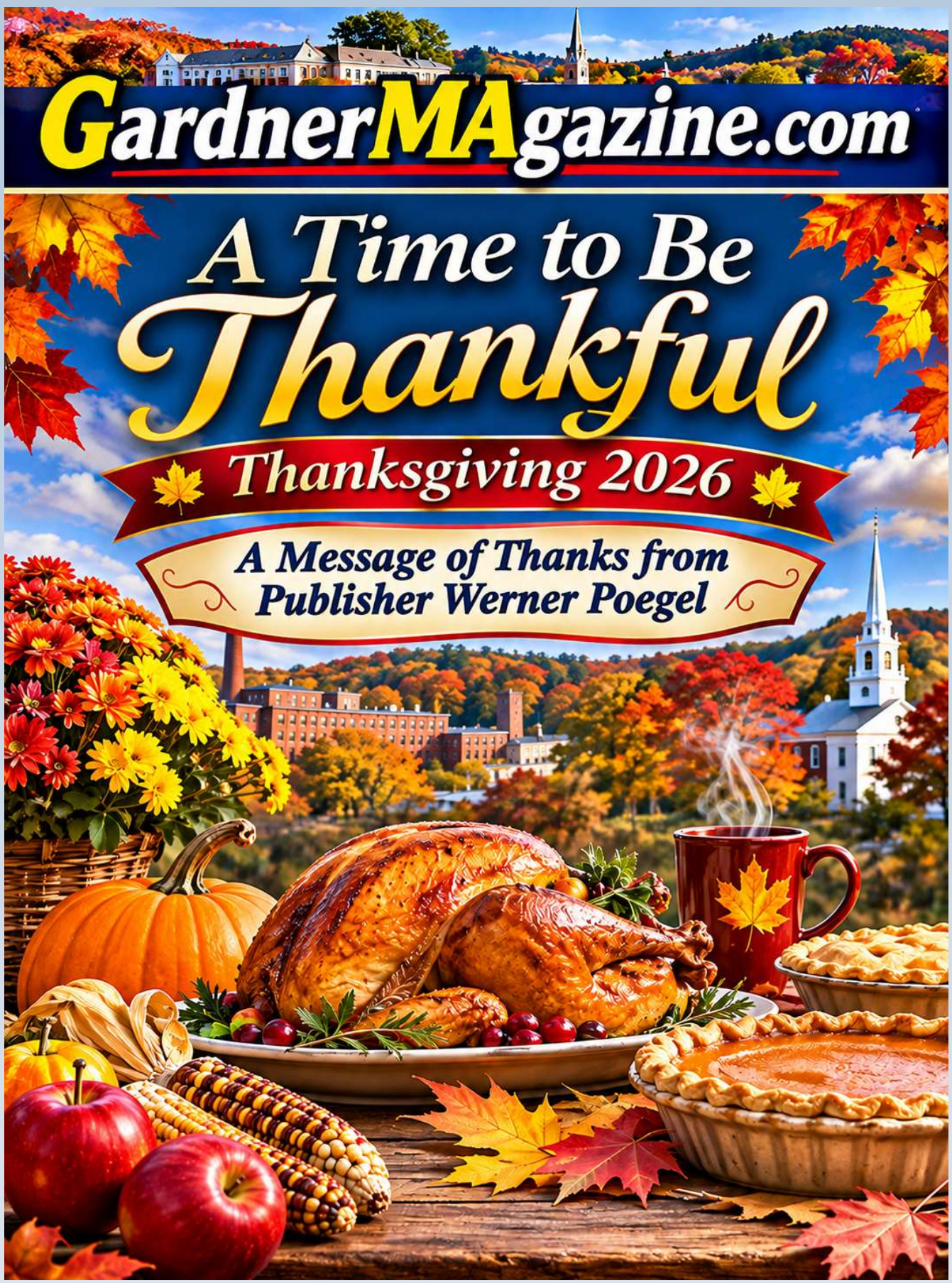

GardnerMAgazine.com
A Time to Be Thankful
Thanksgiving 2026
A Message of Thanks from Publisher Werner Poegel

A Time to Be Thankful — Thanksgiving 2026

This is Werner Poegel of GardnerMagazine.com .

As we approach Thanksgiving 2026, I want to spend a few minutes talking about something that is sometimes overlooked in the rush of our everyday lives.

Something that doesn't cost a penny.

Something that doesn't require a government program, a committee meeting, a special appropriation, or an act of Congress.

And yet, it may be one of the most valuable things we possess.

The ability to be thankful.

Thanksgiving is a uniquely American holiday, but gratitude itself is universal.

And here in Greater Gardner, Massachusetts, we have an extraordinary number of reasons to be thankful.

Not because everything is perfect. It isn't.

Not because every family has everything it needs. Sadly, some do not.

Not because we agree on every issue facing our city, our state, or our country. We certainly don't.

But because, even with all our challenges, we are surrounded by people, institutions, traditions, opportunities, and everyday blessings that make this community a special place to call home.

And perhaps Thanksgiving is the perfect opportunity to recognize them.





Let’s be Thankful for Our Families and Friends

Let's begin where Thanksgiving traditionally begins.

At home.

Around the kitchen table.

Around the dining room table.

Or perhaps around a much smaller table where someone is sharing a holiday meal with just one other person.

We can be thankful for our parents, grandparents, children, grandchildren, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, cousins, and extended families.

For the people who raised us, encouraged us, corrected us when we needed correcting, and celebrated our accomplishments.

We can be thankful for lifelong friends.

For neighbors who have become friends.

For the person who calls just to see how we're doing.

For the friend who shows up when something goes wrong, even when we haven't asked for help.

And let's not forget our four-legged family members.

The dogs and cats who greet us at the door, keep us company, make us laugh, and somehow know when we're having a difficult day.

Sometimes the simplest blessings are the most meaningful.

A familiar voice.

A warm embrace.

A shared laugh. A dog resting beside our chair. Or simply knowing that someone cares.



Let’s be Thankful for the People Who Protect Us

Here in Gardner, we have good reason to be thankful for the people who answer the call when others need help. Our Gardner Police Department. Our Gardner Fire Department. Our emergency medical personnel. Our dispatchers.

And the firefighters, police officers, and emergency responders serving the surrounding communities of North Central Massachusetts.

These are people whose work doesn't stop because it's Thanksgiving.

While many of us are sitting down to turkey and all the fixings, someone is answering an emergency call.

Someone is responding to a fire.

Someone is helping a person having a medical emergency.

Someone is making sure our streets and neighborhoods remain safe.

And somewhere, a family may be celebrating Thanksgiving without a loved one at the table because that person is on duty protecting the rest of us.

We should never take that sacrifice for granted.

And we should remember the veterans of Gardner and the surrounding communities.

The men and women who served in the United States Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, and Space Force.

Some served during wartime. Some during peacetime. Some returned home carrying wounds that cannot be seen. And some never returned at all.

Our freedom to gather, to worship, to speak our minds, to disagree with our government, and to celebrate Thanksgiving in peace is a freedom worth appreciating.

To every veteran, every active-duty service member, and every military family:

Thank you.



Let’s be Thankful for Our Teachers and Schools

We should be thankful for the people who educate our children.

The teachers at Gardner's elementary schools, Gardner Middle School, and Gardner High School.

The educators at Montachusett Regional Vocational Technical School and throughout our neighboring communities.

The administrators, counselors, classroom aides, school nurses, custodians, cafeteria workers, bus drivers, coaches, and volunteers.

Think about what these people do.

They help children learn to read.

They introduce young people to mathematics, science, history, literature, music, art, and technology.

They teach teamwork, responsibility, perseverance, and the importance of treating others with respect.

Sometimes a teacher changes the direction of a child's entire life with a few encouraging words.

Sometimes a coach helps a young person discover confidence they never knew they possessed.

Sometimes a school employee notices that a child is struggling and provides the kindness that makes all the difference.

And let's be thankful for the students themselves.

For their energy, their curiosity, their creativity, and the promise they represent for Gardner's future.



Let’s be Thankful for Those Who Care for Our Health

We have much to appreciate in our healthcare community.

The doctors, nurses, technicians, therapists, aides, and support personnel at Heywood Hospital and other healthcare facilities serving Greater Gardner.

The people working in medical offices, rehabilitation centers, nursing homes, assisted-living facilities, and home healthcare.

The pharmacists who help us understand our medications.

The caregivers who help elderly residents remain comfortable and safe.

And the family members who quietly care for loved ones at home, often without recognition or compensation.

Healthcare is more than medical equipment, buildings, and technology.

It is people caring for people.

And when someone we love becomes ill, we quickly realize how important those people are.

We should also be thankful for the gift of our own health, whatever its current condition may be.

For the ability to get out of bed.

To take a walk.

To enjoy a meal.

To see another sunrise.

And for the opportunity to make tomorrow a little better than today.



Let’s be Thankful for Gardner's Volunteers and Community Organizations

One of Gardner's greatest strengths is something that doesn't always appear in a city budget.

The generosity of its people.

Think about the Gardner Community Action Committee.

The Montachusett Veterans Outreach Center.

Our local food pantries, churches, charitable organizations, civic groups, and volunteers.

Think about the people who organize food drives, collect clothing, distribute holiday meals, raise money for families in need, and help neighbors facing difficult circumstances.

Just recently, members of the Gardner City Council joined together for a food drive benefiting the Gardner Community Action Committee and the Montachusett Veterans Outreach Center.

That's the kind of community spirit we should celebrate.

People giving their time.

People donating groceries.

People helping other people.

And let's recognize those who volunteer at the Gardner Museum, support our libraries, organize community events, coach youth sports, maintain local traditions, and serve on boards and committees.

Many of these individuals receive no paycheck for their efforts.

They simply believe that Gardner is worth the investment of their time.

And because of them, Gardner is a better place.



Let’s be Thankful for the People Who Keep Our City Running

We should also recognize the people whose contributions are often invisible until something goes wrong.

The public works employees who repair our streets, maintain our infrastructure, and clear snow during New England storms.

The people who provide clean drinking water.

The employees who maintain our sewer systems.

The sanitation workers who remove our trash.

The utility crews who restore electricity during outages.

The postal workers and delivery drivers who bring packages and letters to our homes.

The grocery store employees who stock the shelves.

The farmers, truck drivers, warehouse workers, and food producers who make our Thanksgiving dinners possible.

And let's not forget the people who work on Thanksgiving itself.

Restaurant workers. Convenience store employees. Gas station attendants.

Hospital workers.

Emergency personnel.

And everyone else whose job requires them to be away from their own holiday celebrations.

Our everyday comfort depends on an enormous network of people doing their jobs.

And Thanksgiving is an excellent time to appreciate them.



Let’s be Thankful for Gardner's Unique Character

Now let's talk about something especially close to home.

Gardner, Massachusetts.

The Chair City.

A community with a remarkable industrial heritage.

A city built in large part by generations of hardworking people who transformed Gardner into a nationally recognized center of furniture manufacturing.

We can be thankful for the workers, entrepreneurs, craftspeople, and immigrant families who helped build that legacy.

For the factories that once provided employment to thousands.

For the furniture-making skills that became part of Gardner's identity.

For the families whose roots in this city go back generations.

And for the newcomers who continue to add to our community's character.

We can be thankful for Gardner's historic buildings and neighborhoods.

For the Gardner Museum, which helps preserve our history.

For the Levi Heywood Memorial Library, which provides knowledge, opportunity, and a welcoming place for residents of all ages.

For the beauty of Dunn State Park.

For the recreational opportunities at Mount Wachusett Community College and throughout the region.

For our parks, playgrounds, athletic fields, and walking trails.

For the changing seasons that make New England so distinctive.

The brilliant colors of autumn.

The peaceful beauty of freshly fallen snow.

The first flowers of spring.

And those warm summer evenings when families gather outdoors.

We can be thankful for Gardner's small businesses.

The family-owned restaurants.

The neighborhood shops.

The local service providers.

The people who take the risk of opening a business, employing local residents, and contributing to the city's economy.

We can be thankful for the entrepreneurs who see opportunity in Gardner's future.

And we can be thankful for our neighboring communities, from Ashburnham and Winchendon to Templeton, Westminster, Hubbardston, and the many other towns that make North Central Massachusetts such a wonderful region.

Each has its own history.

Each has its own traditions.

And together, they form a region with a strong sense of identity.





We can be Thankful for the Right to Disagree

There is another blessing we sometimes overlook.

The freedom to disagree.

Here in Gardner, we have spirited discussions about budgets, taxes, schools, development, public safety, and the future of our city.

Sometimes those discussions become heated.

Sometimes we become frustrated with our elected officials.

And sometimes our elected officials become frustrated with us.

But think about what that means.

We live in a country where citizens can attend public meetings, ask questions, challenge decisions, run for office, publish opinions, and vote for change.

That's a remarkable privilege.

We should be thankful for those willing to serve in local government, whether or not we agree with every decision they make.

And we should be equally thankful for the residents who pay attention, ask difficult questions, and hold government accountable.

A healthy community needs both.

Thanksgiving reminds us that we can disagree about public policy without forgetting our shared humanity.

The person on the other side of a political argument may also be the neighbor who helps shovel our driveway.

The volunteer who donates to a food pantry.

Or the parent cheering beside us at a school sporting event.

We have far more in common than our disagreements sometimes suggest.



We can be Thankful for the Things Money Cannot Buy

As we approach Thanksgiving, perhaps we should spend a little less time thinking about what we don't have.

And a little more time appreciating what we do.

A roof over our heads.

Heat on a cold November night.

Food in the refrigerator.

Clean water.

A comfortable bed.

A reliable friend.

A good memory.

A beautiful sunset.

The ability to laugh.

The chance to learn something new.

The opportunity to help another person.

These are blessings that can become almost invisible because they are so familiar.

And yet, for someone facing homelessness, hunger, loneliness, illness, or financial hardship, these everyday comforts may represent something extraordinary.

That should inspire not only gratitude, but generosity.

If we have more than we need, perhaps we can share a little.

If we know someone who is lonely, perhaps we can make a telephone call.

If a neighbor needs help, perhaps we can lend a hand.

And if someone has made a difference in our lives, perhaps we can simply tell them.

Two words can carry enormous meaning.

Thank you.



And we can Remember Those Who Are Missing

Of course, Thanksgiving is not an easy holiday for everyone.

Some families will have an empty chair at the table this year.

A parent who has passed away.

A spouse who is no longer there.

A brother, sister, child, or dear friend whose absence is especially painful during the holidays.

Others may be separated from loved ones by distance, illness, military service, or circumstances beyond their control.

And some people will spend Thanksgiving alone.

For them, gratitude may be mixed with sadness.

We should remember those people.

We should make room for them in our thoughts and, whenever possible, in our celebrations.

And we should be thankful for the memories of those who are no longer with us.

The stories they told.

The lessons they taught.

The traditions they established.

The love they shared.

Because gratitude isn't only about appreciating what we have today.

It's also about honoring what others have given us throughout our lives.

This is A Thanksgiving Message to Greater Gardner

As we prepare for Thanksgiving on Thursday, November 26th, I'd like to suggest something simple.

Take a few moments to look around.

Look at the people in your life.

Think about the community in which we live.

Remember the people who helped you get where you are today.

The teacher who believed in you.

The parent who sacrificed for you.

The friend who stood beside you.

The stranger who showed you kindness.

The healthcare worker who helped you recover.

The veteran who served our country.

The volunteer who helped a neighbor.

The employee who quietly made your day a little easier.

And perhaps, most importantly, think about how you might become one of those people for someone else.

Because gratitude is most powerful when it becomes action.

When being thankful inspires us to be kinder.

More patient.

More generous.

More understanding.

And more willing to help.

Gardner has been through difficult times before.

Our city has seen industries rise and fall.

Economic challenges.

Political disagreements.

Changes that have tested our resilience.

And yet, generation after generation, the people of Gardner have continued to work, build, volunteer, raise families, and believe in this community.

That's something worth celebrating.

We don't have to pretend Gardner is perfect to be thankful for it.

We simply have to recognize that this is our community.

Our neighbors.

Our history.

And our future.

And that future will be shaped, in large part, by how we treat one another.

So, this Thanksgiving, whether you're enjoying a large family gathering, sharing a quiet meal with someone special, working a holiday shift, or spending the day remembering someone you love, I hope you'll find something to be thankful for.

And I hope you'll find an opportunity to make someone else thankful that you're part of their life.

From Gardner, Massachusetts, the Chair City, to every community across North Central Massachusetts,

May your Thanksgiving be filled with gratitude, kindness, peace, and the company of people who matter to you.

And may we never forget that one of the greatest blessings we have is the opportunity to make life better for one another.

Happy Thanksgiving, everyone.

Werner Poegel, Publisher GardnerMagazine.com

