

"Comfort Food: A Feast of Love"

Get something to eat, pour a fresh cup of coffee or glass of juice, gather at a table, and read to one another

When we “break bread” together as a church in our worship, we remember that Jesus invited folks to his table as part of his ministry, not just at the Last Supper. So we wanted to create a way for all of us to break bread together with whatever we have at our homes. Indeed, what we’ve asked you to do is to prepare your favorite “comfort food!”

Jesus used the parable of a great banquet to which all people are invited in order to talk about what the “kin-dom” of God, the family of God, looks like. He said, “Go to the highways and back alleys and *urge* people to come in so that my house will be filled.” He often invited the most unlikely guests to his meal-times, confounding the disciples. In this way, he was encouraging a deep love and connection beyond social norms. He knew that we humans need connection and inclusion. Jesus comforts us, saying “you have a place at the table” and Jesus challenges us to make sure we are doing the same– that all people know they are welcome in our hearts, in our homes, in our churches– even if we can’t physically be with each other right now.

It is difficult in this moment not to be near some of the people we love and might be worried about. Take a moment and say out loud the names of people you wish were right there next to you at your table today.

[pause and say them out loud if there is more than one of you, or write the names down]

Jesus is no longer physically on earth, yet every time we gather around a table and we call him to mind, he is present with us in Spirit. And so too, our loved ones are with us. Let this be a comfort to us.

We also want to call to mind, the people we cannot name, whose names we do not know. But we know they need our prayers and God’s comfort.

For those who have lost loved ones
For those who are sick and recovering
For those who are caring for loved ones who are sick at home
For those who are caring for persons in medical care
For those who are separated from loved ones
For those who are feeling alone and isolated
For those who are helping and are so very tired
For those who are struggling to find friends, food, and comfort
For those who are afraid

For those who are in the service industries who are out so we may stay in

[add other categories as feels right for your context]

I invite you to take a deep breath on behalf of all those we do not know and cannot call by name. As we do so, we know that *God* knows who needs our prayers and the Spirit, Breath of God, is blowing from within us outward as a Spirit of Compassion and Presence. *[pause to take a couple of deep and audible breaths]*

Blessings at the table are part of our Judeo-Christian heritage. Indeed, Jesus adapted his Jewish ritual blessing spoken before and after meals. He asked us to remember him whenever we break bread and raise a cup in thanksgiving. This is why we call our communion prayers the “*Great Thanksgiving*.” In this feast of love and comfort, we can call to mind things for which we are deeply grateful. I invite you to speak aloud a couple of things that you are grateful for in this moment. *[pause to allow this]*

And so I invite you to raise a plate of “something” on your table, or a glass of whatever you are drinking, *[take a moment to do this]* and let us bless it in this way, repeating after me there at home:

Holy Comforter

Holy Comforter *[continue to repeat the next lines in this way]*

We gather in your name...
invited by Jesus...
bound together with your Spirit...
in union with each other...

Feed our bodies and our spirits...
with your comforting presence...
so that we might be your comfort to others...

Bless this food...
and break open our hearts...
Bless this drink...
and pour out your love...
Amen...

As you pass and fill your plates, getting ready to continue to eat your comfort food, I invite you to imagine what extravagant love looks like as you reach across the social distance to loved ones, to friends, and even acquaintances or strangers.

And now may you shelter not only in place, but in peace. May the peace and comfort of Christ be present with you now and forevermore. Amen.