

Order of service for Paschal Meal

1. Welcome and Introduction.

A hymn of praise is sung.

All stand as the leader welcomes those present.

We welcome all people to our meal here tonight – Jesus Christ who fulfilled the Passover when He died for us on the Cross a perfect man without blemish, accepts all people to Him – as Paul reminds us in Ephesians;

“Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household.”

Ephesians 2:19



2. The lighting of the Festive Candle.

According to Jewish custom, it is the task of the mother of the house to light the festival candles in every service that takes place in her home. Besides its practical purpose to give us light, this gesture symbolises the coming of Christ the Messiah, the light of the world.

The hostess lights the candle and recites:

Praise be to you O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who has kept us alive by your commandments. May Christ the light of the world inspire us to heal and not to harm, to help and not to hinder, to bless and not to curse, and so serve you, O God of freedom. May this place be consecrated O God, by the light of your countenance, shining upon us in blessing and bringing us peace!

All: Amen

3. The First Cup: the Cup of Mercy

The leader takes the first cup of wine and lifts it up and says:

Praised are you, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who has chosen us from all peoples and exalted and sanctified us with your commands. In love you have given us, O Lord our God, solemn days of joy and festive seasons of gladness, even this day of the Passover, a memorial of the departure from Egypt and for us a memorial of the redemption we have in Christ. Blessed are you O Lord, who sanctified Israel and the festive seasons.

The first cup of wine is poured for the others.

All: Praised are you, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who has created the fruit of the vine.

The first cup of wine is drunk.

4. The washing of the hands.

A basin is brought in and the leader washes their hands.

This was the ceremonial washing of hands to symbolise the need for spiritual cleansing of all those participating in the meal. It was at this point in the meal that Jesus washed his disciples feet, as recorded by John:

So he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

He came to Simon Peter who said to him. “Lord, are you going to wash my feet?”

Jesus replied, “You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand.”

“No,” said Peter, “you shall never wash my feet.”

Jesus answered, “Unless I wash you, you have no part with me.”

“Then, Lord,” Simon Peter replied, “not just my feet, but my hands and my head as well!”

Jesus answered, “A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not

every one of you.” For he knew who was going to betray him, and that is why he said not every one was clean.

When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. “Do you understand what I have done for you?” he asked them. “You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.”

John 13:4-17

5. The Karpas

Everyone takes a piece of celery or parsley and dips it in salt water – a symbol of the tears and sorrow of the Egyptian slavery.

All: Praised are you, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who has created the fruit of the earth.

The celery is eaten.

6. The Aphikomen

The unleavened bread is brought in. The middle piece is unwrapped, taken and broken, placed on the seder platter and lifted up.

All: Behold, this is the bread of affliction which our fathers ate in the land of Egypt. Let all who are hungry come and eat. Let all who are in want come in and celebrate the Passover with us. May it be God’s will to redeem us from all trouble and servitude. Next year, at this season, may the whole house of Israel be free.

7. The Second Cup: the Cup of Redemption

The second cup of wine is poured.

8. The Four Questions

These questions are asked by the youngest people at the meal

Why is this night different from all other nights? On other nights we eat with our families and we don’t eat funny food. Why are we having this special service?

Tonight we are celebrating together this special meal to remember that Jesus changed it forever. We are no longer waiting for the Messiah to come. We all know that he has come because he is with us now. We are doing this so that we will understand a little better what it was like for Jesus’ disciples at the last supper, and so we can understand communion better. We are eating it together because we are all part of God’s family.

Why is this night different from all other nights? We usually have loaves of bread with meals. Why on this night are we eating flat bread?

We are eating flat bread tonight because we are remembering the hurry in which the Israelites had to leave Egypt after God had sent the ten plagues on the Egyptians. The Egyptians urged the people to leave their country, for otherwise they said, “we will all die!” So the people took their dough before the yeast was added, and carried it on their backs in kneading troughs wrapped in clothing. The bread is flat because it has no yeast in it to make it rise: in the Bible yeast is like sin and so it also reminds us that when we follow Jesus we have to get rid of all the sin in our lives.

Why is this night different from all other nights? Why did we eat this celery before our meal?

Celery is known as a bitter herb. We eat it to recall that the lives of the Israelites were bitter while they were slaves in Egypt. In Genesis we read that the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites and worked them ruthlessly. They made their lives bitter with hard labour with bricks and mortar and all kinds of work in the fields. In their hard labour the Egyptians used them ruthlessly.”

Why is this night different from all other nights? On other nights we have sauces with our food, but we don't dip our food in them. Why tonight do we dip our food in salt water and charoseth?

We dip our celery in the salt water to remind us of the tears of sorrow the Israelites wept when they were slaves to the Egyptians. The charoseth reminds us of the clay that the Israelites were forced to make bricks from.

9. Hallel: A time of praise.

At this point, as we have been reminded of the great way that our God redeems His people, it is traditional to sing praises to God from the Hallel Psalms number 113-118. But first let us join in together saying the Hallelujah which means 'Praise be to God.'

All: Who is like you, O Lord, among the mighty? Who is like you, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? The Lord shall reign for ever and ever!! Hallelujah!

Sing a song of Praise.

Say Psalm 117 together.

O Praise the Lord all you nations:

O Praise him all you peoples.

For great is his loving kindness toward us:

And the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever.

Praise the Lord!

10. The Blessing of the Second Cup.

The second cup is raised.

All: Praised are you, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who has created the fruit of the vine.

The second cup is drunk.

11. The blessing of the matzo.

The leader takes the upper matzo and blesses it.

Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who brings forth bread from the earth.

The matzo is broken into pieces and passed around. Each person holds a piece in their hand.

All: Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who has sanctified us by your commands and has commanded us concerning the eating of unleavened bread.

12. The Betrayal.

Each person takes a piece of the bitter herbs and dips it in the Charoseth.

All: Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who has sanctified us by your commands and has commanded us concerning the eating of bitter herbs.

The bitter herbs are eaten.

At this point in the last supper Jesus predicts his betrayal by Judas.

Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, "I tell you the truth, one of you is going to betray me."

His disciples stared at one another, at a loss to know which of them he meant. One of them, the disciple who Jesus loved, was reclining next to him. Simon Peter motioned to this disciple and said, "Ask him which one he means."

Leaning back against Jesus, he asked him, "Lord, who is it?"

Jesus answered, "It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish." Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, son of Simon. As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him.

As soon as Judas had taken the bread, he went out. And it was night.

John 13:21-27, 30

There is special significance to this on two levels. Firstly, it was a sign of affection to give to friend the bread you had dipped. Secondly, they had not yet eaten the meal together, so Judas was effectively excommunicating himself from the fellowship by not sharing the meal with them.

13. Hillel's Sandwich

The leader makes Hillel's sandwich. The bottom matzo is broken by the leader and a sandwich is made with charoseth and horseradish between two pieces of Matzo.

This was the custom of Hillel when the Temple in Jerusalem was still standing. He would put together a piece of the paschal offering, a piece of matzo and a piece of bitter herb together to fulfil the command: "With unleavened bread and bitter herbs they shall eat the paschal Lamb." For us it reminds us that Jesus experienced the sweetness of a meal shared with friends and the bitterness of betrayal.

The sandwich is passed around and everyone takes a piece and eats it.

14. Dinner is served.

The meal is served and eaten



15. The New Covenant.

A Hymn of praise is sung

The prophet Jeremiah spoke of a new covenant, which God would make with Israel, which would be greater than the one he made with them when he brought them out of Egypt.

"The time is coming," declares the Lord,
"when I will make a new covenant
with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.
It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I
took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke
my covenant, though I was a husband to them," declares the Lord.
"This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that
time," declares the Lord.
"I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts.
I will be their God, and they will be my people.
No longer will a man teach his neighbour, or man his brother,
saying, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know me, from the
least of them to the greatest," declares the Lord.
"For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no
more."

Jeremiah 31:31-34

The Old Covenant was to be written on tablets of stone, but the New Covenant was to be written inwardly on our hearts. The Law is God's standard of righteousness. It shows us what sin is. But no person can keep it. The penalty for breaking the Law is death. Therefore, the Law brings condemnation. But God, in his mercy, added the sacrificial system as his means of grace towards his people. He desired a relationship with them and through the means of the priesthood and the Tabernacle, he provided a way into his presence. However, this was temporary and inadequate and only served as 'a shadow of the good things to come', that is, until the day when he would provide his Son, not only as the 'once and for all' sacrifice for sin but also as the High Priest who would open the way for all to enter the heavenly sanctuary into the presence of God.

16. Aphikomen.

After the meal the middle part of the matzo is uncovered. It is broken and distributed to all who hold it in their hands.

Leader: Let us bless the Lord.

All: May the Name of the Lord be blessed from now to eternity.

It was at this point that Christ took the bread. This would have been a surprise to the disciples because there was never anything eaten after the meal itself, so Jesus was really now starting a new sort of remembrance ceremony.

And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying,
“This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.”

Luke 22:19

The bread is eaten

17. The Third Cup: the Cup of Blessing.

The third cup of wine is poured, only into the cup in the centre of the table.

This cup was known as the Elijah cup. The Jews believed that Elijah would come first to signify that the Messiah was about to come. For generations this cup had been present at each Passover but was never touched. Christ now breaks through and takes this cup vividly showing his disciples that indeed the Messiah had come. After supper he took THE cup saying;

“This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.”

Luke 22:20

Leader: Let us say the Grace

All: Let us praise God whose food we have eaten and by whose goodness we live. Through God’s kindness, mercy and compassion the whole world is sustained.

Leader: Our God and God of our fathers, be ever mindful of us, as you have been of our fathers so that we may find grace, mercy, life and peace at this feast of the Passover.

All: Amen

All: Praised are you, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who has created the fruit of the vine.

The third cup of wine is passed around and drunk.

18. The Fourth Cup: the Cup of Glory

The fourth cup of wine is poured.

Psalm 136

Response after each line

His love endures forever.

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good.

Give thanks to the God of gods.

Give thanks to the Lord of lords:

To him who alone does great wonders.

Who by his understanding made the heavens,

Who spread out the earth upon the waters,

Who made the great lights –

The moon and stars to govern the night;

To him who struck down the first born of Egypt

And brought Israel out from among them

With a mighty hand and outstretched arm;

To him who divided the Red Sea asunder

And brought Israel through the midst of it,

But swept Pharaoh and his army into the Red Sea;

To him who led his people through the desert,

Who struck down great kings,

And killed mighty kings –

Sihon king of the Amorite

And Og the king of Bashan –
And gave their land as an inheritance
An inheritance to his servant Israel;
To the One who remembered us in our low estate
And freed us from our enemies,
And who gives food to every creature.
Give thanks to the God of Heaven.

All: Praised are you, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who has created the fruit of the vine.

The fourth cup of wine is drunk.

19. Conclusion.

The festive service is completed. With songs of praise we have lifted up the cups symbolising the divine promise of salvation and have called upon the name of God. As we offer the benediction over the fourth cup, let us again lift our souls to God in faith and hope. May he who broke the Pharaoh's yoke forever shatter all fetters of oppression, and hasten the days when swords shall be broken and wars ended. May he cause the glad tidings of redemption through Jesus Christ to be heard in all Lands, so that humanity may be freed from violence and wrong, and be united in an eternal covenant with God our Father, through the true Passover lamb, Jesus Christ.

As the Jews look in hope to celebrating the Passover again in Jerusalem in the New Temple, may we look to celebrating the eternal banquet in the New Zion, through the Grace of Christ our sacrifice.

Leader: The Lord bless you, and keep you. The Lord make his face to shine upon you and have mercy on you! May the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace!

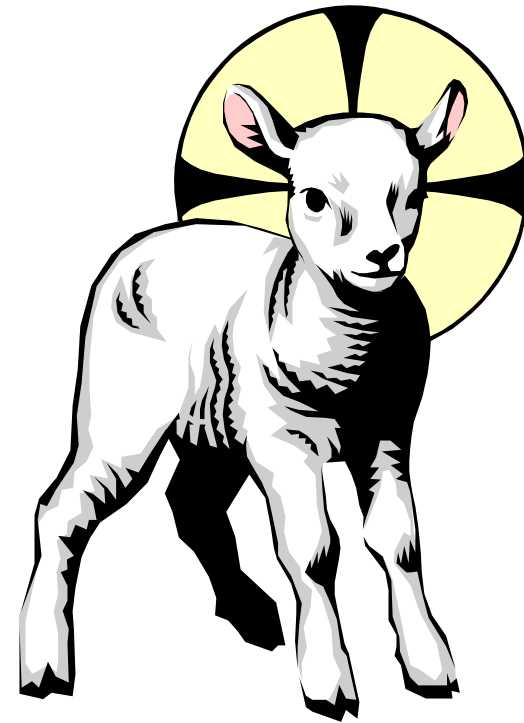
All: Amen, Amen, Amen.

A hymn is sung.

After they had sung a hymn they went out to the Mount of Olives

Leader: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord

All: In the name of Christ. Amen.



Thank you for sharing in this special time with us.