

We see birds and flowers all the time but it is in noticing them or making the connection that God cares for the birds and flowers too that something more happens. Simone Weil, the French philosopher and Christian mystic said, **“Attention is the rarest and purest form of generosity. Absolute unmixed attention is prayer.”** Paying attention to the world around us is at the heart of gratitude. In noticing the beauty of nature and watching and observing it we are over powered by the gift. In noticing a child’s laughter and letting it ring in our ears and in our heart we are moved to gratitude. And when we hold things in our attention it is prayer. Often when praying we think we need to, or it’s that we want to, direct God, by telling God what we need and that is one way to pray, perhaps the most common way, but like the reading says, “God knows what we need.” Paying attention to someone or a situation or a thing is prayer. And that act of prayer or paying attention is an act of generosity.

Facebook did research on what people were saying they are thankful for in their posts. The ten most common things people say they are grateful for are: friends, family, health, friends and family, job, husbands (it turns out women are much more likely to post on Facebook about thankfulness, so husbands rose to the top but when the data is looked at by gender husbands/wives are equally grateful for each other), children, housing, life and music.

We are going to take sixty seconds to hold one of these things in our minds, to pay attention to it. We don’t need to direct God—God knows—we are lifting it to God in an act of pure generosity. 60 seconds

Facebook also look at data about what people posted they are grateful for by state and they found what topics are most distinctive for each state. North Dakota=thunderstorms. Arizona=rain. MN=fall. Pensilvania=Country Music. There we some themes amongst the states and “nature” was one of them: rain, fall, rainbows, living near the beach. Let’s take another 60 seconds to lift to God nature. What is one thing about nature that you are particularly thankful for. Maybe it is sitting on the dock at sunset or hiking in the woods or the beauty of mountains. We don’t need to direct God—God knows—we are lifting it to God in an act of pure generosity. 60 seconds

Another theme among the states was technology: youtube or google were a couple. What is some technological advance that you are grateful for? Maybe it is hearing aids or indoor plumbing, heated seats in your car or improved forecasting of the weather or streaming music. What is some technology you are thankful for. We are going to take sixty seconds to hold this thing in our minds, to pay attention to it. We don’t need to direct God—God knows—we are lifting it to God in an act of pure generosity. 60 seconds

Quite a few states talked about faith and belief in God in their lists of things they were grateful for. What about faith and God and church are you thankful for? Is it something about the community, the hope it provides in difficult times, forgiveness when we mess up, the amazing over-the-top love of God. We are lifting it to God in an act of pure generosity. 60 seconds

Paying attention to the abundance in our lives is a powerful force for joy and when we are grateful we can't be fearful. The Bible says "fear not" well over 300 times and the way we move away from fear is gratitude—paying attention to the gifts in our lives. You don't need to worry. You are enough. God has created you and you are wonderfully made. Turn your eyes, notice, pay attention. God's blessings are all around us. And in giving thanks we are blessed again. A simple word of gratitude opens us up to the world of abundance, mercy and grace.

I am thankful. Thankful for Peace Lutheran Church and for the people that gather here in Jesus' name. I am thankful to be part of a community that cares for each other and prays for each other. I am thankful to be a part of a community that looks outward to the world where God is active and asks, "How is God calling us to make it better?" I am thankful to be a part of a community that seeks to do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with God. I am thankful for you. Amen and Happy Thanksgiving.  
anniversary