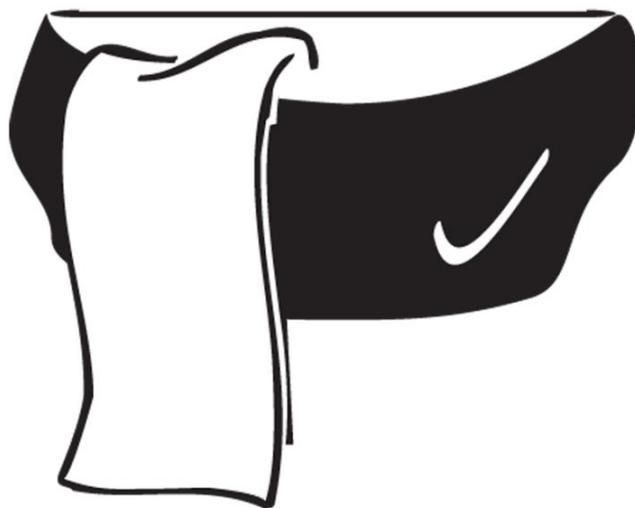


MAUNDY THURSDAY

April 9, 2020



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Liturgy and Instructions for a Love Feast

Adapted from Marcia McFee's "Comfort Food: A Feast of Love" and "The Love Feast" from the United Methodist Book of Worship

About The Love Feast

The Love Feast, or Agape Meal, is a Christian fellowship meal recalling the meals Jesus shared with disciples during his ministry and expressing the koinonia (community, sharing, fellowship) enjoyed by the family of Christ.

Although its origins in the early church are closely interconnected with the origins of the Lord's Supper, the two services became quite distinct and should not be confused with each other. While the Lord's Supper has been practically universal among Christians throughout church history, the Love Feast has appeared only at certain times and among certain denominations.

The modern history of the Love Feast began when Count Zinzendorf and the Moravians in Germany introduced a service of sharing food, prayer, religious conversation, and hymns in 1727. John Wesley first experienced it among the Moravians in Savannah, Georgia, ten years later. His diary notes: "After evening prayers, we joined with the Germans in one of their love-feasts. It was begun and ended with thanksgiving and prayer, and celebrated in so decent and solemn a manner as a Christian of the apostolic age would have allowed to be worthy of Christ."

It quickly became a feature of the Evangelical Revival and a regular part of Methodist society meetings in Great Britain and throughout the English-speaking world. As Methodists immigrated to North America they made Love Feasts an important part of early American Methodism.

While Love Feasts became less frequent in the years that followed, they continued to be held in some places; and in recent years the Love Feast has been revived. Love Feasts have often been held at Annual Conferences and Charge Conferences, where persons may report on what God has been doing in their lives and on the hope and trust they place in God for the future. The Love Feast is also an important part of the practice of Covenant Discipleship groups. Christmas, New Year's Eve or Day, the weekdays of Holy Week, and the Day of Pentecost are also fitting occasions for a Love Feast. A Love Feast may also be held during a congregational supper.

The Love Feast has often been held on occasions when the celebration of the Lord's Supper would be inappropriate—where there is no one present authorized to administer the Sacrament, when persons of different denominations are present who do not feel free to take Holy Communion together, when there is a desire for a service more informal and spontaneous than the communion ritual, or at a full meal or some other setting to which it would be difficult to adapt the Lord's Supper.

The Love Feast is most naturally held around a table or with persons seated in a circle; but it is possible to hold it with persons seated in rows. A church sanctuary, fellowship hall, or home is an appropriate location.

One of the advantages of the Love Feast is that any Christian may conduct it. Congregational participation and leadership are usually extensive and important, especially involving children.

Testimonies and praise are the focal point in most Love Feasts. Testimonies may include personal witness to God's grace or accounts of what God has been doing in the lives of others. Praise may take the form of hymns, songs, choruses, or spoken exclamations and may vary from the relative formality of an opening and closing hymn to spontaneous calling out of requests and singing as the Spirit moves. Sometimes the leader guides those present alternating spontaneous singing and sharing in free and familiar conversation for as long as the Spirit moves. Wesley counseled that all the above be done decently and in order.

Prayer is vital to a Love Feast. A fixed form of prayer may be used, especially something like the Lord's Prayer or Be present at our table, Lord, that is familiar to the people. Spontaneous prayer requests and prayers may come from the people.

Scripture is also important. There may be scripture readings, or persons may quote Scripture spontaneously as the Spirit moves. There may be a sermon, an exhortation, or an address; but it should be informal and consist of the leader's adding personal witness to what spontaneously comes from the congregation.

Most Love Feasts include the sharing of food. It is customary not to use communion bread, wine, or grape juice because to do so might confuse the Love Feast with the Lord's Supper. The bread may be a loaf of ordinary bread, crackers, rolls, or a sweet bread baked especially for this service. If a loaf of bread, it may be broken in two or more pieces and then passed from hand to hand as each person breaks off a piece. Crackers, rolls, or slices of bread may be passed in a basket. The beverage has usually been water, but other beverages such as lemonade, tea, or coffee have been used. Early Methodists commonly passed a loving cup with two handles from person to person, but later the water was served in individual glasses. The food is served quietly without interrupting the service.

The Love Feast may also be followed by a full meal, in which case persons or families may bring dishes of food for all to share. During the meal there may be informal conversation in Christian fellowship, or the leader may direct the conversation by suggesting matters of mutual concern, or there may be spontaneous witnessing and praise. If there is food left over, it may be taken as an expression of love to persons not present.

The Love Feast

The idea is that this service begins your meal together.

Following the Closing Blessing, you may continue your meal as usual.

SINGING

Begin with singing a chorus together.

Suggestion: "Spirit of the Living God" (UMH No. 393)

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me

Melt me, mold me, fill me, use me

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me

PRAYER

As you gather back at the table, pray together:

Be present at our table, Lord;
Be here and everywhere adored;
Thy creatures bless, and grant that we
May feast in paradise with Thee.

Father of earth and heaven,
Thy hungry children feed,
Thy grace be to our spirits given,
That true immortal bread.
Grant us and all our race
In Jesus Christ to prove
The sweetness of thy pardoning grace,
The manna of thy love.
Amen.

REMEMBERING THOSE NOT PRESENT

Read: When we "break bread" together as a church in our worship, we remember that Jesus invited folks to his table as part of his ministry, not just at the Last Supper.

Jesus used the parable of a great banquet to which all people are invited in order to talk about what the "kingdom" of God, the family of God, looks like. He said, "Go to the highways and back alleys and urge people to come in so that my house will be filled." He often invited the most unlikely guests to his meal-times, confounding the disciples. In this way, he was encouraging a deep love and connection beyond social norms. He knew that we humans need connection and inclusion. Jesus comforts us, saying "you have a place at the table" and Jesus challenges us to make sure we are doing the same—that all people know they are welcome in our hearts, in our homes, in our churches—even if we can't physically be with each other right now.

It is difficult in this moment not to be near some of the people we love and might be worried about. Take a moment and say out loud the names of people you wish were right there next to you at your table today.

Jesus is no longer physically on earth, yet every time we gather around a table and we call him to mind, he is present with us in Spirit. And so too, our loved ones are with us. Let this be a comfort to us.

We also want to call to mind, the people we cannot name, whose names we do not know. But we know they need our prayers and God's comfort.

For those who have lost loved ones, **Lord, hear our prayers.**

For those who are sick and recovering, **Lord, hear our prayers.**

For those who are caring for loved ones who are sick at home, **Lord, hear our prayers.**

For those who are caring for persons in medical care, **Lord, hear our prayers.**

For those who are separated from loved ones, **Lord, hear our prayers.**

For those who are feeling alone and isolated, **Lord, hear our prayers.**

For those who are helping and are so very tired, **Lord, hear our prayers.**

For those who are struggling to find friends, food, and comfort, **Lord, hear our prayers.**

For those who are afraid, **Lord, hear our prayers.**

Amen.

SCRIPTURE (*choose a Scripture – or more than one – from the list to read*)

Psalm 145:8–21	God's abounding love
1 Corinthians 13	The gift of love
2 Corinthians 9:6 –15	Our generous sharing glorifies God.
Philippians 2:5 –11	God's self-emptying in Christ Jesus
1 John 4:7 –21	God is love.
Matthew 22:34 –40	Love of God and neighbor
Luke 9:12 –17	Feeding the five thousand
Luke 14:16 –24	Parable of the great dinner
John 6:25 –35	Jesus the Bread of Life

Discuss: What in our Scripture reading stands out to you? Explain.

BLESSINGS AND THANKSGIVING

Read: Blessings at the table are part of our Judeo-Christian heritage. Indeed, Jesus adapted his Jewish ritual blessing spoken before and after meals. He asked us to remember him whenever we break bread and raise a cup in thanksgiving. This is why we call our communion prayers the "Great Thanksgiving." In this feast of love and comfort, we can call to mind things for which we are deeply grateful.

Share with each other something for which you are grateful.

Read: Let us bless this time together in prayer. Repeat each section after me.

Holy Comforter (**Holy Comforter**)

We gather in your name (**We gather in your name**)

invited by Jesus (**invited by Jesus**)

bound together with your Spirit (**bound together with your Spirit**)

in union with each other (**in union with each other**)

Feed our bodies and our spirits (**Feed our bodies and our spirits**)

with your comforting presence (**with your comforting presence**)

so we might be your comfort to others (**so we might be your comfort to others**)

Bless this food (**Bless this food**)

and break open our hearts (**and break open our hearts**)

Bless this drink (**Bless this drink**)

and pour out your love (**and pour out your love**)

Amen (**Amen**)

SINGING

Close with singing the same song you began with.

Suggestion: "Spirit of the Living God" (UMH No. 393)

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me

Melt me, mold me, fill me, use me

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me

CLOSING BLESSING

Read: And now may you shelter not only in place, but in peace. May the peace and comfort of Christ be present with you now and forevermore. Amen.

Service for Hand/Foot Washing

GREETING

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

And also with you.

Tonight, we begin our journey to the cross,
remembering where our table manners came from.
Tonight, we tell the stories that make us God's people.
Tonight, we are a people about to be freed from slavery.
Tonight, we are a people who come with dirty feet
and become clean by water and the word.

Let us declare our need of forgiveness and cleansing.
Jesus, our feet are dirty from the journey.
We have not loved one another as you have loved us.
Callousness and violence stain our hearts and lives.
How will we become clean again?
We see the table there,
but who will make us clean and ready for the meal?
Where will we find water for these soiled soles?
Restore us to the joy of God's salvation.
Amen.

SCRIPTURE: John 13:1-17

HYMN: Let There Be Peace on Earth (UMH No. 431)

HAND WASHING

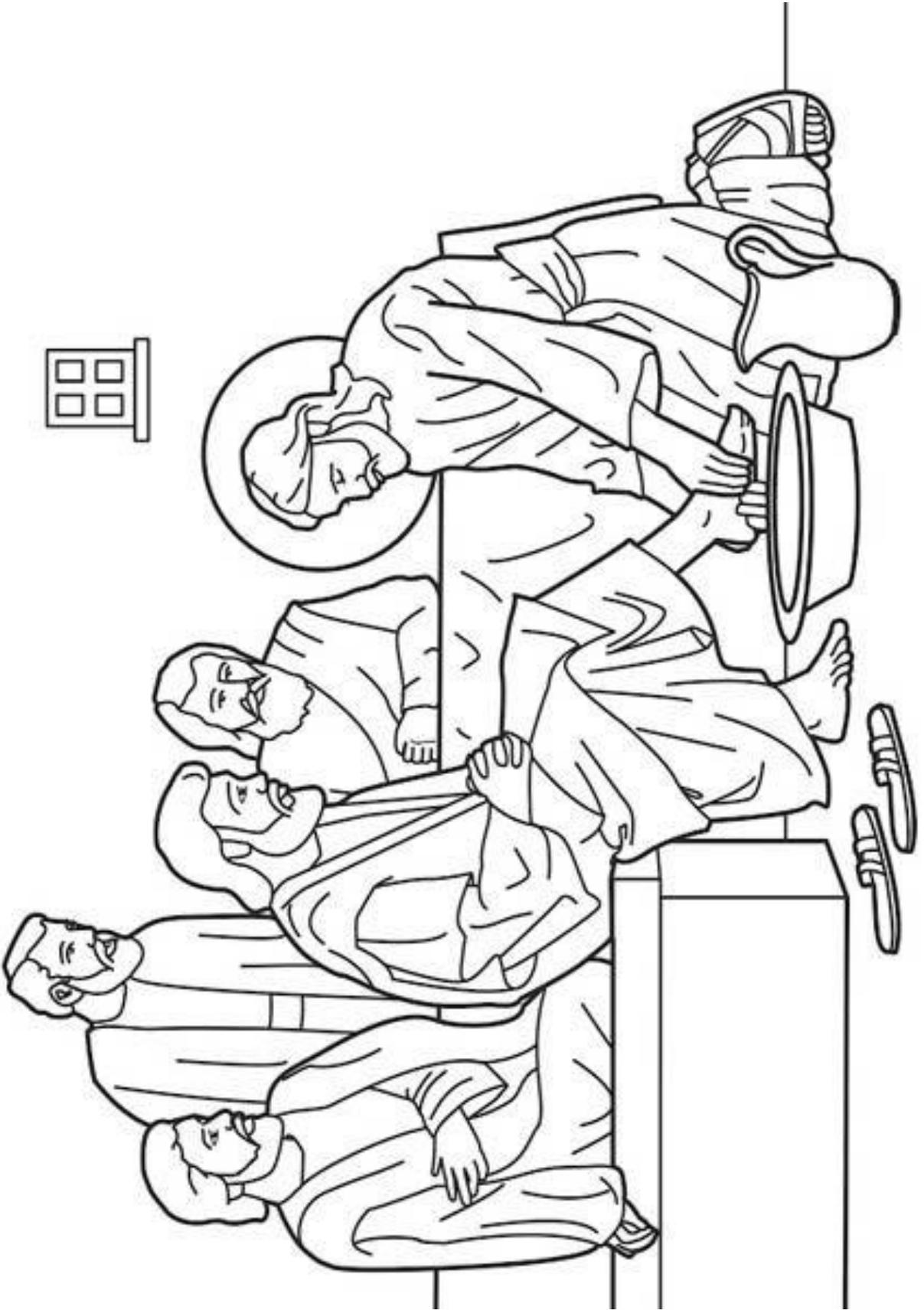
Pass the basin and towel around the table as you wash each other's hands. In this time of health crisis and pandemic, washing of hands is more than just a symbol – it demonstrates love and care for the other person to keep them safe.

SCRIPTURE: Luke 22:7-20

SONG: Spirit of the Living God (UMH No. 393)

[You could enter The Love Feast celebration here]

HYMN: Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus (UMH No. 349)



Communion Bread Recipe

Recipe from the Monastery of the Holy Spirit. Modified by: Steve Reneau

Preheat oven to 400 degrees.

In a bowl, thoroughly mix:

- 4 cups of whole wheat flour*
- 4 tsp. of DOUBLE ACTING baking powder (or 8 tsp. of single acting baking powder)
- 2 tsp. of salt

In a separate container mix:

- 3/4 cup water*
- 3/4 cup milk
- 3/4 cup honey
- 3/4 cup vegetable oil*

Note: If you use a container with a lid, you can shake the mixture to thoroughly incorporate the ingredients.

Gradually add the wet ingredients to the dry ingredients, mixing them together with your hands (this will be very, very sticky). You're shooting for a ball of dough that's cohesive, but not too sticky; this may mean that you don't add all the wet ingredients or if your dough is too sticky, add a bit of flour. Knead the ball of dough.

With your hands, roll the dough ball into a fat cylinder that is six to eight inches long. Cut the cylinder into eight equal parts (—|—|—|—|—|—|—|—|—). Each part/ball should make one 6-inch round. (I use my hands to pat out each ball of dough into a round.)

Once the round is patted into form, take a knife and cut a cross on top. (Be careful not to cut all the way through. You are simply scoring the top of the bread.) The dough round should be about a 1/2-inch thick. (You can make it thinner if you can do so without tearing. They will rise in the oven.)

Place the rounds on an ungreased cookie or pizza sheet ensuring at least an inch between them. They will bake around 10 minutes; however, they may need just a bit longer or shorter depending on your oven. You will know they are finished when they no longer seem doughy. You don't want them super dark on the bottom.

One batch can easily make six to eight rounds.

*For gluten-free bread, use 3 1/2 cups of gluten free flour, omit the water, and use 1/2 cup of vegetable oil.