Music of Thanksgiving

Timothy Short, carillon — Wednesday, November 25, 2026

The recital will be played at noon prior to the Midweek Prayer Service at 12:15 PM in the Elizabeth Chapel, and again at 6:35 PM before the 7 PM worship service in the sanctuary.

Variations on the hymntune *St. George's Windsor* (Come Ye Thankful People, Come) — Theophil Rusterholz (1907-2001)

Theophil Rusterholz was carillonneur for the House of Hope from 1941-1987

A Song of Peace — Jean Miller (1916-1964)

Composed in 1962 for the dedication of Whatley Chapel at Colorado Women's College.

Now Thank We All Our God — Timothy Short

Autumn from Almanac for Bells — Aaron David Miller

Aaron David Miller is the Organist and Director of Music for House of Hope. Almanac for Bells was composed in 2016 for the Student Guild of Carillonneurs at Yale University.

A setting of the American Shaker Hymn: *Simple Gifts* — Aaron Copland (1900-1990)

A prolific American composer, Copland created a setting of this hymn to include in the music for the American ballet, Appalachian Spring. The text *'tis a gift to be simple, 'tis a gift to be free* supported the ballet's theme of peace during wartime.

Capriccio on the hymntune: *Ash Grove* (Let All Things Now Living) — Aaron David Miller

This setting of this Welsh folktune was composed in honor of David Johnson, carillonneur emeritus, to celebrate his 30 years as carillonneur (1993-2023) to this faith community and its neighborhood.

Fantasia on the hymn: *We Gather Together* (Kremser) — Johann Franco (1908-1988)

Composed for the dedication of the carillon at Westminster Presbyterian Church, 1954 in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, on November 25.

A brief history of Thanksgiving Day

The origin of the Thanksgiving holiday is connected to stories of colonial America, particularly the landing of the pilgrims at Plymouth Rock and the three-day autumn harvest celebration with the Wampanoag tribe. However, it was the 1789 Thanksgiving Proclamation by George Washington which laid the groundwork for this holiday. President Lincoln declared a national Thanksgiving in October 1863 to be observed the final Thursday of November as a means to unite and heal a torn nation from the Civil War. President Franklin Roosevelt moved Thanksgiving one week earlier in 1939 to lengthen the Christmas shopping season during the Great Depression. Finally, to settle the confusion, Congress passed the law in 1941 officially designating the fourth Thursday of November as the federal Day of Thanksgiving.

- Long before European colonization, indigenous peoples across North America held autumn harvest and thank-you ceremonies.
- Early European settlers held services and meals in places like Florida (1565), Virginia (1607/1610), and Newfoundland (1578).
- The most famous early influence is the **1621 harvest feast** at Plymouth Colony, where English Pilgrims and the Wampanoag people shared a three-day celebration. [1, 2, 3, 4]

> While the origins of the thanksgiving holiday are often connected to stories of colonial America, George Washington's Thanksgiving Proclamation in 1789 laid the foundation for thanksgiving celebrations on the last Thursday of November.[1] While an annual thanksgiving holiday would not become a federal holiday until 1863 under a proclamation of Abraham Lincoln, Washington's ideas for such a holiday led to advocacy for it to become a federal holiday throughout the nineteenth century.

- Prompted by a 36-year advocacy campaign by writer Sarah Josepha Hale, President **Abraham Lincoln** declared a national Thanksgiving in October 1863.
- Lincoln hoped the holiday would help heal and unite a nation torn apart by the Civil War, setting it on the final Thursday of November.

- President Franklin D. Roosevelt moved the holiday up by one week in 1939 to lengthen the Christmas shopping season during the Great Depression—an event dubbed "Franksgiving" that split the country between two different celebration dates.
- To settle the confusion, Congress passed a law in 1941 officially designating the **fourth Thursday in November** as the federal Thanksgiving Day. [1, 2, 3]

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