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Together for a Meal

March 19, 2020 (<http://katolson.com/2020/03/19/together-for-a-meal/>)

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Last week I was in Grand Rapids with other endorsed worship coaches (<https://www.crcna.org/worship/endorsed-coaches>) for the CRNA (<https://www.crcna.org>) when measures to flatten the curve (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2020/world/corona-simulator/?fbclid=IwAR1FalMubmoWmnbG-f5LgOEgAhqhE04bjmoUpPty3oDy4eCX7Uu9mXgpUZs>) concerning COVID-19 started to appear. We quickly agreed to suspend our agenda and break into small groups to create some resources for people who were now worshipping at home or in small groups. Adam Perez, Diane Dykgraaf, and myself broke into a small group and began brainstorming the seed for this service. A liturgy based around having a meal together in a small group or family unit with specific options for those which included children. While this liturgy is in no way a sacrament, it mimics the patterns and themes as we gather around a table together. Every meal, from the simple to the extraordinary, is a gift from God.

Things to note about this liturgy:

- Some sections have multiple options, choose which serves your gathering best.
- There are some questions in *italics*. Use these questions as you see fit: points to enter into discussion or reflection; a prompt for silent prayer; have a younger child read the question and then use this point as an opportunity for further explanations.
- There are points where multiple songs are suggested (to give variety based on familiarity or preference), use them as you desire. There are links to resources when available. Some

groups may have easier access to music and/or utilize these opportunities. Some will pick different songs. Some may use these to create a playlist to listen to. Some may choose to not use singing voices or any music in their time together at all. All these options fit within the theme of this liturgy.

- The primary hymnal for this liturgy, *Lift Up Your Hearts*, is referred to as LUYH. Many of the hymns selected can be found in multiple hymnals.

Arriving: Washing and Remembering

- As you gather together, intentionally wash your hands in front of one another and reflect on and/or discuss:
 - *Why are we washing our hands?*
 - How the act of washing our hands has lately been a reminder of social distancing and fear of contact with others.
 - How the washing of our baptism has the opposite effect. Despite distance and difference, we are united with Christ and with others through our baptism.
- Read 1 Corinthians 12: 12-14
- Possible Song choices:
 - Baptized in Water (https://hymnary.org/text/baptized_in_water) (LUYH 790)
 - Holy Water (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l0xhhG1Hyos>) by We the Kingdom
 - Ten Thousand Reasons (LUYH 559) by Jonas Myrin and Matt Redman (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XtwlT8JjddM>)
 - Deep and Wide (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mkjPOrQquT8>) (video by Crossroads Kids Club)

Gathering Together: Enjoying One Another's Presence

- Option 1: Pot-luck style–Set your table
- Option 2: From Scratch: Meal Prep Together (keep everyone involved)
 - Can your kids create colourful place settings?
 - Can your friends who don't like to cook set the table or contribute to preparing the meal in other ways?

At the Table: Setting the Stage

- As you stand/sit around the meal/table reflect:
 - *Why does this meal feel different than others we've had around this table?*
- Read Acts 2: 42

Giving Thanks: For the Meal and For God's Action in the World

- Option 1: Dedicated Prayer, Scripture, and Song Blocks of Time
 - Opening the meal with Trinitarian Prayer that gives thanks and praise for God's actions in the past, present, and future.

- Example Prayer:
 - Holy and Almighty God, who has formed the stars over our heads, the grass beneath our feet, and the heart that beats our in our chests. We celebrate your providential love for us through the gift of your Son. We somberly remember his perfect sacrifice on the cross and celebrate his resurrection with joy that bursts from us in love and compassion for others. We anticipate his return by joining in with the work of the Spirit which moves in us and around us. Be with us, those who are gathered around this table, and those who are separated by distance and time. Nourish us in mind, spirit, and body as we eat together and keep our hearts attuned to those who are especially struggling at this time (*lift up concerns*). Thank-you for gathering us together for this meal and joining us as one in Christ's most holy name. AMEN
 - Read Luke 24:13-32 at some point throughout or at the end of the meal.
 - Choose a song or several from the list below or some of your own that reflects the reading or the atmosphere of the meal to sing together.
- Option 2: Conversation as Prayer
 - Begin with a short opening prayer asking God to open our minds and hearts to hearing from each other and from God; asking God's blessing on the meal sharing.
 - Offer prompts to encourage discussion and reflection over the course of eating together. You can use the questions as entry points. Allow this to be a time where you both *notice* and *give thanks* for the ways you have experienced/seen/heard of God's work. These contributions can come from current and past experiences and manifest in sharing things from a single word to an entire story. Finish each time of discussion with any or all of the suggested scripture, songs, or story from your child's favorite story Bible.
 - God Almighty's work in creation.
 - *Why do we call God faithful/providential/Creator?*
 - Potential ideas to to conclude this section:
 - Scripture: Psalm 8
 - Song Suggestions:
 - Let All Things Now Living
(https://hymnary.org/text/let_all_things_now_living_a_song_of_t_han) (LUYH 5)
 - All Things Bright and Beautiful
(https://hymnary.org/text/each_little_flower_that_opens) (LUYH 20)
 - So Will I (100 Billion X) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GfVd5x9W1Xc>) by Hillsong Worship

- Kid's Bible: The Pentecost Story

Putting Our Hands to Work: Washing up / Cleaning up

- Involve everyone in cleaning up the meal together. As your hands work, use this as a tangible reminder of the work to be done in the world, and pray for it. This does not have to be a formal prayer, but can simply be an intentional naming aloud of the needs you see in the world.
 - As you work, talk and pray together about:
 - How the intentional work of your hands connects with the idea that your hands are equipped to work in the world.
 - The needs that you see in your community around you.
 - The needs of the vulnerable (eg. elderly folks in community living facilities, refugee camps where disinfectant products are scarce and social distancing is not an option.)
 - The ways you can help and support one another at home.
 - The way we've noticed needs in the world and where we feel called to meet those needs.
 - Extension project:
 - If you don't have the space for everyone to clean up at the same time, or have children who are too young, create intentional blessings to send out.
 - Have kids create pictures, cards, or letters to share with those who aren't present—extended family, school friends, or others.
- As adults, join in on these activities, or make some phone calls, send texts or letters to others. Send words of encouragement as best reflects your gifts.

Blessing One Another: Gathering Together Intentionally To Finish the Meal

- When the meal is done and all has been cleaned up, come back together and spend some time blessing one another with encouraging words.
 - *How has this meal been a blessing in our lives?*
 - *How has God blessed us through one another?*
 - *How do we feel charged to bless others?*
- Possible Songs:
 - Great Is the Lord Our God (LUYH 249)
 - Build Your Kingdom Here (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sbdJXKqVgtg>) Rend Collective
 - Every Move I Make (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MPvnZILn6EY>) (Dance along put together by CJ and Friends)
 - This Little Light of Mine (https://hymnary.org/text/this_little_light_of_mine_im_gonna_let)

- To God Be the Glory (LUYH 956)–or expand to the full *My Tribute* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nUfrtlI3zkE>) both written by Andraé Crouch

To see this resource and other resources that the Christian Reformed Church of North America has gathered together for small group and solo worship to meet needs during this time, click here (<https://network.crcna.org/worship/worship-and-covid-19>).

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