



Maundy Thursday

supper liturgy

This service is adapted with permission from Barefoot Theology for at-home use for congregants from First Presbyterian Church, Cordata Presbyterian Church, and St. James Presbyterian Church

Concerning the Service

This Maundy Thursday service was designed for use in the home, around the dinner table (whatever shape that takes). 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 honored by that as fine silver and crystal.

This service draws from the Eucharistic tradition, but it is not a sacramental meal. We call it Eukharistía: Ancient Greek (εὐχαριστία), meaning “gratitude, giving of thanks”. And this we can and should do whenever we share the bounty of the earth!

All Christians are called to bless and so while this meal is not sacramental it includes blessings of the food and drink shared, and the people gathered. You can use any bread you have available.

Similarly, while the service mentions wine you should use whatever beverage makes sense for you and those gathered. In the ancient world wine was safe (when the water was not) and was a staple. Using a beverage that is a staple of your dinner table is always acceptable.

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. And this is indicated with “One” or “All.” The “One” parts may be shared and a single leader is not required. While this service assumes a small gathering it can, when necessary, be done by an individual who while physically alone is nevertheless gathered in spirit with the rest of the church this night.

One candle (called the Christ candle) should be placed on the table and lit before the service begins, it will remain lighted throughout. If possible a candle should be given to each person present. Throughout some sections will be marked [In times of pandemic/epidemic], these portions of the service are meant specifically for times when physical gathering has been banned due to disease.



For a shorter version, read only the sections highlighted in purple while following the italicized instructions.

Preparation

[in times of pandemic, epidemic]

All

We begin by washing, as we were washed or will be washed in our baptism. We give thanks for the cleansing love of Jesus. We cleanse our hands as we were cleansed in the waters of new birth. We do this not because we are afraid, but because we were commanded to love: and to cleanse our hands, and gather in spirit, is how we love the vulnerable, whom Jesus loved. May we be instruments of love. May the sacrifices we make be for the good of our human family near and far.

Each person present then washes their hands thoroughly with soap and water. Once washed each should help with setting the table as they are able. The food should be set out in the middle with bread and wine and other good things. When all is ready those present take their places at the table and the one designated begins. If a candle is available for each person they may now take their candle, light it, and place it at their place at the table. They may say the following:

One

As Jesus traveled he spread light wherever he went, light that could not be extinguished. Tonight I light my candle [and remember Jesus] in honor of [the women who attended him/his mother Mary/the disciples/the crowds who followed him/the lepers he healed/the possessed he freed/the poor/the sick/the woman who anointed him with oil/etc].

When all have taken their places at the table.

Opening

One

[Beloveds/Dear ones/Friends] tonight is a holy night. Tonight we join with Christians around the world as we remember the last night our Lord spent with his friends. We gather around a table, and with all those who remember tonight. Though we are dispersed, we are together, in spirit and in truth. Tonight is about friendship, and love. But not all the stories tonight are happy, because suffering and evil are real. So tonight we will eat a meal, we will share stories, and we will pray together.

Blessing of the Meal

This portion of the service may be used at any time a meal is shared among Christians. It follows the shape of the last supper, and therefore will sound familiar and much like the Eucharist. However a pastor is not required because the elements are not consecrated. They are however blessed, something all Christians are called to do.

The one who blesses the bread takes the bread and holds it where all may see it.

One

On the night that Jesus gathered with his friends he took bread and he 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, balm for our souls, and may it empower us to be Christ's body in this world.

The bread is passed around the table for all to take their fill.

The one who blesses the wine [or other beverage] then takes the wine (in a bottle or carafe) and holds it where all may see it.

One

On the night that Jesus gathered with his friends he took wine and he blessed it and shared it with them. For the God who made us delights in us, and gives us good gifts to delight our tongues, and give joy to our souls. As Jesus offered the Samaritan woman water that will not fail, so Jesus offers us the same. May this [wine] be for us the holy drink of heaven, and may it wash us of sin and quench the thirst of our souls.

The wine [or other beverage] is then poured out into each person's cup, a generous amount!

The whole company together then blesses the rest of the meal, saying together.

All

(With young children say together: Dear Heavenly Father, we thank you for this meal. Please bless it.)

Holy and lifegiving God, we thank you for the bounty of your Creation laid before us. We ask you to bless it, that it may be to us a holy meal. We give thanks for all those who labored so that it might sustain us, and we ask that through it you would give us the strength to be your good stewards; to care, and tend your creation, and to care especially for our siblings, all the people of this world. Tonight, be with all the members of our community who we love and miss, those who cannot be here with us to share this meal. We ask these things by the grace of Jesus Christ our Brother and the Holy Spirit our friend and guide. Amen.

The meal should be enjoyed by all. As feels appropriate the following stories should be read by members of the gathered group while the rest continue their meal. These stories can be scattered throughout the meal as seems appropriate. Conversation and questions are encouraged, for this is a gathering of friends. For young children, two alternative stories have been provided from the Jesus Storybook Bible: "The Servant King - The Last Supper" to be read during the meal and "A Dark night in the Garden" to be read after everyone has eaten and the dishes are still on the table. The stories can be found on pages 9-11 of this guide.

The First Story

John 2.1-12

The Wedding at Cana

The Second Story

Matthew 14.13-21

Feeding the Five Thousand

The Third Story

John 13.1-17, 31b-35

The Last Supper



As the meal is concluded and the dishes are still on the table the following is read

John 18.1-11

The Betrayal and Arrest of Jesus

One

Our dinner is over, the waiting begins. Tonight Jesus was alone, under arrest, and awaiting his death. Tonight his friends were alone with their guilt, shame, and fear.

[In the time of pandemic/epidemic]

One

Tonight we are missing our normal routines, our communities, and friends. Many are alone, isolated and afraid, Jesus waits with us all tonight, even as we wait with him. Jesus knows what loneliness feels like, what fear tastes like. Jesus knows the heartbreak of being alone when you want most to be with people you love. Tonight we hold vigil with [pray with] the sick, the fearful, the lonely, and with all who risk their own lives to protect and care for ours.

One

We are invited to clear away the dishes, and clean up the remains of our meal in silence, and with prayer. Tonight this table was our altar, and this home[place] our sanctuary. Let us cleanse it of all that has come before this moment: of our anxiety, our worry, our sorrow, and our shame. [As we clean up, help us wash away all our worries, sadness and shame.]

The table may then be cleared by all present, as each is able. Each person extinguishes their candle. The Christ candle may be left lighted. One person may be designated to read Psalm 51 while the table is cleared, and table cloth or decoration removed. The table is then wiped down with the clean damp cloth, and dried.

When the table is cleared all gather together for a final prayer and invitation to keep vigil.

One

Holy One, you are near your people this night, wait and watch with us; for our hearts are heavy. May your Spirit watch over the sick, and guide the hands of those who tend to them. And we beseech you, comfort us as a Mother soothes her beloved children. May we watch, and wait, strengthened by your presence. **Amen.**

If desired those gathered in that place should bring flowers, potted plants, beloved objects, the Christ candle or other lights. A place to watch with Jesus (and a reminder of the Garden of Gethsemane) can be made with these things and those who feel so called spend an hour there at some point in the night reading scripture, praying, or simply keeping silent vigil.

Service by The Rev. Josephine Robertson, All Saints Episcopal Church, Bellevue, WA.



Jesus Storybook Bible Readings

The Story for the Meal:

The Servant King

The Last Supper, from Mark 14 and John 13-14

It was Passover, the time when God's people remembered how God had rescued them from being slaves in Egypt. Every year they killed a lamb and ate it. "The lamb died instead of us!" they would say.

But this Passover, God was getting ready for an even Greater Rescue.

Jesus and his friends were having the Passover meal together in an upstairs room. But Jesus' friends were arguing. What about? They were arguing about stinky feet. Stinky feet? Yes, that's right. Stinky feet.

(Now the thing about feet back then was that people didn't wear shoes; they only wore sandals, which might not sound unusual, except that the streets in those days were dirty - and I don't mean just dusty dirty - I mean really stinky dirty. With all those cows and horses everywhere, you can imagine the stuff on the street that ended up on their feet!)

So anyway, someone had to wash away the dirt, but it was a dreadful job. Who on earth would ever dream of volunteering to do it?

Only the lowliest servant.

"I'm not the servant!" Peter said.

"Nor am I!" said Matthew.

Quietly, Jesus got up from the table, took off his robe, picked up a basin of water, knelt down, and started to wash his friends' feet.

"You can't," Peter said. He didn't understand about Jesus being the Servant King.

"If you don't let me wash away the dirt, Peter," Jesus said, "you can't be close to me."

Jesus knew that what people needed most was to be clean on the inside. All the dirt on their feet was nothing compared to the sin inside their hearts.

"Then wash me, Lord!" Peter said, tears filling his eyes. "All of me!"

Jesus Storybook Bible Readings | continued

One by one, Jesus washed everyone's feet.

"I am doing this because I love you," Jesus explained. "Do this for each other." Now, one of Jesus' friends had made a bad plan. No one else knew what the bad plan was. But Jesus knew – and so did Judas. Judas was going to help the Leaders capture Jesus – for 30 pieces of silver.

"Go on, Judas," Jesus said. And Judas got up from the meal, left the room, and walked out into the night.

Then Jesus picked up some bread and broke it. He gave it to his friends. He picked up a cup of wine and thanked God for it. He poured it out and shared it.

"My body is like this bread. It will break," Jesus told them. "This cup of wine is like my blood. It will pour out."

"But this is how God will rescue the whole world. My life will break and God's broken world will mend. My heart will tear apart – and your hearts will heal. Just as the passover lamb died, so now I will die instead of you. My blood will wash away all of your sins. And you'll be clean on the inside – in your hearts."

So whenever you eat and drink, remember," Jesus said, "I've rescued you!" Jesus knew it was nearly time for him to leave the world and to go back to God.

"I won't be with you long," he said. "You are going to be very sad. But God's Helper will come. And then you'll be filled up with a Forever Happiness that won't ever leave. So don't be afraid. You are my friends and I love you."

Then they sang their favorite song. And walked up to their favorite place, an olive garden.

The Story for after the meal is finished and the dishes are still on the table:

A Dark Night in the Garden

The Garden of Gethsemane, from Luke 22, Mark 14, John 18

The wind was picking up now, blowing clouds across the moon, shrouding the garden in darkness.

"Stay up with me?" Jesus asked his friends. They said yes and waited under the olive trees, but they were tired and soon they fell asleep.

Jesus Storybook Bible Readings | continued

Jesus walked ahead alone, into the dark. He needed to talk to his heavenly Father.

[And so he cried out to God, his Papa, in great agony] ...

Violent sobs shook Jesus' whole body.

Then Jesus was quiet. Like a lamb. "I trust you, Papa," he said. "Whatever you say, I will do."

Suddenly, through the trees, a glitter of starlight flashed off steel. Into the quiet garden came whispers, muffled voices, clanking metal - and the sound of boots marching.

Jesus stood up.

He woke his friends. "Now is the time," he said gently. "Everything that was written about me - what God has been telling his people all through the long years - it's all coming true."

And into the night, with burning torches and lanterns, with swords and clubs and armor, they came - an army of soldiers. Judas led them straight to Jesus so they could arrest him.

Peter leapt up, took a sword, and tried to defend Jesus. He sliced off a guard's ear. Jesus immediately touched the guard and healed him.

"Peter," he said, "this is not the way."

Peter didn't realize that no army, no matter how big, could ever arrest Jesus. Not unless Jesus let them.

Then Jesus, who had never done anything except love people, was arrested, as if he were a criminal.

Jesus' friends were afraid. So they ran away and hid in the dark shadows. The guards marched Jesus off and took him to the Leaders.

The Leaders put Jesus on trial. "Are you the Song of God?" they asked. "I Am," Jesus said.

"Who do you think you are? To call yourself God? You must die for calling yourself the Son of God!"

Only the Romans were allowed to kill prisoners, so the Leaders made a plan.

"We'll tell the Romans, 'This man wants to be our king!' And then they will crucify him."

But it would be all right. It was God's Plan.

"It was for this reason that I was born into the world," Jesus said.