

**“Respect for the Interdependent Web of Existence”  
The Unitarian Church of Lincoln  
November 20, 2016**

“Our seventh Principle may be our Unitarian Universalist way of coming to fully embrace something greater than ourselves. The interdependent web—expressed as the spirit of life, the ground of all being, the oneness of all existence, the community-forming power, the process of life, the creative force, even God—can help us develop that social understanding of ourselves that we and our culture so desperately need. It is a source of meaning to which we can dedicate our lives.”

Rev. Forrest Gilmore, Executive Director,  
Shalom Community Center, Bloomington, IN

***Gathering of the Community***

**Ring of Bell**

**Welcome and Announcements**

**Prelude:** “Dakota Hymn” Native American

***Stating Intent***

**Calling the Quarters:** Directions and Elements

**Chalice Lighting:** Establishing Our Center

**Opening words:** “Let Us Give Thanks” by Max Coots

**Hymn:** #349 “We Gather Together”

***Deepening***

**Honoring the Wheel of Life:**

Reading by John Seed and Joanna Macy

from *Earth Prayers*

**North** – Earth, trees and rocks      Judy Hart

**East** – Air, creatures of the air - Christina Strong

**South** – Fire, the four-leggeds      Jean Helms

**West** – Water, creatures of the water and womb  
Julie Cross

**Center** – Spirit, place of mystery, beyond words  
by G. Woods

**Body Prayer:** connecting with All

**Celebrating with Music:** #387

“The Earth, Water, Fire, Air”

***Returning to Community: the work of the people***

**Bread Communion:** Sharing the fruits of the earth

Litany Response: WE BLESS THE LABOR OF THEIR HANDS AND THE KINDNESS OF THEIR HEARTS.

**Offering and Offertory:**

“How Can I Keep from Singing”

by John Coates, Jr.

***Integration and Release***

**Weaving the Web:** All are One

**Closing Hymn:** #32 “Now Thank We All Our God”

**Closing Words:** from Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

**Postlude:** “What a Wonderful World”

by George David Weiss and Bob Thiele

**Releasing the Quarters**

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***Stating Intent***

**Calling the Quarters:** Directions and Elements

**North: We bring our awareness to North -**

May the cleansing winds of winter, place of reflection,  
The evergreens that remind us of ongoing life,  
The rock and soil of earth that holds us solid in storms,  
Be fully present in our hearts and minds as we gather.

**East: We bring our Awareness to East –**

May the new life and fresh air of spring, place to plant,  
The creatures of air who enchant with flight and song,  
The innocence of childhood, opening us to All,  
Be fully present in our hearts and minds as we gather.

**South: We bring our awareness to South –**

May the fire of passion and power and summer, place  
of creation,  
The four-leggeds who serve and share with us,  
The force of life that flows in and through each and all  
Be fully present in our hearts and minds as we gather.

**West: We bring our awareness to the West –**

May the healing presence of water of life,  
The creatures of stream, river, lake, ocean, and womb,  
place to harvest and gather the fruits of our lives,  
The autumnal movement into the dark for true  
enlightenment,  
Be fully present in our hearts and minds as we gather.

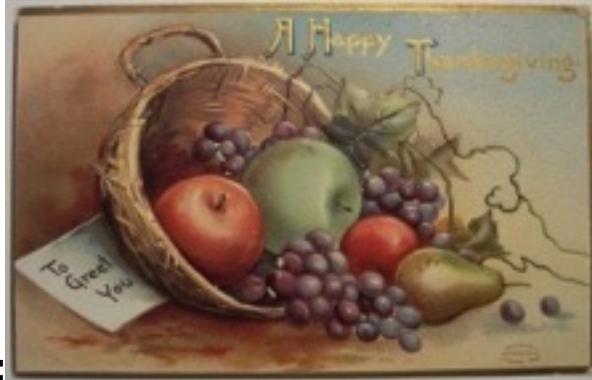
**Chalice Lighting: Establishing Our Center**

Earth, air, water, fire and spirit! The Web of Life!  
We kindle a flame of this community as we gather  
aware that we are often unaware, inattentive, unloving.  
May this flame illuminate our minds and warm our hearts  
so our words and deeds reflect the light of our chosen faith.  
May we remember all that we are, standing in the center,  
Place of mystery and connection with All.

**Opening words:** “Let Us Give Thanks” by Max Coots

**Let us give thanks for a bounty of people:**

**For children who are our second planting, and, though  
they grow like weeds and the wind too soon blows them  
away, may they forgive us our cultivation and fondly  
remember where their roots are.**



**Let us give thanks:**

**For generous friends ... with hearts ... and smiles as bright as their blossoms;**

**For feisty friends as tart as apples;**

**For continuous friends, who, like scallions and cucumbers, keep reminding us that we've had them;**

**For crotchety friends, as sour as rhubarb and as indestructible;**

**For handsome friends, who are as gorgeous as eggplants and as elegant as a row of corn, and the others, as plain as potatoes and as good for you;**

**For funny friends, who are as silly as Brussels sprouts and as amusing as Jerusalem artichokes, and serious friends, as complex as cauliflowers and as intricate as onions;**

**For friends as unpretentious as cabbages, as subtle as summer squash, as persistent as parsley, as delightful as dill, as endless as zucchini, and who, like parsnips, can be counted on to see you throughout the winter;**

**For old friends, nodding like sunflowers in the evening-time, and young friends coming on as fast as radishes;**

**For loving friends, who wind around us like tendrils and hold us, despite our blights, wilts, and witherings;**

**And, finally, for those friends now gone, like gardens past that have been harvested, and who fed us in their times that we might have life thereafter;**

**For all these we give thanks. Amen.**

(Rev. Max Coots, a Unitarian Universalist minister who served the Canton, NY, church for 34 years before his death, wrote this delightful prayer that so well captures the spirit of Thanksgiving.)

**Hymn: #349 “We Gather Together”**

***Deepening***

**Honoring the Wheel of Life:**

Reading by John Seed and Joanna Macy  
from *Earth Prayers*

**North** – Earth, trees and rocks

Who am I? What are you? (What is the web of life?)

Matter made from rock and soil. It . . . is pulled by the moon as the magma circulates through the earth heart and roots suck molecules into biology. Earth pours through us, replacing every cell in the body every seven years. Ashes to ashes, dust to dust, we ingest, incorporate and excrete the earth, are made from the earth. I am that. You are that. (The web of life is that.)

**East** – Air, creatures of the air

Who am I? What are you? (What is the web of life?)

The gaseous realm, the atmosphere, the planet’s membrane. The inhale and exhale. Breathing out carbon dioxide to the trees and breathing in their fresh exudations. Oxygen kissing each cell awake, atoms dancing in orderly metabolism, interpenetrating. That dance of the air cycle, breathing the universe in and out again, is what you are, is what I am. (The web of life is that.)

**South** – Fire, the four-leggeds

Who am I? What are you? (What is the web?)

Fire from our sun that fuels all life, drawing up plants and raising the waters to the sky to fall again replenishing. The inner furnace of your metabolism burns with the fire of the Big Bang that first sent matter-energy spinning through space and time. And the same fire as the (magma from tubes at the bottom of the sea) that burns into the primordial soup catalyzing the birth of organic life. You were there, I was there, for each cell of our bodies is descended in an unbroken chain from that event. (The web of life is there, as well.)

**West** – Water, creatures of the water and womb  
Who am I? What are you?

Blood, lymph, mucus, sweat, tears, inner oceans tugged by the moon, tides within and tides without. Streaming fluids floating our cells, washing and nourishing through endless riverways of gut and vein and capillary. Moisture pouring in and through and out of you. Of me, in the vast poem of the hydrological cycle, You are that. I am that. (The web of life is that.)

**Center** – Spirit, place of mystery, beyond words  
by G. Woods  
Who am I? What are you? What is the spirit of the web of life? We seek answers to these questions, knowing the answers are ever changing in the ongoing process of life. The questions are good ones. And still we live in the deeper mystery, ever changing, always old, ever new, each connected to all. As seekers, may we know that we are also the mystery, living it and co-creating it. How we use our energies and our consciousness matters. Let us pay attention!

**Body Prayer:** connecting with All

**Celebrating with Music: #387**

“The Earth, Water, Fire, Air”

***Returning to Community: the work of the people***

**Bread Communion:** Sharing the fruits of the earth  
This loaf of bread is created from the fruits of the harvest. It represents the produce of the earth, air, fire, and water of the interdependent web and of those whose work makes our lives possible, those who labor for our nourishment. We invite you to join in blessing them as we break the bread.

**Reader 1:** WE BLESS THIS BREAD WITH THANKS FOR ALL THE FARMERS WHO PLOW AND PLANT THE SEEDS OF THE WORLD’S GRAINS.

All respond: WE BLESS THE LABOR OF THEIR HANDS AND THE KINDNESS OF THEIR HEARTS.

**Reader 2:** WE BLESS THIS BREAD WITH THANKS FOR ALL WHO HARVEST THE WORLD’S GRAIN, WHETHER BY HAND OR MACHINE, WHETHER MIGRANT OR SETTLED, FOR THOSE WHO THRESH AND MILL IT, AND FOR THE ANIMALS WHO HELP THEM.

All respond: WE BLESS THE LABOR OF THEIR HANDS AND HOOVES AND THE KINDNESS OF THEIR HEARTS.

**Reader 3:** WE BLESS THIS BREAD WITH THANKS FOR ALL WHO TRANSPORT THE FLOUR, FOR THE BAKERS WHO TRANSFORM IT INTO BREAD, FOR THE MERCHANTS WHO MAKE BOTH FLOUR AND BREAD AVAILABLE TO US.

All respond: WE BLESS THE LABOR OF THEIR HANDS AND THE KINDNESS OF THEIR HEARTS.

**Reader 4:** WE BLESS THIS BREAD WITH THANKS FOR ALL WHO FEED US – FOR OUR PARENTS WHO FIRST PUT BREAD ON OUR TABLES AND TAUGHT US TO ENJOY ITS TASTE, FOR THOSE IN OUR HOUSEHOLDS

WHO PREPARE THE FOOD, FOR FRIENDS WHO INVITE US TO SHARE A MEAL, FOR ALL WHO COOK AND SERVE FOOD IN SOUP KITCHENS AND HOSPITALS, IN SCHOOL CAFETERIAS AND RESTAURANTS, AND AT EVERY HEARTH AROUND THE WORLD.

All respond: WE BLESS THE LABOR OF THEIR HANDS AND THE KINDNESS OF THEIR HEARTS.

(Bread is passed among the four quarters to all congregants)

**Offering and Offertory:**

“How Can I Keep from Singing”

by John Coates, Jr.

***Integration and Release***

**Weaving the Web:** All are One

**Closing Hymn:** #32 “Now Thank We All Our God”

**Closing Words:** from Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

Sons and daughters of the earth, steep yourself in the sea of matter, bathe in its fiery waters, for it is the source of your life and your youthfulness.

You thought you could do without it because the power of thought has been kindled in you? You hoped that the more thoroughly you rejected the tangible, the closer you would be to spirit: that you would be more divine if you lived in the world of pure thought, or at least more angelic if you fled the corporeal? Well, you were like to have perished of hunger.

You must have oil for your limbs, blood for your veins, water for your soul, the world of reality for your intellect: do you not see that the very law of your own nature makes these a necessity for you?

Know these things and honor the interdependent web of all of life and the mystery within which we live and move and have our being. Thus we release the center, the hub of the web.

**Postlude: "What a Wonderful World"**

By George David Weiss and Bob Thiele

**Releasing the Quarters:**

**West** – We release our awareness of the East,  
Knowing it is always present for us. Blessed Be!

**South** – We release our awareness of the South,  
Knowing it is always present for us.

**East** – We release our awareness of the East,  
Knowing it is always present for us.

**North** – We release our awareness of the North,  
Knowing it is always present for us.

**Merry meet, and merry part, and merry meet again!  
Blessed Be!**