Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.

One: And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.
All: May the peace of God be with you always.
Program Suggestions and Activities

Gratitude Jar
1. At your church gathering, women’s group or community group, place a “gratitude jar” in the center of the table when you meet.

2. Distribute strips of paper that read “I am grateful for . . . ,” and ask each person to write down what they are grateful for.

3. Pass the jar around so everyone can put their gratitude notes in the jar.

4. Ask “What are you grateful for?” and “How did you experience this activity today?”

5. Suggest that participants create gratitude jars at home. Encourage them to stop and write something that they are grateful for when they see the jars.

6. Read a scripture of thanksgiving and praise together, such as Psalm 100. Conclude your devotion time by singing a hymn of praise, such as “Give Thanks.”

Gratitude Journal
Write down the gifts that you have received today. Even if you cannot journal every day, when you can, write in your journal the gifts of God for which you are grateful.

Gratitude Notes and Letters
In an era of electronic communication, it is unusual to receive a written thank-you note. Take time to write a letter or note of thanks, expressing your appreciation for a person’s impact on your life. Send it or deliver it in person, and express to the recipient how grateful you are for this person’s kindesses to you. And, once in a while, write one to yourself and mail it to your own address! It can be a great joy to receive a thank-you note from you to you!

Compose a Thank-you Note in Your Head
No time to buy note paper or stamps? No internet available to email a thank-you? Compose a thank-you note in your head. Think of someone who has blessed you in significant ways, stop where you are right now, and say thank you.

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Notes


Other Resources

Order additional copies of this resource through Presbyterian Distribution Service, 800/524-2612, or download from http://allwomen.pcusa.org.