

Greetings sisters and brothers in Christ, How many of you are enjoying fresh vegetables this time of year? Summer is one of my favorite seasons because it means an abundant harvest of vegetables like tomatoes, zucchini, cucumbers, cabbage, peppers, and kale. Even though my own tomato plants are struggling, the gifts of family and church friends have kept us well-supplied. So many of our gardens are sprouting with more vegetables than we know what to do with. One of my greatest passions is to try new recipes using as many freshly grown vegetables as I can. There's also something about the abundance of vegetables that sprout this time of year that reminds me of God's abundance. God's blessings and mercy for us and for the world is greater than we can possibly imagine. In recent weeks, God has continued to show me the sheer abundance we have in Jesus Christ. The abundance of God's love and care was particularly important for me to hear in times of deep uncertainty in our nation, our communities, and in our churches. Through this pandemic, Winfield United Methodist Church has seen committed disciples offer their abundance of gifts and talents for online and in-person worship services. Wednesday night Bible Study has begun outside in person, one of the church's LIFE discipleship groups is regularly gathering, and our youth group is meeting in person again. We are planning an outdoor fellowship activity and offering free ice cream to the children at Brittany Point Apartments. I have also had the blessing of resuming worship services at Bel-Air at Devonshire Assisted Living to residents who had not worshiped together since March. God has truly poured for an abundance of blessings and miracles in these difficult times. Jesus tells us in John 10:10 that, "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly." We live in a time when so many things we have taken for granted: Shaking hands, hugging, singing in worship, gathering with friends, etc, have been taken from us. In times like these, it is easy to get caught up in the things we lack. Yet when we focus on God's abundance, we can live with gratitude and joy for all that God has and continues to do for us. Karl Barth, one of the most prolific theologians of the 20th century, reminds us that gratitude is one of the greatest fruits of the Christian life. When we think of God's grace and love, the perfect human response is gratitude: "Grace and gratitude belong together like heaven and earth. Grace evokes gratitude like the voice an echo. Gratitude follows grace like thunder lightning." Living with gratitude for the abundance of God's blessings is the key to Christian joy. Pastor's Letter The following Prayer of Thanksgiving comes from the Episcopal Book of Common Prayer. It is a prayer that reminds us God's abundance and presses us to respond with gratitude and thanksgiving: Accept, O Lord, our thanks and praise for all that you have done for us. We thank you for the splendor of the whole creation, for the beauty of this world, for the wonder of life, and for the mystery of love. We thank you for the blessing of family and friends, and for the loving care which surrounds us on every side. We thank you for setting us at tasks which demand our best efforts, and for leading us to accomplishments which satisfy and delight us. We thank you also for those disappointments and failures that lead us to acknowledge our dependence on you alone. Above all, we thank you for your Son Jesus Christ; for the truth of his Word and the example of his life; for his steadfast obedience, by which he overcame temptation; for his dying, through which he overcame death; and for his rising to life again, in which we are raised to the life of your kingdom. Grant us the gift of your Spirit, that we may know Christ and make him known; and through him, at all times and in all places, may give thanks to you in all things. Amen. I encourage you to live with gratitude and to continually take stock of the joys and blessings God has given you. It is truly the key to a richer and fuller Christian life. If anyone is feeling isolated, lonely, or alone, I am happy to take the time to reach out to them. I have begun one-on-one visitations again, meeting outside and with a six feet distance. I am also happy to call or write a note of prayer and encouragement. You can reach me at (304)646-9597 and at christo.scott@gmail.com Grace and Peace, + Pastor Chris