

WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY, OCTOBER 3, 2021

Pacific Presbyterian Church and First Presbyterian Church of Union, Missouri

WORLD COMMUNION SUNDAY

GATHERING

PRELUDE

CALL TO WORSHIP

One: We gather from the west to the east,
from the south to the north,
to celebrate the God of peace
who accompanies us in our acts of peace.
**All: This God of peace accompanies us
in each and every circumstance around us.**
Unison: **We praise God's name! Amen!**

***OPENING HYMN "This Is My Song" GtG 340**

One: This is my song, O God of all the nations,
All: a song of peace for lands afar and mine.
One: This is my home, the country where my heart is;
here are my hopes, my dreams, my holy shrine;
**All: but other hearts in other lands are beating
with hopes and dreams as true and high as mine.**

One: My country's skies are bluer than the ocean,
and sunlight beams on cloverleaf and pine.
**All: But other lands have sunlight too, and clover,
and skies are everywhere as blue as mine.**

One: So hear my song, O God of all the nations,
All: a song of peace for their land and for mine.

One: This is my prayer, O Lord of all earth's kingdoms:
All: thy kingdom come; on earth thy will be done.
One: Let Christ be lifted up till all shall serve him,
All: and hearts united learn to live as one.
One: So hear my prayer, O God of all the nations:
All: myself I give thee; let thy will be done.

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***UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

Gracious Lord, creator of this universe,
in your generosity you have given us
a world of abundance and diversity,
yet we live guided by greed and selfishness.
We confess that we have defaced your creation
and poisoned our environment
through our consumerist behavior and for personal gain.
In Christ, you made us brothers and sisters
and intended for us to be united,
and yet we have built walls to separate us
from those who are different from us.
You gave us wisdom and creativity
and we have used those to trick each other
and to develop weapons of destruction and death.
You gave us laws to order our lives
and we have abused them
to take revenge and punish our enemies.
We love war rather than strive for peace.
We ignore the poor and the weak
and honor the rich and powerful.
In all this we have not lived according to your will.
Forgive us, Lord, for daring to boast in our human achievements
and for failing to recognize that you alone are worthy of praise.
In your relentless mercy,
forgive us,
free us from fear
and make us conduits for your reconciling love. Amen.

***SILENT CONFESSION**

***ASSURANCE OF PARDON** *(based on Romans 8)*

One: God refuses to give up on us. God restores us. God sent the only Son to save us.

All: **There is nothing that can separate us from the love of God through Christ Jesus our Lord.**

One: Friends, believe the good news, through Jesus Christ we are forgiven!

All: **Thanks be to God!**

***THE PEACE**

One: The peace of Christ be with you.

All: **And also with you.**

(From your seat, a brief sign of peace may be shared: a wave of the hand, a nod of the head, etc.)

THE WORD

SCRIPTURE READINGS Luke 13:29
I Corinthians 10:16-17

LUKE 13:29 (New Revised Standard Version+)

²⁹ Then people will come from east and west, from north and south, and sit at table in the kingdom of God.

I CORINTHIANS 10:16-17 (New Revised Standard Version)

¹⁶ The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ? ¹⁷ Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SERMON “(Big) Table Stories” by Pastor Bill Vincent

The Table [--communion table--] is big.

Many of you know we moved into our new home within the past week or so, including moving a lot of our stuff out of storage, including our dinner table.

When the movers had come to Kansas to help us move to Missouri, they had taken our dinner table completely apart: it was easier to move that way.

So here we were, in our new home, with our dinner table, in pieces, on the floor: the top here, what looked like legs there, some braces over here, and a lot of screws...and no instructions!

Our friend Richard was willing to help us put it together. It was like this big puzzle, an adventure, it was fun (and sometimes frustrating).

And yes, I'm happy to report, we did get it put together.

What I discovered was that working together with Richard nurtured our relationship, it brought us together.

Service. And this big Table [--communion table--].

And though I would not want to suggest that *we* actually build this Table, I do believe there are things we can do to nurture this Table, and the relationships around it.

And service is one of them.

Service for each other. Service for others who may not be at the Table or may not think they belong at the Table or may never have even heard of the Table.

And not simply service for others, but especially service *with* others.

The past century has seen a shift in the church's understanding of mission and service, where mission is understood less to be doing something *for* someone else, and more to doing something *with* someone else: working together, in partnership.

Service for others. Service with others.
All of that as part of our service to the Lord of this table.
You see, there are things we can do to nurture this Table.
And service is one of them.

Respect is another.
For remember: the Table is big.
And there are many different people at the Table, and many different kinds of people at the Table. Some we like. Some we don't.
Like the neighbor that rubs you the wrong way, from which you'd just as soon keep your distance.
But when we come to the Table, we're brought together, closer together, and that's not maintaining your distance.
So respect is needed. And that includes giving someone the benefit of the doubt.

Working at another church in another presbytery, I would get together with a group of pastor friends once a month. I lived between one colleague and where our group would gather. So this colleague, Susan, would often pick me up and we would drive together to our meeting, having nice conversations along the way.

As we're driving down the interstate once, some driver did something crazy and I made some snide comment about it. But Susan had a different take. You see Susan tries to think the best of others, trying to give them the benefit of the doubt, trying to imagine a scenario that is sympathetic to them. That's a gift, a talent: one we could all nurture within ourselves, including me.

So I'm driving down Highway 100 yesterday. It's raining, and I come upon a car that's obviously not as comfortable driving up to speed as I am. So I pull into the left hand lane to pass. As I'm passing, this truck comes up behind me – fast – and blinks its lights: it obviously wants to pass me. Well, I'm passing another car here! Give me a break!

So, I continue passing the car, and before I can pull over, the truck blinks its lights again. It really wants to get by.

I pass the car, pull over into the right hand lane, and the truck zips past me...and we both get stopped at the next traffic light.

Well, the truck has pulled over into the right hand turn lane, as if it's going to turn right. But as soon as the light turns green, it quickly pulls out in front of everyone else and goes straight!

I mean, come on!

Then I thought of Susan. What would she think? And I began to imagine different scenarios. Maybe the driver's spouse is pregnant and gone into labor, and he's trying to get home to drive her to the hospital. Maybe he just got a call that his best friend is dying and taking his last breaths, and he wants to get there to say goodbye. Maybe he has a legitimate reason to be in a hurry.

Now, let me be clear: I'm not trying to excuse poor (or even dangerous) behavior.
But I am trying to see things from a different perspective, trying to understand another.

(You know, it's real aggravating to be working on a sermon and find that it's pointing right at me!)

I mean, let's admit it: we would like for others to give us the benefit of the doubt, would we not? Why not us for them?

Respect. Part of that is giving another the benefit of the doubt. And it's part of what nurtures this Table.

And yes, it's a big Table.

But remember: it's not our Table. It's not my Table.

And because it's not my Table, all are welcome, all are included; my standards and my prejudices cannot restrict the invitation.

Because it's not my invitation to which others respond...or to which I respond.

You received an invitation to a wedding. The service is beautiful. Afterwards, you're at the reception. You've found your seat, and as you sit there, you survey the crowd, seeing who was invited. "Wait a minute! What is *she* doing here? And him? How did *he* get invited?"

From east and west. From north and south.

All are welcome. All are invited.

Not all behavior is acceptable. But all people are.

And I'm not the host. So 'the host' can invite whomever 'the host' wants to invite.

And our Host has made it clear that the arms are open wide and the invitation is open for all. So who am I to question the Host's invitation?

"You mean him? You mean her?"

There's an irony here, realizing that somewhere there's someone thinking the exact same thing about me.

Perhaps I should give them a break. And trust they'll give me one, too.

Because the Host has given both of us a break. It's called grace, and it's the basis of the invitation to us all.

Perhaps we should extend to others the same grace we hope they'll extend to us...and we know the Host has already extended to us all.

I mean, we're here, aren't we?

Perhaps others should be here too...at the Host's invitation.

From east and west. From north and south.

***AFFIRMATION OF FAITH** (*The Apostles' Creed - Contemporary*)

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come again to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

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PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Pastor: O Lord, our God...
People: ...hear our prayer and make us one.

THE EUCHARIST

OFFERING

Invitation

Reflection

**Unison Prayer of Dedication*

Gracious God, you create and call us, feed and sustain us, forgive and redeem us. We can never return to you that which you deserve. We pray to honor and glorify you with our gifts and with our entire lives. May the offering of our time, talent, and tithes be a tangible way of showing our love for and loyalty to you. We rejoice in being called to work with you in sharing your abundant harvest with the entire world you so love. Amen.

SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

Invitation to the Lord's Table

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Leader: The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

Leader: Lift up your hearts.

People: We lift them to the Lord.

Leader: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People: It is right to give our thanks and praise.

(The prayer continues...)

The Lord's Prayer (Contemporary)

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.**

Give us today our daily bread.

**Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.**

**Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
now and forever. Amen.**

Breaking of the Bread

Communion of the People

(Please hold each of the elements so that we might partake of them together.)

“We Gather Here in Jesus’ Name” GtG 510

Bread:

One: We are now a family, of which the Lord is head.

All: Though unseen, he meets us here in the breaking of the bread.

One: We gather here in Jesus’ name,
his love is burning in our hearts like living flame;

All: for through the loving Son the Father makes us one:

One: come,

All: take the bread;

One: come,

All: share the Lord.

Cup:

One: No one is a stranger here;

All: everyone belongs.

One: Finding our forgiveness here,

All: we in turn forgive all wrongs.

One: He joins us here; he breaks the bread;

**All: the Lord who pours the cup is risen from the dead;
the one we love the most is now our gracious host:**

One: come,

All: drink the cup;

One: come,

All: share the Lord.

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Prayer

SENDING

***CLOSING HYMN** "I Come with Joy" GtG 515

1. **I come with joy , a child of God,
forgiven, loved, and free,
the life of Jesus to recall,
in love laid down for me,
in love laid down for me.**
2. **I come with Christians far and near
to find, as all are fed,
the new community of love
in Christ's communion bread,
in Christ's communion bread.**
3. **As Christ breaks bread and bids us share,
each proud division ends.
The love that made us, makes us one,
and strangers now are friends,
and strangers now are friends.**

4. **The Spirit of the risen Christ,
unseen, but ever near,
is in such friendship better known,
alive among us here,
alive among us here.**

5. **Together met, together bound
by all that God has done,
we'll go with joy, to give the world
the love that makes us one,
the love that makes us one.**

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***CHARGE AND BLESSING**

Pastor: ...And let the gathered people of God say...

People: ...Amen.

POSTLUDE

The Call to Worship, Prayer of Confession, and Prayers of the People (adapted) are taken from this year's Peace & Global Witness Worship Resources (PCUSA).

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