

**A Liturgy of Communion for World Communion Sunday During the Pandemic: Live Streamed on October 4, 2020, at ~ 12:30 from New Maryland United Church, with Rev. Dr. Kelly Burke**

Welcome everyone.

Welcome to this day known as World Communion Sunday.

It is a day where Christians around the world remember our connection to Jesus and to one another, and as a sign of that unity we break bread together and lift the cup. A simple meal, known as Holy communion, or Eucharist (which means Thanksgiving), or the Lord's Supper, or, as my late Theology professor Ted Jennings used to call it: Eating and Drinking with Jesus.

Now communion was, as we understand it, first instituted in an Upper Room in Jerusalem, on a holy night of Passover, by Jesus as he gathered at a table and shared one last meal with his beloved friends. Jesus' words and his actions that were part of this Upper Room story happened at the end of a full feast.

Maybe this meal now is happening after your "feast."

Or perhaps it will begin a longer table time.

Maybe it is set apart, just on its own.

It matters not.

Communion has taken many different forms, as it developed over the centuries. Some churches celebrate it weekly. Others 4 times a year...or somewhere in between. And now, sometimes, it happens over the internet. It looks a little different depending where – and *when* - you are having the meal.

The notion of recognizing that we do this meal all around the world, and to set aside a day to honour that began in 1933 at Shadyside Presbyterian Church in Pittsburgh, PA, The concept spread very slowly at the start. People did not give it a whole lot of thought. But apparently it was during the Second World War that the spirit really caught hold. Rev. Dr. Kerr who first conceived of the notion, believed it was because people were trying to "hold the world together. A world wide Communion symbolized the effort to hold things together, in a spiritual sense, while war raged on around the globe. It emphasized that despite so much evidence to the contrary, we were one in the Spirit, one in the love of God."

Sometimes in New Maryland, in honour of World Communion Sunday, you have brought in fabrics from around the world and we have dressed the table with them. We have uplifted the music from partners in New Guinea or Africa, letting our tongues twist around some new words and rhythms.

Sometimes folks have baked breads from their own tradition, or their place of origin and we have had a table laden with chapatas and brown bread and bannock; a loaf sweet with coconut, and simple rice wafers.

One World Communion Sunday I had brought in a huge map and folks came and told us where in the world they were from, and put a sticky note, in the shape of a heart, on that spot of the map. Other folks told us of where their friend was living in a far flung corner of the world, or where their son was off teaching, and we stuck a heart there too. And later we had our mealtime with Jesus and one another and with all those hearts dotted all over the map.

Do you have something ready now? A little something to break?... a little something to drink?....

If not just put me on pause and go ahead and dig something out.

I'll be here when you get back.

### **The Invitation:**

So, welcome to this table.

And as I invite you to this table,

I recognize that you are inviting me to yours:

Your kitchen table?

A bedside table?

A TV tray in your living room?

A coffee table in the den?

A spot quickly cleared off on the table in the family room?

No matter, for they are all holy.

Because it is Jesus who welcomes us to all of them, saying

Blessed be this table and all tables,

As we share in this meal together – with one another and the world!

### **THE GREAT THANKSGIVING**

We give you thanks, God of the ages; and God of *this* particular time and place.

God of the neighbourhood, of Nasonworth and New Maryland and the Gornish; of Hanwell and Fredericton; God of Tuktoyukuk and Paris and Little Heart's Ease;

God of community gathered close, and community scattered.

Pour out your Spirit upon us, O God, as we eat and drink and remember, for this is how we proclaim the mystery of our faith:

That God was born of Mary, in troubling times.

And so filled with the Holy Spirit was Jesus  
that in him people experienced the presence of God among them.  
He crossed barriers of race, class, culture, and gender.  
He preached and practised unconditional love—  
love of God, love of neighbour,  
love of friend, love of enemy—  
and he commanded his followers to love one another  
as he had loved them.  
Because his witness to love was threatening,  
He was crucified.  
But death was not the last word.  
God raised Jesus from death,  
turning sorrow into joy,  
despair into hope.

Here at the table we are gathered and held in your love, O God.  
For this is the Table of Jesus- who lived a life of radical hospitality. He  
shows us still, even in the midst of pandemic, that life is a holy gift, and  
meant to be shared. And so, in these days of isolation all around the world,  
we tell one another the story, so we remember what it is to gather together at  
table:

It was on the same night in which he would be betrayed. And Jesus gathered  
with his beloved friends in an Upper Room. And there he took the bread,  
and he blessed it, and broke it, and gave it to his friends, saying:

**[Words around the Bread/cracker/chip, etc.]**

This is my body.

**The body that knows what it is to long for embrace, though needing to  
refrain.**

The body that knows what it is like to be afraid,  
**that knows what it is like to be loved out of its fear.**

The body that knows what it is like to be alone and in pain and no one to  
visit.

**The body that knows what it is like to labour without enough  
protection.**

This is the body that knows life in all its sorrow and joy, its emptiness and  
fullness.

**This is the body of Christ.**

Take, break, and eat....

[eat]

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**[Words around the Juice/Water/Tea, etc.]**

And after supper Jesus took the cup of wine, and he gave it to his friends saying: *This is my life's blood, the new covenant poured out for all, and all for love's sake. Whenever you drink this, this do in remembrance of me.*

This is the cup of his life...

**The cup that Jesus lifted and shared;**

And the cup he had to drink alone;

**The cup that was poured out on the streets and hillsides; and night time gardens.**

Poured out like fragrant oil, and tears and scattered palms,

Poured out for the faithful and the feckless, for you and for me.

**This is the cup of his life poured out for us all in love.**

Taste and see that God is good.

[drink]

**PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION (unison):**

**We give thanks that bread broken brings wholeness;**

**that wine poured out replenishes;**

**that time spent with the Risen Christ and one another – even when we gather electronically - is both gift and grace.**

**Amen!**

**The Benediction**