

*The following two services are based on some of our earliest memories of Jesus' gatherings and are, of course, Jewish in origin. I am offering them here for use either in podcasts which communities can share or at private family meals. I would encourage you to include others who may be able to connect virtually. They first appeared in Out of the Fire, 1992 and have been edited for these challenging and creative times. You may share them virtually and I appreciate you attributing them when you do. The services can be used in part or entirely. Every Wednesday, I publish three prayers on my blog that you are also welcome to use. These are set up for the Collect, a Prayer over the Gifts, and a Prayer after Communion.*

*Before beginning either version of this service, one should gather the elements for this meal. These include: candles, grape juice and/or wine, bread, and milk (to which you might add honey if it will be consumed). You may use the readings provided here or the readings designated for the day. These can be found at this [link](#).*

## **Meal in Community/Family**

### **The Opening (Psalm 146)**

Hallelujah! Praise God, O my soul!

We will praise God as long as we live.

We will sing praises to our God all our lives long.

Happy are they who have God for their help, whose hope is in our God

Who made heaven and earth, seas and all that is in them.

Who keeps promises forever.

Who gives justice to those who are oppressed  
and food to those who hunger.

God sets the prisoners free. God opens the eyes of the blind.

God lifts up those who are bowed down.

God loves the righteous. God cares for the outsider  
and sustains the orphan and widow,  
but frustrates the way of the wicked.

God shall live in our hearts forever  
throughout all the generations.

Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

### **Collect:**

Loving Creator, who blesses and hallows community: receive the offering of our histories, our fears, and our hopes. Be present as we live in a new time, filled with anxiety, but also hope. Open our understanding to the power of transformation so that we may learn from suffering and fear, and find our way to live in the city of peace and healing. Let our community be renewed in beauty, power, and grace. **Amen.**

## **Blessing of the Candles**

*Sunrise* by Mary Oliver (below)

You can  
die for it —  
an idea,  
or the world. People  
have done so,  
brilliantly,  
letting  
their small bodies be bound  
to the stake,  
creating  
an unforgettable  
fury of light. But  
this morning,  
climbing the familiar hills  
in the familiar  
fabric of dawn, I thought  
of China,  
and India  
and Europe, and I thought  
how the sun  
blazes  
for everyone just  
so joyfully  
as it rises  
under the lashes  
of my own eyes, and I thought  
I am so many!  
What is my name?  
What is the name  
of the deep breath I would take  
over and over  
for all of us? Call it  
whatever you want, it is  
happiness, it is another one  
of the ways to enter  
fire.

### **Prayer**

Loving God, we give you thanks for surrounding us with the light of day. Shine in our hearts with the radiance of the Beloved of God.

**Blessed is our God Creator and womb of the world  
Who has blessed us with inner light.**

## **Blessing over the grape-juice and/or wine**

**Reading:** John 15:12-17

Jesus said: My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love is no more than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know what the master's business really is. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from our Maker I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Holy One will give you. This is my command: Love each other.

**Prayer:** God our creator, you have made us one with this earth, to live in harmony and to bring forth fruit. May we so cherish all that has life from you that we we may share in the joy of creation and the struggle for justice.

**Blessed is our God, Creator and womb of the world**

**Who has created the fruit of the vine.**

## **Blessing over the bread**

**Reading:** Gospel of the Day or Mark 8:1-10

During those days another large crowd gathered. Since they had nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples to him and said, "I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. If I send them home hungry, they will collapse on the way, because some of them have come a long distance."

His disciples answered, "But where in this remote place can anyone get enough bread to feed them?"

"How many loaves do you have?" Jesus asked.

"Seven," they replied.

He told the crowd to sit down on the ground. When he had taken the seven loaves and given thanks, he broke them and gave them to his disciples to distribute to the people, and they did so. They had a few small fish as well; he gave thanks for them also and told the disciples to distribute them. The people ate and were satisfied. Afterward the disciples picked up seven basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. About four thousand were present. After he had sent them away, he got into the boat with his disciples and went away.

**Prayer:** Sustaining God, whose loving hand shares with us all that we think to possess: grant us grace to be accountable for the abundance and to be as faithful as we are appreciative.

**Blessed is our God, Creator and womb of the world**

**Who has blessed us with inner light.**

## **Blessing over the milk**

**Reading:** Deuteronomy 30:19, 6:3

This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live.

Hear, Israel, and be careful to obey so that it may go well with you and that you may increase greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, just as the God of your ancestors, promised you.

**Prayer:** God our Mother

You hold our life within you. Nourish us at your breast  
and help us to learn and grow in compassion and courage.

**Blessed is our God, Creator and womb of the world**

**Who has blessed us with inner light.**

## **The Lord's Prayer**

**Closing Reflection:** *spring song* by Lucille Clifton

the green of Jesus  
is breaking the ground  
and the sweet  
smell of delicious Jesus  
is opening the house and  
the dance of Jesus music  
has hold of the air and  
the world is turning  
in the body of Jesus and  
the future is possible

**Blessing:** May we feel God's blessing as we raise our prayer for healing, for peace and justice  
for all. Amen.

*(Together, a meal is shared, either virtually or in person.)*

# Meal in Community/Family

*(an alternative version)*

## The Invitation

*Candles are lit.*

Open to us the gates of justice and insight.

**May we enter through them, giving thanks because God's steadfast love endures forever.**

Blessed are those who seek, following the hunger within.

**Blessed is the light which shines within our community/family/friends and illumines our pathway.**

*A cup of milk (and honey) is raised.*

The earth belongs to God; let the people bless the planet with all its creatures and green, growing life.

**This is the land of milk and honey; may we appreciate and learn from the world around us and from the First Nations who have kept the sacred teachings in the midst of oppression and suffering.**

*A cup of wine and/or grape juice is raised*

In laughter and tears, in times of plenty and times of want, we grow together in loving community in Christ.

**May we drink the fruit of the vine in celebration of joy and solidarity in suffering.**

*Bread is offered.*

With hope in a time of uncertainty, we offer our lives and our work, that together we may be food for our world.

**May the One who nurtures our souls feed us with the bread of community, as we are connected in and through the love of Christ, the lifeblood of our faith.**

*Olives or oil may be offered.*

From the olive tree, we see the sign of peace with justice.

**May the oil of compassion anoint our shared lives so that all sisters and brothers may live in peace.**

## Readings:

*Isaiah 60:18-20*

No longer will violence be heard in your land,  
nor ruin or destruction within your borders,  
but you will call your walls Salvation  
and your gates Praise.

The sun will no more be your light by day,  
nor will the brightness of the moon shine on you,  
for the Lord will be your everlasting light,  
and your God will be your glory.

Your sun will never set again,  
and your moon will wane no more;  
the Lord will be your everlasting light,  
and your days of sorrow will end.

*Revelation 22:1-5 (a paraphrase)*

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. No longer will there any harm come to anyone. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and the servants will serve the Holy One. They will see that face, and that name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for God will give them light. And justice and peace will reign for ever and ever.

*Luke 19:1-10*

Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way.

When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a sinner."

But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount."

Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a descendant of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save those who have their way."

### **Prayers:**

Creator of the world, we give thanks for all the good things in our lives, for the opportunity to be together, and for your presence within and around us.

We pray for an end to violence in our homes, in our streets, between nations. Let us remember....

We pray for an ethic of justice tempered by compassion. Let us remember the struggles of....

We pray for those who suffer in mind, body, or spirit. We pray for and with them, under the sheltering wings of God. May our concern be for....

We pray for the planet. Let us remember those who love the earth and seek healing and wholeness in the web of creation. We pray especially for....

As Jesus taught us, we pray together....

**The Lord's Prayer**

Blessing: The banquet is read and the feast is prepared.

**May the dance begin here and wind throughout all the world.**

*(Together, a meal is shared, either virtually or in person.)*