

In different households, across towns and nations we come to one table  
With our forefathers and mothers we join the heavenly choir as one people  
With those who cannot worship through illness or service we are held in the  
embrace of God's grace

With the disciples we come to the table  
bringing the dirt and weariness of the day and longing to be made clean  
bringing our hunger and thirst and longing to be fed  
bringing our fears and need and longing for consolation and strength

Spirit, who breathes God's story to us and through us  
With whispers of your grace  
draw us into your salvation story  
that we may know ourselves one with each other and you  
and that we may continue to be your love poured out for the world  
Amen

An Upper room

**An Upper Room did our Lord prepare  
for those he loved until the end;  
and his disciples still gather there  
to celebrate our Risen Friend.**

**A lasting gift Jesus gave his own —  
to share his bread, his loving cup;  
whatever burdens may bow us down,  
he by his cross shall lift us up.**

**And after supper he washed their feet,  
for service, too, is sacrament;  
in him our joy shall be made complete —  
sent out to serve, as he was sent.**

**No end there is! We depart in peace;  
he loves beyond the uttermost;  
in every room in our Father's house  
he will be there, as Lord and Host.**

*Fred Pratt Green (1903–2000) Words: © 1974, Stainer & Bell Ltd, 23 Gruneisen Road,  
London N3 1DZ <[www.stainer.co.uk](http://www.stainer.co.uk)>  
Methodist Church. Singing the Faith (Kindle Locations 14968-14986). Hymns Ancient &  
Modern Ltd. Kindle Edition.*

Jesus Washes the feet of the disciples John 13:3-20

## Mary's thoughts

Another meal  
after the excitement  
palms waving  
shouts of the kingdom  
we sit  
subdued  
wondering what's to come  
the jokes had dried up  
appetites gone  
a funeral feast

Jesus stripped  
embarrassment flared  
jumping from eye to eye  
until no one's eyes met  
the floor all we saw  
what was he doing?  
we heard water poured  
a gasp as he knelt  
washed

I cringed back into the corner  
hoping he wouldn't notice me  
that only the men  
would receive his attention  
remembering  
my touch on his feet  
cleansing  
healing  
thanking

all wanted to object  
to stop him  
to take his place  
but words failed  
breath stopped  
frozen  
stuck  
waiting

a shout  
"You can't!"  
Peter's indignation  
tearing the air  
sending shock waves  
voicing all our thoughts  
wording all our feelings

"I must"  
no less shaking  
or shocking

And so he knelt  
the water in the bowl  
transforming from clear to murky  
muck from the day  
merged in muddy mess  
No one excluded  
Andrew and Peter  
John and Judas  
All that weighed us down  
washed away by his love

## Meditation

What does it mean to celebrate this feast when we are apart?

I must admit I've spent days wondering about this service, first not even wanting to start, then starting but scrapping it almost immediately, feeling it might be an impossible task.

Then I began to look at the story again

In John's Gospel we get very little detail of the meal itself. No talk about bread and wine, body and blood. Instead we get a different act of grace and communion. Jesus shows God's self emptying love by removing all his garments, stripped bare in an act that foreshadows the cross, he washes the muck off his disciples' feet. Bear in mind that this is no symbolic washing of feet already clean but an act of true cleaning of the muck and filth that had gathered from walking on streets where the other traffic was made up of livestock, horses, donkeys. I'll leave the state of those feet to your imagination!

As I read the story of Jesus cleaning the disciples' feet, all the disciples' feet including those who would betray or deny him, I think of other stories I have read today: the student doctor attempting to change a catheter and becoming covered with its contents, consultants learning how to turn over patients to help them breathe, bus drivers becoming infected as they continue to transport people

I thought also of the endless messages to wash our hands.

How would it be if every time we washed our hands it became an act of prayer?  
If we recognised God with us in that simple act bringing cleansing, lifting our burdens?  
If we used it to let go of all those unnecessary things which we cling to so tightly?  
If we used it as a time to think of the needs of the world for healing and to hold those needs before God?

As I thought of that meal told of so vividly in the other Gospels and in passing in John, that meal where all gathered together and were fed and empowered, where Judas shared a dish with Jesus and received no less than the others, I thought also of the shared meals of these strange times:  
of restaurants delivering meals to hospitals for tired staff  
of Foodbanks and their volunteers  
of meals shared on the internet  
and recipes shared on WhatsApp  
of all those learning how to bake and how it feeds body and soul

And I wondered how we could make every meal a communion  
savouring each mouthful and giving thanks  
realising the grace of God in all we receive  
remembering God's love poured out for us  
being reminded of those whose need is great  
- of the children who are hungry and the parents who go without so their children can eat  
- of the households where abuse makes meal times and all times ones of fear and pain  
- and so many more

And then I began to wonder what it is to love as Jesus loved us in this time. For many of us that love shown by Jesus can be best shown by staying home in doing so we prevent others from being infected and if you're an activist that can be hard. We feel the urge to get out and do something. We don't want to sit and wait. But as the story of God's love continues that's exactly what the disciples must do also. They watch helplessly as Jesus is taken to his death.

### The Bowl and the Towel

*In an upstairs room, a parable  
is just about to come alive.  
And while they bicker about who's best,  
with a painful glance, He'll silently rise.  
Their Saviour Servant must show them how  
Through the will of the water  
And the tenderness of the towel.*

*And the call is to community,  
The impoverished power that sets the soul  
free.  
In humility, to take the vow,  
That day after day we must take up  
the basin and the towel.*

*In any ordinary place,  
On any ordinary day,*

*The parable can live again  
When one will kneel and one will yield.  
Our Saviour Servant must show us how  
Through the will of the water  
And the tenderness of the towel.*

*And the space between ourselves sometimes  
is more than the distance between the stars.  
By the fragile bridge of the Servant's bow  
We take up the basin and the towel.*

*And the call is to community,  
The impoverished power that sets the soul  
free.  
In humility, to take the vow,  
That day after day we must take up the  
basin and the towel.*

John 18:1-27

Ah Holy Jesus

Ah, holy Jesus, how have you offended  
that man to judge you has in hate pretended?  
by foes derided, by your own rejected,  
O most afflicted!

Who was the guilty? Who brought this upon you?  
It is my treason, Lord, that has undone you;  
and I, O Jesus, it was I denied you,  
I crucified you.

See how the shepherd for the sheep is offered,  
the slave has sinned and yet the Son has suffered;  
for our atonement hangs the Saviour bleeding,  
God interceding.

For me, kind Jesus, was your incarnation,  
your dying sorrow and your life's oblation,  
your bitter passion and your desolation,  
for my salvation.

O mighty Saviour, I cannot repay you.  
I do adore you and will here obey you.  
Recall your mercy and your love unswerving,  
not my deserving.