

# Love Feast

Maundy Thursday, April 2, 2015  
Long Green Valley Church of the Brethren

## Meditation Music

### Welcome with the Word in song

Isaiah 1:18

## Come, let us reason

by Ken Medema

"Come let us rea-son, to-gether, that's what  
God says, "Come let us rea-son, to-  
gether," says the Lord. Lord.  
"Tho' your sins be as scar-let, they shall be as white as snow,  
Tho' they be red like crim-son, they shall be as wool."

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## Opening Thoughts

The Lord invites us to come into that sacred space where our failings don't need to be defended at all costs. In this place we can let down our guard in the presence of our holy, loving God, and admit that we are sinners in need of forgiveness. Here we can sit as brothers and

sisters, none of whom are better than or worse than us, all of whom need the transforming touch of the One who says, "Come."

In this set-apart time, our hands can serve as God's hands to one another,  
with water - washing,  
with food - sharing,  
with hearts - loving. Along the way of this journey together, we seek to release our failures when it comes to sin as we receive the gift of another washing us. In the process, we are empowered to serve. And then, we become more than servants, for we go to sit at the table of friendship as guests of the One who brings this community of forgiven sinners together.

Yes, with this meal we are remembering that upper room event of long ago when Jesus gathered his disciples for a "last supper." With bread and cup we will once again recall how Jesus became our Christ, as his body was broken and his blood was shed for us. However, in this meal we will also hear our calling to be the body of Christ in this world today, for Love Feast is a commissioning service.

We are *sinners* who become *servants* who seek to welcome strangers, even enemies, as *friends* in Christ, who are then called to become *apostles*, that is: disciples sent to share good news of the good news that the coming realm of God's Love is bursting out all around us,  
like seeds planted ready to sprout,  
like lost coins waiting to be found,  
like prodigal children  
running home to a waiting father,  
like a wedding banquet set and guests invited.

This is God's Love Feast.

repeat "Come, let us reason" (*above*)

These initial moments of this special time are meant for reflection before we journey to the footwashing circles and then to the meal tables. Please turn to the back of your bulletin, where you will find a "Prayer at Personal Examination" (the second paragraph). In the next minute or so of silence, read over this prayer, which paraphrases Psalm 116. Ready yourself to make it your prayer. In so doing, prepare the way for the Lord to be at work this evening within you.

- Silence -

## **Unison Prayer at Personal Examination**

(back of bulletin - paraphrase of Psalm 116, CEB)

I love you, Lord, because you hear my requests for mercy. I will call out to you as long as I live, because you listen closely to me. You have delivered me from death, my eyes from tears, and my feet from stumbling. O yes, Lord, I am your servant! So I will offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving and call on your name. I will keep the promises I made to you in the presence of all God's people. <sup>-1-</sup>

## Moving to disciple circles

It is time to take our next steps in this journey together. Please take a hymnal and go to the footwashing circles, with the men on this side of the partition and the women on the other. Quietly bring more or take away extra chairs, and face one another in the presence of God.

# Forgiven Servants

## Responsive Reading

John 13:2b-17

843

And during supper Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. 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.

**Jesus came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"**

Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand."

**Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet."**

Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me."

**Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!"**

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." For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, "Not all of you are clean."

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? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you.

***Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.*** <sup>-2-</sup>

## Meditation

Like Peter and the rest of those first disciples, we are far from perfect. We often stumble our way through this journey of following Jesus. Look to the gospel accounts of this long ago night we here remember, and find this Peter denying any knowledge of his Lord  $\acute{o}$  three times, in fact. Read of the inability of all of them to be steadfast. They all ran when trouble knocked. Fear pushed them away. And yet, these "sinners," these persons prone to wander, to leave the One they loved, would become apostles, the bedrock of a movement sent out into the world to serve in Jesus' name.

Like us, they were broken, conflicted, full of doubt, afraid, much of the time unable to see past the present moment. In fact, in their midst was betrayal, and they didn't have a clue. Here sat those first disciples, in what would prove to be their last meal with Jesus before everything changed. The details of this moment pull us in. In our mind's eye, we see Jesus remove his cloak and tie a towel around his waist. Many of us have seen a brother or sister do this before us innumerable times. We hear the sound of water as it is poured in a basin and set before our, not just their, feet. We know that this was a common act of hospitality back then, something seemingly out of place today. But because many of us have done this so many times, it somehow seems the right thing to do.

Do not, however, forget what the washing is all about. We do not come to this place as "perfect" people. Our personal road is full of dust. We have made our share of mistakes. In spite of our best efforts, or maybe because of our worst, there are tears in the fabric of our relationships. There are broken pieces to the pottery of our lives. Like the saints before us who have wrestled with inner demons and struggled through dark nights of the soul, we need the tub and the towel and the touch of the master. We need to be washed. Like Peter, we may be so bold or foolish to respond, "not just my feet, but all of me." With a prayer as old as the early church, we cry, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner." (*Jesus Prayer*)

And there at our feet is Jesus. Or is it our sister or brother-in-Christ? And the Bible spills off the page and into our present journey. The water reminds us of our baptism and the steadfast love of the Lord which never ceases, of God's mercies which never come to an end. Though far from perfect, we are on the way toward the kingdom of God, forgiven for a purpose. The water with which we wash our feet or hands, like the water of our baptism, is for both cleansing and for commissioning. Forgiven, we are called forth as servants in Jesus' name. We are to become his hands, not only to those closest to us, our brothers or sisters in Christ, but to others who may not share our values or beliefs, but with whom Jesus invites us to find common ground.

We are "forgiven servants." Hear that description with humility. We remain always in need of forgiveness, not because God is not merciful or loving, but because the One who died for the forgiveness of our sin (once and for all), is our servant leader. We cannot follow him, we cannot be his hands, his body, if we lord it over others. This is true even in the act of footwashing. Some of us are unable to get down on our knees (or, perhaps better said, get up from our knees). In order that this not be for you a stumbling block, we offer the option of handwashing. For the rest of us, I encourage you not to let the fact that you can get down (or back up from) your knees get in the way of you receiving or giving what lies at the heart of this ordinance.

Please turn to the back of your bulletin to the "Prayer before Footwashing." It refers to a verse in our hymnal which we will not sing, a song from long ago in our Brethren tradition, which states,

"And now, Lord Jesus, finally  
may your good Spirit outpoured be,  
your grace and might displaying,  
and thus shall we in this hour start  
to live like you, with a whole heart,  
your holy love obeying." -3-

Let us pray in unison.

## **Unison Prayer before Feetwashing**

(back of bulletin)

Loving Christ, in true humility you stooped to wash the feet of your disciples. May we too, as faithful servants, wash each other's feet in loving service, for by this very act of love we start to live like you, in your holy love obeying.

## **Feetwashing**

(hymns sung as needed)

1. **Amazing grace!** how sweet the sound, 143  
that saved a wretch like me!  
I once was lost, but now am found,  
was blind, but now I see.

2. 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,  
and grace my fears relieved.  
How precious did that grace appear  
the hour I first believed.

3. Through many dangers, toils, and snares,  
I have already come.  
'Tis grace has brought me safe thus far,  
and grace will lead me home.

6. When we've been there ten thousand years,  
bright shining as the sun,  
we've no less days to sing God's praise  
than when we'd first begun.

by John Newton  
vs. 1-3, 1779  
vs. 6, 1790

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1. **Come, thou fount** of every blessing, 521  
tune my heart to sing thy grace.  
Streams of mercy, never ceasing,  
call for songs of loudest praise.  
Teach me some melodious sonnet,  
sung by flaming tongues above.  
Praise the mount, I'm fixed upon it,  
mount of God's unchanging love.

2. Here I raise my Ebenezer,  
hither by thy help I'm come,  
and I hope, by thy good pleasure,  
safely to arrive at home.

Jesus sought me when a stranger,  
wandering from the fold of God.  
He, to rescue me from danger,  
interposed his precious blood.

3. Oh, to grace how great a debtor  
daily I am constrained to be!  
Let that grace now, like a fetter,  
bind my wandering heart to thee.  
Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,  
prone to leave the God I love.  
Here is my heart, O take and seal it,  
seal it for thy courts above.

by Robert Robinson, 1758

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1. **I heard the voice of Jesus say,** 493  
    Come unto me and rest.  
Lay down, O weary one, lay down  
    your head upon my breast.ö  
I came to Jesus as I was,  
    so weary, worn and sad.  
I found in him a resting place,  
    and he has made me glad.
2. I heard the voice of Jesus say,  
    Behold, I freely give  
the living water, thirsty one;  
    stoop down and drink and live.ö  
I came to Jesus, and I drank  
    of that life-giving stream.  
My thirst was quenched, my soul revived,  
    and now I live in him.
3. I heard the voice of Jesus say,  
    I am this dark world's light.  
Look unto me, your morn shall rise,  
    and all your day be bright.ö  
I looked to Jesus, and I found  
    in him my star, my sun,  
and in that light of life I'll walk  
    till traveling days are done.

by Horatius Bonar, 1846

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1. **What wondrous love is this,** 530  
     O my soul, O my soul?  
     What wondrous love is this, O my soul?  
     What wondrous love is this, that caused the Lord of bliss  
     to bear the dreadful curse for my soul, for my soul?  
     to bear the dreadful curse for my soul?
  
2. When I was sinking down,  
     sinking down, sinking down,  
     when I was sinking down, sinking down.  
     when I was sinking down, beneath God's righteous frown,  
     Christ laid aside his crown for my soul, for my soul.  
     Christ laid aside his crown for my soul.
  
3. To God and to the Lamb I will sing, I will sing,  
     to God and to the Lamb I will sing,  
     to God and to the Lamb who is the great I Am,  
     while millions join the theme, I will sing, I will sing.  
     while millions join the theme, I will sing.
  
4. And when from death I am free I'll sing on, I'll sing on,  
     and when from death I am free I'll sing on,  
     and when from death I am free I'll sing and joyful be,  
     and through eternity I'll sing on, I'll sing on,  
     and through eternity I'll sing on.

anonymous

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**Spirit of the living God,** fall afresh on me. 349 <sup>-4-</sup>  
 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.

## **Moving to the Lord's Table**

# Beloved Friends

## **Responsive Reading**

John 15:12-17

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***"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.***

No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you.

**I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father.**

You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name.

**I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.” -2-**

## **Meditation and song**

Many of us have followed the recent public television show, *“Downton Abbey,”* which portrays an early 20<sup>th</sup> century English manor, with its division between the gentry upstairs and the servants downstairs. We become captivated by the lives of all during what was a time of dramatic change, as class distinctions and privilege were slowly eroding, along with the traditions built upon them. The moments that *“hook”* us come when the barriers between servant and nobility seem to come down, and they struggle to figure out that strange territory called *“friendship.”*

*“I do not call you servants any longer,”* Jesus says, *“I have called you friends.”* Does this mean that we all now reside upstairs, where others serve us and, as nobility, we now are above others? Hardly. We are still called to be *“forgiven servants”* in this world. But, we are more than servants. We are invited to be friends of Christ Jesus. I use the word *“invite”* because, like love, true friendship cannot be commanded. I know this is Jesus’ biggest commandment, to *“love one another as I have loved you.”* It is also the most demanding. Case in point: *“no one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.”*

Now, you can think about soldiers on a battlefield when you hear those words, but me, I think about different turf. It’s in our daily relationships that this becomes the hardest. Real friendship requires honesty and setting aside things that too easily get between us. What dies along the way is our self-centeredness. Believe me, it’s hard to release our grasp on how *“we”* see things and try to view life from someone else’s perspective. Let’s be clear, Jesus died to make common ground between us and God, to transform enemies of God into friends. If we, then, are *“friends”* of Christ, does that help us see others now from God’s perspective? No matter how different we are from one another, we all were fashioned by God from the same *“ground,”* from the same *“humus”* as human beings. Humility is another word for *“laying down”* (on the ground) *one’s life for one’s friends.”*

At this point in Love Feast, we share a simple meal, remembering that last supper Jesus ate with his disciples long ago. As we eat here and now, we seek common ground with those around us. We may not see eye to eye. Our interests, our politics, our status, our sex, our race (etc.) may be very different. Those things are not what make us *“beloved friends.”* We may struggle with this but, because Jesus laid down his life for his friends, our world is changing for the better. So, before we eat, take a few moments and look at these friends of Christ at your table, while I sing.



# Look

1. and 3. What do you see when you look in the face of the one  
2. Turn your eyes to the Lord and see with the light

in front of you? Can you read it like a book?  
God pro-vides. In - to your life will be born

Or may - be your eyes see some-thing new. Look with -  
a new-ness that you can - not hide. It's the

in the per - son, what does this some-one show? Un - der -  
one thing you've want - ed, to see the light with - in. Op - en

stand this per - son, (his/her) be - ing come to know, e - ven  
up your be - ing and let the Son shine in, let Him

[1. and 3.]  
(tho'/so), your eyes can't see too far.  
in, your eyes can see so far!

[2.]  
let Him in.

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## Singing our grace

## Lord, bless the hands

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Canon

1  
Lord, bless the hands that share with us.

2  
And bless the hearts that care for us. Now hear this

3  
sim - ple prayer from us. A - men. A - men.

4

Text: M. Andrew Murray, 1974, *The Brethren Songbook*, 1975

Music: Teresa R. Murray, 1974, *The Brethren Songbook*, 1975

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## Eating Together

# Sent Disciples

## Hymn

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### 1. I am the Bread of life. <sup>-5-</sup>

You who come to me shall not hunger,  
and who believe in me shall not thirst.  
No one can come to me unless the Father beckons.

*Refrain:* And I will raise you up, & I will raise you up,  
and I will raise you up on the last day.

2. The bread that I will give  
is my flesh for the life of the world,  
and if you eat of this bread, you shall live forever,  
you shall live forever. *(refrain)*
3. Unless you eat of the flesh of the Son of Man  
and drink of his blood, and drink of his blood,  
you shall not have life within you. *(refrain)*
4. I am the resurrection, I am the life.  
If you believe in me, even though you die,  
you shall live forever. *(refrain)*

5. Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ,  
the Son of God, who has come into the world. (refrain)

## **Meditation**

On this night of nights, we remember that upper room event of long ago when Jesus sat with his disciples for a ðlast supper.ö All too soon the table would be cleared and they would walk in the dark to Gethsemane for a ðthy will be doneö time of prayer, where one disciple betrayed and the rest scattered. The injustice system then went to work with lightning speed, with a few detours, and by the next day an innocent man was nailed on a cross. It was the slow work of God that led to this point, but the quick work of man which executed it.

Like the lamb whose lifeblood marked the doorpost of each Hebrew home back in Egypt, causing the angel of death to pass over, Jesus - the lamb of God - was led to slaughter. With words taken from the prophet Isaiah, this suffering servant was *ðdespised and rejectedö í ðhe was wounded for our transgressions, and crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healedö* (53:3a, 5).

It is his death that we remember. It is his broken body we think of as we take up a piece bread between us, break it and eat it. It is his lifeblood we ponder as we drink the fruit of the vine from a cup we call his. It is this death we proclaim ó there before us, we claim it. He died for us, for you, for me. With bread and cup we proclaim that Jesus became our Christ as his body was broken and his blood was shed for us. However, in this meal we also recognize something more. We hear his calling to **be** the body of Christ in this world today.

As I said earlier, Love Feast is a commissioning service. Because of what Jesus did upon the cross, we - who are *sinner*s - become *servants* who seek to welcome strangers, even enemies, as *friends* in Christ. We are called to become *apostles*, that is: disciples sent to share good news. Yes, we tell about how Jesus died for us, and then how God raised him (and us) to new life, the message waiting to be repeated this Sunday. But we also are called share the good news that Jesus himself proclaimed with his words and through his deeds from his baptism to his death: that the coming realm of God's Love is at hand, it is bursting out all around us,

like seeds planted ready to sprout,  
like lost coins waiting to be found,  
like prodigal children  
running home to a waiting father,  
like a wedding banquet set and guests invited.

In fact, this table is but a simple foretaste of a meal that awaits the children of God when the kingdom comes, and God's will is done on earth as it is in heaven.

ðThis is the feast of victory for our Godí  
For the Lamb who was slain has begun his reign.  
Alleluia!ö<sup>-6-</sup>

As we come to the bread and cup,  
let's listen to the apostle Paul.

## **Scripture**

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

<sup>23</sup> 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, <sup>24</sup> 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." <sup>25</sup> 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." <sup>26</sup> For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

## **Invitation**

All of us who are in love and fellowship in the family of God, who do truly and earnestly repent of our sins, who humbly put our trust in Christ, and who desire his help that we might walk in newness of life, are invited to draw near to God and receive this holy communion to our comfort, through Jesus Christ our Lord. <sup>-7-</sup>

## **Unison Prayer before the Bread and Cup**

(back of bulletin)

Loving God, as we break bread and drink wine together, we praise you for your love and faithfulness by sending us Jesus. Here we are, in joy and gratitude, to receive your perfect grace.

## **The Bread**

øThe bread which we break  
is the communion of the body of Christ.ö

## **The Cup**

øThe cup which we bless  
is the communion of the blood of Christ.ö

## **Hymn**

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1. **Go to dark Gethsemane,**  
ye that feel the tempter's power.  
Your Redeemer's conflict see,  
watch with him one bitter hour.  
Turn not from his griefs away.  
Learn of Jesus Christ to pray.
2. Follow to the judgment hall,  
view the Lord of life arraigned.  
Oh, the wormwood and the gall!  
Oh, the pangs his soul sustained!  
Shun not suffering, shame, or loss.  
Learn of him to bear the cross.

3. Calvary's mournful mountain climb.  
There, adoring at his feet,  
mark that miracle of time,  
God's own sacrifice complete.  
"It is finished!" hear the cry.  
Learn of Jesus Christ to die.

by James Montgomery, 1825

## **Unison Parting Prayer**

(back of bulletin)

O God of all, as living and loving servants of Jesus, we walk out into the night led by Christ's light to bring light and peace to our broken world. We go, with praise and thanksgiving. <sup>-1-</sup>

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### notes:

<sup>1</sup> written by Nancy Faus-Mullen, member of the Richmond, IN Church of the Brethren, retired professor at Bethany Seminary, from Church of the Brethren Living Word Bulletin series (Anchor/Wallace, Sleepy Eye MN 56085) for April 2, 2015, Maundy Thursday/Love Feast.  
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<sup>2</sup> *New Revised Standard Version*, copyright © 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved (verse 6 of #843 altered)

<sup>3</sup> Hymnal #451, "How pleasant it is," vs. 4. Attributed to Wilhelm Knepper, *Geistreiches Gesang-Buch*, 1720; tr. Ora W Garber, *European Origins of the Brethren*, 1958, alt. Translation © 1958, Church of the Brethren General Board.

<sup>4</sup> by Daniel Iverson, 1929. Text and music copyright © 1935, renewal 1963 Birdwing Music and BMG Songs, Inc.

<sup>5</sup> by Suzanne Toolan, 1966, based on John 6. Text and music copyright © 1970 G.I.A. Publications, Inc.

<sup>6</sup> from "This is the feast of victory," Hymnal #476, based upon Revelation 5:12-13, translated by John W. Arthur, © 1978 Lutheran Church in America, The American Lutheran Church, The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, and The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod. Sung to tune: *Festival Canticle*, © 1978 Richard Hillert.

<sup>7</sup> from *For all who minister*, p. 233 © 1993 Brethren Press; *Pastor's Manual*, p. 60, © 1978 Brethren Press; *Book of Worship*, p. 213, © 1964 Brethren Press.