

Maundy Thursday Handwashing Liturgy
Southminster Presbyterian Church
April 2020 in the midst of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Prepare:

Gather the following items around a coffee table, dining table, or another place in your home where you are comfortable:

- Bible
- Device to play music
- Pitcher of warm water
- Bowl with soapy water
- Lotion
- Hand towels

If you are worshipping by yourself, know that you are never truly alone for God is always with you. As you wash your own hands, remember that it is the Spirit of God that lives within you that has the power to wash you of your sins. Remember that there is no solitude that keeps out God's love.

If you are worshipping with others, take turns reading the prayers and scriptures aloud. You may choose to wash your own hands or wash one another's hands.

Read:

One of the significant moments remembered on Maundy Thursday is the act of foot washing. We remember the Passover Meal at which Christ took the position of a servant and washed his disciples dusty, dirty feet. Some churches read the scripture passage while others practice the act of washing each other's feet in the middle of the worship service. It is a symbolic act of the washing away of our sins.

This year, we cannot join together for worship as we usually would, and it is not our feet that draw our mind's attention—it is our hands. Our hands which we frantically scrub all day long, hoping it is enough to keep a dreaded virus at bay. Our hands, which seem symbolic of disease transmission, rather than loving touch. In this time of social distancing, it is hard to imagine a more radical act than if Christ was in our living rooms with us, offering to wash our hands for us.

So, on this Maundy Thursday, let us prepare for the Tenebrae service by remembering and performing this radical act.

Proclaim:

God, who is rich in mercy, loved us
even when we were dead in sin,
and made us alive together with Christ.
By grace we have been saved.

Our sins are forgiven in the name of Jesus Christ.
Almighty God strengthen us with power
through the Holy Spirit,
that Christ may live in our hearts through faith. **Amen.**

Read: John 13:1-17

It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand."

"No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet."

Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me."

"Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!"

Jesus answered, "Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet; their whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you." For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean.

When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

Read:

By remembering the Passover, the Last Supper, and the foot washing, we are not just trying to go back and recreate history. Remembering the ways God has shown us the depths of divine love through Jesus Christ in the past helps us to understand God's love for us in the present. In the face of the suffering and death with which the world is filled, simply attempting to go back in time would not be particularly helpful. Tonight, we remember that God's word comes to us now, to our time. Jesus Christ is our forgiveness. In the power of the Spirit, he has washed our

feet and our lives. He turns us toward our neighbors, whom we are commanded to love and serve. As we take on the posture of a servant, we remember that in the days to come—in the cross proclaimed tomorrow and the Resurrection proclaimed on Sunday—Easter has already come out to hold us.

Wash while you Listen or Sing:

Play or sing the hymn *Ubi Caritas* (https://youtu.be/X9e_QO1ATho) as you wash one another's hands. As you do so, reflect on the grace and love of Jesus Christ poured out in your life.

Live in Charity

205

Ubi caritas

Live in char - i - ty and stead - fast love.
U - bi ca - ri - tas et a - mor,

Live in char - i - ty; God will dwell with you.
u - bi ca - ri - tas De - us i - bi est.

This refrain comes from a Latin hymn associated with the washing of feet on Maundy Thursday. Whether in English or Latin, it is most effective when sung unaccompanied and in parts.

Pray:

Holy and Gracious God,

We thank you for your costly gifts of love and grace.

It is not as easy to be a servant as you make it look.

Prepare our hearts to walk with you through these hard and holy days ahead.

Amen.

If you are about to watch the Tenebrae Maundy Thursday Livestream, clean up the supplies for handwashing and dim the lights in the room where you will be worshipping.

Use whatever time is left before the service for silent prayer or listen to [meditative music](#).

Many thanks to Gordon Lathrop and Gail Ramshaw from Resurrection Lutheran Church in Arlington, Virginia for creating much of this liturgy for churches to use this year.