



The CommUUnicator

Newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist
Fellowship of Waynesboro

Mayflower and Fortune

We're just a week away from Thanksgiving Day. How are you feeling? Not ready for the horde of guests who will descend on your home? Or if you are the guest this year, are you ready to rein in that impulse to say what you think about politics or religion and the benighted nature of the person next to you? Maybe you will be neither guest nor host and will be alone. Maybe that suits your temperament or is what you need this year. Maybe it induces anxiety. Many of us are at best ambivalent about our holiday situation. And if you're not ambivalent now, you probably will be once you are face-to-face with your people – or their absence.

I have other reasons to be ambivalent about Thanksgiving. Elder William Brewster, who came to America on the *Mayflower* and was the spiritual leader of the Pilgrims in Plymouth Colony was my ninth-great grandfather. My family had forgotten about it until my aunt wanted to be a member of the Daughters of the Mayflower and had to prove her lineage back to an ancestor who arrived in Plymouth Colony in 1620. Never mind that Jonathan Brewster, Elder Brewster's oldest son and my ancestor, did not arrive until the next year on the *Fortune*.

I doubt that my *Mayflower* and *Fortune* ancestors were any better or worse than anyone else engaged in the Anglo-colonial enterprise or theocracy in the 1600s. I don't

know which ones engaged in which shameful activities, but we know that the Massachusetts colonists committed genocide on native American tribes around them. My ancestors inevitably played some role in the early settler history of Massachusetts, including the worst bits. And the utopian glories of the first Thanksgiving story were politically motivated lies created only in the late 1800s. The reality was that fifty years of pushing Wampanoag neighbors out of the way led to King Phillip's War. The conflict devastated the Wampanoags and shifted the balance of power in favor of European colonists. No matter what individual ancestors did, their community's strength rested on taking the land from its historic occupants. There are many sources for reading the full story.

My ancestor Jonathan and his wife Lucretia had eight children in Plymouth and then moved the family to New London, Connecticut. The next five generations of my ancestors lived there until my third-great grandfather in that line, Gibson Harris, moved his family to the newly opening Illinois territory in 1820. My family and I learned the Thanksgiving mythology in school like everyone else. We counted our ancestors as "good guys," unaware of what any of them actually did. But in my family, Thanksgiving was not much different from the harvest festivals of many lands. Gathering. Prayers of Gratitude. Celebration and Food.

Do I wish my ancestors were not part of the history of English colonialism? Of course. But I also do not believe we inherit the sin of our ancestors. They did, however, participate in shaping the today we inherit. Being ambivalent about my ancestors is part of looking at the truth without flinching. Our world is as it is because of their actions. And we have the power to make different choices than they did. Thanksgiving should lead us to ambivalence, and that ambivalence prepares us to experience true gratitude – the kind that compels us to pursue justice for all. Happy Thanksgiving!

Peace and Blessings,
Rev. Paul

Service Auction Success!

The 2022 UUFW Service Auction had one of its best years ever. The many donated goods and services earned **\$11,722**, with more expected to come in from the unsold items.



A huge thank you goes primarily to expert managers, Kay Yost and Nancy Lay. They were helped by Marilyn Nash, Nancy Trimble, Abbie Edwards and master auctioneer, Bill Harouff.



An outstanding number of high-quality items were donated for the silent auction.

With Bill wielding the gavel after two years of online auctions, we were eager to participate in the live auction.

Thank you everyone for your donations, your generous spending and your contributions to a sumptuous potluck.

Signage

Find me a finer word than love
And I will pin it to the stars above.

Find me a word more ugly than hate
And I will nail it to Hell's dark gate.

Joe Good

