

Thankful, Blessed, Grateful 11-24-24 Rev Brigid Beckman

We gather in gratitude in this, our spiritual home, on land located near the confluence of the Hudson and Mohawk rivers on the traditional lands of the Kanien'keháka and Muh-he-con-neok people, who stewarded this land for generations before the arrival of European colonists. The Kanien'keháka (People of the Flint) and Muh-he-con-neok (People of the Waters that are Never Still) are more commonly known today as the Mohawk Haudenosaunee and Stockbridge-Munsee Band of Mohicans. Despite the similarity of their westernized names, the Mohawk and Mohican were culturally and linguistically distinct.

We recognize that we live and work and worship on the homelands of sovereign Indigenous nations with rich histories and cultures that continue today – both within New York and beyond. (This portion is from (or adapted from) the following sites: [The Indigenous Values Initiative](#), [Native Governance Center](#), The University at Albany's Native land acknowledgement)

We acknowledge that the complex history of this country rests on the lives and forced labor of those brought to these shores unwillingly, in chains, stolen from homeland and family and the names of their ancestors. We recognize that these lives are known and held in love by the unnamed ancestors.

We recognize, too, that people arrive on these shores today, like many of those European ancestors arrived on these shores, leaving behind desperate poverty, drawn by a promise of a new kind of life– a life of equality and freedom– a promise that our country has never quite fulfilled, and yet has never fully abandoned.

We acknowledge that the myth of our first Thanksgiving– the Pilgrims and Native people joining together to celebrate the successful harvest, while factually inaccurate, invites us into the deeper truth of myth: we are people called to live in harmony and cooperation. We are a people called to rejoice with thankful, grateful hearts the blessings we hold in our lives. We are a people called to live into the promise of all we hold dear: that we are created FROM Love, to BE love, created as ONE family, a kaleidoscope of unrepeatable expressions of God.

Meditation

As we enter our time of meditation, feel yourself supported by your ancestors, sense your body and breath, just as it is....close your eyes, or simply let your gaze soften and drop, or focus on the light of the candle. Notice the sensation of your breath in, and out, and where your body moves gently as you inhale and exhale.

As we enter the quiet, I'll offer a few phrases that you might silently repeat in your own heart/mind... or just let the sound of my voice bring you back to noticing your breath. In the stillness, open your heart to anything in your life for which you are thankful, any small or momentous blessings for which you are grateful

I breathe in, grateful for this breath
I breathe out, grateful for this breath

I breathe in, grateful for this moment, just as it is
I breathe out, grateful for this moment, just as it is

I breathe in, and pray my thanks
I breathe out, I live my thanks

Breathing in, I trust God's blessing
Breathing out, I know all is well

Message: Thankful, Blessed, Grateful

- Five Unity Principles:
 - God is all and all is God
 - We and all of creation are OF God, inherently GOOD
 - co-creators with God through our thinking, beliefs and actions
 - Prayer and meditation are pathways to communing with the Divine presence, which is ALWAYS available
 - **Knowing these principles is not enough– we put them into PRACTICE (Let my LIFE be prayer...)**
- We are hard pressed to talk about current events OR complex history in our country and around the globe– without “sides” lining up to shout at each other about how right “our side” is and how wrong “their side” is. Just getting out of bed can feel like we are playing with a campfire about to turn into a wildfire!

- Staying *near to* those flames and not being consumed is a delicate balance, and can only be achieved by going deeper, by shoring up our spiritual practices of prayer, meditation, and communing with the deep heart of the Holy One, the unnameable/omni-nameable Presence.
- Choosing to be thankful, grateful and to see our blessings is a way of returning to our center, our essence— our trust that God is the heart of us AND ALL THINGS.
- This is the work of living into our Unity Principles, it is the gift of living our sacred purpose. It is what will give us courage, strength and tenacity to face hardship, to face our fears, to lean in to each other.

Welcoming ALL with a spirit of gratefulness; living from a place of love, finding what is ours to do, and allowing our hearts to be open and vulnerable to our sorrows and the sorrows of the world— and STILL be grateful— calls us to align our hearts, minds, souls, actions, prayers with the immanent/transcendent presence of God.

And that is always an inside job that requires us to commit to our spiritual practices— and it is a communal job that requires us to step into the sometimes messy, often joy-filled work of living in community.

To close, here is a prayer based on words of Metta blessing written by our friend Pam's mother Angela, whose life we celebrated yesterday at her memorial service.

May all be blessed.

May we have strength.

May we stare down the darkness.

May we overcome our fears.

May all be healthy and wise.

May all be forgiving and forgiven.

May all be filled with grace.

May it be so.

We are blessed with strength and the courage to stare down darkness and overcome our fears. We are blessed with health, well-being and wisdom. We are forgiving and forgiven. We are filled with grace. We are thankful, blessed and grateful.

And so it is. Amen.