

# Levenhagen

## λογοι

November 2020

## Thoughts from Aaron

### *Now Thank We All Our God*

Thanksgiving. If I'm honest, I have to work a little harder to cultivate a thankful attitude these days. We live in a time of physical and social isolation when families are kept apart, holiday traditions are set aside, and even on the best of days we see the world from behind a mask. And then we read the Apostle Paul's words to the Thessalonians: "Give thanks in all circumstances." All circumstances...even the circumstances we find ourselves in today?

When I was young, we always sang the old German hymn, *Now Thank We All Our God* at every Thanksgiving Eve worship service. But few of us know the circumstances in which it was written. The text was written by Martin Rinkhart, a Lutheran pastor in the town of Eilenburg, Germany. Eilenburg was repeatedly overrun by the warring armies during the Thirty Years' War, resulting in the town being overcrowded with refugees. To make matters worse, a plague broke out. Though Rinkhart could barely provide for his own family, he opened his home as a refuge for the victims. With the plague at its worst, Rinkhart was the only surviving pastor in Eilenburg. He conducted as many as 50 funerals a day, burying 4,480 victims in 1637 alone, among them his beloved wife. That same year he penned the words to a hymn he called, *Nun Danket alle Gott*:

*Oh, may this bounteous God through all our life be near us,  
With ever joyful hearts and blessed peace to cheer us,  
And keep us in His grace, and guide us when perplexed  
And free us from all harm in this world and the next*

*Ever joyful hearts and blessed peace.* From a worldly perspective, Rinkhart had every reason not to be thankful. His town was ravaged by war and an epidemic. His family had been devastated by the loss of his wife. But like the Apostle Paul, he maintained his confidence in the sure promises of God. Though nearly 400 years old, it is a hymn for our times as well. Now, in this moment, thank we all our God...in all circumstances, in every trial...because, as Rinkhart wrote, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, "has blessed us on our way with countless gifts of love and still is ours today." That is something to be thankful for!

**Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.**

(1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, ESV)



Above: Luther Tower, Concordia Seminary

## Prayer Requests

- **Prayer Answered!** We have a contingent offer from a buyer on our home in Indianapolis! If all goes well, we will close on the sale in December.
- For the faculty at the seminary as we transition to online classes for the next few months. Teaching remotely is a tremendous challenge and extra work for them.
- For continued health and that the COVID-19 pandemic would come to an end.

# Family Update

## *November Means Birthdays!*

Around our house, November is always a very busy time...but always with a lot of special memories. I thought we'd take this month to update you on the kids' activities.

Faith celebrated her 12<sup>th</sup> birthday on November 7<sup>th</sup> (bottom right with Eden, one of our cats). Faith is in the sixth grade at Wydown Middle School, although she has been in virtual (online) classes for the entire school year.

She loves anything to do with animals—especially our cats. When school isn't in session, you can find her playing with friends from the seminary families, building new Minecraft worlds on her iPad, or watching movies. While COVID prevents her from doing this, she loves theater and acting in musicals. She looks forward to the Seminary Youth Group every Thursday night. We can always count on her to bring a smile to our face on stressful days!

Nathan celebrated his 16<sup>th</sup> birthday on November 13 (bottom left) which means one thing: a driver's license! He is a sophomore at Clayton High School but, like Faith, he

has elected to attend virtual (online) classes for the first semester. Nathan works part-time at a local ice cream shop and used part of his savings from his earnings to purchase his first used car.

When he isn't studying or working, you will usually find him playing video games, watching IndyCar races with Dad, or racing at local go-kart tracks. Earlier in the month he competed in the St. Louis championship for indoor karting at a local track and after qualifying 6<sup>th</sup> finished in the top 20. He was disappointed not to finish higher, but we're always proud of both his ability and his sportsmanship. When his schedule permits, he is active in both the Seminary youth group and another youth group at a local church.

From moving away from their lifelong home to adjusting to a new school they can't attend in person, we're so proud of how both of them have adapted to the big changes this year has brought



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