

Online or Prerecorded Service of Worship with Communion
Used at Tulare United Church

PRELUDE

WELCOME

Welcome to worship. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. I am Lorah Houser Jankord and I am blessed to be the Pastor of Tulare United Church where this service is being recorded. *During this prerecorded interactive service we will share together Holy Communion.*

Many of you have received an email with these directions and a copy of the service. If you haven't already please take a few moments now to prepare.

Gather some bread - a slice or a small loaf of any kind of bread. In some parts of the world tortilla, rice cake, naan or cassava are used as this element which is defined not as a wheat product but as the most common food of the people. Let it be something you alone or you with others in your house may break and share.

Prepare a cup or cups of juice -- perhaps grape or cranberry -- or wine, with or without alcohol.

Set these elements in the living room or kitchen where you experience worship electronically with our faith community. Perhaps you want to put them on a lovely cloth or fabric that reminds you of a special time or a person deeply connected with you in the communion of saints. Perhaps you will light a candle or place a flower or plant or the photograph of someone you wish to bring into the circle of faith beside the bread and the cup.

For many in our world this has been an agonizing week – the COVID-19 numbers continue to rise - 6.2 million people testing positive for COVID-19 with 376,000

deaths (40% of deaths in the US are in nursing and assisted living homes), protests about the murder of George Floyd, many caregivers and essential workers are tired and depressed, tension and fear and mistrust of the other, outrage over the profane use of God and churches for personal gain, the death of a beloved grandson. So much sadness and so we come to this table for healing, for strength, for comfort. “You Raise Me Up.” was written by Rolf Løveland and Brendan Graham 18 years ago. It is a touching and ideal song for today as we remind ourselves that God is not only with us in the trials but will lift us from the dark place. Thank you to Brian Hull for recording “You Raise Me Up” so we are able to be reminded and renewed by the promises it shares.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Jesus, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof. But only say the word and your servant shall be healed. (from Matthew 8:8). As we approach this table let us do it with a clean heart. Let us confess our sins:

God of all mercy, we confess before you and each other that we have been unfaithful to you. We lack the love of our neighbors, we waste opportunities to do good, and we look the other way when you cry out to us in the suffering of our brothers and sisters in need. We are sincerely sorry for our sins, both those we commit deliberately and those we allow to overtake us. We ask your forgiveness and pray for strength that we may follow in your way and love all your people with that perfect love which casts out all fear; through Jesus Christ our Redeemer. Amen.

Sometimes our voice is gone because our heart is breaking either by something we've done or left undone. Please use this moment of silence to talk to God who is always ready to listen. (calm nature video)

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Jesus looked up and said to the sinner; Where are your accusers? Has no one condemned you? Neither do I condemn you; go, and do not sin again.” (adapted from John 8:10,11)

SCRIPTURE

The scripture for today reminds us that diversity is for the common good. The gifts of the Spirit create a diverse and well-rounded fellowship that can only be healthy in unity.

1 Corinthians 12:12, 14-18, 24b-31

MESSAGE

We humans have some quaint ways of reminding ourselves of things we do not want to forget. We are too often a forgetful group... and so we tie a string around our finger or set the alarms on our cell phones or put up a post-it note or my personal favorite is changing a ring to a different finger - to remind us of this or that. In much the same way Christ instituted the sacrament of Holy Communion. “Do this in remembrance of me.” As we come to this table we are reminded of him and his actions for us. We are reminded of his coming and how this revealed God’s love to us – that the same God against whom we rebuffed over and over, against whom we have sinned over and over... this God still loves us so much and wants us

to be whole... and so God sent Jesus Christ to do what we could not do for ourselves. And so we are reminded of our own inability to justify ourselves to God and we are reminded of our need of God to make us more than we can be by ourselves as we heard in the song earlier... and we are reminded that in some miraculous way the prepared believer is met by Christ in the symbols of the Eucharist. Eucharist means thanksgiving. Celebrating Communion is a joyous act of thanksgiving for all God has done, is doing, and will do for the redeeming of Creation. It is the way the Body of Christ – no matter if we are scattered – will experience fellowship with the Church across distance, across time, across political and economic and racial boundaries. It is this that we as a Church too often forget – that we are actually part of the whole entire inclusive Body of Christ. That both frustratingly and literally we become part of the Body and then we become subject to the rules of the head – who is Christ. This is part of our great Christian heritage – that we - as a very part of the body - listen and take commands from the head – the body (us) do not rule the head. This is the point that the writer of Corinthians, Paul, dramatically brings to conclusion in the next passage the well known “love chapter” With this writing in Chapter 13 he vividly points out that love should become the center of a follower’s life. For in accepting Christ through the sacraments there is not only forgiveness of sins but there must also be an acceptance of spiritual gifts that come through communion with the Lord. The greatest of these is love. This is the point we most often forget in coming to communion... we don’t just walk up here or sit right there in your home and attend – we must participate, we do not just observe – we must accept what is given. Too often we find ourselves quietly, nonchalantly coming to allow Christ to forgive us and forget we must participate – we must be attentive receivers. For in coming to this table of grace we signify that

we wish to be part of the earthly and heavenly Body of Christ. So it follows that as members of that body we take the commands of Christ. It means we are no longer free but we are committed and from this commitment must come action. At this table we receive the gift that Christ offers – the freedom to commit ourselves as we remember his action for us and his unfailing love. And more importantly as we leave our tables we must be willing to be used by Jesus Christ as part of the Church. Not seeking to lord it over others like we are better than them but to work diligently with all and take an active part in the coming of the kingdom – not just in our own communities but throughout the world. We should be so filled with Christ’s love that it can be seen in our lives... so that through us others may come to know God... and that through us the Spirit may work in the world. There is so much to remember as we come to this table... and there is so much to do as we leave it since we are all part of the Body of Christ... so let’s act...

CELEBRATION OF HOLY COMMUNION

If you have not prepared your space for Communion yet please pause the recording and do so now. Be assured that even an English muffin can become a sacrament, even a cup of water or tea will become a remembrance of God’s redeeming love.

INVITATION

For Holy Communion today, I invite you to lend Christ your table.

Long ago, on the first day of what we now call Holy Week, people throughout Judea arrived at the dusty gates of Jerusalem, primed with “Hosanna” in their hearts and Jesus asked to borrow a donkey.

On the Thursday that followed, Jesus rented or was given John Mark’s mother’s Upper Room to celebrate the Passover with the disciples.

After his crucifixion a borrowed tomb was used to house Christ’s body.

On the afternoon of the resurrection, Jesus was invited into a house in Emmaus and used the bread of that hospitality to break and bless.

Lend Christ your table, your bread, your cup and your heart, for, as the disciples told the person who loaned the donkey, "The Lord has need of it."

PRAYER OF CONSECRATION

We are one bread, one body, one cup of blessing. Though we are many throughout the earth and this church community is scattered, in your many kitchens, and living rooms, rest your hands lightly upon these elements which we set aside today to be a sacrament. Please repeat after me as we ask God's blessing upon them.

Gentle Redeemer,

there is no lockdown on your blessing

and no quarantine on grace.

Send your Spirit of life and love,

power and blessing

upon every table where your child is sheltered,

that this Bread may be broken

and gathered in love

and this Cup poured out

to give hope to all.

Risen Christ, live in us,

that we may live in you.

Breathe in us,

that we may breathe in you.

WORDS OF REMEMBERING

We remember that Paul the apostle wrote letters to congregations throughout places we now call Greece, Turkey and Macedonia, and they were the first “remote” worship resources. Our online service has a long heritage.

The Communion words sent to the church at Corinth were these: For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

One: Let us in our many places receive the gift of God, the Bread of Heaven.

All: We are one in Christ in the bread we share. (eat the bread)

One: Let us in our many places receive the gift of God, the Cup of Blessing.

All: We are one in Christ in the cup we share. (drink from the cup)

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING:

Let us pray in thanksgiving for this meal of grace, rejoicing that, by the very method of our worship, we have embodied the truth that Christ's love is not limited by buildings made with human hands, nor contained in human ceremonies, but blows as free as the Spirit in all places. Please join me in prayer.

Spirit of Christ, you have blessed our tables and our lives. May the eating of this Bread give us courage to speak faith and act love, not only in church sanctuaries, but in your precious world, and may the drinking of this Cup renew our hope even in the midst of pandemic and protest, grief and economic despair. Wrap your hopeful presence around all whose bodies, spirits and hearts need healing, and let us become your compassion and safe refuge. Amen

COMMISSION AND BENEDICTION

Friends – be renewed in this service of remembrance. Go safely out into the world to serve God with gladness; be of good courage; hold tightly to all that is good and then share it; never repay evil for evil; strengthen those who are weak and fearful; be a helper to the addicted and ill; honor all people; love and serve God with every gift that the Spirit has given you... and remember you are an essential part of the Body of Christ.

May the God of love, peace and grace sustain you in joy and in sorrow. And may all you do in this life be to God's glory. Amen.

Go Now in Peace – Tammy Nowell/piano

all parts of the service in italics are from: Online Communion for Palm Sunday was written by the Rev. Maren C. Tirabassi.

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