



**Mennonite
Church**
Canada

Resource Centre

From our Churches

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FEAST OF THANKSGIVING

**An Inclusive, Modified Communion Service for Thanksgiving
Based on the Agape Meal of the Early Church**

Preparation:

Gather the following:

Grapes, variety of vegetables, sour pickles, variety of crackers (keep in mind the persons with food allergies), chicken, apple juice, dessert.

Invite:

Everyone to bring a symbol of something they're thankful for this year.
Participants of all ages to pray the prayers of thanksgiving.

Feast of Thanksgiving:

Music: *Prayer of Agur* (Bryan Moyer Suderman, see www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/1159), based on Proverbs 30:7-9.

Scripture: (from Genesis 1, Psalm 104, Psalm 95)

1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.
And there was evening and there was morning, the first day. (Gen 1:1,3)

ALL: AND GOD SAW THAT IT WAS GOOD

2 On the third day God said, "Let the earth sprout out sprouts, plants seeding seed, fruit trees making fruit each of its own kind with their seed in them on the earth.¹ And it was so. (Gen 1:11)

¹ Translation by Ellen Davis, Old Testament professor at Duke Divinity School

ALL: AND GOD SAW THAT IT WAS GOOD

2: God made springs to pour water into the ravines
Giving water to all the beasts of the field. (Ps 104:10-11)

ALL: AND GOD SAW THAT IT WAS GOOD

1 God makes grass grow for the cattle, and plants for people to cultivate
Bringing forth food from the earth, and bread that sustains their hearts. (Ps 104:14-15)

ALL: AND GOD SAW THAT IT WAS GOOD

2 The trees of the Lord are well watered,
There the birds make their nests. (Ps 104:16-17)

ALL: AND GOD SAW THAT IT WAS GOOD

Men: O come, let us sing to the Lord
Let us make a joyful noise
to the rock of our salvation

Women: Let us come into God's presence with thanksgiving
Let us make a joyful noise to the Lord with songs of praise. (Ps 95:1-2)

ALL: O COME LET US WORSHIP AND GIVE THANKS

1 All things look to God to give them their food at the proper time
When God gives it to them, they gather it up. (Ps 104:27-28)

2 When God's hand is opened,
they are satisfied with good things.
When God's Spirit is sent they are created,
and God renews the face of the earth. (Ps 104:28,30)

ALL: O COME LET US WORSHIP AND GIVE THANKS

Hymn #98 (HWB) Sing to the Lord of Harvest

Introduction/Prayer

Jesus loved eating with people. There are many stories in the New Testament where Jesus had dinner with others. Things happened when Jesus ate with people: 5 loaves became enough to feed over 5000 men, women and children; water became wine at a wedding feast; a woman poured oil on Jesus' head during supper because she loved him.

The chief priest was mad at Jesus for eating with Jesus' various "associations." Jesus didn't always follow the rules. One time his disciples didn't even wash their hands before they ate. Boy, did they get into trouble over that! Jesus ate with the town bully, the sinners, the poor –

the folks no one else liked. All people. All ages. Jesus loved eating with people and he got in trouble for not doing it the “right way.”

Today Jesus is the host of our table. He has invited us to eat with him because he loves us. We have come to eat with Jesus because we need to remind ourselves of all that is good from the past year and to say a special thank you to Jesus.

This is how we will do this:

We will pass out each item of food; please help yourself to something of everything. Put it on your plate. We will then give a brief explanation of the symbolism of each food item. There will be a prayer, and we will then respond with the words from Psalm 65 printed in the bulletin. After we have done this with each item, we will sing our grace, “Be present at our table Lord.” And then we will eat and drink together.

Prayer:

Lord God, as we come to share the abundance of your table, we cannot forget that there are places in the world where there is very little food. Places where the crops are poor and farmers are struggling. As we share these simple foods, may we remember those who are hungry, those who are thirsty. Starving for food, thirsty for drink – but also hungry and thirsty for justice, family, freedom from fear. As we celebrate the feast of thanksgiving give us joy as we recall all the amazing and wonderful things you have done for us this year. Amen.

Hold up the grapes.

The grapes are a symbol of the farmers from around the world who grow fruit for us to enjoy year round.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Congregational Response:

**You crown the year with your bounty
The pastures of the wilderness overflow.**

Hold up the vegetables.

The vegetables are a symbol of the seeds we planted this year in our gardens and fields. Seeds that produced a harvest.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Congregational Response:

**You crown the year with your bounty
The hills gird themselves with joy**

Hold up the pickles.

The pickles are a symbol of the sour places in our life, the hard occasions when nothing goes right yet somehow we know God is present.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Congregational Response:

**You crown the year with your bounty
The meadows clothe themselves with flocks**

Hold up the crackers.

Crackers are a symbol of our many differences. We need each other. By working together we can accomplish much.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Congregational Response:

**You crown the year with your bounty
The valleys deck themselves with grain**

Hold up the chicken.

The chicken is a symbol of how we are sustained through all the ups and downs of life.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Congregational Response:

**You crown the year with your bounty
Your wagon tracks overflow with richness.**

Hold up the apple juice.

The apple juice is a symbol of our thirst for justice, for love, for healing, for joy.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Congregational Response:

**You crown the year with your bounty
The prairies shout and sing together for joy.**

Hold up the chocolate.

Chocolate is a symbol of all the beautiful and sweet things we enjoy, the many times of delight, wonder & surprise.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Congregational Response:

**You crown the year with your bounty
And God saw that it was VERY GOOD!**

Prayer: #457 (HWB) *Be Present at our Table, Lord*

Everyone eats.

Hymn: #87 (Sing and Rejoice) *Praise and Thanksgiving*

Remembering the Year with prayers, stories and songs

Many of you brought symbols of things for which you are thankful. This is the time to share the stories behind these symbols. What are you thankful for and how would you like to share that with each other?

Closing Hymn: #478 (HWB) *Sent forth by God's blessing*