



St. Andrew's Episcopal Church

House Church Agape Meal Prayer Service

Adapted by The Rev. Danáe Ashley from "Around a table: a family breaking bread" in Celtic Daily Prayer: Book Two, Farther Up and Farther In, The Northumbria Community Trust (2015), pgs. 950-954

"In our formal rituals around Communion, we sometimes forget that the Last Supper occurred as a group of friends sharing a meal. This alternative way to remember Christ's sacrifice and love can be used with friends and family members of all ages, and is ideally shared with a meal around a table" (950).

During this time of COVID-19, we "seek and serve Christ in all persons" by following protocol that protects the health and safety of others. For St. Andrew's House Church Groups in Phase 2, this means participating in a small group of eight people virtually (one 'person' virtually can include anyone in a household sharing the same screen) or in a small group of five people in-person practicing physical distancing, wearing masks, washing our hands and using hand sanitizer, bringing your own cup and plate, bringing your own food and drink, and whatever other precautions are necessary. Please follow the Washington State Safe Start guidelines for non-religious gatherings, as although this is church related, it is not a worship service at the church and is considered a gathering of family and friends at someone's home or outdoor space (<https://www.governor.wa.gov/sites/default/files/SafeStartPhasedReopening.pdf>) and our Bishop's Diocesan guidelines (<https://ecww.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Diocese-of-Olympia-Phased-Approach.pdf>). Please contact your clergy if you have any questions.

These House Church Groups are accessible for all ages and we especially encourage you to have children and youth participate in the liturgy and discussions.

Preparation

Virtual:

1. Host sends out the Zoom link for date and time of House Church each week (or whenever the group has decided to meet).
2. Participants have their meal or snacks, including bread, when they arrive in the virtual meeting room.
3. Each participant will have a real or electric candle ready to light and a copy of the liturgy online or printed out.
4. Prayer Leader leads the liturgy.

In-Person

1. Host sends out the date, time, and location of House Church each week (or whenever the group has decided to meet).
2. Participants bring their own meal or snacks, including bread, along with plates, cups, and cutlery, bring their own chairs (if outside), wear masks, and practice the in-person protocol as outlined by the State and the Diocese.
3. The Host will have a candle (real or electric) ready to be lit.
4. Each participant will bring their own copy of the liturgy online or printed out.
5. Prayer Leader leads the liturgy.

The Gathering

*The small group gathers together in their chosen space following the Virtual or In-Person instructions above. One person is the Prayer Leader and the people respond in the **bold** print.*

The leader begins by saying:

We are all welcomed as we share this meal.

Each speaks out their own first name, going clockwise around the table. When they are done the people say together

People: All are welcomed.

Leader: God is with us

And the Holy Spirit draws us closer.

The candle is lit and place on the table.

The Lord is with us.

The Holy Spirit is here.

Prayers for Others

The leader says:

Placing the palms of our hands on the table (or on our laps), we bring to mind the people we have spoken with today, silently counting them with our fingers, if that helps.

After a few moments of thought, the following is said together:

We thank God for all those we share the days of our lives with.

Silence is kept. Then the leader continues:

Turning over our hands,
we look at our unique fingerprints.
We bring to mind the different people

who have left their gentle marks upon our lives today.

After a few moments of thought, the following is said together:

We thank God for all those who have touched us and encouraged us.

Silence is kept. Then the leader continues:

With one hand,
we fold in our thumb,
and then each finger,
into a gentle fist,
as we think of those who are in particular need of God's
touch—
maybe even including ourselves—
for God's healing, courage, and hope.

Silently, we name each person,
aware of God's motherly love holding them
as a mother bird would take her chicks under her wing.

Finally, we place our other hand underneath our closed hand.

**We ask God to hold in the hollow of God's hand
all those we have prayed for
and given thanks for today.**

All sit for a moment in silence with their hands just as they are, with gratitude.

Scripture Reading

The following passage is read by one of those gathered:

As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. But they urged him strongly, saying, 'Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.' So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. *Luke 24:28-31*

Breaking and Sharing the Bread

During a pandemic time, each person brings and holds their own bread and beginning with the leader, they go clockwise around the table (or take turns around the virtual table), mentioning one thing for which they are thankful before eating it. When not in a pandemic time, the bread is passed clockwise around the table, and each person takes a piece, mentioning one thing for which they are thankful before eating it.

Alternatively, the leader may invite the group to hold on to their bread and eat it together once everybody has spoken.

The Meal

The following is then said together:

**Lord, each day as we wait on You,
You strengthen our hearts.
So now, as we eat the food set before us,
strengthen our bodies,
and as we share our lives around this table,
strengthen the bond between us.**

The food, that has been lovingly prepared, is eaten.

Near the end of the meal, the leader may invite all present to reflect and share, using these or similar words (adapted from Virginia Theological Seminary's Agapé Meal for Several Persons):

In the week past, what has been difficult, what have you mourned?
And what grace or gift have you known or received?

Groups with children amongst them might ask instead:

When have you felt sad this week?
When have you felt loved?

The small group may agree to participate in our online worship from week to week and reflect on the sermon and/or the Virtual Coffee Hour questions more deeply. You can find our online worship on our website: <https://www.saintandrewsseattle.org/> or on our YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC6KXwPQ3X5INZaHsZmPovnA>

You may also wish to have different readers read the Scriptures for the previous or following Sunday. You can find our lectionary at The Lectionary Page: <http://www.lectionarypage.net/>

You may read a selection from other spiritual writings, lives of the saints, spiritual poetry, or other writings engaging faith to aid in discussion.

Even though we cannot sing together during a pandemic, if you are meeting virtually, you can sing in your own home. If you are meeting in-person, you can listen to music together. Our Music Director, Tim Drewes, and his wife, Cheryl, have put together many hymns and meditative musical selections on our YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC6KXwPQ3X5INZaHsZmPovnA/videos> We also have Kester Limner and Andy Myers' Taizé style music available there, as well: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLq1K1z88vMP0s2kaTmFeT93cPvzDR3Vw5>

Blessing the Cup

At the end of the meal, the leader says

The Lord is with us,
and the Holy Spirit is here.

Everyone lifts their hands, palms up, arms extended to the side toward their neighbors but not touching and says together:

**Blessed are You, God of life.
We have shared our lives around this table.**

**God of all creation, blessed are You.
Through Your goodness we have this cup,
fruit of the vine and work of human hands.**

Scripture Reading

The following passage is read by one of those gathered:

The Master, Jesus, took the cup of wine after supper, saying:
This cup is my blood, my new covenant with you.
Each time you drink this cup, remember me.

What you must solemnly realize is that every time you eat this bread and every time you drink this cup, you reenact in your words and actions the death of the Master. You will be drawn back to this meal again and again until the Master returns. *1 Corinthians 11:25-26, adapted from The Message*

Sharing the Cup

During a pandemic time, each person takes a sip from their own cup, taking turns clockwise around the table (or together around the virtual table). When not during a pandemic time, the cup is passed clockwise around the table.

When all have had the cup, the following is said together:

**Loving God, we thank You
for every gift of life and well-being,
of love and faith, and for
the gift of this meal we have shared together.
Help us to find our life in You,
and work to see Your kingdom coming.
Amen.**

Blessing

You were called to travel on the same road and in the same direction, so stay together, both outwardly and inwardly. You have one Master...one God...of all, who rules over all, works through all, and is present in all. So let everything you are and think and do be permeated with this Oneness.

Ephesians 4:4-6, adapted

Give thanks to the Lord for God is good;

God's love endures for ever.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

In the name of Christ. Amen.