

# Love Feast at Home

adapted from *Sacred Practices, Creating Spiritual Memories*, 2011

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First, let's be clear: The ordinance (or teaching) of Love Feast is meant to be celebrated when the body of Christ comes together as the church. When Paul says in 1 Corinthians 11:33, "So then, my brothers and sisters, when you gather to eat, you should all eat together," he wasn't referring to just any meal. He was talking about the Lord's Supper, or as we Brethren call it, Love Feast.

At PFC, Love Feast, which also could be called our full communion service, is observed twice each year, on World Communion Sunday, (the first Sunday in October), and on Palm Sunday. This year, the COVID-19 sheltering directive precludes our ability to gather together on Palm Sunday. What follows is an adapted Love Feast service for use in your home. I encourage your family to participate in this ancient observance. Love Feast connects us to the Upper Room and Jesus' last meal with his disciples. The last meal that Jesus and the twelve were celebrating was an observance of Passover, a symbolic meal that recalled the tenth and final plague in Egypt as God miraculously freed the Jews from slavery, beginning the Exodus.

*In the ordinances, the Brethren seek to remind themselves who they are, who their Lord is, and where lies their kingdom goal; they seek to celebrate and give thanks for the grace they have experienced in discipleship; they seek to renew and deepen their commitment to their Lord and to one another; they seek to make themselves open to new light, to more power, to a closer following upon the Lord's way to the kingdom.*

So, you can see that Love Feast has its roots in ancient observances spanning more than 2,500 years. The early members of the Church of the Brethren desired to reconnect to the early church that we find described for us in the book of Acts and Paul's letters, as well as in the teachings of Jesus. Guided by Scripture, they discovered four parts:

- **Self-Examination** – a time provided to examine our walk as disciples of Jesus, making sure we are in a right relationship with God and our fellow person. (See 1 Corinthians 11:28-29)
- **Feet Washing** – a reenactment (as is the entire Love Feast celebration) of the Upper Room. Jesus washed his disciples' feet to provide an example of servanthood. We wash feet to remember Jesus' act and to remind ourselves of the type of love and service we are expected to provide to the world. (See John 13:1-17)
- **A Symbolic Meal** – Jesus was sharing the Passover meal with his disciples in the Upper Room, but clearly, he was instituting something new. We eat a symbolic meal together in thankfulness of the love that was outpoured for us in Christ's life and death, sharing the strong bond of unselfish Christian love. (See John 13:18-30)
- **Communion of the Bread and the Cup** – The only memorial Jesus requested; the only thing he asked be done "in remembrance of me." (See Matthew 26:26-28; Luke 22:19-20)

What follows is a home communion service that I developed several years ago. I have adapted it to include aspects of all four parts of Love Feast. If you wish to engage in only self-examination and the Bread and the Cup, you can use the sections marked with an asterisk (\*).

*"Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them."*    Jesus

## Communion at home

I would encourage you to consider occasionally offering communion to your family. The Church of the Brethren does not believe that only ministers or pastors have the ability to do this. We believe that the bread and the cup are symbols of the sacrifice that Christ made for us on the cross. About the cup, Jesus, himself, said, "...do this, whenever you drink it." Paul added in 1 Corinthians 11:26 – "For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."

I believe that because the staples of bread and wine appeared on the table at almost every meal, Jesus intended for us to remember him and his sacrifice routinely. But make it special. Have a special plate on which to place the bread or crackers that you use. Consider using special cups for the grape, cranberry juice, etc.

Family members can participate by reading various portions of the home communion service, but an adult or older child should administer the symbols. Sometimes, it can be meaningful to use different symbols. For example, goldfish crackers and grapes can be substituted. These symbols also give an opportunity to talk about Jesus calling us to be "fishers of men," and how he called us to be connected to the true vine, (Jesus, himself). Believe it or not, pizza and soda have been used for communion. Why not? Think about it. On some tables, they are just as common as bread and wine were in Jesus' day.

A suggested simple home Love Feast service follows:

## HOME LOVE FEAST SERVICE

### \*OPENING SCRIPTURE - PSALM 23

*1 The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing. 2 He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, 3 he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake. 4 Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. 5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. 6 Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.*

### \*GREETING

*In the name of God the Creator, Redeemer, and Comforter, peace be to this house and to all for whom this is home.*

## **\*INVITATION**

*Hear these words of Jesus,*

*I am the bread of life; anyone who comes to me shall not hunger; anyone who believes in me shall never thirst. (John 6:35)*

*In Luke's Gospel we read that Jesus, at the table with two of the disciples, took bread and blessed and broke it, and gave it to them, and their eyes were opened, and they recognized the risen Christ in the breaking of the bread. (Luke 24:30-32)*

*In Acts we read that as the church was gathered, often in the homes of believers, Christians devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to coming together as a community, to the breaking of bread, and to prayers. (Acts 2:42)*

*Jesus Christ, the Bread of Life, we gather at your table to know you in the breaking of the bread.*

## **\*CONFESSON OF SIN AND ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS**

*Scripture tells us that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, but if we confess our sins we know that God will forgive. Let us offer our silent prayer, confessing our sins and asking God for forgiveness. (Allow a brief time for silent prayer.)*

## **FEET WASHING – Read John 13:1-5**

You are encouraged to engage in actual feet washing. Having a father or mother wash the feet of his/her family can be a powerful experience. Family members can also take turns washing one another's feet.

After feet washing, read **John 13:12-17**. Think about and discuss the ways in which your family can live out feet washing. How can you demonstrate the servanthood of Christ to others, not only in your family, but in your neighborhood and in your world?

## **THE AGAPE MEAL – Read Luke 22:13-16**

**PRAYER FOR THE MEAL – Our Father, we thank you for this food. We thank you for the meal that your Son shared with his disciples in the Upper Room. Thank you for the love that was outpoured at that meal even though the disciples were arguing and one was even planning betrayal. Help us to remember Jesus' unselfish love and to use it to draw us closer together as a family as part of the body of Christ. Amen.**

Enjoy a symbolic meal or a regular simple meal with your family. In recent

celebrations at PFC, as Love Feast has been held during morning worship, we've had bagels and baked oatmeal. Other times, we've used soup with bread and cheese. Meals bring us closer together as we share a table and food. This is a good time to continue the discussion begun after feet washing. Consider this question: How do you think Jesus felt sharing a meal with disciples who were arguing over who was most important, as well as with one who was about to betray him?

#### **\*BREAKING BREAD, POURING THE CUP, SHARING THE SYMBOLS**

(While taking the bread and breaking it) *We remember that on the night when he was betrayed, Jesus took bread, gave thanks, broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, "This is my body which is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me."*

(After distributing the bread, say) *This bread, which we break, is the communion of the body of Christ.* (Everyone can repeat this phrase in unison, if desired, before partaking.)

(While pouring and raising the cup) *In the same way, Jesus also took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."*

(After distributing the cups, say) *This cup, which we bless, is the communion of the blood of Christ.* (Everyone can repeat this phrase in unison, if desired, before partaking.)

#### **\*PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING & LORD'S PRAYER**

*We thank you, God, for inviting us to this table where we have known the presence of Christ. Strengthen our faith, increase our love for one another, and help us embody that love in our lives. And now we pray as Jesus taught us, Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.*

#### **\*BLESSING**

*May God bless you and keep you. May God's face shine upon you and be gracious unto you. May God look upon you with kindness and give you peace. Amen.*