

## *Thanksgiving Communion*

November 25, 2018

Rev. Paul Beckel

Bellingham Unitarian Fellowship ~ [www.buf.org](http://www.buf.org)

### **WELCOME**

In Thanksgiving with ancient symbols and everyday acts, with the food and drink we have shared, we celebrate the past which lives and works within us still. We celebrate the future, daily born from our labors. And we give thanks for this moment, where past and future join, where we live and struggle together to build a home of gratitude and generosity.

**GATHERING SONG**      *For all that is our Life*      #128

### **COMMUNION**

From time immemorial people have found deep meaning in the sharing of a meal, and in remembering those things that are most precious. Again today we participate in that ancient tradition.

Any food, or drink, will suffice. Whether we bring to the table those foods emblematic of North American Thanksgiving traditions, or if we turn to traditions rooted in diverse cultures ... or if we are still carving out new traditions ... may whatever we taste and swallow remind us of those who plant and harvest, and transport, process, package, transport again, and market by wholesale and then retail ... and then deal with the trash. May all that we eat and drink remind us of those who build and maintain the roads and machines, those who teach farmers and builders, those who provide care to the teachers, and those who clothe the care providers. It can be difficult to keep all of this in mind with each and every sip, each and every bite.

Even to the extent that we cut out some of these intermediaries by growing what we eat or pumping our water by hand, still we would do well to train our minds upon the interdependent web of flora and fauna, earth, fire, air, and time without whose alchemy we could not be here.

It can be difficult to keep all of this in mind with gratitude and consciousness *not just* that we depend upon so much and so many, but that we, and everyone we see today, or think about, each of us *is a part* of the whole.

And so a ritual of communion can help us to recall the wonder of it all.

It is good to be reminded of this vision of wholeness because we live in a world where nutritious beans and berries grow alongside weeds and thistles. We live in a world where joy and plenty mingle daily with clinging, suffering, and waste. And it is within that *complex* world that we are called to give thanks, not just for what we've had, but even for what is yet to come.

Let's attend to that call — that call to give thanks — right now. Close your eyes if you're

comfortable doing so. Place your feet flat on the floor and breathe slowly, pausing between breaths.

We prepare ourselves now for *the feast* of life. Even as our own lives are transformed in the cycle of coming and going,

We recognize our dependence upon  
And our participation in  
This world of nature  
We recognize our dependence upon  
And our responsibility for  
Creation, enjoyment, and cleaning up.

In anticipation of a symbolic act of acceptance, taking just a bit of this world back into ourselves  
We celebrate our unity with all people  
Who have lived upon this earth for tens of thousands of years,  
Warmed by the great sun.

We celebrate our unity with those who have seen life come and go  
along with the winds of time  
Those who have sought to know what it means  
To be alive  
To be on this earth together  
mysteriously interconnected in this living network

Today, taking food and drink back into ourselves  
We participate in all of the meals that have ever been eaten  
By humans and other animals:  
Great feasts, public celebrations, and meals alone, scrounged from what has been discarded.

Today, taking food and drink ... breath ... and learning, and care, back into ourselves  
We acknowledge that our lives are sustained and nourished by the gifts of others.  
And so we offer thanksgiving.  
For all that is given up, for all that dies  
So that we may live

We commemorate all those who have poured their lives into living. Those who have poured their lives into the search for deliciousness, dignity, and love. The great and the small. The Remembered and unremembered.

When I strike the chime, please come up to receive a cup of either cran-raspberry juice or sparkling water with a touch of cranberry. Please, young and old, even if you've never heard of a Thanksgiving communion, which might be 99% of you.

It may be less than a mouthful, and yet, with mindfulness, this sip can be a preamble to coffee

hour, and lunch, and dinner and however many snacks we consume for the rest of the day. A preamble of consciousness.

So here's what to do: come up in two lines, smile inwardly or outwardly, or both, take a cup and say "thank you" (or "yes" or "I am grateful," or whatever feels genuine). Don't hurry. Drop the cup in the basket at the side aisle. Then return to your seat and again closing your eyes, take a moment to laugh or cry or hold someone's hand in silence, continuing to breathe slowly and deeply, but with your heart beating just a little extra oomph. Eventually the music will stop and I'll strike the chime again to bring us all back together.

### **Afterward**

With ancient symbols and everyday acts, with food and drink shared, we celebrate the past which lives and works within us still. We celebrate the future, daily born from our labors; we give thanks for this moment, where past and future join, where we live and struggle together to build a home of gratitude and generosity.

==

Our American myth of thanksgiving recounts the story of vulnerable people on a quest...blown away from somewhere they did not want to be, blown by fate or by choice into a new life, possibly even more dangerous. It is the story of ancient Israelites fleeing Pharaoh, and Pilgrims on religious quest. It's the story of slaves discovering freedom, the story of frightened immigrants discovering a brief moment of safety. It is the story of those already here, and new generations grappling with the meaning of belonging.

Story after story, generation after generation, people neither broken nor fully triumphant, communities discovering, in whatever situation they find themselves --*enough* of a moment-of-*enough* to give thanks, such that we can take a next step, a next breath, a next blessing.

So too, may each of us here today have enough. May each of us recognize that we have enough. May each of us find courage to extend ourselves so that all might have enough.