Finding the Words:
Words for Worship

CBF LITURGY AND WORSHIP AIDS

SEASON OF LENT, MAUNDY THURSDAY, APRIL 2, 2026

Liturgical Color: red, purple, white, or gold

Lectionary readings:
Exodus 12:104, (5-10), 11-14
Psalm 116:1-2, 12-19
1 Corinthians 11:23-26
John 13:1-17, 31b-35
(John 13:4-5)

Opening quote: (for bulletin or screen)
"Love in action is service to the world."
– Lynne Namka

Call to Worship:
One [consider inviting a child or youth to lead the litany]: Jesus got up from supper and began to wash the disciples' feet.
All: Knowing that all things had been given into his hands, Jesus washed the disciples' feet.
One: Jesus got up from supper and began to wash the disciples' feet.
All: Knowing that actions speak louder than words, Jesus washed the disciples' feet.
One: Jesus got up from supper and began to wash the disciples' feet.
All: Knowing that his time with them was growing short, Jesus chose love for his mandate, and washed the disciples' feet.

Invocation:
Dear Jesus, deep in the mystery of Holy Week, where knowing and unknowing whirl and mingle, love us where we are, and never let us go.
Amen.

Invitation: [offered in explanation by a youth or a children's/youth minister]
During this season of Lent, the children and families of the church invite us all to journey together through a cumulative project here in [or near, to suit your situation] our sacred space. We will be "making room" for the Christ in our lives. During this service, we will ask everyone to join the young people in finding a colored paper and pen [give guidance on where on each row these supplies are located] and contemplate some single thing you'd wish to be free of during your journey to Easter, something you'd like to wash off your feet like dust…and write or sketch your idea on your paper. Near the end of our service we will collect these words in the basin here, and the children will add them to our faith family's Lenten "house" project. We are watching it take shape over these weeks of waiting for Easter, and are grateful that our church will be joining with us to create something special!

Call to Confession:
If Lent can be seen as a journey toward our heart's true home in Christ, confession and repentance can be seen as steps of reorienting on that journey, examining our steps, turning, continuing.
Family, God calls us to confession this day. How will we respond?

Prayer of Confession:

Loving God, we confess that we have sinned
In our thinking, our speaking, and our doing—
Both in acts we've committed and
acts we've withheld.
We have not loved anyone with our whole heart—
Not you, not our neighbor, not ourselves.
In your mercy, God,
Forgive us, set us back on the path, and draw us more fully into the life of love you dream for us.

Assurance of Pardon:

Family of faith, hear the good news and believe—in the love of God, demonstrated for us in the person of Jesus the Christ, you live forgiven and free!

[suggested placement of John 13:1-17]

Memorialization of Foot Washing:/Basin and Towel:

Option 1)
In the same way that Jesus demonstrated his love for his disciples by serving them, we can serve one another by washing each other's feet. Basins and towels are available _____ for you to use as you offer this holy service to each other, in remembrance of Jesus' service. As you come forward, bring your colored slip of paper with the thing you'd like to wash off your feet like dust, and place it in the empty basin nearby.

Option 2)
We remember Jesus' selfless service to his friends on this night by marking the feel of cool water and rough towel in our own hands. A filled basin and towel are _____ for you to touch as you recall this holy service in your own meditation. As you come forward, bring your colored slip of paper with the thing you'd like to wash off your feet like dust, and place it in the empty basin nearby.
[if your congregation is new to the basin memory as part of Maundy Thursday, make certain that ministers and worship leaders act as confident models for whichever option is chosen…others will follow (hopefully!).]

[suggested placement of 1 Corinthians 11:23-26]

Celebration of Lord's Supper:

[Celebrate communion in the way most familiar to your congregation; or, if this service has drawn a smaller or different group than typical, it may be a good time to celebrate by intinction or in small groups.]

[suggested placement of John 13:31b-35]

Receiving Love's Mandate:

After assuming a lowly position of service and washing his disciples' feet, after serving his friends a memorial meal as gracious host, after offering his own life as humble example—Jesus gave his followers, there in the room and down through the ages, a command…a mandate. "Love one another." Like all great teachers, he repeated himself. Like the best teachers, he had already demonstrated love in action, offering a ready illustration for the mandate. Not much longer into the evening, and the disciples would be called on to demonstrate their love for Jesus as he prayed in the Garden…

Benediction:
Here in this deep mystery of Holy Week, in the space where knowing and unknowing whirl and mingle, know that you were created for love. Amen.

Hymn suggestions:
They'll Know We Are Christians—text P. Scholtes, ST. BRENDAN'S, 1991, The Lorenz Corp.
Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love—text T. Colvin, CHEREPONI, 1969, Hope Publishing Co.
O the Deep, Deep Love of Jesus!—text S. T. Francis, EBENEZER
Let Us Break Bread Together—text African American Spiritual, LET US BREAK BREAD
Eat This Bread—text Communauté de Taize, EAT THIS BREAD, ONE LICENSE: 00891

Art suggestions:
Footwashing, window in Christ Church, Korntal Germany
https://diglib.library.vanderbilt.edu/act-imagelink.pl?RC=55035

"Making Room" sanctuary devotional project:
Each worship service will provide an opportunity for the children to lead the way in the creation of a Lent-long all-church project of contemplation and devotion in the form of an art project located somewhere in or near the sanctuary. Children may participate during their children's period, and help with collecting the adults' contributions later in the service.

The project will begin with the outline of a house (or for those ambitious and crafty, a framehouse!), and each service an addition will be made to the house. The objective is not a work of polished art, but an act of communal contemplation.

This art project will coordinate with the CBF children's and family Lenten devotional series, "Making Room at Home for Jesus", which can be accessed at ***www.cbf.net/lent*** in both English and Spanish. Our hope is that children's ties to worship will be strengthened as they participate and lead meaningfully in the Lenten journey at home and at church.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Leigh Anne Armstrong is a chaplain, liturgist and songwriter and a longtime member of Auburn (AL) First Baptist Church.