

Near the Cross: Worship at Home Liturgy for Holy Week 2020

Avery United Methodist Church

This resource is to be used in homes during Holy Week this year, as we are unable to gather for communal worship in the church building. Liturgy is the word we use to describe the elements of worship and the order in which we do them: prayers, music, scriptures, message, offering, call and response, communion, etc. The word *liturgy* means “the work of the people.” Thus, everyone is meant to participate in the “work” of worship. We are not meant to be passive observers of a few leaders.

This year, the COVID-19 pandemic is bringing the intent of liturgy home – literally! We will all practice the liturgy of Holy Week as individuals and families in our own homes, reminiscent of the early church which operated entirely in homes. By following the same liturgy, we will remain connected to each other through the Christ who suffered and sacrificed everything so that we may have eternal life.

This worship liturgy was created by Pastor Erik, with inclusion of materials provided by the Western Pennsylvania Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church & Midnight Oil Productions. We are grateful for the leadership and resourcing provided by our Annual Conference, which is supported by paying our connectional apportionments.



A Picture of the Hill of Crosses in Lithuania, taken by Pastor Erik while visiting there in 2000 for a mission trip. The Hill of Crosses has for centuries been a site of peaceful resistance by Lithuanians, and grew the most during Soviet occupation from 1944-1990, when open displays of religion were not allowed. Today it stands as a testament to peace, and signifies allegiance to Christ above all earthly authorities.

Maundy Thursday

Preparation: Find a place in your home for you/your family to engage in worship, like the kitchen table or a dedicated space in your living room. Gather a Bible, a candle or lamp to light, a purple cloth if you have it, and a small plant or flower if you have one. Invite each person to bring a cross and/or other symbol of faith, as well as a cup and plate of their choosing. Prepare music if you want to include it. (Pastor Erik recommends music from the Taize Community). This space will be used throughout the week for all of these liturgies.

Pastor Erik will lead the following liturgy on Thu. April 9 from 5:30-6 pm via ZOOM, an online video conferencing software. You may also call in with your phone to participate with audio only, like a conference call. Contact Pastor Erik at erik.hoeke@gmail.com to receive an email invitation to participate.

A Love Feast to Unlock Hope

Developed by Rev. Doug Dyson, First UMC of Sharon, PA

Adapted by Rev. Erik Hoeke

The Love Feast is a Christian ritual meal distinct from the Lord's Supper. In sharing food we strengthen our bonds of harmony and goodwill, and remember Christ's love for us and in us. More commonly practiced in early American Methodism when long-traveling circuit pastors consecrated communion quarterly, this ritual sharing of food and drink is suited for a time when spatial isolation prevents us from meeting together. In this observance, all present – and/or those connected through social media, electronic streaming, on the phone or otherwise – become those who together share this remembrance of God's agape love poured out for us.

Begin with an invitation to prepare for the feast by getting a snack, pouring a fresh cup of coffee or other beverage, gathering at a table, or otherwise getting ready. If you are streaming, this is an ideal time for a familiar musical refrain that people can hum or sing along with as they prepare. If a person is alone, they may wish to add a photo of loved ones, a gift that reminds them of a special relationship, or other reminders to their table preparation.

Call to Worship (spoken, or sung to the tune of Old 100th, the Doxology tune)

As you sing, light the candle or lamp in your sacred space.

Be present at our table, Lord;
be here and everywhere adored;
thy creatures bless, and grant that we
may feast in paradise with thee.

Introductory words:

If you are with others, I invite you to share with those around your table [*or with those gathered by Zoom*] what food(s) you bring to the table for our virtual feast. If you are alone today, you may wish to call a friend or family member to share this time by phone, or take a moment to remind yourself of God's presence with you through the Holy Spirit.

Remembering the story:

When we "break bread" together as a church, we remember how, throughout the Scriptures, God's presence is revealed in the sharing of a meal:

with Abraham as he entertained strangers;
in the providing of manna to the wandering Israelites;
for the widow, whose grain and oil did not run out;
and to Isaiah under the broom tree;

In the same way, Jesus also fed people as he gave loving welcome and abundant provision:

at the wedding feast at Cana;
for the feeding of thousands;
in the homes of sinners and tax collectors;
and to his disciples at the Last Supper.

After Jesus' resurrection, two disciples recognized Jesus in their midst through a shared meal. As they shared their food with this stranger, their eyes were suddenly opened to the Risen Lord sitting in their midst!

So today, we gather at our tables to celebrate God-with-us through Jesus, risen and present Savior. The good news for us is this: though we cannot gather in a sanctuary, though we are confined in our houses with doors shut this Easter Sunday, we know Jesus is present in the sharing of our food. Afraid or anxious as we may be, may Jesus speak words of peace and joy to us today.

Table Grace:

Gathering God, we – like the first disciples – are stuck behind closed doors today.

Step into our locked rooms, and be present at our tables, Lord.

Speak peace to us as we break bread and the share in your agape love.

In the name of Jesus, the one who unlocks hope for us, we pray. Amen.

Sharing at the Table

This is a time for sharing the food at the table, and for sharing messages of hope and peace with each other, such as:

Favorite scripture passage

Words of witness to how God is present and active in one's life these days

Brief message of encouragement and hope. One may consider the answer to the question, "What is giving me hope during this time of distancing and disorientation?"

Let each person take a piece of food, hold it, and share a passage of Scripture or a hope-filled word before partaking. Then do the same with whatever cup you are drinking. Sharing may be in person around the table, or in the video chat. It may also be by calling a friend or family member on the phone or writing an encouraging letter or card to someone while you eat.

Song (if desired)

After time for all to share, invite singing:

My hope is built on nothing less than
Jesus' blood and righteousness.
I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but
Wholly lean on Jesus' name.
On Christ the solid Rock I stand, all
Other ground is sinking sand,
All other ground is sinking sand.

Closing exhortation:

Friends, as we share this Love Feast, the Risen Son of God is among us, connecting us to one another and unlocking hope for all people. As food nourishes our bodies, may our hearts be filled with hope. As drink refreshes us, may our spirits be lifted with peace and joy. Thanks be to God!

Good Friday

Preparation: Return to your holy/sacred space you created on Maundy Thursday. Light the candle or lamp, and dim or turn out other lights.

You may follow this liturgy on your own, or follow along with the video posted on the Avery UMC website and Facebook page.

Call to Worship

Separating himself from the community, Judas betrayed Jesus, setting in motion the events of this day.

Falling asleep in the garden, the disciples were inattentive to the significance of this night.

From a safe distance, Peter stood in a courtyard and three times denied knowing Jesus.

Protecting his own interests above the interests of others, including Jesus, Pontius Pilate sought separation from the will of the crowds to crucify Jesus.

Jesus was alone when he carried his cross up the hill to the Place of the Skull, Golgotha.

He was alone as he hung there, the disciples and the women standing at a distance, crying.

In many ways, Good Friday reminds us of our tendency to distance ourselves from our Lord. Like Judas we value material benefits. Like Peter we are ashamed of our faith. Like all the disciples we are quickly distracted and fail to pay attention to the significance of Christ's death. Like Pilate we consider our own interests before Christ's. We stand at a distance, careful not to experience Christ's suffering too closely, lest we be asked to make sacrifices ourselves.

This is the story of how Jesus sacrificed everything so that we may have life, and have it abundantly. This is the story of distancing ourselves from God, only to be reminded that God has erased that distance through Jesus' death on the cross. This is the story of suffering and sacrifice for good and loving purposes. This is the essential story to our faith.

Scripture

Read John 18:1 to 19:30.

Extinguish the candle or lamp.

Read John 19:31-42.

Song: What Wondrous Love is This

What wondrous love is this,
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.

Media or Technology Fast (Optional)

From Pastor Erik: Constant information about the COVID-19 pandemic can increase our stress and anxiety. I am encouraging everyone to fast (abstain) from media from sundown on Good Friday until sunrise on Easter. This includes news sources in print, TV, or online, as well as social media. Additionally, I recommend a fast from all technology – phones, tablets, TVs, video games, etc., or limiting its use for the duration of Holy Saturday. In its place, spend more time in prayer, and doing activities that do not require the use of technology. See the Holy Week activity sheet for ideas.

One way to enter the fast is to use the end of the Good Friday service to log out of social media accounts, turn off phones and computers, and hide TV remotes or unplug TVs. Consider doing so as you sing or speak the closing song.

Holy Saturday

Preparation: Return to your holy/sacred space you created on Maundy Thursday.

Prayer

Merciful and ever-living God,
Creator of heaven and earth,
the crucified body of your Son was laid in the tomb
and rested on this holy day.

Grant that we may await with him the dawning of the third day
and rise in newness of life, through Jesus Christ our redeemer.

Amen.

An act of Centering Prayer

1. Choose a sacred word as the symbol of your desire to experience God's presence to dwell within you. Examples: Peace, Hope, Calm, Rest, Love, Wisdom.
2. Set a timer for 3, 5, or 10 minutes and start the timer.
3. Sitting comfortably and with eyes closed, settle your mind and ponder the sacred word. Repeat it silently over and over again to help you continue to focus upon it.
4. When thoughts, bodily sensations, and feelings arise, allow them to come and go, returning to your sacred word as your focus until your time concludes.
5. At the end of your prayer time, remain in silence with eyes closed for another minute, as you gently bring yourself back to the presence of the room around you.



Easter Sunday

Preparation: Return to your holy/sacred space you created on Maundy Thursday. Light the candle or lamp to acknowledge the light of Christ.

You may follow this liturgy on your own, or follow along with the video posted on the Avery UMC website and Facebook page.

Opening Prayer:

O Lord, open our lips, and we shall declare your praise! God of life, when all hope seemed swallowed up by death, you unlocked new life through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Teach us to rejoice in your presence, and to share fullness of life and love with all people. In Christ's holy name, Amen.

Music: Sing *This Easter Celebration* (to the tune of *The Church's One Foundation*), or play another favorite Easter song. This hymn is attached.

Scripture:

Read Jeremiah 31:1-6

Reflect: What would you ask God to do again for you?

Prayers of the People:

Pray for those on your heart today. Pray especially for:

Those who were once the lowest and are now considered essential workers, that they may remain healthy and safe.

Those who are sick, whether with COVID-19 or another illness, that they may recover strength and health.

Those who grieve alone because they cannot gather with those they love, that they may be comforted.

Those who feel anxious and afraid when they look toward the future, that they may be at peace.

Avery UMC Prayer Focus for Today: Church leaders & pastors. Pray especially Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koikoi, the District Superintendents, and the Conference Staff of the Western Pennsylvania Conference of the United Methodist Church. With their help, we are finding new and creative ways to unlock hope this Easter.

Lord, in your mercy, receive this prayer. Unlock hope in my heart today. Amen.

Scripture:

Read John 20:1-20

Reflect: To whom in this text do you most relate? Is it Mary, alone, confused, and crying? Peter and the other disciple, running toward anything that might bring them hope? Or the disciples who were trapped by their own fear, hiding behind closed doors?

How does Jesus' resurrection unlock hope for Mary, Peter, and the others? How does it for you, today?

Offering: Give thanks for God's faithfulness and goodness. Take time to prepare a contribution to your local church, and/or to another organization whose work brings hope in your community. Offer your gift to God.

Music: Play a joyful Easter song, and/or sing *Christ the Lord is Risen Today!*

Benediction: Go into this day knowing that no door is locked so tightly that Jesus cannot enter. May the resurrected Christ unlock hope in your life today!

Christ is Risen – Everywhere!!!

Share a brief video of you or your family dressed in your “Easter Sunday best” as you proclaim:

Christ is Risen! Halleluia!

Or, send a picture of you or your family celebrating Easter worship together at home.

“Hide” an Easter Egg in plain sight so that others can hunt for the eggs.

Send them to erik.hoeke@gmail.com or text them to 412-480-7938 by 2 pm on Sunday for inclusion in a **Christ is Risen – Everywhere!!!** compilation video.

This Easter Celebration

Carolyn Winfrey Gillette, 2020

Aurelia

Samuel Sebastian Wesley, 1864

1. This Eas - ter ce - le - bra - tion is not like ones we've known.
2. No gath-ered choirs are sing - ing; no ban-ners lead the way.
3. Our joy won't come from wor - ship that's in a crowd-ed room
4. In all the grief and suf-fering, may we re-mem-ber well:
5. We thank you that on Eas - ter, your church is blessed to be

We pray in i - so - la - tion, we sing the hymns a - lone.
O God of love and prom - ise, where's joy this Eas - ter Day?
but from the news of wom - en who saw the emp - ty tomb.
Christ suf - fered cru - ci - fix - ion and faced the powers of hell.
a scat - tered, faith - ful bo - dy that's do - ing mi - ni - stry.

We're dis-tant from our neigh - bors— from wor - ship lead - ers, too.
With sanc - tu - a - ries emp - ty, may homes be-come the place
Our joy comes from di - sci - ples who ran with haste to see—
Each Eas - ter bears the pro - mise: Christ rose that glo - rious day!
In homes and in the pla - ces of help and heal - ing, too,

No flo - wers grace the chan - cel to set a fes - tive mood.
we pon - der re - sur - rec - tion and ce - le - brate your grace.
who heard that Christ is ris - en, and then, by grace, be - lieved.
Now no - thing in cre - a - tion can keep your love a - way.
we live the Eas - ter mes - sage by glad - ly serv - ing you.