

“Bringing Light Into Darkness”



89th Annual Interfaith Thanksgiving Service

*Hosted by the Sixth-Ward Ministries
Of Greater Altoona*

Presented in a Pre-Recorded Format

Order of Service

Greetings and Introduction: Rabbi Audrey Korotkin, Temple Beth Israel

Hymn: "Let All Things Now Living," by Katherine K. Davis

Rev. Evelyn Madison, Pastor, Trinity United Methodist Church,
Roaring Spring

Rev. Rebecca Holland, Pastor, Christ Community Church UMC,
Altoona

Hebrew Bible Reading: Isaiah 42:6-7, Isaiah 49:6

Will Wallen, Greater Altoona Jewish Confirmation Program

"From Darkness to Light: A Prayer In a Time of Disaster"

(Call and response: "Lord hear our prayer")

Rev. Rebecca Zeek, Pastor, Bedford (PA) Church of the Brethren

"We Render Thanks" Jewish Prayer for Thanksgiving

Dr. Andrew Gurman, Ritual Chair, Temple Beth Israel, Altoona

"Mi Sheberach" Prayer for Healing by Debbie Friedman

Dorothy Liller, Soloist, Temple Beth Israel

Introduction to Our Featured Speaker

Rabbi Audrey Korotkin

Featured Speaker: William Wallen, Executive Director,

Greater Altoona Jewish Federation

Reflection from the Islamic Tradition

Prof. Shamsa Anwar, Islamic Center of Altoona

"Yes, Give Thanks": Reflection from the Protestant Tradition:

Rev. Mark Liller, Pastor, First Presbyterian Church, Tyrone

Hymn: "When We Face An Unknown Future," by Carolyn Winfrey Gillette

Read by Rev. Rebecca Hollander

Accompanied by Rev. Evelyn Madison

Benediction: Rev. Evelyn Madison

Closing Song: "T'filat HaDerech" (A Prayer for Travelers) by Debbie Friedman

Dorothy Liller, Soloist, Temple Beth Israel

Opening Hymn: “Let All Things Now Living”

Let all things now living
a song of thanksgiving
to God the Creator triumphantly raise,
who fashioned and made us,
protected and stayed us,
who guides us and leads to the end of our days.
God’s banners fly o’er us;
God’s light goes before us,
a pillar of fire shining forth in the night,
till shadows have vanished
and darkness is banished,
as forward we travel from light into light.

Hymn writer: Katherine K. Davis

Hebrew Bible Reading: Isaiah 42:6-7, 49:6

“I the ETERNAL, in My grace, have summoned you, and I have grasped you
by the hand.

I created you, and appointed you a covenant people, a light of nations—
Opening eyes deprived of light;

Rescuing prisoners from confinement,
from the dungeon those who sit in darkness.”

For God has said: “It is too little that you should be My servant
in that I raise up the tribes of Jacob and restore the survivors of Israel:
I will also make you a light of nations,
that My salvation may reach the ends of the earth.”

**“From Darkness To Light: A Prayer In a
Time of Disaster”
A Call and Response**

Loving God,

At the beginning of Creation, You calmed the chaos of the world. Be present now to those whose lives are suddenly filled with chaos. Grant them the grace of calm in the midst of confusion. We pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

You have always shown us the way from darkness into the light. For those struggling now to see the light, we ask that You shine it a bit brighter in our world. Grant us all the grace to see a way forward through the present darkness. We pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

Throughout history You have raised up leaders to care for your people. May those who are called upon to lead now in this time of despair be given the grace to do so with conviction and compassion. We pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

You are truly a God of abundance. Open our eyes so that we may see how our ministries can use the abundance with which we have been blessed to help those in need. Grant us the grace to move with humility and prudence in all that we do. We pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

You are also a God of wonders. We have often struggled to imagine the breadth and depth of what is possible with You at our side. Grant us all – those directly affected and those holding them in prayer – the grace of creativity in our response to this event. We pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

The Psalmist sings, "Be strong and take heart, all you who hope in the Lord." Let it also be our song this day. May we, and those we pray for, truly hope in the Lord. And may that hope give us all the strength and heart we need to move from darkness into light.

Amen.

“We Render Thanks”

We must often revive the gladness of gratitude
And retrain our lips to utter words of thanks.

God’s gifts often go unnoticed in our haste;
And disappointments may blind us to our blessings.

We render thanks for life itself,
For sight, hearing, smell, and touch.

For the certainty that an ever-renewing vital force
Infuses us and vibrates in the glory about us.

We give thanks for the beauty of nature and its gifts,
And pray that we may share as richly as we have received.

We stand in wonder before the birth of children,
The miracle of their growth, their love, and laughter.

We are grateful for love and the opening of hearts
Between husband and wife, parents and children.

We give thanks for our freedom, while knowing its frailty,
And recognize our obligation to nurture and protect it.

We are grateful for the blessings we enjoy in this land,
And hope that we may share in the renewal of its vigor.

We are grateful for the gifts of knowledge and conscience,
Enabling us to know truth from falsehood, right from wrong.

Disturbing our peace when the blessings we enjoy are denied to others,
When their need for justice and compassion is unfilled.

We give thanks to God who shares with us
A small spark of Divine glory and wisdom,

Involving us in the drama which is both God’s and ours —
The partnership of completing the work of creation.

Poet: Nahum Waldman

Mi Sheberach Prayer for Healing

Mi sheberach avoteinu
M'kor hab'racha l'imoteinu
May the source of strength
Who blessed the ones before us
Help us find the courage to make our lives a blessing
And let us say Amen

Mi sheberach imoteinu
M'kor habrachah l'avoteinu
Bless those in need of healing with r'fuah sh'leimah
The renewal of body, the renewal of spirit
And let us say Amen

Songwriters: Debbie Friedman / Drorah Setel

Hymn: When We Face An Unknown Future

When we face an unknown future that we can't imagine yet,
when the closeness we have treasured turns from blessing into threat —
As we miss our friends and loved ones, as we crave community,
may we look, God, in this season, for a whole new way to be.

May we cherish those around us as we never have before.
May we think much less of profit; may we learn what matters more.
May we hear our neighbors' suffering; may we see our neighbors' pain.
May we learn new ways of offering life and health and hope again.

God, when illness comes to threaten, and when so much here goes wrong,
may we know this thing for certain — that your love is sure and strong.
You're beside us in our suffering — and when times are surely tough,
we may face an unknown future, but it's filled, Lord, with your love.

Hymn Writer: Carolyn Gillette

Closing Song: "T'filat HaDerech" (Travelers' Prayer)

May we be blessed as we go on our way

May we be guided in peace

May we be blessed with health and joy

May this our blessing, amen.

May we be sheltered by the wings of peace

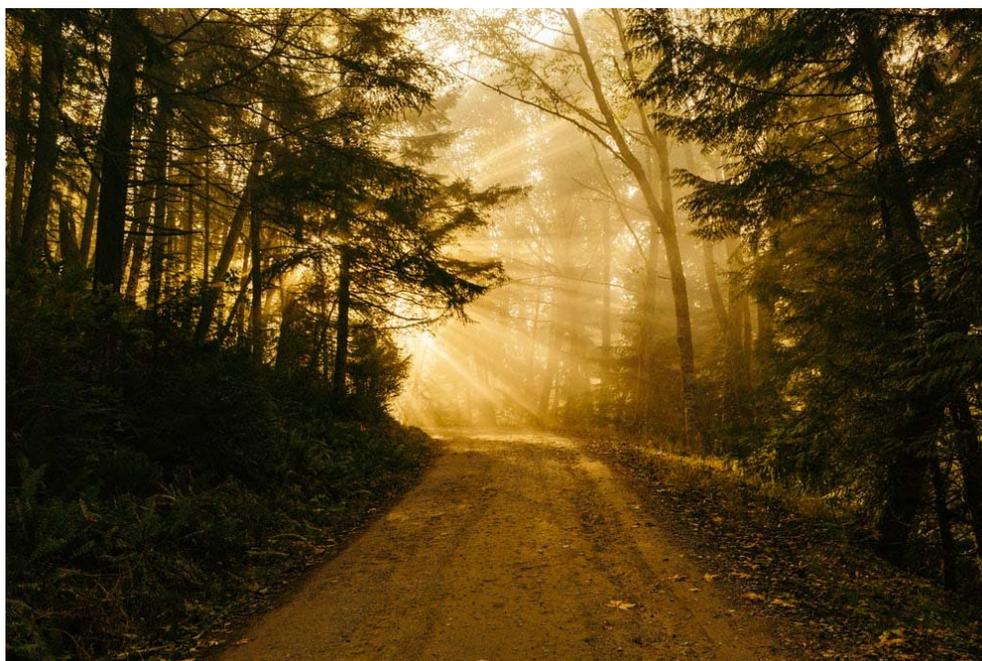
May we be kept in safety and in love

May grace and compassion find their
way to every soul

May this be our blessing, amen.

Amen, may this be our blessing, amen.

Songwriter: Debbie Friedman



About this Service

This annual Interfaith Thanksgiving Service, now in its 89th year, is one of the oldest in the nation. It began on Thanksgiving Day, November 26, 1931, as the nation was in the grips of the Great Depression. At 10 o'clock that morning, over 400 people streamed into Temple Beth Israel - filling the sanctuary to capacity and beyond. The service was led by Rabbi Eugene E. Hibshman. Pastors and members from the following churches were in attendance: Reverend Ralph Harrity from Grace Reformed (now Grace United Church of Christ); Reverend Andrew Bixler from Simpson Methodist (now part of Simpson-Temple United Parish); Reverend Frederick Greninger from Lutheran Temple (now part of Simpson-Temple United Parish); and Reverend Benjamin Waltz from Twenty-Eighth Street Church of the Brethren.

In the 1950s, Jaggard United Methodist Church (now Jaggard First UMC) and Mount Zion Missionary Baptist Church joined in the Thanksgiving service. In later years, Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church and the Salvation Army became participants.

In recent years, we have opened our door and our arms to our neighbors throughout Greater Altoona, and clergy and members from many faith communities now come together to give thanks. In 2019, we became *truly* interfaith, as included leaders of the area's Buddhist, Baha'i and Muslim communities as well.

Our leadership, our congregations, our neighborhoods, and our world have changed over the years – but the reason for our gratitude remains the same. We give thanks for the bounty we enjoy, for the opportunity to share that bounty with others – and for the people in our neighborhoods who make our lives richer.

