

BLESSINGS ALWAYS

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Association Minister Message

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AMEN. "So be it. Amen." (NVSV). "This is so. Amen." (CEB). Revelation 1:7. Thanksgiving. Giving-thanks. One of the first musical rounds I remember singing was *"For health and strength and daily food we give you thanks, O God"* at camp with 100 youth in attendance. The harmony of it fascinated me, especially when we had four groups singing it at one time. Even the non-singers joined in and we all sang with enthusiasm on the day we were divided into four groups. After the last note was sung we all shouted a big *AMEN*.

One of our churches sings before the Postlude *"The Lord Bless You and Keep You"* which has a four-part harmony section of *AMENS* that the congregation does superbly, each part entering at different times, all worshipers singing a different vocal part. It seemed an affirmation to God of what had happened during worship. Thanksgiving is an *AMEN* that reflects God's graciousness to us and our gratitude to God for blessings both human and divine.

The German pastor and musician Martin Rinkart in 1647 wrote the great hymn *"Now Thank We All our God"* during the horrors of the Thirty Year's Wars, a time of devastation, hunger, disease and death. His *AMEN* found divine blessing even in the midst of chaos and destruction. *AMEN* is about trust in God, that God is reliable, trustworthy and ever present no matter what condition we are in. Giving-thanks is not just about the things we have but about worth, dignity, and being affirmed as created in God's image. God embraces us with love that laughs and cries with us always, forgives us over and over again and names us God's daughters and sons. God's *AMEN* is an emphatic affirmation of unconditional love that offers blessings beyond our imaginations.

Thanksgiving and giving-thanks are living the *AMEN* of a faith that is ever mindful of the need for peace and justice in the world. *"Now thank we all our God with heart and hands and voices, who wondrous things has done, in whom this world rejoices, who, from our parent's arms, has blessed us on our way with countless gifts of love, and still is ours today."* (# 419, NCH, vs. 1). *AMEN*. The Creator's name be praised. *"So be it."* **BLESSINGS ALWAYS.**