

A Table Liturgy for Easter

St. Catharines United Mennonite Church



In this time when we would usually gather with family and friends, we find ourselves sharing the table with only our closest household companions. Some of us will eat alone, as we have for many days now.

As a church, we offer these words, for you to use, wherever and with whomever you find yourself sitting today.

This is not intended as communion as we would normally participate in it, per se, but as a way of pausing, and remembering all the same, the death and resurrection of Jesus as you partake in a meal in your home this Easter.

If you have a loaf of bread and wine or juice, you might consider placing them as symbols at the center of your table. Likewise, a candle, if you have one, and it is safe to do so.

The events leading up to Jesus' death, including his last supper, took place during the celebration of Passover. During this time, Jewish families gather around the table and retell the story of how God freed their people from captivity.

In that spirit, which has carried over into our own practices as people of the cross, we invite you to read and reflect on the story of Jesus' death as we share it with you here.

Good Friday Reading (Spoken Aloud or Read Silently):

On the night that he was betrayed, Jesus shared a meal with his friends. They sat together, around the table, just as they had so many times before. Jesus was the host. He took the bread, and he gave thanks to God for it. Because God made the grain, and bread is a gift to be grateful for. And he broke it, as if to eat it, but then paused, and said, “this is my body, given for you.”

They all went on with their meal, and their talking. After they had finished, and had all had their fill, Jesus lifted up a cup of wine and said to them, “this cup is the new life and way of living that God is opening up for you now.”

Then they sang a song together, left the room they were in, and went off to a nearby mountain, where there was a garden. They sat down there. Jesus walked for a ways and prayed. The disciples fell asleep. They did not know what was about to happen.

One of the other disciples approached, with some others. He had decided to betray Jesus. They took hold of him, and presented him before the authorities.

They dragged Jesus from one official to another, questioning him about the things he had been saying and doing. All the while, crowds gathered, and began to demand that Jesus be put to death. Jesus was innocent, guilty of no crime.

They began to make fun of Jesus, and hurt him. They dressed him up like a king, because that is what people had been calling him all this time.

They put a crown made of thorns on his head. They beat him badly, and lead him off to the be put to death.

When they got to that place, they had him set down the cross had carried. They took his clothes, and they nailed him to the wood. Jesus asked God to forgive them all. He loved even them.

There were two others there with him – men who had been caught stealing. They were on crosses too.

As people passed by, they taunted Jesus and laughed. “You say you came to save people. Why not start with yourself?”

One of the men who had been caught stealing started joining in. The other one told him to stop. “Don’t you see? By law, you and I had this coming, but this man has broken no rules. Jesus, I believe you really are king, even though they all think it is a joke. Please. Please don’t forget about me when you take the throne.” Jesus told him that he wouldn’t forget about him, and that they would be together again soon.

As the three of them hung there, the sky became dark. Shadows covered everything so they could hardly see. After a few hours, Jesus began calling out. “Where are you God?” he yelled, “Why have you left me here, like this?” Then he cried out again, and said to God, “I give myself to you.” And then he died.

Some of Jesus’ companions and family members were there, and watched from a distance. Later, one of Jesus’ friends came and asked to take Jesus’ body. Then he buried him.

Moment of Silence:

Pause for a moment of silent remembrance.

Consider Christ's suffering and the suffering in our world.

Reflection (Shared Aloud, or Considered Silently):

Much has changed, as we celebrate Holy Week this year.

Does it feel different to read the story in this time? How?

What words or part of the story stand out, as you read them?

How might this story speak to the hurt our world feels now?

How might this story speak to the hope we have, in Jesus?

Preparation for Meal (Spoken Aloud or Read Silently):

As we eat, we do so remembering God's mercy and forgiveness, shown to us on the cross of Christ. We confess our wrongs, and look to the God of our salvation. We are reminded of God's heart that breaks, and Jesus' body that was broken. And of Jesus' blood that flowed, as an outpouring of suffering and self-giving love.

We pray...

Prayer: (Spoken Aloud or Read Silently)

God, you prepare a table for us. You give us food to eat, and means to receive it. You provide what our bodies need.

Even now, I am / we are fed.

God, you redeem us. You lived with us, in Jesus. You suffered with us and died for us. You show grace and welcome us home.

Even now, I am / we are loved.

God, you give us one another. You provide friends and family. You make ways for us to reach out, even across distance.

Even now, we are a community.

God, you accompany us in all times. You promised, in Jesus, to remain with us always. Your Spirit is in us. You are with us.

Even now, I am / we are not alone.

God, you invite us to labor with You. You know what our world needs, and what we need now. There is much to be done.

Even now, I / we have work to do.

God, you hold all things together. You hold our hearts in yours. You love what you created. You are still making things new.

Even now, you are God.

Bless this food, and this time. Amen.