



Bread & Blessings

INSTRUCTIONS & PERMISSIONS

1. This liturgy can be used at a meal time or as a stand-alone experience. If done at a meal, feel free to “do it up nice” with the “good dishes,” a centerpiece of fresh flowers, and so on.

You are welcome to share this Bread & Blessings on Saturday night as a way of entering Sabbath. You are also free to use it at any other time of day that suits you best.

In other words, **you have permission to be creative; use these prayers whenever and where ever it suits best.**

2. Whether you eat with family around the dinner table or with friends around a picnic blanket at the beach, you will need to the following:
 - 2 candles,
 - a basin of water, a cup, and a hand towel,
 - 2 loaves of bread.
3. Please read the words in **bold**. If you are not using the accompanying recording (found on the Highland website), you are encouraged to have different people take the lead in reading through the prayers.
4. You can pray these prayers with others or by yourself. If you're on your own, please keep in mind that you're not alone. There are other people in other locations sharing bread and blessings with you. Furthermore, you are participating in a bigger story; thousands of Christians over thousands of years have celebrated the heavenly banquet. As you eat, remember: you are taking part in the great communion of saints in a very real sense.

Again: use these resources as necessary.

WELCOME

The love of the Great and Gracious Host, who gives bread to the hungry, the grace of the Bread of Life, who gives himself for the sake of the world, the strength of the Spirit, who sustains us in the wilderness with the gifts of heaven, and the eternal joy of all God's saints gathered around the Supper Table of the Lamb be with you all.



Acts 2:42 reports that the first Christians devoted themselves to the Apostles' teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayer. Men and women from different cultural and social backgrounds served together as ministers, offering hospitality to friends and enemies, neighbours and strangers. Because the early church generously cared for the needs of others, Jesus' people quickly gained a reputation for being a healing community, and the number of Jesus followers grew rapidly.

What motivated the abundant kindness of the early Christians? It's quite simple, really. The early Christians were quick to share because the scriptures told them that God is One who is very much interested in blessing the world and seeing to its flourishing. God's people were blessed by God in order that they might be a blessing to the world. As a result, the early Christians understood that they had been co-missioned by God to bless as God does. In other words, if the church is to be known as God's people, then it's best we imitate who God is and what God does; if God is generous in blessing, then it follows that we should be generous in blessing, too. With their imaginations shaped by the Living Word of God, the early church was quick to joyfully share the Bread of Life that brings blessing and healing to the world.

One of the most powerful things we can do—and which we never can seem to do enough of—is speak words of blessing. Indeed, the book of Proverbs describes the curative properties of words. For instance, Proverbs 18:4, 20 tells us: “A person's words can be a source of wisdom, deep as the ocean, fresh as a flowing stream. . . and good talk is as gratifying as a good harvest.” Proverbs 15:4 notes that “Kind words bring life, but cruel words crush the spirit,” and Proverbs 12:8 adds: “Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.”

With all of that in mind, you are invited to experience the story of Jesus and his people by breaking bread and speaking healing words with this liturgy of “Bread and Blessings.”

SINGING ~ *Peace Prayer*

Lord, make me a means of Your Peace.
Where there's hatred grown let me sow Your love.
Where there's injury, Lord, let forgiveness be my sword.
Lord, make me a means of Your Peace.

Lord, make me a means of Your Peace.
When there's sadness here let me sow Your joy.
When the darkness nears may Your light dispel our fears.
Lord, make me a means of Your Peace.

Lord, grant me to seek and to share.
Less to be consoled than to help console,
Less be understood than to understand Your good.
Lord, make me a means of Your Peace.

Lord, grant me to seek and to share,
To forgive in thee; You've forgiven me.
For to die in thee is eternal life to me.
Lord, make me a means of Your Peace.

—Steve Bell

LIGHT

In Jewish tradition, lighting candles at sundown on Friday is the last act of the workweek, the literal spark that carries us into the Sabbath. One candle represents creation and the other redemption. They may also be signs that call us to "remember" (from the command in Genesis) and to "observe" (from the command in Exodus).

THE PREPARATION PRAYER

**Blessed are You, O Lord our God, Author of peace.
It is from you that we receive every good and perfect gift.
You who made the Sabbath, grant us and all our loved ones
rest on this Sabbath day.
Giver of life and love, may the light of Sabbath drive out from among us
the spirit of fear and the spirit of anger.
Enter our years this day, that we may walk in the ways of your light.
Grant us your peace, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Pause your playback device and have someone light one of the candles.

THE CREATION PRAYER *(this may also be spoken while lighting the first candle)*

**Blessed are You, O Lord our God, Source of the universe,
who brings forth light out of darkness.
In love you made the holy Sabbath our heritage
and a reminder of the gift of Creation.
Because of your abundant provision, we can rest on this day.
Blessed are you, O Lord our God, Source of the universe.**

Pause your playback device and have someone light the second candle.

THE REDEMPTION PRAYER *(this may be spoken while lighting the second candle)*

**Blessed are You, O Lord our God, King of the universe,
who liberates from bondage.
In love you made the holy Sabbath our heritage
and a reminder that you bore your people on eagles wings out of captivity.
Because you free us from all that enslaves, we can rest on this day.
Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the universe.**

THE REQUEST FOR ILLUMINATION

**Blessed are You, O Lord our God, Lord of the Sabbath.
In love you became the holy Sabbath,
a heritage and a gift in whom we find our rest from sin, evil and death.
Because you are the light of the world,
and because you call us to let our light shine before others
in such a way that they may glorify our Father who is in heaven,
we light these candles in prayer:
as they give light to all who are in this place, may our lives,
shining with your great love, give light to all we meet.
Blessed are you, Jesus our God, Lord of the Sabbath, in whose name we pray.
Amen.**

SANCTIFY

The practice of handwashing is reminiscent of the Jewish purification rituals—such as baptism—in which people would purify themselves in fresh, flowing water before making offerings to God.

A household member (traditionally the oldest child) brings a basin of water, a cup, and a towel. Each person simply rinses their hands. Another option is for one person to take the cup in their left hand, fill it up, and then cleanse their right hand with 2-3 splashes of water. S/he then passes the cup directly to the right hand and cleanses the left hand with 2-3 splashes of water.

As a mark of hospitality, many people will refill the cup for the person next in line.

The blessing can be spoken all together once everyone has washed their hands. Or, a person can wash his/her hands, then raise them up, and as the water trickles down, recite the blessing.

In either case, when done one can dry their hands off with the towel. It is common to hold the towel after drying your own hands, and pass it directly to the person who follows you.

*Pause your playback device and
take time for everyone to wash their hands*

THE PURIFICATION PRAYER

**Blessed are You, O Lord our God, Holy One in Infinite Love,
who purifies us through your commandments,
cleanses us through the shedding of Jesus' blood on the cross,
and sanctifies us through the waters of baptism.
Because you chose us and make us holy,
we consecrate our hands for love and service in your name.**

NOURISH

Sabbath bread is called “challah.” In the Old Testament, Israelites were commanded to set aside a portion of dough every week as an offering. That “gift to the Lord” was called challah.

On many tables you will find two loaves of challah rather than one. On Sabbath we revel in abundance; we have a double portion of everything just as the Israelites received a double portion of manna on Sabbath during their forty years of wandering in the wilderness.

The blessing over the bread connects us to the process of work that has to happen in order for the challah to get to our table. Bread isn't just brought forth from the earth, it requires the work of many hands. The abundance of Sabbath comes with the responsibility to work to make a better world the other six days of the week. The abundant blessing of God enables us to share generously, which is what we do as we pass the bread around the table.

THE THANKSGIVING PRAYER

**Blessed are You, O Lord our God, Gardener of life,
who provides the seed-bearing plants of the earth for our use.
As the grain once scattered in the fields is now reunited on this table
in bread which human hands have made,
reintegrate us with ourselves, our neighbours, and You
as we enjoy these gifts.**

Singing (to the tune of the Doxology):

**We join you at this table, Lord.
Be here and everywhere adored.
Abide with us, and grant that we
May feast in Paradise with thee.
Amen.**

Pause your playback device and pass the loaves of bread around. After the last person has enjoyed a piece, you can dig into the rest of the food if you're sharing the bread at a meal.

ENJOY THE MEAL!

APPRECIATE

BLESSING OF ONE ANOTHER

In the Jewish tradition, words have creative power. Because humans are God's image bearers, human curses and blessing shape the world, much like God's Word calls reality into existence.

With that in mind, you are encouraged to bless each person around the table while you're eating or when you're finished. This can be done in a variety of ways. You can place hands on people, or you can simply raise your hands over them. (You can even raise a glass and toast someone.) You can also go around the circle and have each person bless the person next to him/her. Parents, you are encouraged to go to each child around the table and speak good words over them. If you're on your own, you can simply pray blessings for people who come to mind.

You can speak your own words, but you're also free to use the blessings provided below.

- ⊕ May you be like Ephraim and Manasseh, like Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah:
May the Lord bless you and keep you.
May the Lord cause the light of his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you.
May the Lord look on you with favour and give you peace. *—Numbers 6:24-26*
- ⊕ May the Lord answer you and deliver you from all your fears. Those who look to God are radiant, and their faces shall never be ashamed. *—Psalm 34:4-5*
- ⊕ May the Lord, your refuge—the Most High, your dwelling place—
let no evil befall you, no harm come near your home.
God's angels guard you in all your ways;
God be present to protect and honour you in times of trouble.
May the Lord satisfy you with a long drink of salvation,
and the gift of a long life rich in saving power. *—Psalm 91:9-16*
- ⊕ God strengthen you; God help you; God uphold you with God's righteous right hand.
—Isaiah 41:10
- ⊕ May you be like a tree replanted beside the streams of Eden, with roots that reach down to the water, and with leaves that are always green; never afraid through the hottest of summers, serene and calm through droughts, bearing fresh fruit every season. *—Jeremiah 17:8*
- ⊕ May the Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from death, live in you, and do the same thing in you: reviving you, and giving strength to your body, making you as alive to God as King Jesus. *—Romans 8:11*
- ⊕ May you fix your attention on God, and let God transform you completely from the inside out by the renewing of your mind, so that you will readily recognize and quickly respond to what is good, pleasing and perfect. May God bring the best out of you, and develop well-formed maturity in you. *—Romans 12:2*

- ✦ May the God of hope strengthen you with wisdom and peace, so that your life, filled with the Holy Spirit, will brim over with joy! *–Romans 15:13*
- ✦ May you experience and embrace the amazing grace of the Master, Jesus Christ, the extravagant love of God, and the intimate friendship of the Spirit. *–2 Corinthians 13:14*
- ✦ May what our Master Jesus Christ gives freely be deeply and personally yours.
–Galatians 6:18
- ✦ We give thanks for you, and pray that the glorious God will make you intelligent and discerning in knowing Jesus personally, your eyes focused and clear, so that you can see exactly what it is he is calling you to do, grasp the immensity of this rich way of life he has for you, and experience the immeasurable greatness of his power at work in you. *–Ephesians 1:16-19*
- ✦ Although it can never be fully known, may you have the power to understand how broad and long, how high and deep, is Christ's love, so that you live a full life, completely filled with the very nature of God. *–Ephesians 3:18-19*
- ✦ May your love abound and overflow more and more with knowledge and depth of insight, so that you are able to discern what is best and make wise choices, enabling your life to produce a harvest of righteousness. *–Philippians 1:9-11*
- ✦ May you receive and experience the amazing grace of the Master, Jesus Christ, deep, deep within yourself, and may God fully satisfy every need of yours according to the riches of glory that pours from Jesus. *–Philippians 4:19, 23*
- ✦ May God give you a wise mind and soul attuned to Jesus' will so that you acquire a thorough understanding of the ways in which God works. And with all the wisdom and understanding that his Spirit gives, may your life produce all kinds of good deeds. May the glorious power of God make you strong enough to take part in everything bright and beautiful that God has for us, so that your life overflows with joy. *–Colossians 1:9-12*
- ✦ May you be infused with strength and purity, and may the Master pour on the love so it fills your life and spills over on everyone around you. *–1 Thessalonians 3:12-13*
- ✦ May the God who makes everything holy and whole put you together more fully and completely, so that you experience in spirit, soul, and body the deep peace of our coming Master, Jesus Christ. *–1 Thessalonians 5:23*
- ✦ May God make you fit for what you've been called to be—a fully alive and whole person! May God fulfill all your desires for goodness, and fill every act of faith with the power of the Spirit, so that the name of Jesus is glorified in you, and you in him.
–2 Thessalonians 1:11-12
- ✦ Now may the God of peace, who puts all things together, makes all things whole, work in you what is pleasing to God, and provide you with every good thing you need, so that you might experience and contribute to wholeness yourself. *–Hebrews 13:20*

- ✦ May you grow in grace and peace and understanding many times over as you deepen in your experience with God and Jesus, our Master and Saviour. –2 Peter 1:2, 3:18
- ✦ May God the Father and Jesus Christ, God's Son, together with the Spirit, give you grace, mercy, and peace in truth and love. –2 John 3

GRACE AFTER THE MEAL

Many faiths and cultures have a grace before meals; not quite as many have a grace after meals. The blessing after the meal is based on Deuteronomy 8:10, where God's people are given this command: "When you have eaten and are satisfied, bless."

End the time together by blessing God with these words:

**Blessed are You, O Lord our God, Merciful One,
who sustains us with bread.
We are blessed with compassion by you,
and your blessing flows through us.
Teach us to remember that it is not by bread alone that we live.
Grant us evermore to feed on Him who is the true bread from heaven,
even Jesus Christ our Lord.
Blessed are you, O Lord our God, Merciful One,
and look with favour upon the homes of your people.
Defend us against evil
and supply all our needs according to the riches of your wonderful grace.
Make us sanctuaries of peace, love, blessing and joy
for stranger and neighbour, friend and enemy.
Help us to follow you every step of our daily lives.
May we always abide under the safe shadows of your love,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.**

BENEDICTION ~ *Unto the Least of These*

When you visit a friend
And take hold of her hand,
And you show her a smile,
Ease the pain for awhile;
When a stranger walks by
And you look in his eyes,
See the Saviour is there
For a heart of despair;

When you do it unto the least of these,
You do it unto me;
You do it unto me;
You do it unto me.
When you do it unto the least of these,
You do it unto me;
You do it unto me;
You do it unto me.

When you give of your heart
To the ones set apart
In a moment of grief,
You can be their relief,
Bring a laugh, shed at a tear,
Knowing Jesus is near.
When you step out in faith
You are never too late.

—Steve Bell



RESOURCES

The liturgy is based on, adapted from, inspired by the following resources:

“Sabbath Meal: A FAMILY LITURGY TO WELCOME THE SABBATH” by Steve Berkenpas, Living Hope
Christian Reformed Church (Abbotsford, BC)
<http://livinghopecrc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Lent-2021-Sabbath-Meal.pdf>

Onetable Shabbat Dinner guide:
<https://onetable.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/ULTIMATE-SHABBAT-GUIDE.pdf>

