

Maundy Thursday Table Liturgy
Guide for Worship at Home¹
Crossroads Presbyterian Church

On the night before he died, the night in which he was betrayed, Jesus gathered with his disciples. They shared a meal and prayed together. According to the Gospel of John, Jesus knelt and washed their feet. According to the other gospels, after supper Jesus took the bread and wine on the table and asked the disciples to remember him by those simple elements. Jesus also commanded his disciples to love one another as he loved them.

We can remember these important moments in Jesus' last days using simple, tangible things most of us have at home. This time of worship is designed for the dinner table or another table where you love to sit. You can use this guide to conduct worship on your own.

Read over this guide to worship at home before you are ready to have your time of worship, whether on your own or with your family.

Prior to mealtime worship: You are invited to bake a loaf of bread, or bake something to share as part of your meal.

Tip for Young Families: Have your child make their own paper placemat for dinner this evening. Have them draw a picture of a way they might show love or receive love.

ACTION – Setting the Table

Gather the following items and set them on your table:

- *Bowl filled with water, or a bowl with a pitcher filled with water*
- *Towel*
- *Candles, if you have some, and something to light them with*
- *Bible*
- *and any other food for your Maundy Thursday meal*

GATHER AT THE TABLE

Sit down at the table. Breathe. Take in the beauty and the ordinariness of the table set before you.

Light the candle(s) to invite the light of Christ into your time of worship.

PRAYER

Lord, the table is set and we are gathered. We come to hear your Word, to serve each other, to remember our baptisms, to eat together, and to eat with you. We come to prepare for your betrayal, arrest, and crucifixion – things for which we can never truly be ready. This night, be present to us in the water, in this meal, and in the Word. In your name we pray, Amen.

¹ This liturgy is adapted from one that Rev. Emma Nickel created for First Presbyterian Church of Royal Oak, MI.

SCRIPTURE – John 13:1–7; 31b–35

¹ 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.

² The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper ³ Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, ⁴ got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. ⁵ Then 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. ⁶ He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" ⁷ Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand." ⁸ Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me." ⁹ Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" ¹⁰ Jesus 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." ¹¹ For 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?" ¹³ You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. ¹⁴ So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. ¹⁵ For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. ¹⁶ Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. ¹⁷ If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them."

³¹ Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. ³² If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. ³³ Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.' ³⁴ I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

ACTION – Encounter the waters for washing and remembering our baptism

Place your hands in the bowl of water, or pour water over them from the pitcher into the bowl. If there are more participants, feel free to pour water over one another's hands. Feel the coolness of the water and imagine the gift of Jesus cleansing your feet in the dusty, hot climate of the Middle East. Imagine Jesus doing the job of a servant by washing the dirty feet of guests arriving for a meal. Imagine the waters of baptism flowing over your hands, reminding you that you are God's own child, claimed by God and loved by God, forever.

PRAYER

Servant of all, you teach us to do as you have done. Help us to find ways of loving one another through our most difficult days, just as you shared love in your time of trial. May our neighbors know we are Christians by our love. Amen.

REFLECTION

What does the sign of water recall for you, and how does it connect with your faith?

ACTION — Breaking Bread at your Table/Enjoying your meal

Consider breaking a piece of bread if you have some.

REFLECTION²

Reflect to past meals and moments around table. What meals have been memorable? What gatherings made you feel welcomed? Have you ever had a memorable Communion experience? What made it memorable?

How does it make you feel to know that Jesus fed and shared a meal with all his disciples, even Judas who would soon betray him? What does that teach us about God?

Jesus gives thanks for the bread before breaking it. What things do you give thanks for in your life? Make a quick mental list of 5–10 things you often forget to thank God for. Jot them down or share them with those gathered at the table.

Tip for young families: *Invite each child at the table to reflect on their favorite dinner blessing and sing/say it together. Point out that Jesus also offers a blessing to God for the bread before he and his disciples eat, so when we say grace, we are being like Jesus.*

PRAYER —“Here We Are” by James Hart Brumm³

Here we are, O God, gathered around your Table,
gathered together by your love,
all done trying to shift the blame away.
We know we betray you, every day,
but we are ready to try again.
Help us to follow faithfully.
Lead us, Christ our Master.

Here we are, O God, gathered around your Table,
fed by your own body and blood,
re-calling you into our presence.
As your life fills us,
we feel the challenge to let you shine through us every day.
Help us to live both holy and whole.
Fill us, Spirit of Shalom.

² These reflection questions and “Tips for Young Families” are provided by Rev. Sara Are | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org, from a liturgy created during Lent 2020, in the midst of the global pandemic caused by COVID-19.

³ p. 212 in *Spring: Liturgical Resources for February, March and April including Lent and Holy Week*, ed. Ruth Burgess, Wild Goose Publications, 2019. Used with permission. www.ionabooks.com

Here we are, O God, gathered around your Table,
washed and dressed by your grace,
ready to follow you into the world.
We see the danger and death out in the world.
Help us to see you at work among us.
Fill us for our journey, God our Maker.

**Here we are, O God, gathered around your Table,
Knowing there are crosses to be carried,
Knowing there is Good News to be lived.**

**Triune God, ever leading us, filling us, fitting us,
Strengthen us to walk with you:
For only by walking with you to the Cross
can we step into the glory of your Resurrection.**

CLEARING THE TABLE AND STRIPPING THE WORSHIP SPACE

Take a few moments to carefully clear the table. In the sanctuary, we would strip the worship space of all the normal elements of praise and celebration. With intention, clear away the bread and cups, put away your Bible, blow out your candle, and fold and put away any table covering. Return to the empty table for a few moments of silence before the blessing.

Tip for young families: Invite each child to help clean up. As you clean, ask each other, “What was your favorite part of the liturgy and meal?”

Blessing

Go from this table, knowing that Christ walks behind you to hem your journey.
Go from this table, knowing that Christ walks before you to light your way.
Go from this table, knowing that Christ is beneath and above you,
that Christ is with you in all ways.
Go from this table, knowing that Christ surrounds you –
this night and forever. Amen!

DEPART IN SILENCE

Return to the rest of your routine, keeping in mind the worshipful attitude of this service.