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## THE LORD'S SUPPER

### *A Unitarian & Free Christian Service*

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¶ *The service leader, standing by the Table, shall say the following prayer:*

**F**rom olden times comes to us this meal of bread and wine.  
In the night before his passing, Jesus and his friends were gathered around this table.

He had spoken of a God who wants to save the world;  
of the cross that must be carried;  
of the cup that must be emptied  
of the joy awaiting the faithful.

Now he spoke of the sacrifice that should be made;  
of the communion in his love, stronger than death;  
of the darkness befalling those betraying this love.

It was a meal of bread and wine.

The bread, made out of grains of wheat, should be broken.

So must his body be broken and die.

The wine, pressed from grapes, should be shed.

So must his blood be shed, for many.

Those who had joined the meal, knew the significance of the moment.

They understood:

the darkness of betraying love;

the grief of sacrificing for love;

the power of communion in a love stronger than death;

the peace of those who remain in his love.

The meal of bread and wine is the communion in this love we behold  
in Jesus, in which we share through him;

the communion with the deceased;

the communion with those far away;

the communion with those near;

the communion with those who will succeed us.

Friends, in faith and love, you are invited to this Supper, whether you belong to this church, to any other, or to none, all those who know themselves bonded in the Spirit or who long to live in communion with Jesus.

¶ *The service leader then invites those present to pray the Lord's Prayer:*

Now, let us join together in saying together the prayer Jesus taught all those beginning in the life of the Spirit, the Lord's Prayer:

**O**ur Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

¶ *The service leader invites all present to say together the following prayer of confession:*

**E**ternal God, who knows our weakness so much more than we do ourselves, fill our hearts with the will to forgive and the grace to be forgiven. It is so hard for us to transcend our hurt, our anger and our pain, and sometimes we despair. But somewhere deep inside ourselves your loving and forgiving spirit is at work – help us, O help us to know it and receive it.

¶ *Silence*

¶ *The service leader recites the Great Commandments and then offers a prayer:*

**J**esus taught us: “Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”

**E**ternal God, who by the example of Jesus, consecrated for us a new way of living in your service, give us, we pray, the assurance of your mercy, cleanse us by your Holy Spirit, that our fellowship at this time may be with you, with Jesus whom you sent, and with all who are one with him and you, in spirit and in truth. Amen.

¶ *Reading/s if desired*

¶ *The service leader may, if desired, offer this or another communion address:*

**I**n this service we commemorate a great friendship and a great sacrifice. We come together to have communion with God through the example of Jesus that we may deepen and renew our fellowship with him, and increase the power and sincerity of our discipleship. The love of others and the desire to serve them was the chief passion of his life. We think of him not only in relation to his own disciples, to whom he endeavoured to impart the gift of his spirit, but also in his relation to the men and women of his time, to whom he gave his best, both in word and work. What distinguished him most of all was the value he set on spiritual fellowship. Friendship with him meant not merely

practical help and sympathy, but also spiritual encouragement and support. He was insistent that the hungry must be fed, the naked clothed, the sick visited; but he was not less insistent that men and women's souls should be nourished, and that they should share the riches of the life eternal. In all that he said and did Jesus appealed to the soul. All men and women were to him his brothers and sisters in God, and he based his relations with them upon that idea. Love to God and love to humankind were not principles that one might take or leave. They were the essential principles of humanity, without which a true life was impossible.

Today, whatever are our perplexities or difficulties, we still acknowledge the truth and beauty of the Christian principle. Our spiritual nature lays upon us the ministry of love and service. Time and again our ideals are denied in the realm of the every-day and the practical. Yet we cannot shrink from the clear witness of our souls to the love of God and of humankind as the supreme things of life. Like Jesus we owe to them our fullest loyalty and allegiance; and we pray that as we partake of the symbols of his ministry and sacrifice, we may share the friendship of his spirit, and be strengthened and purified in soul by our fellowship with him. We would be one in this ministry of the Spirit, in our Christian discipleship, with all faithful men and women of every age, clime and faith who have loved and served humanity in the spirit of Jesus.

¶ *Then the service leader, standing by the Table, shall say:*

**W**hen the hour came, [Jesus] took his place at the table, and the apostles with him. He said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I tell you, I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he said, "Take this and divide it among yourselves; for I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood." (Luke 22:14-20)

¶ *Then the service leader, lifting the bread, says:*

**A**nd so, as all share in the bread of life and are children of God, we break this bread as a sign and symbol of Jesus, of all who have faithfully served God and humankind, and as a reminder of our desire

to serve one another in perfect love.

¶ *The bread is shared together in silence.*

¶ *Then the service leader, lifting the cup, says:*

**A**s we are all made of one blood and together share this world, we take this cup as a sign and symbol of Jesus of all who have witnessed to the unity of humankind, and a reminder of our desire that, freely as we have received, freely we will give.

¶ *The cup is shared together in silence.*

¶ *When all who desire to do so have shared the bread and wine, there follows a few moments of silent thanksgiving to God.*

**E**ternal God, we give thanks that you have set us in the line of so many good and faithful men and women. We remember all who from the beginning of the world have worked towards righteousness and walked with you, all whose lives have been beautiful with the same beauty that was in Jesus. Let the cloud of witnesses be to us an example of godly life, and by faith, hope and love may we be united to them and to you now and forevermore.

**G**ather or scatter us, O Lord, according to Your will. Build us into one church, a church with open doors and large windows, a church which takes this world seriously, ready to work and to suffer, and even to bleed for it.

**C**hrist is born in us when we open our hearts to innocence and love. Christ lives in us when we walk the path of forgiveness, reconciliation and compassion. Christ dies in us when we surrender to our own arrogance, selfishness and hate. Christ rises in us when our souls awaken from spiritual death to join the community of kindness, to enter the divine kingdom in the world's midst. Let us go in peace. Amen.

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*This Communion service was compiled for use in churches and fellowships belonging to the Unitarian & Free Christian traditions. The Table prayer is from the Dutch Remonstrants (a liberal church long associated with our own). The closing prayer beginning "Gather or scatter us, O Lord" is from our early 17<sup>th</sup> Century forbear the Polish Brethren who taught the oneness of God and the humanity of Jesus. The remaining prayers are found in various Unitarian and Free Christian prayer and service books dating from 1932 until the present.*

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