

Great Thanksgiving for 18th Sunday after Pentecost
(Authority)

Invitation:

By the authority of love, you are invited to this table.
Come and love God and love one another.
Come and be loved by God and one another.

Confession:

Any action not authorized by love is sin. There is no greater authority in our lives, yet we have chosen to ignore it. Instead we have used other ways to justify our sin, claiming other authorities. We have claimed our privileges to justify our racism, our sexism, and our ableism. We bully our way through life thinking might makes right and majority rules. We have used the authority of citizenship to justify our harsh treatment of refugees and migrants. Forgive us for any act we have committed not authorized by Your love. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon:

One: God's love was revealed among us this way: God sent Their One and only into the world so that we might live through them. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that They loved us and sent Their One and only to be an atoning sacrifice for our sin. By the authority of this love of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven.

All: God's love has been revealed to you also. By the authority of this love of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Thanksgiving:

One: By whose authority do we care for others?

All: Love is our authority.

One: By whose authority do we forgive the sins of others?

All: Love is our authority.

One: It is this love that deeply stirs our souls.

All: And compels us to go into all the world proclaiming good news!

One: You have commanded us to do one thing: love.

The greatest spiritual gift You have given us, empowers us to love.

The fruit of Your Spirit that fills our soul, is love.

Love is the reason for our creation.

Love is the only excuse we need.

We act by this authority given to us by Your love.

We are anointed by love.

We are baptized into love.

We are ordained from the beginning of creation to love.

The goal of our very existence to become perfected in love,
to love just as You love.

So we join with You in embracing the whole world.

We join You in comforting all who sorrow.
We join with You in encouraging all who are struggling.
We want to enable all to join with us in worshipping You,
in singing Your praises, in dancing with great joy in Your presence.
We want to echo the great joyful celebration in heaven right here on earth,
even now in this place, saying:

**All: God is love, pure love.
By abiding in this love
We abide in God.**

**God abides in us.
Love perfected among us,
So we may be bold.** (Based on 1 John 4:16b-17)

One: You are love, and Christ is Your purest reflection.
Jesus loved everyone, because You do.
Jesus showed love to beggars and rich young rulers.
Jesus showed love to those caught in sin, and those still in denial.
Jesus showed love to oppressors and those suffering under that oppression.
Jesus showed love by eating with known sinners, and in the homes of religious authorities.

Jesus loved the outcast, the unclean, the neglected,
and those who were foolish enough to see themselves as better.

Taking upon himself the authority of a servant,
Jesus washed feet to exemplify Your love, O God.
Now, we too, are authorized, to love wherever we see a need.

During the ritual of Passover,
Jesus took the unleavened bread and blessed it.
This bread was used to remind Israel of the needs of others.
Jesus broke and shared this bread, saying:
“Take, eat, this is my body broken and given for you.”
Now, we too, are authorized, to love wherever we see a need.

Continuing the ritual of Passover,
Jesus took the cup of wine and blessed it.
This wine was used to remind Israel of how others suffer from our sins.
Jesus shared the wine, saying:
“Drink, everyone, this is the cup of my blood,
a libation poured out freely in recognition of God’s eternal covenant of grace,
promising the forgiveness of the sins to all, even ours.”
Now, we too, are authorized, to love wherever we see a need.

We are ready to love all others, as Jesus loves,

in all of its breadth and depth.
A way of life laid out for us in
this mystery we have seen in Jesus Christ:

**All: To love like Christ, we must die like Christ.
To love like Christ, we must rise like Christ.
To love like Christ, we must never give up,
just as Christ who comes again and again.**

One: Loving Push, Divine Yes,
whisper to these gifts of bread and wine,
reveal in them to us the body and blood of Christ,
God's unmerited favor.

Loving Push, Divine Yes,
whisper to our hearts, as we move on to perfection,
reveal to the world through us, Your church,
the true body and perfect bride of Christ,
God's unmerited favor.

Loving Push, Divine Yes,
whisper to the souls of the Choptank Charge of the United Methodist Church
giving them the authority to love the loveless, to hear the cries of the anguished,
and to share the good news of great joy made available to all.

**All: Together we join in this prayer,
with Christ, in Christ, because of Christ
in union with the Holy Spirit,
bringing glory and honor to the God of Universal love and peace,
in union with all the world. Amen.**

One: Now pray with me according to the plan of Christ:

**All: God who loves us all, guides us all, helps us all.
No one is beyond Your reach and care.
You provide daily for all of us.
By grace, You never give up on any of us,
and want us to show the same grace to each other.
Keep us from giving up all hope,
But fill us with fresh visions of possibility.
You authorize us to love, to care, to heal Your world, always. Amen.**

Prayer after Communion:

Thank You for sharing with us this holy mystery in Jesus Christ. It has opened our eyes to the depth of Your love for us. You have renewed our calling to love as You have loved us. Now send us out into the world under Your authority to love the world. May all the world see Your love in us in all we do. Amen.

