

# Broken Bread

Compassion, Peace and Justice Newsletter, Presbytery of Des Moines  
Volume 35 · Number 3

Fall 2017



More than any other time of the year, Thanksgiving is when we celebrate the bounty of harvest. While not a Christian holiday, the way we celebrate Thanksgiving reflects our faith commitments. Our celebrations can extend the love and fellowship of Christ beyond our dining room tables. We can enact our faith at the table by choosing foods and ingredients that honor the people that produce them as well as God's creation. We can engage in Christian hospitality by welcoming strangers and providing for those in need. We can simplify and be mindful of the spirit of thanksgiving by relaxing, praying, playing and spending time with those we love.

With a spirit of celebration for the breadth of God's goodness, [we offer these stories of living faithfully throughout the Thanksgiving season.]  
*from the Just Living series, Presbyterian Hunger Program*

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## TRIPLE-A THANKSGIVING

*RE Lorena and Rev. Ross Blount, Allerton, IA*

We think of the old advice: Share your holiday with a needy person, someone from the Care Center, an international visitor, a far from home student.

Our grandson in 2015 asked if he could bring a Nigerian friend to see us at Thanksgiving. During that memorable visit, we took our new friend to a local craft fair. Like a magnet he was drawn to the Amish table and a tiny German-accented Amish woman in a black shawl. She soon was musing to him about her cashew candy and that she had always wondered how cashews grew. This very tall, very black African was soon delightedly orating on Nigeria's cashew plantations!

Amish and African met in Allerton: it was a Triple-A Thanksgiving for us all!



# WELCOME TO THANKSGIVING AT THE MAGILLS

*RE Margaret Magill, member of First United Presbyterian Church, Atlantic, IA*

The Magill home is almost 60 years old and from the first was meant to be a place of welcome. Tom always said, "Can we invite a few people in? Don't go to a lot of work!" And to have guests was a lot more fun than work. We are in a rather remote location on Indian Creek Road and it was always great to have friends come to see us.

Thanksgiving is a giving and gathering time with thankfulness for the blessings of togetherness with family and friends. We come together in the living room before the feast so each can express a thankfulness. A scripture is read and then the doxology is sung with all the harmonies. There is a small pause as the notes reverberate in our hearts. Some spontaneous hugs happen as silent thanks are also given to our heritage.



The table is expandable. We included of course, the grandparents and other family members and excitement ran high if the Turnbells were home on furlough from the mission field. If elderly church members were going to be alone, they were invited. Mel Campbell joined our family from South Carolina to better his education and we learned about sweet potato pie instead of pumpkin. The children grew up and went off to college and their friends sometimes joined us around our

table. Weddings increased the size of our family and then came the highchairs, bibs, and books on chairs to raise the eye level of the kids. The cycle starts over again with others now the grandparents and those once in the high chairs have babes in arms.

The food is traditional . mostly. Turkey rules, of course, but vegans and vegetarians are accommodated. There is green bean casserole, variations of sweet potatoes, mounds of mashed potatoes with or without clear gravy, broccoli and Brussels sprouts, apple salad in Grandma's special crystal bowl, cranberry salad. Some one remembers to get the rolls to the table. The homemade strawberry jam is there already. Middle Eastern Tabbouli has become a tradition with onions, mint, tomatoes and parsley from the last of the garden produce. Scalloped corn and oysters have returned to traditional fare when we discovered that some people liked it! Ready for dessert? Apple pie for Sarah, cheesecake for Jeff, and pumpkin pie, of course. There are brownies with ice cream and cookies for just a tiny bit of sweet. Plates of cheese, crackers, and veggies have been nibbled on before, during, and after dinner and there is a bowl of home-made chocolate dipped mint candy.

A new venture for the Magill extended family and guests is "Thanksmas". Because of the many family factions, we have combined holidays and have started sharing the gift of ourselves instead of giving presents at Christmas time. This frees the smaller family units to make their own traditions. A theme is chosen for each person to do a "Presentation" as a gift of themselves. Everyone tells a story on the theme as we gather. We have done family stories, a favorite book or author, and something I can make or do. Even the younger members participate and enjoy this time.

So join us and we will celebrate family, food and faith in Thanksgiving.



# THE THANKSGIVING LESSON

Mary Cowhey, for *Teaching Tolerance*, Scholastic Instructor, November-December 2006

Not every teacher would take first graders to homeless shelters or to visit the mayor's office. I do.

What I love about first graders is they aren't afraid to ask difficult questions. One day, while we were talking about plants as a food source, a girl asked, "Why do some people not have enough food and other people have lots?"

This led us to other questions of fairness, like why some people don't have a place to live. As a former community activist, I thought about this classroom conversation often, and when I noticed a call for volunteers for an annual Thanksgiving dinner for homeless and low-income people at a church downtown, I knew it was time for our class to take action.

I taught my students at the Jackson Street School in Northampton, Massachusetts, a quote from the Dalai Lama, "It is not enough to be compassionate. You must act." I chose the act of pie-making.

We decided to bake pumpkin pies, ask a bakery to donate the boxes, and carry our treats downtown on the public bus. First, we would go to City Hall to meet with the mayor. Then we'd walk down the block to the church, deliver the pies and cookies, and help set up the hall for the dinner before catching the bus back to school.

I had never done anything like this before, but it seemed like a reasonable idea.

One might argue that the realities of homelessness, poverty, and hunger are too much for young learners. I haven't found that to be the case.

I choose to bring activism into my teaching because I believe young children are capable of amazing things, far more than is usually expected of them. They can learn to think critically, analyze data, and make inquiry as active citizens in their communities. Young children understand fairness and are deeply

moved and highly motivated by the recognition of injustice.

On the Tuesday before Thanksgiving, my students mashed pumpkins, measured sugar, and sprinkled cinnamon, (with some help from family volunteers). They used their math skills to time the baking and their creativity to decorate the tops.



In all, we made a dozen pumpkin pies and several batches of cookies. Afterwards, we munched on roasted pumpkin seeds.

As we prepared to leave for the day, we heard a rumor it might snow. My students asked if we would still go. I answered, "Of course. People are still hungry even if it snows. We promised to bring our pies and set up for that dinner." But then I wasn't counting on more than a foot of snow.

## "A Promise is a Promise"

When I woke up the next morning, school had been cancelled. As I was eating breakfast, glumly thinking about our pies locked up at school, the phone rang. It was a parent. "I told Jack it's a snow day," said Jack's mother, Ann, "but he's insisting he has to go to school anyway to deliver those pies. He keeps saying 'A promise is a promise.'"

Sometimes, the ability of first graders to quote their teacher almost verbatim is scary. I took a deep breath and called my principal. She agreed to open the school after the roads had been plowed to liberate the pies.

Then Ann and I called the whole class list to find out who was up for a family field trip. Later that

morning, a caravan bearing pies, cookies, and 25 children snaked its way through the snowy streets to City Hall.

### Meeting with the Mayor

The mayor of Northampton, Clare Higgins, thanked the children for their hard work and determination. Afterwards, Rebecca Story, an advocate for the homeless, introduced herself and led an open discussion with my young students about homelessness.

My student Sadie raised her hand and said, "I think it's unfair that some people don't have homes." Ms. Story then told us some of the reasons people become homeless, how working a minimum wage job without health benefits or reliable transportation creates a fragile existence that can easily unravel. She also described some of the services for homeless families and adults in Northampton.

When students asked her what life was like for homeless people and what they could do to help, she told them very specific things they could collect, items like lip balm and hand lotion, adult socks and laundry detergent.

Ms. Story described how homeless people could trade in a pair of dirty, wet socks for a pair of clean, dry socks each night at the shelter. She also explained how people could use washers and dryers for free but needed laundry detergent. The kids listened with rapt attention.



### The Littlest Volunteers

After our visit to City Hall, we all bundled up to carry our pies to the church. I looked over my shoulder and saw this long trail of brightly booted children, proudly and seriously carrying boxes of pies and tins of cookies, stretching down the slippery steps of City Hall, across the slushy crosswalk and up the block.

When we reached the site of the dinner, we rolled up our sleeves as the bemused volunteer coordinator explained the task at hand to this large crew of small helpers. They nodded with

looks of complete understanding and took off like a swarm of ants to perform their allotted tasks.

The volunteer coordinator was surprised by their efficiency and asked how they set tables and stacked plates so quickly. Sadie rolled up her sleeve to show her skinny arm and said, "Because we're powerful!"

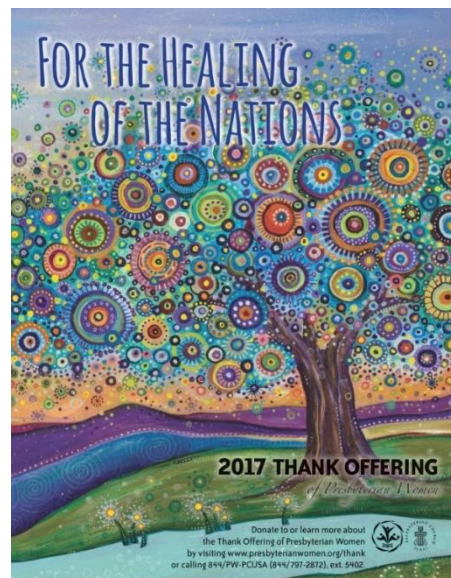
Through helping others, my students were beginning to realize their own strength.

## ...BE THANKFUL

*RE Sue Kimball, member of Trinity United Presbyterian Church, Indianola, IA*

*As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the LORD has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. . Colossians 3:12-15*

"And be thankful." As we enter the season of Thanksgiving, before we feast and gather, travel and celebrate, snuggle and share, let us first take a moment to dress (ourselves) with patience, meekness, humility, kindness, and compassion as we offer our deepest gratitude for being holy and beloved in God's eyes.



Since 1888, Presbyterian Women have expressed their gratefulness for the blessings in their lives in a tangible manner. The Thank Offering was established to fund programs that provide education, safe housing, clean water, health care, help for prisoners, justice for women and so much more. This offering is collected in the fall from individuals, PWs in the congregation and PWs in the Presbyteries. At least 40% of the offering funds health ministries! Such a need for so many today.

Do you have a special project whose purpose meets basic human needs? Would it provide a form of aid that would meet the needs of the people served and is the project less than three years old or an existing project that is moving in a new direction? Your group's mission could qualify for a PW Thank Offering Grant in the amount of \$5,000 to \$50,000. This one-time grant could benefit women, children, youth, young adults, persons of diverse races and/or ethnicities, and/or persons with disabilities, to enhance their quality of life.

Because of the generosity and thanksgiving this past year, ten entities in the US received Thank Offering grants and five from outside of the US (Argentina, Palestine, Kenya, Liberia, and Cuba). In 2017, for example, The Food for Thought Garden received \$7000 to purchase a polytunnel (a greenhouse-like structure) to extend the growing season to double the amount of fresh produce available to the local school backpack program and those experiencing food insecurity in the Arkansas community. The Breakfast Club is now serving breakfast four times a week to elderly people who live in the small, rural farming town of Nueva Paz, Cuba. Amara Iq̄l Mara (Woman to Woman) Breast Cancer Project is addressing an urgent health concern in villages across the West Bank in Palestine. Phoenixville Women's Outreach can provide security cameras, lighting, and motion detectors to the front and back of the shelter for 21 single, homeless women in Pennsylvania. And, there is much more good news to tell. Millions of dollars and thousands of ministries worldwide have been supported through these gifts of Thanksgiving.

As you contemplate the endless blessings bestowed upon you and your family, church, and community this Thanksgiving, you might act out of your gratitude by giving out of your abundance to this offering, writing a grant to assist others, or tell someone about the grant opportunity. Take this step by visiting [www.presbyterianwomen.org/thank](http://www.presbyterianwomen.org/thank) where you can give directly online. Your donation will impact the healing of the nations.+

If you have questions, or want to learn more about the work of Presbyterian Women in the world you may contact the Presbyterian Women Synod moderator, Sue Kimball, by email at [kimballsusan53@yahoo.com](mailto:kimballsusan53@yahoo.com) or phone (515)-961-2493.

## THANKSGIVING:

### A NATIVE AMERICAN VIEW

*Jacqueline Keeler, Winds of Change, an American Indian journal.*

I celebrate the holiday of Thanksgiving.

This may surprise those people who wonder what Native Americans think of this official U.S. celebration of the survival of early arrivals in a European invasion that culminated in the death of 10 to 30 million native people.

Thanksgiving to me has never been about Pilgrims. When I was six, my mother, a woman of the Dineh nation, told my sister and me not to sing "Land of the Pilgrim's pride" in "America the Beautiful." Our people, she said, had been here much longer and taken much better care of the land. We were to sing "Land of the Indian's pride" instead.

I was proud to sing the new lyrics in school, but I sang softly. It was enough for me to know the difference. At six, I felt I had learned something very important. As a child of a Native American family, you are part of a very select group of survivors, and I learned that my family possessed some "inside" knowledge of what really happened when those poor, tired masses came to our homes.



When the Pilgrims came to Plymouth Rock, they were poor and hungry -- half of them died within a few months from disease and hunger. When Squanto, a Wampanoag man, found them, they were in a pitiful state. He spoke English, having traveled to Europe, and took pity on them. Their English crops had failed. The native people fed them through the winter and taught them how to grow their food.

These were not merely "friendly Indians." They had already experienced European slave traders raiding their villages for a hundred years or so, and they were wary -- but it was their way to give freely to those who had nothing. Among many of our peoples, showing that you can give without holding back is the way to earn respect. Among the Dakota, my father's people, they say, when asked to give, "Are we not Dakota and alive?" It was believed that by giving there would be enough for all -- the exact opposite of the system we live in now, which is based on selling, not giving.

To the Pilgrims, and most English and European peoples, the Wampanoags were heathens, and of the Devil. They saw Squanto not as an equal but as an instrument of their God to help his chosen people, themselves.

Since that initial sharing, Native American food has spread around the world. Nearly 70 percent of all crops grown today were originally cultivated by Native American peoples. I sometimes wonder what they ate in Europe before they met us. Spaghetti without tomatoes? Meat and potatoes without potatoes? And at the "first Thanksgiving" the Wampanoags provided most of the food -- and signed a treaty granting Pilgrims the right to the land at Plymouth, the real reason for the first Thanksgiving.

What did the Europeans give in return? Within 20 years European disease and treachery had decimated the Wampanoags. Most diseases then came from animals that Europeans had domesticated. Cowpox from cows led to smallpox, one of the great killers of our people, spread through gifts of blankets used by infected Europeans. Some estimate that diseases accounted for a death toll reaching 90 percent in some Native American communities. By 1623, Mather the elder, a Pilgrim leader, was giving thanks to his God for destroying the heathen savages to make way "for a better growth," meaning his people.

In stories told by the Dakota people, an evil person always keeps his or her heart in a secret place separate from the body. The hero must find that secret place and destroy the heart in order to stop the evil.

I see, in the "First Thanksgiving" story, a hidden Pilgrim heart. The story of that heart is the real tale than needs to be told. What did it hold? Bigotry, hatred, greed, self-righteousness? We have seen the evil that it caused in the 350 years since. Genocide, environmental devastation, poverty, world wars, racism.

Where is the hero who will destroy that heart of evil? I believe it must be each of us. Indeed, when I give thanks this Thursday and I cook my native food, I will be thinking of this hidden heart and how my ancestors survived the evil it caused.

Because if we can survive, with our ability to share and to give intact, then the evil and the good will that met that Thanksgiving day in the land of the Wampanoag will have come full circle.

And the healing can begin.

*Jacqueline Keeler, a member of the Dineh Nation and the Yankton Dakota Sioux works with the American Indian Child Resource Center in Oakland, California.*



# THANKSGIVING IN EL SALVADOR

*RE Susan Stroope, member of Central Presbyterian  
Church, Des Moines*



It's not too unusual for ex-pats to gather in groups of friends, wherever they may find themselves in the world, to celebrate the most American of holidays, Thanksgiving. Often the menu consists of noble attempts at traditional Thanksgiving fare as well as specialties reflecting the local cuisine. November of 2009 found me, my sister Nancy, trip chaperone Mike and a small group of intrepid high school students from Des Moines in Berlin, El Salvador studying environmental issues and challenges in a developing country. I, an environmental science teacher, had picked Thanksgiving week for this field trip because it would allow us to make the week-long trip without missing much school.

Those of us adults involved in the planning wanted to make sure that the kids would not regret missing a major holiday with their families. Arrangements were made to secure a turkey. Farm to table took on an enhanced meaning as we greeted Tom Turkey on Thanksgiving morning tethered to the clothesline on the grounds of the Pastoral House where we were staying. One of our goals for the day was to secure a few ingredients needed to complete the menu. Canned pumpkin, CoolWhip, crispy onions, cranberries and appropriate spices had been brought with us and packed in suitcases. A

couple of the girls insisted that sweet potatoes would not be acceptable without a marshmallow topping. Several of us were skeptical that we could procure those sugary confections but at a supermarket in San Miguel we found them! Granted, they were the fruity-flavored, pastel-colored mini-marshmallows, but arranged in a peace symbol on top of the sweet potatoes, they were the hit side dish of the meal. By the time we returned from our errands, the turkey had been completely dressed and was sitting in a large roasting pan ready for stuffing. Kenny, who was contemplating a career as a doctor, was assigned to help stuff the turkey and he gingerly thrust his hands deep into the bird's body cavity while covering his eyes. He is now a software engineer.

As evening approached, the meal was coming together nicely. But alas, the electricity was not. Undaunted, Mike, wearing his trusty camping headlamp, grabbed knife and fork and proceeded to carve up our delicious main course in the dark. It was a joyous feast and one that I will be eternally grateful for having the opportunity to share with friends, family, and amazing students who have all become adults whom I deeply admire for the life choices they have made. But most of all I am most deeply grateful that not a single one said, as we went around the Thanksgiving table sharing our thoughts aloud, that he/she was thankful for living in the United States and for all the privilege and advantage that entails.

## HOPE FOR A TIME TO BE THANKFUL

*Rev. Russ Melby, ELCA, retired*

No Way To Treat a Child is the theme of the YouTube video named Detaining Dreams. According to the synopsis, the 23 minute video seeks to challenge and end the Israeli Military's prolonged occupation of Palestinian children in the Israeli Military Detention System. I have seen the video on three occasions and led a discussion on this poignant and powerful YouTube presentation at the May, 2017 ELCA Southeastern Iowa Synod Assembly. [The trailer may be accessed at: <https://youtu.be/PBmEK3YThbQ>. The next

public showing will be on November 6, 6:30 p.m.-8:00 p.m., at the Franklin Avenue Library, 5000 Franklin Avenue, Des Moines. Free and open to the public. Sponsored by the Middle East Peace Education Coalition of Central Iowa. ]

The mistreatment of children is not something to be thankful for at Thanksgiving or anytime. One cannot give thanks when the children in Israeli detention centers, or those who experience the hell of Syrian captivity, or spend too many years in refugee camps throughout the world, continue to suffer and die. As Louis Lomax, the author of The Negro Revolt, said to a group of Lutheran High School youth, including me, at the Cobo Hall Arena, Detroit, Michigan, in 1965: "Don't tell me that Jesus is Lord when children continue to suffer and die. +



One can give thanks, when, in the words of Martin Luther King Jr., the children are free at last. + We human beings, including Christians and other people of good will, can give thanks for the examples of great humanitarians like Albert Camus, who, in 1948 spoke to a group of Dominican monks at the Latour-Marburg Monastery. "We are faced with evil. And, as for me, I feel rather as Augustine did before becoming a Christian when he said: "I tried to find the source of evil and I got nowhere." But it is also true that I, and a few others, know what must be done, if not to reduce evil, at least not to add to it. Perhaps we cannot prevent this world from being a world in which children are tortured. But we can reduce the number of tortured children. And if you don't help us, who else in the world can help us do this? + (Resistance, Rebellion, and Death, Albert Camus, Translated by Justin O'Brien, page 73)

Because a great human being like Albert Camus spoke powerful words to Christians like us, we can give thanks that the God who breathes life into all human beings uses even so-called "non-believers" like Camus to remind us that being

thankful also means sharing of our resources, prayers, and advocacy on behalf of children and adults who are, even today, being tortured.

May our Thanksgiving Day remind us to accept that we live in a not-so-Good Friday world, and may God who raised Jesus from the dead, strengthen us to struggle with our oppressed neighbors, in order to inaugurate a world with Easter as our present and future hope. Even today. May it be so.

*The Reverend Russell Melby is the former Iowa director of Church World Service.*

## PRAYER

*From Sacraments and Seasons: Peacemaking through Worship III*



Creator God,  
 You ignite the sun  
 And fan into flame  
 Every spark of life.  
 You enliven the sea.  
 You enrich the soil.  
 You shower the earth our mother  
 With refreshing rain  
 Causing food and flower  
 Tree and animal  
 To laugh with the joy of life.  
 You, O God, gift the world  
 With an infinite variety  
 Of color and kindness.  
 Your human family  
 Has so much  
 To share and learn.  
 Continue to gather us  
 Together in your praise.  
 Lead us on the way rejoicing.  
 And now we give thanks for daily bread,  
 Remembering always,  
 Those special people  
 Who nurtured us around family tables and in  
 School cafeterias, around picnic tables



And soup kitchens, around church family night  
suppers  
And in disaster canteens.  
And now we give thanks,  
Remembering always  
Those special people  
Who plant and nurture and gather the food,  
All those who bring to us the fish and all  
The good gifts of the sea,  
All who labor on the farm and in the grocery  
stores  
And warehouses of the world,  
All those who every day  
Labor over stove and sink,

All those who wait tables  
And wash dishes and utensils.  
Creator God, we give thanks for  
The ministry of food and drink,  
Praying that we may be your instruments  
In providing food and in calling for  
A just and living wage for all your people.  
Gracious and Living God,  
We give thanks  
For all our sisters and brothers  
Who serve in every place  
And for all who share this planet with us.  
Let all the people say SHALOM and AMEN.

## GRAINS OF TRUTH



*If the only prayer you ever say in your entire life  
is "thank you", it will be enough.*

Meister Eckhart