

## World Communion

**Preparation:** *The communion table should have significantly more food than usual. The bread might be cut into large pieces. (Could also use crackers, pieces of pita bread, small rolls, etc.) In addition, have other foods like grapes and apples. Add goldfish crackers and you have "loaves and fishes." Small paper plates and napkins should also be on the table. The cup will come at a separate point in the service, so it would be difficult to have it by intinction (unless you serve the bread twice!). Trays with the small individual cups work best.*

**Worship Order:** *The service follows an unusual order of worship. Because the second meditation challenges us, it is followed by the confession that would usually come at the start. But it is not necessary to follow everything as it is here. The only thing that is essential to the character of this service is the split sermon and communion.*

### Opening song

#### Call to Worship

*from Isaiah 25:6, 55:1-3*

One: All around the world,

**All: People rise to greet the morning and sing praise to the Creator.**

One: All over the earth,

**All: People hold hands around a table and offer thanks.**

One: All around the globe,

**All: Some cry for food, some are filled with laughter, all search for truth.**

One: The LORD Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples,

**All: A banquet of aged wine - the best of meats and the finest of wines.**

One: Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters.

**All: You who have no money, come, buy and eat!**

One: Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost.

**All: Why spend our money on what is not bread,  
and our labor on what does not satisfy?**

One: Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good,

**All: and our souls will delight in the richest of fare.**

### Song

#### Scripture Readings: *(with introductions)*

*We know from the Bible that Jesus got invited to a fair share of banquets, often using them as an opportunity to teach about that heavenly banquet where people would "feast on the abundance of [God's] house and be given "drink from [God's] river of delights." In Luke 14, Jesus is at one of those dinners, teaching during the meal as usual. Another dinner guest responds to one lesson by saying "Blessed is anyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!" We pick up the story at verse 16:*

#### **Read Luke 14: 16-23**

*The image of God's feast was not new. Psalm 36 also speaks of God's invitation to all people, high and low. Verses 7-10:*

#### **Read Psalm 36:7-10**

### Children's message (loaves & fish)

### Anthem

### First Meditation: The Joyful Feast

God must know how much we love our food, because when the Lord wants us to understand divine goodness and abundance, God uses the image of a banquet, rich in generosity, overflowing with abundance.

This goes way beyond meeting our basic needs. A banquet makes it clear that God wants us to be full and rich and satisfied in life. It teaches us that God's love is freely and abundantly given; and shows the foolishness of those who don't make it a priority to come and be fed. God insists that *this* banquet is open to all who would come to the feast and makes it clear every seat should be filled.

This is an image we can understand. Who doesn't like to eat? Presbyterian churches tend to be rightly proud of their covered-dish dinners, where serving tables and dinner plates overflow with abundance, leaving people content and well-satisfied, even overstuffed, with *good* food.

We're living up to a biblical precedence, you know. Have you ever been to a Passover meal? That's what Jesus' last supper probably was. The Seder is a feast, table piled high with food rich in both taste and meaning. *That's* the meal we're remembering when we come to the Lord's Table.

When the early church gathered to celebrate the Lord's Supper, it was usually at suppertime (because of their 7-day work week), and it looked a *lot* like a covered dish meal. They'd bring their food, then eat together, pray together, and worship together.

Acts 2:42 describes the believers as "devot[ing] themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers." They weren't just breaking a symbolic loaf, as we do today. They were having a *meal*.

So when and how did the "joyful *feast* of the people of God" get reduced to a small bite of bread and a tiny cup of juice? It's still a meal like no other, but it's nothing like the last supper Jesus had. It's not what the early church did. And it doesn't represent well the feast of rich food the Lord Almighty has in mind, the one with the best of meats and the finest of wines.

If there was ever a day when we needed a bigger, more abundant table, it would be World Communion Sunday. Today, of all days, the Lord's Table *has* to be big enough to allow room for so many *different* people: different languages, different cultures, different foods, different traditions; *different* ways of worshipping and fellowshiping and praying and breaking bread.

The Lord's Table has to have sufficient abundance to meet all the *many* different needs of all the people who come to it: needs of body and health, of mind and spirit, of heart and faith; needs for mercy and forgiveness and love and grace, need for an end to violence and poverty, need for more peace and equality and justice for *all* God's children, worldwide.

In light of that, *this* World Communion Sunday we're preparing the Lord's Table a little differently. We're not offering the best of meats or finest of wines, or even the heartiness of a covered dish meal. It's still only a *symbolic* feast.

But it's a lot more than our usual Chicklet-gum-sized piece of bread; and we'll have our cup a little later, as Jesus did – after our "supper." As we set the table, you'll see elders bring in cheese and grapes and apples as well as bread, even goldfish crackers – in honor of the loaves and fishes!

When you come to the table, you'll be given a plate and invited to help yourself.

Please do! Remember and enjoy this day the *abundance* of the feast God has prepared! And as you do, think of *all* the good things God has provided for you, *all* the blessings the Lord desires to bestow on *every* one who calls on his name. Think of the *size* of *God's* worldwide table!

Come! Eat of *all* that is good, and let your soul delight in the richest of fare.

*Note: Other scriptures referred to in the sermon:*

*Isaiah 51:1-12; Isaiah 26:6-9; Acts 2:42; 2 Corinthians 5:18-20*

## Song

### Share the Feast

#### Invitation:

*The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it; the world, and all who live in it. Friends, this is the joyful feast of the people of God! They come from all over the world: from east and west, and from north and south. Together they sit at this, the Lord's table, to feast at a banquet like no other. Someday, we will all sit together at this table in the kingdom of God.*

**Great Thanksgiving:**

We give you thanks, O God, for you have made us in your image – female and male, black, brown, red, and white. You created us and taught us to love you and our neighbors, and even ourselves. You set us in this world to love and to serve you, calling us to live in covenant relationship with you and in peace with your whole creation.

We have failed to do so, but you have not rejected us, but continue to call us back to your way. In Jesus Christ you showed us your love for all, especially those among us often rejected by others: criminals, prostitutes, addicts, abusers; the poor, immigrants, those suffering from illness or deemed unclean or impure by society. Today we join our voice with theirs, and with all people and creatures in heaven and on earth, as we glorify your name and lift our voices in joyful praise:

*Sing: Santo, Santo, Santo, mi corazón te adora! Mi corazón te sabe decir: santo eres Señor.  
Holy, holy, holy, my heart, my heart adores you! My heart pours out my praise to you;  
you are holy, Lord.*

Truly you deserve our love, O God, and so does your Son, Jesus, our Lord. He proclaimed the good news of the reign of God and showed us the way to a new community, one in which the last would be first, justice would be realized, resources would be shared in common; where those hungry for food would be fed, and those thirsty for God would be filled. Yet we rebelled against Jesus' message of compassion and justice, and he was crucified because we feared such love.

But God's love and life is stronger than human fear or death. Jesus rose from the grave. We joyfully celebrate his life and place our hope and assurance in his resurrection as we wait for the day that he is fully present with us and in us, and the world is at peace.

Gracious God, we give you thanks for giving us your Son and for pouring out your Holy Spirit upon us. By your Spirit we are able to become one with you and with one another. Feed us at this table, that we might hear your call to feed others. Fill us with compassion and move us to action, that your reign might be over the earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

**Words of Institution:** 1 Cor. 11:23-24

**Breaking of the Bread**

The feast of God for the people of God. Come and be fed! *Share the feast!*

*(Instructions should be written in the bulletin such as "Please come to the table in the front on your side, accept a plate, take abundantly of the "feast" and return to your seat to eat of it as our worship continues.")*

**Scripture Readings:** (with introductions)

*Psalm 63 describes our thirst for this feast God offers. It's a Psalm of David, when he was in the Wilderness of Judah:*

**Read Psalm 63**

*But when we come to the Lord's Table, our manners aren't always what they should be. That's clear from the 11<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Corinthians. You'll recognize verses 23-26, but we don't always remember the context you'll hear today, beginning with verse 17.*

**Read 1 Cor. 11:17-34****Second Meditation: Table Manners**

Christians don't always have good table manners, even when we're sitting at the Lord's Table. *That unfortunate tradition also goes back to the earliest days of the church. Gathering together to eat, and breaking the bread as part of the meal, lost some of its sacramental quality when people got drunk. The sense of Christian love and fellowship was diminished when some went ahead and gobbled down their food while others went hungry. That's just not what the feast of God was supposed to be about.*

Maybe we think we don't have any of the problems they had in Corinth, because nobody can get drunk when we serve juice instead of wine, and usually we all eat the same small quantities of the same food at the same time.

But maybe *our* problem is that we're forgetting how big this table is and who all is sitting at it with us. Maybe we're forgetting other people *God* wants to have sitting beside us. Could be we lose sight of how desperately the Lord wants them to be fed, too. Where are our manners?

Scripture comes alive when we allow a challenge of the past to confront us today. So... as we remember our brothers and sisters sitting around the Worldwide table, do we stop to think how many of them come hungry? For some, that bit of bread and juice may be their only food for the day.

Do we get so caught up in our own needs here and now that we serve ourselves first, and fail to notice those at the end of the line in other parts of the world who are left wanting? Maybe not at the communion table; maybe it's through our trade policies and immigration laws, but do you think God sees a huge difference?

And who's not at this table at all? Not that we've shooed people away, but are there some we've never fully welcomed, never even invited?

What can we do to let the hungry people we serve at the community kitchen *know* that they are *welcome* to feast *with* us at *this* table?

When will World Communion move beyond representing nations with flags and linens and different types of bread, and start having some people of the world here at *our table*?

We have "people of the world" who live in our neighborhoods, go to our schools. So when and how will we learn how to welcome them here to this church?

When and how will we learn how to truly be ambassadors for Christ? That's in Paul's *second* letter to the Corinthians, when they learn that God's entrusted them with a divine ministry of reconciliation. Now it's been entrusted to *us*.

What would Paul write to *us*, I wonder? How are *our* table manners?

I don't have an answer for that, but this much I know: This is the *Lord's* table. This is *God's* feast. And **we** are the servants who are charged with going out into the streets and lanes of the town and bringing in the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame, compelling people to come in, so that the table of the Lord may be filled.

We have a ways to go before we can say we've done that. Amen.

## Confession

### Call to confession:

When Isaiah invited people to God's feast, he also said: "Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake their way and the unrighteous their thoughts; let them return to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon."

Let us confess our sins, first in a unison prayer, then in the silence of our hearts.

### Unison prayer

**Gracious and generous God, we have to admit that sometimes our manners at your Table aren't what they ought to be. And when we forget all the different people you have invited, or we don't remember your promise of abundance, we make your Table smaller than it is.**

**Forgive us, Lord. Enlarge our vision of your Table and our appetite for your feast, we humbly pray. Open our eyes to see *all* your children. Open our mouths to invite them, our arms to greet them, and our hearts to welcome them in. We ask this in Jesus' name, and in remembrance of Him.**

### Assurance of Pardon

All of God's people have been made into One Body, with Jesus Christ as the head. In him, *all* of us are forgiven.

**Thanks be to God.**

## Passing the Peace

## Share joys & concerns

## Prayers of the People

## Song

## Share the Cup

### Pouring of the Cup

1 Cor. 11:25-26

### Celebrating the new covenant

Psalm 116:12-13

Psalm 116 asks: "What shall I return to the Lord for all his bounty to me?" The writer answers his own question: "I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord." This *is* the cup of salvation. Let *us* call on the name of our Lord and lift up this cup in remembrance of him, as we are united with one another and with God in the new covenant in Christ's blood.

*(The cup was passed and held until we drank of it together)*

### Prayer after Communion

Loving God, thank you for the nourishment we have received at your table. May your new covenant strengthen us in heart and mind, that we might accept the challenge of welcoming *all* who share in this meal, whoever they are, whatever their circumstances, whether they live here or on the other side of the world. May we live as though the earth *is* yours, O Lord, and remember that all the people who live in it are your children.

By your Spirit, may the life-giving power of this meal flow from you to us, and from us to others, that we might share your feast, and the work we do in your name for justice, unity, and peace may help all who are hungry for food and thirsty for God to be fed, body and soul.

We ask your special blessing upon our friends and families, on this church, on all who are on our prayer list, and on all we have raised before you this day aloud and in our hearts – all the needs, all the joys. Bind us together with one another and with you in one family of love. Prepare this family of faith to welcome a new pastor, and prepare her to be a shepherd to this your flock. Give to all eyes to see and will to follow where you would lead, and make all your children one in Christ, for we ask it in his name as we pray as he taught us, saying:

*The Lord's Prayer*

## Offering

## Song

## Benediction

### Possible hymns include:

In *Glory to God* hymnal

37 ..... *Let All Things Now Living*

301 ... ..... *Let Us Build a House*

317, 318 ..... *In Christ There Is No East or West*

410 .. ..... *Gather Us In*

510 ... ..... *We Gather Here in Jesus' Name*

511 ... ..... *Come, Behold! the Feast of Heaven*

769 .. ..... *For Everyone Born*

On PIN website (Worship / Hymns & Songs / Other Hymns & Songs)

*Gather Nations, Gather Peoples*

*Come to the Water*

*This service was conceived by the Rev. Laurel Underwood. The communion liturgy is adapted from the Book of Common Worship. Everything else was written by Rev. Underwood. You may use or adapt this service in part or in whole as long as acknowledgment of authorship is given.*