



THE LUTHERAN CHURCH—MISSOURI SYNOD

# Minnesota South District

... cultivating leaders intentionally engaged in the mission of God

## November 28, 2019—Thanksgiving

Dear brothers in Christ,

Grace and peace to you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ!

This Thanksgiving you need to know how grateful I am for you. As I travel across the MN South District and engage with many of our pastors, I continue to rejoice and give thanks for the fine pastors that we have in our District. Thank you for your faithful service. Thank you for loving your people. Thank you for the countless sacrifices and the long hours you put in. You, dear brothers, are a blessing to many, especially to me! (For those who are married and have families, please also pass along my sincere thanks to your families for sharing so much of you and your time with the congregation you serve.)

I am a pastor at heart; I continue to miss the rhythm and routine of congregational life. So I often find myself longing for the daily routine and joys of my parish. This makes me all the more thankful to the Lord for the faith He's given you and your dedicated service in the name of Jesus. The souls for whom you care and the encouragement in the faith you bring your flock are doubly joyful for me to witness. Thank you deeply, brothers!

I know how difficult ministry can be, especially in these confused and tenuous times. So during this increased busy holiday season, I encourage you to find some intentional moments of prayer-filled thankfulness when you, too, can give thanks to the Lord for the faith of your people.

To spur you on to that end, consider how the Apostle Paul begins and then develops nearly every one of his epistles. His letters reflect his prayer life for God's people. I would contend they also serve as an invitation for us pastors to deepen our own prayer life. In fact, when it comes to giving thanks, Paul reminds us how thanksgiving for the gift of faith in our people is foundational for the life of faith. Consider these verses from his following letters:

*"First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world" (Rom. 1:8, ESV).*

*"I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus" (1 Cor. 1:4).*

*"For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers" (Eph 1:15-16).*

*"I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy" (Phil. 1:3-4).*

*“We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints” (Col. 1:3-4).*

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

Prayer is essential to the work of being a pastor. On our ordination day, we vow on solemn oath “in the presence of this congregation and before our Lord God to whom you must give an account now and at the Last Day” that we will “be in constant prayer for those under your pastoral care.”

One of my colleagues has written: “While prayer is some of the most important part of our work as pastors, it is also the easiest to neglect. People notice if we don’t prepare a sermon; they don’t notice when we miss our noon prayers.” (To that end, I [commend to you this link](#) to a fine article on the prayers of St. Paul from my DOXOLOGY colleague and Collegium Fellow, Rev. Bryan Wolfmueller.)

My dear brothers, my prayer life is filled with thanksgiving for you. I thank the Lord for the faith you believe, teach, and confess—and for your partnership in the Gospel. It is a joy to serve with you and for you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. You are a blessing to me!

Your pastor and your brother in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rev. Dr. Lucas V. Woodford". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rev. Dr. Lucas V. Woodford