

**19th Sunday after Pentecost
October 3, 2021**

World Communion Sunday



**St. John United Church of Christ
10207 Lincoln Trail, Fairview Heights,
IL
397-6323
Rev. Rosemary Captain**

Organist - Sharon Banjavcic
Liturgy - Rev. Dr. Laurel Koepf Taylor,

***CALL TO WORSHIP:**

Leader: We were created in relationship and for relationship.

Congregation: We are created for community!

Leader: God knew it was not right for us to be alone.

Congregation: We are created for community!

Leader: Through Jesus Christ, God entered into human relationship with us.

Congregation: We are created for community!

Leader: We rejoice in our unity with all humanity.

Congregation: We are created for community!

***PRAYER OF CONFESSION:**

God-made-flesh, Bone of our bone, we confess that we think we can go it alone, that we try to do it all, That in doing so, we neglect the gifts you have given us: The bone of our bone, the flesh of our flesh, the bodies you created, and the relationships you created us for.

Jesus Christ, you who lived in a human body, call us to community. Remind us that in you we are one. Awake in us a respect for one another, and celebrate with us the diversity within that unity.

May it be so now and forever. **Amen.**

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Leader: You are the divine creation, and it is not right for you to be alone. Know now that you are forgiven and called back into relationship with God and with one another.

***GLORIA PATRI: NCH 759**

**Glory to the Creator, the Christ, the Holy Spirit,
Three-in-One; As it was in the beginning, is now,
and ever shall be, world without end, Amen. Amen.**

***SCRIPTURE: Matthew 26:17-30**

¹⁷ On the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, the disciples came to Jesus and said, “Where do you want us to prepare for you to eat the Passover meal?”¹⁸ He replied, “Go into the city, to a certain man, and say, ‘The teacher says, “My time is near. I’m going to celebrate the Passover with my disciples at your house.”’”¹⁹ The disciples did just as Jesus instructed them. They prepared the Passover.

²⁰ That evening he took his place at the table with the twelve disciples. ²¹ As they were eating he said, “I assure you that one of you will betray me.” ²² Deeply saddened, each one said to him, “I’m not the one, am I, Lord?”

²³ He replied, “The one who will betray me is the one who dips his hand with me into this bowl. ²⁴ The Human One goes to his death just as it is written about him. But how terrible it is for that person who betrays the Human One! It would have been better for him if he had never been born.” ²⁵ Now Judas, who would betray him, replied, “It’s not me, is it, Rabbi?” Jesus answered, “You said it.”

²⁶ While they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, “Take and eat. This is my body.” ²⁷ He took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, “Drink from this, all of you. ²⁸ This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many so that their sins may be forgiven. ²⁹ I tell you, I won’t drink wine again until that day when I drink it in a new way with you in my Father’s kingdom.” ³⁰ Then, after singing songs of praise, they went to the Mount of Olives

MESSAGE: “We Need this NOW!!”

You may wonder why I chose this particular scripture to read. We usually read it at Lent as part of the Passion story. I wanted to review the words that are there in the “original” story and what’s not there. The Bible calls this “the Last Supper”. Today we call it

Holy Communion. Communion. Communing together. Coming to the table together. When I look at our world today, I think WE NEED THIS NOW.

It seems to me that we humans have found more ways to divide us than to unite us. On World Communion Sunday we attempt, in a small way, to demonstrate how we can come together.

Looking at the words in our scripture text and thinking about celebrating communion together, I noticed that we humans have a tendency to add things to this ritual; rules, regulations, doctrines. Different faith traditions offer this Table of Grace in different ways. Such as fasting an hour before receiving communion, going to confession first, becoming a member of that particular church first, and in some traditions, communion can only be served by the “elders” of the congregation and they must wear white gloves. In some traditions, children cannot participate in communion until they are confirmed or at least know what communion is. I didn’t hear anything like that when I read that scripture in Matthew. Did you?

Ah, we humans have a way of making things more difficult for pilgrims on their spiritual journey. The Apostle Paul called them “stumbling blocks.”

WE NEED THIS COMMUNION NOW!

This scripture passage tells us that Jesus and his disciples plus closest friends and those who traveled with them, such as the wives and children of the disciples. Jesus’ mother was probably there also. They were celebrating the Passover meal where everyone can eat. Even today, Jews gather in homes with their families and friends to celebrate Passover.

The one thing that IS mentioned in this passage is the idea of a new covenant. A covenant is a binding contract between two parties, ratified by swearing an oath. Jews were familiar with the Old Covenant between God and Israel. Jesus is informing them that there is a new covenant; the new “contract” is between Jesus and all who believe in him.

WE NEED THIS COMMUNION NOW!

As we partake in Holy Communion today, let us remember all the divisions happening in the world today and pray that Jesus can bring us all together. Jesus gives his life for us. What can we do?

WE NEED THIS COMMUNION NOW!

HOLY COMMUNION:

The Great Prayer of Thanksgiving

May the God of all be with you!

May that God be with you, as well!

We will join our hearts with all of God's people,
offering them to the God who loves us.

**God fills our hearts, our lives, with overflowing
grace.**

With voices in every tongue, of every faith,
we will sing our praises to God.

We offer glory and thanksgiving to our God.

When there was nothing but your imagination,
God of Wonder, you thought, and the Spirit began to
twinkle chaos with stars, moons, and planets.
You spoke, and the Word began to call to life
centipedes to march across the ground, sparrows to
dart across skies, and little kittens to lap milk.

You laughed, and shaped us in your image,
to offer all these things and more to us. But we were
convinced we did not need you, and so chose to stay
wrapped in our little cocoons spun by sin and
death.

Over and over, in dusty streets and urban
centers, your prophets call us back to you, but we

were set in our ways, not wanting to walk by your
rivers of life. So that we might finally have life with
you, you sent your Child to us, so that all the world
might be redeemed.

With those whose hearts are filled with joy,
with those whose lips tremble with questions,
we lift our praises to you:

Holy, holy, holy are you, God of all, God of each.

All creation everywhere joins in praising you.

Hosanna in the highest!

Blessed is the One who calls us to the Table of life.

Hosanna in the highest!

In your holiness, God of creation, you could have
stayed aloof, letting the world drift back into chaos.
But you became one of us, in a little child born in a
place no one imagined, and to a family none would
have picked. A little child, Jesus knew the hunger
and fears of poverty and despair.

A young boy, Jesus knew the doubts and questions
of wondering about the future.

A worker, Jesus knew the struggles to put food on
the table.

A storyteller, Jesus knew how to reach the deepest
depths of the human heart.

A servant, Jesus was willing to take on our death for us, so that in the power of the resurrection, sin and death lost their power over us.

As we gather in grand churches and in open fields, as we feast on the finest bread, and drink from crystal cups, we join our sisters and brothers in every place, proclaiming the mystery:

**Jesus died, so we might know the depths of love;
Jesus was raised, so we might know the strength of love;
Jesus will come, so we might know God's steadfast love for us.**

At altars carved from marble and tables shoved together, with people who are at the feast every time it is served, as well as those just stopping in, we pray that you would pour out your Spirit upon your children and on the gifts gathered from the simple goodness of creation and set aside for holy use.

In the bread which is broken, may we be reminded of those places like Palestine and Israel torn apart by ancient and modern fears; may we be strengthened to bring hope and help to flooded communities; may we become willing to listen to those who tell stories of unspeakable horrors from decades ago.

In that cup which is filled with grace, may we be called to welcome those who have been forced to flee from the neighborhoods they loved, but now fear; may we gather up children who have been forgotten, to be blessed by their resilience; may we commit ourselves to ending injustice in every place, in every person.

And when all time has ended and the world as we know it is made complete, we will gather around that One Table of grace, hope, peace, and love with sisters and brothers of every time and place, forever praising your name, God in Community, Holy in One. Amen.

SHARING THE ELEMENTS:

***PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING:**

Bountiful God, we give you thanks that you have refreshed us at your table by granting us the presence of Christ. Strengthen our faith, increase our love for one another, and send us for the into the world in courage and peace, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

BENEDICTION:

As you leave this sacred space,

live out your connection with one another,
knowing that all humanity is
bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh,
one world communion. Amen!