

**“Thanksgiving Family Bread Service”©**  
**Mattatuck Unitarian Universalist Society, Woodbury, CT**  
**The Rev. Jeanne Lloyd, Minister**  
**November 22, 2009**

*Set-up at 8 am*

*Set up all the tables, perhaps in a U shape going around the room, with space down the center w/long table in center (stagger the chairs). Encourage children to sit on inside to help pass out bread.*

*Tablecloths*

*Cider*

*Cups*

*Napkins & paper plates*

*Knives/cutting boards*

*Cutting bread and putting it in baskets*

*One knife at each table (adult)*

*Hymnals at each table*

*We need to set up as many baskets/trays as there are tables. Then while a person is describing source of bread, Denise breaks into as many baskets/trays as there are tables. Then after everyone is finished, children distribute the baskets to tables. Cider is already in pitchers at tables.*

**PRELUDE *Blue Grass Band* ~ Rick Brodsky, Josh Cohen, Frank Infurchia, Gary Wikfors and *Larry Demming* (band’s choice of music)**

**CALL TO GATHER**

Come, Come Whoever You Are, #188

“Come, come, whoever you are;

Man, woman, parent, child

Whatever your religious journey,

Whatever your skin color,

Whatever your abilities,

Whomever you love-

You are welcome here this morning.

You are welcome at our table.

You are welcome in this religious home.”

## WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Good Morning! Welcome to the Mattatuck Unitarian Universalist Society, affectionately known as MUUS. I am The Rev. Jeanne Lloyd and it is my great pleasure and privilege to serve this wonderful congregation. We welcome all of you.

- If you are a newcomer, and haven't signed our guest book in the entryway, please do so before you leave so that we may send you a newsletter listing our activities. Newcomers may look for people with gold nametags. These are members of the Membership Committee, and they will be happy to answer any questions you may have. If you have been attending our services for a while and would like to join the society please see me or a member of the Membership Committee.
- Our time together continues with coffee, tea, and conversation after the service, and we invite you to join us.
- To parents – children are invited to stay in today's service. However, if there are very young one need a break, we do have a nursery attendant available in the nursery.
- Later in the service newcomers will have an opportunity to introduce themselves and we hope that you will do so. It is optional, but we would like to give you a proper welcome.
- Since our Sunday services offer a variety of worship experiences, including ordained clergy as well as brilliant lay speakers, we encourage you to come back often.
- You may have noticed that we have a camcorder set up to record parts of today's service. Please be assured that Announcements, Joys and Sorrows, and Personal Reflections will not be recorded.
- So that we may maintain our spiritual space, please place your cell phone in a meditative state of being.
- The flowers this morning are given in honor of \_\_\_\_\_. Please consider making an offering of flowers for this sanctuary for various Sundays throughout the year, in honor of a special event or in memory of a loved one. You can sign up at the back table.
- Our fellowship time after the service is an important time for all of us, and food and drink always make that time ever so much more nourishing to the soul. Please sign up to bring and serve simple but wholesome snacks on the sign up sheet at the back table.
- Important parts of our community life are the invitations we give to one another for activities beyond our morning's service. Please note the announcements in your order of service. I have these additional announcements:

- If there are any other MUUS related announcements, we ask that you line up to my left to share them now and please use the microphone."

"Here end this morning's announcements."

### **SOUNDING OF THE BELL<sup>1</sup>**

And, now: I invite everyone to relax your body, come into this natural space in beauty & light. Take the next few moments to focus on your breathing. Breathe deeply. Relax. We welcome you into this place made more sacred by your presence.

***Sound bell . . .***

### **OPENING WORDS & CHALICE LIGHTING      *Everard Day***

These words from Thich Nhat Hanh, "I like to walk alone on country paths, rice plants and wild grasses on both sides, putting each foot down on the earth in mindfulness, knowing that I walk on the wondrous earth. In such moments, existence is a miraculous and mysterious reality.

People usually consider walking on water or in thin air a miracle. But I think the real miracle is not to walk either on water or in thin air, but to walk on earth. Every day we are engaged in a miracle which we don't even recognize: a blue sky, white clouds, green leaves, the ... curious eyes of a child--our own two eyes. All is a miracle..."<sup>2</sup>

### **\*GATHERING HYMN #389 "*Gathered Here*" (sung as a round)**

#### **OFFERTORY & MUSIC (band's choice of music)**

As we take our collection, we invite first time visitors to let the plate/basket pass them by, you are our guests today. Today, we also have a basket by the door to collect your free will offering for next year's Thanksgiving Service. As you may guess there are special expenses associated with this service, and what you give this year, will help us be able to hold it again, next year. Please give as generously as you can.

---

<sup>1</sup> *As a courtesy to all gathered here today, please silence your cell phone.*

<sup>2</sup> *The Miracle of Mindfulness*, by Thich Nhat Hanh, pp. 12, 47-48, 49

For now, though, I ask you for your weekly financial offering to this community, to sustain and strengthen this place, which is sacred to so many of us; a community of memory and of hope . . . that holds within it the promise of the dream of a people living in just and compassionate relationships with each other.

## **WORDS OF THANKSGIVING**

***Denise Pedane, Director of Religious Education***

*[Some representative youngsters from the Sunday school may do a responsive reading they have written or otherwise say what they are thankful for.]*

**\*LITANY: RESPONSIVE READING #540**

***"The Peace of Autumn"***

**\*HYMN 21 "For the Beauty of the Earth" (v. 1-2)**

## **WORDS OF THANKSGIVING**

***Rev. Jeanne Lloyd***

Reading your reflections on gratitude inspire in me my own sense of appreciation for the level of faithfulness with which you are willing to share your most vulnerable feelings with me. I do not take for granted the trust you place in our relationship, and I am grateful for your giving of yourselves and your hearts to this congregation and this minister.

In reading your reflections, I was also struck by their poignancy. It occurred to me that, paradoxically, gratitude often derives its deepest meaning for what it isn't. Our sense of gratitude is derived from a profound sense of where we might otherwise be, what we might otherwise be living without . . . , or as the song goes, "There but for you go I."<sup>3</sup>

I remember when my son was born, there was, most especially in his early days, that sense that this being, this person, this child so special, so unique, so mysteriously created, so precious; this person would . . . all too soon, be grown and going on his way. It was a deeply bittersweet feeling. There was no sense that I would be given the opportunity to take him for granted! He would be leaving sooner than we would ever want, partly it seemed because we loved him so much. That time . . . for leaving, would never be far enough away.

PAUSE

So gratitude exists in light of everything that has happened or didn't happen. It only has meaning when it is in context with what might have been or could yet be. In light of the certainty of death, we are grateful for health and life in this moment. In light of the

---

<sup>3</sup> Lerner & Lowe's Musical "*Brigadoon*."

blessings of children, we are grateful to be in their presence for as long as that can be. In light of the great absence of beloved communities in this world, we are grateful for this community, its ideals and its people and their shared character.

Over and over again, members wrote of their gratitude for loved ones and their profound influence.

One writes of the compassion he learned from his father, and with gratitude realizes that it was only with his father’s death that he, the son, began his new life in Connecticut, and thereby found the blessings of becoming part of a community called MUUS. Another writes that he is grateful that his Dad is still independent and healthy. Others write with amazement of the maturity they now see in their adult children. They speak of being grateful that they are able to visit their children and grandchildren on special birthday celebrations. They speak with gratitude of the comfort that comes with continuing annual family traditions.

One couple shared . . . “we are thankful for the brave people in recent times who stood up and insisted on our legal rights to be who we are in safety and to enjoy the benefits of legal marriage.”

These reflections were not always easy ones to write. For some, it required an unexpected thrust of courage to respond. For one, the recognition that though they had the many blessings of loved ones and family, something was amiss, something hurting, something preventing them from enjoying their blessings, and this was disturbing. And, they, though stymied, were grateful for this provoking assignment. They are now in search for . . . what is it. . . that is holding them back from enjoying the only life they have in this world?

Another person shared with me the context in which she wrote of her gratitude. She was grateful for the short life of a child who gave up on life far too young, and without clear explanation. She is grateful that though the pain endures, this child was her child for the time they were together. No one else’s. Hers. And, no one, not even tragedy, can take that away from her. She writes of being a survivor with some sense of gratitude that she hasn’t perished. She writes that she is grateful for family relationships, even though they can be complicated and difficult. She is grateful, because, still, it is love that binds them together. She writes that she is grateful for the **memories** of those she has had by her side, whose bodies she has touched, whose hands she has held, whose hearts she has integrated with her own, whose support seems to be ever present even though they are now gone. These memories give her reason to be grateful. She exclaims, she will always be able to say, “this was mine. My

daughter, my mother and my father, cousins, aunts, uncles, all the relatives that I knew, friends, and all who shared life and relationships with me; all these I am grateful for.

PAUSE

More than one member wrote that she was grateful for knowledge. Knowledge, instead of ignorance. Illumination instead of darkness. For a probing mind and spirit. One wrote of their gratitude for the Friends of the Buddha Small Group Ministry at MUUS. Another wrote of the illumination of knowledge that shapes us all, and gives us strength. Another is thankful for his spiritual practice and its positive impact on his day-to-day life.

Others write of their gratitude for the magnificence and natural beauty of the world, its plants and animals, all living things. For art, music and creativity abounding in our lives. For written and expressed words of language that can give us rest and resolution, peace and quiet, sustenance and a *feathered breath of hope*. One writes, "I am grateful to be alive, even when it is hard. I wrap my arms around it all! I am grateful that Unitarian Universalism is such a good fit for me. It allows me to have my own spiritual path without the dogma."

Several wrote of the loves of their life, from friends, to partners, to spouses, to lovers, to children, to sisters & brothers, parents and relatives, and, of course, their pets. One person wrote that I am grateful for my husband, who is loving and supportive no matter how crazy life gets, and for my children, who help me see the world through younger, more open eyes. Another wrote, "I am grateful for the unwavering love and support of my sister who lives way too far away!"

Another writes, "Most of all, I value those wonderful friends, several in particular, with whom I've shared my life - for their love, support, encouragement, inspiration and so much fun and laughter. I'm especially lucky to have been born with a capacity for joy, and lots of energy. Life is very rich for me, and I'm trying to learn how to return the favor in some way."

PAUSE

Some wrote of having worked through, survived, moved through, moving through treatment for cancer. Of their gladness for various medical treatments that improve the quality of one's life, and possibly length their life. They write of how this disease has made them more keenly aware of the preciousness of life. Many say that to be able to face illness and disease, with this community, brings about a deeper three dimensional quality to life, poignantly precious, deeply meaningful.

Many mentioned their gratitude

- at having a home to live in,
- at having a job,
- at having food,
- at having a reliable car to drive,
- at having a future retirement,
- that MUUS is nearby,
- for friendly neighbors,
- for life in this moment,
- for challenging projects to work on,
- for dear friends such as Anita Winchester,
- for the *privilege* of being able to help a friend's family as their loved one dies,
- for a sense of blessing from all these blessings.

One wrote that she is grateful that she has the strength and means to help others.

Another wrote of their gratitude for this wonderful congregation as a source of strength, centering, community, and growth. That "even during times of stress, turmoil, and loss, MUUS offers me a balance."

And finally, one of our own writes, "This morning I am grateful for the silence in my home when I can be with my own thoughts and inspired to contemplate what I am most grateful for in light of all that has happened in the past year. I am grateful; for the morning light that has illuminated a special face that I see in the rock cliff in my backyard. The last time I looked I couldn't see it and thought it had been overgrown with moss...but this morning, the light was just right and I could see it clearly...and so it is with my life. I have not had the distancing of time to see fully what the events of the past year have brought into my life. And, I still mourn the deaths I have experienced. But I am grateful for the looking back over my life and being able to have some light shed on what I found difficult at the time, but now see the way each thing that has happened foreshadowed what was to come. I am grateful for all kinds of light, grateful for words, and grateful for the silences where we can truly be at One, with ourselves, each other, the universe, the All that Is.

May it be so.

**\*HYMN 21 "For the Beauty of the Earth" (v. 3-4)**

#### **PRESENTATION OF THE BREAD**

*[The minister or an assistant says these words:]*

We are a gathered community. These United States are a blending of many traditions, many peoples. We are a "growing together."

Being a wonderfully diverse group of people, many traditions and heritages are represented in our congregation. Some of the breads we have had brought include (list breads). **Would those who have brought bread to share each step forward?**

*Have them form a line to bring bread up.*

*As each individual comes forward and places their bread on the table, they state their name and the country or region from which their bread originates. If they choose, they may wear a native costume and speak their native tongue first, before they repeat it in English. Encourage them to **offer their name and the origin of their bread**. After speaking, they return to their table. SS Committee Person breaks their loaf of bread into as many baskets as there are tables, while next person speaks about their loaf of bread.*

### **SHARING OF THE BREAD**

*[When all the people have brought their bread forward and spoken, the following is said by the leader:*

The ingredients of bread include:

corn, wheat, rice – symbolizing the staff and strength of life;

water – representing freshness and purity;

yeast – raising the spirit; sugar – providing for the growth of the yeast;

salt – setting limits of growth for the yeast;

and eggs – enriching and enlivening the texture of the bread.

All these ingredients are mixed, kneaded, raised, punched down for a finer quality, baked, and cooled. Our common table is now laden with the breads of our many heritages, our many strains brought together. But bread, like life, must be shared to be whole, to fulfill a purpose, to embrace and nourish the bittersweet of life. Let us now share the bread. We ask that the basket of bread at each table be passed around the table, and that each person break off small amounts of the different loafs of bread for themselves. We ask, if you can do it, to hold onto the bread, until after we say our covenant. ;-)

**MUSIC** *[for distributing the bread. Basket/trays are taken to each table. (band's choice of music)*

**COVENANT** (in unison)

*Love is the spirit of this society.  
Dwelling together in peace,  
Seeking truth,  
Helping one another,  
Serving human needs,  
Honoring the Earth and all that is,  
This is our covenant.  
For all this, we are grateful.*

**INVITATION FOR FELLOWSHIP & MUSIC** (*band's choice*)

*[After the covenant is spoken, these words:*

From time immemorial, the sign of friendship and welcome reception of strangers has been the sharing of bread and the shared cup. We offer you bread and cider from our common table. Eat, drink, and enjoy our gathered company.

*[People talk and visit while they eat and drink and the Blue Grass group plays.]*

**PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING**

**Rev. Jeanne Lloyd**

These words from Richard Gilbert<sup>4</sup>

I inhale and exhale in regular rhythm,  
An act so common it never occurs to me to pay attention.  
And when I do, I am overwhelmed with the wonder of it all.

I eat my food, as I have done for a thousand thousand days,  
A practice so frequent I hardly notice the miraculous million events that happen in my body.  
And when I do, I am taken with their singular beauty.

I greet my loved ones, as I have greeted them for years,  
A habit that I pass off casually until I realize the deep poignancy of greetings and farewells,  
How precious they are,  
How they touch deeper feeling chords each time.

Perhaps it is middle age, or old age,

---

<sup>4</sup> Richard Gilbert, "The Poignancy of Living In These Days," in *What We Share, Collected Meditations*, Vol. 2, editor: Patricia Frevert, (Boston: Skinner House Books, 2002) 21-22.

Or perhaps sentiment grows in me,  
Or perhaps I am awakening to life in ways transcending my usual semi-awake state  
of being.

The poignancy of living in these days  
Penetrates me, burrows deep into psyche or soul or spirit –  
I know not what.  
I only know that I feel things more deeply with the passing years.  
That the common things of life become uncommon,  
That the ordinary becomes extraordinary,  
That the habitual becomes sacred.

Bittersweet is the poignancy of living in these days.  
I awaken myself,  
And bow down to deep gratitude.

.....  
**SILENCE**

---

*Please rise in body or spirit to sing the song inserted in your Order of Service, called,  
"There is a Time." When we finishing singing, please stand or sit in silence, and let the  
spirit of gratitude for all said and unsaid, penetrate your heart, mind and soul.*

**\*CLOSING HYMN "There Is a Time" by Carolyn McDade** (see insert, all verses)

**CLOSING WORDS & MUSIC (band's choice)**

*(please remain seated to enjoy the music)*

We receive fragments of holiness, glimpses of eternity, brief moments of insight.  
Let us gather them up for the precious gifts that they are, and, renewed by their  
grace, move boldly into the unknown.

~ Sarah York<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> Sally York: <http://www.uua.org/spirituallife/worshipweb/closings/submissions/5406.shtml>  
November 22, 2008

**\*EXTINGUISHING OF THE CHALICE**

"Please join hands for the extinguishing of the chalice."

"We extinguish this flame, but not the light of truth, the warmth of community, or the fire of commitment. These we carry in our hearts until we are together again. Let the congregation say AMEN."

\* You are invited to rise in body or spirit.

Announcements or political statements are inappropriate at this time. When sharing, please be brief.

Please use the portable microphone even if your voice is usually heard. This will enable your voice to be heard.

***The Thanksgiving Ethnic Bread Service***

*This unusual service comes from Rev. John Robinson. It has been celebrated at Eliot Chapel (Unitarian Universalist) in Kirkwood, Missouri, since 1976. Rev. Jeanne's brother-in-law, Rev. Dick Haynes, and his family, are members of Eliot Chapel. It is now so popular that two identical services have to be held so that all can attend. In 1984 the congregation published a delightful Thanksgiving Bread Cookbook called "Shared Repast" featuring many of the breads which have been used in this service.<sup>6</sup>*

---

<sup>6</sup> Adapted from "The Communion Book," edited by Carl Seaburg, UUMA 1993, 41-47.