

November 2011
E-newsletter

GRATITUDE

The harvest is in, a celebration of God's abundance. Creation's smorgasbord groans under the weight of God's lavishness. Farmers' market yields bags heavy with squash, pumpkins, potatoes, onions and apples. No wonder the early settlers celebrated this abundance with thanksgiving.

But what does abundance have to do with families? Is this going to be a riff on consumerism or hyper-busyness? No, this is an opportunity to pause; look, really look at our lives; and say "thank you" to a God whose signature is abundance.

So often, adults and children alike recount a litany of scarcity – we want more possessions, different relationships, gifts that aren't ours, skills we haven't acquired, travel we haven't done, more money in the bank, a job or school that suits us better, recognition for who we are and what we have accomplished, and time. Oh, would we like more time! Looking a life through the lens of scarcity makes us dissatisfied and miserably unaware of all of the good things in our lives.

But, God has showered us with abundance. All we have to do is open our eyes, our minds and our hearts to it. Satisfaction, delight, and gratitude are ours, if only we pause in the headlong rush for "more", to celebrate "enough".

How might we begin?

- Instead of a wish list, create a family thankfulness list.
- Celebrate the differences within your family. Give each family member a meal when everyone else says a prayer of thanks for the unique gifts of that person, expressing gratitude for all that person means to them individually and to the family as a whole.
- Set aside some Christmas money to share with a person, organization, or cause about which your family is passionate.
- Plan to share the holidays with those who don't have others with whom to celebrate.
- Find warm winter clothes that your family can give to others who don't have adequate cold weather clothing.
- Walk or drive around your community, pointing out the gifts that recent immigrants bring to your community.
- Attend a cultural event of a culture that is new to you.
- Remember the elders in your family, congregation or community. Visit them and learn from their stories.

FAMILY ACTIVITIES:

1. Pick a variety of apples at an apple orchard. Do an "apple tasting", thanking God for this luscious abundance.

2. Bake two batches of cookies, asking, "Who would really appreciate a plate of homemade cookies?" As a family, deliver them to a new neighbor, a widower, a family with a new baby.
3. Do an afternoon family-rake-athon. Bring out a boom box and take turns listening to each person's favorite music. Celebrate with a pizza dinner.
4. As a family, cook a vat of soup or stew. Invite another family or two to join you for dinner, games and conversation. Light a candle before dinner, thanking God for the gift of friendship.
5. At Thanksgiving dinner, invite each person to name one thing for which they thank God.