



Welcome to Worship
Everyone who enters gets an apple

Grace Lutheran Church
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Prelude:

Welcome and Announcements

Pastor and Acolyte come up the aisle during song (a basket of apples)

CALL TO WORSHIP

Our help is in the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth.

We glorify our God with songs of thanksgiving and joy.

God has done great things for us, filling us with grace.

God fed our ancestors in the wilderness, God clothes us with hope.

We will offer our hearts to God, always saying, 'Thank you!'
to the One who loves us.

We will sing our praises, shouting of God's presence in our lives.

Gathering Hymn: *“God, Whose Farm is All Creation” ELW 734*

- 1 God, whose farm is all creation,
take the gratitude we give;
take the finest of our harvest,
crops we grow that we may live.

- 2 Take our plowing, seeding, reaping,
hopes and fears of sun and rain,
all our thinking, planning, waiting,
ripened in this fruit and grain.

- 3 All our labor, all our watching,
all our calendar of care
in these crops of your creation,
take, O God: they are our prayer.

PRAYER AND MEDITATION

Hot showers in the morning and cool breezes in the evening; work that provides for our families, and abundance that makes us generous; silly jokes told by third graders, and the silent tears of a grandmother lost in her childhood forever. What blessings are ours, Creation's Joy!

Teachers who patiently help us with our math, and mentors who keep us on the right paths; friends who shovel snow off sidewalks before we waken, and employers whose hearts are greater than their profits; piano teachers who smile at our repeated mistakes, coaches who teach us (one more time) how to shoot a free throw. What blessings are ours, Servant of Joy! Dogs who bounce us awake early in the day and cats who lullaby us to sleep at night; grandfathers who teach us how to whittle and sisters who give up a date to baby sit; little boys who always forget to wipe their mouths and folks who always remember to say 'thank you.' What blessings are ours, Joyous Spirit!

God in Community, Holy in One, thanksgiving is in every word we speak, even as we pray,

We give you thanks, most gracious God, for the beauty of the earth and sky and sea; for the richness of mountains, plains, and rivers; for the songs of birds and the loveliness of flowers. We give you thanks for the return of seedtime and harvest, for the increase of the ground and the gathering in of its fruits, and for all the other blessings you have given us, our nation, and all people. May we continue to grow in our grateful enjoyment of your abundant creation, to the honor and glory of your Name, now and forever. Amen

(Please be seated)

First Reading: Joel 2:21-27

²¹ Do not be afraid, land of Judah; be glad and rejoice. Surely the LORD has done great things!

²² Do not be afraid, you wild animals, for the pastures in the wilderness are becoming green. The trees are bearing their fruit; the fig tree and the vine yield their riches.

²³ Be glad, people of Zion, rejoice in the LORD your God, for he has given you the autumn rains because he is faithful. He sends you abundant showers, both autumn and spring rains, as before.

²⁴ The threshing floors will be filled with grain; the vats will overflow with new wine and oil.

²⁵ "I will repay you for the years the locusts have eaten-- the great locust and the young locust, the other locusts and the locust swarm-- my great army that I sent among you.

²⁶ You will have plenty to eat, until you are full, and you will praise the name of the LORD your God, who has worked wonders for you; never again will my people be shamed.

²⁷ Then you will know that I am in Israel, that I am the LORD your God, and that there is no other; never again will my people be shamed.

Word of God, Word of Life

Thanks be to God

The First Thanksgiving?

Pastor: Welcome to this interfaith Thanksgiving service. It doesn't matter how you arrive tonight—tired or energized; hungry or full; clear or distracted; joyful or sad—we receive you with love, and thank you for being here.

The very first Thanksgiving held in the fall of 1621 was also an interfaith celebration that lasted for three-days. It was an expression of gratitude as the English and Native People came together.

The story goes, the governor sent out four men hunting. It had been a difficult first year for the Plymouth colonist and a small harvest of native corn was added to the fruits of their labor found in nature: such as berries, wild grapes, fish, shellfish, deer, wild turkey, and thousands of geese and ducks migrating back to the area. The bountiful hunt provided food enough for almost a week.

The celebration was a harvest feast that was traditional in many agricultural societies. But the English would not have recognized this event as a "thanksgiving." For them, a "thanksgiving" was a purely religious day of solemn prayer and worship to thank God for a special blessing. This event was all about feasting and recreation, the beginning of the "fat" time of the year with more good food and less strenuous work.

The town of Plymouth was in the heart of the homeland of the native Wampanoag [wamp - pen - no - ag] People, who came to investigate the

sound of gunshots as a possible attack. For them, the colonists' celebration fell within Keepunumuk, [keep – un – new – muck] the time of harvest.

For generations, Native People had also held ceremonies to give thanks to the Great Spirit – the Creator - for successful harvests and to bless the next growing season. In fact, giving thanks was the primary reason for all ceremonies and celebrations in the Indigenous faith.

Seeing this celebration, they went out and killed five deer, which they brought to the colony and bestowed on the governor, the captain, and others.

This presentation of the five deer was essentially a peace-making diplomacy taking place in this interfaith harvest celebration. Exchanging gifts has always been the Wampanoag [wamp - pen - no – ag] language of respect and friendship.

Out of the goodness of God, the colonist were able to partake of plenty.

HYMN:

“Praise and Thanksgiving”

ELW 689

- 1 Praise and thanksgiving, God, we would offer
for all things living, you have made good:
harvest of sown fields, fruits of the orchard,
hay from the mown fields, blossom and wood.

- 2 God, bless the labor we bring to serve you,
that with our neighbor we may be fed.
Sowing or tilling, we would work with you,
harvesting, milling for daily bread.

- 3 Father, providing food for your children,
by Wisdom's guiding teach us to share
one with another, so that, rejoicing
with us, all others may know your care.

- 4 Then will your blessing reach ev'ry people,
freely confessing your gracious hand.
Where you are reigning, no one will hunger;
your love sustaining showers the land.

Responsive Reading: Psalm 126

¹When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion,
then were we like those who dream.

²**Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy. Then they said among the nations,
“The Lord has done great things for them.”**

³The Lord has done great things for us,
and we are glad indeed.

⁴**Restore our fortunes, O Lord,
like the watercourses of the Negeb.**

⁵Those who sowed with tears
will reap with songs of joy.

⁶**Those who go out weeping, carrying the seed,
will come again with joy, shouldering their sheaves.**

Appreciation: Enjoying Daily Gifts

You learn from this story the goodness of God was very ordinary to the English Puritans, as it was to the Wampanoag [wamp - pen - no – ag] People. Gratitude was woven into every aspect of the Indigenous way of life and faith. Not only at harvesttime, but every day, in every small act of hunting or gathering, they acknowledged and gave thanks to the Creator for each simple gift.

Then, as now, this daily practice of appreciation goes hand in hand with enjoying life. And with being close to God. If we slow down and become fully aware of our daily gifts—not just the feast, but the single, red apple—we begin to truly live in God’s grace.

I invite you now into a short meditation on the gift of the apple in your hand. I’ll guide you throughout this meditation. If you haven’t done something like this before, please give it a try.

First, just relax . . . close your eyes . . . and allow your attention to gather in as you take a deep breath. . . . Feel your breath coming in and going out, gently

by itself, deep within your body. No force, no strain. . . . Simply allow yourself to rest back, and be carried on the gentle rhythm of your breath.

From this calm, centered place, imagine yourself walking into a freshly mowed apple orchard in early spring. Feel a soft, warm wind blowing against your face. As you walk, you find yourself particularly drawn to one old apple tree, standing in the full sunlight, its branches just beginning to wake up from winter with new growth and new leaves.

You settle back against its trunk, where you are held without effort in a place of safety and peace, rooted like the tree to the rich soil beneath you. Feel yourself falling into the orchard's warm embrace, the warm embrace of God. Breathe God's love deeply into your heart. Draw God's strength up into your feet from the fertile ground below you. Rest here.

As time slowly unfolds, you see buds begin to form on the branches sheltering you, buds that gradually open into a cloud of delicate, white flowers. Hear the bees buzzing between the flowers, dancing in a pulse of life all around you, pollinating each white flower, feeding off the sweet nectar. Listen. Wait.

Summer comes, and the flower petals fall around you in a shower of white. Summer sun and rain swell the flowers' fertile ovaries into a new shape. See the innermost part grow into a seed core. See the outer wall transform into miraculous molecules, full of vitamins, minerals, and health-giving nutrients, a fruit whose flesh is crisp, juicy, and sweet—expanding with Divine energy.

Feel your heart swell as this apple grows larger before your eyes, day by day. See it ripen in color as well as size, changing from light green to marvelous red. The old tree's branches begin to bend under the weight of its luscious fruit. Many seasons of growth have led to this one, precious harvest.

Now the air cools, and the fall wind begins to stir your hair. Reach up, and pick just one, sweet, red apple. Soon many people will enter your quiet orchard to gather its bounty. Imagine their hands gently taking all the apples from the tree's branches and placing them into large, wooden crates. Imagine other hands carrying these heavy crates from orchard, to tractor, to truck, to market for other hands to select, taste, and enjoy.

Your hand holds just one sweet, red apple—a beautiful gift from the orchard’s air, sun, soil, and water; a miraculous gift from an old tree and its friendly bees; a perfect gift from a loving God. Allow your mind to enter into its seed core and feel its energy of new life. Energy in perfect harmony with every one of God’s creations.

Now take a deep breath . . . Begin to bring your awareness back together, aware of your physical surroundings. Move or stretch as you need to . . . and when you’re ready, open your eyes.

(Time of Silence)

Let us pray together the “*Prayer of Thanks for Creation*”.

Great and Eternal Mystery of Life, Creator of All Things, I give thanks for the beauty You put in every single one of Your creations.

I am grateful that You did not fail in making every stone, plant, creature, and human being a perfect and whole part of the Sacred Hoop.

I am grateful that You have allowed me to see the strength and beauty of All My Relations. My humble request is that all of the Children of Earth will learn to see the same perfection in themselves.

May none of Your human children doubt or question Your wisdom, grace, and sense of wholeness in giving all of Creation a right to be living extensions of Your perfect love.

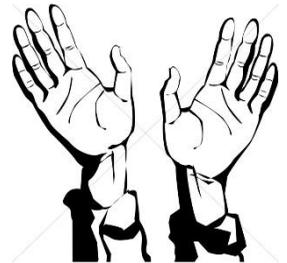
[“Prayer of Thanks for Creation,” Native American tradition]

Second Reading: 1 Timothy 2:1-7

¹ I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people--

² for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.

³ This is good, and pleases God our Savior,



⁴ who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.
⁵ For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus,
⁶ who gave himself as a ransom for all people. This has now been witnessed to at the proper time.
⁷ And for this purpose I was appointed a herald and an apostle--I am telling the truth, I am not lying--and a true and faithful teacher of the Gentiles.
Word of God, Word of Life
Thanks be to God

Contentment: Living in Peace

Through gratefulness, we say yes to life. We say yes to God. We fully respond to each given moment and all its simple and complex blessings: the red apple, the hot coffee, the favorite sweater; the car that starts, the friend that calls, the sun that shines. We make a choice to focus on what it is that we love about life. Even, and especially, when times are tough.

Because by focusing on God's gifts at all times, we take less for granted. Consume less. Fear less. Open our hearts more. Find our connection to all things and in all things. This is a core message in all faith traditions: our contentment and true peace in life rest on giving thanks to God.

CALL TO RECONCILIATION

We wonder what's for lunch, we worry about work tomorrow, we fret about the test that is coming up. So much worry, so much time wasted over things we cannot control. The One who showers earth with rain, who places the stars in the autumn sky, is the same One who wraps mercy tight around you, who feeds us on healing and hope. Let us confess how our worries keep us from trusting the God who hears us and restores us to new life. Please join me as we pray,

UNISON PRAYER FOR FORGIVENESS

Because we live in this modern, tech-driven, twittering age, we often forget what you have done for us, God of every blessing. We pat ourselves on the back for our ability to learn new computer skills, but

have forgotten that life is more than a machine. We have more than we could ever use yet, like squirrels, store up more and more. Our faith is often pushed to the back of the closet, to make room for all the fears we wear so easily.

Forgive us, Restorer of life. As you clothe us with your grace and mercy, may we share with those who have so little. As our hearts overflow with your love and wonder, may we offer them as gifts to everyone we meet. As you feed us with your joy and hope, may we welcome to the Table all those whose lives are filled with tears and pain. As we gather with family and friends during this season, may we continue to give thanks for the gift of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

Silence is kept

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

This is the good news: as God dresses creation in wonder, so you will be clothed in grace; as God pours out abundance upon the earth, so you will be blessed with peace and joy.

We don't say it often enough, but thanks be to God for healing, for life, for wonder, for mercy. We are blessed, for we are forgiven. Amen.

INTERFAITH PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE:

Pastor: In peace, we pray to you, God of a thousand names, lifting up our special needs and concerns, out loud or in silence.

[Pause for responses from congregation]

God is the Father, Earth the Mother. With all things and in all things, we are relatives. *[Sioux, Native American]*

All: Thank you for the gift of this life.

As the radiant sun shines upon all regions above, below, and across, so does the glorious one God of love protect and guide all creatures. *[Buddhism]*

All: Thank you for the gift of this life.

God provides everyone with his daily food; why, O man, art thou afraid?
[Sikhism] see – kea sum

All: Keep us aware of your loving care.

Contentment is the root of happiness, and discontent the root of misery.

[Hinduism]

All: Keep us aware of your loving care.

Every little yielding to anxiety is a step away from the natural heart of man.

[Shintoism] shin - toe - ism

All: Keep us aware of your loving care.

Do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink; nor about your body, what you shall put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them.

[Christianity, Matthew 6:25–26]

All: God, give us peace in our hearts.

A tranquil mind gives life. *[Judaism, Proverbs 14:30]*

All: God, give us peace in our minds.

There can never be peace between nations until it is first known that true peace is within the souls of men. *[Oglala Sioux, Native American]*

All: God, give us peace in our souls.

All: Let us know peace.

For as long as the moon shall rise,

For as long as the rivers shall flow,

For as long as the sun shall shine,

For as long as the grass shall grow,

Let us know peace. *[Cheyenne, Native American]*

And now in the tradition of St. Patrick's, I invite you all to exchange greetings of peace.

Peace be always with you.

All: And also with you.

Gospel: Matthew 6:25-33

²⁵ "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes?"

²⁶ Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?"

²⁷ Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?"

²⁸ "And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin.

²⁹ Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these.

³⁰ If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you--you of little faith?"

³¹ So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'

³² For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.

³³ But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

The Gospel of the Lord
Praise to you, O Christ

HYMN: *"Many and Great, O God"*
Wakantanka taku nitawa

ELW 837

ORIGINAL DAKOTA

Wakantanka taku nitawa
tankaya qa ota.
Mahpiya kin eyahnake ca,
maka kin he duowanca.
Mniowanca sbeya wanke cin,
hena oyakih.

ENGLISH

1 Many and great, O God, are your works,

maker of earth and sky.
Your hands have set the heavens with stars;
your fingers spread the mountains and plains.
Lo, at your word the waters were formed;
deep seas obey your voice.

- 2 Grant unto us communion with you,
O Star-abiding One.
Come unto us and dwell with us;
with you are found the gifts of life.
Bless us with life that has no end,
eternal life with you.

(Dakota Tune, Text written by Joseph Renville)

Generosity: Giving from Your Heart

At this time, I'd like to call your attention to a universal spiritual practice, of gratitude. There are many wonderful ways to bring it into your daily life. Many of us say grace over meals, but we can give thanks whenever we start a new day or activity. Or we can use a repeated action like starting a car or turning on a light to trigger prayer. Or we can keep a simple daily gratitude journal

Scientific research is also underscoring all the benefits of grateful living. According to the work of Robert Emmon, practicing gratitude makes us healthier and lowers the risk of many common disorders, like depression and high blood pressure. Really important in these hard times, grateful living makes us feel less alone in our struggles and fears, more connected to the flow of life. And it's a key component for personal happiness: love, compassion, and hope for the future.

Because it directs our view outward, gratitude also makes us more generous toward others. When we know we are living in God's abundance, we are more willing to give. I hope that you have brought with you a food offering and have placed it in the tubs by the door. If you like, you may leave your gift in the collection plate in the back of the church as you leave.

Finally, I invite you to share your apple with someone else: being reminded of the gift of the apple... you meditated on earlier... and perhaps share that with them as part of your Thanksgiving dinner or centerpiece, as a gift to a coworker, friend, teacher or even a stranger; as an offering to the birds or squirrels or deer. Let's keep our circle of thanks going!

And now, to circle back to the wisdom of the 17th-century Puritans, we close with this Harvest Prayer.

Let us pray.

Please be gentle with yourself and others. We are all children of chance, and none can say why some fields blossom while others lay brown beneath the harvest sun.

Take hope that your season will come. Share the joy of those whose season is at hand. Care for those around you. Look past your differences. Their dreams are no less than yours, Their choices in life no more easily made.

And give.

Give in any way you can. Give in every way you can. Give whatever you possess. Give from your heart.

To give is to love.

To withhold is to wither. Care less for the size of your harvest than for how it is shared, And your life will have meaning and your heart will have peace.

[Anonymous 17th-Century Sermon]

Benediction:

The Lord bless you and keep you;

The Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you;

The Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace. Amen.

[Birkat Kohanim (Hebrew Priestly Blessing), Numbers 6:24–26]

Sending Hymn: *(Argentine folk song)*



“May the God of hope go with us every day” (Song of Hope)

May the God of hope go with us ev-ery day,
Filling all our lives with love and joy and peace.
May the God of justice speed us on our way,
Bringing light and hope to ev-ery land and race.

Praying, let us work for peace; Singing, share our joy with
all; Working for a world that’s new, Faithful when we hear
Christ’s call.

***Go in Peace and Give Thanks to God!
Thanks be to God – We Will!***

Credit:

**~ Rev. Clare C. Novak, Interfaith Minister, St. Patrick’s Episcopal Church,
Incline Village, NV (www.tahoepiscopal.org)**