

Maundy Thursday Service
Central Queens United Church
Passover Seder with Christian Communion
April 2, 2026

Welcome

Introduction

The sacrament of Holy Communion has its origins in the Jewish Passover Feast, the Passover Seder. Jesus was a Jew, and his closest friends met in the upper room in Jerusalem.

They gathered to remember how their ancestors were once slaves in Egypt. There was always an element of sadness in the meal as they recalled their ancestors' suffering. They gathered to give thanks to God for delivering the Israelite people from slavery and guiding them through the desert to the Promised Land, their new home. They met in expectation that God would continue to care for them in the future, just as God had in the past. Thus, there was always hope and confidence at the meal.

The Passover Feast was always ritualistic: the same ancient words were spoken, the same symbolic actions performed, and the same food and drink were placed on the table. Tonight, we will follow some of those rituals: do the things that Jesus did, hear the same words that Jesus heard, and taste the same kind of food that Jesus and His friends tasted.

We begin by sharing in a blessing and the singing Psalm 122, the song they always sang when they arrived in Jerusalem to celebrate the feast.

Passover Seder Meal

Opening Blessing

Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the Universe, who has brought us together to remember the night of deliverance, the night when you saved your people from slavery in Egypt. We give thanks for the gift of freedom, and for the deliverance we have through, Jesus the Christ, our Savior. Amen.

Song I Joyed When to the House of God

VU #846

Lighting the Candles

As the candles are lit, together let us bless the Lord our God.

ACTION: Candles are Lit

All say:

**Blessed are you, O lord and God, ruler of the universe,
for giving us festivals and seasons for rejoicing,
and for bringing us to this time of the year:
the springtime, the season of our freedom.**

Prayer

Blessed are you, our Lord and God,
for bringing us together this night
to celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread.
As we gather here,
we are linked with the friends and families
who throughout the centuries
have celebrated this Passover festival.

We celebrate the springtime;
we celebrate the going out from Egypt;
we celebrate our freedom;
we celebrate our living, whose fullness is yours;
we celebrate our future, which rests with you alone.

And so we praise your holy name
for bringing us to this happy time;
this season of our freedom.

Together let us bless the Lord our God.

ACTION *All raise their cups and say:*

Blessed are you, O Lord our God,

ACTION *All drink a "sip" of wine (Juice).*

The washing of hands:

In preparation for this meal which we share,
we wash our hands:
a symbolic action of purification;
a token of our intention to be pure within ourselves.

ACTION *All wash their hands with baby-wipes*

The Questions *(Traditionally asked by a child)*

A young child asks

Why is this night different from all other nights?

This night is different because it is the night we remember and celebrate our freedom from slavery in Egypt. The Seder meal, with its special foods and traditions, helps us tell the story of how God delivered the Israelites from bondage.

Why do we eat parsley tonight?

We eat parsley (known as **karpas**) to remind us of springtime and new beginnings. It also symbolizes the tears of the Israelite slaves, which is why we dip it in salt water before eating it.

Why do we eat unleavened bread and bitter herbs tonight?

We eat **unleavened bread (matzah)** because when the Israelites fled Egypt, they didn't have time to let their bread rise, so they ate flat, unleavened bread. We eat **bitter herbs (maror)** to remind us of the bitterness and suffering the Israelites endured while they were slaves in Egypt.

Why do we eat charoset tonight?

Charoset is a sweet mixture (often made of apples, nuts, wine, and spices) that represents the mortar the Israelite slaves used to make bricks for Pharaoh. Its sweetness reminds us that even in times of hardship, there is hope for freedom and redemption.

The reader continues.....

Long ago, our ancestors worshipped many gods. But now, the Eternal One is our God, and we offer our devotion to the One God. As the sacred teachings tell us:

"Thus says the God of Israel: 'In days of old, your ancestors lived beyond the river and worshipped other gods. I took Abraham from beyond the river and led him through the whole land of Canaan. I increased his family by giving him a son, Isaac. And I gave Isaac two sons, Jacob and Esau. Jacob and his family went down to Egypt.'"

Blessed be God, who is faithful to all generations. For the Holy One foretold the end of bondage, saying to Abraham:

"Know that your descendants will be strangers in a land not their own. They will be enslaved and oppressed for four hundred years. But the people who oppress them will be judged, and afterward, they will go free with great abundance."

Together let us bless the Lord our God.

ACTION *All lift their cups and say:*

The promise made to our forebears holds true for us today.

ACTION *All take a sip of wine (juice).*

The Story (Exodus 12:1–17, 29–36):

- 1 The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt:
- 2 This month shall mark for you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year for you.
- 3 Tell the whole congregation of Israel that on the tenth of this month they are to take a lamb for each family, a lamb for each household.
- 4 If a household is too small for a whole lamb, it shall join its closest neighbor in obtaining one; the lamb shall be divided in proportion to the number of people who eat of it.
- 5 Your lamb shall be without blemish, a year-old male; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats.
- 6 You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month; then the whole assembled congregation of Israel shall slaughter it at twilight.
- 7 They shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it.
- 8 They shall eat the lamb that same night; they shall eat it roasted

over the fire with unleavened bread and bitter herbs.

9 Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but roasted over the fire, with its head, legs, and inner organs.

10 You shall let none of it remain until the morning; anything that remains until the morning you shall burn.

11 This is how you shall eat it: your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it hurriedly. It is the Passover of the LORD.

12 For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike down every firstborn in the land of Egypt, both human beings and animals; on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the LORD.

13 The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live: when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague shall destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.

14 This day shall be a day of remembrance for you. You shall celebrate it as a festival to the LORD; throughout your generations you shall observe it as a perpetual ordinance.

15 Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread; on the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses. For whoever eats leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day shall be cut off from Israel.

16 On the first day you shall hold a solemn assembly, and on the seventh day a solemn assembly; no work shall be done on those days; only what everyone must eat, that alone may be prepared by you.

17 You shall observe the Festival of Unleavened Bread, for on this very day I brought your companies out of the land of Egypt. You shall observe this day throughout your generations as a perpetual ordinance.

Exodus 12:29–36: 29 At midnight the LORD struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the prisoner who was in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of the livestock.

30 Pharaoh arose in the night, he and all his officials and all the Egyptians; and there was a loud cry in Egypt, for there was not a house without someone dead.

31 Then he summoned Moses and Aaron in the night and said, “Rise up, go away from my people, both you and the Israelites; go, worship the LORD, as you said.

32 Take your flocks and your herds, as you said, and be gone. And bring a blessing on me too!”

33 The Egyptians urged the people to hasten their departure from the land, for they said, “We shall all be dead.”

34 So the people took their dough before it was leavened, with their kneading bowls bound up in their cloaks on their shoulders.

35 The Israelites had done as Moses told them; they had asked the Egyptians for jewelry of silver and gold, and for clothing.

36 And the LORD had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have what they asked. And so they plundered the Egyptians.

This passage describes the institution of the Passover and the final plague upon Egypt, where the firstborns of Egypt are struck down, prompting Pharaoh to release the Israelites.

Our victory is diminished because of the death of our foes. Let us all spill a few drops of wine onto our plates in compassion for those who were slain that night.

ACTION *All spill a few drops of wine.*

Together let us thank the Lord our God.

**How thankful we must be to you, our God,
the all-present One,
for the good you do to your people.**

Eating the parsley

We eat this green vegetable, a fruit of the earth. We recall that our ancestors were tillers of the soil, grateful for God's bounties. But in dipping the vegetable into the salt, we remember, too, the tears which our ancestors shed while suffering the hardness of slavery. May our gratitude for the blessings we enjoy help to soften the pain of sorrow, and convert tears to joy and gladness.

Together let us bless the Lord our God.

All say:

**Blessed are you, O Lord our God,
Creator of the fruits of the earth.**

ACTION *Then dip the parsley in salt before eating it.*

Eating the Unleavened Bread and Bitter Herbs

This is the bread of affliction which our forbearers ate in the land of Egypt. Because there was no free time to wait for the dough to be leavened, they baked cakes of unleavened bread. We dip the unleavened bread into the bitter herb, the horseradish, recalling how the Egyptians embittered the lives of our ancestors with hard work. Let us eat the bread of affliction.

ACTION *All dip the bread in the horseradish and eat it.*

Eating the Haroset

The haroset is a mixture of apples, nuts, raisins, and honey. It represents the mortar our ancestors used for bricklaying when they were slaves. For us, it is a reminder that the freedom we are celebrating today is also hard work. Let us take the haroset together.

ACTION *All eat the haroset.*

The Roasted Egg

The roasted egg (Beitzah) is usually not eaten at the meal. It symbolizes new life and sacrifice.

Shank Bone

Shank Bone (Z'roa) although not present at our meal tonight would have been part of the Passover. It represented the Paschal lamb that was sacrificed and eaten during Passover. It served as a reminder of the Israelites' redemption from slavery in Egypt and the blood of the lamb that marked their homes during the final plague.

Personal Deliverance

In every generation, each person must look at themselves as having come out of Egypt personally. For it was not our fore bearers alone whom the Holy One redeemed. With them, God redeemed us too. So, in this spirit, we see ourselves as participants in the Exodus.

All say

**As inheritors of the priceless heritage of liberty,
we join now in praising and glorifying God's holy name,
remembering the task is ours
to work for the liberty of God's people today:
those who are bound by chains of poverty and injustice,
and kept prisoner by slave-masters
whose first priority is to exploit and control.**

**For the miracles wrought by God in the past,
as well as in our day,
we offer our thankfulness.**

**For God has delivered us from slavery to freedom:
from sorrow to happiness;
from mourning to rejoicing;
from darkness to light.**

**In gratitude for these blessings,
we shall sing songs of praise,
and we shall drink the cup of blessing.**

ACTION *All take a sip of wine (Juice).*

Then, with a new song, and a renewed flavour,
let us give thanks once again
for our physical deliverance and our spiritual freedom.

All say

**Blessed are you, our God,
who has redeemed your people.**

**Blessed are you,
great sovereign of the universe,
who created the fruit of the vine.**

Song Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow

VU #541

The Sacrament of Holy Communion

Gathering

Christ invited you to this table of grace.

**We come, hungry for holy mystery, thirsty for love
unending.**

The Spirit moves among us, weaving past and present,
heaven and earth.

We gather in wonder, in remembrance, in hope.

Hymn Here, O My Lord, I See Your Face to Face

VU #459

Prayer of Thanksgiving

The Holy One be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to God.

Let us give thanks to the Maker of Heaven and Earth.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

Eternal and Everlasting One, in the beginning, your Spirit hovered over the deep, calling forth life, breathing beauty into dust, shaping all that is seen and unseen.

Through prophets and poets, through fire and flood, you have whispered your love.

When we turned away, you called us home.

When we were bound, you led us to freedom.

And so, with those who have gone before us, and those yet to come, with the saints and the angels, the mountains and the seas,

we lift our voices in praise:

Holy, holy, holy God,

Heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest!

Blessed is the One who comes in the name of Love.

Hosanna in the highest!

Words of Institution

On the night before he died, Jesus took bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to his friends, saying:

"Take, eat. This is my body, given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Then he took the cup, the fruit of the vine, gave thanks, and offered it to them, saying:

"This cup is the new covenant, sealed in my blood. Whenever you drink it, remember me."

Mystery of Faith

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

Consecration and Sharing

Holy Spirit, breathe upon these gifts of bread and wine.

Make them for us the body and blood of Christ,

That we, nourished and made new,

May be Christ's body in the world.

The gifts of God for the people of God. Come, for all is ready.

(The bread and cup are shared.)

Prayer After Communion

**Holy One, you have met us at this table.
In the breaking of bread, in the sharing of the cup,
You have fed us with grace, filled us with love,
And sent us forth to be your hands and heart in the world.
May we go in peace, carrying the light of Christ. Amen.**

Hymn Let Us Talents and Tongues Employ

VU #468

Blessing & Sending

Go now in the love of the Creator,
The peace of Christ,
And the power of the Holy Spirit.
Go in peace to love and serve.
Thanks be to God! Amen.