

Eden United Church of Christ
Order for Worship
First Sunday after Christmas
A Moravian Love Feast
Sunday, December 27, 2009
10:00 a.m.

WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Eden United Church of Christ is an Open and Affirming congregation.

We believe that all people are children of God;

that persons of all ages, races and sexual orientations are part of our increasingly diverse culture.

We welcome all persons into the full life and ministry of this church.

Children's bulletins are available upon request from the ushers.

Thank you for muting your cell phone, pager, and PDA during worship.

Thank you for bringing no food or beverages in the Sanctuary

other than sacramental elements and bottled water.

PRELUDE

A Place Called Home
A Christmas Carol

Alan Menken/
Lynn Ahrens

GREETING AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Pepper Swanson

INVITATION TO THE LOVE FEAST

Today, in honor of Christmas, we will have a special service of song, prayer, and food called a Love Feast. It is a service of worship that is both ancient and modern. It is ancient because it is based on the practice of early Christians (in the first to third centuries) sharing food or a meal together in the spirit of Christian love, a practice that was later forbidden by the church in the 4th Century . It is modern because it is a form of worship found in many churches across the county, if not the globe, particularly at Christmas time. This year, at what was probably the nation's largest Love Feast, over 2,000 people were served coffee and sweet rolls at Wake Forest University in North Carolina. More typically, however, Love Feasts take place in small and medium-sized churches like our own.

The simple Love Feast service we will celebrate today is based on the tradition of the Moravian Church, which has used Love Feasts to celebrate Christmas and other events in the life of their church for over nearly 300 years.

The Moravian Church is quite possibly the first Protestant church. It traces its roots to two 14th century critics and reformers of the Catholic Church in Bohemia and Moravia (now Czech Republic), named Jan Hus and Jerome of Prague, both of whom were burned at the stake for their beliefs, which included wanting worship in the language of the people, allowing priests to marry, allowing lay people to receive both bread and wine for communion, and the elimination of indulgences.

After Hus and Jerome were martyred, the Moravians struggle to exist in a climate of extreme religious persecution and were forced into hiding for several centuries. Their revival began in the early 1700's when a small band of underground Moravians (sometimes called the Secret Seed) found refuge in Saxony (Germany) on the estate of Nicholas Louis, Count of Zinzendorf. Under his protection, the Moravians established a small town and began to grow strong enough to begin to send missions to many parts of the globe, including the U.S. Tradition tells us it was during this period of revival, under Zinzendorf, who became the Moravian's bishop, that the Love-feast was re-introduced as a worship practice.

Later when Zinzendorf led the Moravian immigration to North America in the 1740's where they settled in Pennsylvania and North Carolina, the Love-Feast came with them. Moravian history say the first love feast in America was in November 17, 1753, on the evening of the arrival of the first Moravian colonists in North Carolina, where they established a settlement in the Winston-Salem area. It was also in this time period that John Wesley, founder of the Methodist Church, participated in a Moravian Love-Feast and introduced it to the fellow Methodists. Today, there are about 800,000 Moravians worldwide in 350 churches. In the US, they are most commonly found in the North Carolina and Pennsylvania, their original settlement areas. Their slogan remains: "In essentials, unity; in nonessentials, liberty; and in all things, love" and they are known for their core values of simplicity, happiness, unintrusiveness, fellowship, and service.

The traditional Moravian Love Feast celebrates the birth of Christ through scripture reading and prayer, the singing of hymns, the lighting of candles, and the serving of Moravian bread and coffee, by dieners, which is the German word for "one who waits at table". Today's Love Feast here at Eden will be much the same. Our dieners include members of our confirmation class and we will have time to sing, time to pray, and time to share a simple meal of Moravian Love Feast buns and a hot drink together in celebration of the birth of Christ.

Let us begin our Love Feast with our gathering song and the lighting of the candles.

GATHERING SONG

Nu Oli (*v.1 in English*)

№ 146

THE LIGHT ENTERS WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

INVITATION TO TABLE FELLOWSHIP

Pepper

BLESSING OF THE FOOD (*in unison*)

Stephanie S. Spencer

**O God, we thank Thee for this day.
Bless all we do and all we say.
May we each enjoy Thy blessings great
As Jesus' Birth we celebrate.
And may the love that we share here
Remain throughout the coming year. Amen.**

(The children K-5 are excused after the carol to the Fireside Room for the Children's Gathering. They will return following the Four-Stranded Garland Prayer. Nursery care is available at any time during worship.)

FOUR-STRANDED GARLAND PRAYER

Pepper

Today, in keeping with the Love Feast emphasis on prayer and fellowship, we will be trading our usual sermon time in favor of a spiritual exercise, call the Four-Stranded Garland. The Four-Stranded Garland is a method of meditative prayer recommended by Martin Luther to his barber Peter in 1535. At the heart of this prayer practice is the belief that while knowledge and study of scripture (the usual Protestant approach) is worthy and usual, the reading of scripture in a meditative and prayerful way can also be a powerful devotional tool. Luther believed that reading scripture, the Lord's Prayer, the 10 commandments or a religious creed in a prayerful and meditative gave the person praying a unique experience, the ability through meditation to see how the scripture might apply to one's own life and experience.

Before we begin, I will describe the 4-Stranded Garland prayer practice to you. But don't worry about remembering this as you will be guided throughout the meditation. Also, please be aware that meditation of this type can sometimes feel uncomfortable and bring up emotional or even physical sensation that might be distressing. If you feel you need to take a walk, please feel free at any time to quietly leave the room and find a place to take a break. There are benches in the foyer and the Norberg room is available. Today's scripture, which is from the Book of Colossians, will be read five times. The first time, it will be read at normal speed for your general understanding and then, it will be read four more times at a slower, more contemplative pace, to provide an opportunity to reflect on the words for 1) instruction, 2) gratitude, 3) confession, and 4) guidance. As the scripture is read, just relax your mind and listen to the text, pondering any words or phrases that draw your attention. After each reading, you may prayerfully share a word, phrase, or idea that drew your attention with the others at your table. Be careful during these times of sharing not to be drawn into discussion; as much as possible keep your prayerful attitude and thoughts. After the final reading and sharing, you may share a sentence or two about your experience with each other and then you will be asked to close the devotion at your table with a prayer. As I said, you will be guided at each step of the practice.

SCRIPTURE READING

Colossians 3:12-17²

Liturgists

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Parent through him. (NRSV)

¹ Harmonization Copyright ©, Oxford University Press. From THE ENGLISH HYMNAL, 1906.

² New Revised Standard Version adapted for inclusive language.

SOLO

Let This Be a House of Peace

Jim Scott

PRAYERS OF THE COMMUNITY

The Rev. Dr. Arlene K. Nehring

Joys and Concerns

Pastoral Prayer

Jesus' Prayer (*in unison*)

Our God, in whom is heaven, blessed be your name. Your presence come, your will be done, both here and everywhere. May your realm of peace and freedom sustain our hopes and come on earth. May we be fed today with the bread that we need, and may forgiveness be ours in the same measure we give. In times of temptation, strengthen us. From the grip of all that is evil, free us. For you reign in the glory of the power that is love, now and forever. Amen.

CAROL

Love Came Down at Christmas³

№ 165

OFFERING & DEDICATION OF OUR GIFTS

Invitation (*Thank you for placing your blue worship card in the offering plate*)

Stephanie

Offertory

I need you

arr. Lee Steward

* **Offertory Response**

Doxology⁴

№ 780

*Praise God from whom all bless-ings flow;
Praise God, all crea-tures here be-low
Praise God for all that love has done;
Creator, Christ, and Spirit, One.*

* **Prayer of Dedication**

CAROL

Who Would Think What Was Needed⁵

№ 153

BENEDICTION

Pepper

Our Love-Feast draws to a close. Like the end of a good family meal, let us thank each other for their presence here today and for all that they have shared with us in conversation and in prayer. May each of us go forth now, wearing the clothes of Christ -- compassion, kindness, humility, and forgiveness -- so the world around us might see and receive the light that was born unto us this and every Christmas. Merry Christmas and may you go with God.

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⁴ Public Domain

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POSTLUDE

God Bless Us Everyone
A Christmas Carol

Alan Menken/
Lynn Ahrens

Today's Worship Leaders

The Rev. Dr. Arlene K. Nehring, Senior Minister

Pepper Swanson, Minister In Training, Preaching

Stephanie Spencer, Liturgist

Lee Steward, Music Director and Pianist

Pat Ball, Greeter

Stephanie Andrade, Andrew Davis, and Kern Hansen, Confirmands

Peggy Apperson, Cindy Keune, and Frank Jenkins, Ushers

Liz McKay, Education, Spiritual Life, and Outreach Coordinator

Lisa Kelly, Angelina Collier, & Jessica House Steward, Nursery Caregivers

Jan Bass and Suzie Hasselkuss, Fellowship Hour Hosts

Suzie Hasselkuss, Michael Stuber, Pepper Swanson, and Alliene Turner, Bun Bakers

Ruth Jenkins, Office Attendant

Bill D'Anjou, Jr., Sunday Sexton

Dan Apperson, Trustee on Duty