

Wesley United Methodist Church

October 4, 2015

"World Communion Sunday."

Table #1 Universal

Hymn #620, One Bread, One Body.

The hymn we just sang draws upon Gal. 3:28.

"There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer Slave or Free, there is no longer Male and Female, for all of you are one in Christ."

and 1 Cor. 12 One body with many members.

The communicants at this table choose one of the many breads upon the tray, symbolic of persons all over the world celebrating communion.

The size of a Communion table is usually determined by the number of people to be served at the size and architectural demands of the house of worship. But in a sense, the Communion table is always 24,901.55 miles long...for that is the circumference of the earth, and the Communion table reaches around the world. Thus, it symbolizes a God of love who embraces the whole earth and all that is within it.

Table #2 Asian Table Rice Cakes

Hymn: CD

Asians being unused to music as an expression of worship, hesitated in exploring this aspect of Xian Faith. Their acceptance of music evolved through three stages

1st They learned to appreciate music that communicated the messages of salvation and newness of life. It was foreign and primitive to them.

2nd It was a stage of imitation and adaptation - Asians learned to atune themselves to the Xian West.

3rd stage shows us liberated Asians who returned to their styles of music and tunes.

Many Asians will this day commune with rice or rice cookies.

Lord make us realize that our Christianity is like a rice field, that when it is newly planted, the paddies are prominent; but as the plants take root and grow taller, these dividing paddies gradually vanish, and soon there appears only one continuous field.

So give us roots of love and make us grow in Christian fellowship and service, so that thy will may be done in our lives, through our Savior, thy Son, Jesus Christ. Amen

Table #3 African Table Wheat Mush

Hymn #625, Come, Let Us Eat

This West African hymn is a teaching tool; The uninitiated are instructed and the faithful are reminded of the proper actions when celebrating Communion.

This hymn text is based on 1 Cor. 5:7-8 Christ sacrificed his life for us. He is like new yeast, not old yeast of malice and evil, but the bread of sincerity and truth.

Christians in Africa will symbolically partake of Christ's body as they eat the wheat mush.

"God took our heads out." But how do you say 'God redeemed us so that your Bambara tribesmen can understand? a missionary inquired earnestly of his West African translation helper. "Why, we say God took our heads out," was the strange reply.

Then this Bambara man explained about the once long lines of lash-driven men and women wearily walking to the coast, with a chain leading from one slave's iron collar to the next. At times, in the villages through which these lines passed, a local chief or king might see some

friend and want to redeem him--thus taking his head out of the iron collar. This he could do if he paid the Arabs enough gold, silver, brass or ivory."

"God took our heads out" when he gave his only Son. The ultimate price for our redemption--Redeemed by his blood!

Table #4 Hispanic Table Tortillas

Hymn # 637 "Una Espiga" (Leaves of Summer)

This beautiful communion hymn from Spain, by Cesareo Gabarain, is a favorite in Latin American and Hispanic churches in the United States. Moreover, it has been translated into forty languages and sung all around the world and has special meaning in ecumenical communion celebrations.

Tortilla is the common bread of those of Hispanic heritage.

The Old Testament provided that the Jews who were too poor to bring a blood offering could bring a memorial of flour. At Communion we stand beside a memorial of flour. For we are poor. Materially we are rich, but spiritually we are poor. So we bring our little memorial of flour, and God blesses it and makes it the token of his Son's offering of blood.

Table #5 European Table German Bread

Hymn #102, "Now Thank We All Our God"

Composer, Rev. Martin Rinkart was a chorister as a boy in the famous Thomas Church in Leipzig where Bach was later musical director. A graduate of Leipzig University, he became schoolmaster in Eisleben, rose through Deacon and Pastor to Bishop in Eilenberg. Since Eilenberg was a walled city, it was a refuge for fugitives from far and near during the 30-year-war from 1618 through 1648. The town became over-crowded and unsanitary, it suffered from famine and disease during the great pestilence of 1637. Officials and clergy in the town either died or ran away, left Rinkart to care for the dead. He read the burial service over 40 to 50 persons a day. The 8000 persons who died included Rinkart's wife.

With all his responsibilities he was a musician and a prolific writer. Rinkart, his body worn out, died at the age of 63. The song, "Nun Danket Alle Gott," "Now Thank We all Our God," was originally titled "Tisch Gebetlein," or a "short Grace before meals."

The German hymn encourages us to be thankful to God with all our being. The lyrics taken for this song are found in Sirach 50:22-24.

22. And now bless the Lord of all, who everywhere works great wonders, who fosters our growth from birth, and deals with us according to his mercy.

23. May he give us gladness of heart, and may there be peace in our days!

24. May he entrust to us his mercy, and may he deliver us in our days!

This bread, baked the same way for centuries, is a common bread in European countries. Drinking in the spiritual life of Christ, promises us we will never hunger or thirst again.

Table #6 Scandinavian Table Sweet Bread

Hymn #502 "Thy Holy Wings, O Savior." Quartett

A Swedish Folk Tune, the lyrics taken from four different verses from four different Psalms.

Psalm 91:4 under his wings you will find refuge

Psalm 76:26 God is my strength and portion forever

Psalm 119:164 You are my hiding place

Psalm 61:10 Create in me a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me

1 Peter 3:18-22 Leads our focus to baptism and reminds us of God's saving act through

*Noah and the flood. Ultimately praying that through the good and ill
Jesus experienced we may rest securely.*

As Scandinavians have Danish or sweet breads as common daily diet - symbolically, we feed on Christ's body now--

We pray that God will create clean hearts in us as he has filled our cups.

Table #7 Native American Table Corn Bread

Hymn #148 "Many and Great, O God." (both verses)

This Dakota hymn from the Dakota Odowan (the Dakota Hymn Book) of the Northern Mississippi Valley is widely known and sung in the United States. YWCA groups in the first two decades of the twentieth century sang this hymn in the original language.

We have just sung in the second verse that we might have communion with God. Native Americans in the Southwest celebrate Christ's body with cornbread or fried Indian bread.

*God of grape and God of grain, God of sun and God of rain
God of laughter, God of pain, God who let his Son be slain.
God of mercy, God of grace, God of time, and God of space,
God of cross and hidden face, God who has not left this place.
God of life and God of light, God of peace yet God of might,
God who rose from deaths' dark night, God who reigns beyond our sight.
In this bread and in this wine here we join with thee to dine,
at this table let us find strength to let thy light to shine. Richard C. Brand, Jr.*

Table #8 Russian Table Dark Bread

Hymn: "Heavenly Light."

Andrew Kopylov an Imperialist Russian Composer and Violinist was the composer of Heavenly Light. Arranged by Peter J. Wilhousky, an American of Russian descent also most known for the Christmas song "Carol of the Bells.

Words to Anthem:

Sent from heaven, thy rays were given on great and small to shine, O Light Divine! May each soul in sorrows night see the heavenly light!

Thou blessing to all creation, lead us to our salvation! All those whose feet may falter, lead us to thy sacred altar! Oh shine from above, Divine Light of Love! Show us the way unto our God, we pray! Thou our beacon and guide shalt be! Light Divine, we praise thee!

I assume this would have originally been sung in the Russian Orthodox Churches, a break-off from Roman Catholicism, and earlier in history, the State Church.

A common bread of the Russians and Ukrainians, would be a dark bread.

The dark bread has wonderful Christian significance. As a guest in someone's house, they would offer you the dark bread with salt on a plate. We know the biblical significance of being the salt of the earth. The host without saying a word, just the gesture of offering you the bread and salt was saying, all that we have, we offer to you while you're in our home. As God offers us bread and wine, God also is saying - I give you my all.

Table #9 Pacific Islands Coconut

Proverb Tongan Proverb by Saiosi Prescott

The Pacific Island people are surrounded by the ocean. Therefore, the ocean presents two different things: 1. *The unending-boundless love of God.*

2. also though; the ocean is so deep and dark; there are many dangers about it. The ocean can also represent that the world's ways is swallowing us up. As we submerge ourselves in it's vastness; we can be terribly lost, alone, and terrified. But when we perceive the ocean as God's love, it can uplift us, renew our hope in others, ourselves and in the world. For a Pacific Islander to look upon the ocean as God's unending love is to fill one's heart with joy. A new tradition of celebrating and partaking of Christ's body is to eat coconut which is such a common food of the people.

A story shared by Taka Finau stated that before the missionaries came to the Islands - as a tribal people they celebrated once a year a sacred offering called "Inasi." All tribal people would prepare for nearly two months for this festival. All that you acquired materialistically (fish, baskets, fishnets, coconuts, harvest of crops) was brought and given to the Chiefs. You didn't keep anything for yourself. Your Chief would provide. So when Xianty arrived on the Islands, it was not a difficult transition. Worshiping a God who would sacrifice his Son and give all to his people.

People are invited to come forth and partake of Holy Communion

Hymn: #618 Let us Break Bread Together v. 3

An elderly man, Anton, who had lost his zest for life, decided to end it soon. Nothing in life was pleasant anymore. He struggled with his every day chores. Having lost most of his friends through the years; he was really in bad shape. No family member was able to care for him as they all lived in distant cities. So Anton decided to enjoy one last meal and then go to sleep for ever. As he prepared his dinner, he heard a voice outside his door. He went to look and found a young child standing there in the early dusk asking for a slice of bread.

Anton, who didn't think it would hurt, invited the child in to share his food with him. When he put things together to make the meal special he noticed that he loved caring for the child and he wanted to do his best to feed him. A delicious aroma filled the house. He enjoyed the feeling he experienced caring for someone. Forgotten was the thought of making this his last day in life, forgotten was the feeling of hopelessness. Together they sat at the table and ate the meal; and the man enjoyed the pleasantness of the company. After the child ate, he thanked Anton and he left. The chores of cleaning up were no struggle for Anton and he even smiled when he sat in his rocking chair.

It was soon after that he heard a voice calling his name. He was frightened but answered the call. "Anton, I want to thank you for feeding me tonight." "Who are you, and why do you speak to me like this?" "I am the child that came to your door when you were in utter hopelessness. I am the Christ who loves you and wants you to help feed the hungry children of your city." "But Lord, I don't have the means to feed them." "Yes, you do, Anton, as I will supply them. Never shall you be hopeless anymore and never shall there be a hungry child leaving your doorstep."

Anton, who thought it was only a dream, noticed that his cabinets were filled with supplies and that he actually looked forward to the next day to help feed the hungry children of the city. Later that evening he humbly bowed his head and thanked God for giving him a new purpose in life.