

Thinking About Thanksgiving  
Preacher: Rev. Karen E. Gale  
Date: November 25, 2018

00:00

Thinking about Thanksgiving

A thoughtful and colorful retelling of the first Thanksgiving with the help of our children and youth

In the beginning there were Pilgrims living in Holland, religious refugees from England, who left their lands and home looking for freedom of religion

Their pastor John Robinson sent them off with this blessing "I am verily persuaded the Lord hath more truth yet to break forth out of His Holy Word."

We, too, remember that God is still speaking, still calling us to new ways of loving, new ways of letting in the light, new ways of welcoming, new ways of being.

We are grateful for God's light ....(a white streamer is connected from the balcony to the altar by young helpers.)

On the Mayflower there were also indentured servants, orphans, and tradesmen looking for a new start. They sought to work the land, to pay off their debts, and start a new life in the new world. They were looking for freedom and freedom for them meant actual freedom in due time.

We too remember that God calls us to work for freedom for all: freedom from hate, freedom to worship, freedom to love.

We are grateful for freedom...(a green streamer is connected from the balcony to the altar by young helpers.)

Their journey on the Mayflower was long, 66 days. It was hard. The waves, the seas, tossed the ship. And yet there was hope and life. A baby boy was born on the voyage, christened Oceanus, and God was there with them.

We, too, remember that God is with us in the midst of struggle and storms. There is hope, always hope, in the difficulties and challenges we face. God is always present.

We are grateful for the hope God brings into our lives....(a blue streamer...)

That first winter was hard. Half of the Mayflower passengers died. Some wanted to go back. Everyone was tired of living on the boat that long, long winter. Did you know they lived on the boat at first?

It was a hard time for Native Wampanoag peoples too. 75% of their people had died from diseases brought by earlier Europeans. The lands the Pilgrim came to was empty not because they weren't being used, but because whole villages had disappeared. To this day Thanksgiving is a national day of mourning for many native tribes.

We, too, remember that our Thanksgiving story also contains grief and loss. But God remains steadfast. God was present to the grieving Pilgrims and Wampanoags; God is present to us in our grieving.

We are thankful for God's presence in times of grief and loss....(a black streamer is connected from the balcony to the altar by young helpers.)

In the spring Pilgrims and Wampanoags met. They signed a treaty, one that was never broken across 70 years. Native folks showed Pilgrims how to farm in this new place. And soon there was food!

Cranberries! ...(a red streamer....)

Corn!...(a yellow streamer...)

Squash! ...(an orange streamer...)

The Pilgrims were grateful for the help given them and the connections that they made across differences in culture and customs. For this help kept them alive in this world that was so new to them.

We, too, are grateful for the help we receive from others, and the connections we make in this community and across differences of age and race and background and class. For the help we give one another and those in our world. For God seen in a stranger's outstretched hand. We are grateful for help given and help received. We are grateful for God's help...(a purple streamer...)

In the fall the Pilgrims looked at the food and the land and their community and they were thankful. They looked at the treaty they had signed with the Wampanoag and were thankful. They celebrated with a harvest festival.

There was Deer and fish and turkey and lobster!  
There was corn and vegetables!  
There was a time to sit together!....(a pale green streamer....)  
And they said thank you to God.

We, too, sit down with family and friends, strangers and acquaintances. We look at all we have received and are thankful. We celebrate the goodness of God and the multicolored pathways of love and loss, hope and heartache, help offered and help received, that has come to us. We look at the abundance on our tables and are thankful.

We say "thank you, God. Thank you. God. Thank you God."  
Amen.