

THANKSGIVING

Giving Thanks

In 1621, Governor Bradford proclaimed the first Thanksgiving observance in the New World. The grand celebration was the Plymouth Colony Fall Harvest. After struggling for a year in their new land, many Pilgrims had become sick and died. Yet, this was no occasion for sadness or regrets. Rather, rejoicing and thanksgiving were in the hearts of these determined people as they faced another long, hard winter.

It wasn't until 1789, however, that George Washington called for a national day of Thanksgiving. Since 1941, the fourth Thursday in November has been our official Thanksgiving Day by resolution of Congress.

The custom of Thanksgiving is rooted in ancient history. In the Old Testament, Moses called for seven days of thanksgiving. This biblical observance was known as the Feast of Tabernacles where all the people rejoiced in the goodness of God.

Themes

Schedule your Thanksgiving meeting for the club night immediately before the holiday. The previous week, send a flier home with clubbers to announce the Thanksgiving theme and to detail special instructions.

Pilgrims' Party

Boys and girls dress as Indians and early settlers. Costumes may be made with paper, old clothes, etc. Award team points for each boy and girl dressed in Thanksgiving style. Build the meeting around the Christian faith of our country's forefathers.

A Bakesgiving

In advance, leaders and/or mothers make sugar cookie dough. At club, boys and girls decorate and bake cookies; enough to eat and take a few home. Package others for giving away to shut-ins or the elderly from your church.

Turkey Gobble

Decorate with pumpkins, cornstalks, turkey cutouts, and brown and gold streamers. During Game Time, play some of the following games.

Steal the corn - Play "Steal the Bacon" with an ear of corn instead of a center beanbag.

Beanbag relay –Use sweet potatoes instead of beanbags.

Four-way tug –Use an ear of corn at each hash mark instead of beanbags.

Sprint relay –Use ears of corn instead of batons.

Turkey gobble –Two players per team stand at their team pins. One member of each pair is securely blindfolded. When the whistle blows, the “sighted” player walks ahead of the blindfolded partner calling out, “Gobble, gobble, gobble.” The blindfolded player must follow the sound of the partner’s voice. The blindfolded player completes a lap and crosses the team line. The “sighted” player races into the center for the pin or beanbag.

Wild turkey –All clubbers are given a pencil and a sheet of typing paper. They are instructed to write their names on one side of the paper and turn the paper over to the blank side. The game director turns all the lights off and gives the clubbers 60 seconds to draw a turkey. When ‘lime’ is called, clubbers put their pencils down. The best drawing of a turkey wins a prize.

Turkey spell –Tape a large piece of paper on the floor in front of each team. When the whistle blows, the first player from each team runs to the paper, picks up a felt-tipped marker and writes the letter “T.” He or she then races back to the team and hands the marker to the second team member. The second player writes the letter “U” after the “T.” Play continues until the sixth clubber completes the word “TURKEY” by writing the “Y.” The last player then runs around the team pin and into the center for the pin or beanbag. (If teams are large, use the word “THANKSGIVING.”)

Turkey chase –Clubbers sit on the floor in a circle. A child designated as the “turkey” stands outside the circle of “farmers.” When the whistle blows, the turkey walks around the outside of the circle and tags a farmer on the back. The farmer runs after the turkey and attempts to tag it before the turkey runs around the circle and sits down in the farmer’s place. If the farmer catches the turkey, the farmer becomes the new turkey. The former turkey then takes the vacant place in the circle and becomes a farmer. If and when a turkey reaches the farmer’s place without being tagged, this turkey is given another turn. After two successful turns, the turkey selects someone else to take its place.

In Council Time, encourage clubbers to express their thanks to God by sharing testimonies. They might begin with, (“I’m thankful to God for (because) or “God’s Word says (clubber quotes a verse)”); or “I’m thankful to God that –Younger clubbers may respond in a single sentence, i.e., “I’m thankful to God for our Awana club.”

Draw a large turkey with separate, individual tail feathers. Back the turkey and tail feathers with flannel and place them on a flannel graph board. During the first part of Council Time, ask questions from the clubber handbooks. When a clubber gives a correct answer, he or she is allowed to pluck one feather off the turkey. Five team points are earned for each feather collected during the quiz.

As a surprise, tape cards which read “Be Ye Thankful” under five chairs. Just before team prizes are awarded, announce that five boys or girls will be thankful they sat in the right seats! Clubbers sitting on “surprise seats” are awarded an extra candy bar or prize.

Several weeks in advance, begin planning with clubbers a skit about the Pilgrims' first Thanksgiving. Include Bible verses on thankfulness and present the skit to your entire Awana club.

Ask each team to think of a Bible story which could be worked into a skit illustrating a thankful attitude. Leaders can be prepared with ideas ahead of time. Take a few minutes to work up the skits, then present them to the club.

With a leader's assistance, each team uses a Bible concordance to find things for which we should be thankful. Conclude group study with the reminder that 1 Thessalonians 5:18 says to thank God in all circumstances. Discuss with boys and girls times when we find it hard to say "thank you."

We usually think of the Pilgrims and their first Thanksgiving. Long before that, however, Noah built his ark. He and his family were completely dependent on God during the 40 days and 40 nights of rain, but the day finally came when Noah, his family and the animals could come out of the ark. Gratefully, Noah built an altar on the mountainside to thank God for keeping them safe. Even when storms and problems come, we can still thank God. Remember, He promises that *all things work together for good to them that love God* (Romans 8:28).

Assign each team to a different corner of the room where each is given a large piece of paper. On the left-hand side of the paper, the word "THANKS" is written vertically one letter at a time. Beginning with each letter in the word "THANKS," clubbers together list things for which they are thankful. When this activity is completed, team leaders ask clubbers to thank God in sentence prayers for these and other things. Encourage -don't embarrass or force -each clubber to take part.

Thanksgiving Time Activities

Teach clubbers to share from their abundance this Thanksgiving season. Encourage them to bring cans of food for a needy family in town. Or plan a food shower for your Awana missionaries. Provide gift items for a local children's home or make tray favors for a hospital. Because many groups visit retirement homes and hospitals during the Christmas season, consider beating the rush with a Thanksgiving program.

Many clubbers with unsaved parents won't be given an opportunity to consider God on Thanksgiving Day. An early Thanksgiving morning hike allows you to share with them the beauty and wonder of God's creation and thank God for His goodness. Meet at church early (7:30-8:00 a.m.) and board the bus or cars for a preplanned destination. Selected leaders can go ahead to lay out a treasure hunt or nature hike which clubbers will follow upon their arrival. After the hunt, play one or two active group games while breakfast is prepared over a fire. The menu may be as simple as hot chocolate and donuts, or may include bacon, eggs, toast and hash browns. While your group eats, ask boys and girls to look around and name things God has

created. Close with a short Thanksgiving story or devotional presented by one of the leaders. Get the kids back in time to enjoy Thanksgiving with their families.

The First Thanksgiving

Duplicate and distribute the following handout to clubbers the week before your Thanksgiving theme night. Instruct boys and girls to take the handout home, read it and complete the puzzles. Award team points the next week for those who return their work finished.

The First Thanksgiving

The December sky was gray, the air cold and the sea rough. A small ship named the "Mayflower" bobbed up and down in the Atlantic Ocean. For eight weeks, more than 100 passengers had sailed together on this small ship. Most of the people were Pilgrims. They had left England, across the ocean, so they might have their own church where they could freely pray to God. In England, they weren't allowed to worship as they wished.

The trip across the ocean was a long one, and the Pilgrims were eager to see land. They were tired, cold and hungry. Each day, sailors looked for the shoreline. But many days went by when all they could see was ocean and more ocean. Then one afternoon the shout went up, "Land ahead! Land ahead!" Even though the day was cold and gray, the Pilgrims felt warm with happiness. They saw land! Soon they could start their new life in America.

As the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth, Massachusetts, on December 26, 1620, they bowed their heads in prayer. They thanked God for bringing them safely to this new land.

They experienced many difficulties during their first year in this new country. Because most of their houses were very poorly built, they couldn't keep out the cold and snow. Many Pilgrims became sick and died. But a small group continued to help one another and work hard.

The men cut down big trees in the forest to build warm, sturdy homes. They made new farming tools to use after the snow melted. The women sewed warm clothes and helped in any way they could as a new church was constructed.

The long, cold winter finally ended. Spring arrived, and the Pilgrims made friends with Chief Massasoit and his tribe. These Indians were very kind to the Pilgrims. They gave the new settlers corn, showing them how to plant it and make it grow big and tall. The friendly Indians also helped them plant wheat and barley.

The Pilgrims planted small gardens of peas and beans. They shot turkeys, deer, ducks and geese for meat. All summer long they worked hard in the fields. God sent sunshine and rain. The corn, wheat and barley grew. When fall came, the harvest was plentiful. God rewarded the Pilgrims for their hard work, and they had enough food to store for the upcoming winter.

The governor of Plymouth Colony, William Bradford, called the people together and made a speech. He reminded everyone how much God had blessed them. "We must set aside a special time," he told the

people, “to thank God together for this harvest. We will invite our new Indian friends to the celebration.”

As the day of Thanksgiving grew closer, everyone began preparing for the feast. The men shot ducks, geese and turkeys, and the Indians brought a present of deer. Pilgrim women cooked the meat and other garden-grown vegetables.

Together the people thanked God for the food, good friends, new homes and loving families. They also expressed gratitude for the peace they enjoyed and for their own church. God had been so good to them!

Three whole days were spent eating, talking, sharing, playing games, singing and giving thanks to God. This was the first Thanksgiving in the new world!

Thanksgiving Scramble

The lines of letters in “Thanksgiving Scramble” look mixed up at first. But if you look carefully, you will discover a question and answer about Thanksgiving.

To find the question, start with the second letter and print every other letter in the space below. Then divide the letters into words.

To find the answer, start with the first letter and print every other letter in the space below. Then divide the letters into words.

T W H H E A B I I D B O L E E S S T A H
Y E S B I I M B U L S E T S B A E Y T I
H S A H N O K U F L U D L B F E Q T R H
E A V N E K R F Y U T L H F I O N R G

Thanksgiving List

We can learn a great lesson in thankfulness from the Pilgrims. We should thank God for many things –our homes, food, clothes, school, the Bible, our families and much, much more! Above all, we should thank God for His Son, Jesus Christ, who died on the cross for our sins and rose again from the dead. Today, He’s in heaven making a place ready for everyone who has trusted in Him.

List below some of the many things God has given you for which you are thankful.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

