

Olds-Sundre Pastoral Charge of the United Church
At Home Worship
April 9, 2020 Maundy Thursday
Minister: Rev. Tammy Allan

We gratefully acknowledge that we are on the ancient and traditional lands of The Blackfoot Nation, the people of the Treaty 7, and of Metis Region 3. May we cherish and care for the land and the people, as those who came before us did.

Your Worship Space

As you worship at home, try to create a space for that. It could be as simple as lighting a candle (either flame or battery); or placing a small cross or a symbol that has meaning for you in front of you. If you are alone, perhaps start a journal, as you reflect on the worship experience. Or, perhaps call a friend and share this time with them over the phone. If you are with one or two others, enjoy the conversation that arises...as you practise safe distancing. 😊 Tonight, you may want to place a bowl of warm water and a towel at your worship space, as a symbol of the story.

Opening Prayer

O God we come before you in this Holy Week to follow the path that Jesus walked. Open our hearts and minds to the story, that we might bring our questions, our hopes, our yearnings to this time and this place. May we know deep in our hearts that you are with us on the journey. Amen.

A Gospel Reading John 13:1-17, 31b-35

Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. ²The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper ³Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, ⁴got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. ⁵Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. ⁶He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" ⁷Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand." ⁸Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me." ⁹Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" ¹⁰Jesus said to him, "One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you." ¹¹For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, "Not all of you are clean." ¹²After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you?" ¹³You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. ¹⁴So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. ¹⁵For I have set you an example, that you

also should do as I have done to you. ¹⁶Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. ¹⁷If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.

Jesus said, “Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. ³²If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. ³³Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come.’ ³⁴I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. ³⁵By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Time of reflection

As I prepared this worship resource for you, I was remembering a Maundy Thursday service held at Olds United in my first year of ministry in the area. We were a very small group that evening, and we shared in a ritual of hand washing. We did that, as for us, that evening, it was what foot washing was for people in Jesus’ day. Walking around barefoot or in sandals, they worried about dirty feet. We worry about germs on our hands. I said that 7 years ago – that we worry about germs on our hands. Who knew how much more that worry would become for us today?

Hand washing has become not just part of our daily routine, but it has become essential to our health and well-being in ways we could never have imagined in 2013...or even in 2019. Yet here we are.

I remember too, from those times I have participated in handwashing rituals, the sense of compassion and care that is felt among those who share in that ritual. And, I lament that we cannot do something like that this year. But I invite you to look at handwashing in a new way...in terms of compassion, still. This year, however, the compassion is not for an intimate circle of friends gathered in a room to share a meal, as Jesus did with his disciples. This year, the compassion is about handwashing, mask wearing, social distancing, for the common good.

It’s about the last few lines of the reading for tonight... ³⁴“I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. ³⁵By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

We are being asked to practise the compassion of doing our part to flatten the curve, and live in a way that demonstrates our love for others. We are asked to live as disciples. This year, we’re having to find ways to do that differently, yet, in the midst of it all, there is love - God’s love for us, and the love we are called to share with others.

As you go about your days, each time you wash your own hands, reflect on the reality that this simple act is doing an incredible amount of good. Each time you encounter another person and you step back to maintain that 2 metre distance, remember that you are doing good. Each time you resist the urge to go somewhere crowded or risky in terms of social distancing, know that you are doing good. And know that God is with you, even in the most isolating of times. Thanks be to God.

A Closing Prayer

O God, we thank you for the memories we have of times where we have been deeply aware of your touch, or your love, of your presence among us. As we remember the story of Jesus' time with his disciples, may we remember also the compassion and love shared among that circle of friends. Give us the courage and the wisdom to be disciples today, even though what that looks like today is very different than what it would have been for Jesus' friends. Help us to discern what discipleship means in our time, in our places, in our current reality. Guide us, inspire us, give us hope, we pray, as together we walk through Good Friday to Easter joy. Amen.