

Communion Beyond Barriers

It is a delight to be able to serve such a warm, welcoming and diverse church. Sure, we have shortcomings, challenges and needs. But the *heart* of the congregation, the *character* of the congregation reflects the loving openness our Lord wants his people to display everywhere. And I am thankful.

As we look around at the people gathered for worship on Sunday morning we find individuals from numerous nations. We are drawn together by Jesus. And when we share together at the Lord's Table, he is present as the unseen host who calls us to eat and drink with him. But as we commune with bread and cup, we are united with brothers and sisters throughout the world who have also been invited to the Table by Jesus.

The first Sunday of October we are given a special reminder of the broadness of our family of faith as we celebrate World Communion Sunday. On this day Christians from nations and denominations around the world will gather in worship and explicitly acknowledge the oneness of the Church and the centrality of the Lord's Table in our life of faith.

Communion has always had a central role in Disciples of Christ worship services. Some versions of Christianity celebrate the Lord's Supper rarely but we believe it was the ancient practice to partake of it often. As we do so, we invite all who desire to draw closer to Jesus to participate. We remember the body of Jesus as we eat the bread and remember his blood as we drink of the cup.

But we don't just look to the past as we come to the Table. We look forward in hope as well. Jesus promised his disciples at the last supper that he would again eat and drink with his followers "in the kingdom of God" (Luke 22:18). The Lord's Supper is an occasion of joyful anticipation. It is a foretaste of the Messianic Banquet of eternal celebration with all who have been drawn close by God.

On World Communion Sunday we are reminded that our brothers and sisters in faith are near and far, made part of one family by faith, not by race, nationality or common language. A wonderful old hymn says,

In Christ there is no East or West,
In him no South or North,
But one great fellowship of love
Throughout the whole wide earth
In him shall true hearts everywhere
Their high communion find,
His service is the golden cord
Close-binding all humankind.

And that is the truth we need to proclaim, not just on World Communion Sunday, but every day of the year. It is a truth that breaks down barriers and opens the way of peace for all.