



# UNITED METHODISTS

## OF GREATER NEW JERSEY

### Communion

“Pastors and those who lead our communities must be commended for the ways in which they are maintaining community during this difficult time. Many of our pastors are finding ways to pray, preach, teach, and counsel the faithful as we, together yet physically separate, face this pandemic.

Others have been trying to find ways to extend the sacraments of the church to their communities and I would also commend their intentions. However, the idea of virtual or online communion is sacramentally impossible from a United Methodist perspective.

According to United Methodist doctrine and liturgy, we believe that the Real Presence of Christ is available by means of bread and wine within the gathered community, administered by ordained or licensed clergy. Every aspect of that sentence is necessary in order to have communion.” – Ryan Danker, Baltimore-Washington Annual Conference

Therefore, it is not permitted to administer communion virtually. However, we do recommend offering another form of the means of grace through, the **Love Feast**. The Love Feast is a meal celebrating fellowship and unity while remembering the meals that Jesus shared with his disciples during his ministry.

John Wesley first experienced the **Love Feast** with the Moravians in 1737 and wrote in his diary, “After evening prayers, we joined the Germans in one of their love feasts. It was begun and ended with thanksgiving and prayer and celebrated in so decent and solemn a manner as a Christian of the apostolic age would have allowed to be worthy of Christ.” The Love Feast is celebrated especially in times when celebrating communion is deemed inappropriate – particularly when no one is physically present who is qualified to administer the Sacrament.

### Administering the Love Feast virtually

The main focus of the prayer, fellowship, praise, and scripture. Fellowship is particularly important especially since we are offering it virtually. This can be done in several ways. Here are some examples:

- Gather stories from members of the church on how they’ve seen God at work this week and share them with those participating. Members can share this live if being done on a Zoom call. Otherwise, you can just gather the information ahead of time and share it.
- Share stories of how the church has been active in supporting the community during this time.
- Highlight some of the kids in the congregation who have been doing great work in their home schooling.

Before the service, let people know you will be celebrating the Love Feast before communion and ask them to have some bread or crackers and something to drink such as water, lemonade, or juice. You will need the same as well as a candle or light.



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**Below are two sample liturgies for the Love Feast:**

**Abbreviated version to incorporate in service:**

Leader: As we join together as a community of faith with whom Christ is present, we set symbols on our table to remind us of his promises to us:

A candle (or light), to remind us of the way, "I am the light of the world; whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life".

Bread, symbol to remind us of God's love, "I am the bread of life. The bread that I shall give is myself for the life of the world".

A cup, representing the cup of salvation. Through this, we remember Jesus' love that is poured out for all of us.

**All: God, we welcome your presence with us. May the food and companionship we share nourish our bodies, hearts and minds. And may our spirits be refreshed. As we live in the light of your presence. With us now, and at all times and places. Amen.**

As you break bread and drink of these cups, and let us be reminded that **God loves you...God loves all of us.**

**Alternative version:**

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

**And also with you.**

Taste and see the goodness of the Lord.

**Welcome to this feast of love.**

Throughout his ministry Jesus ate meals in the homes of many, some family and friends, other times strangers. These meals were an opportunity for Jesus to share love. Today you have invited Jesus to come to the table at our homes to share in this meal with you. If you are a table for one or a table of many Jesus has joined you for this special meal.

**Table Grace**

Be present at our table, Lord;

Be here and everywhere adored;

Thy creatures bless and grant that we

May feast in paradise with Thee.

Love Feasts include the sharing of cake, crackers or bread and a beverage, traditionally water.

As we share this bread, as we drink this water, we thank you, God, for our daily bread. Sustain us God.

We thank you also for this water that quenches our thirst, and for you the living water that transforms us. Fill our hunger and thirst for you. Amen.



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Extended alternative:

## **A Love Feast for Sheltering in Place**

*(Before the Love Feast begins participants are invited to prepare ahead of time by having glasses of water or juice and sweet bread to share; and light a candle as you host it)*

One: We have been asked to shelter in place to keep one another safe.

**All: For us this is an act of communal grace.**

One: The Lord has not left us, nor forsaken us.

**All: In Divine Love we are held securely.**

One: We are not alone.

**All: We are still together united by our prayers and our witness of hope before the world.**

One: You are the one who has loved each of us from before the world began. Even now we are all being held in the security of loving arms. You are attentive to our every prayer and through these prayers you have knitted us together. You are aware of our needs before they revealed at our horizon and have begun to act before we know to cry out. Keep us attentive to the needs around us, so you might illuminate your gracious presence through our acts of kindness. Amen.

## **Hymn: And Are We Yet Alive UMH 553 vs.1&2**

And are we yet alive,  
to wish each other grace?  
Glory and thanks to Jesus give  
for his Almighty grace!

Preserved by power divine  
to full salvation here,  
again, in Jesus' praise we join,  
and in his sight appear.

## **Scripture: Psalm 46 (in Haiku)**

God is our refuge;  
Our help in time of trouble.  
So we shall not fear.

Not when our world shakes,  
Nor when the mountains tumble  
Down into the sea,

Waves crash and they foam,  
The surging sea continue  
To shake the mountains.



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The river's channels  
will bring joy to God's city,  
A holy dwelling.

Our God lives in it,  
A city that can't be moved  
God has rescued it.

Our nations still roar,  
As they seem to come and go.  
When God gives a shout,

The earth is dissolved.  
Know the Lord is on our side.  
God is our stronghold.

So come bear witness  
Our God devastates the earth.  
Brings end to our wars.

Shattering the bow  
And breaking all of our spears;  
Our shields in ashes.

"Stop all your striving,  
Recognize that I am God."  
God commands us all.

"I will be placed first.  
I am to be exalted,  
over everything!"

The Lord's on our side.  
God is our only stronghold,  
The God of Jacob.

### **Hymn: *And Are We Yet Alive vs. 3&4***

What troubles have we seen,  
what mighty conflicts past,  
fighting without and fears within,  
Since we assembled last!

Yet out of all the Lord  
Hath brought us by his love;



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and still he doth his help afford,  
and hides our life above.

**The passing of the Bread:**

One: The Lord be with you.

All: **And also with you.**

**Sing or say grace: (tune: Old One Hundred)**

**Be present at our table Lord. Be here and everywhere adored;  
thy creatures bless and grant that we may feast in paradise with Thee. Amen.**

*Sharing the cups of water/juice*

**Hymn: And Are We yet Alive vs. 5&6**

**Then let us make our boast  
of his redeeming power,  
which saves us to the utter most,  
till we can sin no more.**

**Let us take up the cross  
till we the crown obtain,  
and gladly reckon all things loss  
so we may Jesus gain.**

**Blessing:**

May the Lord bless you wherever you are.  
May you find comfort in the eternal love of God  
who was and is and is to come.  
May the hope you embrace be the hope you share,  
until we see each other's face.  
Amen.