

Service of Holy Communion for the Seventeenth Sunday After Pentecost
(*Increased Faith*)

Invitation:

One: Come and increase your faith. Come and find help for your unbelief. Taste and see that the Lord is good. Experience the presence of Christ for yourself. Behold the Lord stands at the door and knocks, if you open the door, Christ will come in and sup with you at this table.

Confession:

All: We struggle to update the faith of our ancestors. The way they saw the world is foreign to our own experience. Their concepts are not our concepts, their understanding is not like our own. We believe, but are unsure how to explain it where it makes sense, not only to others, but ourselves. Speak to our hearts in ways we understand, and release in our souls your creative imagination, to see you in ways that inspire afresh, our soul's holy awe. Amen.

Words of Assurance:

One: God is in your questions and Jesus invites you to learn from him, and explore the universe. Your doubts and unbelief are forgiven. In the name of Jesus Christ you are set free.

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Thanksgiving:

One: God invites you to explore, to ask questions, make mistakes and get dirty.

All: God's grace has set us loose to live without fear.

One: God invites you to exercise your imagination and dream dreams and see visions.

All: God's universe still moves us to awe and wonder.

One: God makes our living each day amazing, filling us with laughter.

All: We cannot help but smile, as God teaches us new moves each day to the dance of life.

One: We do smile,
And find that your joy in us, gives us strength.
Your laughter at our shenanigans,
sets us at ease and helps us relax and enjoy your presence.
The longer we know you,
the more we comprehend your jokes and playfulness.
You understand when we have missed the mark,
when we have jumped to the wrong conclusions about you.
You also celebrate when we come to finally understand
that it has always been about love
and about you helping us to grow into the fullness of that love.

You have invited us to your party,
and you laugh at our surprise at who else is invited,
because you have searched long and hard to find us all.
So we join your celebration of your gathered prodigal children,
and join with all of the angels of heaven in their exaltation:

All: Hallelujah! Praise the Lord, O my soul!
We will praise you as long as we have breath;
We will sing your praises for as long as we live. (Based on Psalm 146:1-2)

One: You have made it so simple, Christ wants us to focus on just one thing:

All: Love.

One: We stubbornly want to make it complicated.
We keep trying to make it exclusive.
We struggle to believe.

But you want us to do only one simple thing, just like Jesus:

All: Love.

One: Love everyone.
Love your neighbor.
Who is your neighbor? Anyone.
Love your enemies, as if they were your friends.
Love strangers, as if they were your own family.
If you want to love God who you cannot see, love those you can.

All: Love.

One: To show us what to believe,
Jesus emptied himself.
Jesus took the position of a slave.
Jesus stooped low, and washed feet.
Jesus believed this was what made him and us great:

All: Love.

One: To show us what to believe,
in a spirit of worship, Jesus took the bread of Passover,
broke it and passed it to everyone present:
adults and children, saying:
“Take and eat, this is my body broken to share with you.”

All: Love.

One: To show us what to believe,
in a spirit of worship, Jesus poured the Passover wine,
and passed the cup to everyone present:
adults and children, saying:
“Take and drink, this is the cup of my blood,
poured out in love, reflecting God’s eternal covenant of grace,
a promise of forgiveness for your sins and mine and those of the entire world.”

All: Love.

One: Many struggle to believe in the love of God.
We choose to demonstrate our belief
by living lives that are reflected in this holy mystery:

**All: In Christ's death, we find life.
In Christ's resurrection, we find hope.
In Christ's promised return, we find our calling.**

One: Holy Mystery, Unfathomable Truth
reveal your truth through this bread and wine
allow them to become to us the body and blood of Christ,

All: love.

One: Holy Mystery, Unfathomable Truth
reveal your truth through us, our word and actions,
allowing them to become for the world, your church
the true body and bride of Christ,

All: love.

One: Holy Mystery, Unfathomable Truth
reveal your truth to the Choptank Charge
and to other members of the United Methodist Church around the world.
Help them as they study your divine revelation,
deepen the meaning of their acts of devotion,
make clear their calling to bring love to everyone.

**All: May these prayers illumine for us the ways of Christ,
our giftedness through the Holy Spirit,
and the love of God for everybody.
That you, our most holy Trinity, might be made manifest in all the earth. Amen.**

One: As we continue to live our questions now, let us pray with Christ the prayer he taught us:

**All: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors;
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.**

Prayer after Communion:

**All: Thank you so very much, for allowing us to share with you in this holy mystery.
We still have so many questions, and need so many answers, yet one thing is clear:
You love us and are willing to see us on to perfection. Even though we still have
much to learn from you, send us out to share the good news we know. You want
others to accept that they are loved and wanted, just as they are, and for whom they**

will become. Amen.