**March 28, 2024 Maundy Thursday**

**Light supper: 6:00 pm**

**Service:  7:00 pm**

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**Welcome:  Pastor Austin**

**Call to Worship**Pastor John: The week has come to wrestle with the story.
**Many: The week has come to reveal the profane.**Pastor Austin: The day has come to embody the sacred.
**Many: The day has come to reflect on love.**Pastor John: The hour has come to remember the story.
**Many: The hour has come to bring peace to our souls.**

**Invocation (Pastor Austin)**Holy God, Companion in the Room,
We enter the space where the story begins. As evening extinguishes daylight, we begin the task of remembering the story. Our minds race as we place ourselves around the table with Christ. Our souls become quieter as the bread is broken and the cup is poured. May we recall tonight’s story as one that has drawn us together over time.. May the readings and rituals bless our heavy hearts worn down by this world. Heal us with each word, each sense, each breath. Amen.

**Prayer Of Transformation and New Life (Unison Led by Pastor John)
Holy Deliverer,
Tonight, we have reached the all-too-familiar story of the eve before the execution. While there are times when we relate very well to Jesus in this story, we forget that we have been Judas, Peter, and the disciples. We have allowed ourselves to become part of someone’s story of pain. Our words have pierced another’s hearts. We have betrayed our neighbor instead of filling this world and another’s soul with love. Instead of living with the heaviness of guilt, allow us to create peace around us and within us. Invite us to share our repentance and to reconcile whenever possible. May we live into the mandate to love one another as you love us. Amen.**

**Words of Grace (Pastor John)**Through the redeeming love of Christ, God has poured grace upon us. May the mercy of God transform us into bearers of love in a wounded world. Amen.

**Scripture:  John 13:1–17, 31b–35 (Pastor Austin)**

**Hand Washing and Blessing Ritual**

*This is a blessing of the hands. In our world today, our hands are used to care for us and others, prepare food, extend a greeting, and work – whether laboring in the fields, manufacturing items, or administration. Our work provides for others and ourselves, extending the love of Christ in our world.*

*(Please place your hands over the basin as water is poured over them.  The towel of blessing reminds us of the towel Jesus used to dry the feet of His disciples.  Please use and share these towels with neighbors as reminders of Christ’s great love.*

*As you are comfortable, allow your hands to be anointed with Dead Sea water with essential oils of myrrh and frankincense.)*

**A Blessing for the Washing of Hands (Pastor Austin)**God of Blessings,
Like water, your grace flows freely over us,
Releasing the shame of the past,
Refreshing us for the future.
Such restoration is a balm to our spirits.
May these hands be a conduit of your love into the world.
May they build systems and spaces of care.
May they deliver words of kindness across the virtual universe,
And may they provide the necessities to our neighbors in need.

Allow the bounty of your blessings which passes through our hands
To alleviate heartbreak and illuminate beauty
As we wander throughout your kin-dom.
Amen.

**Hymn: Let Us Break Bread Together**

*1. Let us break bread together on our knees; let us break bread together on our knees; when I fall down on my knees with my face to the rising sun, O Lord, have mercy on me.*

 *2. Let us drink wine together on our knees;
let us drink wine together on our knees;
when I fall down on my knees
with my face to the rising sun,
O Lord, have mercy on me.

3. Let us praise God together on our knees;
let us praise God together on our knees;
when I fall down on my knees
with my face to the rising sun,
O Lord, have mercy on me.*

 **Communion Liturgy**

**Invitation**
Pastor John: God loves you!
**Many: And the Holy One loves you.**Pastor Austin: Open wide your souls.
**Many: In our vulnerability, we reveal our most authentic selves to God.**Pastor John: May we embrace the mandate of Christ.
**Many: In Christ’s words we celebrate our love for one another.**

**Communion Prayer**Pastor Austin:  Divine Gatherer of Friends,
There is beauty in this evening. From tonight’s sunset to the embracing of friends, a space like this reminds us of an upstairs room with loved ones.

Pastor John:  Yet also an annual gathering as this reminds us of a time of betrayal, of denial, of pain. May the words and rituals tonight be a healing salve. May this time of reflection give us pause from the worries of the world. May this space renew our weary souls and this sacrament revive our spirits, leading us to share the love of God and build God’s Realm around us.

Pastor Austin:  Each time we remember this holy night, we recall the story of the meal. It was on this night of love and betrayal that Jesus took a loaf of bread. After he blessed the bread, he broke the bread, and gave it to his friends. “This is my body,” he said to them. “Remember me each time you break and eat the bread.”

Pastor John:  And after supper, Jesus took the cup filled with the fruit of the vine. He spoke to his followers, “This is the cup of the new covenant. As often as you drink from this cup, do this in remembrance of me.”

Pastor Austin:  Holy Spirit, Winds of Healing, encircle these elements tonight. Surround us with your care, mend the wounds from betrayals, and allow this meal to soothe our heavy hearts.

Pastor John:  This is the sacramental meal of Christ for all God’s children. No matter where you are on the path of life, each of you are welcome at this table.

(Please offer each element to your neighbor as the bread and cup are passed.  When all have received, partake at the direction)

Pastor Austin:  “Take and eat, the Body of Christ”

Pastor John:  “Take and drink, the cup of salvation.”

**Prayer of Gratitude (Unison led by Pastor Austin)
Holy One, with gratitude, we celebrate this space and time with your children. With thanksgiving, we remember Jesus the Christ, the one who shared light with the world, even when the shadows lengthened. Give us strength to re-enter this world sharing love and grace to our neighbors around us. Amen.**

**Hymn:  Go To Dark Gethsemane**

*1. Go to dark Gethsemane, ye that feel the tempter's power.*

*Your Redeemer's conflict see, watch with Him one bitter hour.*

*Turn not from His griefs away; learn of Jesus Christ to pray.*

*2. Follow to the judgment hall, view the Lord of life arraigned
O the wormwood and the gall! O the pangs His soul sustained!
Shun not suffering, shame, or loss; learn of Him to bear the cross.*

*3. Calvary's mournful mountain climb; there, adoring at His feet
Mark that miracle of time, God's own sacrifice complete
"It is finished!" hear the cry; learn of Jesus Christ to die.*

*4. Early hasten to the tomb where they laid His breathless clay
All is solitude and gloom. Who has taken Him away?
Christ is risen! He meets our eyes; Savior, teach us so to rise.*

**Benediction (Pastor John)**As we head into the night, may we commune with God our fears and frustrations. May we reach out to our neighbors as we yearn to settle our souls. May we know the strength of the Holy Spirit as we endure moments of trial and moments of joy. Amen.

Acknowledgments - The Betrayal: Service Prayers for Maundy Thursday Year B was written by Rev. Michelle Torigian, the senior pastor of St. Paul United Church of Christ in Belleville, Illinois. Her liturgies and prayers can be found at [michelletorigian.com](http://michelletorigian.com/).