

## Service from Central Hall, Westminster - January 17<sup>th</sup>.

During the periods of 'Lockdown', when physical Communion Services have not been possible, it has become the custom at MCHW to replace such services with live-streamed 'Love Feasts'.

To conclude the service on January 17<sup>th</sup>. (a 'catch-up' is available to share on-line at 'MCHWlive') the 'Love Feast' was presided over by the Rev. Richard Teal, Superintendent of the Driffield Hornsea Circuit and our current **President of Conference**.

He reminded us that the Wesley brothers had introduced the Love Feast in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century: *"To increase the network of Communities and a sense of call of God's mercies"*. Their 'services' included *"the sharing of bread and water and the sharing of Testimony"*.

Richard read us words of John Wesley – written in 1748:

*"I desire that we might together eat bread as the ancient Christians did with gladness and singleness of heart. At these Love Feasts our food is only a little plain cake and water, but we seldom return from them without being fed, not only with meat that perisheth; with that which endureth to everlasting life."*

Before eating or drinking he referred us to Charles Wesley's Love Feast Hymn – 646 in Singing the Faith. Some of this hymn was read to us – and there were extra verses!!

That, of course, started an investigation.

The earliest Methodist Hymn Book that I can access is a scanned copy of "Hymns for People called Methodist" published in the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

CW's hymn for the Love Feast consists of **16 eight line verses!**

(I believe I came across the statement somewhere that the original had 22 verses – unfortunately I can't find that statement again.)

In this 1829 hymn book it appears as four separate hymns (Part 1, Part 2 etc) each containing four of the verses.

These are printed on the next page with the parts "selected" for Singing the Faith (4 eight line verses) emboldened.

Richard started at verse 2 from Singing the Faith and the additional verses shared with us were verses 3 and 4 from Part Three of the 'original'.

The Wesleyan Methodist hymn book (1904) again prints all four parts as separate hymns (740-743), but omitting verse 3 from Part Two in Hymn 741.

Much more editing is evident in the 1933 hymn book. A four line stanza has been adopted for hymn 748 which has eight four line verses - Part One of the hymn we have already seen.

Hymn 713, from the Christian Fellowship section, reverts to the 8 line form and has four verses:

“Let us join.....” from Part Three, followed by

“While we walk.....”,

“Still, O Lord.....”,

“Hence may all our actions flow” – all from Part Four.

Hymn 756 in Hymns and Psalms retains the four line stanza and is divided into two parts, the first of 4 and the second of 8 verses.

There is a greater selectivity over the verses or 'halves' of verses that have been included.

**HYMN 519.**

**THE LOVE-FEAST. FIRST PART.**

**COME, and let us sweetly join,  
Christ to praise in hymns divine!  
Give we all, with one accord,  
Glory to our common Lord;  
Hands, and hearts, and voices  
raise;  
Sing as in the ancient days;  
Antedate the joys above ;  
Celebrate the feast of love.**

Strive we, in affection strive ;  
Let the purer flame revive,  
Such as in the martyrs glow'd,  
Dying champions for their God :  
We, like them, may live and love ;  
Called we are their joys to prove,  
Saved with them from future wrath,  
Partners of like precious faith.

Sing we then in Jesu's name,  
Now as yesterday the same  
One in every time and place,  
Full for all of truth and grace:  
We for Christ, our Master, stand,  
Lights in a benighted land :  
We our dying Lord confess  
We are Jesu's witnesses.

Witnesses that Christ hath died,  
We with him are crucified :  
Christ hath burst the bands of death;  
We his quickening Spirit breathe:  
Christ is now gone up on high;  
Thither all our wishes fly :  
Sits at God's right hand above;  
There with him we reign in love!

**HYMN 520. SECOND PART.**

**COME, thou high and lofty Lord!  
Lowly, meek, incarnate Word !  
Humbly stoop to earth again :  
Come and visit abject man!  
Jesus, dear expected guest.  
Thou art bidden to the feast;  
For thyself our hearts prepare:  
Come, and sit, and banquet there!**

Jesus, we thy promise claim:  
We are met in thy great name:  
In the midst do thou appear,  
Manifest thy presence here !  
**Sanctify us, Lord, and bless,  
Breathe thy Spirit, give thy peace:  
Thou thyself within us move:  
Make our feast a Feast of Love!**

Let the fruits of grace abound;  
Let us in thy bowels sound:  
Faith, and love, and joy increase,  
Temperance and gentleness:  
Plant in us thy humble mind;  
Patient, pitiful, and kind.  
Meek and lowly let us be.,  
Full of goodness, full of thee.

Make us all in thee complete;  
Make us all for glory meet.  
Meet to appear before thy sight,  
Partners with the saints in light.  
Call, O call us each, by name,  
To the marriage of the Lamb;  
Let us lean upon thy breast,  
Love be there our endless feast!

**HYMN 521. THIRD PART.**

**LET us join, ('tis God commands)  
Let us join our hearts and hands;  
Help to gain our calling's hope,  
Build we each the other up:  
God his blessings shall dispense,  
God shall crown his ordinance;  
Meet in his appointed ways;  
Nourish us with social grace.**

Let us then as brethren love,  
Faithfully his gifts improve,  
Carry on the earnest strife,  
Walk in holiness of life;  
Still forget the things behind,  
Follow Christ in heart and mind,  
Toward the mark unwearied press,  
Seize the crown of righteousness.

Plead we thus for faith alone,  
Faith which by our works is shown:  
God it is who justifies ;  
Only faith the grace applies;  
Active faith that lives within,  
Conquers earth, and hell, and sin,  
Sanctifies, and makes us whole,  
Forms the Saviour in the soul.

Let us for this faith contend,  
Sure salvation is its end:  
Heaven already is begun,  
Everlasting life is won.  
Only let us persevere,  
Till we see our Lord appear,  
Never from the Rock remove,  
Saved by faith, which works by love.

**HYMN 522. FOURTH PART.**

**PARTNERS of a glorious hope,  
Lift your hearts and voices up,  
Jointly let us rise, and sing  
Christ our Prophet, Priest, and King  
Monuments of Jesu's grace,  
Speak we by our lives his praise;  
Walk in him we have received,  
Show we not in vain believed.**

While we walk with God in light,  
God our hearts doth still unite;  
Dearest fellowship we prove,  
Fellowship in Jesu's love:  
Sweetly each, with each combined,  
In the bonds of duty joined,  
Feels the cleansing blood applied,  
Daily feels that Christ hath died.

Still, O Lord, our faith increase,  
Cleanse from all unrighteousness,  
Thee the' unholy cannot see;  
Make, O make us meet for thee!  
Every vile affection kill,  
Root out every seed of ill,  
Utterly abolish sin,  
Write thy law of love within.

**Hence may all our actions flow,  
Love the proof that Christ we  
know;  
Mutual love the token be,  
Lord, that we belong to thee:  
Love, thine image, love impart!  
Stamp it on our face and heart!  
Only love to us be given!  
Lord, we ask no other heaven.**

Returning to the celebration from MCHW:

Richard led us in a prayer, written by Charles Wesley, for the Love Feast.

*“Father of earth and heaven; Thy hungry children feed; Thy grace be to our spirits given; that true immortal bread. Grant us and all our race, in Jesus Christ to prove the sweetness of Thy pardoning grace, the manner of Thy love. Amen.”*

As we came to eat and to drink the following words of ‘administration’ were used:

*“And so we eat together and in so doing we are joined to Christ and to one another. Let us eat.*

*And as we drink we are joined to Christ and to one another.”*

The Love Feast concluded with a benediction.

[In my first searching for the early text of CW’s Love Feast Hymn I went ‘on-line’ and inevitably ended up on a number of American ‘hymnology’ sites. Some of these have references to United Methodist material. One site reproduced the text – again with 16 eight line verses **but** some ‘new’, others omitted. This version is given on the next page – the emboldened type shows again the four verses selected for Singing the Faith.]

**Come and let us sweetly join,  
Christ to praise in hymns divine;  
Give we all with one accord  
Glory to our common Lord.**  
Sing we then in Jesus' Name,  
Now as yesterday the same;  
One in every time and place,  
Full for all of truth and grace.

We for Christ, our Master, stand,  
Lights in a benighted land:  
We our dying Lord confess;  
We are Jesus' witnesses.  
Witnesses that Christ hath died,  
We with Him are crucified;  
Christ hath burst the bands of death,  
We His quickening Spirit breathe.

Strive we, in affection strive;  
Let the purer flame revive,  
Such as in the martyrs glowed,  
Dying champions for their God.  
Make us all in Thee complete,  
Make us all for glory meet,  
Meet to appear before Thy sight,  
Partners with the saints in light.

We, like them, may live and love;  
Called we are their joys to prove,  
Saved with them from future wrath,  
Partners of like precious faith.  
Let the fruits of grace abound;  
Let in us Thy vowels sound;  
Faith, and love, and joy increase,  
Temperance and gentleness.

Plant in us Thy humble mind;  
Patient, pitiful, and kind,  
Meek and lowly let us be,  
Full of goodness, full of Thee.  
Christ is now gone up on high,  
Where to Him our wishes fly;  
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Come, Thou high and lofty Lord!  
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Humbly stoop to earth again,  
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**Jesus, dear expected guest,  
Thou art bidden to the feast,  
For Thyself our hearts prepare,  
Come, and sit, and banquet there!**  
Jesus, we Thy promise claim,  
We are met in Thy great Name;  
In the midst do Thou appear,  
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**Sanctify us, Lord, and bless,  
Breathe Thy Spirit, give Thy peace,  
Thou Thyself within us move,  
Make our feast a feast of love.**  
Call, O call us each by name,  
To the marriage of the Lamb;  
Let us lean upon Thy breast,  
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**Let us join, ('tis God commands)  
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Faith which by our works is shown:  
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Never from the Rock remove,  
Saved by faith, which works by love.

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Christ our Prophet, Priest, and King.  
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