



That Would Suffice

BY STEVE EDINGTON, MINISTER, UNITARIAN
UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF NASHUA, NEW HAMPSHIRE

In the early 1980s when I was serving the Unitarian Universalist Church in Rockland, Maine I would have occasion to go over to Augusta, the state capital, from time to time. This is about a 40 mile trip inland from coastal Rockland, and on one of those journeys I stopped by the Augusta UU Church to visit with a friend and colleague who was the minister there at the time. As I left the church and crossed the street to where my car was parked, I noticed a woman about a

half-block away walking towards me. She was close enough for me to recognize her as someone I served with on the board of directors of our local community mental health center. I decided to wait until she got to where my car was so we could have a little chit-chat.

As she got closer I noticed she had a kind of dazed look on her face, to the point that she wasn't even aware I was standing there. When she finally got about 10 feet away, and was still not showing any sign of recognizing me, I said, "Hey Connie, what's up?" My words had the effect of snapping her out of a trance. She stared at me with very wide eyes and practically yelled out, "Steve, what are you doing here?!"

She was a very active lay leader in her local Episcopal Church in Camden, Maine—a little town about 10 miles up the coast from Rockland. It turns out she'd come over to Augusta for a meeting of a committee she served on for the Episcopal Diocese of Maine. As she was leaving town her car conked out on her. She had it towed to the local dealership, only to be told that it needed a part that would take a day or two for them to get, and they had no loaners available. Her husband was out of town on a business trip and the calls she'd made in an attempt to reach anyone else in Camden who might come over to her rescue went unanswered. This was all back in the Dark Ages, also known as the pre-cell phone era. In addition, the last bus for the day from Augusta that went over to the coast had already departed.

Feeling completely out of options, poor Connie just started wandering down the nearest street, in something of a fog about what to do next, when she almost literally walked right into me. Rather nonchalant about the whole thing myself, I said, "Well, hop in. I'll drive you over to Camden on my way home." "You can drive me home?" "Well sure, we don't live that far apart. I'd be glad to take you over. Let's go."

For the first minute or two of our trip she sat in a kind of contemplative silence, processing all that had just happened to her, before blurting out, "Steve, now I know it's true. There really is a God!"

I laughed so hard I nearly ran off the road. When I got over my laughing fit I said, "Connie, this is really too rich. You're a long-time faithful devoted Episcopalian and it takes a chance meet-up with a Unitarian Universalist minister to finally convince you of the existence of God?!" We were both able to appreciate the humor and the irony in that, and less than an hour later I dropped her off in front of her house in Camden. Apparently the whole experience made such an impression on Connie that for the next few weeks she told all of her friends about it, to the point that we became part of the local folklore of mid-coast Maine.

The fact of the matter is that had I come out of that church five minutes earlier or five minutes later than I did, the two of us would have never met up. I'm sure my



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Gratitude is
happiness doubled
by wonder.
— G. K. Chesterton

A monthly for religious liberals

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friend, resourceful person that she was, would have eventually figured out some way to get herself home. I just happened to catch her when she been momentarily knocked out of kilter, and was trying to get her bearings. And I'm sure as well that part of her exclamation that "There is a God" was an expression of relief and joy and thankfulness that she'd been bailed out of a tough and unexpected situation by doing nothing more than wandering down a city street.

But in addition to being profusely grateful to me—almost to the point of embarrassment on my part—she also felt the need to acknowledge the workings of some greater being or power, and to be thankful on that level as well. She needed to offer a cosmic thank you. What I took—and still take—as a purely coincidental meet-up was for her an indication of the hand of God. This hand gave her an unexpected gift and blessing, even if it was delivered by a Unitarian Universalist minister for whom the idea of a Supreme Being doesn't quite work.

I'm not going to get into the question of which one of us was right. Like Connie, I too feel a need from time to time to offer my own kind of cosmic thank-you. As I hope is the case with each of you from time to time, I have my moments when life feels especially full for me, and when I simply need to say "thank you" for the life I have. Who or What I'm saying thank-you to doesn't much matter to me. I prefer instead to allow myself to feel blessed by a cloud of mystery, a cloud of wonder, and sometimes a cloud of awe—over which I have little, if any, control, but whose presence I feel, nonetheless. When I get in this frame of mind I find I'm drawn back to some words by the late Rev. Raymond Baughn, a UU minister of many years. Among the words of wisdom he offered during his ministry are these: "Giving thanks has nothing to do with who or what produced the gift. It is rather a way of perceiving

our life. Even in the midst of hurt and disappointment, when we see ourselves in a universe that gives us life and touches us with love, we praise."

That sure works for me. My prayer of thanksgiving is not one directed to a deity, but rather it is my way of perceiving life—even when life hurts, wounds, disappoints, frustrates, or an-

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gers me. Such a prayer is more of an attempt to cultivate an ongoing attitude of gratitude than it is words addressed to a Supreme Being. Such thankfulness is a way of seeing ourselves in a universe that gives us life, and in which we find love and care and inspiration. It is cultivating this kind of awareness—which, being human, is an awareness I fall in and out of—that constitutes my cosmic thank you.

To Ray Baughn's words I would add those of the 14th century German mystic and theologian, Meister Eckhart—"If the only prayer you ever say in your whole life is 'thank you,' that would suffice." Indeed, that *would* suffice. Eckhart was a Dominican priest who had to endure several charges of heresy over the course of his life for maintaining that one could experience the divine directly without intercessors, such as the Medieval Church, for instance. "If the only prayer you say in your life is 'thank you' that would suffice." Like Ray Baughn, Eckhart is speaking more about an attitude or stance towards living than he is the content of what a prayer of thanksgiving should contain or to whom it might be addressed. To simply and profoundly encounter one of those special moments of blessing in

our lives is to offer Eckhart's prayer of thanksgiving, even if no words are spoken.

While I'm on the subject of Medieval Catholic mystics with a strong heretical streak, let me also hold up Julian of Norwich. She lived in England about a century prior to Eckhart's time in Germany. Julian lived a hermit-like, contemplative life within the Church at Norwich, and wrote what is believed to be the first book written by a woman in the English language, *Sixteen Revelations of Divine Love*. Anticipating our own Universalist forebears by a few centuries, she held that God was the source and embodiment of universal love, and that there was no hell. Julian also believed that God was really a Divine She—not He—and compared Jesus Christ to a wise, merciful, and loving mother. Like Eckhart, she saw beyond the bounds of her own faith to its universal meanings.

She and Eckhart were both prolific writers by the standards of their day, and Julian of Norwich has one particular line for which she is especially noted and remembered. She said it came to her from God in one of her mystical visions, in which She (that is to say, God) said to Julian: "All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well."

Lady Julian, as she was also called, lived in England during one of the more virulent outbreaks of the Black Plague, when people really did drop like flies. Bodies had to be carted off en masse, and dumped in large pits on the outside of the towns. It might seem almost blasphemous in that kind of setting to speak the words, "All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well," and attribute them to a loving and maternal God. And yet these simple words have endured over the centuries.

Like Eckhart's, these words also strike a universal cord. As I ponder them, I hardly think Lady Julian was saying

that everything is always hunky-dory. All she had to do was look around her, as she surely must have done, to know that wasn't the case. What I take from these words, as I read them through my religious humanist lens, is the affirmation that Life and Love are ultimately stronger and more resilient than death and despair and hatred—however much those latter things may seem to hold sway at any given time. Lady Julian's words are also a call to those who hear them, and who truly get their message, to hold fast to that which is good, to practice kindness, and to stand on the side of love.

"All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well." "If the only prayer you say in your life is 'thank you,' that would suffice." We live in the push and pull between Eckhart's Thank You and Julian's All Shall Be Well on the one hand, and all those things that diminish and demean and cheapen life on the other. Such is the tension in which we have to live.

However it may have been given me, I'm living the only life I have, during the only time given me to live it, and on the only Earth I have in which to live it. What other choice do I have but to accept these truths and live with them and say "yes" to them? We are aware of the unfinished and unhealed parts of the world, just as we're aware of the unfinished and unhealed parts of our own lives. But we must still give thanks.

To say "thank you" or "all shall be well," is not to approve of all that comes your way or that gets visited upon you. Rather it is to face and take all that life gives us and then—using the will, the resources, and the power of the human spirit—to become agents of transformation for ourselves, for those with whom we are in community here, and for a world that stands in need of our care. ■



Gratitude

BY BARBARA MERRITT, MINISTER EMERITA, FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH OF WORCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS

In India recently someone asked my spiritual teacher a question: "What is the

worst karma a person can undergo here on earth? What is the greatest difficulty? The harshest circumstances?"

What an interesting question! How would you answer it? A few responses that came to my mind include financial poverty, to be born in a war-torn country, mental illness, debilitating physical illness, domestic abuse...my Lord, the list seems endless.

I was astonished by my teacher's reply. He answered (and I paraphrase), "The worst karma is to be ungrateful. If you suffer from ingratitude then it won't matter what blessings and goodness are in your life, you won't be capable of receiving it. In contrast, if you are grateful, then even in the most challenging of circumstances, you will be able to recognize the many gifts that you are receiving."

When I heard this, I immediately recognized the truth in his observation, but it was not altogether good news to me. For you see, many of us (if not most human beings) suffer from this particular variety of bad karma. Rather than possessing a grateful heart that is able to focus on all the advantages we have enjoyed, all the good company that we have been given, all the many blessings that we receive on a daily basis, we (or should I say I) occasionally, even frequently, get lost and quite forgetful.

I focus on what isn't on the banquet table. Looking over a lifetime, there are some of us who think we have an inalienable right to criticize, to com-

plain, to accuse and to feel victimized.

It's not that good fortune and great friends and tremendous blessings don't find their way to our door. They do! But the relationship we usually have with such things is to take them for granted. Good health, a warm house, nice clothes, nutritious food, meaningful work, volunteer opportunities, beautiful music from the choir, an occasional nourishing novel or TV show or film—these become white noise. Mere background, not necessarily noticed, appreciated, or fully acknowledged. We scream at their absence, but hardly ever notice their presence. And

No one can argue you into becoming grateful.

if someone says we ought to be grateful for what is good in our lives, we might become annoyed, resentful or impatient.

No one can argue you into becoming grateful. The journey to gratitude is not about making lists or noticing how much you have compared to others, or forcing you to acknowledge how dependent you are on the co-operation of a lively universe.

How we arrive at gratitude is something of a mystery, and I suspect that there are many roads (and detours). How you get to gratitude might take you on quite a different path than the one your neighbor travels. I believe that some models of gratitude are dead ends, especially those based on the calculation method. In this mindset, your assumption is that at the auspicious moment, gratitude will descend on you like fairy dust. At the extreme end of the calculation method you imagine that people who enjoy the

privilege of being grateful are those who 1) win the lottery; 2) receive the Noble Prize or a McArthur Grant or an Olympic Gold Medal; 3) are billionaires; 4) are people whose loved ones never die or suffer from ill health; and 5) have cars, appliances, computers, and hearts that do not break. In such idealized fantasies, those lucky enough to be grateful are rare indeed.

Gratitude is not about the things you do or do not receive. It is about a relationship.

A congregation member taught me a joke that he heard from Garrison Keillor. My poor husband has had to hear me tell it about 73 times. It concerns a grandmother who was walking with her five-year-old grandson on the beach, when suddenly a rogue wave comes up and grabs that child and carries him out to sea. She looks up to the sky, shakes her fist and says, "God, this is unacceptable, unbearable. You cannot take an innocent child." And just as those words come out of her mouth, another rogue wave comes and deposits the child smiling back at her feet. She picks up the child in her arms, looks up to the sky and says, "This child had a hat!"

A variant on the calculation model, which is much more effective (but not without problems), is to put life on a balance. You acknowledge that life is a combination of good and evil, blessings and curses, advantages and disadvantages, peaceful moments and times of great agitation and anxiety. You ride the waves. And when you go into a tough time of hardship and deprivation, you simply have to wait it out. Happiness is an achievement of timing. Where I can't so easily follow is to keep my balance and stay grateful when the ride gets especially rough. Some things go wrong and are never

right again. Tragedies can break your heart for a whole lifetime. Some sorrows are inconsolable. Some failures and defects are permanent. The road to having a grateful heart has to travel a more difficult terrain. As Elie Wiesel, a survivor of the Holocaust, eloquently expressed it: "gratitude emerges from the kingdom of night." Gratitude is not, in this model, the result of good fortune, happiness or great success. Instead gratitude is a response to life itself. It emerges precisely at the moment when we settle at the farthest limits of the sea—in places and circumstances where we believe that we are unreachable, unsaveable and irredeemable. No one ever put it more clearly than the author of Psalm 139: "Thou are acquainted with all my ways.... Where can I flee from your presence? If I make my bed in hell, thou art there...even the night shall provide light. The darkness and the light are both alike to Thee."

The psalmist is making a rather bold statement. Grace can find you anywhere and everywhere. Even with your best and most determined efforts, you cannot exile yourself from the range and reach of love. The power of goodness is so enormous that eventually you will be pulled in.

Gratitude is not about the things you do or do not receive. It is about a relationship. We are here on earth, at least partially, to practice empathy, to honor honest work and to ceaselessly embody that central Universalist principle, *the dignity and worth of all human beings*. This practice of radical equality is measured by the respect with which you treat others, and by the kindness in your heart. And then comes the leap. When you become the giver of kindness you are more likely to become aware of the kindness flowing towards you. You learn gratitude not only for the kindness of those around you, but also for the source of kindness described by the psalmist. Some of us call this source of all life and goodness and

love by the name of God. Some of us call the sense of the whole of life a mysterious reality that cannot be named. But there ought not to be disagreement about the response to our current imperfect circumstances. In the words of lyricist Oscar Hammerstein:

I don't believe any of us can enjoy living in this world unless we can accept its imperfection. We must know and admit that we are imperfect, that all other mortals are imperfect, and go on in our own imperfect way, making mistakes and riding out the rough and bewildering, exciting and beautiful storm of life until the day we die.

In the midst of imperfection we can pray to be given a grateful heart. Grateful for the gift of life. Grateful for the opportunities of this day to come closer to what is real and sustaining. Grateful that no matter how far we wander, or how many times we stumble, grace will find us and we will be blessed. ■

Gratitude and Giving

May brings us Mother's Day in the United States: a reminder to be grateful for *any* of the special people who have touched our lives. A gift to the Church of the Larger Fellowship can celebrate a special person or occasion, or memorialize a loss. Use the enclosed envelope or visit the CLF website

to arrange your gift. At your direction



a card can be mailed to the honoree or their family to announce your kindness.

Grateful for your support through the past, present and future, the CLF is humbled by your generosity as you support this church's work in the world. ■

Humanizing Mom

On Mother's Day, one expects to read about the wonder and glory of motherhood. While I can tell you from personal experience that we mothers like to be appreciated, I can also tell you that a rosy and sentimental Mother's Day column always refers to mothers in some other family—the picture painted there is not me, not my mom, not my grandmothers.

In my family, mothers do not suffer any more than other mortals, nor are we particularly unsung. We complain when we trip over shoes on the living room floor, and we expect a little praise for carrying the daily Grand Accumulation at the bottom of the stairs up the afore-mentioned stairs.

We do not deserve or expect devotion from our children. We wanted to have children. It was our idea. If they come around from time to time when they are grown-ups, we are ever so glad. But if they live their lives as secure and independent souls, we value that.

Motherhood, in my family, is not always the most important job in the world. Some of us are actually good at it, some of us shuffle along and do our best, and a few are better off in other professions. We try to face that.

Mother's Day is no time to romanticize parenthood—parenting is a down-to-earth process if ever there was one. So this Mother's Day, let's humanize Mom. Thank her for doing what she could, given all the dirty socks; thank her for loving you as well as she was able in spite of your three years in junior high, and then, let her thank you for the privilege of being your mother. ■



by *Jane Rzepka*, minister emerita, Church of the Larger Fellowship, from her meditation manual *A Small Heaven*. Published by Skinner House in 1989, this book is available from the CLF library (www.clfuu.org/library or 617-948-6150).



**GENERAL
ASSEMBLY
2011** *June 22-26*
Charlotte, NC

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST
ASSOCIATION OF CONGREGATIONS

50TH
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1961-2011

Rev. Meg to be installed as CLF Senior Minister

The CLF Board of Directors invites those who attend the General Assembly (GA) in Charlotte, North Carolina in June 2011 to attend the annual CLF worship service. This year, we will install the Rev. Meg Riley as the CLF's senior minister. The Rev. Nate Walker will preach at the installation, and speakers will include the Revs. Peter Morales, Bill Sinkford, Abhi Janamanchi and Laurel Hallman. The CLF worship is known for wonderful preaching and exuberant music, and this year promises to be another exceptional service. The CLF will also host an ingathering, a special worship by our Military Ministry and will have a booth in the GA exhibit hall selling UU products and promoting our unique congregation. For more information about General Assembly, go to www.uua.org/ga. ■



Notice of Annual Meeting

Notice to all members of the Church of the Larger Fellowship, Unitarian Universalist

Per Article VII, Sections 1 and 2, of the Church of the Larger Fellowship (CLF) Bylaws, the 41st Annual Meeting will be held at CLF's Ingathering on June 22, 2011 at General Assembly 2011 in Charlotte, North Carolina.

We will post all the necessary documents to the CLF website (www.clfuu.org/annualmeeting) by May 15, 2011. You can download the ballot and other materials, print them, fill out the ballot and send it along to the CLF office at 25 Beacon St., Boston, MA 02108. Or call the CLF office at 617-948-6166 and request a paper copy.

The purpose of the meeting is to: elect a moderator from among members present to preside at the meeting; elect three members to the board of directors, two members to the nominating committee, the clerk, and the treasurer from the slate of candidates presented on the ballot.

Lucia Santini Field, Clerk

May 1, 2011



From Your Minister

BY MEG RILEY
SENIOR MINISTER,
CHURCH OF THE
LARGER FELLOWSHIP

The more I sit with it, the more I think gratitude is the very epicenter of the life of the spirit. Pretty much every religious tradition tells us this, even if they put their own spin on it. Every person I respect as a spiritual teacher embodies it. And my own life has taught me that gratitude can open windows where I thought I saw walls.

Brother David Steindl-Rast, a Benedictine monk, has spent his whole adult life centered in and sharing the practice of gratitude and gratefulness. I discovered his work on a lovely website called *gratefulness.org*, which I commend to you if you go on the Web.

In a video on that website a woman explains the difference between gratitude and gratefulness:

There are two branches of gratitude: one is gratefulness and one is thanksgiving.

Gratefulness is the experience of life when the bowl of life is so full that it's almost overflowing. When you're in the great fullness of life you are one with the universe, and there is no sense of anything being "other."

And that is so fulfilling that the bowl of life overflows and dribbles over, and that puts you into the second branch of gratitude. That's thanksgiving, when the bowl is absolutely overflowing and you're grateful that there is an "other" because all you want to do is to give and share and make a difference. And that is so fulfilling that it puts you in the great fullness of life where there is no other, and you can live your whole life in the two branches of gratitude.

Doesn't that sound like a grand way to live life? Seriously, Brother David looks on the Web to be an extremely happy person! I am sure that living each day in the energy cycle of these two branches of gratitude would make me happy as well. But, I regret to say, often I'm in a different tree altogether.

Too often, I experience the great fullness of life as overwhelming. How will I do everything I have to get done today? Dog hair, unread magazines, kids' dirty socks, etc., all seem to have little tiny faces to taunt me about ever keeping my environment anything close to the restfulness of Brother David's monastery. And that's not even mentioning the paper piles, each beckoning me to spend time with them.

When the great fullness is something I resist, deny, avoid, or curse, then thanksgiving becomes equally warped. If only people would just listen to me and do what I want them to do! Which, of course, is not the same as "I want to give and share and make a difference." I suspect that for Brother David, thanksgiving is not tied to control or outcome, but is a complete act in and of itself.

As I've been working with gratitude as my own spiritual practice, here are a couple of things I've discovered. Gratefulness and thanksgiving can be a description of the breath: taking in the great fullness as the inhale, releasing into thanksgiving as the exhale. Even three breaths with this awareness can shift what I experience and how I participate in the world. (When desperate, I've been known to duck into a bathroom and breathe myself right again.)

I also experience this dynamic of gratefulness and thanksgiving in relationships. As our relationship as congregation and minister deepens, I feel the truth of giving and receiving. Neither one of these can happen without the other. I would not be reflecting and writing now were you not there to read it. And for that I am eternally grateful to you!

It's also nice to set aside a few minutes each day to do nothing but practice gratitude. In the morning, I have embraced lighting the flaming chalice, Unitarian Universalism's centering symbol, as my time of intentional strengthening of the gratitude muscle.

Before I light it, I sit with the great fullness of the chalice itself, empty though it may appear. I call to mind all that surrounds and supports me: ancestors, spiritual leaders, beautiful sights, people and animals and plants, and I sit with the great fullness of all there is. The members of CLF are central in this great fullness practice, both the folks I have spoken with and the ones I have yet to meet personally.

Gratitude is the very epicenter of the life of the spirit.

Once I am full of all of the gifts of life, I light the chalice flame, a symbol of thanksgiving. Flame offers light and warmth, without qualification, to all. "Be ours a religion which, like sunshine, goes everywhere," wrote Theodore Parker, a prominent Unitarian preacher in the 1800s. And there is the flame, happy to offer itself, like sunshine, without limitation or holding back, to all who seek light or warmth.

Doing this each morning (even in my mind sometimes, when circumstances prevent the actual chalice lighting) makes a difference in my days. For one thing, I remember how deeply I am connected to all of you and to so many others. This keeps me grounded. For another, it reminds me how much fuel I have for the fire, so that I can burn brightly without being afraid my light will go out. I start my morning in great fullness, and prepare myself to shine. ■



May 2011

REsources for Living

BY LYNN UNGAR, MINISTER FOR LIFESPAN LEARNING, CHURCH OF THE LARGER FELLOWSHIP

When Rev. Meg first suggested that our theme for May be "Gratitude" I have to confess I was just a bit confused. Don't we do gratitude in November, with Thanksgiving? I mean, if you have a whole holiday all about gratitude, aren't you going to go with that? The point, Meg patiently explained, is that gratitude isn't just for one day a year, or even one month a year. It's a spiritual practice that's good for everybody, every day, whatever way you might express your thankfulness.

She's right of course, and I couldn't agree more. Being grateful is the foundation of living with a peaceful heart. It is certainly something that we need to practice every day, not just when there is turkey or cranberry sauce in the house. But since I have just a hint of a hard time pulling my focus off of holidays, let me point out that May has not one, but two, holidays that have everything to do with gratitude.

Mother's Day falls near the beginning of May—May 8th this year—and, if you think about it, it's a day for being grateful to and for mothers. And Memorial Day falls at the end of May—May 30th this year—and it's a day for being grateful to and for those who have died in military service to their country. There you have it: May wins out over November for gratitude holidays!

Of course, gratitude isn't quite as simple as we might like. I'm sure you don't always feel grateful to your mother, and being told that you should thank her on a certain day might just make you even more grumpy about the ways she doesn't or didn't live up to all the things you thought a mother should be and do. And really, if you think about it, we weren't the ones who *asked* to be born, or to be raised by the people



who raised us. Personally, as a mom through adoption, it kind of makes me nuts when people

suggest that our daughter is lucky that she came to us, or that she should feel grateful to have us as her moms. It's not like we adopted her to do her a favor. We wanted a baby, and she's the one we got.

But...what an amazing thing it is that people choose to

Being grateful is the foundation of living with a peaceful heart.

be parents! Being a mom is hard. Really hard. For a really long time. It takes creativity and energy and patience and determination and a willingness to go forward when you're not sure if you're doing the right thing. So it's not surprising that some people do it better than others, or that even the people who do it really well mess up pretty badly sometimes. You don't need to be grateful to your mom for being the perfect mother, especially since there's not much chance of that happening. But isn't it good to be grateful for the gift of life, and for the gift of love?—even if the person who gave you life wasn't able to raise you, or the way your mother expresses her love might just drive you nuts?

Sure, it's easier to be grateful to someone who greets you with warm homemade cookies after school than someone who insists that you do all your math homework—correctly—before you can play with your friends. But there are a lot more chances to practice gratitude if you celebrate life and love without demanding that life and love look a particular way before they earn your celebration.

Memorial Day, it seems to me, offers a similar, if even more difficult, opportunity for thankfulness. It can be

pretty rough trying to wrap your mind around gratitude on Memorial Day if you happen to feel that the wars which caused so many deaths were a mistake, and that many of the people we honor on that day shouldn't have died to begin with. Frankly, gratitude on Mother's Day may be tricky enough, but it's a whole lot easier to celebrate life and love than a holiday about violent death.

But...what an amazing thing that people are willing to risk their lives for others, that our ability to love goes beyond our family and friends to a whole country. Yes, it makes complete sense to be sad about those who died in war—the sol-

diers and citizens who will never return to their families. But the wonderful thing about gratitude is that you can be sad and grateful at the same time. When people we love die, whether it's in the military or simply of extreme old age, we're sad, and maybe even angry that they are gone when we weren't ready to say goodbye. But we are also grateful that we knew them, and that they were a part of our lives for as long as they were.

So sure, I'll be grateful come November, and more than happy to participate in the feasting. But maybe May is the time to feel gratitude not just for simple things, like pumpkin pie, but also for complicated things like love and death and the chance to be involved in this mixed-up, crazy activity called life. ■





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Did You Know

that additional reflections
on the topic of gratefulness
are available on the CLF
website (www.clfuu.org)?

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O Women of America!

Into your hands God has pressed one of the sublimest opportunities that ever came into the hands of the women of any race or people. It is yours to create a healthy public sentiment; to demand justice, simple justice, as the right of every race; to brand with everlasting infamy the lawless and brutal cowardice that lynches, burns, and tortures your own countrymen.

To grapple with the evils which threaten to undermine the strength of the nation and to lay magazines of powder under the cribs of future generations is no child's play.

Let the hearts of the women of the world respond to the song of the herald of angels of peace on earth and good will to men. Let them throb as one heart unified by the grand and holy purpose of uplifting the human race, and humanity will breathe freer, and the world grow brighter. With such a purpose Eden would spring up in our path, and paradise be around our way. ■

by **Frances Ellen Watkins Harper**, from "Women's Political Future," delivered in 1893 at the World's Congress of Representative Women at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago, Illinois. Published in *Words of Fire: An Anthology of African-American Feminist Thought*, edited by Beverly Guy-Sheftall, The New Press, New York, 1995.



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