



*For use in this time of sheltering in place  
as people are not able to gather in community for Holy Communion*

***Note from Dr. Marcia:** Friends, this brief ritual is offered as a way of “breaking bread” while we are “sheltered in place” and not able to physically gather together. This is not a communion service, but a ritual meant to recall Jesus’ wider table ministry and break and share comfort and love in such a manner that people do not feel deprived of “gathering at the table” while physically separated.*

*- Dr. Marcia McFee, Worship Design Studio*

## “Comfort Food: A Feast of Love”

**Pastor Brian:** 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. Our Lenten Dinner Church has become a way for all of us to break bread together when we would gather, and now we’ve moved to a form of togetherness with whatever we have on the table at our homes.

I invite you to share with the group gathered online what food you are bringing to the table for our virtual feast.

**Reader 1:** 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 *[or in chat/comments]* the names of people you wish were right there next to you at your table today.

**Pastor Brian:** Jesus is no longer physically on earth, yet every time we gather around a table and we can 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.

**Reader 2:** 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.

*Please pause after each line as we call to mind those we remember in this moment...*

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 providing 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

**Pastor Brian:** 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.

*We pause to take a few deep breaths...*

**Pastor Brian:** 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 or share in the chat area a couple of things that you are grateful for in this moment.

And so I invite you to raise a plate of something on your table, or a glass of whatever you are drinking,  
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, let us call to mind the extravagant love of God, and think about how we can share that love across the physical distance between loved ones, to friends, and even acquaintances or strangers.

*We share our meal time and conversation as the Spirit leads.*

*When time to conclude – this blessing is shared:*

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.**