

**November 22, 2020**  
**Thanksgiving Service: Celebrating Gratitude and Generosity**



“Gratitude therefore takes nothing for granted, is never unresponsive, is constantly awakening to new wonder and to praise of the goodness of God. For the grateful person knows that God is good, not by hearsay but by experience. And that is what makes all the difference.” - **Thomas Merton**

"Blessed are those who give without remembering. And blessed are those who take without forgetting." - **Bernard Meltzer**

“That's what I consider true generosity: You give your all, and yet you always feel as if it costs you nothing.” - **Simone de Beauvoir**

“Even after all this time the Sun never says to the Earth, ‘You owe me.’ Look what happens with a love like that, it lights the whole sky.” - **Hafiz**

## **ORDER OF WORSHIP**

**PRELUDE:** “Come, Ye Thankful People Come” words: Henry Alford and Anna Barnaul.  
music: George J. Elvey, *Patty Meyer*, organ

## **GREETING/WELCOME/ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Good morning and welcome! My name is Elisa Lucozzi and I am pastor to the beloved community that is Guilford Community Church. We're so glad you have joined us this morning for our Thanksgiving service, a celebration of gratitude and generosity.

One of the ways we are giving to each other this year, is by working hard to keep each other safe from this COVID virus, so although we really miss being together in person, we continue to gather online, because we love and care about our congregation and our community, because we want to maintain physical distancing in a way that helps us to feel connected, but also keeps us all safe. Although it is hard to be physically distant from one another, we also know that it can't keep our hearts from connecting and we know it is indeed the best way of caring for one another right now. Let us keep creating new ways of being church, because we know that being church has nothing to do with a building and everything to do with loving each other. Let us gather to be the church in a new way with a welcome wide enough for all.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

Rob – Thanksgiving food  
Al Franklin – Special Collection for Kenya

Introduction to Advent movie

First Sunday of Advent – “I Believe Even When...” series

## **Land Acknowledgement**

Since 1970, Native Americans have gathered on Cole’s Hill near Plymouth Rock, to commemorate the National Day of Mourning, on what most of the rest of us celebrate as Thanksgiving. I think one way to celebrate Thanksgiving and honor the National Day of Mourning is to remember that if it hadn’t been for the kindness and generosity of Native Americans, who provided food and friendship to the pilgrims, those refugees fleeing religious persecution, none of us would be standing on this land right now.

So, as we begin today, let us acknowledge and honor this land we occupy by honoring and acknowledging those First Nation people to whom this land belongs:

We gather here on the bank of the Broad Brook  
In the shadow of the great Mount Wantastiquet  
In the valley of the rushing Connecticut  
to worship and discern together the call of God  
to the United Church of Christ for these days,  
let us know that we do so on the hunting grounds  
and homelands of the Mahican and Penacook people,  
as well as the southernmost members of the Abenaki  
Tribe.  
These people used this land since time immemorial  
and are still among us in the present.  
We offer them our gratitude and respect,  
Our repentance and hope in solidarity with them...

**It is a Holy Communion we share of life on earth,  
of past and present, of pain and reconciliation,  
of mystery and majesty...let us begin.**

## **LIGHTING OF THE CANDLES AND SILENT MEDITATION**

We light our candles this morning in the spirit of Thanksgiving,  
with love, hope, and generosity of spirit,  
grateful for this blessed opportunity for our spirits to be bound together.

## **CALL TO WORSHIP**

(based on Psalm 100)

Come before the Lord with joyful songs,  
because God is good,  
because God is generous,  
because we lack nothing.

**Let us enter God's gates with thanksgiving  
and God's courts with praise.**

Serve the Lord with gladness,  
because of God's greatness and justice,  
because God puts an end to war,  
and to all forms of violence.

**Let us enter God's gates with thanksgiving  
and God's courts with praise.**

Come before the Lord with joy  
because God is faithful to God's promises,  
because God's Word is eternal.

**Let us enter God's gates with thanksgiving  
and God's courts with praise.**

Know that the Lord is God,  
and we are God's people,  
God's community, God's family.

**Let us enter God's gates with thanksgiving  
and God's courts with praise.**

**OPENING HYMN: #23 "We Gather Together"**

Words from *Nederlantche Gedencklanck* (1626); Dutch melody arranged by Edward Kremser (1894). *Sung by the GCC Virtual Choir with Patty Meyer, pianist*

## We Gather Together

1. We gath - er to - geth - er to ask for your bless - ing, you chas - ten and  
 2. Be - side us to guide us, O God, with us join - ing, or - dain - ing, main -  
 3. We all do ex - tol you, our lead - er tri - um - phant, and pray that you

has - ten your will to make known; the wick - ed op - press - ing now cease from dis -  
 tain - ing, re - deem - ing our world; so from the be - gin - ning the fight we were  
 still our de - fend - er will be. Let your con - gre - ga - tion es - cape trib - u -

ress - ing. We praise your name, O God; for - get not your own.  
 win - ning; Lord, you were at our side; we trust in your word.  
 la - tion. Your name be ev - er praised! O Lord, make us free!

**PRAYER OF INVOCATION/OPENING PRAYER**

i thank You God for most this amazing  
 day: for the leaping greenly spirits of trees  
 and a blue true dream of sky;  
 and for everything  
 which is natural which is infinite which is yes  
 (i who have died am alive again today  
 and this is the sun's birthday;  
 this is the birth day of life and of love and wings;  
 and of the gay great happening illimitably earth)

how should tasting touching hearing seeing  
breathing any--lifted from the no  
of all nothing--human merely being doubt unimaginable you?

(now the ears of my ears awake and  
now the eyes of my eyes are opened)  
+ e e cummings

### **PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

Leader: Alice Walker wrote: "But one day when I was sitting quiet and feeling like a motherless child, which I was, it come to me: that feeling of being part of everything, not separate at all. I knew that if I cut a tree, my arm would bleed. And I laughed and cried and I run all around the house. I knew just what it was. In fact, when it happen, you can't miss it...I think it pisses God off if you walk by the color purple somewhere and don't notice it."

**All: Every day, we walk by the color purple,  
or green, or yellow, or blue,  
and we don't notice it.**

Leader: Every day, we refuse to hear  
the sound of laughter,  
or footsteps, or birdsong,  
or weeping.

**All: Every day, God's extravagant gifts surround us  
and fill us and connect us  
with every one and every thing,  
and we don't notice it.**

### **Silence**

### **ASSURANCE**

Leader: Come and hear what God has done:  
Even when we don't notice,  
God's extravagant gifts continue  
to surround us  
and fill us  
and connect us  
with every one and every thing,  
showering our lives with grace.

**CHILDREN'S STORY:** The Thanksgiving Door by Debby Atwell, *Robin Davis*

### **PRAYER FOR THE CHILDREN**

**CHILDREN'S HYMN:** "Count Your Blessings"

Words by Johnson Oatman, Jr. (1897); sung by Robin and Andy Davis

## **SCRIPTURE READINGS:** *Rachel Bell*

### **Colossians 3:12-15**

<sup>12</sup> Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. <sup>13</sup> Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. <sup>14</sup> And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. <sup>15</sup> Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.

### **Philippians 4:4-9**

<sup>4</sup> Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. <sup>5</sup> Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. <sup>6</sup> Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. <sup>7</sup> And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. <sup>8</sup> Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. <sup>9</sup> Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

**CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE:** Hymn #617 "Write These Words in Our Hearts"

### **ANTHEM:** "Build a Bridge"

From Alvin Slaughter, learned from Kathy Bullock, *GCC Virtual Choir*. *Andy Davis, piano and soloist*

### **SERMON:** From HopeLESS to GrateFULL

Two men were walking through a field one day when they spotted an enraged bull. Instantly, they darted toward the nearest fence. The storming bull followed in hot pursuit, and it was soon apparent they wouldn't make it. Terrified, the one shouted to the other, "Put up a prayer, John. We're in for it!" John answered, "I can't. I've never made a public prayer in my life." "But you must!" implored his companion. "The bull is catching up to us." "All right," panted John, "I'll say the only prayer I know, the one my father used to repeat at the table: 'O Lord, for what we are about to receive, make us truly thankful.'"

I invite you to pray with me - *May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be acceptable in your sight loving and gracious God. Amen*

Sounds like John's father knew this quote from Meister Eckhardt - "If the only prayer you ever say in your entire life is thank you, it will be enough."

### **From HopeLESS to GrateFULL**

Over the last few weeks we've been talking about hope – how does one remain hopeful in the face of so much suffering, division and pain, hope in the face of an apocalyptic world? Hope or sometimes the lack of it? Hope as a discipline and how our words and even more than that our

actions can help manifest hope in ourselves and others? That's where we enter into today's "thanksgiving" service.

It makes me think of this profound bit of wisdom from the prophet Mary Oliver which says – "it is a serious thing / just to be alive / on this fresh morning / in this broken world."

### **Thanks Living – Thanksgiving everyday**

As is often true in Paul's letter to budding new Christian communities, he is reminding them of what it means to live a life in Christ. Paul's message to the community in Phillippe gives us a message of how we are to live. He begins with "rejoice". And not just to rejoice when things are great but "rejoice always".

<sup>4</sup>Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I will say, Rejoice.

<sup>5</sup>Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near.

<sup>6</sup>Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

It sounds good doesn't it? Rejoice anyhow, rejoice even when the chips are down, even when this pandemic will force us to spend the holidays separated from our families. "Do not worry about anything." Really Paul? Really?!

Then in his letter to the Colossians, Paul invited us to practice compassion, kindness, humility, meekness and patience with one another and also to forgive one another. It ends - *Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.* He adds "And be thankful".

As I kept reading it over and over again something struck me – he didn't say thank God for all that you have. He said "be thankful" – be grateful. He is asking the community to embody gratitude, to make it a part of who they are, to move from thanks giving, to thanks living.

So, perhaps instead of it being an afterthought, as it might have seemed since it appeared at the end of his list, perhaps he meant it to be the foundation for all the other ways of being he asked of the community. When we practice gratitude intentionally, when we make it a part of who we are, of course it changes our individual lives, but it also changes a congregation. When we practice gratitude, we come to worship, not just to "get something out of it" but to give thanks and praise to God. Through this kind of prayer and gratitude, the mission of a church can be transformed, from ethical duty, to the work of grateful hands and hearts.

I have in the past entitled my Thanksgiving service sermon - "Gratitude in Abundance" because, let's face it, it is far easier to be grateful when you have a lot or when things are going your way. How easy it is to be grateful for big things like being healed from a terrible illness or winning the lottery.

The line comes from another of Mary Oliver's poems called "The Uses of Sorrow":

*"Someone I loved once gave me a box full of darkness.  
It took me years to understand that this too, was a gift."*

What if we were instead of being grateful for every single thing around us, yes, even the hard stuff. If you are truly grateful for *everything* you have, then it's easier to see the abundance you are blessed with.

Rev. Traci Blackmon, our denomination's Associate General Minister of Justice & Local Church Ministries, cautions us about how we think about suffering. She says "I don't believe in a theology that says that God has to make us suffer for any divine purpose, but I do believe the things we have gone through and the suffering we've endured, is to make us compassionate, and make us sensitive, and make us aware that other people suffer too."

What does it mean to truly adopt an attitude of gratitude, meaning letting gratitude permeate your very being? How would our lives and the world be transformed if we approached *everything* first by being grateful, how our lives would move from being empty, hopeless – because we recognize all the gifts and graces around us every day to being full?

Writer Anne Lamott says her two favorite prayers are in the morning, "Help me. Help me. Help me," and at bedtime, "Thank you, Thank you. Thank you." This, for me, is the ultimate summary – *hopeless* – "help me" to *gratefull* – "thank you" May we *be* grate-filled, embody gratitude. May we make thanks giving be every day. May we embody thanks living so that we can truly have gratitude in abundance. "Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen, and the God of peace will be with you." Amen.

**PASTORAL PRAYER:** "Blessing of Enough" by Jan Richardson

I know how small	these words
this blessing seems;	there is a space
just a morsel	where a table
that hardly matches	has been laid
the sharp hunger	a feast
you carry inside you.	has been prepared
But trust me	all has been
when I say—	made ready
though I can scarcely	for you
believe it myself—	and it will be
that between	enough
and behind	and more.
and beneath	

**ANTHEM:** "Gratitude" from the *For the People Concert*

Words by Isaac Watts; Music by Alexander Gillet (1803). From "Northern Harmony" published by Tony Barrant, Larry Gordon and Carole Moody Crompton. Performed by the GCC 9:00 Choir and Choir of the Community, November 11, 2017.

**Introduction to Prayers of the People:**

This is the time in our service where I invite your prayers – prayers of concern or sorrow, prayers of celebration and joy. If you have something or someone you would like our gathering to pray for you can type it into the comments section that accompanies this live feed.

## **PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE** *Judy and Chip Siler*

Gracious and loving God, we give you thanks today that we are able to gather in the presence of your Beloved Community, one Body of Christ. Thank you also for the healing and hope which has come to us this week and for your Strength and Love in our lives.

Because you are so ready to hear our prayers, and so willing to give us hope and healing, we ask that you bless all these who we now name:

We offer up prayers for those who have recently received a diagnosis that is life-threatening or life changing, those who have just had surgery or who are awaiting surgery, those who are awaiting test results and diagnosis. May they find your Comfort and Presence in this time of suffering.

For those who struggling daily with a chronic illness, cancer or other life threatening illnesses, mental illness or addiction. Give them peace and health.

For those who are grieving the loss of a spouse, any family member, friend or a pet. Give them comfort.

Let us pray for the ones most affected by the choices we make in all we do, may we keep the merciful face of Christ ever before us who is seen in those who are poor, refugees, or migrants, those who are sick or without homes, those without food or work, and those whose lives are unvalued.

Let us pray for our nation and for every one of us so infected with the virus of racism. May we have the courage now, finally, once and for all to face our own complacency and dismantle the systems of oppression that keep us *all* from truly being free.

We pray for the **251,958\*** in our country and the over one million worldwide who have died from the Corona virus, every single soul precious, every single one someone's heart. May their families and loved ones, friends and colleagues know some measure of comfort as they grieve. May they know that they do not grieve alone. For the all those struggling with this horrible virus – fighting for their lives in an ICU or in their homes. May they know healing. For those who have been tested and are waiting for their results - we offer prayers of comfort. We pray for all those risking their very lives to care for those who are ill.

Through this time of unknowing, this time of transition, may we learn to love each other despite our differences and focus on the work that continues beyond this moment: the work of justice, respect for one another and peace in our land - the work of love.

For all that is good and just, even and especially in the midst of the suffering, grief and loss of so many we give offer prayers of thanksgiving for ....

Now let us say together the prayer that Jesus taught us using whatever words help us to embody its promise. May we bring about one small glimpse of the (kingdom) of God, a kin-dom where all are well, all are fed and free, where all are whole, where all know love, where *all* are beloved.

Let us pray: Our Father, (Our Father/Mother, Our Creator) who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name. Thy kingdom (kin-dom) come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespasses against us and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom (kin-dom) and the power and the glory now and forever. Amen.

\*As of Monday, November 16, 2020

**CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE: #278 “Hear Our Prayer, Oh Lord”**

## **OFFERTORY**

### **CALL TO OFFERING**

Generosity may come as an impulse,  
but it is cultivated by the practice of regular giving.  
Let us today move from beliefs to actions that make a difference in the world.  
We give in gratitude for God’s gifts to us,  
and we give because we need to live beyond ourselves.  
Use this time of offering as an opportunity  
to grow and to grow the realm of God.

Supporting the church and the mission of the church is more important than ever. You can still send in your weekly offerings to the church via US mail **38 Church Dr. Guilford, VT 05301** or consider using our online "offering plate" by going to the church’s website and clicking the PayPal donation button on the home page. So now let us gather up all these offerings as well as the offering of our time and talents and dedicate them to continuing the work of our still speaking God.

## **DOXOLOGY**

### **PRAYER OF DEDICATION**

**God of abundance, we give these offerings of material goods as our commitment to give back to you and to care for your people. Let our giving remind us to see Jesus all around us. Use our offerings of money and of our lives for ministry to your purposes. Amen.**

### **CLOSING HYMN: #27 “Now Thank We All Our God”**

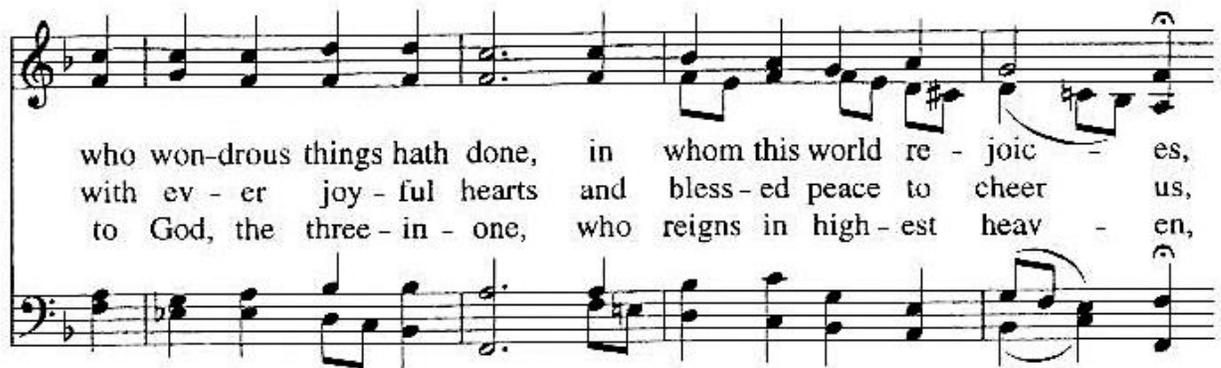
Words by Martin Rinkart (1636); Music by Johann Crüger (1647). Sung by Cathy Hess, Fred Breunig and Connie Green with Patty Meyer, organist

# Now Thank We All Our God

27



1. Now thank we all our God with heart and hands and voices,  
2. O may this bounteous God through all our life be near us,  
3. All praise and thanks to God almighty now be given;



who wondrous things hath done, in whom this world rejoices,  
with ever joyful hearts and blessed peace to cheer us,  
to God, the three-in-one, who reigns in highest heaven,



who, from our mothers' arms, hath blessed us on our way  
and keep us in all grace, and guide us when perplexed,  
the one eternal God, whom earth and heaven adore,



with countless gifts of love, and still is ours to-day.  
and free us from all ills in this world and the next.  
for thus it was, is now, and shall be evermore.

## **BENEDICTION**

“In the end, though, maybe we must all give up trying to pay back the people in this world who sustain our lives. In the end, maybe it's wiser to surrender before the miraculous scope of human generosity and to just keep saying thank you, forever and sincerely, for as long as we have voices.” — Elizabeth Gilbert

## **THREEFOLD AMEN**

**POSTLUDE:** We Plow the Field and Scatter. Words: Matthias Claudias and Jane M. Campbell.  
Music: Johann A.P. Shulz

## **For further prayer and reflection**

[How Gratitude Changes You and Your Brain](#)

[Want to be happy? Be grateful a TED talk by Br. David Steindl-Rast](#)

[Practicing Gratitude: A Monastic Guide by Br. Curtis Almquist, SSJE](#)

[Gratefulness.org](#) - A Network for Grateful Living is a global organization offering online and community-based educational programs and practices which inspire and guide a commitment to grateful living, and catalyze the transformative power of personal and societal responsibility. There are places on this website that lead you through gratefulness exercises and even a free online gratitude journal.

More music:

[Thank You Lord \(ft. Thomas Rhett & Florida Georgia Line\)](#)

[Again I Say Rejoice- Israel & New Breed](#)

[All Good Gifts from Godspell](#)