Let us be thankful to those who planted the crops, cultivated the fields, and gathered the harvest; for the plants and animals who have given themselves so that we can enjoy this meal together;  and to those who prepared this meal, those who served it, and those who will clean up afterwards.

Let us remember those who have no festivity; those who are alone; those who cannot share this plenty; those who are hungry, sick, and cold; and those whose lives are more affected than our own by injustice, tyranny, war, oppression, and exploitation.

In sharing this meal, let us be thankful for the good things we have, for family and friends, for warm hospitality, and for good company.

We are so grateful for this food,

it restores our strength,

it heals our bodies,

it fuels our brains.

We are so grateful for this time,

to renew our spirit,

to share our trials,

to find new strength.

All that we have is a gift.

May we be thankful.

May we celebrate.

May we share.

For our friends,

for our families,

for our meal,

we are thankful.

For life,

for healing,

for joy,

we are thankful.

Thanks to the earth for the soil.

Thanks to the sky for the rains.

Thanks to the farmers for the harvest.

Let us pause: We meet together in an effort to build community, to advance education and understanding. We seek the patience of one another as we strive to learn and grow, and the stamina to make a difference in our state, nation and world. We express our thanks for the gifts of life and for the food we are about to eat.

Let us pause: We gather here today as colleagues and friends with attention to a common goal. That goal is the continued service to the citizens of our state through our programs and information. We understand our responsibilities as committed educators as well as learners — personally and professionally. It is obvious that we work and live in challenging times. We seek the patience of each other as we strive to learn and grow, and the stamina to make a difference in our state, nation and the world.

We express our thanks for an opportunity to gather together where we can reinforce our community principles of openness and engagement for all people, for the gifts of life and for the food that has been prepared for us.

Good afternoon, please center your hearts and minds on the following Albert Einstein quote: "Learn from yesterday. Live for today. Hope for tomorrow." Today may we live in the moment, taking joy in our opportunity to recommit ourselves to professionalism and to excellence. As we gather together as colleagues and friends with common beliefs about education and the importance of extension, we pledge that we will continue to make a difference in the lives of the people of our state, the nation and the world. We express our gratitude for the gifts of life, community and for the food that has been prepared for us. For all of these things and more, we are thankful. Enjoy your meal!

Let us pause. We gather here this afternoon as colleagues, partners and friends in celebration of our accomplishments in the past and in recognition of our fundamental belief that learning put to use, leads to a healthier life for the individual, family and community.

With this in mind we express our thanks for this opportunity to gather together, recognizing our diversity in beliefs and honoring our unity in gratitude. We seek direction from the mission of the university and those given the public trust, and from educators – so that we may use our knowledge, reason and skills to inspire others in making a difference in our communities, state, nation and world.

For the opportunities that have been nourished in the community of this institution, for the gift of life, for the food that has been prepared for us, we are thankful.

Please enjoy the fellowship and meal.

For a quiet moment, I invite you to express gratitude, for goals met, honors, and the gift of intellect, mentors, the support of family and friends, and a society that encourages and funds education.

Continuing, reflect with gratitude and ask for blessings, on the mission of the university and those given the public trust, the graduates, that they may use their knowledge, reason and skills to strive for peace, understanding and the common good.

Please end this reflection according to your own tradition.

As we gather, recognizing our diversity in beliefs, values, faith traditions, but honoring our unity in gratitude, I invite you to reflect quietly on all that is yet to be while expressing thanks for: the gift of intellect, goals met, the support of family and friends, mentors, and a society that encourages and funds education.

Continuing to reflect with gratitude, ask for blessing on the mission of this university and for those given the public trust. As we journey forth filled with knowledge and dreams let us continue to learn from our diversity, filled with compassion, to honor the peaceful, nurture the fragile, empower the impoverished, sensing wonder in the ordinary.

May the gratitude that we experience on this day of new beginnings be the focus for all that is to come.

Sisters and Brothers, we gather on this grand day, understanding that we come from different places, hold different values, and cherish different beliefs. Yet, today we are united in gratitude.

In a world where many cannot study, we are thankful for the achievements, degrees, and honors that we celebrate today.

In a world where many have no future, we are thankful for the dreams, hopes, and plans that have been nourished in the community of this institution.

In a world where many have no community, we are thankful for the support of mentors, teachers, family, and friends.

As we go on from this grand day, on different paths, to different experiences, and different destinies, may our gratitude unite us in the desire of using all that we are and all that we have for the common good so that reasons to be thankful will fill every life.

May our gratitude on this grand day grow into peace for each, and freedom to live, work, and serve throughout all our days.

We meet together in an effort to build community, to advance education and understanding. We seek the patience of one another as we strive to learn and grow and the stamina to make a difference in our state, nation, and world. We express our thanks for the gifts of life and for the food that we are about to partake of.

We gather here today as colleagues and friends with attention to a common goal. That goal is the continued service to the citizens of our state through our programs and information. We understand our responsibilities as committed educators as well as learners – personally and professionally. It is obvious that we work and live in challenging times. We seek the patience of each other as we strive to learn and grow, and the stamina to make a difference in our state, nation, and the world.

We express our thanks for an opportunity to gather together where we can reinforce our community principles of openness and engagement for all people, for the gifts of life and for the food that has been prepared for us. For all this, we are thankful.

“…Help us make the most of this life we are living. As we are about to partake of this bountiful meal, let us not forget the needy and the hunger they feel. Help us to show compassion in all that we do, and for all our many blessings we say thank you.”

Helen Latham

A Prayer for the World

Let the rain come and wash away the ancient grudges, the bitter hatreds held and nurtured over generations. Let the rain wash away the memory of the hurt, the neglect. Then let the sun come out and fill the sky with rainbows. Let the warmth of the sun heal us wherever we are broken. Let it burn away the fog so that we can see each other clearly so that we can see beyond labels, beyond accents, gender, or skin color. Let the warmth and brightness of the sun melt our selfishness so that we can share the joys and feel the sorrows of our neighbors. And let the light of the sun be so strong that we will see all people as our neighbors. Let the earth, nourished by rain, bring forth flowers to surround us with beauty. And let the mountains teach our hearts to reach upward.

Rabbi Harold S. Kushner (with slight modification)