

Maundy Thursday presentation
The Living Last Supper by Ruth Elaine Schram

Schedule for participants:

After reading the individual narrations, those interested should email David Lewis
dlewis@epworth-umc.org

Include your name, with phone and email, and stating the part you are interested in.

Individual reading tryout to select the final participants: after Church: February 4

First rehearsal (reading scripts): March 4, after the 11:00 am Service

Second rehearsal (memorized): March 18, after the 11:00 am Service

Rehearsal with the choir: Wednesday March 28 at 7:00 pm

Blocking rehearsal, with everyone in place, using mikes.

Maundy Thursday, March 29. Evening Service

Scripture reading: John 13: 1-17

Overture: *Processional*

The disciples enter the Sanctuary and take their places, talk among themselves

Choir: *How Great His Love*

Monologue: Simon Peter

My name is Simon Peter. One day, my partners and I were cleaning our nets after a long, hard night of fishing. We were tired and discouraged; we had nothing to show for our efforts. Jesus was preaching, as usual, to the many people who followed Him from here to there, listening to His every word. He asked if He could sit in my boat, (*gesture outward*) and I rowed Him out a little so His voice would carry. When He had finished teaching, He asked me to row out a little further and throw my nets in the water again. (*becoming agitated*) I told Him it was pointless; we had worked all night and caught nothing! But, I did as He asked. (*with awe*) And then, astonishingly – so many fish – the nets broke trying to pull them in. (*voice rising*) So many fish – we filled both of our ships until they began to sink under the weight of them!

(*bowing head*) I fell down on my knees before the Lord, feeling sinful and faithless in His Holy presence. Then He told me I would no longer catch fish, but men. I did not fully understand, but I left my boats, my fish, my livelihood – I left everything to follow Jesus, and I have never looked back.

(*looking around the table*) Tonight He tells us that one of these twelve men, His faithful disciples, will betray Him. (*loudly*) I vainly promised to follow Him even to death, but (*softly*) He looked right into my eyes and said that before the rooster crows, I will deny Him three times. Deny Him! Am I not the “rock” He called me to be? (*emotionally pained*) Could I lose my Lord, my friend, because I am not strong enough to be faithful? (*sit; to Jesus, quietly*) Is it I?

Monologue: Andrew

I've been known as "Peter's little brother, Andrew" since the day I was born. Years ago I left the fishing business to follow that fiery preacher, John the Baptizer. He was anointed by God to prepare the way for the long-awaited Messiah, (*look at Jesus*) and now I follow Him.

(*smiling*) I love to bring people to Jesus. I brought my brother to Jesus, (*look at Peter*) and have watched him grow and become a strong leader among us. (*distant; remembering*) I brought the little boy with the lunch of five loaves and two fish to Jesus. (*look to Jesus*) I have even brought Gentiles to meet the Master because He is open and loving to anyone who is searching for the truth.

(*sobering*) But Jesus has enemies in high places, enemies who would love to silence Him, or even see Him die. And He speaks of a betrayer in our midst. (*prayerfully*) Oh, please do not let it be me who brings sorrow to my Lord! (*sit; barely audible, to Jesus*) Jesus, is it I?

Monologue: James, the Lesser

(*a bit reserved*) I am James, the Lesser, known as such to describe my stature and to differentiate me from the many other men named James. Since joining Jesus' group of followers, I have seen the most miraculous things! Jesus has the power to calm the sea – even the wind and rain obey His voice. Jesus has the power over demons – He has cast out evil spirits and given us the power to do the same in His name. He has the power of healing – He has taken away diseases that people have suffered with for years, even (*in amazement*) from birth. (*with wonder*) Beyond this, He has the power to forgive sin.

(*looking at each of several men, studying their faces, end with back to Jesus*) And now one of these men at this dinner table, one who eats and drinks with Him, will betray Him. How could anyone doubt that He is the Lord, our Messiah, after walking and talking with Him, after seeing prophecies fulfilled, and miracle after miracle, proof after proof? He has called each of us to follow – (*turn to Jesus*) who could turn away? (*sit*) Is it I?

Choir: *Is It I?*

Monologue: James, the son of Zebedee

(with some arrogance) My name is James; *(gesture toward John)* John is my younger brother. We used to work with Peter and Andrew in the fishing industry. Jesus called us to follow Him on the same day that He called Peter, *(look toward Peter)* and we did, thinking that He would establish His kingdom on earth and that we would be His right-hand men.

Jesus calls John and me *(enjoying the title)* “the Sons of Thunder!” *(aside)* Actually, we are the sons of Zebedee, a rich and powerful man in this community who is a personal friend of some of the more influential religious leaders. At one time, I had hoped that this would assure me of a position in the new kingdom. In fact, my mother suggested I should sit at Jesus’ right hand when He claimed His throne, *(look at John)* and John at His left. *(with authority)* After all, it was we who were invited to the mountain with Jesus, and we saw Him transfigured. *(looking up)* His face shone like the sun, *(with wonder)* and the voice of God spoke out of heaven.

(looking out again) He chose me! He chose each of us. How could one of us betray Him? We have seen His perfect adherence to the law; we have heard the voice of God say, “this is My Son.” We have been present during countless miracles, healings – works no mere man could accomplish. *(gesture to John)* Could it be my brother, John? *(look around the table; sit)* Could it be me? *(to Jesus)* Is it I?

Monologue: Matthew

(with strength and self-assurance) I am Matthew, and before I became a disciple of Jesus, I worked for the Roman government collecting taxes. I used to take advantage of one of the “perks” of this profession – skimming a little off the top for personal use. Listening to Jesus, I have come to realize that I have committed a sin against my neighbors. *(in shame)* I took advantage of those people; I cheated them! I became wealthy by stealing their hard-earned wages and goods. I hoarded earthly treasures instead of seeking eternal ones. *(looking at Jesus lovingly)* My heart has changed because of Jesus – I even threw a huge feast at my home and invited others who worked in that corrupt organization to meet Him, *(hopeful)* and perhaps be changed as well. *(darkening)* But now that He speaks of a traitor among us, will the others suspect me, a known publican, a sinner? *(sit; to Jesus, contrite)* Lord, is it I?

Monologue: Simon, the Zealot

(intense) Before Jesus called me, I was a member of the zealots. We believe in God and that God alone rules over this holy nation of Israel, and we refused to pay homage *(pause, look suspiciously at Matthew)* or taxes to any Roman governor. *(sign)* It goes against allowing them to rule over us, and we must give our due and treat them with respect. Since following the Christ, I have tried to channel my zeal into telling others about Jesus, God's Son, and reaching out to people for His Kingdom.

Is there a spy among us? A Roman, perhaps? *(look at others)* How could any follower of Jesus question His power and authority? *(confidently)* He is God! He is our King! He is greater than any government! Could I somehow revert to my old ways – could I, Simon, betray my King? *(sit; to Jesus)* Is it I?

Choir; *King Triumphant*

Monologue: Bartholomew/Nathanael

(with conviction) I'm known as Bartholomew to some, Nathanael to others. I've been a diligent student of the scriptures and a disciple of John, the Baptizer. My friend Philip told me about this Jesus of Nazareth, saying He was the one about whom the prophets had written. At first, I was skeptical. Jesus – of Nazareth? *(with disgust)* Filthy, immoral place. Can anything good come out of Nazareth? *(with wonder)* But John said Jesus was "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world."

(slowly) Then I met this Jesus. *(with amazement)* He seemed to know me already, to know my innermost thoughts. Although I have always been a devout man, I realized Jesus was offering something more intimate, more personal than my religion ever offered before. For over a thousand years, we have been celebrating the Feast of Passover, *(point to bowl of saltwater)* remembering the bitter slavery in Egypt with the bitter herbs, *(gesture toward wine)* remembering the ten plagues with the ten drops from the goblet. Remembering how the blood of the sacrificed lamb caused the angel of death to pass over the Israelites and spare their firstborn. *(smiling)* Remembering how God set His people free. That wonderful story! How they fled with no time to cook leavened bread – they baked unleavened bread in the warmth of the sun. *(wondering)* Now Jesus breaks this unleavened bread and says, "This is my body." He shares the cup and says, "This is my blood. Do this in remembrance of me."

I don't understand. *(sit slowly; more quietly)* What could make me betray my Friend? *(to Jesus, honestly questioning)* Lord, is it I?

Monologue: Philip

My name is Philip. Jesus came to me one day when I was working and said simply, “Follow me.” I spent an entire day with Him, and I was convinced – (*excited*) this is truly the Promised One! It has taken some time for me to understand that this Man, this fulfilled promise, is actually...God, here, among us!

Recently, thousands of men and women, families, were sitting on the hillside, listening to Him teach. Jesus asked me where we could buy bread to feed them all. (*a little embarrassed*) At once, I thought only of the actual, physical cost of such a venture – why, our treasury does not hold such funds! I gave no thought to the people’s discomfort, or to the possibility of a divine miracle. But Jesus, oh! (*remembering with wonder*) Jesus took five tiny pieces of bread and two tiny fish, prayed over them, and broke them into pieces. He fed thousands, and we collected twelve baskets full of leftovers! (*amazed, looking at Jesus*) God, here, among us.

(*confused, looking at each man*) Who would deny the Promised One, this divine presence in our midst? And to whom would this person deliver Jesus – to the vain and arrogant priests who refuse to believe God has kept His promise, or to the pagan Roman government that fears a rival Ruler? Could any one of us forget His power, His compassion – could I forget? (*sit; to Jesus, humbled*) Is it I?

Monologue: Thaddaeus/Lebbaeus

(*awe-struck, looking at Jesus*) His hands. Carpenter hands. Rough, weathered hands...and yet so gentle and loving. His hands reached out and touched a leper, and the disease was erased from his body. His hands reached out and touched Peter’s mother-in-law, and her fever disappeared. His hands reached out and lifted Jairus’s daughter from her deathbed. His hands opened the ears of the deaf and the eyes of the blind and mended the bones of the lame. (*emphatically*) Countless infirmities, illness, deformities – gone.

(*gently; reaching out*) His hands reached out, blessing little children when others would have turned them aside. (*reaching down*) His hands reached down, rescuing Peter out of a churning sea that would have swallowed him. (*looking at Jesus; folding hands in front*) His hands, blessing and breaking bread, folding in prayer. Such simple gestures, and yet... (*open hands palm up and study them*) so profound. Those hands that have shown mercy and kindness, (*bowing head*) given love and healing; (*with wonder; gesture around table*) those hands that served me, Thaddaeus, and His other brothers, (*gesture upward*) and worshipped His Father: they are the hands of God in this very room.

(*looking around the room*) All of us have received blessing from His hands. All of us have seen the miracles those hands have performed. Who could betray Him into the hands of an enemy? (*looking at Jesus; quietly sit*) Will I, Thaddaeus, betray You? (*more softly*) Is it I?

Choir: *His Hands*

Monologue: John

I am John, the “beloved” disciple. (*humbly, with awe*) Beloved! Loved by Jesus! Loved by the One who was in the beginning with God. Loved by the One who is greater than all of us, and yet washes our feet, setting an example of humility and servitude.

You might think that because Jesus calls me His beloved disciple that I have reason to be proud. (*bowing head in humility*) Oh, how I have learned that the opposite is true. I once thought that I might hold a place of power and prestige in His Kingdom, but He has shown me over and over that the war He wages is a spiritual battle. He reaches out to the needy, paupers – He does not seek out the rich and powerful. He dines in the homes of sinners and common folk, not the elite. I have seen Him equally befriend a well-known Pharisee and an immoral woman, forgiving both. (*more emphatically*) God has sent His Son because He loved the world – (*softer*) the lowly – (*very softly*) me – so much. So much that He does not want any one of us to perish, but to have everlasting life. This Jesus, He is the way, the truth; (*slowly, emphasize each word*) He is Life.

(*looking around at others*) Even though we are His closest friends and followers, I don’t think we truly understand the depth of His love. I believe He would give His life for mine. How could I not do the same? (*tearfully*) Will my pride cause me to stumble – will I betray Him? Could I? (*sit; quietly to Jesus*) Is it I?

Possible: Communion

Choir: *You Are the Bread*

Monologue: Thomas

(*with a critical manner*) I have been listening to Jesus speak tonight around this table, and I simply do not understand. Words meant to comfort, but words met with confusion and misunderstanding. Talk of betrayal, met with incredulity and suspicion. (*frustrated*) Where is He going? (*emphatically*) There is so much yet to be done, right here, right now!

(*in awe and wonder*) Sometimes I marvel that I, Thomas, have seen Him with my own eyes! (*look at hands*) I have touched my Lord and Master with my own hands. (*look at Jesus*) I have watched Him perform wonders, change lives. (*confused*) I don’t want Him to go away, not now, not ever. And how can we follow Him if we don’t know where He is going? (*becoming more contrite*) Is there something I have done or will do that will contribute to this betrayal He speaks of? (*inward; clutching heart*) Has He seen my lack of faith, my hidden doubts, my fear? (*sit; to Jesus*) Is it I?

Monologue: Judas Iscariot

(emotionally charged throughout) I am Judas Iscariot, the treasurer for this group. I have followed Jesus, but I am growing tired of his reluctance to take a stand against our oppressors. I believe He is who He says He is, but why would God send a Messiah for this – *(with disgust)* to wash feet and serve bread? I have no need of a “spiritual” king! *(emphatically)* We need a political king, *(shake fists)* someone to rise up and overthrow these Roman tyrants! Thousands of people follow Him over mountainsides and across rivers to hear Him speak; surely He could put together an army in no time. Something must be done to force Him to make His move, to lead us to victory, to establish the New Kingdom!

(look at others with distaste) A betrayer among us, indeed. All these men look at one another suspiciously around the table, wondering, guessing, accusing. They look inwardly and ponder their own motivations, *(growing more frustrated)* but why do they sit here like sheep waiting for a shepherd? Someone must DO something! Well, I have.

Tonight the elders and chief priests will help me help Him usher in the promised Kingdom. History will thank me for this! *(quietly)* Oh yes, someone has betrayed Him. *(sit)* Perhaps all of us will do so before this night is over. *(to Jesus, with mock innocence)* Master, is it I? *(Judas picks up a small pouch jingling with coins, looks at Jesus a bit guiltily and exits.)*

Choir: *How Great His Love (Finale)*