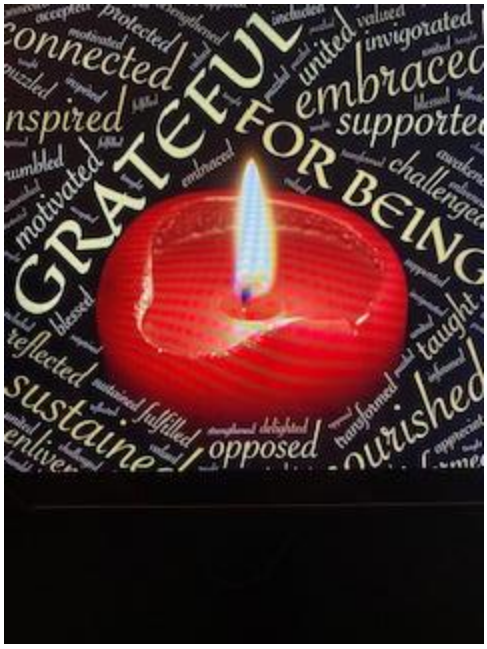

11/20/20

Dwight's Aunt Eunice, a staunch New Englander and proud Mayflower descendant, brought her PITCHPIPE to every Thanksgiving celebration! Before we sat to eat, WITH GREAT CEREMONY she would solemnly blow the correct note and we would all break into song — "We gather together to ask the Lord's blessing....."
I always wondered who the "wicked" might be (as I sang the line "the wicked oppressing now cease from distressing") until my research revealed that the text had originally been written in 1597 in thanksgiving for a Netherlands victory over the Spanish after years of occupation and oppression. Under their rule, the "gathering together" of Dutch Protestants was forbidden, hence the joyful first line of the hymn. (our daughter Lucinda, who lives in the Netherlands, says that a national holiday still celebrates this victory every year!)

300 plus years later, in 1904, Julia Cory was asked by a NYC organist to write a hymn of thanksgiving. Using that SAME tune, she wrote new words, removing references to war, and "We praise You O God, our Redeemer, Creator" was born. The two hymns are often seen side by side in the "thanksgiving" section of a hymnal.

Click this link to sing these powerful words, so appropriately for our own troubled times. May we all give thanks for God's "strong arm" guiding all of us!!