Since God is all these things, says the Psalmist, God is greatly to be praised. “I will extol you, my God and King, and bless your name forever and ever. Every day I will bless you, and praise your name forever and ever” (vv. 1-2). The Psalmist says we are to think on the “wondrous works” of God, to proclaim God’s “awesome deeds”, and to celebrate the fame of God’s abundant goodness (vv. 5-7).

And who is to give God this praise? All of creation! “All your works shall give thanks to you, O LORD” (v. 10). Our mouths will continually speak “the praise of the LORD” and the faithful are to bless God (v. 21). Each generation is to praise God and God’s works to the next generation (v. 4), because our God is a God worth knowing and serving.

It is the Biblical duty of every generation of Christians to see to it that the next generation hears about God’s mighty deeds. God does not drop a new Bible from heaven on every generation. God intends that the elder generations will teach the newer generations to read and think and trust and obey and rejoice in God. It's true that God draws near personally to every new generation of believers, but God does so through the Biblical truths that they learn from the preceding generations. The Spirit comes down vertically (you might say) where the truth of God is imparted horizontally.

But there’s more to this than simply passing along information: we are to impart these Biblical truths with joy and for joy. The Psalmist does not say, "One generation shall merely *teach* your works to another." The Psalmist says, "One generation shall *praise* your works to another." Praise is rejoicing in God. The education of the next generation must not only aim to inform, it must also include praise. "One generation shall *praise* your works to another." Let our praises carry God’s truth to the next generations, because the aim of truth is praise. The aim of education is rejoicing in God. Let our teaching model our joy. Let each generation praise God’s work to the next generation!

Deuteronomy 6:4-7 says: *Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up.*

The Biblical model is for parents to be the primary teachers and shapers of their children's minds and hearts, to impart to children a God-centered, Bible-saturated vision for all of life. And the church family is an important resource for parents, reinforcing what parents do and teach at home. There are multiple generations within our congregation: our members range from just a few weeks old to over 100 years young. We have people with years of education and experience, who can help teach the next generations. A partnership between parents and the whole family of faith is the image we see for Federated: one generation teaching and praising God so the next generation will see God’s mighty acts and know God’s amazing love. "One generation shall *praise* [God’s] works to another."

Let me tell you a true story. Once upon a time, way back in 1872, the community of Fergus Falls, MN was little more than a village of about 150 people. There really wasn’t much of a community yet: a few dozen homes, a temporary hotel, a saloon, and some stores with apartments overhead. There were few professed Christians in town and no churches: circuit riding preachers would lead religious services as they rode through the territory.

That year, The Rev. Dr. M. S. Goodale, a Presbyterian minister from Amsterdam, NY (west of Albany), came to Fergus Falls to visit his cousin, Eli. W. Dewey, to hunt prairie chickens. When he discovered the lack of Christian community, Dr. Goodale resolved to go home and raise funds to establish a church in Fergus Falls. Good to his word, Dr. Goodale raised $1,500 and built that first church. Dr. Goodale and his congregation believed that the truth and love of God needed to be shared in Fergus Falls. They stepped up and took the risk and made a commitment to the Gospel. Their generation laid the foundation for succeeding generations to praise God’s work in Fergus Falls, MN. Here we are, nearly 145 years later, the Federated Church, still going strong.

Now it’s our turn. Our generation is being asked to praise God’s work to the next generation. Through us, God is doing some amazing and wonderful things right now. We’re feeding our neighbors in record numbers with our hunger ministries. We’re building with Habitat for Humanity to provide a home for a local family. We’re welcoming 25-30 kids on Wednesdays for Kid’s Club. We’re working with 24 confirmands as they prepare for membership. We’re sending 80+ cleanup buckets to Texas and Florida to aid the cleanup efforts. We’re preparing to send eight mission trippers to Guatemala. And there are new families joining us monthly as we reach out with open hearts, open minds, and open arms.

In all of these things, we are praising God’s works and declaring God’s mighty acts to the next generations. We can do all these things because God’s Spirit is alive and working in us. We can do all these things because you continue to support the mission and the ministries of the Federated Church. We can do all these things because each one of us reaches out, takes a risk, steps up to meet the need, and gives generously as God has blessed us generously.

One more story: this past summer one of our youth was biking through town and took a tumble. Being far from home, this young person decided to come to the church for help. Here, this young person received God’s love from staff who provided a shoulder to lean on, a bandage for a skinned knee, and a drink of water on a hot day. A few days later, the child’s parent contacted us to thank us because their child knew this church to be a safe and welcoming place to find help. Out of all the places in town, that child chose to seek help at Federated Church, knowing help would be given. Staff was here to offer that help because you provide for this church – the building and the ministries - through your giving.

I know that some of you have already pledged: thank you for that! Others are still deciding what to give. I’m asking all of you to consider raising your pledge this year as a sign of your commitment to share God’s Word and love with the next generations. If you’ve never made a pledge before, now is the time: let your praise shine forth through your commitment to the mission and ministries of Federated Church. Giving to the church budget may not be as exciting as donating to a special cause, but without your support this church will not be here to meet the needs of our neighbors.

The plain truth is that we have fewer pledging units that we did six years ago and the church’s costs keep rising as life gets more expensive. We each need to recognize the blessings of God in our life and to show our praise by making a serious financial commitment to this faith family. Let your pledge be a sign to the next generation that God is good and faithful and compassionate and just, and working in and through this congregation. Let ours be a generation of generous givers who praise God’s works to future generations.

Prayer: Lord, show me clearly what you want me to do with the gifts you have given me. Grant me the strength that I need to answer your call with courage and love. Make me a generous person so that others may experience your love through me. Help me always to look to you to show me the way to lead my life. Amen.

**From Generation to Generation**

October 15, 2017 Psalm 145

The Federated Church, Fergus Falls, MN

I wear a signet ring on the fourth finger of my right hand. It’s a gold ring with the letter “D” engraved on the top. The inscription on the inside of the ring has the initials of my Great-Uncle and Great-Aunt who gave the ring to my Father on his tenth birthday (1-27-1952). This ring is a cherished reminder that I am part of the Dent family. I still remember the day my Father gave it to me: he passed it on to me sometime in my teen years, and it’s been on my finger ever since. Someday I will pass this ring on to Jonathan.

I have other treasured things from generations past. A heavy, cut glass flower vase from my Grandmother which she always kept filled with wildflowers. My Grandfather’s Hebrew Bible from his seminary days in the 1930s, complete with his handwritten notes in the margins. From my Dent Grandfather, a first edition set of President Ulysses S. Grant’s memoirs (Grant married Julia Dent, so he’s family!). My piano, purchased with an inheritance from my Great Aunt Harriet who used to visit and bake peanut butter cookies while she listened to me practice. These objects are special because they remind me of the love and the lessons passed down from generation to generation.

There are some items and traditions which are so precious that we take great pains to ensure that they are passed from one generation to another. Our faith is one of those things. What we believe and the values we hold dear are essential things to pass along to the next generation. What we know about God, who God is and what God did and does, are critically important things for our children and grandchildren to know.

The Psalmist thought so, too, which is why Psalm 145 is a catalogue of the greatness of our God. The Psalmist says that God’s greatness is unsearchable (v. 3). God is “gracious and merciful, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love” (v. 8). God is “good to all” and God’s “compassion is over all” that God has made (v. 9). God is “faithful” in all God’s words and “gracious” in all God’s deeds (v. 13). God “upholds all who are falling” and God “raises up those who are bowed down” (v. 14). God provides food in due season (v. 15) and “satisfies the desire of every living thing (v. 16). God is “just” in all God’s ways and “kind” in all God’s doings (v. 17). God is near to those who call on God; God hears their cries and saves them (v. 19). God watches over all who love God (v. 20). The Psalmist wanted every generation to know these important truths about God.