

Special Sundays

Liturgy,
art, &
poetry
for special days
of worship

Liturgy for World Communion Sunday

Written by Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed

We invite you to implement this service as-is, or adapt it for your context. Either way, please attribute credit as follows: Liturgy by Rev. Sarah Speed | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org

Introduction

About World Communion Sunday

This tradition, always held on the first Sunday in October, was originally conceived by Dr. Hugh Thompson Kerr of Shadyside Presbyterian Church (USA) in Pittsburgh, PA, in 1933. He had served as a moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church. The U.S. Presbyterian Church adopted World Communion Sunday in 1936, then in 1940, the National Council of Churches endorsed it and promoted it to churches globally. Since that time, the practice has grown and expanded beyond denominational lines, emphasizing ecumenical partnership and unity throughout the Christian tradition.

World Communion Sunday is a celebratory Sunday that invites us to think beyond the walls of our own congregation. On this day, people around the world celebrate Communion as an act of radical unity. While we gather at our own Table to celebrate Christ's joyful feast, we will also remember, with fondness, our siblings in faith celebrating this same meal around the world.

About the Service

We encourage you to adorn your Communion Table with a wide diversity of breads. This is a visual reminder of the beautiful diversity in which Communion is celebrated worldwide. Similarly, this service incorporates different spoken languages and global music as additional ways to turn our hearts toward our international siblings in faith.

Introduction *(continued)*

Music Suggestions

Here is a list of suggested hymns and songs for congregational singing:

- "In Christ There Is No East or West" by John Oxenham (1908)
- "Siyahamb' ekukhanyen' kwenknos" / "We Are Marching in the Light of God," South African traditional song (1984)
- "O God of Every Nation" by William Watkins Reid (1958)
- "We Are One In the Spirit" by Peter Scholtes (1966)
- "Sekai no Tomo" / "Here, O Lord, Your Servants Gather" by Tokuo Yamaguchi (1958)
- "Wakantanka Taku Nitawa" / "Many and Great, O God, Are Your Works" by Joseph Renville (1842)
- "Somos Pueblo Que Camina" / "Welcome, Pilgrims on the Journey" by Manuel Dávila
- "Let Us Talents and Tongues Employ" by Fred Kaan (1975)

For special music:

- "Baba Yetu" by Christopher Tin (2005)
- "Sisi Ni Moja" by Jacob Narverud (2017)
- "Familia" by Tina Colón Williams, Dawn Hill, & Krissy Nordhoff (Vineyard Worship, 2020)
- "Promesas" by Joel Barnes, Carrington Gaines, Keila Marin, Lemuel Marin, Aaron Moses, Dante Bowe (Maverick City Music, 2021)
- "Akhekho Ofana no Jesu," performed by Donnie McClurkin in Zulu (Gospel Goes Classical, 2017)
- "He Shall Speak Peace," by Birgitta Veksler (2015)
- "Jésus Sois le Centre" by Adam Ranney, Israel Houghton & Micah Massey (NXTG Worship, 2020)

Suggested hymns for during Communion:

- "For Everyone Born a Place at the Table" by Shirley Erena Murray (1996)
- "Come to the Table of Grace" by Barbara Hamm (2008)
- "Let Us Break Bread Together" African-American spiritual (1926)

Scripture Suggestions

This liturgy is not crafted around any particular scripture. Instead, it is designed to be general enough that you can use any desired preaching or focal scriptures. Choose from this list, or select the texts that speak to you.

- Psalm 133
- Luke 9:10-17, John 6:1-15, Mark 6:30-44, or Matthew 14:13-21 (*The feeding of the 5,000*)
- Luke 19:1-10
- Acts 2:42-47
- 1 Corinthians 1:10-17

Introduction (continued)

About This Liturgy Outline

- *Italicized lines are notes for worship leaders.*
- Unbolded lines are to be spoken by worship leaders and, when appropriate, printed in bulletins or projected on screens.
- **Bolded lines are to be spoken by the congregation and printed in bulletins or projected on screens.**

Materials & Setup

Materials

The following materials are needed for the service:

- Communion supplies: plates, chalices, pitchers, bread, juice or wine.
- *Optional:* Linen or fabric from different parts of the world, especially if you have fabric from global church partners. Use these for your Communion Table cloth.
- *Optional:* A diversity of breads to adorn the Communion Table, and to possibly serve: naan, baguette, pita, challah, tortillas, chapati, matzo, rice cakes, lavash, ciabatta, etc.
- *Optional:* Prepare samples from each type of bread for children to eat during the time with children.

Preparation Before the Service

Prepare the Communion elements that you will serve to the congregation. Adorn your Communion table with fabrics and breads from different parts of the world. Prepare the abundant feast visually as well as for consumption.

Order of Worship

Prelude/Processional

You may wish to process in a diversity of breads, placing them on the Communion Table.

Welcome

In your welcome to the gathered community, share more about World Communion Sunday and your particular celebration of it during this service. Below is a paragraph you can adapt to include in your welcome and/or print in the bulletin:

Family of faith, welcome to worship on this World Communion Sunday! Whether this is your first time here, or your hundredth time with us, we are delighted to see you on this special day. *(continued)*

Welcome *(continued)*

You may notice that our Communion Table today is laden with a wide array of delicious breads originating from different parts of the globe. That is because on World Communion Sunday, Christians all over the globe come to Christ's Table to remember that we are united as the body of Christ. Therefore, as a reminder of this good news, we have bread from around the world. We have naan from India, baguettes from France, chapati from East Africa, tortillas from Central and South America, soda bread from Ireland, and the list goes on! *(Adapt this line as needed.)* Today is a joyful day, a holy day, and we are thrilled to share it with you.

Friends, let us now prepare our hearts for worship. I invite you to take a deep breath in. Feel your feet below you on the floor. Release the tension in your jaw and roll your shoulders back. This is God's house. You are welcome here. All are welcome here. So let us worship our holy God together. Please rise in body or in spirit to join me in the call to worship.

Call to Worship

If you are hungry,

there is room at God's table.

If you are weary,

there is a seat saved for you.

If you dream of belonging,
then we will practice belonging here.

From north, south, east, and west,
God invites us home.

Let us worship our nourishing God.

Opening Hymn

See a list of suggestions included in the introduction to this liturgy.

Call to Confession

Family of faith, no matter what your week has looked like,

no matter what you carry with you into this space,

Jesus is always going to invite you to the Table.

That's the amazing thing about God's love—it does not keep score, and it knows no end.

So join me in the prayer of confession, not because you have to, but because you *can*.

Join me in the prayer of confession, trusting that with these words, God is already inviting you into deeper faith.

Let us pray: