

# **INTERFAITH SERVICE OF THANKSGIVING**



## *Many Voices - One Message of Thanksgiving*

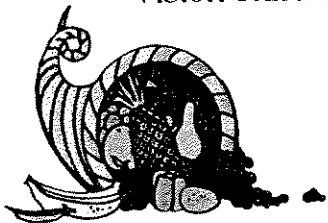
**Annual Community Interfaith Thanksgiving Service  
Sunday, November 19, 2006, 7:00 pm**

**Unity Church of Oak Park  
405 N. Euclid Ave, Oak Park, IL**

*Called by our spiritual experience to be a Tent of Meeting,  
we affirm and honor the diverse ways in which the One we call God leads and blesses all  
peoples and brings us together. This common insight leads us to value a harmony of respect  
and individuality in persons and religious traditions.*

*From this vantage point, we hope to foster community among communities,  
to speak with a common moral voice in our own community,  
and to sponsor events and activities which affirm the worth and dignity  
of all whom God has created.*

**-Vision statement adopted by the Community of Congregations, May, 1996.**



**PRELUDE:** "Air on the G String" J.S. Bach

**TIME OF WELCOME:** Rev. Helice Greene, Co-Minister of Unity Church

**INTRODUCTION OF SERVICE:** Rev. Dwight Bailey, President, Community of Congregations

**PROCESSIONAL GATHERING HYMN:** "Lift Every Voice and Sing" (insert)

**SERVICE AND READINGS AND PRAYERS**  
**TEXTS AND PRAYERS OF ONE MESSAGE OF THANKSGIVING**

**Baha'i Community of Oak Park:** Robert Williams  
*Selection from book entitled: Baha'i World Faith*

O ye friends of God! Be kind to all peoples and nations, have love for all of them, exert yourselves to purify the hearts as much as you can, and bestow abundant effort in rejoicing the souls. Be ye a sprinkling of rain to every meadow and a water of life to every tree. Be ye as fragrant musk to every nostril and a soul-refreshing breeze to every invalid. Be ye salutary water to every thirsty one, a wise guide to every one led astray, an affectionate father or mother to every orphan, and, in the utmost joy and fragrance, a son or daughter to every one bent with age. Be ye a rich treasure to every indigent one; consider love and union as a delectable paradise, and count annoyance and hostility as a torment of hell-fire. Exert with your soul; seek no rest in body; supplicate and beseech with your heart and search for divine assistance and favor, in order that ye may make this world the Paradise of Abha and this terrestrial globe the arena of the Supreme Kingdom. If ye make an effort, it is certain that these lights will shine, this cloud of mercy shall rain, the soul-nourishing breeze shall waft, and the scent of this most fragrant musk be diffused.

**Vajrayana Buddhist Center:** Kelsang Wangden  
*From Eight Verses of Training the Mind by Geshe Langri Tangpa (11<sup>th</sup> C)*

"When others out of jealousy Harm me or insult me, May I take defeat upon myself and offer them the victory. In short, may I directly and indirectly offer help and happiness to all my mothers, and secretly take upon myself all their harm and suffering."

In Buddhism, when we meditate on the kindness of others, we are not focusing on their motivation, but simply on the benefit that we receive. All the facilities we take for granted, such as houses, cars, shops, and hospitals, the food we eat, the clothes we wear, the computers we use, these are all are produced solely through others' kindness. The fact that some of the people who help us may have no intention of doing so is irrelevant. We receive benefit from their actions, so from our point of view this is a kindness. Rather than focusing on their motivation, which in any case we do not know, we should focus on the practical benefit we receive. And give thanks.

**Hindu:** Govinda Pillay  
*Thanksgiving Prayer*

We are once again thankful for the bountiful harvest to celebrate Thanksgiving. The harvest is an investment for robust health and happiness. In the midst of this bounty why is there strife, war and destruction? The answer is distrust, fear and anger. The cause is lack of synchrony in neural function. The remedy goes beyond good nutrition, exercise and prayer. It needs focused, persistent positive feelings and attitude. The juxtaposition of prayer and anger is an anomaly caused by preponderance of prevailing dissonance. Slow abdominal breathing and meditation will go a long way to overcome this anomaly. Let us all pray that we reflect on these issues and adopt a positive attitude to ensure sustainable peace worldwide by working with small groups and communities and spreading the mantra.

**Thanksgiving Responsive Reading**

Worship Adonai in gladness: come before God before God with joy.

***Enter God's gates with thanksgiving;***

***With gratitude sing out God's praise..***

Adonai, Creator of the heavens and the earth,  
Provides food for the hungry with mercy,  
And brings justice to the oppressed.

***Praise the Creator who works great wonders,***

***Who enables us from birth , who treats us with compassion,***

God covers the sky with clouds, sending rain,  
Bringing forth bread from the earth to sustain us,  
Providing wind to gladden the human heart.

***God has brought peace to our borders***

***And has satisfied us with choice wheat.***

God has, blessed us with liberty;  
With noble dreams, and with the pursuit of happiness

***Give thanks to Adonai, for God is good.***

***God's love endures forever.***

God crowns the year with goodness,  
And the fields yield a rich harvest.

***The hills are covered with happiness,***

***And the meadows are clothed with sheep;***

***The valleys, adorned with corn***

How shall we thank God for our blessings? '

***Let us share our bread with the hungry;***

***Let us not turn away from the needy.***

Clothe the naked and shelter the homeless,  
Help those who have no help.

***Let us not take our blessings for granted.***

***Let us share them with others, with thanks.***

Sing a new song for Adonai

'Where the faithful gather, let God be praised.

***Let us share in that love with our life.***

**Oak Park Monthly Meeting of Friends: Helen R. Dickinson**  
*2 minutes of silence*

**Unity Temple - Unitarian Universalist: Ana Porter**  
*The Oversoul-by Ralph Waldo Emerson*

Let us learn the revelation of all nature and thought; that the Highest dwells within us, that the sources of nature are in our own minds. As there is no screen or ceiling between our heads and the infinite heavens, so there is no bar or wall in the soul where we, the effect, cease, and God, the cause, begins. I am constrained every moment to acknowledge a higher origin for events than the will I call mine. There is deep power in which we exist and whose beatitude is accessible to us. Every moment when the individual feels invaded by it is memorable. It comes to the lowly and simple; it comes to whosoever will put off what is foreign and proud; it comes as insight; it comes as serenity and grandeur. The soul's health consists in the fullness of its reception. Forever and ever the influx of this better and more universal self is new and unsearchable. Within us is the soul of the whole; the wise silence, the universal beauty to which every part and particle is equally related; the eternal One. When it breaks through our intellect, it is genius, when it breathes through our will, it is virtue; when it flows through our affections, it is love.

**Unity Church of Oak Park: Rev. Diane Venzera**  
*Psalm of Thanksgiving by Jean B. Grover*

What is it, to be thankful? It is to say, with mind and heart, "I am glad - for food and friends and daily bread, for roof above and floor beneath, for sun and flowers and cloudless sky. I am glad?"  
Yes, it is this - but more. It is to see beauty in all things, in shadow and in light, in the commonplace, and the glorious; in rain, and wind, and bare, brown earth, to see with the eyes of the heart. It is to feel - with heart and mind and soul; to feel the rhythm of the earth, the changing, restless sea; the feather-tipped breeze and the striding gale or a quiet countryside. It is to feel both elation and gloom, hilltop and valley, the conflict and the peace of love.  
All this it is yet more! It is to know with heart and soul and mind. To know the each and the fullness thereof, the mystic wonder of all creation and to say with God, "It is good." This is Thanksgiving - to see, and feel and know and then to be! God bless you.

**Vineyard Church of Oak Park: Rev. Wayne Fife, Asst. Pastor**

*Psalm 146:7-9* "The Lord upholds the cause of the oppressed and gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets prisoners free, the Lord gives sight to the blind, the Lord lifts up those who are bowed down, and the Lord loves the righteous. The Lord watches over the foreigner and sustains the fatherless and the widow."

*Psalm 82:1-4* "God presides in the great assembly; He gives judgment among the 'gods', saying: How long will you defend the unjust and show partiality to the wicked? Defend the cause of the weak and the fatherless; maintain the rights of the poor and the oppressed. Rescue the weak and needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked."

*Excerpt from The Way In Is The Way On, teachings and writings on life in Christ by John Wimber, pastor and founder of the Vineyard Church movement.* "Ask the Lord to fill you with His passion, His heart for those who are helpless to help themselves; ask Him for opportunities to serve others in your local community. Jesus will send you people to love on behalf of Him. What an awesome opportunity we have to be the hands and the feet of Jesus. We must never forget the poor and the oppressed among us. For when we give ourselves to others, our own healing will be waiting."

**Zoroastrian: John Mobed**  
*Collection of prayers from Avesta*

**HYMN:** Wings of Song Hymnal #206 (v.v. 1,2) *"This is My Song"*

**THANKSGIVING REFLECTION**

Imam Charles Muhammad, (United Muslim Association of Oak Park - River Forest)  
*Holy Qur'an Sura 1:1-7 Al Fatihah,*

In the name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful. Praise be to God, Lord of the Worlds, the Beneficent, the Merciful, Master of the Day of Judgement, Thee (alone) we worship; Thee (alone) we ask for help. Show us the straight path, the path of those whom Thou hast favoured; not the (path) of those who earn Thine anger nor of those who go astray.

**CHORAL REFLECTION:** *Hashivenu, "Cause us to return to you, O Lord, and we shall return. Renew our days of old."* arr. by Doreen Rao

The Oak Park and River Forest Children's Chorus (Canterini Ensemble Intermediate group) Rosetta Sellers-Varela, Conductor; Stewart Leitch, accompanist

**TIME OF GIVING:** Kathy Russell

Offering for Hunger Task Force Food Pantry and West Suburban PADS, and announcements re Walk-in Ministry, and other areas of service.

**ORGAN OFFERTORY:** *"Surely the Presence"* by L. Wolfe

**THANKSGIVING DIRECTIONS BLESSING, 2006** (insert)

Rev. Thomas Dore - St. Giles Parish

**CLOSING SONG:** Wings of Song Hymnal #364 *"My Country 'Tis of Thee"*

**POSTLUDE** *"The Peace Song"* by Sy Miller

Pianist - John Melnick

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Thank you for joining us this evening, and a special thanks to the Unity Church and the congregations that provided tonight's cookies.

After the service please join us for refreshments downstairs. You are invited to take a tour of the Unity Church building.

Please plan to join us January 19, 2007, for the Annual Dinner and Meeting of the Community of Congregations at River Forest United Methodist Church. The speaker will be Donna Carroll, President of Dominican University, on "Sowing the Seeds of a Meaningful Life."

Support the Holiday Food and Gift Basket Program - sign up tonight!  
Support the OPRF Pantry and Walk in Ministries as a volunteer - sign up tonight.

**The Oak Park River Forest Community of Congregations**

Website <http://www.lgrossman.com/comcong.htm>

P.O. Box 3365, Oak Park, IL 60303-3365; Telephone (708) 386-8802; Fax (708) 386-1399

The Community of Congregations is an interfaith organization serving the greater Oak Park and River Forest area. Its ministries include the Oak Park River Forest Food Pantry and the Holiday Food and Gift Basket program, under a grant provided by Youth Services of Oak Park and River Forest Townships. It also cooperates with PADS [Public Action to Deliver Shelter], the Cluster Tutoring Program, Walk-in Ministry, and the annual Crop Walk. In addition to these ministries we sponsor a variety of programs including the community's annual Interfaith Thanksgiving Service, one of the oldest such programs in the Chicago area. We seek to respond to the needs of our community by working collaboratively from many different religious traditions and invite your participation.

Lift Every Voice and Sing

1. Lift ev - ery voice and sing, till earth and heav - en ring,
2. Ston - y the road we trod, bit - ter the chas - tenting rod,
3. God of our wea - ry years, God of our si - lent tears,

LIFT EVERY VOICE

WORDS: James Weldon Johnson, 1921  
 MUSIC: J. Rosamond Johnson, 1921  
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