

Agapé for Maundy Thursday

This order of worship for Maundy Thursday is within the context of an Agape Meal to be eaten in homes, and perhaps with others in a congregation or the wider church that join together online from their homes.



(Note: More than one household could prepare for this service and coordinate their shared celebration using a video conferencing platform.)

For the sake of simplicity for both ritual and technological reasons, if there are several persons present or more than one household participating, one individual should serve as presider.

On the night of his betrayal, Jesus shared a meal with his disciples. He shared this meal 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.

This evening marks the beginning of the Three Day celebration of Christian Passover. During this extraordinary time that requires us to practice social distancing in order to help protect everyone from the rapid spread of the COVID-19 virus, we are being taken back to our households as our base-point. But we have the blessing in this technological age of joining others in fellowship even when we are alone in our households. We can join now with each other on this holy night, as we pray, sing, and hear the Word of God while we eat together, each in our own homes but joined in fellowship.

This service also acts as a call to the revitalization of the domestic church, a notion of which the Church has lost sight over the past few generations. In addition, it recognizes the profound connection between the Celebration of the Eucharist and the meals we share in daily life. Therefore, though this rite is not the sacrament of the Eucharist, it reminds us of the holiness, the “sacramentality” of all meals, the holiness of all food, and the presence of the Risen Christ whenever we break bread.

This service weaves together parts of the Maundy Thursday liturgy with aspects of the Agape Meal as outlined in the Book of Occasional Services of The Episcopal Church (2018). (An Agape meal is an ancient feast of a communal meal shared by Christians, ‘agape’ - a-ga-pay - being a Greek word that reflects God’s unconditional love.) This service may include the washing of feet in households where there are two or more people.

To make ready your home for the service, please do the following –

- 1. Prepare a simple meal to share in your home that is fitting with your own dietary requirements and Lenten fast. Salads, soups, fruits and nuts, and simple grains or pastas can all be fine. Include a bit of bread and wine, according to what is in keeping with your dietary requirements.*

2. *Set your space for your meal, including a Bible and a couple of candles. If you are connecting with other households via a laptop, tablet, cell phone, land-line (hopefully with speaker phone), or internet-connected screen in the room, make sure it is where it can be audible and visible to everyone during the meal. Many people will have had opportunities over this past month to test their sound and video input and output on their devices.*
3. *If observing the footwashing, set up what you need to wash each other's feet. A washbasin, a pitcher with warm water, and a few towels are sufficient. Make sure there is a chair by the basin where people can sit when their feet are washed. If you wish to use a bit of soap, feel free. Set a foot-washing space in the room, just a bit away from the table. Have what you need for good washing and drying of hands at a nearby sink. Even if not observing the footwashing, you may wish to have a basin and pitcher nearby as a visual reminder of one of the key actions of this night.*
4. *The hand washing in the Gathering is not meant to replace a footwashing. Rather it arises out of an ancient practice of washing one's hands before prayer, and also serves as a reminder of our consideration and care of others during this time of pandemic.*
5. *If you are eating this meal on your own, feel free to adapt by leaving out the dialogues between Presider and People. You may wish to leave out other texts as seems appropriate, or alter them to speak in singular voice. The prayers, however, should continue to be plural in reference, as you are praying with the wider church.*
6. *Please remember that appropriate adaptations for illness in the household should be made.*

+ *The Gathering* +

Presider: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

People: **And also with you.**

Presider: Let us pray. *(Allow a brief time of silence before starting the prayer.)*

Holy God, source of all love,
on the night of his betrayal,
Jesus gave us a new commandment,
to love one another as he loves us.
Write this commandment in our hearts,
and give us the will to serve others
as he was servant of all,
your Son, Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever.

People: **Amen.**

The Presider or another person continues,

As we prepare to serve our meal, let us begin by washing, cleansing our hands as we were cleansed in the waters of baptism. We do this not because we are afraid, but because we are commanded to love. So we cleanse our hands as an expression of love for the vulnerable people Jesus loved. May we be instruments of God's care. 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 Blessings* +

When the table has been set, all gather around the table, standing as able.

After a time of silence, the presider offers the following blessings.

Over Wine

Blessed are you, O Lord our God, Ruler of the universe. You create the fruit of the vine; and you refresh us with the cup of salvation in the Blood of your Son Jesus Christ. May the time come quickly when we can share that cup again, even as you are with us now in our very thirst for you. Glory to you for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Over Bread

Blessed are you, O Lord our God, Ruler of the universe. You bring forth bread from the earth; and you have fed us on our way with the bread of life in the Body of your Son Jesus Christ. Let us be fed again soon with that bread of life. As grain scattered upon the earth is gathered into one loaf, so gather your Church in every place into the kingdom of your Son. To you be glory and power for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Over the Other Foods

Blessed are you, O Lord our God, Ruler of the universe. You have blessed the earth to bring forth food to satisfy our hunger. Let this food strengthen us in the fast that is before us, that following our Savior in the way of the cross, we may come to the joy of his resurrection. For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, now and for ever. *Amen.*

+ *The Meal* +

The meal is now eaten. If several are gathered, they first serve one another, then dine.

+ *The Word and the Prayers* +

At the end of the meal, someone reads John 13.1-17.

This scripture passage may be read from your Bible or using the copy of the passage provided as an appendix to this service.

If there is to be a footwashing, it takes place immediately after the reading. Simply move to where the basin, pitcher, and towels are placed. The Presider starts the footwashing. Then those present may wash the feet of one another. This action should include no conversation, and be carried out in silence. When the footwashing is finished and all participating have washed their hands, people return to the table.

A simple hymn may be sung. (Examples are provided in the second appendix below)

The following psalm is said after the footwashing. If there is more than one participant, it may be said in unison, or the verses may be alternated, with one voice praying the odd numbered verses and everyone else saying the even number verses.

Psalm 63:1-8

- 1 O God, you are my God; eagerly I seek you;
my soul thirsts for you, my flesh faints for you,
as in a barren and dry land where there is no water.
- 2 Therefore I have gazed upon you in your holy place;
that I might behold your power and your glory.
- 3 For your loving-kindness is better than life itself;
my lips shall give you praise.
- 4 So will I bless you as long as I live
and lift up my hands in your Name.
- 5 My soul is content, as with marrow and fatness,
and my mouth praises you with joyful lips,
- 6 When I remember you upon my bed,
and meditate on you in the night watches.
- 7 For you have been my helper,
and under the shadow of your wings I will rejoice.
- 8 My soul clings to you,
your right hand holds me fast.

Prayers of the People

Presider: I invite each and all of you to name those people and places
for whom we should pray and remember this night.

Time is allowed for people to do so.

The Presider concludes with one of the following prayers:

O God of the crucified and risen One,
from whom no trial or trouble can separate us:
you feed us with your Word
and soothe us with your Spirit, closer to us than breath itself.
Make us glad this night for the life of your servant Jesus;
Make us servants of all for the sake of Jesus;
who for our sake gave his life for the salvation of all.
In the Name of Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord.

People: **Amen.**

or

Presider: Infinite, intimate God,
your Son Jesus Christ girded himself with a towel
and washed his disciples' feet.
Hear the prayer we offer in his name,
and grant us the will to be the servant of others
as he emptied himself to become the servant of all,
who gave up his life and died for us,
yet lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

People: **Amen.**

After a brief time of silence, people may say "good night" to those with whom they shared this time online or over the phone.

Before the silence and 'goodnight, or as the table is cleared and clean up takes place in each household, participants are encouraged to reflect upon the service, addressing questions like:

What stands out to you from what we did tonight? What did you notice?

Was there a moment you felt particularly close to God or one another?

What do you think might be the connection between footwashing and the Eucharist?
How about the connection between our family meals and the Eucharist with the church?

How might Jesus be inviting you to serve others in your actions?

Portions of this rite have been provided by and/or adapted from the Rev. Dr. James Farwell and Dr. Lisa Kimball of Virginia Theological Seminary, and The Rev. Dr. David Gartner, Diocese of Spokane, The Episcopal Church. The hand washing at the beginning of the service was provided by The Rev. Josephine Robertson, All Saints Episcopal Church, Bellevue, WA. All used or adapted with permission.

Jesus Washes the Disciples' Feet

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 devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him.

During supper ³Jesus, knowing that the Father 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."

¹²After 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. ¹⁶Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. ¹⁷If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.

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Appendix:

Possible hymns to sing

Great God, your love has called us here

Preferred tune is St. Petersburg. However, if you do not know that tune, the tune St. Catherine also works (same tune as 'Faith of Our Fathers.')

Great God, your love has called us here
as we, by love, for love were made.
Your living likeness still we bear,
though marred, dishonoured, disobeyed.
We come, with all our heart and mind
your call to hear, your love to find.

Great God, in Christ you call our name
and then receive us as your own,
not through some merit, right or claim,
but by your gracious love alone.
We strain to glimpse your mercy seat
and find you kneeling at our feet.

Then take the towel, and break the bread,
and humble us, and call us friends.
Suffer and serve till all are fed,
and show how grandly love intends
to work till all creation sings,
to fill all worlds, to crown all things.

Great God, in Christ you set us free
your life to live, your joy to share.
Give us your Spirit's liberty
to turn from guilt and dull despair
and offer all that faith can do
while love is making all things new.

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Where charity and love prevail

This can be sung to the tune Winchester Old, the same tune used for the Christmas carol 'While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks.

Where charity and love prevail,
there God is ever found;
Brought here together by Christ's love,
by love are we thus bound.

With grateful joy and holy fear
His charity we learn;
Let us with heart and mind and strength
now love him in return.

Let strife among us be unknown,
let all contention cease;
Be His the glory that we seek,
be ours His holy peace.

Let us recall that in our midst
dwells God's begotten Son;
As members of His body joined,
we are in Him made one.

Love can exclude no race or creed,
if honoured be God's name;
our common life embraces all
whose Father is the same.

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For those familiar with the songs of Taize, Ubi Caritas/Live in Charity and Bonum est Confidere/It is Good to Trust in the Lord are excellent choices, both of which are in the 1998 hymn book of The Anglican Church of Canada. They are repetitive and easy for children and those unable to read to pick up. In any case, if the examples in this appendix do not work for your setting, perhaps they bring to mind well-known or favourite hymns of yours that do.