

Worship for August 15, 2021

Prelude

Welcome and Announcements Robin McComas

*Call to Worship

What shall we return to the Lord for all the good things God has done for us?

We will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord.

*Hymn 260 Alleluia! Sing to Jesus

Prayer of Confession

Merciful God, you pardon all who truly repent and turn to you.

We humbly confess our sins and ask your mercy.

**We have not loved you with our whole hearts,
nor have we loved our neighbor as ourselves.**

We have not done justice, loved kindness, or walked humbly with you.

Have mercy on us, O God, in your loving-kindness.

In your great compassion,

cleanse us from sin.

**Create in us a clean heart, O God,
and renew a right spirit within us.**

**Do not cast us away from your presence,
or take your Holy Spirit from us.**

**Restore to us the joy of your salvation
and sustain in us a bountiful Spirit.**

Jesus, Lamb of God, have mercy on us.

Jesus, bearer of our sins, have mercy on us.

Jesus, redeemer of the world, grant us peace.

Assurance of Forgiveness

Hear the good news!

Who is in a position to condemn?

Only Christ,

and Christ died for us,

Christ rose for us,

Christ reigns in power for us,

Christ prays for us.

Anyone who is in Christ is a new creation.

The old life is gone and a new life has begun.

Know that you are forgiven and be at peace. Amen.

First Reading Exodus 16:1-15

Time With Our Young Disciples

Gospel Reading Matthew 14:13-21

Morning Message

Our texts today are what we call “bookmark stories.” They are accounts of distinctive moments in the life of God’s people in the Old and New Testaments with which we are likely to be very familiar. We even refer to them in Bible shorthand. We only have to say “manna in the wilderness” or “loaves and fishes” and an image forms in our minds of a special event in Bible history. There are many accounts of eating and drinking in Scripture. Meals figure prominently in the faith story. These particular texts are often chosen to support a service of Communion, such as we are having today.

I was asked last week why we are having Communion today. So, I think that begs a word of explanation. It has been Kuhn’s practice to celebrate Communion on the first Sunday of every month. We hope to get back to that when practical and possible.

When Covid struck last year, we suspended worship in the church building. We moved to a recorded service. We scaled back Communion and began observing the sacrament on those days in the church year most closely identified with Communion: Maundy Thursday and World Communion Sunday.

On Christmas Eve we had planned an outdoor service with Communion. Then the snow and ice covered our streets and walkways and we cancelled the service.

We observed Communion most recently on Pentecost Sunday, the day we recognize as the church’s birthday. But, this is not the first Sunday of the month. It is not a special day in the liturgical calendar. But, it is a significant moment in the lives of the church’s people. So we will mark it with the sacrament.

This is the week and the season that the church’s children and young people return to their classrooms. A school is a real community, with its own culture and traditions, practices, and challenges. This year, hopes are high for a “normal” year, uninterrupted by Covid. We are all praying for that.

When school is in session, the rhythm of our weekdays change, even for those of us who left the school community years ago. Traffic will increase. We will be on alert for school buses loading and un-loading. Maybe we will attend athletic or cultural events, especially if they involve a grandchild or a neighbor kid. The school year provides the whole community with a certain energy and momentum.

Some are making the big transition to college life. This certainly changes the dynamics of every family, including the church family. We pray that our young people have been adequately prepared to enter the adult world.

And so, today, we gather around the Lord's Table, to break the bread and drink the cup, to be fed and strengthened, before we scatter to engage the next season of life.

According to Melva Wilson Costen, retired professor of the Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta, Georgia, the oldest New Testament references to the "breaking of bread" and "the Lord's Supper" are found in the gospel of Mark and in 1 Corinthians.

The term Communion is derived from the practice of early Christians. Paul wrote to the church in Corinth: "The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a *koinonia* in the blood of Christ?" (1 Corinthians 10:16). The Greek word *koinonia* is translated "*Communion*" in the King James Version of the Bible, and *sharing* in the New Revised Standard Version. It is also translated "fellowship" or "partnership," referring to a common sharing, or a sense of communion, with Christ and with one another.

The gospels report Jesus' common eating and drinking with people from various walks of life, making such events worthy of remembrance. As far as it can be determined, Jewish meals always included bread. It was also customary for the host, or head of the house, to bless the bread and then break and share it with those at the table.

On the night of his betrayal, Jesus and his disciples shared the Passover meal in the Upper Room. It was in those final, intimate moments together, that Jesus broke bread and called it his body, and lifted the cup of wine and called it the new covenant poured out in his blood, given for the forgiveness of sins. He gave a new commandment that they love one another as he has loved them.

On the day of his resurrection, the risen Jesus made himself known in the breaking of the bread. He continued to show himself to believers by preparing, serving, and sharing meals post-resurrection. This became a practice among the followers of Jesus and the breaking and sharing of bread became a sacred act of remembrance.

In Communion, Presbyterians believe, we are in the company of the real presence of Christ. Communion is understood as our common participation in the divine life, a life set apart, because it is initiated by Christ. John Calvin contends that such a union is ultimately a mystery too great to explain.

In Communion, we give thanks to the God who creates, redeems and sustains us throughout salvation history. We confess our sins and receive forgiveness. We remember the dying and rising of Christ and we anticipate the heavenly banquet promised to us in the fullness of time.

When our daughter Caroline, was about three or four, she asked for a kitchen set. One of Ed's hobbies is woodworking. So, the two of them looked through plans, bought the supplies, and built a stove and a table. She spent hours playing house, baking imaginary cookies and serving endless cups of coffee. Her friends always gravitated to the "little kitchen" as she called it. Boys and girls alike. They all enjoyed playing with it. What they were doing was imitating the scenes they witnessed in their own homes, rehearsing for the time when they would live out those roles for real.

When our first grandson was about two, he loved playing with the silver service that used to sit on a table in our living room. We packed away the silver and pulled out the old kitchen set. We bought a toy coffee maker and some new plastic food. Both of the boys have spent hours stirring imaginary soup and serving coffee to Mommy and Daddy. I don't drink coffee, but do drink tea, which they remember, so I'm served tea.

There are some moments with little ones that we would like to preserve forever. This is one: Tad making coffee with the toy coffee maker, it's a Keurig, like the one that sits on the kitchen counter. Walking slowly, balancing the little cup carefully in his hands, like it truly held hot steaming tea, his little boy voice piping, "Here's your tea, Fifi. I made it for you." The sweet smile and the sparkling eyes of the host at this meal just melt my heart. He is eager to convey that this was a special act for a special person in his orbit. He finds delight in serving others.

The One who invites us to the Table reminds us that we are to live as the divine host lived. Accepting the invitation to come to the Lord's Feast demands that we actively seek peace and reconciliation with Christ and we commit to work for the reconciliation of the world.

In the Brief Statement of Faith, we read, "we trust in God... who feeds us," meaning we have faith in the Word of God-faith in the Word who became flesh, lived among us, and provided the model for our actions.

We are invited to the Table to be nurtured for Christ-like living. A life that calls us to commit ourselves anew each time we eat the bread and drink the cup to love and serve God and one another.

In that, may we all find our heart's true delight.

*Affirmation of Faith
Gloria Patri

The Apostles' Creed p. 35

Celebrating the Sacrament of Communion

The Invitation; Words of Institution; Great Thanksgiving; Communion of the People

The Communion elements will be served from the Table. Those who wish to remain seated will be served by the elders.

Prayer After Communion

We thank you, O God, that through Word and Sacrament you have given us your Son, who is the true bread from heaven and food of eternal life.

So strengthen us in your service

**that our daily living may show our thanks,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Presenting Our Tithes and Offerings

Prayer of Dedication

**Blessed are you, God of all creation,
through your goodness we have these gifts to share.
Accept and use our offerings for your glory
and for the service of your kingdom. Amen.**

*Hymn 65 Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah

*Blessing

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

*Postlude

Shower announcement

Mark your calendars now for Rally Day, September 15. Sunday School begins, third and fourth grade students will receive Bibles, and we will celebrate the day with a picnic dinner at Barboursville Park.

The Presbytery of West Virginia meets August 19 in Charleston. This is the first in-person meeting since the beginning of the pandemic. Please lift some prayers for all who work to make the meeting possible and the body as they conduct the business of the church.