**Maundy Thursday – Agape**

At Larkfield & East Malling Methodist Church, we would normally celebrate Maundy Thursday by gathering for a meal and an ‘Agape.’ This is the Greek word used in the New Testament to mean ‘self-giving love’ – it is also used in the Christian tradition to mean a ‘love feast’ (an informal meal in which stories and prayers are shared). Love feasts remind us of all the meals that Jesus shared with his friends – including the Last Supper, which we remember on Maundy Thursday, but also countless weddings, parties and day-to-day dinners.

These resources are offered for you to use in your own home. You are invited, if you wish, to use them at 5pm on Maundy Thursday (9 April) knowing that others will be using them at the same time. If you wish to join with a group online, Rev Naomi will be leading us through this informal service via Zoom (click on this link: <https://zoom.us/j/919617182?pwd=bnFXcGJ1ZnhLZHBKOXM5V3oyU1JQUT09> – Meeting ID: 919 617 182 / Password: 001669). However you use these resources, we celebrate that, in this time of separation and grief, we are united as members of the Body of Christ.

You will need a little something to eat (perhaps bread, or cake, or biscuits). If you are using these resources with others, decide whether one of you will lead, or if you will take it in turns to read.

**Gathering**

On this night, our Lord Jesus Christ said: “A new commandment I give to you, that you love each other, as I have loved you.”

**Prayer**

Glory to you, O God:

you sent Jesus among us

to live our life and die our death

so that we might spend eternity with you.

Glory to you, O Christ:

you came among us, not to be served but to serve

so that we might call you friend.

Glory to you, O Holy Spirit:

you lead us into the truth

and breathe new life into us.

Loving God, forgive us for the things we have done wrong.

*Pause for a moment to reflect.*

… and set us free in Christ, our risen saviour. Amen.

**Reading** John 13:1-17

Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, “Lord, are you going to wash my feet?” Jesus answered, “You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand.” Peter said to him, “You will never wash my feet.” Jesus answered, “Unless I wash you, you have no share with me.” Simon Peter said to him, “Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!” Jesus said to him, “One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you.” For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, “Not all of you are clean.”

After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, “Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.

**A reflection for Maundy Thursday by Nigel Varndell** (shared by Gwen)

Why did you wash their feet?

I don’t understand, it makes no sense.

Why did you do something so demeaning, so distasteful, when you did not have to? Why humble yourself and wash the feet of your own disciples?

You are the Messiah, it makes no sense for you, of all people, to do something that should be done by the least of all people, not by the greatest. It is not what we want our Messiahs to do.

Unless... unless we have got it wrong and that, somehow this is a measure of what Messiah means? Not that it is defined in greatness but that somehow, in your world the first will be last, and the greatest, least and servant of all?

But if we are to follow you, does it mean that we must follow your example too? Are you suggesting that we too should make ourselves humble? That we must wash the feet of the people whom we would rather ignore, or scapegoat, or deride? Must we too become the servants of the least among us?

the refugee,

the disabled,

the homeless,

the addicted,

the anti-social,

the child?

Was that what all of this was about? To try and put us in our rightful place, not at the centre of our own world, but at the centre of yours, where we are no longer the most important person? Is that it? Were you trying to teach us this simple truth: that other people, all other people, should matter too? Is that why you washed their feet?

**Listen** The Servant King (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A0FSZ_iSYO8>)

**Sharing and thanksgiving**

Eat the simple meal you have prepared, knowing that you are sharing with your sisters and brothers in Christ. As you do so, you might like to reflect on the following questions. If you are eating with others, share your prayers and stories with one another as you eat:

* Where have you encountered God this week?
* Who has served you this week?
* How is God calling you to serve others?
* Who would you like to pray for today?

**Take a few moments to pray for other people**

**Prayer after the sharing**

As the scattered grain was made one in the loaf, so you, Lord, have made us one in yourself.

We too feel broken by our separation and isolation. But we hope and trust in you and look forward to the day when we can be physically united as your body, your people, your church community.

Today, generous God, we give you thanks that you nourish us in body and spirit and that you unite us in your Son, our living Lord Jesus Christ. As we look forward to Easter, we set our sights on a glorious celebration of your love and grace. Amen.

**The Lord’s Prayer**

Our Father in heaven,

hallowed be your name,

your kingdom come,

your will be done,

on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins

as we forgive those who sin against us.

Lead us not into temptation

but deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power,

and the glory are yours

now and for ever. Amen.

**Closing words**

In a few short days, we will gather at the empty tomb and celebrate that Christ is risen.

But on this day, Maundy Thursday, we remember that after they had broken bread together, the disciples went out to the Mount of Olives.

Jesus prayed to his Father: ‘If it is possible, take this cup of suffering from me;

yet not my will but yours be done.’

Christ was obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

*Hold a few moments of silence.*

May the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with us and those we love, today and always. Amen.

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