



LAKESIDE

UNITED METHODIST CHURCH & PRESCHOOL

HOLY THURSDAY PRAYER STATIONS

SUPPLIES

FOOT WASHING

- A bowl of water

THE LAST SUPPER

- Bread
- Grapes

GETHSEMANE

- Candle(s), one for each person if possible
- Lighter or matches

PETER'S DENIAL

- Blank sheet of paper
- Writing utensils, a different color for each person if possible

FOOT WASHING

SCRIPTURE

JOHN 13:3-5, 12-15 31B-35

Jesus knew the Father had given everything into his hands and that he had come from God and was returning to God. So he got up from the table and took off his robes. Picking up a linen towel, he tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a washbasin and began to wash the disciples' feet, drying them with the towel he was wearing.

After he washed the disciples' feet, he put on his robes and returned to his place at the table. He said to them, "Do you know what I've done for you? You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and you speak correctly, because I am. If I, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you too must wash each other's feet. I have given you an example: just as I have done, you also must do.

I give you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, so you also must love each other. This is how everyone will know that you are my disciples, when you love each other.

MEDITATION

Generally, you don't have to tell someone to do something they're already doing. You have to tell people to do things they aren't doing. And at the Last Supper, Jesus felt like he had to tell them to love each other.

In that moment, Jesus exemplified the kind of love he was calling them to by doing the literal job of the household servant by washing their feet.

Imagine Jesus at your feet right now, kneeling as a servant. He takes your foot, scoops water from the bowl, gently washes your feet, and dries them with the towel around his waist.

Ask yourself: Whom have I not loved as Jesus has loved me? Whom have I not served as Jesus has served me? Who is the last person on earth I would want to wash the feet of? What group of people makes me frustrated just by thinking about them? How might Jesus call me to love them?

During this time of social distancing and stay-at-home orders, it can be easy to narrow our focus to ourselves and our immediate family. We all certainly have a responsibility to care for those who rely on us, and by following these precautions, we are showing love to both the medically vulnerable and the health care workers giving their all to stay ahead of the virus.

At the same time, there are so many other needs that have not disappeared. Housing, hunger, mental health, social connection, access to services, unemployment, the sick and imprisoned. While none of us can solve all of them, we can take time to seek out ways to help with one or more.

— ACTIVITY —

Touch the water. Allow it to represent for you both the cleansing of God's forgiveness and a symbol of the love and service God is calling you to offer to the world around you.

THE LAST SUPPER

— SCRIPTURE —

MARK 14:22-26

While they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to them, and said, "Take; this is my body." He took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, and they all drank from it. He said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. I assure you that I won't drink wine again until that day when I drink it in a new way in God's kingdom." After singing songs of praise, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

— MEDITATION —

Like so much of Jesus' life and ministry, the Last Supper came as a surprise to those around him. Think about that for a moment: Jesus was the Messiah that all those faithful to God were waiting on, and he perfectly lived out the Law that so many of them had memorized. And yet he was constantly confounding and even frustrating those who thought they had it all figured out.

We can be a bit hard on the people who lived in Jesus' day. Sure, some of them were blinded by sin, some were motivated by self-interest or politics, and some just seemed to miss what was

happening right in front of them. But if we are being honest, doesn't that describe us too? Spend a moment or two reflecting on a time in your life when God was doing something in your life, your family, or your community and you missed it at first – or even worked against it without realizing it!

Now look at the bread on the table. The most basic bread is just a mixture of flour, water, and salt. But in the right hands, a skilled baker can create something incredible. Similarly, in the hands of Jesus, the most basic things on a dinner table are about to take on profound meaning.

In your mind's eye, join Jesus and the disciples sitting around the table. Hear their laughter, their stories. Smell the food, the humanity. Mark writes, "While they were eating, Jesus took bread..." Did anyone even notice? Probably not. Jesus just wanted a piece of bread, right?

But then he blessed the bread and broke it. Take; this is my body... And he took a cup. This is my blood... He had transformed the most basic elements every meal and turned them into symbols that would remind us of how much he loves us and of the sacrifice he made on our behalf.

— ACTIVITY —

Take and eat a piece of bread and a few grapes if you have them. As you do, reflect on the fact that sometimes God uses the ordinary things in our lives to do extraordinary things – and that means it can be easy to miss what God is doing if we aren't paying attention.

Particularly in this season, it is easy to be distracted and even frustrated by the small things: a home full of noisy family members or the deafening silence of living alone, the boredom of being stuck at home, or the repetitive nature of days that begin to all feel the same. Perhaps these are some of the ordinary things that God can elevate and turn into a blessing.

Ask God to open your eyes to where the Holy Spirit is moving in your life.

GETHSEMANE

— SCRIPTURE —

MARK 14:32-42

Jesus and his disciples came to a place called Gethsemane. Jesus said to them, "Sit here while I pray." He took Peter, James, and John along with him. He began to feel despair and was anxious. He said to them, "I'm very sad. It's as if I'm dying. Stay here and keep alert." Then he went a short distance farther and fell to the ground. He prayed that, if possible, he might be spared the time of suffering. He said, "Abba, Father, for you all things are possible. Take this cup of suffering away from me. However—not what I want but what you want."

He came and found them sleeping. He said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Couldn't you stay alert for one hour? Stay alert and pray so that you won't give in to temptation. The spirit is eager, but the flesh is weak."

Again, he left them and prayed, repeating the same words. And, again, when he came back, he

found them sleeping, for they couldn't keep their eyes open, and they didn't know how to respond to him. He came a third time and said to them, "Will you sleep and rest all night? That's enough! The time has come for the Son of Man to be betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up! Let's go! Look, here comes my betrayer."

— MEDITATION —

The words that Mark uses to describe Jesus here are not words we generally associate with Jesus: *despair, anxious, sad, dying...* They are completely understandable in the context of what Jesus is going through, but they still may feel odd.

Here is Jesus, pleading with God – if there is any other possible way to accomplish God's will, let's try that first. What makes Jesus' sacrifice so incredible is not that he *wanted* do any of this but that he was willing to do whatever God wanted. The strength and depth of our faith is found in our choice to be obedient, not in whether we are excited by everything God calls us to.

As we find ourselves in the midst of a pandemic, perhaps those same words describe us at this moment. How many of us are struggling with despair, anxiety, or grief? How many around the world are literally dying? And while this virus was not caused by God nor is it a tool of God's judgment, we may find ourselves pleading with God for a different path forward.

Some of us may be familiar with Philippians 4:13 - I can do all things through him who strengthens me. This Scripture is often misinterpreted to mean that God will help us accomplish all of our goals. But really what Paul meant was that we can *endure* all things through Christ. This is because Christ himself endured the worst in humble obedience and has now given us his Holy Spirit to rely on.

There is another set of shoes (or sandals) in which we can find ourselves in this passage – the sleepy disciples. It is late at night, they have just finished a big meal, and Jesus has asked his closest friends to pray with him in a quiet and peaceful place. They just cannot keep their eyes open.

Jesus finds them asleep multiple times, and Mark writes, "they didn't know how to respond to him." Have you ever disappointed someone you cared about and just didn't know what to say? Sometimes, there are no excuses. We let people down, or we let God down, and it is our fault.

And while the disciples were literally asleep, there are many ways we can be "asleep" in our daily lives. We check out. We stop praying, reading our Bible, or going to worship. We stop connecting with the world around us. We live in a dream, pretending that everything is alright or that someone else will handle the messy parts of life. Perhaps you have been tempted into doing some of these things over the last few weeks.

But Jesus called his disciples to wake from their sleep so they could see and face head on the reality that was in front of them.

— ACTIVITY —

Light the candle(s) as a sign that you would like to stay awake with Christ. Look at the flame as you offer a prayer asking God to show you how you can both take care of yourself while still being present to the world around you.

PETER'S DENIAL

— SCRIPTURE —

JOHN 13:36-38, 18:25-27

Simon Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, where are you going?” Jesus answered, “Where I am going, you can’t follow me now, but you will follow later.” Peter asked, “Lord, why can’t I follow you now? I’ll give up my life for you.” Jesus replied, “Will you give up your life for me? I assure you that you will deny me three times before the rooster crows...

Meanwhile, Simon Peter was still standing with the guards, warming himself. They asked, “Aren’t you one of his disciples?” Peter denied it, saying, “I’m not.” A servant of the high priest, a relative of the one whose ear Peter had cut off, said to him, “Didn’t I see you in the garden with him?” Peter denied it again, and immediately a rooster crowed.

— MEDITATION —

When Peter is face-to-face with Jesus, he pledges his full dedication to the Gospel. He will follow Jesus anywhere and even give up his life. But then, when Peter has the opportunity to live this commitment out in the face of opposition, it suddenly isn’t so easy. Jesus has been arrested, and it doesn’t look good. He’s trying to follow the events of the night, but he also doesn’t want to get wrapped up in them. When he gets noticed, he falters and falls back to focusing on his own safety and well-being.

We can probably all think of some fairly direct parallels in our lives. Perhaps we have held our tongue in conversations at work or with friends when we know inside that God wants us to speak up. Perhaps we have hidden our fears to the point that anxiety is our Master. But this isn’t the only way we deny our identity as children of God or our relationship with Jesus is it?

Anytime we feel the pressure to sin – whether from peer pressure or our own internal desires – and we recognize it and still choose to do the wrong thing, say the wrong thing, or believe the wrong thing... isn’t that denying our relationship with Christ? When we feel God leading us to share our faith or serve someone else, and we choose not to, isn’t that denying our relationship with Christ?

This night, Peter does what he thought he would never do. And it can be really hard to let go of a failure like that. But this isn’t the end for Peter. After the resurrection, he will meet Jesus on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. It is here that Jesus both forgives Peter and calls him to lead the Church and transformation takes place.

But to fully appreciate the grace and mercy of God, we must first confront the reality and depth of our sin. That is at the heart of the season of both Lent and specifically Holy Week – slowing down, reflecting, repenting, and not simply rushing to Easter Sunday morning.

— ACTIVITY —

Take your paper and draw a handful of dots spread out across the blank sheet. Next to each dot, write the names of sin, struggles, or temptations: pride, idolatry, greed, hatred, prejudice, envy,

lust, addiction, unrighteous anger.

Slowly connect the dots in a random order. As you do so, think about what ways you have denied Jesus in thought, word, and deed. What failure are you holding onto? Where in your life do you need to be transformed by the power of the cross? When you connect with a dot that isn't a struggle for you personally, give thanks to God and pray for those in our lives who do struggle in this way. Conclude by saying a prayer of gratitude for Jesus' unending mercy and the power of the cross to transform us into His likeness.

Have each person in your group use a different color and connect the dots in a different order, creating a multi-colored web of prayers supporting and holding our community together.