

“Thanksgiving Family Bread Service”^{©1}
Mattatuck Unitarian Universalist Society
The Rev. Jeanne Lloyd, Minister
Denise Pedane, Director of Religious Education
November 23, 2008

SOUNDING OF THE BELL

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Come, come, whoever you are;
Man, woman, parent, child
Whatever your religious journey,
Whatever your skin color,
Whatever your ability,
Whomever you love-
You are welcome here this morning.
You are welcome at our table.
You are welcome in this religious home.

Good Morning! Welcome to the Mattatuck Unitarian Universalist Society. I am Rev. Jeanne Lloyd, and it is my great pleasure and privilege to serve this 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. If you have questions about Unitarian Universalism or are thinking about joining this congregation, we invite you to join us for coffee/tea after our service today and to speak with me or a member of the Membership Committee. You can recognize them during coffee hour, because they wear gold nametags. Today's special service of thanksgiving is one for all ages, and as such children are welcome to stay in the service.

Announcements:

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. If there are any other MUUS related announcements, you are welcome to share them now (look for people to raise their hands. Have them use the portable microphone.)

Here ends this morning's announcements.

¹ *This unusual service comes from 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.*¹

PRELUDE *Blue Grass Band* ~ Rick Brodsky, Josh Cohen, Frank Infurchia, and Gary Wikfors

OPENING WORDS & CHALICE LIGHTING

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....”²

***GATHERING HYMN #349** *“We Gather Together”*

OFFERTORY & MUSIC

As we take our collection, we invite first time visitors to let the plate/basket pass them by, you are our guests today.

Let us now take an offering to sustain and strengthen this place, which is sacred to so many of us; a community of memory and of hope, for we are now the keepers of the dream. (Braddock Lovely)

WORDS OF THANKSGIVING

Denise Pedane

***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

These words by Richard S. Gilbert adapted from “Thanks Be for These”

For the sound of bow on string,
Of breath over reed,
Of touch on keyboard;

For slants of sunlight through windows,

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

For shimmering shadows on snow,
For the whisper of wind on my face;

For the smooth skin of an apple,
For the caress of a collar on my neck;

For the prickling of my skin when I am deeply moved,
For the pounding of my heart when I run,
For the peace of soul at day’s end;

For familiar voices in family rites,
For the faces of friends in laughter and tears,
For the tender human arms that hold me . . .

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

One member writes:

Every new experience in my life, knowing that everything that happens is another opportunity to learn and grow in G*d’s omnipresence. I’m thankful for my son & daughter & for all the friends and new people I meet almost every day. I’m especially grateful too, for my good health, home, and precious cat. I’m extremely thankful also for the election of our new president who has come just when most needed.

Another member writes: I am grateful for the work of our Board of Directors at addressing the issues of the last year, and bringing us to calmer waters; for Marj Hansen, for consistently providing good music for our services, for caring and hardworking people in our congregation, for our poetry group with Mary Lohmann's guidance, for my dear partner's being, for becoming stronger and gaining better health, for having a home with heat and enough food, for my dear cousin and other precious friendships, for Ct. passing the marriage bill for same sex couples, for our new President winning the election and for living in a country where we can vote, speak out, and work to create a better future, for personal guidances from numerous resources, for rescue workers throughout the world, for courageous reporters, who can cut through politics to report the news, for the earth and nature, struggling in numerous places to survive. For all people, who are working to keep anyone any where as safe from terrorism as possible.

A couple from our congregation writes: we are grateful for financial stability, during these difficult economic times generally speaking but also in a world when others struggle simply to survive. Even though we tend to work more hours than we are ever compensated for and deal

with difficult people and stressful days, steady jobs allow us to do a lot for ourselves and for others – a blessed dichotomy! We have health and the love of family & friends. And we have each other - something I am particularly grateful for, having survived abuse in the past. Having removed myself from that cycle I am forever blessed by the care and respect that I now receive and am able to give in partnership with someone else. Thanksgiving for us is a time to consciously reflect on these kinds of things that we tend otherwise to forget or ignore, and to give them their proper place.

Another member writes:

Our son’s brush with serious illness was a reminder of how life can turn on a dime, and that each day of health is something to be grateful for. Along with this experience came a true gratitude that insurance coverage was available to my child when so many among us struggle without it. I am also grateful for the strong spiritual support that MUUS provides. I have a new sense of excitement attending Sunday mornings.

CONGREGATION IS INVITED TO THOSE THINGS FOR WHICH THEY ARE GRATEFUL

³For the flashes of memories that linger,
For the mysterious moments that beckon,
For the particularity of this instant;

For the silence of moon-lit nights;
For the sound of rain on my roof,
Of wind in dry leaves,
Of waves caressing the shore;

For the softness of summer breezes,
For the crispness of autumn air,
For dark shadows on white snow,
For the resurrection of spring,
For the faithful turning of the seasons;

For angular, leafless trees,
For gentle hills rolling in the distance,
For meandering streams seeking an unseen sea;

³ Richard S. Gilbert adapted from “Thanks Be for These”

For cornstalks at still attention,
And brittle plants bristling past their prime,
For unharvested gardens returning plants to enrich the soil;

For the sight of familiar faces,
The sound of our spoken names,
The welcoming embrace of outstretched arms;

For the ritual of friendship,
Reminding us we matter:
Thanks be for these.

***HYMN 21 “For the Beauty of the Earth” (v. 3-4)**

PRESENTATION OF THE BREAD

We are a gathered community. America is 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. Would those who have brought bread to share each step forward?

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. [Please wait before eating.]

MUSIC *[for distributing the bread. Basket/trays are taken to each table.]*

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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

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.

Children/youth serve cider in small cups to the congregation. 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 Gilbert⁴

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,

⁴ 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.

How they touch deeper feeling chords each time.
Perhaps it is middle age, or old age,
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.

CLOSING HYMN No. 389 “Gathered Here”(sung as a round)

SILENCE

CLOSING WORDS & EXTINGUISHING OF THE CHALICE

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 York⁵

POSTLUDE

[Everyone sits for closing Blue Grass postlude.]

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