

Freedom's Feast THANKSGIVING

Ceremonies to get the most out of your THANKSGIVING celebration.

A MEMORY HARVEST *Gathering the Stories That Connect Us* CEREMONY

Ask all storytellers to come to join the gathering with their selected objects. Give copies of the ceremony to everyone. Make sure that the tone is warm and gentle. People who hadn't planned to participate in advance may suddenly think of a story they want to share. Others may choose not to share a story they had planned to present. Everyone responds differently in front of an audience. Be respectful, kind and encouraging. Enjoy the results!

Leader We are thankful for so many reasons as we gather together today. We celebrate the harvest of food we are about to eat and the gift of life our meal represents. We are also grateful for other gifts of life as well. We are blessed by the presence of all here. We also miss (mention any who are sick or unable to attend for other reasons). This Thanksgiving we want to acknowledge the gifts we received from people who are no longer with us. They taught, inspired, and loved us. Today we want to remember and thank them by sharing special stories about them with all who are here.

ALL Memory is our bounty. Stories are our harvest.

Leader calls on first person to show the object that relates to the story he or she wants to share. As people complete their stories ask them to place their object on the special table of honor or on the Thanksgiving table as a centerpiece. This is a good opportunity to involve young children by asking them to collect and place the object in a place of honor.

Leader Thank you for the gift of your story. **NAME OF THE PERSON in the story** has joined our gathering.

ALL Welcome to our table!

Continue until all stories are told. When final story is complete:

Leader We have been blessed today with a cornucopia of memories as we recall the lasting impact that special people have had on our lives.

ALL Memories are our bounty. Stories are our harvest.

Reader We are grateful for the lessons learned.

Reader Talk to your children while they are eating; what you say will stay even after you are gone.

NEZ PERCE NATIVE AMERICAN SAYING

Reader We are grateful for the love given.

Reader The giving of love is an education in itself.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT, FIRST LADY OF THE UNITED STATES, UN DELEGATE, CIVIL RIGHTS ACTIVIST

Reader We are grateful for the laughter shared.

Reader Laughter is the shortest distance between two people.

VICTOR BORGE, HUMORIST, PERFORMING MUSICIAN, NATURALIZED US CITIZEN

Reader We are grateful for the tears shed.

Reader The soul would have no rainbow had the eyes no tears. **JOHN CHENEY, LIBRARIAN, POET, WRITER**

Reader We are grateful for the time together.

Reader Family faces are magic mirrors. Looking at people who belong to us, we see the past, present and future.

GAIL LUMET BUCKLEY, WRITER, JOURNALIST, DAUGHTER OF LENA HORNE

Reader We are grateful for the memories gleaned.

Reader The past is never dead. It is not even past. William Faulkner, American novelist

Leader asks storytellers to repeat names of people they brought to the table.

ALL Welcome to our table and to our lives.

Before the main course or dessert is served, the leader recites a thanksgiving prayer, says a blessing and/or thanks each person for his or her contribution to the meal.



MLK DAY

Visit us again for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day at www.freedomfeast.us



OPTIONAL PRAYER

For the smiles
around this table
and the food
we are about to eat.
For all the lessons
we have learned:
The questions asked
and still unanswered.
For the freedom
to wander in our minds
and wherever our feet
may carry us.
For the opportunity
to pursue our passions
and the chance
to be changed by them.
For the gift of a government
that belongs to us
and the blessing of a land
whose endless bounty
depends upon our care.
For the chance
to offer our gratitude
in our own way,
in our own faith,
in our own time.

ALL: Together we say
Thank You.

**A FREEDOM'S FEAST
THANKSGIVING PRAYER**

