

AN AGAPE FEAST FOR OUR JOURNEY

First Lutheran Church, Clarion, IA

ENTER IN SILENCE (*lights off*)

SONG: *Morning Has Broken*

LEADER: Good Morning! It is indeed a good morning! It's God's morning! It is GOOD!

It is another day on the journey! We have awakened.... we have washed the sleep from our eyes... loosened the stiffness in our body... We are refreshed... we smell the food...the coffee...we know its time to break the fast.

What a privilege to break the fast with an agape meal... a love feast!

READER 1: Agape - the Greek word for love.
An Agape meal - a love feast of the early Christians
A time for sharing nourishment of food for the body,
A time for thanking God,
A time for prayers, songs, and scripture for the soul
and a time for an offering of money for God's mission in the world.

READER 2: We have journeyed from many places gathered here for sharing and listening to one another...
We have gathered together for healing... to be renewed,
We will soon be preparing for the journey into God's world.
We are ready to be fed.

Many years ago near the Sea of Galilee, it was a similar setting. Jesus needed to be renewed.... BUT there were sick to be healed, crowds of people had gathered, stories were to be told, there was preparation for the journey

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 14: 14-21

READER 3: What a miracle! Yet a mundane miracle... stretching food to feed a crowd! Women do it all the time!

It was a miracle! But more *was* going on than the abundance of food to satisfy hunger and tiredness....
it was an agape meal distributed with divine compassion.

The miracle was also the willingness to share out of what was at hand... God created a world where there is more than enough for all, if people will share with willingness of heart and mind.

The miracle is... in Jesus all person's needs are supplied. "*My God will supply every need of yours, even in the desert places of this life.*" Philippians 4:19

LEADER: On the table are fives loaves and two fishes. Let each table select a server to come to the table now. Take some bread and fish pass it around the table. Let each person take a portion, but do not eat yet.

Servers, come now to the table.

(Two people lift up the trays with loaves and fish and let the Servers take portions from the trays, back to their table. When all have been served, continue with the prayer.)

Hold the bread and fish in your hand.... and let's thank our Lord.

Loving God, Giver of all gifts, bless this food of bread and fishes. May it nourish our bodies and give us strength to carry out your plan for peace and life. Amen.

Now... take the fish and bread in your hand and feed it to your neighbor. This is an agape feast...where the body is refreshed with food and the spirit is renewed to overflowing because of the grace we experience as people of faith.

Share the feast with your neighbor! Experience the grace of God!

SONG: *For Those Tears I Died, Hymns for the Family of God*
Pub: Paragon Associates Nashville, Tennessee

LEADER: As you shared the fish and the bread, you believed that you too would eat.... that your neighbor would share... there was no guarantee.
The amount of the food was small... PERHAPS you would have nothing to eat.

BUT, in faith you knew there would be enough, you shared what you had.

It is in such sharing that we discover that Christ is in our neighbor.... in our churches in our society.... Christ is in our midst to share the agape feast for our journey.

The meal is ready!
The fast has been broken!
Christ is among us!
Let everyone come to the table...for food...for drink.
Let the agape feast begin!

BREAKFAST

LEADER: We have been strengthened with food for our bodies for our journey.
A miracle of abundance....
of abundant food ...
of abundant grace in ordinary food....

We hear another story of Jesus sharing a meal and opening the eyes of the one with whom he shared the bread.

SCRIPTURE: Luke 24: 28-35 (share the setting of the story before reading)

READER 1: The Emmaus story reminds us that Christ is seen in the ordinary....
in the breaking of the bread....
in sharing....
in listening....
in caring....
in risking....
ordinary daily events in all our ordinary daily lives.

READER 2: Two ordinary people, receiving great joy in really seeing Jesus, hasten on the journey to share the Good News.

Their eyes were opened - BUT -they couldn't clearly see UNTIL they shared the joy with someone else.

Your eyes...my eyes...have been opened.... we want to see clearly, really see Jesus.

BUT...who will be on our ordinary journey of life? With whom can we share?
Where can we find Jesus?

SONG: *Jesus, Where can we find you in the World Today?"*
Songs for the Journey, Augsburg/Fortress

READER 3: Our eyes are opened!

You do enable us to see you in the world.

We can see you in the homeless... those without shelter...

READER 1: We can hear you in the cries of the oppressed... cries for justice to roll like water.

READER 2: We can feel you in the arms of children.... our children, our grandchildren, our nieces and nephews.... our orphans, our abandoned children.

We can taste you in the rice and beans as we share meals with our sisters and brothers in the refugee camps in El Salvador.

READER 1: We can touch you in the sick.... the dying.... those in pain.... those who mourn.

READER 2: We can listen to you as our sisters and brothers live their faith amid the struggle for human rights in Capetown, Johannesburg, and in the bush in South Africa.

READER 3: We can feel your presence with the people who search for freedom in the elections in Namibia

READER 1: We know you in freedom as walls fall in Germany

LEADER: WE CAN INDEED SHARE CHRIST WITH OUR SISTERS, BROTHERS, AND CHILDREN IN OUR NEIGHBORHOOD, IN OUR CHURCHES, IN THE WORLD!

We can share out of what we have....

abundant food....

abundant worldly goods....

abundant grace among us.

Out of our abundance we share in faith that even our abundance will be multiplied as loaves and fishes in the world.

Our offering this morning will be for our sisters and brothers who have experienced the natural disasters... _____.

As the disciples gathered the abundance after the meal, we will gather the abundance of our offerings.

After you give your offering, gather in a circle around the room for our Prayer of Thanksgiving.

OFFERING

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING *(each paragraph read by another voice, dispersed around the circle)*

God of miracles and wonderful surprises, we give thanks that we may come together in this circle of life to share in the abundance of your good earth.

We acknowledge we have not always shared out of our abundance. We have had so many loaves that we have had to freeze some while our neighbors had none. We have hoarded our bread and fish while your children have starved. Forgive us, O' God.

Often our eyes have been closed to the miracles in our midst. Forgive us when we fail to see Christ in the ordinary and in our extraordinary neighbor.

As living beings we recognize that we are a part of one another, freed by you to share in love with all your children everywhere.

May we be responsible in our stewardship, joyous in our giving and loving in all that we do.

Continue to surprise us with your miracles, God. Multiply our 'work, our energy, our offerings and our sharing that we might be as loaves and fishes throughout the land.

Continue to prepare us for our journeys into the world.... help us to be miracles to ALL your children. In the name of the miracle in us all, let the people say AMEN! AMEN!!!!

SONG: *Bind Us Together*

W. Jeanne Rapp
Conference of Presidents
11/89