

## **WELCOME TO AN AT-HOME LOVE FEAST!**

This brief ritual, adapted from the work of Dr. Marcia McFee, is offered as a way of breaking bread in place of partaking in the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

Sharing a meal around a table was a big part of the way Jesus did ministry. He welcomed strangers and outcasts at a meal. He provided comfort and hope at a meal. He instructed his disciples at a meal. The last thing he did with his followers was eat together. When you “break bread” at your home using this ritual, remember Jesus, remember the church he called us to, and remember the promise that he will always be with us.

## **PREPARATION**

Prepare your meal. Use whatever you have on hand. If possible, create your favorite “comfort food!”

## **OPENING WORDS** *to be read aloud*

Jesus used the parable of a great banquet to which all people are invited in order to talk about what the kingdom of God, the family of God, looks like. He said, “Go to the highways and back alleys and urge people to come in so that my house will be filled.” He often ate with the most unlikely people, confounding the disciples. In this way, he was encouraging a deep love and connection beyond social norms. He knew that we humans need connection and inclusion. Jesus comforts us, saying “you have a place at the table” and Jesus challenges us to make sure we are doing the same – that all people know they are welcome in our hearts, in our homes, in our churches – even if we can’t physically be with each other right now.

It is difficult in this moment not to be near some of the people we love and might be worried about. **Take a moment and say out loud the names of people you wish were right there next to you at your table today.**

Jesus is no longer physically on earth, yet every time we gather around a table and we call him to mind, he is present with us in Spirit. And so too, our loved ones are with us. Let this be a comfort to us.

We also want to call to mind, the people we cannot name, whose names we do not know. But we know they need our prayers and God’s comfort.

For those who have lost loved ones.

For those who are sick and recovering.

For those who are caring for loved ones who are sick at home.

For those who are serving in health care and tirelessly caring for others.

For those who are separated from loved ones.

For those who are feeling alone and isolated.

For those who are teachers preparing online lessons for our children.

For those who are grocery workers who are keeping us fed and supplied.

For those who are helping and are so very tired.

For those who are struggling to find friends, food, and comfort.

For those who are newly unemployed and face an uncertain future.

For those who are afraid.

Take a deep breath on behalf of all those we do not know and cannot call by name. As we do so, we know that God knows the needs of our hearts before we even ask. We know the Spirit surrounds us as the Divine Comforter.

**Take another deep breath and breathe in God's presence.**

### **BLESSING THE MEAL**

Blessings at the table are part of our Judeo-Christian heritage. Jesus asked us to remember him whenever we break bread and raise a cup in thanksgiving. This is why we call our communion prayers the "Great Thanksgiving." In this feast of love and comfort, we can call to mind things for which we are deeply grateful. Speak aloud a couple of things that you are grateful for in this moment.

Now lift a part of your meal, a plate of whatever you are eating, or a glass of whatever you are drinking, and bless it using these words.

#### **Holy Comforter**

**We gather in your name, invited by Jesus, bound together with your Spirit, in union with each other. Feed our bodies and our spirits with your comforting presence so that we might be your comfort to others.**

**Bless this food and break open our hearts. Bless this drink and pour out your love. Amen.**

As you fill your plates and eat your meal, imagine what extravagant love looks like at this time where we must reach across the physical distance to loved ones, to friends, and even acquaintances or strangers.

### **AFTER THE MEAL**

Receive and Offer this blessing:

**And now may you shelter not only in place, but in peace. May the peace and comfort of Christ be present with you now and forevermore. Amen.**