This is a compilation of thirty-one prayers, one for each day of the month, offered by the staff of the Congregational Church of San Mateo to our beloved Faith Community as a gift on October 27, 2019 in honor of Lynnelle Bilsey, Director of Music, for her 25 years of service.
God of abundance, we choose gratitude. We choose to accept life as a gift from you. We choose to be grateful for the earth from which our food comes; for the water that gives life; and for the air we all breathe.

We choose to see our families and friends with new eyes, appreciating them for who they are, and be thankful for our homes whether humble or grand. We will be grateful for our neighbors, no matter how they voted or how much we feel hurt by them. We choose to see the whole planet as our shared commons, the public stage of the future of humankind and creation.

God, we choose gratitude.

We will not let anything opposed to love take over this table. Instead, we choose to see grace, free and unmerited love, the giftedness of life everywhere, as the tender web of all creation. In this choosing, we will pass gratitude onto the world.

Amen.

(adapted from A Thanksgiving Prayer by Diana Butler Bass, 2016)
For food in a world where many walk in hunger,
faith in a world where many walk in fear,
friends in a world where many walk alone,
we give you thanks, O Lord.

Amen.

— From *Seven Days in Utopia*, directed by Matthew Dean Russell
When I sang with Sweet Adelines in Portland, OR, I was in a quartet called “Spare Parts.” After we rehearsed, we shared a meal and always began it by singing this grace in four-part harmony.

— Marge Boyd —
The Japanese have a tradition of saying *itadakimasu* before meals, meaning “I humbly receive.”

“For a minute, our stations are tuned to a broader, richer radius. We’re acknowledging that this food didn’t just magically appear: Someone grew it, ground it, bought it, baked it. Grace is also a moment of pause before the shoveling begins. We savor these moments out of time, when we are conscious of love’s presence. That is grace.”

—Anne Lamott
In my family we have always sung Johnny Appleseed with a California twist:

The Lord is good to me,
and so I thank the Lord
For giving me the things I need:
The sun and the rain and the redwood tree.

It means all the more to us now because the redwood trees, though practically limbless, survived the forest fire.

A great resurrection tree that reminds us there is always new life.

— Kibbie Ruth —
723  For the Fruit of All Creation

1 For the fruit of all creation, thanks be to God.
2 In the just reward of labor, God’s will is done.
3 For the harvests of the Spirit, thanks be to God.

For his gifts to every nation, thanks be to God.
In the help we give our neighbor, God’s will is done.
For the good we all inherit, thanks be to God.

For the plowing, sowing, reaping, silent growth while we are
In our world-wide task of caring for the hungry and needy,
For the wonders that astound us, for the truths that still conspire,
In the harvests we are sharing, God’s will is done.

Sleeping, future needs in earth’s keeping, thanks be to God.
Sparing, in the harvests we are sharing, God’s will is done.
Found us, most of all, that love has found us, thanks be to God.

WORDS: Fred Pratt Green (1903-2000), alt.
MUSIC: Welsh melody; harm. Luther C. Emerson (1820-1915)

Arr. Hyd Y Nos
8.6.8.8.6.4.

Words © 1990 Hope Publishing Company
Ever-present God,

I thank you for this meal I am about to receive.

Thanks for the soil, sunlight, and rain
in order to maintain the miraculous web of life,
which I am part.

I also give you thanks for my fellow creatures,
all the fruit trees, corn plants,
chicken, pork, salmon, cattle,
farmer, agricultural research,
truck driver, grocer, and cashier too.

In Jesus name I pray. Amen!

— Jorge Perry Bautista —
(To the tune of Row, Row, Your Boat)

Bless, bless, bless this food
Bless all present here
And help us now to spread your love
To people far and near!

alternative verse:

Eat, eat, eat your food
Eat your tasty meal!
The more you eat, the less you talk
The better you will feel!
I wrote this prayer for my family when the kids were very young. We still say it most nights before dinner.

Let us give thanks for this food. It is a gift of the whole universe. We are part of the web of life. May all beings everywhere be happy, peaceful, and free.
Blessings on the blossoms,
Blessings on the fruit
Blessings on the leaves and stems
Blessings on the root...
Blessings on the meal.
Here is one that I really like!

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God Bless to Us Our Bread
(Bendice, Señor, nuestro pan)

Spanish: Bendice, Señor, nuestro pan,
y da pan a los que tienen hambre,
and give bread to all those who are hungry, and hunger for justicia a los que tienen faim, donne faim de justice à ceux qui ont faim.

English: God bless to us our bread, and give bread to all those who are fed; God bless to us our bread.

French: Dieu, bénis notre pain; donne du pain à ceux qui ont

Sheryl Johnson

11
I thank Thee, O Thou whose bounty fills my cup
with every blessing meet.
I give Thee thanks for every drop—the bitter and the sweet.
I praise Thee for the desert road, And for the riverside;
for all Thy goodness hath bestowed, and all Thy grace denied.
I thank Thee for both smile and frown, and for the gain and loss;
I praise Thee for the future crown and for the present cross.
I thank Thee for both wings of love which stirred my worldly nest;
and for the stormy clouds which drove me, trembling, to Thy breast.
I bless Thee for the glad increase and for the waning joy;
and for this strange, this settled peace which nothing can destroy.

— Jane Crewdson
We kind of free-style saying grace at our house, but this one is pretty much in the spirit of most of ours:

To those who have hunger, dear God, give bread.

To those who have bread, give hunger for justice.

Please be in the sharing of our food, our conversation, and our hearts.

— Zoe Mullery —
Great God, the giver of all good

Great God, the giver of all good, accept our thanks and bless this food. Grace, health, and strength to us afford, through Jesus Christ, our risen Lord.

Music: Thomas Hastings, *Juvenile Songs*, 1841
Let us give thanks for this meal, saying, “We thank you, Living God.”

For this breath, for this heartbeat, for the gift of these companions,

We thank you, Living God

For this nourishment and flavor, for soil and sunlight, air and rainfall,

We thank you, Living God

For all to whom this food connects us, from field to farm and store to table,

We thank you, Living God

As we share this meal together, may our thirst for peace be strengthened and our hunger for justice deepened, until all are fed, and safe, and well.

We thank you, Living God.

Amen.

— Jorge Perry Bautista —
For the laughter of the children,
    for my own life breath,
    for the abundance of food on this table,

for the ones who prepared this sumptuous feast,
    for the roof over our heads,
    the clothes on our backs,

for our health,
    and our wealth of blessings,
    for this opportunity to celebrate with family and friends,

for the freedom to pray these words without fear,
    in any language,
    in any faith,

in this great country,
    whose landscape is as vast and beautiful as her inhabitants.
    Thank you, God, for giving us all these.

Amen.

— Rabbi Naomi Levy
One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, said to him, “There is a boy here who has five loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?” (John 6:8-9)

God of the barley loaf,
God of the boy,
God of the fish,
And God of the humble brother;
When we do not have enough,
may we use what we have
to do what we can.
Because a small boy did this,
and generosity listened.
Amen.
(from the Corrymeela Prayer book by Pádraig Ó Tuama)
And when he had said these things, he took bread, and giving thanks to God in the presence of all he broke it and began to eat.

Acts 27:35
A prayer our family uses is from the CCSM Nursery School (where Annette Daniels once taught and church children attended). It was in the space that Little Wonders uses now. Old timers might remember the original of this prayer assumed that God was male. The Nursery School taught little ones otherwise… back in the 1970’s!

God is great and God is good, and we thank God for our food.

— Kibbie Ruth —
Be Present at Our Table, Lord

Be present at our table, Lord; be here and everywhere.

where adored; thy creatures bless, and grant that we

may feast in paradise with thee.

For an alternate arrangement see 3, 924, 965

Lift Up Your Hearts 843
Words: John Conyngham, 1741, alt., P.D.
Music (GENEVAN 134/OLD HUNDREDTH 8.6.8.8x Louis Bourgeois, 1561, P.D.)
I often have the pleasure of meeting colleagues from a variety of religious backgrounds for dinner. Because we do not share a common faith, our tradition is to simply join hands and acknowledge each other's presence in gratitude for friendship, support, and community. We express our thanks for those who have made our meal possible and the privilege of being together.

— Marge Boyd —
God, whose farm is all creation

1 God, whose farm is all creation, take the gratitude we give;
2 Take our plowing, sowing, reaping, hopes and fears of sun and rain,
3 All our labor, all our watching, all our calendar of care

take the finest of our harvest, crops we grow that we may live,
all our thinking, planning, waiting, ripened in this fruit and grain,
in these crops of your creation, take, O God: they are our prayer.

Text: John Arlott, 1914-1991
Music: OMNI DIE, Gross Katholisich Gesangbuch, Nürnberg, 1631
Text © Trustees of the late John Arlott
Here's a sung grace I really like that can be sung as a round:

For Health and Strength

Round

For health and strength and daily food we praise thy name, O Lord.

Doctrine and Covenants 1:36:25

Words and music: Anon.

— Sheryl Johnson —
Beans Green and Yellow

by Mary Oliver

In fall
it is mushrooms
gathered in dampness
under the pines;
in spring
I have known the taste of the lamb
full of milk
and spring grass;
today
it is beans green and yellow
and lettuce and basil
from my friend’s garden -
how calmly,
as though it were an ordinary thing,
we eat the blessed earth.
I love this simple mealtime prayer, which is rooted in the Buddhist tradition.

We receive this food in gratitude to all beings who have helped to bring it to our table, and vow to respond in turn to those in need with wisdom and compassion.
God is great and God is good,
And we thank God for our food;
By God's hand, we must be fed,
Give us Lord, our daily bread.
Amen.
i thank You God for most this amazing
day: for the leaping greenly spirits of trees
and a blue true dream of sky; and for everything
which is natural which is infinite which is yes

(i who have died am alive again today,
and this is the sun's birthday; this is the birth
day of life and love and wings and of the gay
great happening illimitably earth)

how should tasting touching hearing seeing
breathing any-lifted from the no
of all nothing-human merely being
doubt unimaginable You?

(now the ears of my ears awake and
now the eyes of my eyes are opened)

* * *

e e cummings

— Zoe Mullery —
Before grasping this grain, let us consider in our minds the reasons why we should care for and safeguard this body.

This is my prayer, O God:
May I be forever devoted at your feet, offering body, mind, and wealth to the service of truth in the world.
This offering is from my favorite poet, John O’Donohue:

Grace Before Meals

As we begin this meal with grace,
Let us become aware of the memory
Carried inside the food before us:
   The quiver of the seed
   Awakening in the earth,
   Unfolding in a trust of roots
   And slender stems of growth,
   On its voyage toward harvest,
   The kiss of rain and surge of sun;
   The innocence of animal soul
   That never spoke a word,
   Nourished by the earth
   To become today our food;
   The work of all the strangers
   Whose hands prepared it,
   The privilege of wealth and health
   That enables us to feast and celebrate.

— Marge Boyd —
Here is a prayer for AFTER the meal...

WENDELL BERRY

PRAYER AFTER EATING

I have taken in the light
that quickened eye and leaf.
May my brain be bright with praise
of what I eat, in the brief blaze
of motion and of thought.
May I be worthy of my meat.
In the midst of uncertainty at what we now know was his last supper, Jesus shared a meal and at that meal, he paused to give thanks, and then, he gave himself over in love. May we, no matter what is going on around us, rise above our momentary circumstances and offer grace and gratitude, recognizing that we are not alone, and in the giving of thanks, commit our lives to love once again.

Amen.

— Penny Nixon —