

FROM THE DESK OF BISHOP MAAS

EXERCISING THE GRATITUDE MUSCLE



Definitions for the words “gratitude,” “thanks” or “appreciation” often use one or both of the other words of the trio—gratitude means thanks means appreciation means gratitude and so on... Some will use the phrase “a positive feeling” related to receiving something.

From my perspective, gratitude is more than a feeling—it’s an action, set in motion by a choice. Like exercise, gratitude is something we can practice regularly and in doing so, improve our overall health. Certainly scripture is full of prayers and phrases of thanks—“in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God,” (Philippians 4:6) is an often-quoted example.

Modern science is catching up with the ancient wisdom of scripture in contemporary studies of gratitude and the impact it has on those who practice it. Studies have shown improved mental health, improvement in those suffering depression or anxiety and even more frequent physical exercise and fewer visits to the doctor among other benefits of the simple act of giving thanks.

Gratitude isn’t just a positive feeling, and it’s certainly not reserved for one day a year. In this season of Thanksgiving, it’s a good time to begin or renew practices of gratitude through daily prayer, sending thank-you notes or emails or taking time to count one’s blessings. For people of faith, the benefits of gratitude include not only those things mentioned above, but the gift of a closer relationship with God.

Flex your gratitude muscle this month, and know that you are always held in deep appreciation by those of us on the Nebraska Synod staff who have the privilege of serving with you.