

## ----- Through The Years -----

Have you ever heard of a Love Feast? It is not a five star dining experience but rather a Christian fellowship meal that recalls the meals (not the Last Supper) that Jesus shared with His disciples. Its purpose was to express the sharing or fellowship enjoyed by the family of Christ. Love Feasts or Agape Meals, as they are sometimes referred to, are very old practices going back to Jewish and early Christian traditions.

John Wesley was introduced to the Love Feast during a meeting with the Moravians in Savannah, Georgia in 1737. The Moravians had begun this type of meal in Germany in 1727. The meal consists of bread, cake, crackers, or rolls along with a cup. The cup is usually water but it can be drinks such as coffee or tea. Giving for the poor was also part of the experience. Love Feasts are not to be confused with Holy Communion, which is a sacrament in the United Methodist Church. The Moravians usually sat in a circle and shared the items to be consumed. They remained quiet during the meal.

Wesley was deeply impressed by the Love Feast concept but decided that it should be a time of testimony, rather than quiet contemplation. He encouraged that Love Feasts be performed regularly. Indeed, during the early years of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States, Love Feasts were done by congregations during the long intervals when a circuit riding pastor was away. Unlike Communion, a Love Feast does not have to be administered by a member of the clergy. A leader is appointed and participants usually, but not always, sit in a circle or at a table. Wesley added hymns, prayers and scripture to the meal. Participating groups can range from a disciple group to the entire congregation. Love Feasts have also be known to be followed by a full dinner.

The Love Feast typically begins with a hymn followed by prayers. Scripture is then read which is followed by an address on those scriptures from one or several people. The bread is then passed. A collection for the poor is taken and testimonies are given. The cup is then circulated. A Love Feast cup is either two handled or three handled making it easier to pass. Individual cups can also be used as alternative vessels. Another hymn is sung and then a dismissal with blessing ends the meal. The use of Love Feasts greatly diminished over the years but are still preformed in some Methodist settings. While we don't do these meals much anymore, perhaps our famous United Methodist Potlucks are another example of showing our community and fellowship with Christ.

Do you have any MUMC history you would like to share with the congregation? Please send it to:

Don Humphrey  
7330 Holly Park Dr.  
Concord, Ohio 44060-6704

or e-mail to: [dhumphrey@ameritech.net](mailto:dhumphrey@ameritech.net)