

Simple Gifts

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The All Souls Journal

Counting Your Blessings?

-by Rev. Marlin Lavanhar, Senior Minister



“If your church really is a house of prayer for all people, and is inclusive of everyone, including atheists, then why do you begin every Sunday service with the words: This is indeed a day which God has made?” This question arises occasionally when I’m visiting with our guests.

First, I explain that members of All Souls understand that “God” is not God’s name. G-O-D are the three letters used in English to point to the mystery and power at the core of life and death. There are many names for this mystery, but God is the most universal. However, the word God is poetry rather than prose. The name God is a symbol rather than a sign. A sign describes something specific, whereas a symbol points to something that can be interpreted in many ways. The word God is like the word Love in that love is also something that most people feel, and sense, and know, but is impossible to adequately describe or define.

So, every Sunday the first words spoken in our services for more than 50 years are: This is indeed a day which God has made. Let us rejoice in it, and be glad. They are words from Psalm 118. The main point is that neither you nor I made this day and we could not make it even if we tried. The incredible mystery of how this day, and this world, and our lives have emerged, is beyond our comprehension whether we are a scientist or a theist or both. Thus, we begin every service with these words which invoke awe and humility before the grand mysteries of our creation. Humility and awe are our doorways into the spirit of worship.

The next words we say are: Let us count our many blessings. Let us be grateful for the capacity to see, feel, hear, and understand. Let us be grateful for the incredible gift of life. And let us be especially grateful for the ties of love, which bind us together, giving dignity, meaning, worth, and joy to all of our days.

We move from humility and awe into gratitude. Indeed, since we did not create this day, it is a gift. Rev. Galen Gingrich, the senior minister of All Souls in



New York City, describes our tradition as having a

Gratitude:

Sing and Dance
and Praise and Love



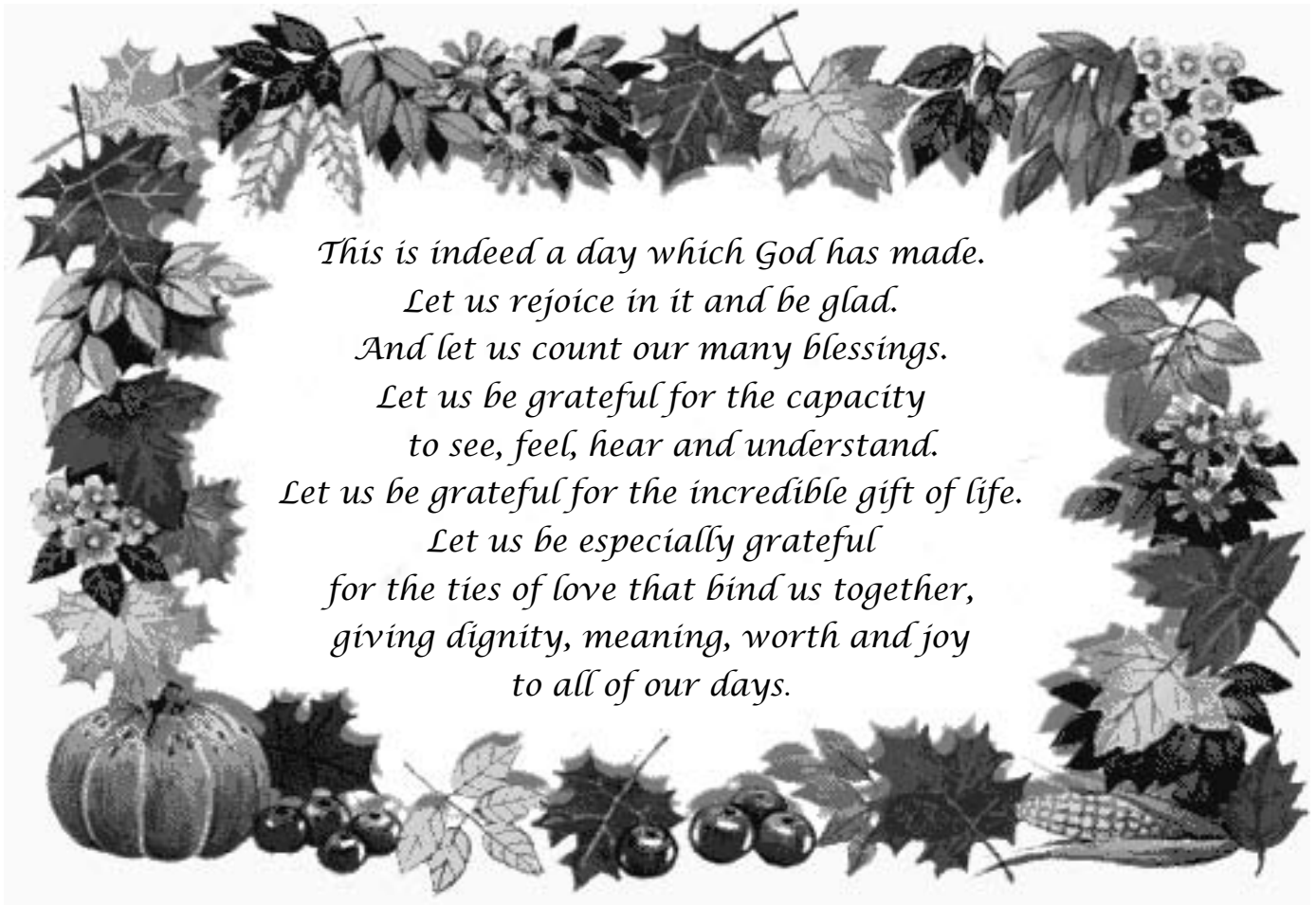
Grateful For
Our Own Backyard



A Grateful Human,
Just Being

discipline and an ethic of gratitude. The discipline is that in saying thank you, we acknowledge our dependence and interdependence with others. Saying thank you involves both humility and connection. The ethic of gratitude is the idea that because we have been blessed with so much to be thankful for, we have an obligation to do our part to create a world that expands the possibilities for others to be thankful and blessed as well.

We begin each service with humility, awe and the discipline of gratitude, and we end each service by affirming the ethic of gratitude with the words: Be blessed and be a blessing. †



Our church program-year (September-May) is fashioned around nine theological themes. Each theme plays a part in the development of a well-grounded religious and spiritual life. The church's offerings each month are by no means limited to the themes. However, these topics provide an axis around which many elements of church life gain more meaning and depth. They provide us with a set of common stories and ideas that become elements of an ongoing community conversation. Be warned: Seriously engaging these themes could transform your life!

- September - Vocation & Calling**
- October - Unity**
- November - Gratitude**
- December - Peace**
- January - Grace**
- February - Prayer & Spiritual Practice**
- March - Letting Go**
- April - Salvation**
- May - Truth**

Sing and Dance and Praise and Love

-by Rev. Tamara Lebak, Associate Minister



After the Praise and Worship service in October, a member of the congregation came up to me and said, “Tamara, I have danced with the Sufis, the Buddhists, the Humanists, the Pagans, and the Native Americans, but until tonight, I had never danced with the

Christians.” I believe that this may in fact be true for many Unitarian Universalists to whom it seems as though everything but Christianity is accessible. That same person told me that she was going to spread the news: that celebrating what it means to be human, and to be alive in this world, can be had in a Christian context at a Praise and Worship service at All Souls. It is an embodied opportunity to express one’s gratitude for this life.

Worship, at its best, is designed to turn our attention to that which we value most – those core values which drive our aspirations and our loftiest intentions. Worship is a public proclamation of that which we deem worthy. The root of the word itself actually means worthy or worthiness.

So what are we worshipping at All Souls? Worship is a time for us to recount our covenant, to lift up those values that we agree to support together. Worship is an opportunity to reconnect with that experience of the existence of something larger than ourselves. It is that experience of connection – of being filled with joy, or love, or hope, or faith – that moves us to action in the world. Worship is an opportunity to remember that we did not in fact create the day in which we live, that we are not in fact the soul creators of our life’s unfolding. It is an opportunity to reconnect to the power that we do have to make a difference in our own lives.

So what about Praise? Praise

is an opportunity to lift our voices to express gratitude. Praise, in the Christian context, is often directed toward God, or, in some circumstances, to the Christian understanding of the embodiment of God, Jesus. The words are repetitive, similar to many world religious traditions where you would find prayerful or meditative chanting. The repetition gives participants the opportunity to let go of the words and allows them to relax into the music. The music is rhythmic, often accompanied with swaying, and many choose to raise their hands as an expression of praise. Frequently Associate Music Director David Smith, a very accomplished musician and worship leader, will remind us in a service that this raising of the hands simply means, “My mind is on God.” And God, in our cultural context, is for you to define.

We have a rare and wonderful gift in our monthly Evening of Praise services, to experience unbridled joy through song and worship. I hope you will take the opportunity to sing, and dance, and praise, and love, in worship together. †



Grateful For Our Own Backyard

-by Kathy Keith, Executive Director



Welcome to the Backyard – an outdoor playground and classroom that has been in the works for nearly 10 years. In the last year and a half countless dedicated hands and backs have humbly dug trenches and hauled sand to complete the project.

It was a dream of those who started the All Souls Kids Program, including Kevin Harrison, Bob McNulty, Terri Faith, and Sandy Connelly, to have an outdoor classroom that would help teach about our faith through play.

The Backyard has come to life under the direction of Children’s Religious Education Administrator Shannon Boston. The plans were drawn up by architect Jason Starr, and executed through the hard labor of the Children’s Religious Education Board under the direction of Clarence Pahl and Amanda Stewart; Eagle Scouts Alex Tirrell, Zachariah McLaughlin, and Colin Spooner, and it was funded through the generosity of Jenk and Jerri Jones and the Flint Family Foundation.



The Backyard traces the roots of Unitarian Universalism in North America. It begins with the wikkiup on the west side, a living structure made of willow, planted and tended by Amanda Stewart, Brigid Kelley and many others. The wikkiup honors the indigenous people who were first on this land and connects us with earth-centered spirituality. The playground is built on land that once belonged to the Muscogee (Creek) Chief Tuckabuchee.

The little boat, built by Alex Tirrell as his Eagle Scout Project, symbolizes the ship that brought Universalist John Murray to America from England. Enroute to New York, The Hand in Hand got stuck on a sand bar off the coast of New Jersey and Murray went ashore where he met farmer, Thomas Potter. Potter had built a chapel and was waiting for someone to come to preach the gospel of universal salvation.



The rustic cabin on the southeast side represents the Walden Pond cabin of Unitarian Henry Da

vid Thoreau. It was the Eagle Scout Project of Zachariah McLaughlin.

The little white church represents us – All Souls Unitarian Church – which institutionalized liberal religion in Tulsa, first on Boulder at 14th Street, and now at 30th and Peoria. All Souls has served as a center for progressive social change and a voice of reason and tolerance in our community for nearly 90 years.

Clarence Pahl spent untold hours work-



ing on the church from the steeple to the hand-crafted pulpit and pews inside, where our children rehearse the freedom of the pulpit entrusted to our ministers, and the freedom of the pew enjoyed by our congregants. The covered platform on the north side may be used as a meditation or performance space. The natural setting is enhanced by a water feature, created by Warren Stewart and Scott Caldwell, which symbolizes the



source from which we all spring.

The stepping stones, created by our children under the direction of Bill Westcott, spell out the words of our covenant:



Love is the Spirit of this Church
and Service is its Law.
This is our Great Covenant:
To dwell together in peace,
To seek the truth in love,
And to help one another.

A raised bed filled with flowers and vegetables built by Jeramy and Libby Auld adds to the multi-sensory aspects of the Backyard.



On November 8, at 11:00 am, during our Earth Blessing, we will dedicate our Backyard – a place where our children can breathe, touch, feel, smell, love, laugh, and

imagine in the faith we hope to pass on to them for a lifetime. †

The Day of Great Gratitude

-by Debra Garfinkel, Pastoral Care Minister



Once there was a beautiful princess. She had everything she ever wanted. She had lovely clothes to wear. She had scrumptious food to eat. She even had a pony. But she wasn't happy. And, as time went by, all the people realized what her parents, the king and queen, knew. The princess never laughed.

Now the king and the queen were very good people. They loved their daughter, the princess, very much. It's not that the princess wasn't polite; she was. It's not that the princess didn't say please and thank you; she did. The princess was nice to other children and she was careful, clean, and said her prayers. Somehow, though, no one ever saw or heard the princess laugh. It was a great mystery.

The wise people of the kingdom – all the mothers and fathers – consulted amongst themselves. Some said, “The poor dear probably thinks she'll spoil her beauty by laughing.” Others believed that her diet needed changing. “Give her more broccoli, more cauliflower, more beans! She'll have to laugh!” they exclaimed. And others feared the worst: that the princess had some terrible disease that kept her from laughing.

As the years went by, more and more people in the kingdom grew to believe just that – that the poor princess had some terrible disease. And you can imagine that the king and the queen grew sadder and quieter. The people thought that the terrible disease was catching and stopped visiting the royal family. The castle became very quiet. Nobody laughed. The situation was most disheartening.

You should know that this kingdom was full of heart. The king and queen were loving parents who spared no expense to help their daughter. They hired comedians who told funny stories and did silly things. But the princess did not laugh. They sent for people skilled in the healing arts. Nothing. Not one snort. Not one giggle. They even tried feeding her lots of broccoli and cauliflower and beans. All that did was give the princess a big tummy ache. The king and queen still loved their daughter and refused to give up,

but they became very, very discouraged.

Then, one beautiful, sunny day, a stranger arrived in the kingdom. The stranger noticed right away that everywhere he went, people were sort of sad. He asked around and eventually heard the story about the princess who never laughed. “Never?” he repeated to make sure he'd heard correctly. “Never, ever, ever? Not even when she was a baby?” The stranger was assured that this princess had never, ever laughed. “Hmmm,” thought the stranger. “I must meet this young woman.”

So, even though he was a perfect stranger and nobody knew anything about him, he walked right up to the castle door. “Hello, Your Majesties,” the stranger greeted the king and queen. “I've travelled all over this world and seen a great many wonderful and interesting sights. I've heard stories both glorious and amazing. And, I've enjoyed much hearty laughter and cried many tears. Yet, in all my travels and throughout my life, I've never heard such a



story as a princess who never laughs. I am deeply touched and mildly curious. I wonder, would it be possible for me to meet her, just for a moment?"

The king and the queen looked the stranger up and down. He seemed a kind fellow. "Well, all right. But she may not want to see you." "I'll take my chances," he said amiably. "What have I got to lose?" One of the princess's most trusted servants accompanied the stranger to a parlor where he waited for awhile. In a few minutes, the princess entered the room through her own special door.

The most amazing thing happened. The stranger just sat there. He didn't say hello. He didn't say anything. He just sat and looked at the princess in a kind and caring way. The princess was used to people talking and trying to make her laugh. At first, she didn't know what to do. But the stranger was so calm, so quiet, so easy, that the princess began to relax. Instead of sitting so straight that you would have thought she had a board for a back, she began to settle into her chair. She actually felt comfortable. And safe. And accepted. The stranger continued to sit comfortably in his own chair, calmly and kindly looking at the princess. Then, she noticed he had the beginnings of tears in his eyes. She leaned ever so slightly forward. "What's the matter? Are you OK? Can I get you something?" "I'm wonderful, Princess," the stranger said. "My eyes just do this sometimes." "Oh," she said. They were both quiet again.

After awhile, the stranger stood up, thanked the princess and said he had to go. "May I come see you again?" he asked. The princess stood up, too. "Why, yes. I think I'd like that," she said, a bit puzzled to hear herself. She was really surprised when she later discovered that a whole hour had gone by. What had happened?

The stranger returned once, twice, three times. It was always the same: they sat in calm, quiet silence. They spoke briefly. Sometimes the stranger had tears. Sometimes he smiled. All the princess knew was that she felt better after having these times with him. At the end of the fourth visit, the stranger told the princess he was leaving. "I know," she said, a bit impatiently. "When will you be back?" "No," he said kindly, "you misunderstand. I'm leaving the kingdom. It's time for me to travel on." The princess couldn't understand it. Everyone always gave her exactly what she wanted – even before she knew she wanted it. How could this be? He couldn't leave her! She needed him. Yet, no matter what she said, the

stranger kindly and gently insisted that it was time for him to go. Then, he did. And he never returned.

At first, the princess was inconsolable. She stayed in her royal chambers. She cried. She threw things. She yelled at her parents. Then, she demanded to be left alone. As she sat quietly in her beautiful room and looked out her window at the beautiful world, she saw something – no one knows what it was. The princess saw something and she relaxed. She sat very still for about an hour – but it seemed like only moments. When she realized what had happened, she smiled a beautiful smile and felt something tickle inside. Before she knew it, she laughed. Only a tiny laugh at first, but it was definitely a laugh. Then, one laugh built upon another and another until she was laughing so hard that tears streamed down her princess cheeks. Then, she cried and cried as she had never cried before.

Her faithful servant heard her and rushed in to help. "Oh, Dear Princess! What's wrong?" The princess smiled through her tears. "Nothing is wrong, Dear Friend. Everything is finally well. All will be well. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you."

To this very day, the people of the kingdom tell this story of the princess who never laughed. They marvel at the effect of a total stranger who did nothing but sit with the princess. And although no one knows for sure what happened, exactly, they remember the day that the princess laughed and cried. They call it The Day of Great Gratitude – you might call it Thanksgiving Day. Because from that day forward, the princess expressed her gratitude for everything and everybody. She was grateful for a heart that was capable of loving and breaking and loving again. She was grateful for sunshine and clouds and mud and stinky cabbage. The princess was grateful to just sit and be.

And the stranger? Well, some say that he still travels the world, marveling at all of the stories and the songs and the ways that people find to be who they are. Who knows? Perhaps just such a stranger will come visit you some day. And for that, we can be truly grateful. †





- D** November 1
At times our own light goes out and is rekindled by a spark from another person. Each of us has cause to think with deep gratitude of those who have lighted the flame within us. ~Albert Schweitzer
- A** November 2
To educate yourself for the feeling of gratitude means to take nothing for granted, but to always seek out and value the kindness that stands behind the action. Train yourself never to put off the word or action for the expression of gratitude. ~Albert Schweitzer
- I** November 3
Saying thank you is more than good manners. It is good spirituality. ~Alfred Painter
- L** November 4
Let us rise up and be thankful, for if we didn't learn a lot today, at least we learned a little, and if we didn't learn a little, at least we didn't get sick, and if we got sick, at least we didn't die; so, let us all be thankful. ~Buddha
- Y** November 5
Gratitude is not only the greatest of virtues, but the parent of all the others. ~Cicero
- November 6
Revenge is profitable, gratitude is expensive. ~Edward Gibbon
- T** November 7
The hardest arithmetic to master is that which enables us to count our blessings. ~Eric Hoffer
- H** November 8
The Pilgrims made seven times more graves than huts. No Americans have been more impoverished than these who, nevertheless, set aside a day of Thanksgiving. ~H.U. Westermayer
- O** November 9
Gratitude is the fairest blossom which springs from the soul. ~Henry Ward Beecher
- U** November 10
As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them. ~John F. Kennedy
- G** November 11
Don't pray when it rains if you don't pray when the sun shines. ~Leroy (Satchel) Paige
- H** November 12
Let us be grateful to people who make us happy; they are the charming gardeners who make our souls blossom. ~Marcel Proust
- H** November 13
Appreciation can make a day, even change a life. Your willingness to put it into words is all that is necessary. ~Margaret Cousins
- T** November 14
If the only prayer you said in your whole life was, "Thank you," that would suffice. ~Meister Eckhart
- S** November 15
A wise man does not grieve for the things which he has not, but rejoices for those which he has. ~Epictus



November 16

Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It turns what we have into enough, and more. It turns denial into acceptance, chaos into order, confusion into clarity... It turns problems into gifts, failures into success, the unexpected into perfect timing, and mistakes into important events. Gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for today and creates a vision for tomorrow.
~Melodie Beattie

November 17

I awoke this morning with devout thanksgiving for my friends, the old and the new.
~Ralph Waldo Emerson

November 18

We can only be said to be alive in those moments when our hearts are conscious of our treasures
~Thornton Wilder

November 19

In the New Testament, religion is grace and ethics is gratitude.
~Thomas Erskine

November 20

The deepest craving of human nature is the need to be appreciated.
~William James

November 21

God gave you a gift of 86,400 seconds today. Have you used one to say "Thank you?" ~William A. Ward

November 22

"Why is the hardest arithmetic to master, that which enables us to count our blessings?" ~Eric Hoffer

November 23

Silent gratitude isn't much use to anyone
~G.B. Stern

November 24

Gratitude is the memory of the heart.
~Jean Baptiste Massieu

November 25

When we were children we were grateful to those who filled our stockings at Christmas time. Why are we not grateful to God for filling our stockings with legs?
~G.K. Chesterton

November 26

If you have lived, take thankfully the past.
~John Dryden

November 27

I would maintain that thanks are the highest form of thought; and that gratitude is happiness doubled by wonder.
~G.K Chesterton

November 28

For each new morning with its light, For rest and shelter of the night, For health and food, for love and friends, For everything Thy goodness sends.
~Ralph Waldo Emerson

November 29

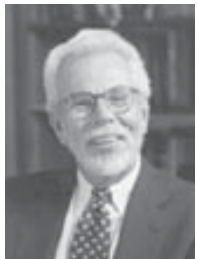
Praise the bridge that carried you over.
~George Colman

November 30

If you count all your assets, you always show a profit.
~Robert Quillen

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*Dr. John Wolf,
Minister Emeritus,
in his 50th year of ministry*

For nearly 50 years here, there were three things I was constantly trying to get done. One was giving away the Sunday collection. And (in 2005) you did it!

Another was to get you to understand that the only reason to join this church is to support it. It's not going to save your soul; that's not why you're here. You want to support it because there's nothing else like it. Therefore, if you don't like the music, or you don't like the minister, or you don't like anything, it's just tough – your job is to support this church come hell or high water, and support it well.

We have done remarkable things in these years together. "Emeritus" is Latin for "golf" – but they've gotten me back here for a few minutes simply to tell you that I am so proud of this place I can hardly see, particularly what we've done regarding Higher Dimensions. It's going to take some getting used to, but we've gotten used to a lot of things – you got used to me, for heaven's sake.

Now a third thing is being done, finally, which I think is the best idea I ever had. And that is to ask you, when you make your pledge, to make it permanent. In other words, when you make your pledge, make it forever. If it's not enough, we'll come back and talk to you. Or if it's too much, and you find that out, it's fixable. Make a pledge, and make a good one to start with, and that will be it. Support this church no matter what. Support this church with what you've got, because there's really not any other place like it.

There's nothing we can't do, so give generously. Support this place – it's a miracle!

*Imogene White,
Member since 2008,
serves on the Care Team.*



It is my pleasure to share with you today why I became a part of All Souls. It was an easy choice. What other church in Tulsa allows such freedom of thought and diverse expression of belief systems?

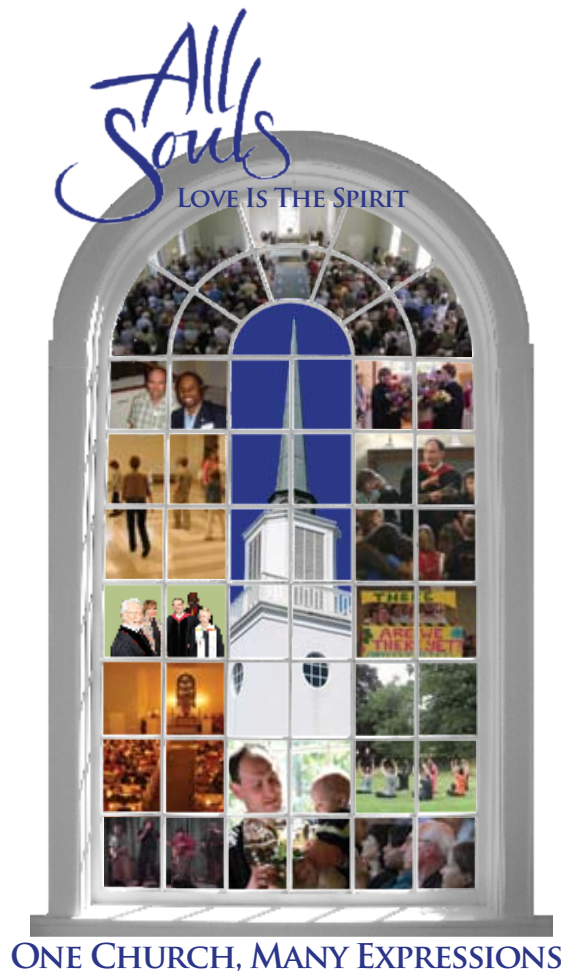
Even though I come from a thoroughly Baptist background, I have always been a free-thinker with lots of questions (which usually got me into lots of trouble in that religious setting). But at All Souls, I have found acceptance, and a niche in the church community where I fit and can contribute my time and talents.

All Souls has it all. Opportunities are ever present for nurturing your children, caring for those who need and desire it, broadening your world view and understanding of others, and an outstanding community social life.

I came from an entirely different worship experience; however, my belief system does NOT rest upon any form of worship, tradition, or presence of personalities. The foundation of my theology is rooted in my established relationship with God, the spirit of light, or the one called by many names.

I now find myself completely settled and at peace here at All Souls. There is a warmness exhibited here. It is a place of safety, without fear or guilt. I applaud those of you who have shown that love is truly the spirit of this church and service is its law. The reality of that covenant is ME!

All Souls is good soil in which to develop roots so you will reap a good life harvest. I am here because I want to be.



We're In! Are You?

Bill & Carol Ainsworth † Jeff & Sharon Allred † Darin & Brenda Alfred † Roger & Sue Ames
 Edwin & Judy Anderson † J. Martin Anderson † Walter Armstrong † Laura Arrowsmith
 Dan & Claudia Arthrell † Earl & Gunilla Bachenberg † Mary Bain † Steve & Marcia Baker † Kathryne Beach
 Herb Beattie † Betty Belcher † Edith Benedict † Roger & Mary Blais † Dianne Bostic † Shannon Boston
 Robert & Clara Bowman † Louann Buhlinger † Hugh & Carol Burleigh † J.J. Burnam † Tom Bush
 Steve & Linda Caldwell † Martha & Charles Cantrell † David & Sara Carlson † Brian Carroll † Deb Carroll
 Dorothy Checotah † Christian & Carla Clark † Marcy Clements † Charlie Cobb
 David Cone & Sara Newell † Stacey & Glenn Craig † Michele Cruncleton † Gerald & Joy Davis
 Jeff Day † Leonardo De Andrade † Emily Duensing & Ted Bakamijan † Denise Dutton † Jim Dyer
 Walter & Jayne Exon † Sam & Terri Faith † Shannon Falter † Kris Farnsworth
 Tom & Jean Ann Fausser † Dallas Ferguson † Paul & Ruth Ann Ferguson † Greer Fites
 Rick Fortner † Gerry & Cathy Foster † Arlin Franklin & Bonnie Johnson † Ruben Garcia
 Debra Garfinkel † Richard & Vicky George † Ron & Barbara Glass † Marion & Charles Gotwals
 Sharon Green † Ayn Grubb † Laura Hailey-Butler † Hank & Nancy Harbaugh † Sheron Hardesty
 Antoine Harris † Mory Harsh † Tex & Ellen Hartman † Robin Hernandez † Rudy & Deb Herrmann
 Dewey & Melissa Hicks † George & Jeanne Hillman † Stephen Hobbs † Kim Holland † Rhonda Holt
 Tom & Kathy Horne † JoAnn Howse † Kelly Jennings † William & Hillary Jennings † Bonnie Johnson
 Chad & Jennifer Johnson † Mary Ellen Jones † Dan Joslyn † Stephen & Anita Kabrick
 Julia Karlak & David Martin † Scott & Kathy Keith † Mary Kindschi † Virginia Kingsolver
 David & Marjorie Kroll † Dianna Langdon † Barbara Langston † Gary & Anita Larsen
 Marlin & Anitra Lavanhar † Tamara Lebak & Jill Webb † Randy Lewis † Dick & Trish Lieser
 Mary Jane Lindaman † Joe & Stacy Lytle † Greg Markley † Keith & Sasha Martin † Sid Martin
 Doris Mayfield † Joe & Nancy McDonald † Denis McGilvray & Sarah Passmore † Leslie McGuire
 Gerry McCloud † Brad & Jennifer McSweeney † Eleanor Meeker † Kevin Metzinger † Tammie Mims
 Margo Mitchell & Rob Lawyer † Gabriella & Jack Molnar † Gay & Betty Morrow † Ed & Karen Mulkey
 Betty Murdock † Dennis Neill † Michael Newman † Pat & Jane Newman † Reatha Oliver † Bonnie Paige
 Jim & Lisa Perrault † Wallace Philoon † Mona Pittenger † Mike Pryor † Anita Randza
 Forest Redwood & Holly Romine † Eunice Regier † Ruth Richards † Chad & Gabrielle Ricketts
 Lynn Rivers & Fred Pottorf † Kate Robey † Kenn Robinette † Luis & Jennie Rojas † Jim & Dianne Rusher
 Jack Savage † Penny Schell † Mike & Sarah Schmitz † George Schnetzer & Mary Lhevine
 Jeff & Denise Schoborg † Charlotte Schultz † Robert & Shirley Scott † Beverly Seay † Harry & Joan Seay
 Jon & Kathie Seekins † John & Claudette Selph † Tom & Stephanie Seymour † Jean Shields
 Marvin & Jennifer Shirley † Tim & Sandy Shoemaker † Eileen & David Simmons
 Annie & Michael Simpson † Betty Skalla † John Slater † Sharon Smith † George & Marilyn Snedden
 Ken & Georgia Snoke † D'Mitri Sobol † Kate & Jason Starr † Laura Stauffer † Thomas Stone
 Marianne Strong † Laura Sturm † Scott & Sheila Swearingen † Guy & Kim Thiessen
 Doug & Jennifer Turner † Andy & Tara Urich † Cynthia Vanderpool † Amanda Varner & Dawn Mitchell
 Glenn & Betty Visher † Jim & Janis Walker † Jane Walter † Mike Wessinger † Gene White
 Barry & Nancy Wilder † Woodley Williams † Laurel Williamson † Gary & Kay Witt † Cathy Wolf
 John & Barbara Wolf † Larry & Phyllis Wolverton † Norma Woolsey (As reported on 10/20/09)

Please make your financial commitment to All Souls in person,
 online at www.AllSoulsChurch.org, by mail, or fax to 918-743-0158.

Thank You



Gratitude - Personified

-by Kate Starr, Youth Director & Rev. Tamara Lebak, Associate Minister

Gratitude giggled uncontrollably
as he wiped the melted chocolate
and toasted marshmallows
and graham cracker crumbs
from Vulnerability's face,
and hands, and elbow, and hair.

The two pulled themselves away
from the warmth of the den's fire
to walk hand in hand through the darkness
toward the nursery;
one jumping with delight,
the other moving along more hesitantly.

Gratitude tucked in all the stuffed animals
so they'd be cozy.
Vulnerability tucked in the bed skirt
so no spiders could crawl up.
Gratitude pulled down the blankets
and fluffed the pillows.
Vulnerability pulled down the shades
and locked the windows.
Gratitude made sure to say prayers
to the great mystery.
Vulnerability made sure to say incantations
to empty the closets of intruders.

"Want me to tell you a story?"
asked Gratitude gleefully,
and Vulnerability nodded, cautiously.
"Once upon a time, there was a hermit
who lived in a cave on a snowy mountain.
People traveled from exotic places
to seek the wisdom of the man
who seemed to hold the key to happiness.

"The first person to call was Suffering,
who made the long journey on feet
wrapped in rags.
What is the key to happiness
when there is so much cruelty and hardship?
Have you ever watched a tree in a storm?
A tree does not blame the wind
as it is battered about.
It bends and sways, supported by strong roots.
Become grateful like the tree.

"The next person was Entitlement,
who flew his high-tech helicopter over the mountain
and rappelled down to the mouth of the cave,
What is the key to happiness
when in life we often don't get what we deserve?
Did you ever hear a muskrat wish he were a mink?
Animals do not waste time
on what could have or should have been.
Learn to be thankful like the muskrat.

"To help make his way through the snowy pass,
Betrayal hired a guide
who abandoned him in the night.
What is the key to happiness
in a world where no one can be trusted?
Does a bird stop whistling
because a cat moves in next door?
No, she sings the tune without words
and never stops at all.
Be like the bird and let blessings perch in your soul.

"Resentment was the last to come.
Blind since birth,
his journey seemed to take a lifetime.
What is the key to happiness
in a world filled with hatred and rage?
Oh my child, I see myself in you.
For I, too, have held bitterness in my heart.
In my youth, I left the world of misery
and disappointment and disloyalty.
But the world found me
and continued to come calling.
After many years of prayer and introspection,
I made the decision to transform my deepest wounds
into my greatest strengths
and to share my experience with others.
You, too, can rewrite your story."

Vulnerability kissed Gratitude on the head.
"Oh my child," she said.
"You have so much to teach me."
And she turned to make her way
through the darkness
back toward the light. †

Spiritual Practices - Blessings for Heart & Home

-by Rev. Debra Garfinkel, Pastoral Care Minister



This Thanksgiving holiday, as with every day, the ministers and staff of All Souls share our warm wishes. Just as we feel the many blessings of being part of this faith community, we wish you these many diverse blessings:

May the blessings of many generations
grant you happiness and joy.
May the blessings of many traditions
grant you compassion.
May the blessings of the ages reveal love.
May the blessings of the Universe
surround you with peace.

May you laugh until your sides ache.
May your tears cleanse your soul.
May you dance merrily and mightily.
May you rest well and awake renewed.



Iroquois Prayer of Thanksgiving, adapted
We return thanks to our mother, the earth,
which sustains us.
We return thanks to the rivers and streams,
which supply us with water.
We return thanks to all herbs,
which furnish medicines
for the cure of our diseases.
We return thanks to the moon and stars,
which have given to us their light
when the sun was gone.
We return thanks to the sun,
that has looked upon the earth
with a beneficent eye.
Lastly, we return thanks to the Great Spirit,
in Whom is embodied all goodness,
and Who directs all things
for the good of Her children.



An Irish Blessing

May there always be work for your hands to do
May your purse always hold a coin or two
May the sun always shine on your windowpane
May a rainbow be certain to follow each rain
May the hand of a friend always be near you
May God fill your heart with gladness to cheer you.



Buddhist

(serving the food)

In this food I see clearly the presence
of the entire universe supporting my existence.

(looking at the plate of food)

All living beings are struggling for life.
May they all have enough food to eat today.

(just before eating)

The plate is filled with food.
I am aware that each morsel is the fruit of much hard
work by those who produced it.

(beginning to eat)

With the first taste, I promise
to practice loving kindness.
With the second, I promise
to relieve the suffering of others.
With the third, I promise
to see others' joy as my own.
With the fourth, I promise
to learn the way of nonattachment and equanimity.

(after the meal)

The plate is empty. My hunger is satisfied.
I vow to live for the benefit of all living beings.



Untitled Prayer

by John J. Morris, SJ

Mighty God, Father of all,
Compassionate God, Mother of all,
bless every person I have met,
every face I have seen,
every voice I have heard,
especially those most dear;
bless every city, town, and street that I have known,
bless every sight I have seen,
every sound I have heard,
every object I have touched.
In some mysterious way
these have fashioned my life;
all that I am, I have received.
Great God, bless the world.



A Grateful Human, Just Being

-by Kate Starr, Youth Director



“A nor’easter is stalled off the coast, with gale-force winds and driving rain, making things pretty miserable from North Carolina all the way to New England.” This was the weather report I heard from the comfort of a warm bed in a safe hotel room, just before I was supposed to meet the Outward Bound crew for eight days of sea kayaking in the Outer Banks. “Well,” I thought, “I’ll just find a neighborhood bookstore and order room service all week.” It was the beginning of an internal argument that continued for more than an hour as I tried to decide what to do.

I had strategically chosen this Outward Bound over white-water rafting or rock-climbing or wilderness adventure because it would be calming in its repetitiveness, contemplative even. My real life was already a series of category-4 rapids, death-defying heights (and lows), and wild adventures. I wanted eight days of monotony – the Zen of paddling for hours across smooth waters – to get into a spiritual zone where life decisions could incubate.

My mental dialogue did not stop until I finally layered the fleece shirt under my water-repellant coat and headed for the ferry. The rain felt like needles piercing my face as the Outward Bound crew boated to the islands. It beat down on the tarp stretched like a giant mushroom cap over our heads, around our backs, and under our bottoms as we sat cross-legged and hunch-backed eating a plowman’s lunch of bread and cheese during crew introductions. It pounded the tents through the night as we slept damp and steamy. The rain continued during our first dawn run along the beach. It continued during emergency escape training when we each learned how to quickly pull off the kayak’s waterproof skirt and swim to the surface in the event we accidentally capsized. It continued through everything we did: running at daybreak, kayaking up the coast, setting up camp, preparing dinner, eating, sleeping. Repeat. Repeat. Repeat. The rain continued for five days.

And then, it stopped. And the sun came out. And it was beautiful. And I could see a light house in the distance as dolphins leaped beside our flotilla of

soggy survivors. And I knew if I could live through this, I could live through anything.

We were joined along the beaches by others – couples and families and fair-weather fans. And I felt sorry for those people who had no idea what they missed – the problem-solving; the trauma-bonding; the triumph over tragedy; the simple pleasures of a warm fire and dry socks; the feeling of being one with nature – not sunny California nature, but the nature animals endure, the nature most of us miss while we’re in the comfort and safety of our home or hotel room. Anyone can kayak when it’s sunny and smooth; it takes a special kind of person to do what we had done. And I felt special.

For months, I sought to recreate opportunities for the internal growth that comes from overcoming adversity. I pushed myself beyond my limits: extreme exercising in inclement weather, doing for others who were less fortunate, taking difficult classes. I was a junky for it. But eventually, real life became enough. I got married, had a baby, bought a house, got a new job. That was plenty of beloved adversity. I no longer needed to artificially create challenges to feel the rush that comes from taking your body and mind and heart and soul to their very limits. It happened on its own. The Outward Bound experience taught me that even though I was so tired at the end of the day I thought I would die, I wouldn’t. And that eventually it will stop raining – literally and metaphorically.

I still enjoy running (these days, power walking) in the rain and the growth that inevitably comes from living through difficult situations. But now I really appreciate a beautiful sunny day and the benefits of a respite. I am grateful for the ordinariness of a gravel bar as well as the grand vistas. I enjoy floating down a lazy river on an air mattress as much as I do white-water rapids in a canoe. I don’t mind taking the path of least resistance from time to time, instead of choosing the road less traveled. I do a lot more dwelling in peace and a little less seeking the truth. I am grateful to be a human being, not always a human doing. †

THANKSGIVING FESTIVAL NOVEMBER 22

Family Services

at
10:00 am
&
11:30 am

Childcare for
infants & toddlers
as usual



Festival of Thanksgiving, 1956

Resources for Further Reading

A Grateful Heart: Daily Blessings for the Evening Meal from Buddha to the Beatles, Edited by M. J. Ryan. Organized by season, this collection of beautiful and thoughtful contemplations for families of all spiritual orientations includes words from the Bible, Ghandi, Martin Luther King, Thich Nhat Hanh.

Thanks!: How the New Science of Gratitude Can Make You Happier, by Robert Emmons. Dr. Emmons, editor-in-chief of the "Journal of Positive Psychology," puts Albert Schweitzer's famous dictum, "Gratitude is the secret to life," to a rigorous scientific test. The author draws on the first major study of the subject to show how the cultivation of gratitude can measurably change peoples lives.

Simple Abundance: A Daybook of Comfort & Joy, by Sarah Ban Breathnach

In this practical, inspirational guide to the expression of your authentic self, Ban Breathnach provides a meditation or exercise for every day of the year presenting the principles of simple abundance: gratitude, simplicity, order, harmony, beauty, and joy.

Gratitude: A Way of Life, by Louise L. Hay. Louise Hay has gathered the insights and wisdom of some of the most wonderful teachers and writers she knows, including Dr. Wayne W. Dyer, Dr. Joan Borysenko, Dan Millman, Harold Bloomfield, Dr. Bernie Siegel, and Shakti Gawain, who share their understanding of the practice of gratitude.

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- 2) Include your name and daytime number.
- 3) Not all submissions will be published. Submissions may be edited.

Questions? Call Laurel Williamson at 743-2805, ext 305.

November Highlights

- Nov 6 Soulful Sundown:
 "Gratitude Adjustment"
- Nov 8 Earth Blessing
 Playground Dedication
- Nov 12 Day Alliance
- Nov 13 Dining Across the Decades Potluck
- Nov 17 Evening Alliance
- Nov 19 Board of Trustees
- Nov 20 Parents Night Out
 Coffeehouse: The Greencards
 An Evening of Praise
- Nov 22 Thanksgiving Festival

See inside for
Parish Notes

The All Souls Weekly Bulletin



ALL SOULS
ALTERNATIVE
WORSHIP

*Gratitude
Adjustment*



**FRIDAY
NOVEMBER 6
7:00 PM**

Featuring
Secular Praise Music
WITH REV. TAMARA LEBAK, RICK FORTNER,
LAUREL WILLIAMSON & MORE !

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