

# TIA (Thanks in Advance)

Unitarian Universalist Church of Olinda

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As we've gotten more familiar with different technologies over the past few months, I'm also introducing some of the internet lingo that we sometimes come across while using online media. A lot of this techie language tends to use abbreviations – shorthand ways to express common and significant phrases. So, this year, I am peppering these condensed expressions in the titles of my sermons. Last month, I talked about *FWIW*, meaning *For What it's Worth*. Today, I want to talk about the expression *TIA*.

Now, the alphabet soup of medicine, and the alphabet soup of correspondence and internet-speak, can have overlapping abbreviations that mean different things. Some of you, or someone you know, may have already had experience with something called a TIA – a Transcient Ischemic Attack, sometimes known as “mini-strokes”, which would not have been a pleasant experience. Today, I'm talking about a different, and more affirming, kind of TIA – the note that means *thanks in advance*.

This is something you might tag on at the end of an e-mail or text message, to assure your correspondent that you are grateful for what they can offer – *even if it hasn't been done yet.*

This, is a pre-emptive form of gratitude, that is banking on the faith that, even when considering the fog of the future, someone *will* deliver... or do their best to make good on their intentions for your sake.

Now, it might sometimes seem like the default way of practicing gratitude is... retrospective – giving thanks for something that has been done for us, or that we have received, or that we've benefitted from – in the past.

Sometimes, the gratitude feels a bit more immediate, by acknowledging something that's there for us *now*. A common theme on this Thanksgiving holiday is the harvest time, naming the good fortune many of us have, to enjoy the yields of the earth and the wonder of nature. Sometimes we recognize the work and life of animals that may be involved in our nourishment. And we also recognize the work and dedication of all the people involved in producing these gifts and getting them to us – some of you are involved in doing this very work.

We do these acts of thanksgiving with good reason, to build reciprocity in community, to remember that which is there for us... even when we might sometimes forget, *and* to recognize the interdependent web of which we are part.

And the neat thing is that this interdependent web goes beyond space, as it also transcends time. Certainly, we look at the past, but sometimes, we can look at the sources of gratitude that we foresee in the future.

Over the past six months, there has been greater social consciousness about the value of the work performed by what we call essential workers – and this category is often quite expansive, reminding us that we rely on each other more than we might typically think. Most often,

foremost in our minds are medical and health professionals, care workers, labourers along the chain of supply, as well as school and childcare services... though this list will immediately seem terribly inadequate to *truly* reflect the interdependent web that allows for our society to function.

And as we think about the coming weeks and months, we think about the work that still needs to be done to move us beyond the current realities of the pandemic. One place where expectations are high is in the case of a vaccine. And even though we don't have one yet, we can be grateful now for the work that is *already* being carried out toward that goal. We can give thanks in advance, because even though we don't know when it will happen – and at times we might even be uncertain *if* it will happen – we still have faith that the people involved will deliver all they have to give toward that target.

And that's what giving thanks in advance is about, my friends. It's an expression of faith in others, in their intentions toward us, and in their abilities. It's an expression of hope, that we may look forward to yet another opportunity to be grateful. It's an expression of love, for those who share this reciprocal, interrelated web with us. It is as transcendent virtuous cycle that goes beyond space and time.

My friends, as we approach the “bookend” anniversaries of the Church of Olinda, recognizing 140 years since the founding of our church, in November, and 140 years since the construction of our church building, in September, we are doing all these kinds of acts of thanksgiving, my friends.

We are paying homage to the past, to the founders of the church, and the people who helped to build its community and its physical home. We are giving regard, in gratitude, for the community we have now, eager to celebrate together what is there for us to share, and for the new and various ways that we can *be* church together, even while apart. *And* we

also express hope for the future of our church, seeing a vision of what it can be, and how we might do it.

My friends, we are giving thanks in advance for the work we do now, that we may enjoy the yields in days, weeks, months, and years to come; and that we may be gratified that others may also benefit from this, sometimes in unexpected ways.

And for this we may be grateful, in anticipation.

So may it be,  
In Gratitude and Solidarity,  
Amen

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### **Opening Hymn #67 We Sing Now Together**

~)-| Words: Edwin T. Buehrer, 1894-1969, alt © UUA

Music: Adrian Valerius's *Netherlandtsch Gedenckclanck*, 1626,

arr. by Edward Kremser, 1838-1914

KREMSER

### **Meditation Hymn #68 Come, Ye Thankful People – Karen Miller**

Words: Henry Alford. 1810-1871

Music: George Job Elvey, 1816-1893

ST. GEORGE'S WINDSOR 7.7.7.7.D.

### **Hymn #277 When We Wend Homeward**

Words: Psalm 126

Music: American folk melody, arr. by Annabel Morris Buchanan, 1889-1983, © 1938, renewed 1966 J.

Fischer & Bros. Co., harmony by Charles H. Webb, 1933- , © 1989 J. Fischer & Bros. Co.

LAND OF REST

### **Closing Hymn #1010 We Give Thanks**

~)-| Words & Music: Wendy Luella Perkins, 1966- © 2004 Wendy Luella Perkins

arr. Susan Peck, 1960-