***GIVING THANKS ~ THE SPIRIT OF GRATITUDE***

SECOND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH SUNDAY FORUM

November 22, 2020

Good morning. Welcome everyone. Here we are today, part of the 13.8 billion year unfolding journey of the Universe, on the outer fringe of the Milky Way Galaxy, one of trillions of galaxies; the third rock from the sun of an ordinary solar system, part of a 4.8 billion year emerging Planet Earth Story, on one several moving platelets upon which our continent, North America presently resides, and part of a human created nation, state, and Missouri and Mississippi watersheds and bioregions, land first inhabited by the Osage, Ioway, Oto, Missouria, the Shawnee, Delaware, Algonquin, Kaskaskia, the Cherokee, Cahokia, Illineweh and Oneata—

Original Nations of this part of Turtle Island who have much Truth-telling to share about living as human beings with reverence and gratitude in this Web of Life and as part of this nation.

Meister Eckart once said:

***If the only prayer you ever say in your entire life is thank you, it will be enough.***

I invite us to begin this morning with two prayers: the first from our Judeo Christian tradition and the second from the Native American Tradition.

 **PSALM 100**

**All Lands Summoned to Praise God**

 **A Psalm of thanksgiving.**

**1**Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth.
**2**    Worship the Lord with gladness;
    come into God’s presence with singing.

**3**Know that the Lord is God.
    It is God that made us, and we are God’s;[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+100&version=NRSV" \l "fen-NRSV-15512a" \o "See footnote a)]
    we are God’s people, and the sheep of God’s pasture.

**4**EnterGod’s gates with thanksgiving,
    and God’s courts with praise.
    Give thanks the Lord, bless God’s name.

**5**For the Lord is good;
    God’s steadfast love endures forever,

 and God’s faithfulness to all generations.

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I invite you to stand and with heart, mind, body and soul, step into each step of this prayer.

A Three Step Morning Prayer

**First Step:** Plant your feet firmly on the earth. Using your five senses, give thanks to our Creator God for the countless ways God comes to us through creation- for all the beauty that your eyes see, for all the sounds that your ears ear, for all the scents that you smell, the tastes that you taste, for all that you feel (the sun, wind, rain, snow, warm, or cold). Pray this day that you may be open and attuned to the countless ways that our Creator God comes to us through your senses, through the gifts of creation.

**Second Step:** Let go of all the pain, struggle, regret, failures, garbage of yesterday - step out of it - leave it behind- brush the dust of it from your feet.

**Third Step**: With this third and final step, step into the gift of the new day, full of hope, promise, and potential. Give thanks for the gift of this new day, which God has made!

Amen.

*- Jos*e*Hobday*

During the day, as you encounter anxiety or being overwhelmed, just take the three steps without words with your whole body, and let your body help you get grounded in your senses and all creation, give thanks, and let go.

Today is the Reign of Christ Sunday—the last Sunday of the Liturgical Church Year, lifting up the birth, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus and the affirmation of his proclamation of G-O-D’s Kin-dom on Earth as in Heaven. It is also Thanksgiving Sunday/the Season of Thanksgiving, So, it is very appropriate that we are taking this opportunity to reflect on GIVING THANKS, THE SPIRIT OF GRATITUDE that is the foundation and well-spring of a healthy life and spiritual formation. It is easy to “give thanks” when all is going well in our lives. What does it mean, as stated in Paul’s Letter to the Thessalonians, *to give thanks in all circumstances*?

**SECULAR TRADITION OF GIVING THANKS**:

Prompted by secular national Thanksgiving Day, declared a holiday on the fourth Thursday of November by President Abraham Lincoln in 1863 to:

-pull together the divided country during the Civil War;

-commemorate the first Thanksgiving of the Pilgrims and American Indians in 1621 at

 Plymouth;

-celebrate and prompted by the returning to Massachusetts the lost book of Plymouth

 written by William Bradford, one of the original leaders of the Plymouth Colony

 and the second governor for 30 years.

President George Washington was the first to declare a Day of Thanksgiving, but neither a specific day nor a holiday. It was a day of thanksgiving and remembrance of the harvest meals shared by the Pilgrims and Wampanoags after a disastrous winter after their arrival in Plymouth in December of 1620 during which half of the colonists died. Their survival was due to the

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Wampanoags who helped them with a defensive alliance and planting of crops. It was a memorial to those settlers who had died and also Indians who had died a couple years earlier from a plague brought to northeast by French or English fishermen.

 Over the centuries this event has become mythologized, celebrated as a happy feast with pilgrim hats, turkeys and Indian feathers.

For Native Americans, it is often seen as a Day of Mourning, remembering the consequences of their genocide by people whom they welcomed as immigrants to a new land and to whom they had helped survive, ultimately at their own expense.

**JUDEO-CHRISTIAN TRADITION OF GIVIN G THANKS**

-As with Psalm 100, the Hebrew Scriptures of full of prayers and expressions of Giving Thanks, a spirit of gratitude, an attitude of living.

-In the New Testament, Paul writes in his first Letter to the Thessalonians, which is the first book written in the New Testament books, in a time of trial:



He didn’t say, give thanks **for** all circumstances, but give thanks **in** all circumstances.

As Jesus broke bread with his disciples, he gave thanks and distributed the bread.

The center of life for the Christian Church is Communion, the Common Meal or **The Eucharist**, from the Greek work **Eucharisto**, meaning **giving thanks**. Prefacing the blessing of the bread and wine, is The Great Prayer of Thanksgiving—for Creation, God, Jesus, the Spirit, the Cloud of Witnesses, the Church. And following the giving of the bread and cup, is the prayer of thanksgiving. Thanksgiving bookends the communion service and thus is a model for our receiving and sharing the life we have been gifted to live.

-A beautiful expression of this attitude lived in the midst of difficult circumstances is the hymn *NOW THANK WE ALL OUR GOD,* written by German Lutheran minister Martin Rinkart in 1637 in the midst of the 30 years’ war and at the height of a severe plague sweeping Europe, during which he conducted 50 burials a day, one year burying 4,000—many members of his

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community, church and family, including his wife. An example of giving thanks in all circumstances.

*NOW THANK WE ALL OUR GOD*

*Now thank we all our God, with heart and hands and voices,
Who wondrous things has done, in Whom this world rejoices;
Who from our mothers’ arms has blessed us on our way
With countless gifts of love, and still is ours today.*

*Oh, may this bounteous God through all our life be near us,
With ever joyful hearts and blessed peace to cheer us;
And keep us in His grace, and guide us when perplexed;
And guard us through all ills in this world, till the next!*

*All praise and thanks to God the Father now be given,
The Son, and Him Who reigns with Them in highest Heaven—
The one eternal God, Whom earth and Heav’n adore;
For thus it was, is now, and shall be evermore.*

**NATIVE AMERICAN TRADITION OF GIVING THANKS**

Thousands of years before the Judeo-Christian Tradition in what is now the continent of North America, known to them as Turtle Island, for Indigenous People, giving thanks to the Great Creator and Spirit of Life was a core of their Life Way and spirituality. An example of this are the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois Confederation) whose first act upon gathering is a prayer of thanksgiving for everything which could take minutes or hours. Below are links to such prayers.

['A Haudenosaunee "Thanksgiving" Prayer' A Native American Prayer.](https://search.aol.com/click/_ylt%3DAwrgDdo7gLVf73wAm1ZpCWVH%3B_ylu%3DY29sbwNncTEEcG9zAzMEdnRpZAMEc2VjA3Ny/RV%3D2/RE%3D1605759164/RO%3D10/RU%3Dhttps%3A//www.firstpeople.us/html/A-Haudenosaunee-Thanksgiving-Prayer.html/RK%3D0/RS%3DF2a5NVpFiK7yEAzysvseA1C6A5Y-)

www.firstpeople.us/html/A-Haudenosaunee...

A Native American Prayer titled 'A Haudenosaunee 'Thanksgiving' Prayer'. A Haudenosaunee "Thanksgiving" Prayer. Except for the words "Greetings to the Natural World," the words in bold are not meant to be said.

[A Native American Thanksgiving Prayer - Molly Larkin](https://search.aol.com/click/_ylt%3DAwrgDdo7gLVf73wAnFZpCWVH%3B_ylu%3DY29sbwNncTEEcG9zAzQEdnRpZAMEc2VjA3Ny/RV%3D2/RE%3D1605759164/RO%3D10/RU%3Dhttps%3A//mollylarkin.com/a-native-american-thanksgiving-prayer//RK%3D0/RS%3DO8fopK8mTopKFLXD2obuSaZv7JQ-)

mollylarkin.com/a-native-american-thanksgiving...

A Native American Thanksgiving Prayer. Thanksgiving prayer is common to most religious groups. Native Americans had days-long ceremonies just for the purpose of expressing thanks. I find it sad that in modern America, Thanksgiving has become more about a meal than gratitude for all we have. This Thanksgiving Prayer comes from the Seneca Nation in the Northeastern United States and is at least 500 years old.

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**OUR UNDERSTANDING AND EXPERIENCE OF GIVING THANKS**

This week we having begun or paused during the day or ended our day by reflecting on moments or arenas of gratitude—at least 5 “things” each day. Perhaps this helped us plumb the depth of what gratitude means. Perhaps a single things opened the door to a whole universe of thanksgiving.

For example, seeing a beautiful rose might elicit thanksgiving for its beauty, intricacy, aroma, pattern. Perhaps reflecting deeper brings an expression of thanksgiving and wonder for how it is nourished water from the soil through its stem, and for the gift of soil and water. Or perhaps a deep gratitude for the pollinators which spread its seed and create other food and benefit for a larger ecosystem.

Or perhaps you notice something that irritates you or you grumble about. You complain about the drilling in the street outside until you experience gratitude for the workers and a repaired road. Or you grumble about doing dishes until you experience gratitude for the fact that you have food. And so on.

We begin to experience giving thanks not for all things but in all things. Our giving thanks is not totally dependent upon our circumstances. Rather it is our attitude to them. Gratitude is spirit and also decisional. It is being present to a situation, a moment. Being conscious.

So, reflecting together:

1-What was your first response when you received this invitation to record your experiences of giving thanks?

2-What triggered a spirit of gratitude in you this week—at the beginning of the week? The middle? The end?

3-What surprised you about his exercise? How did it make you feel? Other responses?

4-What did you discover about yourself? How has it changed you? About living a life of gratitude?

5-What will you take away from this week’s experience that will be helpful to you as you continue your journey?