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Thanksgiving, 2016

Dear Friends and Colleagues around the UCC in Iowa,

“The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases;
God’s mercies never come to an end;
They are new every morning;
Great is your faithfulness.
The Lord is my portion, says my soul,
Therefore, I will hope in him.”

Lamentations 3:22-24

I keep a small stuffed animal in front of my computer monitor on my desk. It’s Eeyore, the dour donkey from A. A. Milne’s “Hundred Acre Wood” – friend to Winnie-the-Pooh and the rest of the creatures who reside in that famous forest.

I don’t need Eeyore to remind me to be dour – that comes quite naturally, to be honest. Instead, Eeyore serves as a sort of mirror, reminding me that Eeyore really didn’t have it very bad, and neither do I!

I have much for which to be thankful, and you probably do, too! I am blessed with a loving family, meaningful work (albeit at times a bit too much of it!), interesting colleagues, plenty to eat, a warm and comfortable place to sleep.... the list could go on and on.

The Biblical story reminds us that the blessings of life are never distributed quite so equitably as they could be.... certainly not so equitably as God wishes they were. There is a conundrum here: I’m quite sure God intends for us to see God’s beneficence in that which is good. The blessings of life are not things intended to evoke guilt – they are generous gifts from God and should be savored and enjoyed. But the gifts of God are never intended to be hoarded and therein lies a basic human challenge – we are (almost all of us!) inclined a bit too much to hoarding and a bit too little to sharing.

As my staff and I work on your behalf among the 168 congregations of the UCC in Iowa we are not mostly about enforcing denominational rules and procedures – we are about the Gospel. My staff and I have a slogan – “Boldly following Jesus.” We work with clergy and with churches to the end that the Gospel witness of grace and inclusion, of challenge and forgiveness, of empathy and justice, of love and peace and hope might find ever widening circles of expression here in Iowa.

It is expensive to do this work and one more thing for which I am grateful – profoundly grateful! – is that the churches and people of the UCC in Iowa are so faithful is financial support of this work.

As you know, ours is a relatively small universe from which to seek support, but it is a good universe. YOU are part of that universe. Will you consider a gift – even a generous gift – in support of this work? I can assure you that my staff and I work very hard to see to it that your gifts are used carefully and faithfully to advance the values and message of Jesus. We are working hard to make the UCC here in Iowa ever more welcoming and inclusive.... ever more courageous in proclaiming God's very good (and sometimes challenging) word.

Please join us in this work with a gift at this Thanksgiving time.

God bless you!!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rich Pleva". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Rich Pleva
Conference Minister
The United Church of Christ in Iowa

You can make a gift by returning the enclosed card with your check or credit card information, or by going online to www.ucciaconf.org and clicking on the red "donate" button on the upper right hand corner of the home page.

Perhaps you'd appreciate the tax advantages of donating appreciated stock. Give me a call. We can help make that easy for you.

Thank you!

Rich Pleva, Conference Minister
Associate Conference Ministers:
Jonna Jensen
Brigit Stevens