

Serious or Not—Thanks

By Susan Vogt

Thanksgiving dinners are traditional, and so is saying grace before the meal. Liven up your table prayer at Thanksgiving with some forethought and these ideas for a more creative expression of thanks.

For

Adult, Couple

Season

Fall

Needed

Thanksgiving dinner, large basket



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Prepare in Advance

Ask each person coming to Thanksgiving dinner to bring one item that is a symbol or reminder of a blessing for which he or she is thankful. Offer the following categories to prompt your guests' creativity:

- **Person:** Photo or object that is a reminder of a person who has been a blessing.
- **Place:** Photo or memento of a vacation spot or a beloved corner of the home or yard.
- **Thing:** Some device or object that has made life easier.
- **Event:** Photo or memento of an event that brought joy this year.
- **Talent:** Something that symbolizes a talent that has been enjoyed.
- **Mistake or misfortune:** Something that symbolizes a mistake or misfortune that turned out to be a blessing.

If you choose to do the variation in Step 4 below, ask each guest to also bring a usable item of clothing (or new toy or nonperishable food) to give away.

Activity Plan

1. Before the meal is served, gather at the dining table and place the basket in the middle. The person serving as the prayer leader opens with the prayer below:

Generous God, source of all life, we give thanks today for all the people, places, and things that have enriched our lives this past year. We are grateful for the happy times and the times we've cried out of loss or pain, for both bond us to one another. We are thankful for successes and failures, for even the failures testify to our humanity. We are grateful for things that make our lives easier and lighten our heart. For all things, serious or not, we give thanks.

2. The prayer leader then invites each person, in turn, to show the object representing his or her thanks, explain what it means, and place it in the basket. Invite each guest to conclude by saying: *I thank God and all of you for being in my life this past year.*
3. After each person has offered his or her item and thanks, the prayer leader concludes by saying:

For all these things and more, we give you thanks, O God. Amen.

4. Variation: In the spirit of Thanksgiving, gather usable items of clothing (or toys or nonperishable food) to give to a serving organization in your community.

