St John’s Episcopal Church
Ross, CA

Agape Meal
Ordinary Time, Proper 25
October 25, 2020  10AM

Come hydrate your soul at St John’s:
   A community of connections across generations.
Connect to God through worship, service,
   real life and tradition.

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During this season of pandemic, we have not been able to gather to share the Holy Eucharist, Christ’s sacrificial love made present and real in the bread and wine.

We invite you today to share an “Agape Meal,” which is not the Holy Eucharist that we long for so much, but an alternative way to recall and share Jesus’ life and and love. Again and again during his ministry, Jesus gathered an unlikely crowd around the table: prostitutes, tax collectors, the poor and sick, his friends, and those who would betray him. These meals were a foreshadowing of God’s kingdom, where each person is nourished, loved, and included.

Today, we remember Jesus’ ministry as we gather around his table spiritually. We call this an “agape” meal, as “agape” is the Greek word for the kind of love that God has for us - love that is unconditional and always seeks the growth and joy of the beloved.

To share in this meal, you are invited to prepare two things before the service:
- something to eat: bread, crackers, cheese, fruit
- something to drink: water, lemonade, wine

Whatever you prepare should be simple and easy, but also something you love, food and drink that bring you comfort.
As we worship today, you are invited to pray aloud with us, or join silently; to sing along or enjoy listening. Welcome - we are thankful for your presence!

Have a prayer request that you’d like to be shared (anonymously or with your name) on Sunday during the prayers? Would you like a blessing for a birthday, anniversary, or other occasion of thanksgiving? **During the service, please text your prayer request to (415) 275-0115 and it will be shared at the Prayers of the People.**

Please join in praying for the needs and concerns of our congregation by viewing our online [Prayer List and Prayer Wall](#).

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**Altar Flowers this morning are given to the Glory of God**

To remember or celebrate a loved one with a donation for our altar flowers, please contact Nancy Strauch via [email](mailto:email) or at 510-237-5021.

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**Prelude**

Arise, O God  
Paul Chesnokov (1877-1944)

**Welcome**

*After the welcome announcement a bell will sound, signaling a few moments of prayer and silence.*
Liturgy of the Word

Procesional Hymn
O God, our help in ages past  
Hymnal 680 vss.1-5 (St. Anne)

All standing, the Presider says
Blessed be the one, holy, and living God.

People
Glory to God for ever and ever.

Presider and People
Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy Name; through Christ our Lord. Amen.
Opening Anthem
All things bright and beautiful       Hymnal 405 (Royal Oak)

refrain, verse 2, refrain

Collect of the Day

Presider              God be with you.
People                And also with you.
Presider              Let us pray.
Almighty and everlasting God, increase in us the gifts of faith, hope, and charity; and, that we may obtain what you promise, make us love what you command; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.
First Reading

1 Thessalonians 2:1-8

You yourselves know, brothers and sisters, that our coming to you was not in vain, but though we had already suffered and been shamefully mistreated at Philippi, as you know, we had courage in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in spite of great opposition. For our appeal does not spring from deceit or impure motives or trickery, but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the message of the gospel, even so we speak, not to please mortals, but to please God who tests our hearts. As you know and as God is our witness, we never came with words of flattery or with a pretext for greed; nor did we seek praise from mortals, whether from you or from others, though we might have made demands as apostles of Christ. But we were gentle among you, like a nurse tenderly caring for her own children. So deeply do we care for you that we are determined to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you have become very dear to us.

Reader
Hear what the Spirit is saying to God’s people.

People
Thanks be to God.
Psalm 90:1-6,13-17
Please join in praying the Psalm together:

1 Lord, you have been our refuge *
   from one generation to another.

2 Before the mountains were brought forth,
or the land and the earth were born, *
   from age to age you are God.

3 You turn us back to the dust and say, *
   "Go back, O child of earth."

4 For a thousand years in your sight are like yesterday when it is past *
   and like a watch in the night.

5 You sweep us away like a dream; *
   we fade away suddenly like the grass.

6 In the morning it is green and flourishes; *
   in the evening it is dried up and withered.

13 Return, O Lord; how long will you tarry? *
   be gracious to your servants.

14 Satisfy us by your loving-kindness in the morning; *
   so shall we rejoice and be glad all the days of our life.

15 Make us glad by the measure of the days that you afflicted us *
   and the years in which we suffered adversity.

16 Show your servants your works *
   and your splendor to their children.

17 May the graciousness of the Lord our God be upon us; *
   prosper the work of our hands;
   prosper our handiwork.
The Holy Gospel

Matthew 22:34-46

Priest The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew.
People Glory to you, Lord Christ.

When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. “Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” He said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”

Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them this question: “What do you think of the Messiah? Whose son is he?” They said to him, “The son of David.” He said to them, “How is it then that David by the Spirit calls him Lord, saying,

‘The Lord said to my Lord,
“Sit at my right hand,
until I put your enemies under your feet”’?

If David thus calls him Lord, how can he be his son?” No one was able to give him an answer, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions.

Priest The Gospel of the Lord.
People Praise to you, Lord Christ.

Sermon

One minute of silence follows the sermon.

The Rev. Skip Fotch
The Nicene Creed

*Please stand if you wish and join in saying the creed.*

We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father.
Through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven:
by the power of the Holy Spirit
he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary,
and was made man.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.
We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.
With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified.
He has spoken through the Prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.
Prayers of the People

As a people entrusted by God with the call to love our neighbor, let us offer our prayers and thanksgivings, saying: God, our creator,

*Guide us in truth and love.*

We give thanks for the right to vote. Help us to hold this privilege and responsibility with the care and awareness it merits. God, our creator,

*Guide us in truth and love.*

Help us create communities that will build your kingdom here on earth – communities that will protect the poor, stand up for the vulnerable, advocate for those who are not seen and heard, and listen to everyone’s voice. God, our creator,

*Guide us in truth and love.*

We pray for this nation that is deeply divided. May we come together for the common good and do as you have called us to do – to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with you through creation. God, our creator,

*Guide us in truth and love.*

May this election proceed smoothly, fairly, and peacefully; In the aftermath of the election, may we all work toward reconciliation with one another and with God. Help us to listen in love, work together in peace, and collaborate with one another as we seek the betterment of our community and world. God, our creator,

*Guide us in truth and love.*

**Priest**

In thanksgiving for the blessings we have received and the freedoms we enjoy, let us continue our prayers. We pray for communities who are struggling with inequality, unrest, and fear. We pray for those in our own community who are in need of your care and healing, especially...And for all who have died, including... God, our creator,

*Guide us in truth and love.*

We give you thanks and praise, O God, for the work of the Holy Spirit within and among us, work that began long ago and continues today. Grant that we may always be open to your transformation. *Amen.*

**Peace**

*The Ministers and the People greet one another in the name of the Lord.*
Announcements
**Agape Meal**

**Offertory Anthem**

_During this time of uncertainty, St. John’s particularly needs your help to continue to offer care and support to our community. You can give online [here](#)._  

_During the anthem, you are invited to place your food and drink on a table in front of you._

O praise the Lord, my soul

Mikail Ippolitov-Ivanov (1859-1935)

Betsy Bennett-Smith, soprano

Presider  The Lord be with you.  
People    And also with you.  
Presider  Lift up your hearts.  
People    We lift them to the Lord.  
Presider  Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.  
People    It is right to give our thanks and praise.  

Presider  Jesus, we give you thanks that during your ministry on earth you invited all people to join you at your table, taking care that none were excluded. We give you thanks that you welcomed all: prostitutes, tax collectors, the poor and sick, your friends, and those who would betray you. You spoke of the Kingdom of God as a great feast to which all are invited. And so today we seek to join you at your table. We desire to hear your voice, to share your love, and to be joined in deep communion with those from whom we differ.

We pray that as we share this food and drink, you would unite us spiritually with you and one another though we are physically apart. We pray that in this meal, you would feed our bodies and our spirits with your presence, so that we might bring your presence and comfort to others. Bless this food, and break open our hearts; bless this drink and pour out your love.

You are invited to hold up your food.

Blessed are you, O Lord our God, Ruler of the universe. You bring forth bread from the earth; and you have fed us on our way with the bread of life in the Body of your Son Jesus Christ. Let us be fed again soon with that bread of life. And as grain scattered upon the earth is gathered into one loaf, so gather our separated community together that we may be the Body of Christ, given for the world you have made. To you be glory and power for ever and ever. Amen.

You are invited to hold up your drink.

Blessed are you, O Lord our God, Ruler of the universe. You refresh us with the cup of salvation in the Blood of your Son Jesus Christ. May the time come quickly when we can share that cup again, even as you are with us now in our very thirst for you. We thank you for your continued presence in our lives. Glory to you for ever and ever. Amen.
Lord’s Prayer
Please join hands with those worshipping next to you as we pray the Lord’s Prayer.

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 trespasses,
    as we forgive those
        who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
    but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
    and the power, and the glory,
    for ever and ever. Amen.

Sharing of the Agape Meal

Presider
Blessed are you, O Lord our God, Ruler of the universe. You have blessed the earth to bring forth food to satisfy our hunger. Let this food strengthen us in the Eucharistic fast that is before us, that following our Savior in the way of the cross, we may come to the joy of his resurrection. For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, now and for ever. Amen.

All partake of the food and drink.

Prayer of Thanksgiving
Please stand or kneel.
Let us pray.

Presider  We have gathered this day, both mourning and rejoicing.
People   We have gathered this day in faith that Jesus is with us.
Presider  Surrounded by illness, we mourn with those who suffer.
People   Yet still we say, Alleluia!
Presider  We know loneliness and discomfort;
People   Yet still we say, Alleluia!
Presider  In the midst of this pandemic
People   We trust your presence and love.
         Alleluia! AMEN.

Blessing
The presider asks God’s blessing on the congregation
Birthdays, Anniversaries and Occasions of Thanksgiving
All those celebrating birthdays, anniversaries and occasions of thanksgiving are invited to share them using the phone number at the beginning of the bulletin.

Today, tomorrow and always we rejoice in the hands of God.
May God's powerful hands support you.
May God's guiding hands lead you.
May God's loving hands enfold you.
We rejoice in the hands of God. Amen.
Closing Hymn
Savior, like a shepherd lead us

1 Savior, like a shepherd lead us; much we need thy
2 Early let us seek thy favor, early let us

tender care; in thy pleasant pastures feed us;
learn thy will; do thou, Lord, our only Savior,

for our use thy folds prepare. Blessed Jesus!
with thy love our bosoms fill. Blessed Jesus!

Blessed Jesus! Thou hast bought us, thine we are.
Blessed Jesus! Thou hast loved us, love us still.

Hymnal 708 (Sicilian Mariners)
Dismissal

Our worship has ended and now our service begins. Let us go forth into the world, rejoicing in the power of the Spirit!

People

Thanks be to God! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Postlude

Fugue on a Russian Carol

Reinhold Glière (1875-1956)

During this time of uncertainty, St. John’s particularly needs your help to continue to offer care and support to our community. You can give online here.

Today after the 10am service, please join us here for coffee hour on zoom. If you would like help in connecting through zoom, please reach out by email.
St John’s Episcopal Church

Bishop of California: The Rt. Rev. Marc Handley Andrus
Rector: The Rev. Chris Rankin-Williams
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    Senior Warden: Robb Baer
    Junior Warden: June Sullivan
    Mary Beth Baker, Genny Biggs, Joannie Ericson, Maya Farhoud, Jennifer Jones, Paul Kaplan,
    Mike O’Brien, Chris Russell, Jaco Sadie, Kathryn Supinski, Amy Taylor.