

**ZOOM Worship for, October 3, 2021
Celebrating World Wide Communion**

Territorial Acknowledgment and Announcements

We acknowledge that the land on which we gather is situated upon traditional territories of the Erie, Neutral, Huron - Wyandot, the Haudenosaunee and later the Mississauga of the Credit First Nations. The territory is mutually covered by the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement between the Iroquois Confederacy and the Ojibway and other allied nations to peaceably share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes.

Today, this remains the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work in their community, and to share and respect Mother Earth.

Centering Music: "Lord Listen to Your Children Praying" VU 400

Lord, listen to your children praying,
Lord, send your Spirit in this place;
Lord, listen to your children praying,
send us love, send us power, send us grace!

Call to Worship and Opening Prayer

One: The whole world is in God's hands.
Two: *Everything that lives and breathes.
Everything that simply is. Everything.*
One: From the farthest spaces, to the inmost places!
Two: *God is with us and we are with God.*
One: As people of Christ, gathered virtually at our diverse tables,
with our sisters and brothers around the world,
to remember whose we are, we praise —
we sing, we worship.
Two: *Shall we pray?
With all that we have, with all that we are,
we worship you, God-of-all-Being.
Bless this day. Bless this time. Bless this virtual gathering.
Bless this world, with your overflowing love.
Alleluia! Amen! (Richard Bott, Canada, adapted)*

Opening Hymn: "Creator God You Gave Us Life" MV 27

Creator God you gave us life,
your image formed within our souls,
yet through the mist of time and space,
we search for that which makes us whole.

Through hands that paint majestic skies,
and voices chanting melody,
with words that reach beyond the page,
we comprehend your mystery.

In ev'ry flow'r and ev'ry tree,
we see your great diversity,

yet greater still we see your love,
expressed in our humanity.

Through hands that paint majestic skies,
and voices chanting melody,
with words that reach beyond the page,
we comprehend your mystery.

When with our hearts, our hands our minds,
we share our gifts with all the world,
our spirits soar beyond the veil,
to touch the very face of God.

Through hands that paint majestic skies,
and voices chanting melody,
with words that reach beyond the page,
we comprehend your mystery.

Prayer for Reflection and Revelation

Loving God:

You asked for my hands
that you might use them for your purpose.
I gave them for a moment, then withdrew them,
for the work was hard.
You asked for my mouth
to speak out against injustice.
I gave you a whisper that I might not be accused.

You asked for my eyes
to see the pain of poverty.
I closed them, for I did not want to see.
You asked for my life
that you might work through me.
I gave a small part that I might not get too involved.

Lord, forgive my calculated efforts to serve you,
only when it is convenient for me to do so,
only in those places where it is safe to do so,
and only with those who make it easy to do so.

Forgive me,
renew me
send me out
as a usable instrument
that I might take seriously
the meaning of your cross.

(Joe Seremane, South Africa)

Sung Response: "Senzeni na?" MV 66

Senzeni na? Senzeni na? (4x)

Scripture Readings:

Mark 10:2–16 *The Inclusive Bible*

Some Pharisees approached Jesus and, as a test, asked, "Is it permissible for husbands to divorce wives?" In reply Jesus asked, "What command did Moses give?" They answered, "Moses permitted a husband to write a decree of divorce and to put her away." But Jesus told them, "Moses wrote the commandment because of your hardness of heart. From the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female. This is why one person leaves home and cleaves to another, and the two become one flesh.' They are no longer two, but one flesh. What God has united, therefore, let no one divide." Back in the house again, the disciples questioned Jesus once more about this. He told them, "If a man divorces his wife and marries another, he commits adultery against her; and if a woman divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery." People were bringing their children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples scolded them for this. When Jesus saw this he was indignant and said to them, "Let the children come to me; do not stop them. It is to just such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. The truth is, whoever doesn't welcome the kingdom of God as a little child won't enter it." And Jesus took the children in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands on them.

Music For Meditation: "The Wonder of it All"**Reflection: "Softening our Hearts"****Hymn: "Who is My Mother" MV 178**

Who is my mother, who is my brother?
All those who gather round Jesus Christ:
Spirit blown people born from the Gospel
sit at the table, round Jesus Christ.

Differently abled, differently labeled,
widen the circle round Jesus Christ:
crutches and stigmas, culture's enigmas,
all come together round Jesus Christ.

Love will relate us colour or status
can't segregate us, round Jesus Christ:
family failings, human derailings
all are accepted round Jesus Christ.

Bound by one vision, met for one mission
we claim each other, round Jesus Christ:
here is my mother, here is my brother,
kindred in spirit, through Jesus Christ.

Virtual Offering:

One: O God, to those who have hunger, give bread,
Two: to those who have bread, give the hunger for justice.
Amen (Latin America, individual author unknown)

Sung Response: For the Gift of Creation” VU 538

For the gift of creation, the gift of your love,
and the gift of the Spirit by which we live,
we thank you and give you the fruit of our hands.
May your grace be proclaimed by the gifts that we give.

Invitation to Communion

- One: Come to the table of One whose footprints are on tundra, desert, delta, the Sea of Galilee, bush and forest and whose Good News speaks in Swahili, Spanish and Sign, Bahasa Indonesia, Basque and Braille, Urdu, HTML and Te Reo Maori.
- Two: Come to the breaking of rice cake, puto and corn tortilla, the laying down of seema and wafer, the passing of unleavened Passover bread and naan, and the pouring a cup of merlot or concord grape, salabat juice, atole, or coconut milk.
- One: Come to a meal with a global guest list. There is no “save the date” – it is now. (*Maren Tirabassi, USA*)

Choir: “Feed Me Lord”

Sacrament of Communion

- One: God be with you.
Two: And also with you.
- One: Lift up your hearts.
Two: We lift them up to God.
- One: Let us give thanks to God!
Two: It is right to give God thanks and praise!
- One: God of brilliant sunsets and shining rainbows,
God of golden daffodils and glowing autumn leaves,
God of all the blues of sunlit seas,
God of all the shades of green in bush and field,
in rivers and oceans and lakes,
in rough stones on a beach and polished jewels in a showcase,
- Two: God of people, brown and amber, pink and ebony,
artistic and athletic, practical and visionary,
compassionate and laughter-bringing,
God who colours us a world of variety,
We thank you that you have made each of us unique,
that you call us to contribute our special colours to the life around us. (*Aotearoa / New Zealand*)
- One: You brought your people out of slavery into a land of milk and honey;
flowing with streams of living water and planted with groves of olive trees;
and today, in our country,
fields of wheat stretch under the prairie skies
and blossoms from apple orchards hold promise of succulent goodness, while in cities,
community gardens, farmer’s markets, backyard blooms;
vegetables and herbs provide beauty and nourishment.

Two: Even when we turn away from you
living in greed and violence,
overfishing the oceans, despoiling the land,
ignoring those who have no food
while our garbage cans are overflowing,
you send us prophets to call us back and remind us to live for a day when no one will go hungry,
and we will live together as gardeners and neighbours
in justice and peace.

One: And so with people round the world:
farmers and fishers,
winemakers and coffee growers,
butchers and bakers,
those who deliver our daily bread
and those who prepare and serve it
to our dining tables and kitchen tables,
we raise our voice in thanks and praise: *(Nancy Hardy, Canada)*

Sanctus and Benedictus MV 203

O holy, holy, holy God, O God of time and space,
All earth and sea and sky above
bear witness to your grace.
Hosanna in the highest heav'n, creation sings your praise.
And blessed is the one who comes
and bears your name always.

Two: Remember, the Lord, the friend of sinners,
who were the oppressed, the estranged, the weak, the sick, widow, orphans.

One: Remember, the Lord, the one disliking of the common structure and power.
Remember, the Lord, the one sharing of daily food in life.

Two: Remember, the Lord, the one liberating from a dictator.
We remember thy suffering, O Lord, at thy Last Supper. *(Korea)*

One: On the night before he died,
he had supper with his companions.
He took a loaf of bread, and after giving thanks,
he broke it, and gave it to them, saying:

Two: "Take, eat.
Do this in remembrance of me."

One: Then, he took a cup, and after giving thanks,
he passed it among them, saying:

Two: "Drink this.
Do this in remembrance of me."

One: Through this loaf and cup, Jesus lives within us.

Two: In word and deed, Jesus lives among us.

One: Jesus, you emptied yourself completely
keeping nothing for yourself.

Two: Now, naked, utterly stripped,
you give yourself to us as bread that sustains us
and as wine that consoles us.

One: You are Light and Truth
You are the Way and the Hope

Two: You are Love. Grow in us. *(Guatemala)*

One: Send your Holy Spirit upon us
and upon this offering of your church around the world,
that we who eat and drink at Christ's table
may share in his life.
Pour out your Spirit upon the whole earth,
and make it your new creation.
Gather your church together
from the ends of the earth
into your realm where peace and justice are revealed—
that we, with all your people,
of every language, race, and nation,
may share the banquet you have promised.

Two: At this time, we also remember all those
with whom you would have us share your feast.
We pray for all who are in sorrow or in pain . . .
all who are ill or alone . . .
all who live with fear, oppression, or hunger . . .
all whom the world counts as last and least . . .
We pray for your church and its varied ministries . . .
for the nations as they strive for peace and justice . . .
for the earth, and the fragile web of life we share . . .
for our families and friends . . .
And as one people, we share ancient words of prayer:

The Lord's Prayer (sung) VU 959

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 glory are yours
now and forever. Amen

One: We rejoice in the God of life,
who gives us bread:

the fruit of the earth worked with human hands.
and who makes it into the bread of life.

Two: We rejoice in the God of life
who gives us wine:

the fruit of the vine tended with daily care,
and puts the flavour of the new world into it.

One: As the wheat and grapes are joined on this table in bread and wine –
into a visual symbol for us –

Two: May our church join together
into a visual symbol for the entire world. *(Germany)*

Sung Amen MV 205

Amen, Amen, O Holy One!
Hosanna and Amen!
Amen, Amen, O Holy One!
Hosanna and Amen!

Sharing the Bread and Cup:

One: The ears of wheat are broken and scattered
on the hillside to grow.
Gathered, they are broken again
and scattered throughout the city to make bread.
the bread is scattered to each home
and broken to make nourishment.
Broken and scattered, broken and scattered,
and some becomes Christ's body broken for us
as we are the people of God scattered through the city
and, perhaps, broken to give nourishment to others. *(Isobel de Gruchy, South Africa)*

We receive this bread, broken, scattered and made whole.
We drink this cup, thirty, longing, willing to be poured.

Choir "We Will Take What You Offer"

One: O Holy One, when we are satisfied that we have experienced World Communion and we can put
away the global music of "Des Colores," "Jesu, Jesu," "Siyahamba," and still the tambourine,
djembe and singing bowl ...
When we replace pita and rye, tortilla, rice cake, and naan with white bread, and children do not
dress in their grandparents' lederhosen, or dashiki or obi ...
When every prayer is spoken in English ...

Two: The real work of World Communion begins:
To find those lost and broken by the pandemic, to feed all the hungry in body and spirit, to re-
unite children with parents, to rebuild places where fire has burned, storms have devastated,
war has been waged, to ask forgiveness of the world's indigenous peoples ...

One: And, in every season, to make the world's music in our hearts. *(Maren Tirabassi, USA)*

Closing Hymn: “Let us Talents and Tongues Employ” VU 468

Let us talents and tongues employ,
reaching out with a shout of joy:
bread is broken, the wine is poured,
Christ is spoken and seen and heard.

Jesus lives again, earth can breathe again,
pass the Word around: loaves abound!
Jesus lives again, earth can breathe again,
pass the Word around: loaves abound!

Christ is able to make us one,
at the table he sets the tone,
teaching people to live to bless,
love in word and in deed express.

Jesus lives again, earth can breathe again,
pass the Word around: loaves abound!
Jesus lives again, earth can breathe again,
pass the Word around: loaves abound!

Jesus calls us in, sends us out,
bearing fruit in a world of doubt,
gives us love to tell, bread to share:
God (Immanuel) everywhere!

Jesus lives again, earth can breathe again,
pass the Word around: loaves abound!
Jesus lives again, earth can breathe again,
pass the Word around: loaves abound!

Commissioning /Blessing

May the God of Life,
be your guide on the road every day,
be your refuge in times of uncertainty
and be your rest in times of fatigue.
May the God of Life,
strengthen you when you feel weak,
comfort you when you feel sad
and hug you when you feel alone.
May the God of Life,
who loves you and knows you,
cover you with the tenderness of a Mother.
Forever.
Amen. *(Argentina)*

Musical Benediction: "When You Walk From Here" VU 298

When you walk from here, when you walk from here,
walk with justice, walk with mercy,
and with God's humble care.

Parts of our Worship and Communion Liturgies adapted from "Gifts in Open Hands: More Resources for the Global Community." Used with permission. With thanks to the Uniting Church in Australia for their collection of world prayers for World Communion Sunday.

Reflection "Softening our Hearts"**Mark 10:2-16**

On this day of thinking of our global family of faith, when we are joining together with Christians to share Jesus' inclusive meal, we are given a scripture passage that seems to focus just on personal relationships – or rather how we treat each other in those relationships. It might seem unrelated to global concerns, but I believe that what Jesus is really talking about in this passage is very much connected to all our relationships, everywhere.

Divorce seems to have been one of those 'hot button' topics in Jesus' day, given that the religious authorities try to trick him with questions about it, and the disciples continue to question Jesus even after he has given his answer. As well, it must have been a contentious issue when Deuteronomy (which is one of the passages of scripture to which Jesus and the Pharisees are referring) was written hundreds of years before, as part of the story of Moses' time as leader of God's people.

First, I think it's important to point out that Jesus does not say "Moses was wrong" and that "you must never divorce." What he does point out is that hearts had been hardened when Moses wrote the laws, and that a union that was to bring joy and fullness to people's lives had often become little more than a business transaction, changeable on a whim. Deuteronomy speaks of a man writing a certificate of divorce because his wife "does not please him because he finds something objectionable about her." *Deut. 24:1* There was no recourse for the woman, nor did she have the power to divorce her husband.

Jesus does indicate that God had created the "gold standard" for relationships as he quotes from the second chapter of Genesis. "The two become one flesh" – so intimately connected that they are like one being. They – to quote a popular romantic movie – complete one another. This is what God had planned for us, loving partnerships that create a new thing when we deeply commit to our spouses, aware of each other's vulnerabilities and weaknesses, and never putting each other at risk. Marriage is more than a civil contract, even though some with hardened hearts married for political gain, or for land or power or dowries, and divorced on a whim.

Women and children in patriarchal society in ancient times were particularly vulnerable when divorce was an option only for men, and as they were often considered property 'owned' by men. Women and their children were highly dependent on marriage for their livelihood and wellbeing, and this dependence, combined with their husbands' ability to initiate divorce, is one source of their

vulnerability. We know that Jesus spoke often of those vulnerable ones, lifting them up as he does in this passage. In answer to the disciples' questions he gives equal agency to men and to women – “if a man divorces his wife” AND “if a wife divorces her husband” with disregard for their wellbeing, they will both face consequences, as we know to this day. He then brings those vulnerable children into his circle once again – reminding them that the powerless and weak, the vulnerable and childlike, are the very ones that can teach us about God's love and God's justice.

For me, it is clear that throughout this scripture passage Jesus is telling us that God wants us to root our relationships in love, not in legalisms or contracts that can be easily broken. We are called to soften our hearts so that we can look beyond the “what's in it for me” attitudes about ALL our relationships. We are called to imagine what we can build with one another based on love, respect and deep connections, remembering to include and care for those who are more vulnerable, more at risk of losing their shelter, security or wellbeing.

This teaching about relationships is completely applicable to our World Communion celebrations today, I think. What a difference we could make in the world if our conversations, our relationships, and our support for others globally had everything to do with a softening of our hearts and a deep connection with others based on respect, and intimate caring! Fairer trade could happen not because it is mandated or negotiated, but because we hold the wellbeing of all people as a priority. We would not need child labour laws because we would make all our purchasing decisions based on our deep connections to those God calls us to care for, so there would be no support for businesses that exploited them. We might not need environmental laws because our relationship with creation would become so deep and intimate that we could not make choices that would bring harm.

God knows that sometimes we cannot live up to the 'gold standard' set for us. God knows that marriages can become toxic or at least loveless and need to be ended, God knows that we sometimes struggle to see all the vulnerable ones in our communities and in our world, God knows that sometimes it is hard for us to forgive each other, love each other, and treat each other with respect. God also knows that we can learn, we can soften our hearts, we can be filled with childlike wonder but also childlike acceptance. God knows us, and loves us, and continues to walk with us as reach out to one another. With Christ to guide us, Spirit to encourage us, and God beside us, we can continue in our shared work of building deep, meaningful, just and loving relationships within our church family, and our global family.

Amen.