

## Corporate Doesn't Do Thanksgiving

A reflection by Rev. Jackie Clement  
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In the past few weeks I have been fixated on finding earrings appropriate to the coming holiday. Some might even say I've been obsessed with the need to obtain festive turkey-shaped jewelry. Obsessed to the point that my single minded fixation has worn off on other people, and at one time there were no fewer than five of us out hunting turkeys. Well, two of our number went into this one store, and, finding many holidays represented with dangling fir trees and articulated skeletons, asked the sales clerk if there mightn't be an articulated or dangling turkey somewhere about. The sales clerk went off to check and returned with this message, "Corporate doesn't do Thanksgiving."

That sort of says it all, doesn't it? Corporate doesn't do Thanksgiving. Now the sales clerk simply meant that Thanksgiving wasn't one of the holidays they designed jewelry for, and I'm sure the Pilgrims would actually applaud that stance, but just one of the many reasons I left a 20-year high tech career for the ministry was because corporate didn't do Thanksgiving. Yes, we got the day off and once I even got a turkey, but on a regular daily basis things like thanksgiving weren't welcome in the office.

What we do here at church with a fair amount of frequency is talk about and *practice* how we put our faith into action in our lives and in the world. And then, for many of us, we go to work and are asked to check it at the door. And back we go to trying to figure out how to live out our faith once again.

I'd like to share just one example of someone living out their principles and their sense of thanksgiving. My friend John is retired, and thus does not simply throw cash around randomly. Also, you should know that we call him "Fact Man," which should reveal something of his meticulous relationship with the truth. So when the oil bill came and said that he had a credit (he didn't owe them, but they owed him, mind you) ... that he had a credit of \$3,500 John was somewhat taken aback. So born and bred Unitarian of some seventy years he calls the oil company and tells them there's been an error. They check their figures and say, "No error. It's correct." Many would leave it be at this point, but Fact Man pulls out all his oil bills for the year and totes things up and calls them back and says, "Nope. Not right."

Well, the owner of the company calls and admits as how there was no way they ever could have uncovered the error, and thank you for your honesty and we would like to treat you to a dinner out for saving us a not inconsiderable sum. Pizza from the place across the street is John's idea of dinner out, so the oil company owner asks if John has a favorite charity he would like to donate to. Hmm, just so happens that John's daughter is minister of the UU church in Chelmsford. So the Chelmsford church gets a whopping great check from a grateful oil company who gets a charitable donation tax write-off and lots of good will in the community, plus their \$3,500 dollars back, and John gets the

satisfaction of knowing he lived according to his principles and everyone benefitted from it. We're thinking of changing his name to "Saint Fact Man."

It's not always clear in the world what the right thing is or whether anyone will benefit from how we choose to live out our values. But there are people who can stand as examples and there is Thanksgiving. Thanksgiving is one of the great festivals ready-made, just handed to us that allows us to live out our principles without much undue stress as to how that is done. You gather, you give thanks, you try once again to muster all your forces of love and tolerance for that one person who just does their darndest to wreck the occasion, you offer hospitality and bounty to those are short on hospitality or bounty. Perhaps not simple to accomplish but at least pretty easy to comprehend. I think corporate ought to get a little more into the spirit of Thanksgiving.

May your Thanksgiving be blessed with bounty and love and cranberry sauce without the can rings. May it be blessed with those you hold dear and those you do not know. May you know that this a community where people will join you on your search, even for something as silly as turkey earrings.

Blessed be.

Namaste.