

Living thanks

A sermon on Thanksgiving Sunday October 12, 2025 for the combined congregations of Summerland United Church and St. Stephen Anglican Church in Summerland BC by the Very Rev. Ken Gray

It's a familiar scenario to all of us. We walk into a grocery store, or a car dealership, or into one of Summerland's growing number of Thrift Stores. We browse the shelves looking for something we need or want. Prize clutched in hand we proceed towards the checkout to complete the transaction. In years past we rustled in our purse or wallet for cash; now we pray to Jesus that we can remember our PIN number as the tap feature is apparently disabled. Exchange completed, we say "thank you" to the clerk, and get on with our day.

Saying "thanks" can be a mere pleasantry for sure. It represents however so much more. In a healthy economy the exchange of goods or services for compensation boosts stable employment; it provides consumers the ability to participate in the economy with confidence and pleasure — a new car, a new home, fun things (like camera gear) in order to do fun things — which allows us to be creative individually, and socially. When all goes well, saying "thank you" is the tip of the iceberg of satisfaction.

Sometimes thanks giving finds special expression. Kathie and I enjoy watching the long running PBS show [This Old House](#) (proud sponsor of the Toronto Blue Jays for which I am, personally thankful). Typically Kevin and his team help home owners renovate older homes literally transforming sows' ears into silk purses," changing "rags into riches." And speaking of riches, each project is blessed with a seemingly endless supply of money.

The show's [current project is quite different](#). "The crew now travels to Western North Carolina to meet five families working to rebuild after Hurricane Helene destroyed their homes in 2024. The team meet homeowners to hear their stories from the day of the storm: what they experienced, what they lost, and what recovery means to them." (They also work wonders with totally wrecked homes.) One story from episode one stands out for me.

Local resident Rob saw the rushing water below his safely situated home high above the river. He heard people screaming for help. Some were standing on their roofs. Washing machines and sheds sped down the sewage and oil saturated water. He heard a baby cry. Another resident, John, an avid outdoorsman, was a kayaker. Both men risked their lives to rescue stranded residents. Taking a maul John smashed his way through more than one roof to free terrified residents. One rescued neighbour, Allie, knows that she owes John her life. In this local area, *every single person survived*. Home owner and rescuer reunited several months later, Allie said thank you to John: "Our words may say thank you but I cannot express how thankful we really are."

Gratitude for life-saving care is more present than you may think — sometimes in hospital wards or at a birthing scene; sometimes in successful business or in the work of non-profit organizations; sometimes in the lives of faith communities, right here, right now under the cover of this Stone Church — we collaborate well, and it's not even a year yet. While our ecclesiastical and liturgical traditions do vary, to a greater or lesser extent, both communities are all about giving thanks.

Our Anglican liturgy today broadens our focus from the *specific* to the *general* in these words:

*"Let us give thanks to God our Creator.
It is right to give our thanks and praise*

We praise you and we bless you, holy and gracious God, source of life abundant. From before time, you made ready the creation. Your Spirit moved over the deep and brought all things into being: sun, moon and stars; earth, wind and waters and every living thing. You made us in your image, male and female, and taught us in your ways.”

Sometimes you just have to say it out loud, over and over again, until you believe it, or feel it, or embody it. “Come you thankful people, come.” As I usually say when preaching: “Creator, from the depth and breadth of Creation, we thank you.” Taking a cue from St. Francis, Father Richard Rohr OFM writes: “Franciscan spirituality has never been an abstraction . . . Francis’ living of the gospel was . . . *a simple lifestyle*. It was the incarnation of Jesus Christ continuing in space and time. It was the presence of the Spirit taken as if it were true. It was *being* Jesus more than just *worshipping* Jesus.” I end my reflection as the Eucharistic prayer also ends:

“Now gathered at your table, O God of all creation, and remembering Christ crucified and risen who was, and is, and is to come, we offer to you our gifts of bread and wine and ourselves as a living sacrifice.” No theory; just Gospel love.

Creator, from the depth and breadth of creation, we thank you.

And the people said: Amen

This text is also posted on Ken’s blog [here](#)

