



## THE UNITY MESSENGER

Unity of Santa Rosa  
4857 Old Redwood Highway  
Santa Rosa, California 95403



### Third Annual Thanksgiving Eve Gratitude Service

by Tom McCurry and Harker Brautighan

Please join us for our **Third Annual Thanksgiving Eve Gratitude Service**. Tom McCurry will host this service, with music, a brief message, and the option for each one of us to have our moment to publicly share our gratitude. It takes place **Wednesday, November 25th, at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom.**

When asked about the importance of having a Thanksgiving Eve Gratitude service the day before Thanksgiving, as opposed to another day, Prayer Chaplain and Music Director Tom McCurry said there were four main reasons for the timing of the service.

The first is *tradition*. "This service is based on a tradition that Rev. Mary Murray Shelton introduced decades ago. It meant a lot to me then, and since it's the inspiration for what we are doing now, I'd prefer to stay with it."

The second is *psychological and spiritual impact*. Tom explains this way: "Having an evening service has a very different emotional flavor than a Sunday morning service. It feels different in the moment, and it sticks with you after the fact in a different, and more persistent, way. I think that's valuable to congregants. The same is true of the decor, in a couple of ways: lighting has a big impact on people, and it's not really possible to duplicate the evening/nighttime effect in morning light. Also, decorating for an event is a way to increase the feeling that something special is going on. It signals that this is important."

The third reason is *community*. Tom continues: "I'm kind of 'cheating' to make this its own point, when it really nestles into the one above, but coming to church in the evening, in the neighborhood of dinnertime, in the dark, creates a sense of joined purpose and community. Folks who show up aren't 'just' there because it's Sunday, and 'you go to church on Sunday.' When people come to an evening service or a 4 a.m. World Peace Meditation, they are coming on purpose, and they know that others there are coming for a similar, focused reason. The dark and the decor, and the warmly lighted room, and the gathering of fellows, all work together to create an energetic 'hug' that says, 'This is special, and you are part of it, and you belong here!'"

Finally, the evening gratitude service is a *treasure*. Tom explains: "I'm a fan of enjoying wonderful things in life. I think that a service like this is a precious treasure. If only a few people find it for now, that's OK with me. And if it's as valuable as I make it out to be, then those people are likely to invite a friend who they think will really appreciate it, and pretty soon there will be a good-sized group of folks celebrating the treasure that gratitude is."

I am grateful to Tom for his thoughtful explanation of this service. Don't miss our own Third Annual Thanksgiving Eve Gratitude service. Tom invites every one of you to join us this year, and to consider decorating the space that shows up on your Zoom view with candles, food, or anything that reminds you of abundance and your gratitude. Please call the office at 707-542-7729 or email [info@unityofsantarosa.org](mailto:info@unityofsantarosa.org) for more information.



## The Surprising Expanded "Prayer for Protection"

by Jane Rinaldi

I'm relatively new to Unity, and had no idea that our "Prayer for Protection" which we say together at the end of each Sunday service (and is one of my most favorite moments of the service!) is sometimes published with additional lines. As you know, we say:

The Light of God surrounds us.  
The Love of God enfolds us.  
The Power of God protects us.  
The Presence of God watches over us.  
Wherever we are, God is.

Like many Unity churches, we add the line: "And all is well," which was written later. My discovery of the extended "Prayer for Protection" was purely by accident when I went online to discover the original prayer's origin. The author of the prayer is James Dillet Freeman, who wrote it to support soldiers and their families during World War II. It was carried to the moon and back by Buzz Aldrich in 1969. It's one of the most beloved prayers in the world. I was surprised that some Unity churches have posted an expanded version, which is printed below, and thought maybe others might be surprised, too. While the expanded version has been attributed to Freeman, it is unclear if he wrote the additional lines. However the expanded version came to be, I have to say, it was as though I'd stumbled on a brand new and dear relative — out of the blue.

As it turns out, there are seven other statements included in this expanded "Prayer for Protection" that can offer us additional spiritual help and comfort, especially now, as we wade through the COVID-19 days of autumn into winter.

My hope is that as we read these statements to ourselves, each one will serve as its own unique prayer to offer us another quiet and simple way to more closely connect to Divine Spirit through the challenging months ahead.

The Light of God surrounds me.  
The Love of God enfolds me.  
The Power of God protects me.  
The Presence of God watches over me.  
The Mind of God guides me.  
The Life of God flows through me.  
The Laws of God direct me.  
The Power of God abides within me.  
The Joy of God uplifts me.  
The Strength of God renews me.  
The Beauty of God inspires me.  
Wherever I am, God is.

For more about the origin of the prayer, please visit: [www.unity.org/resources/articles/prayer-protection](http://www.unity.org/resources/articles/prayer-protection).