



“for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to the promise.”  
~ *The Apostle Paul (Galatians 3: 26-29)*

“I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit, in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.”  
~ *The Apostle Paul (Ephesians 4: 1-6)*

“I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

~ *Jesus (John 13:34-35)*

### Love Feast

On Sunday, August 2, during our 9:30am worship service, we will be sharing in an a two thousand year-old feast, in a new way – virtually.

Instead of a communion service for August, we will be sharing in a slightly different Christian meal, known as a Love Feast (sometimes known as The Agapé Feast, Love-Feast, or Lovefeast). A Love Feast is meal shared during a Christian worship service, but is not to be confused with the sacrament of Holy Communion. As such, bread cubes, wafers, wine, and grape juice are generally not used during a Love Feast, so as not to confuse this meal with Holy Communion. As you will read below, the Love Feast meal has become a revitalized rite in Christian churches during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Like Communion, the Love Feast involves a simple food and a simple drink. However, unlike Communion, the food and drink are not consecrated by an ordained minister prior consuming them. In a Love Feast, the portions are also bigger, as well. Generally a coffee mug and a full pastry are used, rather than a cube of bread and a half ounce of wine.

For the August 2 live stream worship service, you should have food and drink for the worship service. Both the food and the drink is your choice, but should be something common and simple. Examples of food include: a pastry, doughnut, pancake, French toast, biscuit, muffin, cookie, cracker, dinner roll, or sticky bun. Examples of drink include: water, coffee, tea, orange juice, or lemonade.

*(Please note, due to technical limitations, there will be NO Zoom on that Sunday).*

### History and Meaning of the Love Feast

In Greek (the primary language of the original New Testament writings), there are multiple words which translate into the English word “love.” Each Greek word for love has a different meaning (such as friendship-love, romantic-love, charitable-love). Agapé is the Greek word for the self-sacrificing *love* of Christ for the sake of others. For Jesus, and therefore for us, “No one has greater love (*agapé*) than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” (John 15:13).

We read that ten days after Jesus’ ascension, the Holy Spirit was imparted on the day of Pentecost (50 days after

Easter). Following Pentecost, Christians gathered for fellowship, sharing a meal, and prayer. In the book of Jude we read that the early Christians shared in lovefeasts (Jude 1:12).

The Love Feast demonstrates our desire to be in fellowship with one another as equal children of God (Galatians 3: 26-29). We *all* need to eat and drink – in a divided world, that is something that all humans share in common, which unites us. In some churches, where Love Feasts are more regularly practiced, they serve the drink in coffee mugs that have 2 or 3 handles (rather than the usual one handled coffee mug) to help symbolize the uniting fellowship of this meal, as the mugs are passed down the pews. Generally during a Love Feast worship service there are extra hymns and choir anthems, and lay witnessing and testimonials rather than a sermon.

The modern use of the Love Feast as a part of worship began on August 13, 1727 in Germany in a Moravian Church, and then spread throughout that denomination to others. In the early American settlements congregations were often served the sacraments by an occasional visit of a traveling pastor, and therefore the Love Feast became a common alternative to communion in early America for those times when no pastor was available to consecrate the communion elements. The use of the Love Feast has become increasingly practiced during the COVID-19 pandemic as alternative meal to communion, as a way to share in a meal of community with God and with one another, through virtual electronic means, without the need to have consecrated bread and wine/grape juice.

As we are social distant in our daily living, challenged by struggles that are dividing us as humanity, and physically separated on Sundays, my hope is that this ancient meal celebrated by the first Christians and by some of the first Christian settlers of our nation, may help unite us in spirit with our Lord God and with one another.

Yours In Christ,  
*Pastor Ben Metz*

## More About the Love Feast

For those who would like a little more history and background about the Love Feast, the following articles are from the Moravian Church and the United Methodist Church.

### The Lovefeast

*(From a Moravian Resource)*

The holding of lovefeasts, after the practice of the Apostolic Church, has come to be one of the outstanding customs of the Moravian Church and has proved to be a real means of grace. Members of other denominations are attracted to Moravian lovefeasts in large numbers, and thus the spirit of fellowship is greatly advanced.

Lovefeasts originated in the first gathering of Christians after Pentecost. The early believers met and broke bread together, thereby signifying their union and equality. These meals of the church family were associated with the celebration of the Lord's Supper, which followed them. They were called agape, from the Greek word for love, that is for the highest type of spiritual love. Gradually the agape lost its devotional character, and toward the end of the fourth century the Church gave it up. The lovefeast of Apostolic times was resuscitated in its original simplicity by the Moravian Church in 1727. After the memorable celebration of the holy communion on August 13, seven groups of the participants continued to talk over the great spiritual blessing which they had experienced and were reluctant to separate and return to their own homes for the noonday meal. Count Zinzendorf, sensing the situation, sent them food from his manor house, and each group partook together, continuing in prayer, religious conversation, and the singing of hymns. This incident reminded Zinzendorf of the primitive agape, and the idea was fostered until lovefeasts became a custom in Moravian life. They were introduced wherever new settlements were founded and so came to America. Wherever its fullest liturgical development exists, the lovefeast is a service of solemn dignity, in which the finest Moravian Church hymns and stately music may be heard, but without any surrender of its central idea.



Because of its attraction for visitors, persons sometimes come to a lovefeast out of curiosity, perhaps amused at the idea of “eating in church.” It is interesting to see such a person yield to the spirit of devotion which pervades the service and change in a very few moments from visitor to reverent member of the service. This never fails when the congregation is itself full of the spirit of reverence and Christian love.

The lovefeast is primarily a song service, opened with prayer. Often there is no address; the hymns in the ode, or order of service, furnish the subject matter for devotional thoughts. If many visitors are present, the presiding minister often says a few words, explaining the purpose of the service, just before the congregation partakes of the bun and coffee, or whatever is served. On special occasions an address may be added, giving opportunity to remind the congregation of the history of the anniversary or the deeper import of the day.

There is no rule as to the food to be offered, except that it be very simple and easily distributed. The drink may be coffee, tea, or lemonade, fully prepared in advance, so that it may be served very quietly and without interruption of the singing. Usually mugs are used, which may be passed from hand to hand along a pew from a tray brought along the aisle. A slightly sweetened bun, which can be served in baskets passed along the pews, is a convenient form of bread. Usually men handle the trays of mugs, and women the baskets of buns. While the congregation partakes, the choir sings an anthem. Later the mugs are quietly gathered and removed. The food served is not consecrated, as in the communion. Children and members of any denomination may partake.

There are many services during the year at which a lovefeast is appropriate, such as the festivals of the church year, the anniversary days of the Moravian Church, the anniversary day of a congregation, a missionary occasion, any day in fact on which there is a desire to stress the headship of the Lord and the oneness and fellowship of His followers.



## **The Love Feast** *(From an United Methodist Resource)*

The Love Feast, or Agape Meal, is a Christian fellowship meal recalling the meals Jesus shared with disciples during his ministry and expressing the *koinonia* (community, sharing, fellowship) enjoyed by the family of Christ.

Although its origins in the early church are closely interconnected with the origins of the Lord's Supper, the two services became quite distinct and should not be confused with each other. While the Lord's Supper has been practically universal among Christians throughout church history, the Love Feast has appeared only at certain times and among certain denominations.

The modern history of the Love Feast began when Count Zinzendorf and the Moravians in Germany introduced a service of sharing food, prayer, religious conversation, and hymns in 1727. John Wesley first experienced it among the Moravians in Savannah, Georgia, ten years later. His diary notes: "After evening prayers, we joined with the Germans in one of their love-feasts. It was begun and ended with thanksgiving and prayer, and celebrated in so decent and solemn a manner as a Christian of the apostolic age would have allowed to be worthy of Christ."

It quickly became a feature of the Evangelical Revival and a regular part of Methodist society meetings in Great Britain and throughout the English-speaking world. As Methodists immigrated to North America they made Love Feasts an important part of early American Methodism.

While Love Feasts became less frequent in the years that followed, they continued to be held in some places; and in recent years the Love Feast has been revived. Love Feasts have often been held at Annual Conferences and Charge Conferences, where persons may report on what God has been doing in their lives and on the hope and trust they place in God for the future. The Love Feast is also an important part of the practice of Covenant Discipleship groups. Christmas, New Year's Eve or Day, the weekdays of Holy Week, and the Day of Pentecost are also fitting occasions for a Love Feast. A Love Feast may also be held during a congregational supper.

The Love Feast has often been held on occasions when the celebration of the Lord's Supper would be inappropriate—where there is no one present authorized to administer the Sacrament, when persons of different denominations are present who do not feel free to take Holy Communion together, when there is a desire for a service more informal and spontaneous than the communion ritual, or at a full meal or some other setting to which it would be difficult to adapt the Lord's Supper.

The Love Feast is most naturally held around a table or with persons seated in a circle; but it is possible to hold it with persons seated in rows. A church sanctuary, fellowship hall, or home is an appropriate location.

One of the advantages of the Love Feast is that any Christian may conduct it. Congregational participation and leadership are usually extensive and important, especially involving children.

Testimonies and praise are the focal point in most Love Feasts. Testimonies may include personal witness to God's grace or accounts of what God has been doing in the lives of others. Praise may take the form of hymns, songs, choruses, or spoken exclamations and may vary from the relative formality of an opening and closing hymn to spontaneous calling out of requests and singing as the Spirit moves. Sometimes the leader guides those present alternating spontaneous singing and sharing in free and familiar conversation for as long as the Spirit moves. Wesley counseled that all the above be done decently and in order.

Prayer is vital to a Love Feast. A fixed form of prayer may be used, especially something like the Lord's Prayer or Be present at our table, Lord, that is familiar to the people. Spontaneous prayer requests and prayers may come from the people.

Scripture is also important. There may be scripture readings, or persons may quote Scripture spontaneously as the Spirit moves. There may be a sermon, an exhortation, or an address; but it should be informal and consist of the leader's adding personal witness to what spontaneously comes from the congregation.

Most Love Feasts include the sharing of food. It is customary not to use communion bread, wine, or grape juice because to do so might confuse the Love Feast with the Lord's Supper. The bread may be a loaf of ordinary bread, crackers, rolls, or a sweet bread baked especially for this service. If a loaf of bread, it may be broken in two or more pieces and then passed from hand to hand as each person breaks off a piece. Crackers, rolls, or slices of bread may be passed in a basket. The beverage has usually been water, but other beverages such as lemonade, tea, or coffee have been used. Early Methodists commonly passed a loving cup with two handles from person to person, but later the water was served in individual glasses. The food is served quietly without interrupting the service.

The Love Feast may also be followed by a full meal, in which case persons or families may bring dishes of food for all to share. During the meal there may be informal conversation in Christian fellowship, or the leader may direct the conversation by suggesting matters of mutual concern, or there may be spontaneous witnessing and praise. If there is food left over, it may be taken as an expression of love to persons not present.