

**Again & Again, We Are Held Together**  
**A Maundy Thursday Dinner Church Service**

*Though we are separated in body, nothing can separate us  
from God's love through which we are one Body in Christ.*



“At the end of life, we will not be judged by how many diplomas we have received, how much money we have made, how many great things we have done. We will be judged by "I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat, I was naked, and you clothed me. I was homeless, and you took me in.”

- **Mother Teresa**

“Miss no single opportunity of making some small sacrifice, here by a smiling look, there by a kindly word; always doing the smallest right and doing it all for love.”

- **St. Therese of Lisieux**

“If the scandal of Jesus was that He was always touching the wrong people and inviting the wrong people to the table - how on earth can we think the Communion meal now is for the extra holy or the super spiritual? - **Jonathan Martin**

Apart from love, everything passes away. - **Rumi**

## **BEFORE WE BEGIN**

- Zoom gathering, Thursday April 1<sup>st</sup>. The meeting will be open at 5:45 for you to join. However, if you join after the service has begun, Elisa may not be available to let you in, so you should instead go to the YouTube broadcast.

Click here: [to Join Zoom Meeting](#)

Meeting ID: 882 4442 6427, Passcode: 879945

## **Preparation Suggestions**

***Please be sure you are muted for the service.***

- Prepare a meal for yourself or to share with the other people in your home.
- Find some music to listen to, if that is meaningful to you. Some ideas include:
  - Idina Menzel – [“At This Table”](#)
  - Sidewalk Prophets – [“Come to the Table”](#)
  - The Highwomen – [“Crowded Table”](#)
  - Antonio Vivaldi – [“Stabat Mater”](#)
  - [“Maundy Thursday Tenebrae”](#) Palestrina
  - [“Taize Selections”](#)
- Set out a basin and pitcher of warm water (or use a sink), soap and a couple of hand towels
- Set your table with dishes, food, a candle or two, a Bible, a cross or icon, photographs or papers with the names of those not with you.
- Be sure to include bread or a substitute and some sort of beverage (water is fine).

**We will end our time in silence and ask that if you are in the Zoom meeting, to exit the meeting as the altar is being stripped.**

*Plain text is spoken by one voice. Bold indicates the response of all voices.  
Italics offers instruction.*

*Except for “Eat this Bread”, all of the other pieces of music will be played through once and then sung through 3 times, unless otherwise indicated.*

## **WELCOME**

Blessings on this sacred evening. My name is Elisa Lucozzi, pastor to the beloved community that is Guilford Community Church. We're so glad you have joined us this evening, as we break bread together, share stories of Jesus' last night and hear once again the great commandment he leaves for us.

A couple of notes about this service before we begin. You are encouraged and invited to partake of your evening meal while participating in this service.

We will share Communion, so, if your evening meal does not include some kind of bread and a beverage, or if you are not planning to eat during the service, you are invited to get anything you might have on hand to participate in Communion.

There will also be a ritual of hand washing as part of the service, so, it may be easiest if you have a bowl of water and a towel near to where you are sitting.

You are invited and encouraged to join in singing during the service. Most of the pieces, most often in the Taizé style, will be played through once and then sung three times.

Now let us begin by acknowledging that we are occupying stolen and unceded Indigenous land, whether gathered at home or at the church building, lands that were never signed away by the Indigenous people, by the Mahican and Penacook people, also the southern most members of the Abenaki tribe, who inhabited these lands before Europeans settled in North America. Tonight, as always, we offer them our gratitude and respect, our repentance and hope in solidarity with them. It is a Holy Communion we share of life on earth, of past and present, of pain and reconciliation, of mystery and majesty...let us begin.

## **INTRODUCTION**

“Agape meals were part of the worshipping life of the early church. They took up the banquet imagery present in a number of Jesus’ parables. They were occasions of joy and festivity as the community celebrated the gift of life through Christ and lived into the promise of God’s Beloved Community. Agape meals also served as boundary markers, enabling the community to affirm its identity as the body of Christ, and they were places of economic justice, enabling a sharing and redistribution amongst the community.” (Background Adapted by T. Dale-Ferguson from Liturgy by G. Sparkes, Gifts in Open Hands)

Tonight, we gather at many tables in many homes to remember that meal so long ago, when Jesus gathered with His dearest friends, His disciples. We remember the wilderness around us: physical separation, quarantine, illness, unemployment, deployment of health care workers, fear, uncertainty and grief. We also remember the wilderness to come for Jesus: betrayal, denial by His closest friends, suffering and death. Let us seek God’s nourishment, strength and hope to face the wilderness.

## CALL TO WORSHIP

**ELISA:** Do you remember your last supper before the pandemic?  
The last meal you had out at a restaurant with friends?  
The last meal before fear and anxiety ran the conversation?  
If you had known it was your last, would you have lingered?  
Would you have ordered dessert?  
Would you have held your friends' hands and told them how much you loved them?  
If you had known, would you have washed their feet?  
Tonight, we gather together, because this night was the beginning of the end.  
This night was Jesus' last supper with His disciples.  
Take a moment to imagine how Jesus must have felt.

Friends, with all of this in mind, I invite you to join me in our opening words:

**All: Tonight, we will hear, again and again, of a love that knows no bounds. May we be fully present here. May we worship holy God.**

## OPENING PRAYER

Dear Friends in Christ,  
peace be with you on this holy night.  
Why do we gather? What is this night?  
It is a night of *love* —  
for on this night Jesus gave His disciples a new commandment:  
to love each other as He loved them.

It is a night of *Communion* —  
for on this night, Jesus gave not only a commandment,  
but also a sign: bread and wine broken and poured,  
to remember Him.

It is a night of loving *service* —  
for on this night Jesus gave us not only a commandment,  
not only a sign,  
but also an example: on His knees with basin and towel,  
washing feet.

It is also a night of *betrayal* —  
for on this night a man Jesus loved  
sold Him for money,  
and brought soldiers to seize and bind Him  
as He prayed.  
This night is joyous, fierce, tender, terrible.

We begin in light, with memories and stories, friends and feasting.

We end in shadows, with a queasy fright.  
 We begin as the friends of Jesus did long ago: together, as one.  
 We end as they did: scattered in the dark.  
 We begin as they did: singing of love and deliverance.  
 We end as they did: without a single sound.  
 Friends, be at peace on this holy night. Let us enter it with open hearts.

**HYMN:** #194 “Come and Fill Our Hearts” by Jaques Berthier & the Taize Community

Come and fill our hearts with your peace. You a-lone, O Lord, are ho-ly.

Come and fill our hearts with your peace, al-le-lu-ia!

**READING:** “Lead” by Mary Oliver *Kathie Lovell*

Here is a story  
 to break your heart.  
 Are you willing?  
 This winter  
 the loons came to our harbor  
 and died, one by one,  
 of nothing we could see.  
 A friend told me  
 of one on the shore  
 that lifted its head and opened  
 the elegant beak and cried out  
 in the long, sweet savoring of its life  
 which, if you have heard it,  
 you know is a sacred thing,  
 and for which, if you have not heard it,  
 you had better hurry to where  
 they still sing.

And, believe me, tell no one  
 just where that is.  
 The next morning  
 this loon, speckled  
 and iridescent and with a plan  
 to fly home  
 to some hidden lake,  
 was dead on the shore.  
 I tell you this  
 to break your heart,  
 by which I mean only  
 that it break open and never close again  
 to the rest of the world.

**INSTRUMENTAL INTERLUDE:** “Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us With Your Love” Ghanaian Folk Melody adapted by Tom Colvin; *Roshe Hebert, piano*

HOLY WEEK

## 273 Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love

*Refrain (Unison)*

Je - su, Je - su, fill us with your love,

show us how to serve the neigh-bors we have from you.

**READING:** “Telling The Story” A Selection from John 13

**LUCY:** It was the day before the Passover festival. Jesus and His disciples were sharing the evening meal. Jesus got up from the table, took off his robes, and tied a towel around His waist. Then Jesus poured water into a washbasin and

began to wash the disciples' feet and dry them with the towel He was wearing.

**FRED:** Jesus came to Simon Peter, who said to Him:

**All: Are you going to wash my feet, Lord?**

**TERRY:** Jesus answered Peter:

**All: "You do not understand now what I am doing, but you will understand later."**

**Sung Response:**

**Jesu, Jesu fill us with your love, show us how to serve the neighbors we have from you.**

**FRED:** Peter declared:

**All: Never at any time will you wash my feet!**

**TERRY:** Jesus answered:

**All: If I do not wash your feet, you will no longer be my disciple.**

**FRED:** Simon Peter answered:

**All: Lord, not only my feet, then, but my hands and head, too!**

**Sung Response:**

**Jesu, Jesu fill us with your love, show us how to serve the neighbors we have from you.**

**KATHIE:** Jesus said: "Those who have bathed are completely clean and do not need to wash other than their feet." After washing their feet, Jesus put His robes back on, returned to His place at the table, and said, "Do you understand what I have done for you? You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and you speak correctly, because I am. If I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you too must wash each other's feet. I have set an example for you, so that you will do just what I have done for you."

**Sung Response:**

**Jesu, Jesu fill us with your love, show us how to serve the neighbors we have from you.**

### **HANDWASHING RITUAL**

*Gather at the sink or water basin with soap and a towel close by. Depending on your home/family context, this ritual may be somber or joyful, serious and gentle or playful. There is no wrong way to do this. God meets us where we are.*

**All: Water has always been a sign of creation, life, birth and rebirth.**

**The washing of our hands has become such a powerful and important way to show love to each other over this past year and moving forward.**

**ELISA:** We remember the water of Baptism, a symbol of our dying and rising in Christ. Tonight, at Christ's invitation, we share this water of service and love.

**All: With this water let us bless one another and wash each other's hands.**

*Take turns washing and drying one another's hands. You may use soap or simply water. As you wash another person's hands (or your own if you are by yourself), say: "May this water renew and restore your spirit." Then gently dry one another's hands saying: "May you dwell in God's tender care."*

**MUSICAL INTERLUDE:** Reprise of "Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us With Your Love"

**SCRIPTURE:** Matthew 26:31-34 **John Cole**

Then Jesus said to them, "You will all become deserters because of me this night; for it is written,

I will strike the shepherd,  
and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.'

But after I am raised up, I will go ahead of you to Galilee."

Peter said to Him, "Though all become deserters because of you, I will never desert you."

Jesus said to him, "Truly I tell you, this very night, before the cock crows, you will deny me three times."

### **CALL TO CONFESSION**

The closer and closer we get to the crucifixion,  
The more earnest our prayers of confession feel.

For we know that what was done to Jesus— Betrayal, humiliation, violence,  
and death—

Are things we do to each other all the time.

So ,with all earnestness, a sense of urgency, and a deep hope for  
transformation, we return to this prayer once again, trusting that the God who  
holds the stars in the sky is holding us tonight. Let us confess together. . .

### **PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

Holy God who holds us together,

if I were to place myself at your table, I would probably be Peter—  
misunderstanding your radical hospitality, sticking to the rules, arguing what I  
do and don't deserve.

Then again, it's possible that I'd be Judas— The one who betrayed You, the one  
who failed to see the good right in front of him, the one who might have  
thought he wasn't worthy of Your love.

If I were to place myself at Your table, it's possible I would be one of the unnamed disciples— watching, but not speaking, silently missing the opportunity to tell You what I believe and how much I love You.

If I were to place myself at Your table, I am confident that I would have made the same mistakes Your well-intentioned disciples made. There is no surprise there. What is surprising is that I know You would have washed my feet nonetheless. So, forgive me, God. Wash not just my feet, but my hands and my head also. Amen.

## **WORDS OF FORGIVENESS**

Family of faith,  
Jesus knew that Peter would deny.  
He knew that Judas would betray,  
and He knew the disciples would hide in fear.  
And still—and still—He invited them in.  
He washed their feet, and He fed them.  
Friends, we worship the living Christ  
Whose love shocks, surprises, and far exceeds our understanding of love.  
So, may this story tonight remind us:

**All: No matter who we are,  
no matter where we go,  
no matter how great our mistakes or regrets are in life,  
we will always be invited in and held together by the Living God.  
Again, and again and again, we are forgiven.  
Again, and again and again, we are held. Amen.**

## **GATHERING AT THE TABLE**

**ELISA:** Tonight, we remember the last night Jesus spent with His disciples celebrating the Passover meal. We remember that the early church would gather for agape meals or love feasts to remember Jesus' life and ministry, to affirm their communal identity as the body of Christ, and to share food and resources so everyone would have enough.

**LUCY:** Our worship centers around a meal. First, we will share bread, then we will eat our meal together and finally we will hear the story of Jesus' last meal with His disciples. We will close our worship by sharing the cup of blessing.

**ROB:** This table is for all who are hungry. If you are hungry, come.

**All: Where compassion and love are, there is God.**

**JOHN:** The love of Christ has gathered us as one. Let us love one another.

**All: Where compassion and love are, there is God.**

**TERRY:** When we are gathered in spirit, even distance cannot separate us. Christ is present in our midst.

**All: Where compassion and love are, there is God.**

**FRED:** In this meal and worship, may we feel the joy that is community, the peace that is Christ and the presence that is Spirit. Amen.

### **BREAKING OF THE BREAD**

**ELISA:** Here we are at a table. We come hungry — for food and drink, for company and conversation, for God’s Spirit of hope, comfort, and peace for our wilderness journey. Jesus gathered around tables like this one. He gathered with sinners and saints, religious leaders and tax collectors, the proud and arrogant, the self-deprecating and uncertain, the filthy rich and destitute, the healthy and sick, the young and old. We remember the last meal that Jesus shared with His disciples – a meal remembering God’s liberating power. At that meal, Jesus took a loaf of bread, broke it and shared it with His disciples saying, “Take and eat, this is my body broken for you. Do this and remember me.”

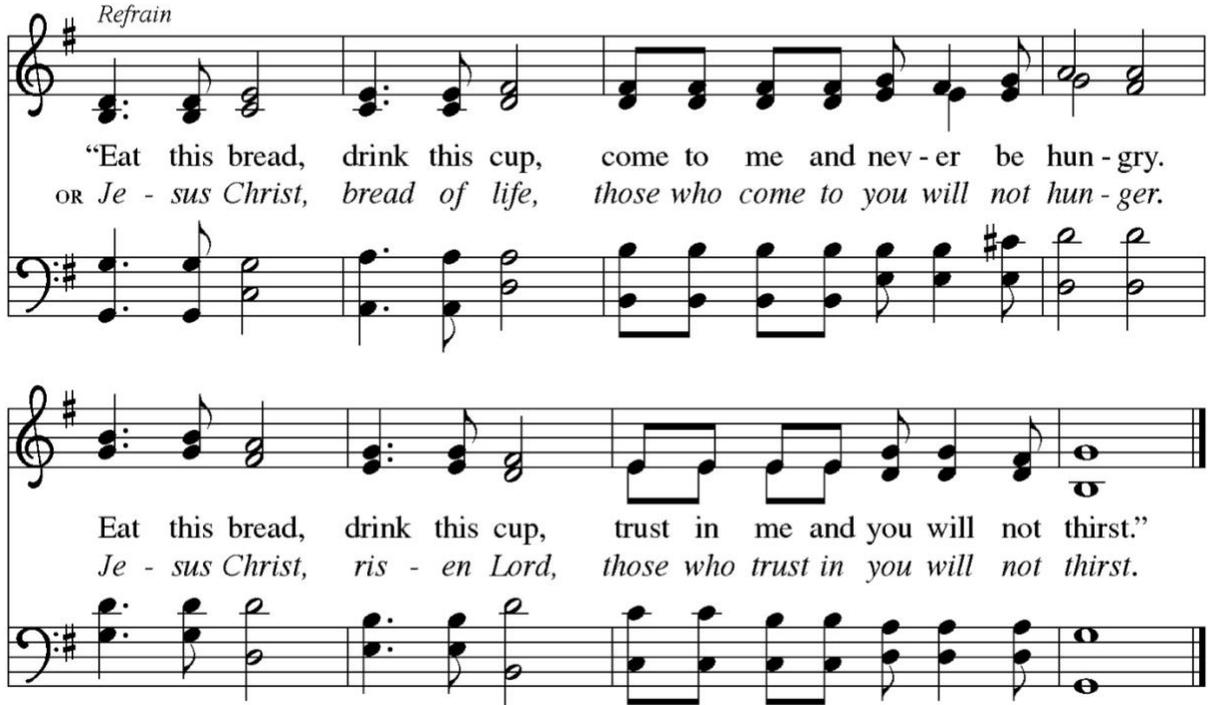
**All: Holy God, for the food before us, for the community surrounding us and the love around and within us, we say thank you! Amen**

**HYMN:** #195 “Eat This Bread” by Jacques Berthier and the Taize Community

## Eat This Bread

### *Jesus Christ, Bread of Life*

*Refrain*



“Eat this bread, drink this cup, come to me and nev - er be hun - gry.  
OR Je - sus Christ, bread of life, those who come to you will not hun - ger.

Eat this bread, drink this cup, trust in me and you will not thirst.”  
Je - sus Christ, ris - en Lord, those who trust in you will not thirst.

*You are invited to serve one another or take the bread saying simply: “The body of Christ”. After sharing the bread, continue to enjoy your meal.*

**TELLING THE STORY:** John 13:1-3, 21-34

**LUCY:** Before the Festival of Passover, Jesus knew that His time had come to leave this world and go to God. Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them fully.

Jesus and His disciples were sharing the evening meal, a festival of love celebrating freedom even as Jesus knew what was to come. The devil had already provoked Judas, Simon Iscariot’s son, to betray Jesus. Jesus knew God had given everything into His hands and that He had come from God and was returning to God. After He said these things,

**FRED:** Jesus was deeply disturbed and testified, “I assure you, one of you will betray me.” His disciples looked at each other, confused about which of them He was talking about. One of the disciples, the one whom Jesus loved, was at Jesus’ side. Simon Peter nodded at him to get him to ask Jesus who He was talking about. Leaning back toward Jesus, this disciple asked, “Lord, who is it?”

**ROB:** Jesus answered, “It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread once I have dipped into the bowl.” Then He dipped the piece of bread and gave it to Judas, Simon Iscariot’s son. After Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him. Jesus told him, “What you are about to do, do quickly.” No one sitting at the table understood why Jesus said this to him. Some thought that, since Judas kept the money bag, Jesus told him, “Go, buy what we need for the feast,” or that he should give something to the poor. So when Judas took the bread, he left immediately. And it was night.

**TERRY:** When Judas was gone, Jesus said, “Now the Human One has been glorified, and God has been glorified in Him. If God has been glorified in Him, God will also glorify the Human One in Himself and will glorify Him immediately. Little children, I’m with you for a little while longer. You will look for me—but, just as I told the religious leaders, I also tell you now—‘Where I am going, you cannot come.’ “I give you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, so you also must love each other. This is how everyone will know that you are my disciples, when you love each other.”

**All: May God open our hearts to hear the good news.**

#### **SHARING THE CUP OF GRACE**

*Have a beverage of some kind available — water, wine, juice, tea.*

**ELISA:** Like Jesus’ disciples, we have broken bread together. We have heard of the betrayal and suffering to come in the days ahead. We remember that at the end of the meal, Jesus took their common cup, and giving thanks for it, He shared it with them saying: “Take and drink — this is the cup of the new covenant poured out in my blood for the forgiveness of sins. Do this and remember me.” *Everyone is invited to drink.*

**All: We are God’s people.**

Shaped and formed by water and Word.  
Sustained and nourished by the gift of Love.  
Together, we will live as God’s people.

Full of awe and wonder the friends ate the bread and shared the cup. They had been fed with stories and prayers, words and deeds, and now this most special bread and wine.

Jesus and His friends sang a hymn before they went to the Mount of Olives.

**HYMN:** “Bless the Lord My Soul” by Jacques Berthier and the Taize Community

# Bless the Lord

Musical score for the hymn "Bless the Lord". It consists of two systems of music. Each system has a vocal line on a treble clef staff and a piano accompaniment line on a bass clef staff. The key signature has one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is common time (C). The tempo is marked with a quarter note followed by "= 78". The lyrics are: "Bless the Lord, my soul, and bless God's ho - ly name." and "Bless the Lord, my soul, who leads me in - to life." The piano accompaniment includes a (b) marking above the second measure of the second system.

$\text{♩} = 78$

Bless the Lord, my soul, and bless God's ho - ly name.

Bless the Lord, my soul, who leads me in - to life.

Jesus looked at them lovingly saying, "pray that you do not come into the time of trial." And moving away from them, about a stone's throw, He knelt down and He prayed, "Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet, not My will but Yours be done." Then an angel from heaven appeared to Him and gave Him strength.

**HYMN:** “Stay with Me” by Jacques Berthier and the Taize Community

PRAYER, TRUST, HOPE

**Stay with Me**  
(Noho Pū)

2198

Vocal

1. Ostinato Chorale (Repeat as desired.)

The musical score is written in 4/4 time with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). It consists of two systems of music, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment line. The first system includes the following lyrics: "Stay with me, re - main here with me, watch and / No - ho pū no - ho mai me ia'u ki - a'i a". The second system includes: "pray, watch and pray. / pu - le kiai a pule.". Chord symbols are placed above the notes: Dm, Gm6/D, Dm, Gm6/D, Dm, C, F, C, Dm, Gm/D, Asus, A.

**READING:** Luke 22:47-53 **Kathie Lovell**

While He was still speaking, suddenly a crowd came, and the one called Judas, one of the twelve, was leading them. He approached Jesus to kiss him; but Jesus said to him, “Judas, is it with a kiss that you are betraying the Son of Man?” When those who were around him saw what was coming, they asked, “Lord, should we strike with the sword?” Then one of them struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his right ear. But Jesus said, “No more of this!” And he touched his ear and healed him. Then Jesus said to the chief priests, the officers of the temple police, and the elders who had come for him, “Have you come out with swords and clubs as if I were a bandit? When I was with you day after day in the temple, you did not lay hands on me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness!”

*Extinguish table candles.*

**READING:** “I Have Come into this World to See This” by Hafiz ; **Rob Harnish**

I have come into this world to see this:  
the sword drop from men’s hands even at the height of their arc of anger

because we have finally realized there is just one flesh to wound  
and it is His – the Christ's, our Beloved's.

I have come into this world to see this: all creatures hold hands as  
we pass through this miraculous existence we share on the way  
to even a greater being of soul, a being of just ecstatic light, forever entwined  
and at play with God.

I have come into this world to hear this:

every song the earth has sung since it was conceived in  
the Divine's womb and began spinning from God's wish,

every song by wing and fin and hoof,  
every song by hill and field and tree and woman and child,  
every song of stream and rock,  
every song of tool and lyre and flute,  
every song of gold and emerald and fire,  
every song the heart should cry with magnificent dignity  
to know itself as God:

for all other knowledge will leave us again in want and aching –  
only imbibing the glorious Sun will complete us.

I have come into this world to experience this:

men so true to love they would rather die before speaking  
an unkind word,

men so true their lives are God's covenant –  
the promise of hope.

I have come into this world to see this:  
the sword drop from men's hands  
even at the height of  
their arc of rage

because we have finally realized  
there is just one flesh we can wound.

# What Wondrous Love is This

183

1. What won-drous love is this, O my soul! O my soul! What  
2. To God and to the Lamb I will sing, I will sing, to  
3. And when from death I'm free, I'll sing on, I'll sing on, and

won-drous love is this, O my soul!                      What won-drous love is  
God and to the Lamb, I will sing;                      to God and to the  
when from death I'm free, I'll sing on!                      And when from death I'm

this! that caused the Lord of bliss to bear the heav-y cross for my  
Lamb who is the great I Am, while mil-lions join the theme, I will  
free, I'll sing and joy-ful be, and through e-ter-ni-ty I'll sing

soul, for my soul, to bear the heav-y cross for my soul!  
sing, I will sing; while mil-lions join the theme, I will sing.  
on, I'll sing on, and through e-ter-ni-ty I'll sing on!

## **BENEDICTION**

**LUCY:** We must not stay here.

**FRED:** As we journey with Jesus to the cross, our purpose is among those who repent,  
those who open their hearts and change their lives to cultivate peace and sow justice.

**ROB:** As we look to the cross, as we feel the wilderness closing in around us,

**KATHIE:** We trust in God, who promises to fill the void of shadow with light and the emptiness of death with life.

**All: Let us leave this time with trembling hearts, to receive and sow the seeds of God's beloved community.**

*We will end our time together in silence.*