

**Maundy Thursday
Agape Meal & Handwashing
Spirit of Life Lutheran Church
Vancouver, B.C.**



Maundy Thursday Agape Meal – Spirit of Life Lutheran Church, Vancouver BC

When Jesus shared Passover with his disciples, it was in the home tradition and setting of the Passover meal. The washing of feet, the sharing of bread and wine, and the new commandment to love one another all happened in a home, in a room where Jesus drew his friends together as host, teacher, friend, and master who was there to serve them all. Maundy Thursday may be considered, at its heart, a homely affair. Tonight, we will gather at the table in our church home to receive and extend the hospitality of Jesus.

This service weaves together parts of the Maundy Thursday liturgy within the frame of an Agape Meal. It includes the blessing of bread and wine; washing of feet, and the “stripping of the altar”.

To prepare your home for the service, please do the following –

1. **Prepare a simple meatless meal** to share in your home. A Mediterranean style meal is often chosen for Agape Meals, but any foods are fine as long as they are simple. Include a loaf of bread and container of wine, according to what is in keeping with your dietary requirements.
2. **Set your space for your meal.**
3. **Set up what you need to wash each other’s feet or hands.** A wash basin, a pitcher with warm water, and a few towels are sufficient. If you wish to use a bit of soap, feel free. Set a washing space in the space, just a bit away from the table. Have what you need for good washing and drying of hands at a nearby sink.
4. **If you wish, you may light a couple of candles.**
5. **Be prepared to clear your table completely** at the conclusion of the service. If possible, the table should be set with the best the house has to offer. A fine tablecloth perhaps, flowers, and the best place settings. We sit down to feast with God, and for that we bring our best. (If your best is a folding table and takeout containers God will be as honoured by that as fine silver and crystal!) You may consider this dinner table your “altar” for the evening, or you may also have prepared a separate holy space to be ritually stripped at the end.

While this meal is not the sacrament of the Eucharist, it includes blessings of the food and drink shared, and the people gathered. While the service mentions wine, you should use whatever beverage makes sense for those gathered.

The service has been written so that various parts can be shared out among those present; don’t be afraid to let children read and lead! Each part is either meant to be read by a single person, or by all.

Holy Week Hymns x 3

- 1) ELW 358 *Great God Your Love Has Called Us*
- 2) ELW 360 *Love Consecrates the Humblest Act*
- 3) ELW 348 *Stay With Me*

GATHERING

LEADER: This is the day that Christ the Lamb of God gave himself into the hands of those who would slay him. This is the day that Christ gathered with his disciples in the upper room. This is the day that Christ took a towel and lovingly washed the disciples' feet, giving us an example to do to others as God has done to us. This is the day that Christ our God gave us the holy feast, that we who eat the bread and drink the cup may here, even in our time of dispersion and exile, remember Jesus' holy sacrifice partaking in Jesus' resurrection, and at the last day may abide with him in heaven.

All: Lord have mercy. Christ have mercy. Lord have mercy.

LEADER: God, we spread this table to remember the loving sacrifice of Jesus Christ, your Son. Accept all we offer you this day. Bind us together in his love and in the love Jesus has commanded us to bring one another; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The Leader holds up the loaf of bread.

Blessing Over the Bread

LEADER: Blessed are you, O Lord our God, Creator of the universe, who has given us bread from the earth.

On the night that Jesus gathered with his friends, he took bread and blessed it and shared it with his friends, for God who loves us, feeds us. As God's people ate manna in the wilderness and were satisfied, so we share this bread with Christ, and with one another. May it be for us bread from heaven, strength for our bodies, and balm for our souls, and may it empower us to be Christ's body in this world.

The bread is passed around the table, with each person receiving a piece. After this, the meal is begun.

Once everyone is eating, one reader reads from Exodus.

Reader: A reading from the book of Exodus 12:1-14

The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt: This month shall mark for you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year for you. Tell the whole congregation of Israel that on the tenth of this month they are to take a lamb for each family, a lamb for each household. If a household is too small for a whole lamb, it shall join its closest neighbour in obtaining one; the lamb shall be divided in proportion to the number of people who eat of it. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a year-old male; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats. You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month; then the whole assembled

congregation of Israel shall slaughter it at twilight. They shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. They shall eat the lamb that same night; they shall eat it roasted over the fire with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but roasted over the fire, with its head, legs, and inner organs. You shall let none of it remain until the morning; anything that remains until the morning you shall burn. This is how you shall eat it: your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it hurriedly. It is the Passover of the LORD. For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike down every firstborn in the land of Egypt, both human beings and animals; on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgements: I am the LORD. The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live: when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague shall destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt. This day shall be a day of remembrance for you. You shall celebrate it as a festival to the LORD; throughout your generations you shall observe it as a perpetual ordinance.

Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people.
People Thanks be to God.

The meal continues. Once everyone has finished eating, this portion of Psalm 78 is read (or sung) responsively.

Psalm 78:14-25

14 He led them with a cloud by day, *
and all the night through with a glow of fire.

**15 He split the hard rocks in the wilderness *
and gave them drink as from the great deep.**

16 He brought streams out of the cliff, *
and the waters gushed out like rivers.

**17 But they went on sinning against him, *
rebellious in the desert against the Most High.**

18 They tested God in their hearts, *
demanding food for their craving.

**19 They railed against God and said, *
“Can God set a table in the wilderness?”**

20 True, he struck the rock, the waters gushed out, and the gullies overflowed; * but is he able to give bread or to provide meat for his people?”

21 When the Lord heard this, he was full of wrath; *

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a fire was kindled against Jacob, and his anger mounted against Israel;

22 For they had no faith in God, *
nor did they put their trust in his saving power.

**23 So he commanded the clouds above *
and opened the doors of heaven.**

24 He rained down manna upon them to eat *
and gave them grain from heaven.

**25 So mortals ate the bread of angels; *
he provided for them food enough.**

Reader: A reading from the first letter of Paul to the Corinthians 11:23-26

For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

Hear what the Spirit is saying to God’s people.

People Thanks be to God.

The Leader holds up the container of wine [or other festive drink].

Blessing Over The Wine

LEADER: Let us pray. Blessed are you, O Lord our God, Creator of the universe, who gives us wine, the fruit of the vine and work of human hands.

Amen.

Each participant receives some of the [wine] in a cup and all drink it together. They then move to the area set up for handwashing (or foot) A Reader reads the Gospel.

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John 13:1-15

Glory to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

13 Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. ²The deceiver had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper ³Jesus, knowing that God had given all things into his hands, and that he had

come from God and was going to God, ⁴got up from the table, * took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. ⁵Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. ⁶He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, 'Lord, are you going to wash my feet?' ⁷Jesus answered, 'You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand.' ⁸Peter said to him, 'You will never wash my feet.' Jesus answered, 'Unless I wash you, you have no share with me.'⁹Simon Peter said to him, 'Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!' ¹⁰Jesus said to him, 'One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet,* but is entirely clean. And you* are clean, though not all of you.' ¹¹For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, 'Not all of you are clean.'

¹² After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, 'Do you know what I have done to you?'¹³You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am.¹⁴So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. ¹⁵For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you.

The Gospel of Christ.

People Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

The Washing

LEADER: Fellow servants of our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night before his death, Jesus set an example for his disciples by washing their feet, an act of humble service. He taught that strength and growth in the life of the realm of God comes not by power, authority, or even miracle, but by such lowly and loving service. Therefore, I invite you, who share in the priesthood of Christ, to come forward, that we may all recall whose servants we are by following the example of our Lord in whose ministry we share. For *“a servant is not greater than his master, nor are those who are sent greater than the one who sent them.”*

All: Peace is my last gift to you, my own peace I now leave with you; peace which the world cannot give, I give to you.

LEADER: I give you a new commandment: Love one another as I have loved you.

All: Peace is my last gift to you, my own peace I now leave with you; peace which the world cannot give, I give to you.

LEADER: By this shall the world know that you are my disciples: That you have love for one another.

All: Peace is my last gift to you, my own peace I now leave with you; peace which the world cannot give, I give to you.

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Participants turn their chairs and prepare their feet or hands for washing.

SUGGESTED HYMNS AND SONGS

Will You Let me be your servant **ELW #659**
Jesu, Jesu Fill Us With Your Love **ELW #708**
Ubi caritas **ELW 642**

Clearing the table/Stripping the altar

The table is cleared as Psalm 22 is chanted You can end your agape meal with the following prayer:

LEADER: Holy God, source of all love, on the night of his betrayal Jesus gave his disciples a new commandment, to love one another as he loved them. Write this commandment in our hearts; give us the will to serve others as he was the servant of all, who gave his life and died for us, yet is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Compiled using resources from the Book of Alternative Services; from the 1979 Book of Common Prayer of The Episcopal Church (USA); from the work of the Rev'd Dr. David Goertner, Coeur d'Alene, Idaho; and from the work of the Rev'd Josephine Robinson, Bellevue, Washington.

A Poem for Maundy Thursday in Isolation, by Pastor Andrea Roske-Metcalf (ELCA)

On the night in which he was betrayed
(that is to say, the night before he was killed;
the night when his friends gave him up,
gave him over to their greed and their fear,
which they regretted almost immediately,
but even almost immediately turned out to be already too late),
On that night, he sat around the dinner table with his friends. Things were dicey, even if no one
said it out loud.
Some of them couldn't sleep,
and some of them slept all the time,
and all of their thinking felt fuzzy.
The men in charge, in other, more important places, couldn't get their stories straight.

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The body count kept rising.

No one knew what would happen in the end,

but it was clear that things would get much worse before they even began to get better.

On that night, the meal was plain, and simple, and confusing, even.

(Most of the usual stuff was all out at the grocery store, and anyway, the Instacart delivery wouldn't arrive for another 3 days.)

On that night, he took those pre-packaged sandwich crackers

(the bright orange kind with peanut butter in the middle), and he gave thanks and he shared them around the table and he said,

“Take and eat. This is my body, given for you,

to remind you to that nourishment takes on so many forms;

to remind you that nourishment will look differently now,

for a while; maybe even for forever,

but this body is enough and you are enough and we are enough.

Eat these, together, and remember me.”

In the same way, after that strange supper,

he took cranberry juice cocktail.

(The wine had run out days before and anyway,

this was the same color, with added vitamin C.)

He poured it – into champagne flutes and water bottles and shot glasses and sippy cups – and he gave thanks.

He said, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood,

poured out for you and for all people –

(listen up: for ALL people) –

for the forgiveness of sins.

This cup is poured out to remind you to look for community in new and unexpected ways; to remind you to *be* community for *others* in new and unexpected ways, because this cup is enough and you are enough and we are enough. Drink this, together, and remember me.”

And they did.

That strange and confusing meal was all they had, but that night, it was enough.

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And they were scared,
whether they said it out loud or not,
but they were together (in one way or another), and that was enough.
And together,
that night,
they were enough.