

(tranquil music) (orchestral music) (orchestral music) (piano playing) (congregation singing) (piano playing)
(choir singing) (piano playing)

Speaker 1: And we're gathered to praise God. We remember that we are the people of God who have referred our wills to the divine will. Accepting the power God offers us now to become new persons in Christ, let us confess our sin before God and one another. Let us pray together. (all) Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought word and deed. We have not loved you with our whole heart. We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We pray you of your mercy, forgive what we have been, amend what we are, direct what we shall be, that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen. (tranquil music) (choir singing) Hear the good news, Christ died for us while we were yet sinners. That is God's own proof of His love toward us. In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven. (congregation responding) Amen

Speaker 2: Listen now, for the word of God, as it is contained in the gospel, according to Saint Mark out of the 14th chapter. "As evening fell, He came with the 12 and as they lay back and ate Jesus said, "Amen I tell you that one of you will betray me, the one eating with me." They started grieving and saying to Him one by one: 'Surely not I.' He said to them, "One of the 12, him dipping with me in the common bowl. For the Son of Man is really going His way, as was written of Him. But woe to the man through whom the Son of Man is betrayed. Better for him if that man were not born. As they were eating, He took a loaf and blessing it, He broke and gave it to them and said, "Take this is my body." And taking a cup and giving thanks, He gave it to them, all drank of it. He said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant poured out for many. Amen I tell you never in any way will I drink of the fruit of the vine, till that day when I drink it new in the reign of God." After singing the hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives and Jesus said to them, "All of you will fall. Since it was written, I will strike down the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered. But after I'm raised, I'll go ahead of you to Galilee" Peter said to Him, "Even if everybody stumbles, not I" Jesus said to him, "Amen I tell you, you, today, tonight before the cock crows twice, you'll deny me three times." But he just kept saying, "If I must die with you, no way would I deny you" All said, "likewise too" They came to a piece of land whose name was Gethsemane. And He said to His disciples, "Sit here while I pray. He took Peter, James and John with Him and began to be deeply appalled and harrowed, so He said to them, "My soul is anguished to death, stay here and watch" Going on a little, He fell on the ground and prayed that if it were possible, the hour might turn away. And He said, "Abba, Father, everything is possible to you, take this cup from me, Still, not what I want, but you" He came and found them sleeping and said to Peter, "Simon, why are you sleeping? Couldn't you watch one hour? Watch and pray, so you don't come to testing" Oh, the spirit is ready, but the flesh is weak. Going off again He prayed saying the same words. Coming back He found them sleeping, since their eyes were growing heavy and they didn't know how to answer Him. He came the third time and said to them, "Sleep now and rest, it's over. The hour came. Look, the Son of Man is betrayed into sinner's hands. Get up, let's go. Look, the one who betrays me is nearing"

Speaker 3: Dear people of God, on this holy night, we remember Jesus' last night on this earth. And we come

to celebrate the Last Supper, Holy Communion, through which the divine mystery of God's love works in us in ways we cannot comprehend. Every time I read about Jesus in the garden on that night, before He was crucified, I identify with those disciples. Jesus wanted to spend that night with those who were dear to Him. He needed their support. He felt alone, deserted, and He asked that they stay awake with Him. Reynolds Price translation, which we just heard makes obvious and poignant, Jesus' sorrow and heaviness that His disciples could not stay awake and watch, but repeatedly went to sleep. He finally said, "Sleep now and rest, it is over" The response of Jesus' disciples is our response. We sleep, we promise more than we can give. We are not sensitive to those who are dear to us. To the need of our family, our neighbors, our roommates, our colleagues, much less to the need of the stranger who knocks at our door. Our spirits are willing, but our bodies are weak. We are too busy with matters of importance. And because we know who we are, because we can identify with the response of the disciples, we are drawn this night to come to this table. We come with hope and expectation and yearning. Many years ago, I talked with a minister, about the absence of any deep meaning for Holy Communion for me. The minister did not answer my quest, but offered me an opportunity to confess what great sin it must be that would be causing the tears, which were welling up in my eyes as I talked with him. What made sense to me, but was incomprehensible to that minister, is that those were tears which were welling up, out of the great yearning for depth, and meaning in my life and the potential for the depth and meaning was found and symbolized in the Holy Communion, with all of its mystery. Many of us come to this holy night with the same yearning, recalling our past communions and remembering this holy season. Our celebrations of the Christian year, our memories, our symbols and sacraments, our stories and our histories are crucial dimensions of our humanity and our Christian faith. For our lives need to be rooted in order for there to be a richness and depth of meaning in our present, And for there to be hope for a grace filled future. That is what we yearn for. And we cannot as Christians seek our meaning of our lives solely in the past, solely in the present, or solely in the future. Hans Küng in his book, "On Being a Christian", talks about the danger of a sort of memory, which ribands people to the past and dims their present and blocks their future. He describes it as spending time dusting paper flowers, when we could be cultivating real roses. But Kung sees the Christian faith as having the power of activating our memories, so that it becomes, they become a springboard, which enables us to take the unmet sleep, which frees us from being bound to a specific time or a specific place and enables us to live in the present, claiming our history and looking toward our grace filled future. Such a memory is not one where we dust paper flowers, but is a our liberating memory. On this holy night, we are seeking the liberating memory. We are the contemporary disciples of Christ who gather here as did the first disciples around the table to break bread and to drink wine, with Jesus Christ, our Lord. That last supper, that final meal, was like many of the meals Jesus had with His disciples. He always blessed the bread and broke it and gave a piece to every person present, and likewise with the cup. That was a part of His Jewish heritage, a custom many Jewish families participate in today. But there was a difference between all those other meals, all those other feast and this last supper. This difference was in what Jesus said as He blessed the bread and shared the wine on this particular night, which may have been on April the seventh, 30 AD. On this particular night, He said, "This my body soon to be broken, this my blood soon to be shed. Jesus was incorporating His disciples into His life and suffering. They were entering the new covenant, which had been promised them. He was binding them together, He was founding the church, even though they did not comprehend what was happening. We His contemporary disciples identify with those disciples of old. We know that we too are weak and fall away, we yearn for the depths of God's love and for meaning which the holy meal offered to the early church and to

our fore-parents. And so we are called on this night, as a community and as persons to share in His body, broken, to share and His blood, spilled, to have our covenant renewed again, to be reconstituted as the church. The invitation to come to this table is to all, to you who are anxious and burdened by too many demands and too much to do, By you who are lonely and bereaved, To you whose faith is weak and whose hope is dim, And to you whose life is joyous and whose life is full and rich. It is an invitation to bring to this table, your shattered dreams and your new hope, your broken lives and those tender new shoots of life, which are new beginnings. It is an invitation for you to join the company of God's people and gather around this holy table with the promise that God will be present in the breaking of the bread and the sharing of the wine. And we know that because we meet God, in the midst of our hurt and brokenness, as well as in our joy and exaltation. Because we meet God in the very ordinary things of this world, bread and wine, we can also meet God in our ordinary lives, when we leave this place and the places we find ourselves each day. We believe, we know that we will be sustained by God's love the same love which sustained Jesus during that last night, when He was deserted by all, even through His death. We have come on this holy night to remember Jesus' last night on earth and to participate again in this Last Supper, through which the divine mystery of God's love works in us in ways we accept and for which we give thanks, but which we can never fully comprehend. Dear people of God, what wondrous love is this, which is offered to us, in the name of God who creates us, and redeems us and sustains us, Amen.

Speaker 4: Would you join with me now as we offer a prayer for others. God in this moment we remember those who claim the name of Jesus Christ, who were a part of the Holy Church, Universal. We ask your blessing upon each one. We ask your blessing upon us all, oh God, may we ever be mindful of who we are, as well as whose we are. And may our allegiance to Christ determine the love which we receive and the love which we share. God, we pray now for those who lead the nations of this earth, surely in times of confusion and distrust, and envy and jealousy, in times when perhaps not even the leaders themselves know what they want, nor what is best for us all, we pray that your wisdom might guide their minds even though they may be unaware. Oh God we pray now for all peoples in need. For those who suffer from hunger and malnutrition, from loneliness and weariness, from sickness and hopelessness. For those oh God who need your healing hand to touch their lives. And oh, God help us, that we who do claim the name of Christ might not offer to you any prayer, which we are not willing to help fulfill. So may we now be mindful of those who are hungry, in prison, sick, lonely. Those who are oppressed, those oh God who need to be ministered unto. Bless, oh Lord, your peoples up on this earth, Amen. Christ our Lord invites to His table all who love Him and who desire to live in peace and in love with one another. May the peace of the Lord be with you always. (congregation responding) Now as forgiven and reconciled people, let us offer ourselves and our gifts to God. May I inform you that the offering, which we will receive tonight, will go for a very special purpose. Two years ago, on this night, we received a special offering for the postnatal clinic in the hospital, where children are born, who have parents, a parent or both parents who have no money to take care of them. And they're apparently at times are no funds to feed them while they're in the hospital and during the early days when they're at home. So tonight I would like to let you know that every penny of which you give, every penny of which we give, will go to the postnatal clinic in the Duke Medical Center, so that some newborn child, might have strength through the food which your money will have to buy. I don't tell you that to ring your hearts and ask you to pour out your pocket books, But to say that here in our own place, is an opportunity for us to care for those who need our love. So, let us now give in response to God's love. (orchestral music playing)

(energetic orchestral music) The Lord is with you. (congregation responding) Lift up your hearts.
(congregation responding) Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God. (congregation responding) Oh God, it is right that we should always and everywhere give you thanks and praise. We thank you Holy God that you loved the world so much, that you sent your only son to be our savior. We remember that on the night in which he gave Himself up for us, the Lord Jesus took bread, after giving you thanks He broke the bread, gave it to His disciples and said, "Take, eat. This is my body which is given for you" When the supper was over, He took the cup. Again, He returned thanks to you, gave the cup to His disciples and said, "Drink from this all of you. This is the cup of the new covenant in my blood poured out for you and many for the forgiveness of sins. When we eat this bread and drink this cup, we experience anew the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, and look forward to His coming in final victory. Help us, Oh God, to know in the breaking of this bread, the presence of Christ, who gave His body and blood for all people, even us. Make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in service to all people." (congregation responding) Because there is one loaf, we many as we are one body. For it is one loaf of which we all partake. When we break the bread, is it not a means of sharing in the body of Christ? When we give thanks over the cup, is it not a means of sharing in the blood of Christ? (whispering) (tranquil music playing) (whispering) (whispering) Jesus said, "I am the vine, you are the branches. By their fruits you shall know them. You shall know that they are my disciples, if they love one another" Dear friends in Christ, as God in Christ loves you, may you love one another Amen (tranquil music) (choir singing) (piano playing) (choir playing) Jesus said I have come that you might have life and have life abundantly. Dear friends in Christ, as our Lord has given to us the abundant life by giving us His all, will you receive now the love, which God offers to you in this moment, and will you go from this place to share that love, in the name and in the spirit of Christ, Amen. (choir singing) (tranquil music) For God so loved the world, that He gave His only son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. Dear friends in Christ, as you, as we all, have this night received the life of Christ, even His body and His blood. Will you go now in the peace of God, to share that love with others, Amen. Let us join together now in this responsive prayer of commitment. You have given yourself to us, oh Lord. (congregation responding) Your love has made us a new people. (congregation responding) Your glory has filled our hearts. (congregation responding) Amen. Will you stand please. With whatever word you feel appropriate to greet the person beside you or across the aisle from you, or when you get back to the dorm or wherever you're going, even someone there, I invite you now to offer a kiss of peace and it may indeed be that, or it may be simply a symbol of the kiss of peace. As we exchange with one another and with others, the love, which God has given to us. (orchestral music begins) (choir singing) Go out in peace to serve God and your neighbor in all that you do. (congregation responding) The blessings of almighty God, creator, redeemer, sustainer, is with you always. ♪ Amen ♪ ♪ Amen ♪ ♪ Amen ♪ ♪ Amen ♪ ♪ Amen ♪ ♪ Amen ♪ ♪ Amen ♪ (orchestral music)