**Order of Service for November 29, 2020:** The Thanksgiving Address

Tony Filipovitch—Member, Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Mankato (MN)

**“Gratitude goes beyond the ‘mine’ and ‘thine’ and claims the truth that all of life is a pure gift.”****—**Henri Nowen, 1932-1996, Dutch Catholic priest and theologian.

**We Gather**

**Gathering Music: “Mass of Thanksgiving” Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643). Italian Renaissance/Baroque composer and master of polyphony. This composition is from 1631. (**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3SxZOh2cLp8>**)**

**Announcements** to “Thanksgiving Song” from Veggie Tales (2002) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a0InbeErmlU> )

**Bell Chime –“Friends, let’s share a song of welcome.”**

**We Invite and Welcome**

**Singing:** #188 (gray hymnal) “Come, Come, Whoever You Are” [words adapted from 13th Century

Persian poet and Islamic mystic Rumi, with music by Unitarian Universalist minister the Rev. Lynn Ungar]. Vocals by Jessie Downs and Helen Lowry, accompanied by Jonathan Vogtle (all courtesy of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Buffalo, NY).

**Welcome**

Good morning, everyone, and welcome to the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Mankato, where our space is virtual, but our worship is not. You are all welcome here. All are worthy, all histories and experiences. Our human differences are sacred and make us strong, a religious community eager to extend compassion to each other as we work toward the justice for which our world cries out.

In these times as in all times, life is calling us to live with abundance and hope, to create the world of equity and justice about which we dream, even as we face a pandemic, a climate crisis, and a crisis of confidence in the institutions of our society and our neighborhoods.

And may we remember, no matter where in the United States we meet for worship this morning, we meet where indigenous people were driven away, land stolen and many lives lost. And still Euro-Americans and Indigenous people live and work and love side by side right here, wherever you are. May we follow the wisdom and be good relatives.

I am Tony Filipovitch, a member of this congregation, and it is a blessing to be together today and every day.

Thanks to Linda Ganske and Andy Roberts for acting as our Zoom greeters and to Treselia Greiner for acting as our Worship Tech today.

**10:38 Special Announcements**

Our worship background this morning is courtesy of Cathleen Kipp. It is a painting based on a Dr. Who episode. Please send your photos of sacred space so we can feature them in upcoming worship services.

**Here now some special words from fellow congregants, Dick & Tricia Nienow:**

**Reflection: Why I Am Here (Dick & Tricia Nienow)**

**We Orient to Worship/Worth-Shaping**

**Chalice Lighting**

Let us now move into a time of worship, shaping worth and meaning from the ordinary as a way to honor the gift of life we all share. Together let us kindle a flame, co-creating a sacred space in our homes and virtually together. As you do, please write in the Chat that a chalice is lit on your street. Dick & Tricia Nienow will lead us in our unison words.

We are a welcoming people of diverse beliefs who commit to nourish the spirit, broaden the mind, nurture the earth, and build community. May this flame we kindle remind us to strive, today and every day, to love beyond belief.

**Centering Music: The days are shorter, the nights are longer, the air is colder. But the harvest is in, the house is warm, and we have each other (if only virtually). This is a time for giving thanks for all we have. Let’s listen to** “I Got the Sun in the Morning” by Irving Berlin from *Annie Get Your Gun* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8g9FV7vPwno> ) If you want, you can sing along (with your mic muted, of course)—or you can just enjoy the incomparable voice of Ethel Merman.

**Story**: Friends, let’s listen to the words of Chief Seattle as illustrated in *Brother Eagle, Sister Sky*, read by our Children’s Faith Development Director Macey Forsyth.

**We Co-Create Religious Community**

**Offering: What makes us a religious community is our sharing of meaning and identity and purpose. Part of what sustains our religious community is sharing our financial resources. As you listen or sing along with the offertory, consider making a monetary gift to the Fellowship so that our community may grow and flourish, increasing our ability to spread compassion and make justice in the larger world.**

#402 (gray hymnal) “From You I Receive” by Joseph and Nathan Segal (brothers

and both rabbis who wrote and sang together in the 1960s-1980s) and sung by Unitarian Universalist minister the Rev. Kristin Grassel Schmidt [https://youtu.be/k7a0Lei2OCA](http://links.breezechms.com/ls/click?upn=tQDFDhR0nEOlNZKVZKv2dLFJspfnyDaIvUUGaSnkJdKPWgoqveIhCqg-2FtfAOg2Bg3sdz_Z0e8DcAvsTNdMRVgWxhrqjRWaGvMaMN0zQ1vEksMpcO-2FFo5TSO8fF69VUc0OZ-2BlBIQMJ9hO-2Fa-2F6bn3VlBr1VikHa-2FoZDW1HnBctJX3BxMJOQ6KpMRBCVPQtiSBlAVMxtwz-2F-2FWzHEDebwjRJbQPbR-2FKrQuX0ED6xasBKPhfUwEHDB1npOySgKLc5ChgLiJUJNTgJsebM0vn0zVuErk3ztttt6J6-2B1rvhAX4Cr2jOjGFe2gzUdi4IdewNxCBstgFN5RT-2Frp38CbV2zpuMdtq2ARY4f4aO0PnbumUwtqu3xx2Q-3D)

**Meditation:**

I invite you now into a time of prayer, reflection, and meditation.

Settle into your mind and your body as it is in this moment. . .

Close your eyes or simply soften your gaze. . .

Bring gentle awareness to those parts of you that hurt. . .

Follow your breath, knowing you are not alone in your pain,

no matter its nature. . .

We breathe together into this time of witness and compassion. . .

Open your heart to the spirit of connection. . .

Hear now the words of e e cummings as he reads his poem, “I thank you god”

**Bell Chime**

**Sorrows and Joys:** I invite us now into a time to share the sorrows and joys at the heart of our religious community.

I will begin with Sorrows. Please type them into the Chat.

Let us hold in our hearts the over 265 thousand Americans and another over one million people world-wide who have died from the COVID-19 disease and its complications.

Let us hold in our hearts all those who suffer from systemic racism, which includes us all and impacts more catastrophically our siblings of color.

Let us hold in our hearts all the humans and other beings, plant and animal, suffering because of the habitat destruction catalyzed by climate crisis.

Please now share your joys with the community. Please type them into the Chat.

Friends, I invite you to sing our song of comfort and joy.

**Singing:** #1002 (teal hymnal) by Mimi Borstein (teal hymnal) and accompanied by Jeff Lowry

**We Take a Deeper Dive**

**The Thanksgiving Address**

In her book, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, Robin Kimmerer describes a traditional… prayer/pledge/poem of the Haudenosaunee people. I want us to have the opportunity to share that together today.

“Huadenosaunee” means “People of the Longhouse,” and us English usually know them as “The Iroquois Confederacy.” This prayer is commonly known as “The Thanksgiving Address,” although another of their names for it is *Nya wehnhah Ska*—“The Words That Come Before All Else.” It is the words they share when they come together.

I had second thoughts about building a service around The Thanksgiving Address—cultural appropriation is often not received kindly. It turns out that Robin Kimmerer did, too. Although an indigenous woman (she is of the Potawatomi people), as she wrote, “I am not a Houdenosaunee citizen or scholar—just a respectful neighbor and a listener….” But she was told that these words are a gift of the Haudenosaunee to the world. As Faithkeeper Oren Lyons said to her, “Of course you should write about it. It’s supposed to be shared, otherwise how can it work? We’ve been waiting five hundred years for people to listen. If they’d understood the Thanksgiving then, we wouldn’t be in this mess.”

And what beautiful words she wrote! I encourage you to read the chapter—it’s titled “Allegiance to Gratitude”—in fact, read the entire book, it’s worth it (a reminder—the book is *Braiding Sweetgrass*). But here are a few of the high points:

At its heart, the Thanksgiving is an invocation of gratitude as well as an inventory of the natural world. After all, she says, it’s “hard to argue with gratitude for berries.”

Part of its power rests in the length of time it takes to send greetings and thanks to so many (just wait—you’re about to see what she means). You have to concentrate; you have to give yourself to listening. This takes effort, especially since we are so accustomed to sound bites and immediate gratification. To those who comment that it goes on too long, she sympathizes: “Poor you. What a pity that you have so much to be thankful for.”

The Thanksgiving Address reminds us that every day we have enough. More than enough. Everything needed to sustain life is already here. Speaking the Thanksgiving every day leads to an attitude of contentment and respect for all Creation. In a consumer society, Kimmerer writes, contentment is a radical proposition. Recognizing abundance rather than scarcity undermines an economy that thrives by creating unmet desires. Gratitude cultivates an ethic of fullness, but capitalist economy needs emptiness. Gratitude doesn’t send you out shopping to find satisfaction; it comes as a gift rather than a commodity.

The Thanksgiving Address also reminds us that we humans are not in charge of the world, but are subject to the same forces as all the rest of life. And it reminds us of how the world was meant to be in its original condition. Is the water still supporting life? Are those birds still healthy? The words of Thanksgiving should awaken us to our loss and spur us to action. Like the stars themselves, the words can guide us back home.

After each antiphon, we will repeat the words, “Now our minds are one.” Piece by piece, she says, the cadence begins to eddy around the boulder of disagreement and erode the edges of the barriers between us. Yes, we can all agree that the waters are still here. Yes, we can unite our minds in gratitude for the winds. It is not surprise, she notes, that Haudenosaunee decision-making proceeds from consensus, not by a vote of the majority. A decision is made only when “all our minds are one.”

Finally, the Thanksgiving expresses a culture of gratitude—which is also a culture of reciprocity. If an animal gives its life to feed me, I am in turn bound to support its life. Duties and gifts are two sides of the same coin. So asking “What is our responsibility?” is the same as asking “What is our gift?” Kimmerer says that only humans have the capacity for gratitude—this is among our gifts.

And so, with this brief orientation, let us now hear and respond to the words of the Thanksgiving Address. I will read each antiphon, and even though you will be muted, you will respond with the affirmation, “Now our minds are one.” (You will get your cue from Kathy, sitting next to me here).

**The Thanksgiving Address (Nya wenhah Ska)**

Today we have gathered and when we look upon the faces around us we see that the cycles of life continue. We have been given the duty to live in balance and harmony with each other and all living things. So now let us bring our minds together as one as we **give greetings and thanks** to each other as People.

*Now our minds are one.*

We are thankful to our **Mother the Earth**, for she gives us everything we need for life. She supports our feet as we walk about upon her. It gives us joy that she still continues to care for us, just as she has from the beginning of time. To our Mother, we send thanksgiving, love, and respect.

*Now our minds are one.*

We give thanks to all of the **waters of the world** for quenching our thirst, for providing strength and nurturing life for all beings. We know its power in many forms—waterfalls and rain, mists and streams, rivers and oceans, snow and ice. We are grateful that the waters are still here and meeting their responsibility to the rest of Creation. Can we agree that water is important to our lives and bring our minds together as one to send greetings and thanks to the Water?

*Now our minds are one.*

We turn our thoughts to all of the **Fish** life in the water. They were instructed to cleanse and purify the water. They also give themselves to us as food. We are grateful that they continue to do other duties and we send to the Fish our greetings and our thanks.

*Now our minds are one.*

Now we turn toward the vast fields of **Plant** life. As far as the eye can see, the Plants grow, working many wonders. They sustain many life forms. With our minds gathered together, we give thanks and look forward to seeing Plant life for many generations to come.

*Now our minds are one.*

When we look about us, we see that the **berries** are still here, providing us with delicious foods. The leader of the berries is the strawberry, the first to ripen in the spring. Can we agree that we are grateful that the berries are with us in the world and send our thanksgiving, love, and respect to the berries?

*Now our minds are one.*

With one mind, we honor and thank all the **Food Plants** we harvest from the garden, especially the Three Sisters who feed the people with such abundance. Since the beginning of time, the grains, vegetables, beans and fruit have helped the people survive. Many other living things draw strength from them as well. We gather together in our minds all the plant foods, and send them a greeting and thanks.

*Now our minds are one.*

Now we turn to the **Medicine Herbs** of the world. From the beginning they were instructed to take away sickness. They are always waiting and ready to heal us. We are so happy that there are still among us those special few who remember how to use the plants for healing. With one mind, we send thanksgiving, love and respect to the Medicines and the keepers of the Medicines.

*Now our minds are one.*

Standing around us we see all the **Trees**. The Earth has many families of trees who each have their own instructions and uses. Some provide shelter and shade, others fruit and beauty and many useful gifts. The Maple is the leader of the trees, to recognize its gift of sugar when the People need it most. Many peoples of the world recognize a Tree as a symbol of peace and strength. With one mind we greet and thank the Tree life.

*Now our minds are one.*

We gather our minds together to send our greetings and thanks to all the beautiful **animal life** of the world, who walk about with us. They have many things to teach us as people. We are grateful that they continue to share their lives with us and hope that it will always be so. Let us put our minds together as one and send our thanks to the Animals.

*Now our minds are one.*

We put our minds together as one and thank all the **birds** who move and fly about over our heads. The Creator gave them the gift of beautiful songs. Each morning they greet the day and with their songs remind us to enjoy and appreciate life. The Eagle was chosen to be their leader and to watch over the world. To all the Birds, from the smallest to the largest, we send our joyful greetings and thanks.

*Now our minds are one.*

We are all thankful for the powers we know as the **Four Winds**. We hear their voices in the moving air as they refresh us and purify the air we breathe. They help to bring the change of seasons. From the four directions they come, bringing us messages and giving us strength. With one mind we send our greetings and thanks to the Four Winds.

*Now our minds are one.*

Now we turn to the west where our grandfathers the **Thunder Beings** live. With lightning and thundering voices they bring with them water that renews life. We bring our minds together as one to send greetings and thanks to our Grandfathers, the Thunderers.

*Now our minds are one.*

We send now greetings and thanks to our eldest brother the **Sun**. Each day without fail he travels the sky from east to west, bringing the light of a new day. He is the source of all the fires of life. With one mind, we send greetings and thanks to our Brother, the Sun.

*Now our minds are one.*

We put our minds together and give thanks to our oldest Grandmother, the **Moon**, who lights the nighttime sky. She is the leader of women all over the world and she governs the movement of the ocean tides. By her changing face we measure time and it is the Moon who watches over the arrival of children here on Earth. Let us gather our thanks for Grandmother Moon together in a pile, layer upon layer of gratitude, and then joyfully fling that pile of thanks high into the night sky that she will know. With one mind, we send greetings and thanks to our Grandmother, the Moon.

*Now our minds are one.*

We give thanks to the **Stars**, who are spread across the sky like jewelry. We see them at night, helping the Moon to light the darkness and bringing dew to the gardens and growing things. When we travel at night, they guide us home. With our minds gathered as one, we send greetings and thanks to all the Stars.

*Now our minds are one.*

We gather our minds to greet and thank the enlightened **Teachers** who have come to help throughout the ages. When we forget how to live in harmony, they remind us of the way we were instructed to live as people. With one mind, we send greetings and thanks to these caring Teachers.

*Now our minds are one.*

We now turn our thoughts to the **Creator, or Great Spirit**, and send greetings and thanks for all the gifts of Creation. Everything we need to live a good life is here on Mother Earth. For all the love that is still around us, we gather our minds together as one and send our choices words of greetings and thanks to the Creator.

*Now our minds are one.*

We have now arrived at the place where we end our words. Of all the things we have named, it is not our intention to leave anything out. If something was forgotten, we leave it to each individual to send such greetings and thanks in their own way.

*Now our minds are one.*

**So, friends, let us enjoy together another song in the spirit of the Thanksgiving Address, “I Got Plenty of Nothin’” words written by DuBose Heyward, music by George Gershwin, in this version performed by Louis Armstrong and Ella Fitzgerald. As before, sing along or just enjoy their artistry.**

**Song: “I Got Plenty of Nothin’” words by DuBose Heyward, music by George Gershwin, performed by Louis Armstrong and Ella Fitzgerald (1957) (**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-DR6cXAa-Ek>**)**

**We Shift to Companionship in the Wider World**

**Chalice Extinguishing:** As we conclude our time of worship this morning,

let us make a promise that we will remain committed

to sustained and robust relationship with each other,

and to the interdependent web holding us all.

And remember Rev. Rita’s words, that

You are loved,

You are worthy,

You are welcome, and

You are needed.

As Tricia and Dick lead us in our unison words, I invite you to extinguish your chalice or candle at home.

We extinguish this flame, but not the light of truth, the warmth of community, or the fire of commitment. These we carry in our hearts until we are together again.

**Singing Benediction: Let us join in a final song together. Thus we bless each other, and thus we are a blessing to each other.**

May the longtime sun shine upon you/ All love surround you/And the pure pure light that’s within you/Guide your way home.

**Bell Chime**

**Congregational Greeting** OK everyone, unmute yourselves and greet each other!

**Coffee “Hour”: Now our hosts will put us in breakout rooms for a** time for gathering to meet, talk, and connect.

**PPT Slides**

**I Got the Sun in the Morning**

Taking stock of what I have and what I haven't  
What do I find?  
The things I got will keep me satisfied  
Checking up on what I have and what I haven't  
What do I find?  
A healthy balance on the credit side

Got no diamond, got no pearl  
Still I think I'm a lucky girl  
I got the sun in the morning and the moon at night  
Got no mansion, got no yacht  
Still I'm happy with what I've got  
I got the sun in the morning and the moon at night

Sunshine gives me a lovely day  
Moonlight gives me the Milky Way  
Got no checkbooks, got no banks  
Still I'd like to express my thanks  
I got the sun in the morning and the moon at night

And with the sun in the morning  
And the moon in the evening  
I'm all right

Got no butler, got no maid  
Still I think I've been overpaid  
I got the sun in the morning and the moon at night  
-I got the sun in the morning and the moon at night

Got no silver, got no gold  
What I got can't be bought or sold  
I got the sun in the morning and the moon at night  
-I got the sun in the morning and the moon at night

Sunshine gives me a lovely day  
Moonlight gives me the Milky Way  
Got no heirlooms for my kin  
Made no will but when I cash in  
I leave the sun in the morning and the moon at night  
And with the sun in the morning  
And the moon in the evening they're all right

Got no mansion, got no yacht  
Still I'm happy with what I've got  
I got the sun in the morning and the moon at night  
Got no silver, got no gold  
What I got can't be bought or sold  
I got the sun in the morning and the moon at night

Sunshine gives me a lovely day  
Moonlight gives me the Milky Way  
Got no checkbooks, got no banks  
Still I'd like to express my thanks  
I got the sun in the morning and the moon at night  
And with the sun in the morning  
And the moon in the evening  
I'm all right

# **“i thank You God for most this amazing” by e. e. cummings**

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)

**I Got Plenty O' Nuttin'**

I got plenty of nothing  
And nothing's plenty for me  
I got no car - got no mule  
I got no misery

Folks with plenty of plenty  
They've got a lock on the door  
Afraid somebody's gonna rob 'em  
While there out (a) making more - what for

I got no lock on the door - that's no way to be  
They can steal the rug from the floor - that's OK with me  
'Cause the things that I prize - like the stars in the skies - are all free

I got plenty of nothing

And nothing's plenty for me  
I got my gal - got my song  
(I) Got heaven the whole day long  
- Got my gal - got my love - got my song