

Sample Interfaith Thanksgiving Worship Service (2011)

A Suggested Order of Worship

Prelude(s)

Choir / Congregational Hymns / Instrumental(s)

Gathering / Opening Song

Congregation gathers in silence. Clergy simply enter and take their appropriate places. Formal procession of service participants is not necessary.

OR

Formal procession of liturgical ministers into sanctuary. Instrumental processional.

OR

Gathering Hymn may be sung by the Congregation. **Suggested Hymns:**

We Gather Together	All Good Gifts
Come, Ye Thankful People, Come	The God of Abraham Praise
All People That on Earth Do Dwell (Olde 100th)	Eternal Father, Strong to Save
Now Thank We All Our God (verses 1 and 2)	We Plow the Fields and Scatter
O God, Beneath Thy Guiding Hand	Praise and Thanksgiving
Other suitable selections...	(to the tune of: Morning Has Broken)

“God, We Rejoice” (to the tune of: “God of Our Fathers”)

God, we rejoice, for you have done great things;
All of creation with your goodness rings.
Pastures and vines and trees all give full yield;
Harvests of gold, your mercy has revealed.

Yet, in our panic and anxiety,
We wonder what our source of food will be
If things go wrong and future ventures fail.
God, may abundance in all lands prevail!

Let thanks ring out in shouts and prayers and praise
To our Creator through the coming days.
Grant us your peace and quiet godliness,
As your salvation’s joy we all confess. Amen.

Sunshine and rain have blessed our fertile land;
Vats overflow with bounty from your hand.
‘Round us is plenty, meant for us to share
With needy people, here and everywhere.

Think of the birds, which never sow or reap,
Or of the lilies, which no wardrobes keep.
Think how much more our God for us provides;
Do not be anxious, God with us abides.

“Forget Not” (to the tune of: “In Christ There Is No East or West”)

Forget not all that God has done,
Providing this good land;
The valleys, hills, and rushing streams
Are from God’s mighty hand.

Abundant crops from soils so rich
Provide our daily bread;
Remember that our God provides
The means by which we’re fed.

Throughout the years, our God has led
Through dangers and distress;
We live by gracious providence,
Drawn from the wilderness

Beware of claiming as our own
The power to create,
As if the bounty we enjoy
Were ours to orchestrate.

God draws us into covenant,
And grants us strength and power,
That we may live with faithfulness
In every day and hour.

*** These suggested hymns are appropriate for use at other parts of the Worship Service.**

Announcements

Host pastor (or other) welcomes those who gather for this celebration.

Any special announcements regarding the Offering, Fellowship time following the service, etc. should be made now, so as not to disturb the rhythm of the service.

Welcome

Thanksgiving is a time of gratitude to God, our Creator and Provider, whose guidance and care go before us and whose love is with us forever.

Thanksgiving is a time to reflect on changes, to remember that we, too, grow and change from one season of life to another.

Thanksgiving is a time of changing seasons, when leaves turn golden in Autumn's wake and apples are crisp in the first chill breezes of fall.

Let us remember the true meaning of Thanksgiving. As we see the beauty of Autumn, let us acknowledge the many blessings which are ours; let us think of our families and friends and let us give thanks in our hearts as we gather to pray.

Call to Worship

Leader: Almighty and Gracious God, you have made yourself known to us in a multitude of ways, and each of those ways invites us to respond to you with grateful hearts.

All: **You have been present with us even before our thoughts and words and feelings ever turned toward you.**

Leader: You created us in your own image, redeemed us with your love and have always sustained us with your grace.

All: **When we think of you, Gracious God, we think of your compassion and tender mercies toward all, and we are humbled with gratitude.**

All: **We gather to give thanks to you, O God, for all things bright and good, the seedtime and the harvest, our live, our health, our food; help us to show thanksgiving for all your freely give, to love you in our neighbor and by the way we live. All good gifts around us are sent from heaven above; then let us thank the Lord for all his love!**

Opening Prayer

Let us pray.

Lord, Bounteous God, you do not cease to give many riches in the rain that fall from heaven and nourishment for life in the fertility of soil. We give thanks to you for the fruits of the land which we have harvested, and we pray that you bless and preserve these fruits which we have received from your hand. Help us to be mindful of the needs of others as we rejoice in the bounty of your goodness to us. With humility and gratitude, we offer this prayer to you our God, living and true, forever and ever.

Amen.

Reading from Sacred Scripture – Hebrew Scriptures

Suggested readings:

Leviticus 19: 9-18

Isaiah 1: 14-17

Leviticus 23: 22-24

Isaiah 12: 1-6

Deuteronomy 8: 7-18

Isaiah 25: 1-9

Deuteronomy 16: 13-17

Isaiah 55: 9-13

Micah 4: 1-4

Isaiah 58: 1-13

Joel 2: 21-27

Psalms: 8, 24, 65, 100, 113, 118, 122, 126, 133, 136, 143

* In the case of the presence of members of other religious traditions, appropriate selections from their Sacred Writings may also be utilized.

Psalm Response (May be sung **or** recited)

Option 1: Psalm 126

* **This Psalm may be done responsively. Or, you may choose from a Psalm from those listed above.**

1. When the LORD restored the captives of Zion,
we thought we were dreaming.
 2. Then our mouths were filled with laughter;
our tongues sang for joy.

 1. Then it was said among the nations,
“The LORD had done great things for them.”
 2. The LORD has done great things for us;
Oh, how happy we were!

 1. Restore our captives, LORD, like the dry stream beds of the Negeb.
 2. Those who sow in tears will reap with cries of joy.

 1. Those who go forth weeping, carrying sacks of seed,
 2. Will return with cries of joy, carrying their bundled sheaves.
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Option 2: Musical Setting of a Psalm 9

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 9: 1, 2, 10, 11

Cantor sings refrain first. People repeat.

I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart;

I will tell of all Your wonderful deeds.

I will be glad and exult in You,
I will sing praise to Your Name, O Most High. *refrain*

Those who know Your Name put their trust in You,
for You, O Lord, have not forsaken those who seek You. *refrain*

Sing praises to the Lord, who dwells in Zion!
Tell among the peoples His deeds!

Option 3: Musical Setting of a Psalm of Thanksgiving (choice of liturgical planners)

Reading from Sacred Scripture – Christian Scriptures

Suggested Readings:

Matthew 5: 3-10

Matthew 6: 8-15

Matthew 6: 25-33

Luke 12: 15-21

Luke 17:11-19

Romans 12: 9-21

1 Corinthians 13

2 Corinthians 9: 6-15

1 Timothy 2: 1-7

James 2: 14-17

* The number and placement of readings from Sacred Scripture would be at the discretion of the local planning committee and/or the Guest Speaker.

Sermon / Reflection (*followed by a period of Silent Reflection*)

Hymn [if desired]

* Choral selections or congregational singing may take place.

Offering

Monetary donations and/or non-perishable food items may be part of the Offering.

* Through public service / bulletin announcements made in anticipation of this Thanksgiving Service, people may be encouraged to bring some non-perishable food items along with them to the Service and be invited to join in the Offertory Procession as those items are brought to an area in or near the Sanctuary. (*Choir Anthem or Congregational singing may accompany this action.*)

A Prayer of Thanks for AFTER the Offering

Option 1

Everything is a gift from God, even the smallest things, and it's the sum of these gifts that makes life beautiful or sad, depending on how we use these gifts.

Option 2 [for an Ecumenical gathering]

O Lord our God, the author and giver of all good things, we thank you for all your mercies,
and for your loving care over all your creatures.

We bless you for the gift of life, for your protection round about us, for your guiding hand upon us,
and for the tokens of our love within us.

We thank you for friendship and duty, for good hopes and precious memories, for the joys that cheer us,
and the trials that teach us to trust in you.

Most of all, we thank you for the saving knowledge of your Son, our Savior,
for the living presence of your Holy Spirit, the Comforter, for your Church, the Body of Christ,
for the ministry of Word and Sacrament, and all the means of grace.

In all these things, O God, make us wise for a right use of your benefits,
that we may render and acceptable thanksgiving unto you all the days of our lives;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prayer of Confession for a Lack of Thanksgiving

ALL:

Hear now, gracious God, our words of contrition that we pray in light of your manifold blessings:

We confess that we have failed to perceive your glory as it is revealed in creation. We have taken the gifts of this world for granted and have not stopped to marvel at what you have provided for us. Forgive us for rushing through life with reckless abandon. Forgive us for trampling upon other persons, places and things and for not understanding how dependent we are upon one another and the earth itself.

Help us, Creator God, to share the resources of this world as good and faithful stewards. Show us how to tend the land, water and air and prevent their pollution and destruction. Teach us the discipline of conserving and of replacing what we have used. Deliver us from exploitation. Keep us from idolizing money and material possessions. Make us compassionate in our concerns for the needs of others. Amen.

At an ecumenical gathering, the sections in brackets may be used:

[The Lord's Prayer

Gathering all of our prayers and praise into one, let us pray as Jesus, our Savior and Brother, has taught us:

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come,

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory for ever and ever. Amen.]

Closing Prayer

We thankfully acknowledge You; our God and God of our ancestors, Lord of eternity. You are the source of our strength, even as You have been our protecting shield in every generation. We thank You and proclaim Your praise for our lives which are in Your hand, for our souls which are in Your care, for Your miracles which are daily with us, and for Your wondrous kindness at all times-morning, noon, and night. Source of all goodness, Your mercies never fail.

Source of compassion, Your kindnesses never cease. You are our abiding hope. We thankfully acknowledge You, our God and God of our, ancestors, God of all beings, our Creator, Lord of all creation. We utter blessings and thanksgiving to Your greatness and holiness, for You have given us life and sustained us. May You continue to bless us with life and sustenance, and gather our dispersed, so that we may fulfill Your commandments, do Your will, and serve You wholeheartedly. Praised be God to whom all thanks are due!

All: Amen.

Commission

May thanksgiving be more than a special day; may it be for us a way of life.

We have been enriched in every way for great generosity. Thanksgiving to our God!

Appreciate anew the good earth that is our inheritance from a loving God.

We celebrate again God's goodness to our ancestors and God's continuing provision for us.

The God who has answered our prayers asks our help in answering the prayers of others.

We will not forget the source of our good life or think we can keep it by hoarding it.

God, who raised mountains and stills roaring seas, will dwell with us to calm and uplift.

Grant us, O God, to live peaceably with all your love and with thankfulness at the heart of all we do.

Blessing

Leader:

On our heads and our houses, the blessing of God.

On our coming and going, the peace of God.

In our life and believing, the Love of God.

At our end and new beginning, the arms of God to welcome us and bring us home.

People: Amen.

Leader: Let us depart in peace.

All: In the name of the Lord. Amen!

Hymn

America the Beautiful (verses 1 and 2)

For the Beauty of the Earth

Now Thank We All Our God (verses 1 and 2)

Other suitable selections...(see earlier list of hymns)

[Prayer of Saint Francis]

Let There Be Peace on Earth

Canticle of the Sun

Postlude(s)

A time of fellowship following the service is a wonderful way to celebrate community.

Optional Texts

A Gathering Prayer

*** The verses of the following prayer may be done responsively. (Reader and All; Male and Female; Left and Right; etc.). The final verse is shared together.**

1. Heavenly God, help our weakness and the poverty of our human race that we may stand before your sovereignty. We ask that you open unto us the treasures of your grace; sprinkle upon our hearts the dew of your abundant mercy.
2. We beseech you, O God, hear the prayer of those who are gathered together from among different faiths and ethnic groups. Almighty God, we come here today affirming our faith in you, who are rich in mercy and compassion; for you do not delight in the destruction of your creation, nor in its perdition.
3. We ask you now to shower forth tranquility, peace and reconciliation in a world that is troubled and grieved. Enlighten the hearts of the leaders of nations that they may collaborate in drawing peoples closer together for the good of all humanity, and in preserving the noble image of humans, which your hands have fashioned.
4. Most Compassionate God, receive the prayers of this gathering offered before the throne of your majesty. Sprinkle the waters of your lasting peace upon the earth, that the poor, the needy, hungry, orphaned and widowed may taste the fruits of your goodness.

All: O God, we ask you to bless, guide and teach each and every one of us to be a herald of peace and love in his or her own land among his or her own people and brothers and sisters in faith. Now and henceforth we praise and worship your holy name. **AMEN!**

Thanksgiving Day Prayer

Lord God, You gather us together as one people, grateful not only for the gift of life itself, but also for the many gifts of friendship, love, devotion and forgiveness that we share in common.

We thank You, dear God, for showing us how to return our thanks by living lives of service, by genuine deeds of hospitality, by extending kindness to the stranger and by our showing of concern for each other.

Help us to appreciate and to respect one another. Allow us to see the full spectrum of Your gifts and the marvelous diversity of Your many peoples. Use us to make You visible and known to others in countless ways so that Your great love for us might be mirrored in our love for one another.

As we again prepare to celebrate the feast of Thanksgiving, help us live our lives with ever grateful and humble hearts. Bless us this day and all days without end, forever and ever.

AMEN.

Thank you, Creator of the universe, for the people gathered around us today. We give thanks for the things of the earth that give us the means of life. Thank you for the plants and animals that we use as food and medicine. Thank you for the natural world, in which we find the means to be clothed and housed. Thank you, Lord, for the ability to use these gifts of creation. Help us to see our place among these gifts, not to squander them or think them as means for selfish gain. May we respect the life you have made. May our spirits be strengthened by using only what we need, and may we use our strength to help those in need. **AMEN.**

Gracious God, who supplies us with every blessing in abundance, lift up our hearts in gratitude and thanksgiving. Open us to remember the gifts we seldom notice, the bounty we take for granted, the rich possibilities you provide. For bread without scarcity, for water that is pure, for houses to live in and friends to enjoy, we give you humble thanks. For beauty and bounty, for healing and hope, for the power of your Word, we lift our voices in joyful praise. Dwell with us now and always. **AMEN.**

Lord God, Creator and Sustainer of our lives, You who have blessed our land with all manner of wealth, we pray that You will bless Your people with a spirit of humility. Let us not, in the pride of possession, forget that we hold all this wealth in trust and that only when we are faithful to that trust and use our wealth with wisdom, justice and generosity can it yield us true happiness. Teach us that the joy of creation far surpasses that of acquisition, that there is more security in mutual helpfulness than in selfish hoarding, that to earn the love and gratitude of our compatriots affords a deeper satisfaction than to force their fear, servility and envy. We thank You, O God, for all Your gifts, but above all, we thank You for the gift of Your Spirit, for only by it and with it can we learn to use Your gifts for our mutual blessing. **AMEN.**

God of the universe, creative Source of all being, from You come our blessings from day to day and year to year. How great are Your love and kindness, O God! The towering mountains and the shaded forests, the abundant streams and the fruitful earth tell of your endless beauty.

For this land so richly blessed, we raise our voices in joyous thanks. To these shores Your children have come from many different lands to seek liberty and new hope. All have been pilgrims to this Western world. Here they found new purposes, increased strength, and the opportunity to go beyond old fears and superstitions. For our country, for its freedoms – promised and attained, for the richness of its natural blessings and renewed harmony among its citizens – we give you humble thanks.

All: O God of justice and peace, inspire all who dwell in our beloved land. Give us wisdom and strength to labor for its well-being, on the firm foundation of right and truth. Fill us with the spirit of kindness and generosity that this land may always be a beacon of light for all peoples who seek to live in peace. **AMEN!**

Prayer during Times of Financial Challenge (recited by all)

Loving God, you provide for the needs of your children.

I place my trust in you during these times of financial difficulty.

Look upon me with your grace and give me the strength to work hard to provide for those whom you have entrusted to me.

You have blessed me with many gifts and talents. May I use them wisely, for the good of all.

Teach me to know the difference between my wants and needs.

Guide me to be generous with others.

Help me to trust that with you at my side, no situation is ever in peril.

You are my God and my all; my hope and my treasure.

I will praise you forever. Amen!

(from: the **Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Scranton**)

Litany of Joy and Humility

We live in a grand and awful time when humanity stands on the border of a promised time, when God's people are summoned to obedience and faithfulness to preserve God's creation, to stand with the poor and oppressed everywhere, and to stand together as the people of the earth.

With confession and humility, we repent of our blindness to the division and war in our own hearts and in our land, our obsession with money and our pursuit of power, our irrational belief in security through weaponry, and our worship of secular gods.

We are called to be obedient to the Eternal, our God, the creator of all humanity and the universe, who loves the whole world and who invites us to be stewards of the earth and servants of God's people, to be co-workers in a new creation.

Let us be peace-makers. Let us be called the children of God, speaking boldly with moral conviction, to the nation and to the world, building, with God's graces, a new moral order in the world community; and acting now for world peace, an enterprise of justice, an outcome of love.

A sample reflection: 5 Kernels of Corn

The Pilgrims had a custom of putting five (5) kernels of corn on each empty place before a dinner of Thanksgiving was served. In many old Plymouth families, the custom is still followed today. It is done on Thanksgiving Day or on December 21 (the anniversary of Plymouth landing). The five (5) kernels were chosen because, prior to the first harvest, life was so hard that the daily ration was five (5) kernels of corn per person. Before eating the Thanksgiving meal, remember the Pilgrims and their custom; let us reflect on the many things we have to give thanks for, and do so!

Five Kernel Prayer

Five kernels of corn on an empty plate
reminding us of our Pilgrim kin,
whose hunger was so very great
that death might have become a friend.

O Great Creator of the earth itself,
you who give bounteous harvest from seed,
grant that we not so much stock our shelf,
as share your abundance with those in need.

When we sit down to tables stacked
with food of every sort and name,
before mouth and stomach are packed,
May we remember from Whence it came. Amen.

Litanies of Thanksgiving

Option 1

Give thanks to the Lord who is good.
God's love is everlasting.

Come, let us praise God joyfully!
Let us come to God with thanksgiving.

For the good world; for things great and small, beautiful and awesome; for seen and unseen splendors.
Thank you, God.

For human life; for talking and moving and thinking together; for common hopes and hardships shared from birth until our dying.
Thank you, God.

For work to do and strength to work; for the comradeship of labor; for exchanges of good humor and encouragement.
Thank you, God.

For marriage; for the mystery and joy of flesh made one; for mutual forgiveness and burdens shared; for secrets kept in love.
Thank you, God.

For family; for living together and eating together; for family amusements and family pleasures.
Thank you, God.

For children; for their energy and curiosity; for their brave play and startling frankness.
Thank you, God.

For the young; for their high hopes; for their irreverence toward worn-out values; for their search for freedom; for their solemn vows.

Thank you, God.

For growing up and growing old; for wisdom deepened by experience; for rest in leisure; and for time made precious by its passing.

Thank you, God.

For your help in times of doubt and sorrow; for healing our ills; for preserving us in temptation and danger.

Thank you, God.

For the community into which we have been called and for our life together.

Thank you, God.

For your Spirit who guides our steps and brings us gifts of faith and love; who prays in us and prompts our grateful worship.

Thank you, God.

We praise and thank you, Eternal God, for all your goodness to us.

Give thanks to the Lord, who is good. God's love is everlasting!

Option 2

Creator God, we thank you for giving your creatures such a splendid and diverse world, with its rhythm of summer and winter, springtime and harvest; a world capable of feeding and sustaining all, if only we would live as you want us to do.

We praise you for its beauty and generosity; for its wonders that speak of your majesty and love, and for the food you provide for our needs and our enjoyment.

For your loving gifts to us:

We praise and thank you.

Saviour God, we thank you that you walk the earth around us like a sower, flinging onto the soil of our lives the seed of your Gospel; offering us new and productive lives in you if you will open ourselves to respond to your call.

We praise you for the way in which you tend us, showering us with love, forgiveness and faith, warming us with your smile, as you encourage us to grow. We offer the first-fruits of our lives to you, in our worship and our living.

For our loving gifts to us:

We praise and thank you.

Sustaining God, we thank you for the out-pouring of your life-giving Spirit, into the world and into each one of us, guiding us, uniting us and enriching all humankind.

We ask that the fruit of the Spirit in our lives might be used to feed the hungry of this hurting world. May we show generosity to the poor and starving and stand up for justice and freedom. May we offer new life in you to those who hunger for meaning, and show your love to those who are lonely or distressed.

For all your loving gifts to us:

We praise and thank you.

Option 3

Leader: The Apostle Paul urged that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people. Since God our Savior desires all to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth, let us lift up these intercessions before the Throne on high:

For our church leaders and those who oversee the holy Church;
preserve them, O God.

For those elected to political office and posts of public trust;
keep their lives peaceful, O God.

For those who serve in the armed forces;
protect them, O God.

For those whose mission is to bring peace;
grant them success, O God.

For those who are sick and suffering;
cure and comfort them, O God.

For those raising families in godliness and piety;
be their anchor, O God.

For those traveling and their safety;
be their guide, O God.

For farmers and whose labor we depend on for our daily sustenance;
bless the work of their hands, O God.

For those in need of the Lord's mercy and help;
sustain them, O God.

For those who are offering their thoughts of gratitude to God;
bless them, O God.

For those who do not know how to express thanks toward God and others;
inspire their minds and hearts with praise, O God.

For those who have passed into eternal life;
receive them in Your kingdom, O God.

Leader: Receive the fervent petitions of those here present, O Lord, and grant their requests uttered in humility and with love. May our intercessions be acceptable in Your sight, so that all of us may one day enjoy the happiness of heaven. All praise, honor and worship are due to You, now and forever.

All: Amen.

Option 4 (from the Moravian Book of Worship) – Ecumenical setting

Almighty and Gracious God, you have made yourself known to us in a multitude of ways, each of those ways invites us to respond to you with grateful hearts.

You have been present with us even before our thoughts and words and feelings ever turned toward you.

You have created us in your own image, redeemed us with your love and have always sustained us with your grace.

When we think of you, gracious God, we think of your compassion and tender mercies toward all, and we are humbled with gratitude.

We thank you, ever-present God, for coming to us in your Son, Jesus Christ, for entering into our human flesh and taking the form of a servant.

We thank you for reaching the least of us while we were yet sinners and for doing all things necessary for our salvation through sufferings, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

We praise and honor you with our hearts and lives, because we know that we could not help ourselves or earn our own salvation.

You continue to rush out to meet us and embrace us while we are yet far off. We marvel at the depth of your forgiving love which always comes to us through the workings of the Spirit. We thank you for each new experience and each new reminder of your very constant care.

You have not left us to live alone in this world, but have called us to be members of your body, the church. We thank you for all those in the past who have shared their faith with us and for those in the present who help to shape our response to your love.

We are grateful for the nurture we receive and the mission we have been given to manifest the good news of Jesus Christ to the world around us.

You have not left us without written and living testimony to your involvement in human history. We thank you for the Holy Scriptures and the insights they provide for us in our mission and ministry.

We are grateful for your words and stories of judgment and justice, comfort and renewal, salvation and peace that come to us from the Bible and from the ongoing inspiration of your Spirit.

For the creation itself and the nourishment we receive from its resources; For seedtime and harvest, sunshine and rain, oceans and forests, for the wondrous way in which we are woven into our environment,

We give you thanks, Creator God.

For all the creative things we are enabled to do through the gifts and talents you have given to us; For the good health within our bodies, minds and spirits; For the courage and healing you provide when we are broken and discouraged in the midst of our earthly pilgrimage.

We acknowledge with thanks your leadership in our journey.

For the gift of time and the guidance you have given for the redemptive us of our days; For the satisfaction and renewal that come from our labor and leisure; For directing us to do justice and love mercy; For the chance to begin again whenever we falter and fail.

We are grateful, our Savior, whose faithfulness endures through all generations.

Gratitude for the Diversity of American Culture (* This Litany may be done responsively.)

On this day of national Thanksgiving, we are grateful to God, not only for those benefits that have come to us from this land and from our experience of its settlement and development but also for the gifts that the settlers in this country brought with them from their lands of origin. For we are the children of many nations, bound together by all that is good in many heritages and cultures.

Those who have here sought a haven and refuge, from the first settlers in Jamestown and at Plymouth Rock to those who still enter our country from many lands, came not empty-handed but bearing many cultural gifts.

We are grateful for the gifts brought to this country by the sturdy stock that came from England --

For their gift of the language we speak, for their gift of civic liberty and for the freedom of worship they planted and fostered in this land.

But not from England alone stem those blessings that make us thank You for having cast our lot in this blessed land.

The pattern of America is a blend of culture from many lands, woven threads from many corners of the world.

Diversity, itself, is the pattern of America, the very stuff and color of its fabric.

To reap the full benefits of that diversity, we should seek to know more about the experiences and qualities, hopes and achievements of the many kinds of people who make America.

Not until wave after wave of these facts sweep over us, will the true quality of our American life ring in the American atmosphere, the American consciousness.

Only then will all Americans feel themselves at one with the builders of America in the past and with each other in the present, drawn together, knit together by a common stake in America.

Then all over this country, Americans will feel themselves at home in the history of America, in that interplay, that diversity which IS America.

The cultural atmosphere of the United States will mean new and broader ways of seeing our neighbors and freer and more generous ways of behaving toward them.

It will mean a new solidarity, irrespective of background - one that lets people remain themselves.

It will bring into full play the healthy, simultaneous tension and fusion of stubborn, creative differences, challenging all groups and individuals to work with one another in contributing from their own life to the good of ALL.

ALL: Open our eyes, O God, that we may see Your divine image in ALL and accept humbly and gratefully the gifts that each race, creed, and nationality brings to our American life!

- Adapted from: Louis Adamic

Thanksgiving Day

Almighty and gracious Father, we give you thanks for the fruits of the earth in their season and for the labors of those who harvest them. Make us, we pray, faithful stewards of your great bounty, for the provision of our necessities and the relief of all who are in need, to the glory of your Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

(From: The Book of Common Prayer)

Prayers of Petition

Opening Prayer: In peace, let us pray to the Lord:

For people of all faith traditions, that we may enjoy relationships built on mutual respect and trust.
Lord, we pray.

Renew your peace in our hearts, and give us the courage of faith in our daily lives. Lord, we pray.

Free us from all prejudice and fear, deepen our understanding and our love. Lord, we pray.

May those in authority work to establish justice and freedom in their countries and throughout the world.
Lord, we pray.

Show us the way to bring your compassion to the poor, the sick, the lonely, the unloved and the forgotten.
Lord, we pray.

For those who seek to be bearers of friendship to young and old, across all age and race barriers. Lord, we pray.

For all who are in prison, condemned or exiled from their homes. Lord, we pray.

For all who serve and protect our nation; for all who are currently in harm's way, may they be kept safe, wrapped in the mantle of your love. Lord, we pray.

For all parents and teachers, and all those entrusted with the care of children and young people. Lord, we pray.

Forgive those who hurt us or distort our best intentions; forgive us also and remedy our acts of injustice.
Lord, we pray.

Console those who are bereaved or in sorrow. Lord, we pray.

Loving God, you care for us all and know all our needs; may we always rest in your love. **Amen.**

Prayer for Peace

O God, you are the source of life and peace. Praised be your name forever. We know it is you who turn our minds to thoughts of peace. Hear our prayer in these difficult times. Your power changes our hearts. Muslims, Christians and Jews remember, and profoundly affirm, that they are followers of the One God, children of Abraham, brothers and sisters. Enemies begin to speak to one another; those who were estranged join hands in friendship; nations seek the way of peace together. Strengthen our resolve to give witness to these truths by the way we live. Give to us: **Understanding** that puts an end to strife; **Mercy** that quenches hatred and **Forgiveness** that overcomes vengeance. Empower all people to live in your law of love. AMEN!

(- from **Pax Christi USA / Fellowship of Reconciliation**)

Guided Meditation

Close your eyes, breathe deeply and relax. Imagine that you are walking slowly through a grain field. The crop is ready for harvest. A breeze blows gently and the stalks sway. The sun is shining. As you watch, the crop seems to fade away and you are turned back in time to when the field was empty. For as far as you can see there are rows and rows of waiting soil. In the distance there is a long figure. This person is moving slowly up and down the rows, sowing seed. As the person continues, something remarkable is happening. The seeds are springing up and growing quickly, but they look nothing like grain. Rather, they are fruits of your labor during this past year. The figure in the distance turns around, and you realize that it is you.

Watch yourself observing the field. What has grown the most? What is wilting a little bit? What accomplishment turned out to be your biggest surprise? How can you use what you are about to harvest from this year's work? How much can you share with others? What will the task of harvesting require in energy and resources?

As you watch the field, you are amazed at all that is growing there. A swell of gratitude fills your heart. While the thanksgiving is flowing, something else begins to happen in your field. The sower is not alone anymore. Other figures emerge from between the rows. They are smiling and nodding and moving toward you, carrying baskets. You recognize them as the people who have been significant in your life during the past year: family members, coworkers, neighbors, friends, spiritual companions, acquaintances who made lasting impressions – teachers, guides, children, prophets, challengers, angels. In their baskets they carry the fruits of their encounters with you. You join in their smiling and a warmth fills this place.

It is a sacred place, a holy space, a field of memories, a harvest of good will. These people form a circle, including you, and they set their baskets in the middle. In their gratitude for the harvest and the process that produced it, all of you bow your heads to pray.

After you pray for a bit, bring the people from the field with you in your heart and when you feel ready, open your eyes.

If desirable, share with those around you some of the most significant blessings of your past year. What has given you joy and enriched your life? What has grown during the past year that you feel ready to harvest now?

(From: **Prayer Services for Parishes**, Karen Berry, O.S.F., St. Anthony Messenger Press, Cincinnati, OHIO, 2005)