

Thanksgiving, Prayer, and the Practice of Peace”

November 9, 2025

There is a deep stillness that settles over the world this time of year. Not silence, exactly—more like the quiet breath between heartbeats. The trees have let go of their glory, the air sharpens and clears, and we begin to light candles against the early dark.

In the church we call this Memorial Sunday—a day for remembering, for naming, for holding the thin line between earth and heaven in tender hands. We will speak aloud the names of those who have crossed that line—names that still echo in these walls, names that still make our hearts turn.

Around the world, this season takes on many names. In Germany, it’s Totenfest, the festival of the dead. In Latin America, Día de los Muertos, where color and laughter mingle with memory. And in each, the same holy knowing: that love does not vanish when a heartbeat stops. That our ancestors’ wisdom still hums in our bones. That the veil between the living and the departed is not a wall, but a thin, shimmering thread.

And this weekend, we also mark Veterans Day—born out of another kind of stillness. The stillness of Armistice. The eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month in 1918 when the guns of The Great War at last went quiet, and weary soldiers stood blinking in the stunning peace.

The word armistice literally means “arms standing still.” Imagine that—the sheer miracle of weapons at rest. After years of thunder and terror and trench and blood, the world inhaled for the first time in a long time. A sacred hush. A silence heavy with hope.

Congress declared that day should be kept with “thanksgiving and prayer and exercises designed to perpetuate peace through goodwill and mutual understanding among nations.”

- Thanksgiving.
- Prayer.
- Peace.

Three movements in a single song. A rhythm for remembrance.

I. Thanksgiving

Psalm 145 begins, “I will exalt you, my God and King, and bless your name forever.” This is not naïve gratitude—it’s defiant praise. Praise that rises up even in the ruins. Praise that says: love still matters; beauty still burns; God’s mercy still flows through cracked places.

Gratitude doesn’t deny grief. It sanctifies it. It says: I hurt because I have loved. AND that love, God help us, is worth the pain.

So we give thanks today: for the saints who taught us how to love, for the veterans who bore the weight of violence so that others might know peace, for the healers and chaplains and friends who tend the invisible wounds. We give thanks for breath, for memory, for the ache that reminds us that we are still, somehow, alive.

II. Prayer

Job knew something about that ache. Everything he had was destroyed—home, family, health— and still, scraping at his sores in the dust, he whispers the impossible, “I know that my Redeemer lives.”

He didn’t shout it from the mountaintop. Friends, he whispered from the pit. A prayer barely held together by breath. “I know that my Redeemer lives.” Not because he feels it, but because he must believe it, or he will not survive.

This, too, is often our prayer. When the names we love are gone from our tables. When the world feels bent beyond repair. When war or illness or addiction or time have taken more than we can bear. Still—we whisper “I know that my Redeemer lives.”

Sometimes our prayer is bold and certain. Sometimes it’s thready and trembling. But it’s always enough. Always the small spark that keeps the darkness from winning.

III. Exercises to Perpetuate Peace

Remember, the third movement of the Armistice proclamation was to engage in “exercises to perpetuate peace.” Peace, friends, is not an idea. It’s a practice. A muscle we strengthen both personally and communally.

The language of “exercises to perpetuate peace” feels right. Peace needs repetition. It needs movement.

When we light candles for our beloved departed, we are exercising peace. When we tell the truth about loss without flinching, we are exercising peace. When we reach across difference, when we lay down our weapons, in word and in deed, when we listen more than we argue, we are perpetuating peace.

Each act of tenderness is resistance to the world’s temptation toward despair. Every kindness is an uprising of the Spirit. Every forgiveness is a tiny armistice of the soul.

IV. Stillness and the Song

So let us linger in the stillness this morning, the stillness of remembrance, the stillness after the last shot is fired, the stillness in which our local saints begin to sing.

For they are singing, you know. All of them. The veterans and the visionaries, the peacemakers and the poets, the parents and partners and friends whose love shaped us.

They are part of the great song the Psalmist promised: “All flesh will bless God’s holy name forever and ever.” And we, the living, we are learning the harmony. May we find our place in that song. May our gratitude deepen into prayer, and our prayer grow strong enough to make peace. And may we, with Job and all who have gone before us, keep whispering into the wind— “I know that my Redeemer lives.”

May it be so. Alleluia and Amen.

Rev. Bridget Flad Daniels
Union Congregational United Church of Christ
Green Bay, Wisconsin
Psalm 145:1-5, 17-21, Job 19:23-27a
November 9, 2025