

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



## The Christian life is a journey.

*TrailNotes* speaks to forward movement, paying attention to the “landscape” we are passing through in this trail-laced, wooded hillside and valley, not to mention the world beyond. *TrailNotes* is an unfolding, ongoing journal of the people who share the trail with us and the things we’re learning and doing. This is a monthly publication of Grace Fellowship Church, Mansfield, Ohio.

## ElderTalk: Restored...To Be Restfully Active

ERIC BYROM

I love to watch videos on YouTube and other online sites where someone finds an old knife or machine that is completely rusted out and then seeks to restore it. They grind away the rust or dip it in some solution meant to dissolve that crud. Then they machine the parts that have been corrupted beyond repair. Once the whole process is done, it is amazing to see what was once a brown hunk of metal is now a functioning machine or implement.



That whole process of restoration and recreation is not just to have the item to look at. Often the item is shown to be able to fulfill the function for which it was created. The knife can now cut. The engine can now run. It is fulfilling what it was

made to do and what rust and age prevented.

In the same way, salvation and regeneration that come from what Christ has done for us on the cross is meant to bring us into functioning as we were originally created to function. When we were corrupted and broken by sin and separation from God, we could not properly function, but when Christ gets ahold of us, He saved us, is saving us and will continue to save us. We are also being transformed into His likeness.

Ephesians 2:8-10 says it so well, “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

We are saved FOR good works but not BY good works. So, a good question that we are considering this year at Grace Fellowship is “Are we studying, imitating and sharing Jesus?” Another way to phrase this is “Are we growing in Christ-likeness?”

This means that the character of Christ will be increasingly being manifest in how we behave and live and walk in our daily lives. One recent insight I gained is that in nearly every one of Paul’s letters, he spends the first part of the letter rehearsing the gospel with people that have already believed the gospel. At some point in the letter, he has a “Therefore” in which the tone of the letter changes from gospel to what the gospel will produce in us. It is always focused on the gospel producing Christlike character in the audience. It always

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## ElderTalk: Restored...To Be Restfully Active

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involves them choosing to implement and change in light of what the gospel has done in them.

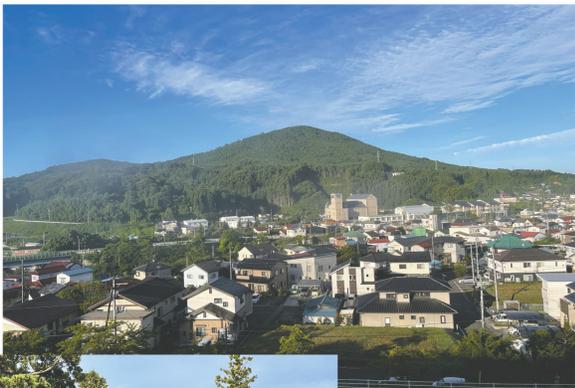
It is an “active restfulness” – resting in Christ’s finished work but actively cooperating with the Holy Spirit’s movement to transform us into Christ’s character in every area of our lives.

So, like those old rusty tools I mentioned at the beginning, we are being restored. The rust is being removed; the parts that are broken are being mended and remade. Are we then functioning in the purpose for which we were created? We were not meant to be restored to be put on a display stand. We were meant for doing the “good works which God prepared in advance for us to do.”

Let’s function as God intended. Let’s be restfully active.

### 日本からの最近の写真3枚

#### Three recent photos from Japan



*Mt. Katasone (above)*



*Courtesy  
of  
Maria McCreadle*



2025年10月1日 – October 1, 2025

## みなさん、こんにちは!

Hello, Everyone!

Through the grace of God, I finally made it to Japan! Thank you all for praying for safe travels. I arrived in Japan on September 13 at 1 p.m. and made it to my new home around 5 p.m. Since then it has been go, go, go!!

I started school September 16 (the Tuesday after I arrived). The school has been very welcoming, and the students are so kind. Many of the teachers and students have been waiting for my arrival, and only three weeks in they are still very appreciative of my willingness to come and teach English. While I work on building these new relationships, I ask that you pray for close relationships with staff and students. This is the best way to start gospel interaction with the people in Japan, and I hope you will pray with me as God starts to open more doors for my team and me to share His Word.

During this time, I have started to help co-lead the team Bible study and am sometimes hosting it on Tuesday nights. We are currently going through Acts in hopes that it is an encouragement to our team. As a team we want to come together to be witnesses of the gospel to our fellow neighbors as we love them through the power of the Holy Spirit. I ask that you pray for my co-leader, Jesse, and me as we faithfully lead the team. I also ask for your prayers for the team as they begin to dig deeper into how the early church was built and how it relates to the work we are doing in Japan.

Along with the team Bible study, the church has started a high school Bible study. The first night was September 21. This study is run by the team and is an opportunity to teach the Bible in English and Japanese to local students. I ask that you pray with me for more attendees and consistent comers so that we may build relationships with the high school students. Also, continue to pray for the church as a whole as they continue to be a light to those around them.

Maria M McCreadle

## A Tale of Two Hymns *John Kurtz*

Charles Dickens began his famous novel, *A Tale of Two Cities*, with these words: “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times...” As Christians we have been told to “give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” (I Thessalonians 5:18) This was certainly behind two of the hymns most commonly associated with the holiday we Americans know as Thanksgiving. Here are the stories which lie behind the origins of those hymns as gleaned from multiple internet sources.

The year was 1636 and the place, Eilenburg, a city in the part of modern day Germany then known as The Electorate of Saxony. The writer, a middle-age Lutheran church pastor, Martin Rinkart, born in 1586. By 1636 most of Europe had become embroiled in a devastating religious and political war for 18 years. The war would



continue for yet another 12 years and be further complicated by an outbreak of plague in 1637. Today we know this period as The Thirty Years War. The walled city of Eilenburg was besieged, homes destroyed, and severe famine resulted. Pastor Rinkart was also a poet and writer with a musical bent, and it was in the midst of such trying circumstances that he wrote

what was initially intended only as a prayer before meals, a table grace. The message was timely, and it was eventually set to music by Johann Crüger and published in 1647 as “Nun danket alle Gott.”

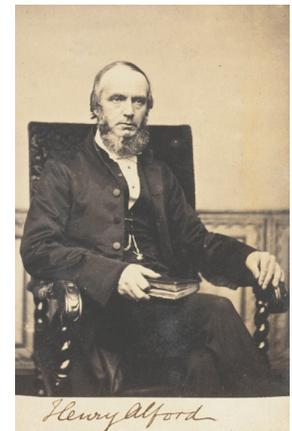
The hymn was so popular that it was sung to celebrate the end of the war at the signing of the Peace Treaty of Wetphalia in December 1648. By the time that Catherine Winkworth first translated the words into English in 1858, the hymn had

become a “Te Deum,” a song of praise and thanksgiving to God, for the German people. Its melody had already been used by both J. S. Bach and Felix Mendelssohn in their own compositions, with other composers to follow suit over the next century. Rinkart had based his words on the first three verses of the Bible Apocrypha’s book of Sirach (Ecclesiasticus), Chapter 50:

“22 Now bless the God of all who everywhere does great things, who raises us up from our birth and deals mercifully with us.  
23 May He give us gladness in our hearts, and may there be peace in our time, in Israel as in times past.  
24 May He grant us His mercy, and may He rescue us in our lifetime.”

Each of the four verses of this hymn, which we know as “Now Thank We All Our God,” are filled with praise to our triune God and thanks for His “countless gifts of love” and freedom from all distress and need. As expressed in the third stanza: “For this it was, is now and shall be evermore.”

Change to a rather more tranquil period of history, 1844, and location, the small rural community of Aston Sandford, Buckinghamshire, England. There, the nearly 34-year-old Anglican priest, Henry Alford, whose mother had died at his birth so that he was raised by his father and an uncle, composed the words of the hymn which we know as “Come Ye Thankful People, Come” for use in the English churches during the month of September. This was their season of Harvest Home, during which services were held to give thanks for the bounty of the harvest which had been gathered in.



His words, based in part upon the parable of the sower in Matthew 13:24-30, makes it very clear to Whom our thanks are due and that He has now and will in the future provide for His people. God is our Provider! The original words, as penned by

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## A Tale of Two Hymns (Continued from page 3)

Alford for the fourth stanza and altered slightly to fit the melody of the St. George's Windsor tune, composed by George Job Elvey in 1858, to which it is usually sung, perhaps say it best:

*“Even so, Lord, quickly come,  
Bring Thy final Harvest-home!  
Gather Thou Thy people in,  
Free from sorrow, free from sin:  
There, forever purified,  
In Thy garner to abide:  
Come with all Thine angels, come,  
Raise the glorious Harvest-home!”*

Two hymns, although written about 200 years apart and under rather different circumstances, both call us to give thanks and praise to our God who WILL provide! His mandate to us: Give thanks! May each of us do just that this Thanksgiving day—and year around!

### ...and of Two Paintings

Here are two famous paintings both by the same American artist, Jennie Augusta Brownscombe (1850-1936), the top one done in 1914 and the lower one in 1925. Both were the artist's studious efforts at depicting what that first American Thanksgiving might have looked like in 1621 with the Pilgrims and their Indian guests. Although there are a few historical inaccuracies in her paintings, these two reflect well both the bountiful harvest and the people's thanks to God for not only having brought them safely across an ocean but also for providing for them to carry on in their new land, America. These are a visual reminder that God does provide and that we need always be thankful for that provision.



At left: “The First Thanksgiving” (1914), in the Pilgrim Hall Museum, Plymouth, MA.



At right: “Thanksgiving at Plymouth” (1925), in National Museum of Women in the Arts, DC.

## November 2025

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- 1 Games Reach Family Game Night, 6:30-8:30 PM, at GFC.
- 2, 9, 16 Operation Christmas Child shoebox collection at GFC.
- 2 Matt Godsil preaching on Exodus 20:1-17.
- 3 Men's and women's *Keys to Freedom* groups:  
Men, 1 PM, Multi-Purpose Room;  
Women, 6:30 PM, Godsil home;  
Women, 7:00 PM, Frankenfield home.
- 8 Men's retreat with Harvest Christian Church here at GFC.
- 9 Jadaé Fox preaching on selections from Nehemiah. 🍷🍞
- 16 Pastor Eric Byrom preaching on I Samuel 18.
- 18 Women's leaders meet with Pastor Eric at Panera Bread, 4:00 PM.
- 23 Pastor Eric Byrom preaching on I Samuel 18:1-4. 🍷🍞
- 27 **THANKSGIVING DAY**
- 30 Celebration Worship. **ADVENT begins.** Jay Shifley to share. Potluck lunch to follow.

## Grace Fellowship Church

365 Straub Rd East • Mansfield, OH 44903  
419-526-4699 • [gracefellowship01@gmail.com](mailto:gracefellowship01@gmail.com)

Eric Byrom Presiding Elder/ Pastor  
(A complete list of church functionaries will return next month.)