

“Thanksgiving Bread Service” ©
Shoreline Unitarian Universalist Society, Madison, CT
The Rev. Lloyd & Amy Buckley, DFF
November 24, 2019

Sounding of the Gong

Gathering Music *Songs of Gratitude* Steve Ernst, Flute

Sounding of the Gong

#Welcome Sue Schaedler, Vice President
Board of Trustees

Prelude *Thanksgiving*, George Winston Nick Stanford, Piano

Chalice Lighting Vivianna Velazquez
(The flaming chalice is the symbol of our free faith)

Opening Words Rev. Lloyd & Amy Buckley, DFF
Amid All The Noise In Our Lives¹ By Tim Haley

Bell

Rev. Jeanne

Amid all the [distractions of] our lives,
we take [these moments] to sit in silence --
to give thanks for another day;
to give thanks for all those in our lives
who have brought us warmth and love;
to give thanks for the gift of life.
We know we are on our pilgrimage here but a brief moment in time.

Amy Buckley

Let us open ourselves, here, now,
to the process of becoming more whole --
of living more fully;
of giving and forgiving more freely;
of understanding more completely the meaning of our lives here on this earth.
So may it be.

BELL

¹Source: 1997 UUMA Worship Materials Collection
<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/opening/5144.shtml> November 23, 2019

#*Opening Hymn 349 *We Gather Together*

As we prepare to sing our hymn, you will find the hymnals under the seat in front of you, unless you're in the front row where they were on your seat. We invite you to share hymnals.

Story

Amy Buckley, DFF

The Man Who Had Nothing by Elizabeth Atwater²

"I loved visiting Granny and Papa when I was a little girl. I thought their little house in the country was wonderful. Papa had a couple of hens that laid blue eggs. I don't know if he ever ate the blue eggs but he was proud of the funny looking hens. Granny and Papa also had a gentle old hound dog that let me dress him in my doll clothes and push him in my doll carriage. The dog seemed to have taken on their patience and gentleness, and he tolerated me with confused brown eyes.

We had a ritual that I came to love. Papa always kept peppermint candy in his overalls pocket and when I was small, I thought it was the best candy in the world. At odd moments, always unexpected, he would reach into his pocket and take out a peppermint for me.

Papa also had an old school bus parked in the back yard that he was always tinkering with. His plan was to fix it up and take Granny on a road trip one day. He let me sit behind the wheel and pretend I was driving while he worked on the engine.

Papa was the most satisfied, content man I ever knew. I grew up hearing him speak often of how blessed he was. He adored Granny and she was at the top of the list of the things he was grateful for. She was a tiny woman and he could never walk past her without putting one of his huge hands on top of her head or gently touching her shoulder.

One evening, as we sat on the porch after supper, he went inside and brought out a photograph and handed it to me. It was a picture of a petite dark-haired woman striking a saucy pose in red high heels. 'This is your granny when she was young. Wasn't she a beauty?' He then glanced at Granny with loving eyes. 'She still is.'

² Newmark & Norville. **Chicken Soup for the Soul, The Power of Gratitude**, (Simon & Schuster, 2016), 254-259.

Confused, I look at Granny in her shapeless dress and apron, her curly gray hair in disarray, her small face stitched in fine wrinkles. I was too young to know that he saw her with his heart and not with his eyes.

As I grew older, I visited Papa and Granny less and less. Their small crowded house seemed run down and poorly furnished to my critical eyes. I was inwardly disdainful when I heard Papa speak of how blessed he was when I knew he could barely put food on the table. He was good with his hands and he made a meager living as a handyman but that old school bus was rusted now and sitting on flat tires. It would never get road worthy to go on that road trip with Granny.

I had started to view my grandfather's life as a failure. Oh, I still loved Papa and Granny and I would always have fond memories of my childhood days spent with them and the funny hens and the sweet old hound dog. But I had lost the admiration I had for him when I was a child. I thought he was poor, and not smart enough to know it.

Papa died of a heart attack when I was in my second year of college. When I walked into the chapel for his funeral, I was shocked at the people who packed that little church. There wasn't even standing room and people spilled into the vestibule. I pushed my way through the crowd and passed doctors, lawyers, teachers, bankers and clergy among and the factory workers, farmers and clerks. It seemed as if everyone in the town, from every walk of life, was represented.

Standing at the casket was Bill Fletcher, a wealthy landowner who often hired Papa to do odd jobs. With tears in his eyes he turned to me. "Your grandfather was the most honest, kindest, gentlest man I have ever known. No matter what was going wrong in my life I always felt better after a little chat with him. He always helped me keep things in proper perspective. He always found life wonderful. He got more pleasure out of his simple lifestyle than I could ever muster from mine even though I probably had more money in my wallet than he had in the bank."

My Fletcher shook his head and rubbed tears from his cheeks. 'He never lost the wonder of a child. He used to talk about those hens that laid blue eggs as if he had a rare treasure. And how he loved Annie. A woman has never been loved more than she.'

He put his arm around my waist. 'You are lucky to have grown up around such a wonderful man. He never had much money, but oh, what priceless treasures he did possess! I wish I was half the man he was.' He glanced around at the people in the crowded chapel. 'Everybody who knew him loved him. How many people can you say that about?'

Papa, who, in my eyes, had nothing, was envied by some who had everything that the world could offer. But I learned that day that the world is very limited in what it can offer. And what it does offer can be easily lost, such as money, fame and worldly goods. I realized that the blessings that Papa often spoke of were not tangible things that could easily slip from your grasp. He was speaking of love, friendship, a stellar reputation, respect and a good woman by his side for seventy-two years. I found Granny and hugged her tightly. 'I am a lucky woman,' she said. 'I had the love of a good man for seventy-two years. I am blessed.'

I kissed her wet cheeks. 'Yes, you are,' I said finally. I could honestly say it now that I finally know what real blessings [are]."

***Hymn #52** *In Sweet Fields of Autumn*

Story

Rev. Lloyd

A Healing Trio by Deborah Drezon Carroll³

"My daughter's first year away at college didn't turn out the way I had imagined it. High school had been emotionally challenging for her so she eagerly embraced the opportunity for a fresh start. On move-in day I happily helped her set up her room. I hugged her goodbye and walked toward the door of her dorm room.

Then I turned back to take one last look at her in her new home. I flashed back to my dorm room from freshman year and nostalgically noted how similar they were – the institutional furniture combined with touches from the girls' childhood – their stuffed animals and tattered pieces of 'blankies.' Even the posters on the wall hadn't changed much. Her roommate hung the same Jimi Hendrix poster so many kids displayed in 1970 when I left college.

As I stood there, I recalled how much I loved my college years. I was simultaneously thrilled for her and a tad frightened, knowing all the things that can go wrong when a freshman has that first taste of freedom. I managed to hold back the tears until I was safely in my car. I sat there and took a deep and calming breath.

During those first few weeks, when we spoke on the phone she sounded pretty happy. Her voice had that perfect balance of excitement, curiosity, and cautious optimism. Her

³ Newmark & Norville. **Chicken Soup for the Soul, The Power of Gratitude**, (Simon & Schuster, 2016), 284-286.

classes were inspirational. She was making friends and learning to balance school and fun.

[But], it [seemed] cautious optimism was turning into pessimism. [She] was doing fine academically but personally she was struggling. She began to suffer some significant physical challenges. With those came emotional issues and those were heartbreaking to hear about. Each conversation seemed just a bit worse than the one before. My formerly positive child was turning toward a dark side. I worried the darkness would become more pervasive than the light in her life.

I searched for ways to help her with the physical struggles. I began doing research online to learn about what she was describing in order to find a doctor to help her, but in the meantime, I wanted a more immediate fix, something to help her get through each day without being [sad]. When we spoke, I tried to turn the conversation to something positive for her to think about. I talked about the good in her life. But I realized this was not something I could . . . do for her – to make her turn her mind toward the light. This was something she had to do for herself.

[So,] I suggested a nightly ritual. [Each night] before bedtime [we'd . . .] e-mail a list of three things for which we were grateful. There was no item too small or too trivial or too big or too corny. The goal was simple – at the end of each day we would take the time to identify three things worth noting for their goodness. We agreed not to be judgmental about each other's list. It could be anything from 'My oatmeal at breakfast was especially delicious,' to 'My best friend called just to say hi,' to 'I got an A- on an English paper I worked hard on,' or 'My project at work is finally finished.' One day it might be, 'Saw a gorgeous sunset,' and on that same day it could include, 'Passed a homeless person sleeping on the street and thought about how fortunate [I am] to have a safe place to sleep.' One day in February it might be 'I saw my first crocus,' or 'So happy to have sisters.'

The only thing that mattered was that we did it every day. In this daily routine one thing became clear. In each day, from the gloomiest to the most resplendent, there are myriad things for which anyone can be grateful . . . if we seek them out. Some days the list of three poured forth freely while other days it was a stretch to find three. But find three we did, each of us, every single day.

I launched this routine to help my daughter, but, as so much of parenting turns out, I learned valuable lessons too. I found myself looking forward to making the daily list. Throughout the day I'd make a mental note of small things, random acts of gratitude so to speak, in order to remember them later. It's surprising just how many I could find on

some days. Although we agreed on three, occasionally I'd throw in a bonus item, just because it was that kind of day.

Ultimately we did find the answer to the mystery of [her illness] and she is happy and healthy now. We stopped doing our nightly list together because we had both found our way back to a place with more light than dark.

But I didn't stop making the list. I found it so uplifting and so soothing as a way to wrap up each day that now I do it in solitude, like a nocturnal meditation. Every night as I place my head on the pillow and close my eyes, I make a mental list of three things for which I am thankful. That trio of gratitude makes for a peaceful finale of every day."

So may it be.

Offertory Words

November Share the Plate

Here, we share with generosity what treasure we have with others whose needs are greater than our own. Each week we donate 50% of our total cash offering to a non-profit program that serves others. This month your cash contributions will go to the . . . Covenant to Care "Adopt a Social Worker" program. Our donations address the needs of specific children, often living with grandparents, who have been removed from difficult family situations. Donations at this time of year anticipate the holiday season.

PAUSE

And, so, in honor of those native peoples who first revered this land as a gift from the Great Spirit; . . . in honor and with gratitude for this earth without which there can be no life, we now offer this prayer song for our Mother Earth.

Offering & Offertory Music

Song for Mother Earth

SUUS Choir

Native American Chant, arr. Lana Walker

Presentation of the Bread

Rev. Lloyd

Today we share a small meal of thanksgiving together, in honor of those who extended hospitality to our ancestors and to those who now sustain each of us and this community.

The ingredients of bread may include:

- corn, wheat, rice – symbolizing the staff and strength of life;
- salt – setting limits of growth for the yeast;
- water – representing freshness and purity;
- eggs – enriching and enlivening the texture of the bread;
- sugar – providing for the growth of the yeast;
- and, finally the yeast itself – raising the spirit.

These ingredients, in sundry ways are mixed, kneaded, raised, punched down for a finer quality, baked in the fire of life, and cooled. Bread, like life, must be shared to be whole. As it is shared it fulfills a purpose that allows us to embrace and nourish the bittersweet of life together.

Sharing the Bread & Music *Honey*, Robert Dett

Nick Stanford

Directions

For our meal of thanksgiving, we will share bread, fruit, and cheese. For those with gluten or other allergies, you will want to take the bread that is in the center of each tray. If you have any doubt about whether the bread is allergy free, please do choose the apples or cheese as an alternate meal . . . Let us eat together while we listen to the gift of music offered us by Nick.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Rev. Lloyd & Amy Buckley

BELL

Rev. Jeanne: Even as we acknowledge the challenges and pain we and others have experienced this past year . . . Even as we worry for those who lose their lives and homes to nature's tempests and human weakness, there are, if we look keenly and with an open heart, things for which we can be grateful. Seeking out . . . searching . . . for that for which we can be grateful, is a spiritual practice. In doing so, we humble ourselves, with reverence, understanding that there are forces beyond our control, but also understanding that the spiritual ability to approach life with gratitude, is what brings meaning and purpose to our lives. How we approach life's joys and sorrows, makes all the difference in our lives, and others.

The past few weeks, I've asked all of you, children and adults, to think about and share with me how you would answer this question:

"In light of all that has happened this year, I am thankful for..."

Your answers comprise the prayer of thanksgiving we now offer the universe.

Rev. Jeanne (on emotional health)

In light of all that has happened this year, I am thankful ...

- To be able to let go of worry and look on the bright side.
- For a multitude of blessings and moments of grace that have been given to me, softening the tragedies of friends and family dying too soon.
- For a year where there has been a lot of good, and, a lot of not good, but where I have tried to grow from all of it.
- For new opportunities that continue to appear to embrace love in all of its forms: Love of family, love of nature, love of our human capacity to learn, change and grow.

- For the time to reflect:

I've returned to sorting family photographs and reading vintage family letters, including my father's WWII letters home from the Pacific. I've reflected on significant events in my life; I've let my mind wander to the stories that make up my own life and to several generations of family stories. With the gift of some quiet moments to spend in thought, my mind has wandered to images of the many (and diverse) people in my life... I'm grateful for those people, whether they still live in this world or live only in memory. How lucky am I . . . how lucky are we all... to have adventurous and fun, caring and generous, intelligent and hard-working role models in this world!

- For quiet peaceful moments when I know I am enough just as I am.
- *For the blessing of books and the ability to read.*
- For the gift of making new music out of difficult emotional experiences and sharing these songs with others. Whether the songs are sorrowful or triumphant, singing them always brings harmony and healing to my soul and helps me see that life's painful challenges offer deep beauty and opportunities for interconnectedness and growth."

Amy Buckley (on physical health)

In light of all that has happened this year, I am thankful ...

- For good health in my older years; that age seems to have descended on me pretty gently, rather than with a thud ... so far.
- To still be here with the knowledge that something exists beyond (having been there myself).
- For all of the talented medical help I've received.
- For my wonderful yoga classes.
- For the sustaining gift of nature to soothe and rejuvenate us.

Rev. Jeanne (on relationships)

In light of all that has happened this year, I am thankful ...

- for children, partners/spouses, bigger and littler brothers, sisters, family and friends . . . the heart-bonded
- that my kids are thriving; for times spent laughing with friends around my kitchen table; for people whose love I can lean on; for mindfulness, my home, and the meaningful work I get to do every day.
- for my 3 daughters who have their own lives, but are there for me when I need help.
- *For pets, cats, and dog(s): One child says, "I begged for a dog for about 8 years. And last Christmas, my Mom finally gave me a little dog collar and she said you are going to get a dog. And I was very happy and grateful for that."*

Amy Buckley (on justice)

In light of all that has happened this year, I am thankful . . .

- For the goodness in the minds and hearts of people, despite a year of so much incivility and actions based on hatred; for the many people around the globe who tirelessly work to defend the rights of the voiceless and powerless.
- I am grateful for the dialogue about the country's values and beliefs to create a positive paradigm shift; I am hopeful that our country will return to what it once was.

- I am grateful for the kindness of dedicated workers and strangers.

Rev. Jeanne (on community)

In light of all that has happened this year, I am thankful for . . .

- Our SUUS community,
- its amazing volunteers in SUUS worship services and their thoughtful reflections;
- the good people we've lost this year;
- this place of spiritual growth;
- the warmth this community provides;
- for all the support I've received here.

PAUSE

Rev. Jeanne: In the next few moments, please respond to our following litany, with the words, *"We give thanks this day."*

A LITANY: For our community gathered here⁴ by Jane E Mauldin

Rev. Jeanne

For our community gathered here, for the spirit that called us together and drew us to this place:

We give thanks this day.

Amy Buckley

For moments we have shared with others; for times when we have reached out across barriers of distance and fear; for times when others have reached out to us; for moments when we have discovered another along our path:

We give thanks this day.

Rev. Jeanne

⁴ <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/opening/5346.shtml> November 23, 2019

For this community of celebration and growth, introspection and solitude, and for those moments of "[a] peace that passes all understanding":

We give thanks this day.

Amy Buckley

For our gathering together out of distant places; for our weaving together out of many separate selves this hour of celebration and worship:

We give thanks this day.

Rev. Jeanne

And, so may it be.

BELL

***Closing Hymn** *A Place at the Table*, Murray & True (verses 1-3) (See insert)

***Closing Words & Extinguishing the Chalice** Rev. Lloyd

Please remain standing as you are able and join hands as you are willing.

We extinguish this flame, but not the light of truth, the warmth of community, or the fire of commitment. We extinguish this flame, but not our gratitude for the Spirit that sustains us in times of joy and sorrow. These we carry in our hearts until we are together again. Let the congregation say, "Amen."

Please be seated to sing our closing song.

Closing Song *We Give Thanks*, Wendy Luella Perkins, arr. Susan Peck

SUUS Multigenerational Choir

Steve Ernst, Piano

Silent Reflection

Let us sit together in silence as we reflect on the message and meaning of today's service.



A Moment of Silence