

Suggestions for Maundy Thursday - April 9th 2020.

An Explanatory Note... Traditionally Christians have gathered on the Thursday before Easter for communion, since it was the occasion of the Last Supper and the institution of communion. Because this year we cannot all gather for a shared communion service under the current restrictions, we have explored the various alternatives. The guidance of the Church of England is that what we do should be distinct from our normal communion practice, because during self-isolation, we cannot be present with each other: it is the sharing 'of the one bread' which marks us as 'one body' in 1 Corinthians 11 - and we can't do that by Zoom.

However, Jesus did have a shared Passover meal as his last meal before the cross with his disciples and the early Christians also 'broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts' (Acts 2:46), and also celebrating 'love feasts' together.

So our suggestion for this year is for a meal with a difference on Thursday night of Holy Week. The unit will most likely be smaller than the New Testament house churches, since most of us will be meeting with just a few family members. If you will be at home alone, we suggest marking the evening as individuals, but conscious of the wider church family and hopefully included by them in a phone call or a contact by Zoom. If you would welcome a call on Thursday evening, please let the church office know and we will do our best to make it happen.

Others may choose to have a nice meal, with something slightly unusual to mark it out as different. This was certainly the pattern in a Jewish Passover, with the youngest person present asking: Why is this night different to every other night? So how about ice-cream midweek? Wearing a backpack on your back as a reminder of the Israelites' quick departure? Special clothes to wear / glasses to drink from?

Ideally it would be good to pause in between courses to share a loaf or roll of bread (perhaps you can bake your own unleavened soda bread and remember God's rescue from Egypt) and fizzy drinks or red wine... Make a deliberate attempt to remember with gratitude what Jesus has done for us in being rejected, suffering and dying for our sin. We won't conduct the service on Zoom because multiple different meal times make that impractical. But we invite you to print off these words to be used for readings and prayers - and to follow the link to a song about the cross sung by Steve Pearce and his daughter Charlotte...

Readings and Prayers

Youngest person present: Why is this night different to every other night?

Answer by everyone: 'Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been offered up for us. So let us keep the Feast,' (1 Corinthians 5:7-8NIRV)

(Perhaps an adult can explain: 'On this night, Christians remember God's amazing rescue of his people from Egypt - Jesus himself celebrated this at the Passover, sharing a meal with his friends. And we also remember the even greater rescue he then made for us when he died on the cross the next day').

Listen to Steve Pearce and Charlotte singing: **Once Again by Matt Redman.**

Pray together:

**Most merciful Lord,
your love compels us to come in.
Our hands were unclean,
our hearts were unprepared;
we were not fit
even to eat the crumbs from under your table.
But you, Lord, are the God of our salvation,
and share your bread with sinners.
So cleanse us, and feed us with the precious body and blood of your Son,
that he may live in us and we in him;
and that we, with the whole company of Christ,
may sit and eat in your kingdom. Amen.**

Share the bread and the cup as a reminder that we all feed on Jesus whose body was broken for us and whose blood was poured out for us.

Read Psalm 117 together (one of the Praise Psalms used traditionally on Passover night)

¹All you nations, praise the LORD.

All you people on earth, praise him.

²Great is his love for us.

The LORD is faithful forever. Praise the LORD. NIRV