

WFWP Colorado: Interfaith Thanksgiving service - Gratitude in the midst of crisis

Gale Alves
November 24, 2020



WFWP Colorado Representative Gale Alves and her husband Antonio are members of the [Grand Valley Interfaith Network](#) (GVIN), a local organization in Grand Junction that fosters cooperation between members of different religious affiliations and promotes community engagement. GVIN annually hosts a ThanksGVIN Interfaith Celebration of Gratitude on the Tuesday before Thanksgiving, and this year it was held virtually for the first time. Pre-recorded at a local church, the interfaith Thanksgiving service was released on YouTube on November 24, 2020 and is available to watch [here](#).

The program featured speakers from nine religious organizations: the First Congregational United Church of Christ, Sikh faith, Global Heart Spiritual Center, Baha'i faith, The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints, the Jewish faith, Unitarian Universalist Congregation, New Thought Colorado and the Family Federation for World Peace.

Rev. Dr. David Dethmers of the First Congregational Church of Christ welcomed everyone as the host, saying "Regardless of our background, religion, faith, perspective or philosophy, we all have things to celebrate and be grateful for. That is why we have all gathered today."

In his invocation, GVIN Vice President David Edwards of the Congregation Ohr Shalom invited God to be present with these words: "Sovereign of the universe, who created all in love, teach us to discover and to love all that is good and beautiful in this world. Teach us to honor the dignity of difference, recognizing the one who we may not think is like us, is nonetheless in Your Image."

Gale was excited to be invited as a speaker again this year, after having participated in 2019. "I like to speak at these events -- even though I get so nervous -- because it gives many people a chance to hear our founders' teachings," she shared, referring to WFWP Co-Founders Rev. Sun Myung Moon and Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon.

Speaking on the theme of "Gratitude in the Midst of Crisis," Gale emphasized that there was a lot to be grateful for in spite of COVID-19 and all the social unrest in this country. "As we are more restricted now and spend more time at home, we have all been afforded the time to take stock of our lives, a chance to reflect mostly on, I suspect, the relationships we have."

However, as Gale reminded us, it is not always easy to love, and we struggle particularly with the people who are closest to us, including our own family members. While we may be tempted to live by the law of retaliation, "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth," that is not God's way of love.

"Rev. Moon teaches that we need to work on relating to difficult people with a parental heart," explained Gale. "The heart of a parent can digest a lot of challenging, painful things, can forgive and can keep loving. Rev. Moon has challenged us to receive the good as well as the bad from people with a grateful,

humble heart."

She also shared some valuable points from Rev. Moon that helped her practice this way of loving, including the importance of daily prayer and the philosophy of living for the sake of others by giving unconditionally. "Love is always replenished by unconditional giving. Meaning, that we never expect anything in return. And then we keep on giving," said Gale.



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She concluded by encouraging us to apply this to our relationships with our spouses, our children, grandchildren, friends, relatives, co-workers, and people in the community, and wishing everyone a wonderful holiday.

Other speakers included GVIN President Rev. Dr. Carla Ryan of the New Thought Church, who expressed our need to live in gratitude no matter the circumstances around us, and Kellene Mortenson, interfaith representative from the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints, who saw gratitude as faith in action.

It was truly inspiring to reflect on the heartfelt messages of all these faith leaders. To watch the entire program, simply click on the button below.

May gratitude fill your thoughts this holiday season.

[Watch interfaith service](#)