



Dr. John Williams
Executive Minister

Included in this issue:

- * *Pastors' Conference*
- * *Planned Giving*
- * *Progress Report*
- * *Senior Adult Retreat*
- * *Parish Paper*
- * *CBTS News*

I have a friend for whom autumn is a favorite time of year. While changing seasons, beautifully colored trees, brisk sunny days and crisp starry nights may captivate others; my friend finds this season most welcome because so many things are pumpkin-flavored! He loves the smell of pumpkin spice; his mouth waters at the thought of pumpkin pie. When I start to rattle off my collection of pumpkin recipes (pumpkin bars with cream cheese frosting, pumpkin pancakes, pumpkin-gingerbread trifle, pumpkin rolls, pumpkin scones with spiced glaze, pumpkin whoopee pies with maple cream cheese filling, etc.) I'm sure his eyes tear up and his lips begin to quiver. To say my friend likes the smell and taste of pumpkin is a bit of an understatement.

What are the aromas and flavors you like? We all have our preferences; but I daresay there is one we should all share. Should not our lives be saturated with the fragrance and taste of Christ? Should we not taste like honey and salt, sweetened with the word of righteousness and salted with the purifying presence of the Holy Spirit? Should not our lives be as the fragrance of Christ to God; sweet, aromatic and pleasing to the Holy One?

I heard recently that a school was evacuated because of a strange odor that turned out to be a pumpkin spice air freshener. I wonder what had been added that made the fragrance so offensive to others. There are things that, when added to the life of the Christian, make us odious to God and to others. Thinking of the theme of this year's Annual Gathering, "Serve with Humility," I am reminded that arrogance and a lack of humility can produce a pungent odor in the life of a Christian. Pride, unkindness, stinginess, argumentativeness, untruthfulness are but a few of the smelly things God deems detestable in Proverbs 6. The seven deadly sins identified in the writings of the Desert Fathers include lust, gluttony, greed, sloth, wrath, envy and pride. Any of these can alter the fragrance of Christ's servant, making him or her odious to all around.

And what can enhance the fragrance of the one who serves Christ? Paul lists compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience as admirable virtues, along with forgiveness and love, "which binds them all together in perfect unity." Certainly those qualities added to our lives add to the sweetness of our fragrance. We are told that the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Again, sweet-smelling qualities that enhance the fragrance of one's life and witness.

Why am I "sniffing the air" in this way? I am aware that for those of us in ministerial leadership, the desire to live a life that is pleasing to God, a life that is a fragrant aroma of sacrifice to the One we love, is truly our heart's desire. But when others don't see us that way, what can we do? For me, I check to see what I've added to the formula for the fragrance I want to waft from my life. The things that smell badly are not the things I want to add to my life. The sweet-smelling qualities that enhance the fragrance of my life and witness are exactly the things I want in greater measure. I hope that would be the case for all of us who have laid our lives on the altar of sacrifice for the sake of Christ and the church He has called us to serve.