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Experiencing Maundy Thursday

Below is a general outline to help smaller communities in our church participate in Maundy Thursday as part of Holy Week through a shared common meal and footwashing experience. This evening is meant to be shared in whatever community you are involved in — whether it be the community you serve with, your coworkers, your family, or Community Group. We suggest anywhere from 4-16 people.

We recommend that you share this written guide with every person attending your Maundy Thursday gathering a few days prior to ensure that each person has an understanding of the night. We encourage at least one person in the group to read through this in depth and consider in advance how the night will be best facilitated in the space you will be meeting to help the group move through the night.

General Outline of the Night

Anticipated duration: 1.5 hours

1. Introduction
2. Opening Prayer and Scripture Reading
3. Meal with guided conversation
4. Footwashing as a group
5. Closing Prayer

The Evening

Introduction (3 minutes):

Have one person read this piece to help set the tone for the night.

Maundy Thursday is a day when we recognize the servanthood and humanity of Jesus. This was portrayed at the Last Supper through the Eucharist and Jesus washing the feet of His disciples.

This Maundy Thursday, we are inviting the church to enter into an evening together, in smaller communities, where we will serve and be served, and remember those who serve us on a daily basis (whether we realize it or not). We will do this through a shared

common meal, one that is easily accessible to everyone, regardless of wealth or class, and an experience of washing one another's feet.

In this guide, we have provided a suggested outline and prayer to help foster a transformative experience through a common meal and the footwashing. At the end of this guide, we have also included a suggested list of what to prepare and what to have people in the group bring. The entire evening should last about 90 minutes.

About The Meal (3 minutes):

Have someone read this piece slowly out loud.

We have intentionally suggested “rice and beans” as the center of this meal to symbolize the common everyday meals around the world that are easily accessible to everyone regardless of wealth or class. Worldwide, rice and beans are central to the diets of both the rich and the poor; indeed, where the wealthy may be able to afford meat and fresh produce, often those living in poverty cannot. Simple meals like these — a grain, some beans or lentils, a few available spices — are a life-sustaining part of everyday existence.

In the Eucharist at the Last Supper, Jesus used the common food elements available to both rich and poor in 1st-century Israel (bread and wine) to give meaning to His life, ministry, and impending death. While the Eucharist itself is endlessly significant and has multiple layers of meaning, beauty, and life, tonight we are seeking to notice one particular layer.

In claiming that the bread was His body and the wine was His blood, Jesus is proclaiming the universal availability of His sacrifice, indeed of Himself, using elements which were commonly available to everyone in His time. Rich, poor, Jew, Gentile — everyone had access to bread and wine.

For our Maundy Thursday meal, we will cook and eat the common meals of our heritage and families of origin as a way to reenact the Last Supper meal and recognize that Christ’s body and blood are not for the chosen few, but for the all of the world.

One final and important note:

This Maundy Thursday meal is *not* meant to be luxurious or extravagant. Rice and beans (or lentils or bread and butter, etc.) are not meant to be a side dish accompanying a beautiful roast or taco bar; they are the main dish. Since we are suggesting “rice and beans” as a concept for a common meal, your interpretation will depend on your culture and heritage. For example, “rice and beans” could mean actual rice and beans, or it

could mean rice and lentils or bread and butter or beans and a vegetable. Part of the hope of this meal is that you would eat Eucharistically, identifying the body and blood of Christ as you eat and drink. Although, this meal is not meant to be bland. Though rice and beans (or its cultural equivalent) seem like a humble, even feeble meal, families around the world turn it into something delicious and beautiful on a daily basis. It, like the Eucharist, is meant to be savored and enjoyed.

Opening prayer (3 minutes):

Have someone in your group read through this prayer slowly, pausing for a moment after each sentence.

Lord, we thank you for this meal.
(PAUSE)

We pause to remember the love and commitment that brought this food to our table.
(PAUSE)

We honor and thank the hands who grew this food, the hands who transported this food, the hands who stocked this food at the store, the hands who prepared this meal.
(PAUSE)

We have been served through a web of sacrifice, hard work, and care. (PAUSE)

We remember your words of love to your disciples in Luke 12: "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you eat; or about your body, what you will wear. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothes. Consider the ravens: they do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds!" (PAUSE)

Jesus, you demonstrated your value by becoming a sacrifice for us. (PAUSE)
We remember that sacrifice through this meal and the sacrament of your body and blood. (PAUSE)
As we partake of this meal, we remember the ways we are unified to you and to one another. (PAUSE)

Lord, we recognize your love, provision and abundance through this simple meal.
(PAUSE)

In the sharing of this meal, you gave us the symbols of a new covenant for all people:
Your body broken for us and Your blood shed for us. (PAUSE)
And in the washing of feet, You showed us the dignity of service. (PAUSE)

By the power of your Holy Spirit, may these signs of our life in faith speak again to our hearts, feed our spirits, and refresh our bodies. (PAUSE)

Amen.

Read Scripture (3 minutes):

Have someone in your group read from the Bible, slowly, John 13:1-17; NIV version is below.

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 everyone 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.

*By way of reminder: after our meal, we are going to wash one another's feet, as an exercise in humbling ourselves, recognizing our need for cleansing, and serving one another in love as Jesus called us to.

The Meal and Conversation (35 minutes):

*Sit down for the meal. Conversation during this meal will be similar to a Community Group gathering where we practice *mutual invitation to invite one another into the conversation. Prior to eating, someone will read three questions below, and lead the group into a 3-minute moment of silent reflection. If kids are participating in the night and 3 minutes of silence are difficult to achieve, that's okay! You are invited to use the time to think about the questions. Each person is to consider the questions and reflect on a response to whichever one of the questions resonates most in order to share with the group during dinner.*

Do not begin eating just yet. We recommend the leader reading these questions and taking the group through the 3 minutes of silent reflection before serving the meal and eating.

Recognize which question resonates most with you and spend the 3 minutes of silent reflection reflecting on that question:

1. Jesus was a servant in His whole life. He was a servant when He healed and when He exhorted; He was a servant in His death and in His resurrection; He was even a servant when He rested. As you consider Jesus as the definition of servanthood, what is challenging to you about this definition?
2. A significant part of Maundy Thursday is learning how to receive. Peter was very uncomfortable with this. How do you feel about Jesus' words to Peter, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me"?
3. As you anticipate us washing one another's feet and having our feet washed, what feelings stir in you?

(Set a timer for 3 minutes)

Enter into a 3-minute silent reflection period.

*After the 3 minutes are up, serve the meal and invite everyone to begin eating. Throughout dinner, invite your group into conversation (via *mutual invitation). Each person should share for 2-3 minutes, and should practice listening to one another speak while enjoying the meal!*

Enjoy the meal!

Introduction to Footwashing (10 minutes):

Once the meal is over and each person has shared his or her response to one of the questions, find a space in the home to move into the footwashing experience. Have someone read out loud:

The purpose of footwashing is to enter into the posture and humility of Jesus and His disciples. The disciples came to their meal expecting to have their feet washed, but not knowing it would be Jesus washing their feet.

We have the invitation to reenact this posture in our hearts daily, of humbly receiving and serving those we live life with. And tonight, we get to act this out through a full body experience, where we actually take a posture of physically kneeling before, serving, and receiving from one another.

Each footwasher will say the prayer and blessing below over the feet of the person they are washing. May it be a way to remember the tender and servant heart of Jesus:

“Bless these feet which have journeyed, labored, and stumbled. Bless these feet as they faithfully walk to follow Jesus. Lord, may you bless them with your love and kindness.”

Footwashing Experience (20 minutes):

Suggested setup and items to have available**:

- A circular seating arrangement (however this best works in the home)
- A basin (bucket, large bowl) of water and a small washcloth for each person in the group
- A small washcloth or hand towel for each person to be dampened in the basin
- A dry hand towel for each person to have their feet dried by the footwasher

Suggested implementation:

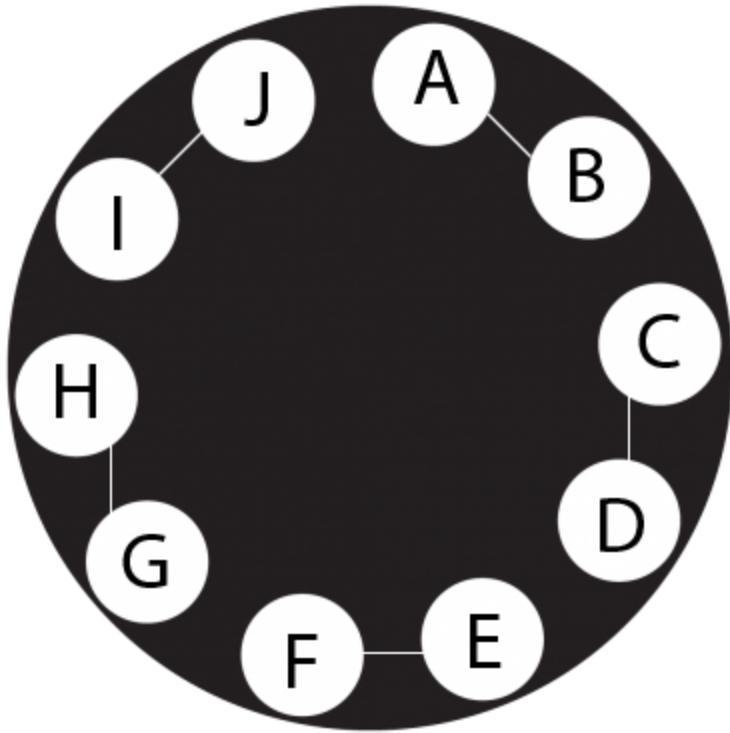
1. The group will watch each act of footwashing together. Only one person will be footwashing and one person will be the recipient at a time.
2. Each footwash should take anywhere between 20-30 seconds
3. To allow space for a reflective experience and the chance for the group to enter into one another's experience, we encourage that the footwasher does not become the recipient of footwashing until after a complete round of footwashing has happened around the room. See the diagram and descriptions below:

First round:

- Footwashers: Person A, C, E, G, I
- Recipients: Person B, D, F, H, J

Second round:

- Foot washers: Person B, D, F, H, J
- Recipients: Person A, C, E, G, I



For example:

Person A and Person B:

1. Have Person A begin as the footwasher (the servant) and Person B as the recipient of footwashing
2. Person A kneels before Person B
3. Person A says this prayer over the feet of Person B while kneeling
 - *Bless these feet which have journeyed, labored, and stumbled. Bless these feet as they faithfully walk to follow Jesus. Lord, may you bless them with your love and kindness.*
4. Person A begins washing Person B's feet with a damp cloth
5. Once done with the foot washing, Person A dries off the feet of Person B
6. Then, Person A sits back down, and Person C begins as the footwasher (the servant) to Person D

Continue this until half of the group has been a footwasher, and half of the group has been a recipient. And then go around the circle a second time, switching the roles of footwasher and recipient.

Closing Unity Prayer and Reflection (10 minutes):

After everyone has been a footwasher and a recipient of footwashing, close your time together by having each individual answer the question below in one word. We suggest practicing mutual invitation so that every individual will have a chance to share:

Share in one word how you are feeling after this experience?

Then, close your time together with a ^Unity Prayer to unify the group and share empathy of what others experienced throughout the evening.

Resources and Key Definitions

***What is Mutual Invitation?**

Mutual Invitation is a discussion technique. To practice humility and becoming aware of your tendencies in group discussions, we are going to utilize a special discussion technique. We've borrowed the exercise from Eric Law's book *The Wolf Shall Dwell with the Lamb*. Law calls it "Mutual Invitation" and uses it to reveal and equalize the power dynamics that exist in groups. He finds it especially effective in multicultural communities because it helps reveal how often the white majority members perceive greater personal power within the community than do many minority members. It is very helpful in making group members aware of how they interact within the group and then also assisting them to reflect on how this affects the community. It may be useful for your group to use this discussion format on a regular basis, or you may decide just to practice it a few times as a training of sorts. Here's how it works:

1. The discussion leader should let the group know approximately how much time will be allocated for this particular portion of discussion.
2. Then the leader will introduce the topic or question to be discussed.
3. Next, the leader introduces or reminds everyone of the discussion process which is as follows:

"The leader or a designated person will share first. After that person has spoken, he or she then invites another to share. Whom you invite does not need to be the person next to you. After the next person has spoken, that person is given the privilege to invite another to share. If you don't want to say anything, simply say 'pass' and proceed to invite another to share. We will do this until everyone has been invited."

^What is Unity Prayer?

A Unity Prayer is a corporate prayer exercise where one person opens the time by praying a simple, one-sentence prayer that begins with “Lord hear our...”. Share a sentiment or feeling or longing that was expressed by a part of the group either directly or indirectly during your time together. For example, you may have heard someone express loneliness and you can pray “Lord, hear our loneliness.” After the first prayer, the rest of the group can voice additional one-sentence “Lord hear our...” prayers aloud. You can pray your own feelings or those of others. The hope of this prayer is to help us remember and intentionally think through what we have heard expressed and entrust it all to God. We will close each meeting with this exercise, hoping that it bonds us through recognizing and holding one another’s felt experiences and teaches us to be better listeners during our time together.

****Preparing for the Evening**

Please prepare the meal and evening however your group sees fit. Below are some practical suggestions we have found helpful:

1. Food - Have an individual or small group prepare the “rice and beans.”
 2. Drink - We suggest having the meal with wine, as wine is part of the Eucharist and what is described in the About The Meal section.
 3. Footwashing - One basin (bucket, large bowl) of water which footwashers will use to dampen clean washcloths in order to wash the feet of recipients (soap is not necessary).
 4. Footwashing - Have each individual bring 2 washcloths or hand towels (one for washing and one for drying).
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