

**New St. James Presbyterian Church
World Communion Sunday
October 4, 2020
Rev. Mark McLennan**

“A Table with 7,815,479,081 seats”

Scriptures:

Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32

Psalm 25:1-10

Galatians 3:23-29

Matthew 26: 26-29

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Dr. Steve Eason taught me and inspired me this week.

He wants you to know that every one of those seven billion plus people is part of the family of God.

What a good thing to remember on World Communion Sunday!

Lot of important things happen at a table :

Birthdays, anniversaries, graduations, - with food and drink

Family reunions, church gatherings – with food and drink

Marriage proposals, significant decisions – made around tables

Family table at my house growing up.

One very special table: Matthew 26: 26-29

World Population – a moving target

Every one of those people belong to the family of God

Who are they? – diverse, languages, colours,

Different food, art,

Get sick, and die, experience grief

Laugh, work cry, sleep, eat –

Spiritually los – even evil

Most of them are really good people

They all matter

IF they don't – who decides that?

Everyone is a child of God

How did we get so torn and separated? It is nothing new.

History records our racism discrimination, prejudice, wars, quests for power

Abuse and violence,

Some people starve, while others throw away food
Some of us sleep in security – other sleep on streets

We know what divides us – nations, race, gender, and social class
Neighbourhoods, schools, political parties, and religion

Conservatives and moderates and liberals
Divided on - immigration, abortion, sexuality, economy, foreign affairs

Dr. Steve Eason

At a public forum on what divides the nation, someone asked:
IS THERE ANYTHING THAT UNITES US?

John Meacham, Presidential historian, replied with a comment that could have been said

- in any church, mosque, or synagogue in the world
- in any house of government or school

“It’s the things we love that unite us – and we love too few things”

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On this World Communion Sunday

I wonder what it is that we love, that unites us.

Jesus said to *love God above all things* – then he tacked on one that nobody asked for:

- *While you’re at it, Love your neighbour as you love yourself*

There are no greater laws than these, he said.

Do you realize that Jews, and Muslims and Christians all have those same laws in their Bibles and Holy books?

It sounds simplistic – ***Love God and Love your Neighbour***

But we have seen and are seeing what happens when the world does not abide by those laws.

It is devastating – the kind of world in which we do not want to live

A painful, angry, violent, disrespectful, maybe even evil world that is devoid of the law of love.

So, what if we were to love? – those of us gathered around the Table of Christ wherever we are today.

What if we who follow Christ were to love all **7,815,479,081 - and growing** -children of God in this world?

Would we speak to each other with more respect?

Would we legislate, make laws, with more sensitivity to the common good?

Would we talk less and learn more from each other?

Would we live with a greater sense of civility? - that's a good word.

It is one thing to disagree with each other, but it is another thing to demonize one another

Do you want to live in that kind of world?

We have seen a lot of that in recent years – in our own country.

We can point our fingers south and accuse – but we need not do so, because
– we can look around us and see the same.

Do we want our children and grandchildren to live in that kind of world?

Praise God – we do have options

That is what this table today, says.

Our world doesn't have to be that way.

There is one more seat at this table, with these billions of folks.

Jesus said he would join us one day, to drink the wine of forgiveness and reconciliation, in God's Kingdom.

That would be a very different world – with different rules, different power, different priorities, and a different purpose.

It is a world in which all **7,815,479,081 people matter.**

The best part – we don't have to wait until we die to get to that world.

Christ rose from the dead so we could begin to live in that world now.

That would be our choice – and this table, the table of Christ, invites us and everybody else, into that wonderful world.

Dr. Steve Eason

He wants you to know that every one of those seven billion plus people is part of the family of God.

What a good thing to remember on World Communion Sunday!

IN THE NAME OF THE CREATOR, CHRIST, AND HOLY SPIRIT...AMEN

STEWARDSHIP THOUGHT

Charles Alexander Eastman (1858-1939), Native American author

Children must early learn the beauty of generosity.

They are taught to give what they prize most, that they may taste the happiness of giving.

A Call to Worship for World Communion Sunday

Leader: Today we gather around God's table from near and far

People: We are the People of God!

Leader: Though we differ in language, custom, and tradition

People: We are brothers and sisters in Christ!

Leader: For there is one Lord, one faith, and one baptism

People: We are One in God's Spirit!

Leader: We are one and together we remember our Lord Jesus

People: For we are the people of Redemption!

Leader: He gave himself up for us, so we could be reconciled to God.

People: Come, let us worship the God of our Salvation!

World Communion Prayer of Confession

God of all nations, we give You thanks that we are all made in Your image, with such rich diversity. On this day we are in solidarity with the faithful around the world. As we break bread together, we remember that we are still one body in You, even though we have different languages, cultures and traditions, different ways of worship, praying and praising. In solidarity we drink the cup together of hope, of new life, knowing that Your will is for Your people to be one body. We are one body, but we are not the same—it is through the gift of diversity that we are able to be Your body. We thank You and praise You for making us all who we are, individually and collectively. We each celebrate our own ancestry, culture, and ethnicity.

Lord as we gather around this wonderful meal everywhere and in every place; bless us all your children.

As we eat this bread and drink this cup linking arms around the world, pour your grace into us all.

Grace us with your presence as we quietly and loudly pray to you.

Lord, on this world communion Sunday, help us examine our hearts so that we may pay proper respect to Christ's sacrifice on the cross. Thank you for offering reconciliation to all of humankind, the forgiveness of sins through Christ, our high priest.

Almighty and ever-present God, we confess our sins to you. We are truly sorry for our wrongdoings and shortcomings, for sins of commission and sins of omission. Forgive us, we pray, in Christ's name.

Empower us to serve you fully, to share the resources we have with those who have less, to weep with those who weep, and to laugh with those who laugh. Help us to be good stewards over the earth you have placed in our care; help us to unite in love and concern for one another, not just in our local community, but with brothers and sisters in all the world.

As we draw near to your holy table, we thank you, Lord, for providing the Bread of Life for us. As we partake, impart on us your grace and mercy, unite us with Christ, our Lord, and with one another. May your kingdom be established in all the earth. Amen.

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Invitation to the Table

World Communion Sunday

Friends, this is the joyful feast of unity.

Christ has gathered his people around the earth to commune at this table.

Across political lines and economic lines, in places of powerfully protected affluence, and among the poorest of the poor, we share a meal, remembering and celebrating the One who proved shalom possible.

And so, come: you from the East and you from the West, from the North and from the South.

Come.

Come with your doubts, come with your hopes, come with your inadequacies and with your strengths.

Come, for this is a table where all are invited, and all are welcome.

Prayer of the Day

God of Creation, Lord of our lives and our living:

Pour out your Holy Spirit on all gathered here, that we might be your light in the world.

Pour out your Holy Spirit on these gifts of bread and wine, that we might be infused with the gift of your nourishing guidance.

Transform us with your nourishing grace, even as we eat of this bread and drink of this wine. Transfigure us to be your presence in the world, even as we are redeemed and reclaimed by your great love.

By your Spirit, make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to the world, until Christ comes in final victory, and we feast at the heavenly banquet.

Through Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in your holy Church, all honor and glory is yours, almighty God, now and forever.

We will not find that needed justice in our apathy; we will not find that elusive wholeness with our quarreling;
we will not find our hoped-for unity with our doctrines; we will not find our misplaced love with our hating;
we will not find that rest we crave in our overflowing planners;
we will not find the peace you offer in our well nursed grudges.

but

we will find you in the brokenness of the Bread and in the breaking of our hearts;
we will find you when we drain the Cup, refill it with our gifts, and offer it to a little child;
we will find you when we squeeze closer together, making room at the Table
for all your people.

Help us to find you, Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer even as we pray together, saying,
*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.*

BREAD AND WINE

BENEDICTION

Blessings Upon You

adapted from a prayer by Margaret A. Davidson

Blessings upon you, upon those you love and those you shall never know.

Blessings upon your steps and upon the vision of your eyes.

Blessings upon you in all circumstances; joy and sorrow, for wisdom rests in them, twin experiences with different faces.

Blessings be upon what lies before you, the challenges and decisions, the pain, and the relief.

Blessings upon you, my friends in Christ.