



36th ANNUAL HOUSTON INTERFAITH
**THANKSGIVING
SERVICE**

Welcome: Rev. Dr. John Wurster: St. Philip Presbyterian Church

Introduction: Garland Pohl, Catholic

Closing: Rev. George Atkinson, Methodist

Houston Interfaith Thanksgiving Service Committee

Alok Jain - Jain

Beth Kulkarni - Hindu

Charlene Chuang - Buddhist

Nadia Tajalli - Baha'i

Kaemaerz Dotiwala - Zoroastrian

George Atkinson - Methodist

Garland Pohl - Catholic

Ajit Giani - Baha'i

Mickey Meyers - Presbyterian

ZOROASTRIAN

Chant: **Ervad Darius Dastu**

Zoroastrian Association of Houston

Inspired are the thoughts, inspired are the words, inspired are the deeds of righteous Zarathushtra.

May the Eternal Holy (laws) accept the Gathas in advance, Homage to you O sacred Gathas.

Invokes divine help for the gift to bring happiness to the world

1. With uplifted hands and deep humility, I beseech, O Mazda, first and foremost this, your divine gift of the abiding joy of Spenta Mainyu, your holy mind. Grant that I perform all actions in harmony with righteousness (Your Divine Law) and acquire the wisdom of the good mind so that I may bring happiness to the soul of the Universe.

Realization of higher and lower selves

2. O Ahura Mazda, may I reach you in fullness of knowledge, through good mind, to be graced with realization of both the selves, the physical (lower) self and the mental (higher) self which comes from following your divine law, through which you lead all devotees into the abode of light (Heaven).

Perfect Bliss

3. I shall weave songs of adoration, as was never done before for you O Righteousness and for you O Good mind, and for you O Mazda Ahura for through you flourishes divine wisdom and the never waning moral courage. So, descend, O Powers, in answer to these invocations and grant us Perfect Bliss.

Teach mankind to strive for righteousness

4. In truth when singing your praise, I shall attune my soul to good thoughts and become aware of the blessing which flow from holy deeds undertaken for Mazda Ahura's sake . . . As long as I have the will and strength, so long I will share your divine gift and teach Humanity to strive for righteousness.

—GATHA AHUNAVAD HA 28

Reflection: **Natasha Dungor**

Zoroastrian Association of Houston

SIKH

Chant: **Amrik Singh** (Head Priest) Sikh National Center

Aasaa, Fifth Mehla:

This human body has been given to you.
This is your chance to meet the Lord of the Universe.
Nothing else will work.
Join the Saadh Sangat, the Company of the Holy;
vibrate and meditate on the Jewel of the Naam. ||1||
Make every effort to cross over this terrifying world-ocean.
You are squandering this life uselessly in the love of Maya.
||1|| Pause ||
I have not practiced meditation, self-discipline, self-restraint or righteous living.
I have not served the Holy; I have not acknowledged the Lord, my King.
Says Nanak, my actions are contemptible!
O Lord, I seek Your Sanctuary; please, preserve my honor! ||2||4||

— (Guru Granth Saib Page :-378)

JEWISH

Chant: Cantor Diane Dorf
Congregation Beth Yeshurun

Early Morning Blessings

When one first wakes up:

I am grateful to you living and sustaining Sovereign, that you have restored my soul with compassion, Your faithfulness is boundless.

For the gift of the body:

Praised are You Adonai our God, Who rules the universe, fashioning our bodies in wisdom, creating openings, arteries, glands, and organs, marvelous in structure, intricate in design. Should but one of them fail to function by being blocked or opened, it would be impossible to survive and serve You. Praised are You Adonai, healer of all flesh, sustaining our bodies in wondrous ways.

For the gift of the soul:

The soul that You, my God have given me is pure, You created it, You breathed it to me in life eternal: You keep body and soul together, one day You will take my soul from me, to restore it to me in life eternal. So long as this soul is within me I acknowledge You, Adonai, my God, my ancestors' God, Master of all creation, Sovereign of all souls, Praised be You, Adonai, who restores the soul to the lifeless, exhausted body.

Reflection: Rabbi Steven Morgen
Congregation Beth Yeshurun

JAIN

Recited by: Samani Malaya Pragya Ji
Jain Vishwa Bharati Houston

Living beings are born as a human only after the soul reaches a certain level of purity.

–Uttaradhyana Sutra 3/7

Reflection: Samani Niti Pragya Ji
Jain Vishwa Bharati, Houston

ISLAMIC

Chant: Safir Ali Anwari **Ismaili Muslim Community**

[16:14] He it is Who made the sea subservient, that you may eat fresh meat therefrom, and extract from it ornaments that you wear. You see the ships plowing through it, and [this is so] that you may seek His Bounty, and that haply you may give thanks.

[16:15] And He cast firm mountains in the earth, lest it shake beneath you, and streams, and ways, that haply you may be guided,

[16:16] and landmarks, and by the stars they are guided.

[16:17] Is He Who creates like one who creates not? Will you not, then, reflect?

[16:18] And were you to count the blessings of God, you could not number them. Truly God is Forgiving, Merciful.

—Sura 16: The Bee (Al-Nahl)

Reflection: Zainab Khuwaja-Ali **Ismaili Muslim Community**

HINDU

Reader/chanter: Thara Narasiman
Hindus of Greater Houston

Trees bear fruit for other's sake.

Rivers flow for others to use.

Cows give milk for all for nourishment.

This human body of ours too is meant to benefit and serve others.

– Rig Veda

Reflection: Partha Sarathi Chatterjee
Hindus of Greater Houston

CHRISTIAN

Reader: John Lemen
St. Philip Presbyterian Church

From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

– 2 Corinthians 5:16-20

Reflection: Rev. Dr. John Wurster
St. Philip Presbyterian Church

BUDDHIST

Reading: **Beth Arlington** Houston Shambhala Meditation Group

As earth and the other elements, together with space, eternally provide sustenance in many ways for the countless sentient beings, so may I become sustenance in every way for sentient beings to the limits of space until all have attained nirvana.

As the sugatas of old gave birth to the bodhichitta and progressively established themselves in the discipline of a bodhisattva, so I too, for the benefit of beings, shall give birth to the bodhichitta and progressively train myself in that discipline.

At this moment my birth has become more fruitful. I have realized my human life. Today I am born into the family of the buddhas. Now I am a child of the buddhas.

From now on I will forthrightly perform the actions befitting to my family. I will act so as not to degrade the faultlessness and discipline of my family.

— from the Bodhisattva Vow in [The Way of the Bodhisattva](#) by Shantideva

Presentation: **Celeste Budwit-Hunter** Houston Shambhala Meditation Group

BAHA'I

Prayer: Kian Tavackoli **Bahia's of Hedwig Village**

O Thou kind Lord! O Thou Who art generous and merciful! We are servants of Thy threshold and are gathered beneath the sheltering shadow of Thy divine unity. The sun of Thy mercy is shining upon all, and the clouds of Thy bounty shower upon all. Thy gifts encompass all, Thy loving providence sustains all, Thy protection overshadows all, and the glances of Thy favor are cast upon all. O Lord! Grant Thine infinite bestowals, and let the light of Thy guidance shine. Illumine the eyes, gladden the hearts with abiding joy. Confer a new spirit upon all people and bestow upon them eternal life. Unlock the gates of true understanding and let the light of faith shine resplendent. Gather all people beneath the shadow of Thy bounty and cause them to unite in harmony, so that they may become as the rays of one sun, as the waves of one ocean, and as the fruit of one tree. May they drink from the same fountain. May they be refreshed by the same breeze. May they receive illumination from the same source of light. Thou art the Giver, the Merciful, the Omnipotent.

From: The Promulgation of Universal Peace - Talk given by Abduâ€™™I-Baha on 12 May 1912 at
Unity Church, Montclair, New Jersey

Reflection: Kayvon Haghpeykar **Baha'is of West University**



As followers of Jesus Christ, we seek to be an inclusive grace filled community, engaging the world with open minds, willing hands and generous hearts. We long for deeper faith, vibrant hope and boundless love for everyone, every day, everywhere.

The photo below shows the recent installation of 700 pinwheels on our front lawn, in memory of the more than 700,000 persons in the US who have died from COVID-19.

