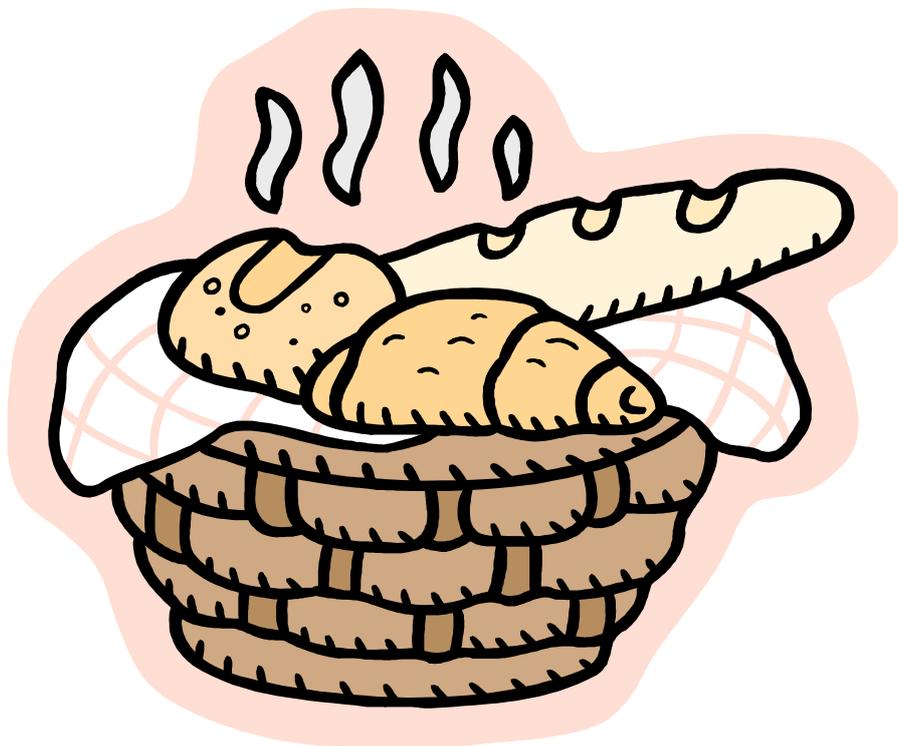


A GENEROUS COMMUNION



**Published by the Worship Panel
of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches**



2008

Introduction

Communion comes from the same root as community. A communion service should have at its heart a sense of oneness not only with the Divine but with one another as members of a worshipping community. As we prepared this service for the 1995 General Assembly Meetings, while being faithful to the Judaeo-Christian tradition in which the communion meal is rooted, we made this connection between communion and community our guiding principle.

Recognizing that some Unitarians might choose to exclude themselves, we aimed to make the service as inclusive as possible of the range of Unitarian positions and concerns. We aimed also to be inclusive of men and women equally, of attenders with physical disabilities and of the varied cultural backgrounds of those who like to attend. Finally, we sought to keep the worshippers connected with the wider community (in our case, all the others attending the G.A. Annual Meetings) and the wider world.

The Worship Panel has now decided to make our service available in print to worship leaders for use either as a whole or as a basis on which to build a communion better suited to the styles and traditions of their local groups.

Our material came from numerous sources, mainly Unitarian. In particular, we drew on *The Communion Book* (Carl Seaburg ed., Unitarian Universalist Ministers' Association, 1993) and *Celebrating Life* (Andrew Hill ed., Lindsey Press, 1993). We recommend these two source books to anyone wanting additional material.

Joy Croft and Andrew Hill

What You Will Need for this Service

- Two celebrants, A and B, whose parts are indicated here, although one person could take both parts
- Someone to read the passage from John's Gospel (titled "Ministry of the Word")
- A table, although the floor will do in an informal setting
- A tablecloth, a goblet or chalice (earthenware or silver), a bread basket (or silver plate), a napkin, a bottle of red wine or fruit juice and a loaf of wholemeal bread
- Two or three helpers to set the table and to help with the sharing of bread and wine
- A copy for everyone of the words to be said together (photocopy the last page of this booklet), or those words can be repeated, line by line, after one of the celebrants.

A GENEROUS COMMUNION

1 Preparation

Ingathering

A

We, whose journeys are always beginning, We, whose mission always awaits us,
We, whose visions are bent on loving, We gather here this morning.

We gather as a community drawn together out of common need,
each carrying our own carpet bag of treasures and dreams.
We gather together seeking our own meanings,
yearning for life in all its dimensions –
as it challenges and expands, as it burdens, as it consoles and heals.

We gather in these moments to drink from a common cup and share a common loaf.
We come here for communion,
to create a community of our diverse and individual selves with God at its heart.

B

Let us take a few quiet moments now to reflect on our coming here today:
on the joys and sorrows we bring with us, on our hopes and fears,
on senses of achievement - let us enjoy them, on doubts and perplexities
let us acknowledge them and give them space here and now, in the silence . . .

Let us be aware too of who we are:
each of us a unique mind and spirit in this community of free faith,
each with a separate perspective, each with particular gifts to give,
each with a different reason for being here.
Let us reflect on this here and now, in the silence . . .

We, whose journeys are always beginning, we, whose mission always awaits us,
We, whose visions are bent on loving, we are gathered now.

Adapted from *Exaltation*, UUA, 1987

Hymn

*During the singing the table is laid with a white cloth and with bread and wine or fruit juice.
The wine or fruit juice may be visibly poured from its bottle into the goblet or chalice.*

- 1) Life is the greatest gift of all the riches of this earth;
Life and its creatures, great and small, of high and lowly birth:
So treasure it and measure it with deeds of shining worth.
- 2) We are of life, its shining gift, the measure of all things;
Up from the dust our temples lift, our vision soars on wings;
For seed and root, for flower and fruit, our grateful spirit sings.

3) Mind is the brightest gift of all, its thought no barrier mars;
Seeking creation's hidden plan, its quest surmounts all bars;
It reins the wind, it chains the storm, it weighs the outmost stars.

4) Love is the highest gift of life, our glory and our good;
Kindred and friend, husband and wife, it flows in golden flood;
So, hand in hand, from land to land, spread sister-brotherhood.

Hymns for Living no. 249

Confession

A

The promise of God's commonwealth is before us. Yet despite this promise, we are frail creatures, bound to history and place, subject to errors and limitations. Let us speak to one another of our common struggle to be whole.

Everyone

We speak of love;
Sometimes we are loving, sometimes we are not.

We speak of peace;
Sometimes-we are peaceful; sometimes we are not.

We seek community but may find alienation.
We seek integrity but may find fragmentation.
Sometimes we are lonely, sometimes we are lost.

Search me, O God, and know my heart. Test me, and know my thoughts.
See if there be any hurtful way in me. And guide me in the way everlasting.

Sharing the Peace

B

The mystery is that we are connected, even when we feel apart. Let us make word and deed one now, as we remember the ancient words:

If you are bringing your gift to the altar and there remember that your neighbour has something against you, leave your gift before the altar, first be reconciled with your neighbour and then come and offer your gift.

Matthew 5:23-41

Everyone

Our gift is our presence here. Our neighbour is represented by those who are around us. So let us make peace with our neighbours.

People move around, greeting one another - by word, hand clasp, kiss or hug as feels appropriate.

Prayer of Jesus *said by everyone*

God, lover of us all, most holy one,
Help us to respond to you, to create what you want for us here on earth
Give us today enough for our needs; forgive our weak and deliberate offence,
just as we forgive others when they hurt us.
Help us to resist evil and to do what is good;
for we are yours, endowed with your power to make us whole. Amen

from *Celebrating Life*

2 THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

Reader

Jesus looked up and saw a large crowd coming toward him. He said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?" One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?" Jesus said, "Make the people sit down." Now there was a great deal of grass in the place so they sat down, about five thousand in all. Then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated, so also the fish, as much as they wanted.

John 6:5,8-11

3 MINISTRY OF THE TABLE

Prayer of Thanksgiving

At the appropriate words B breaks the bread () and raises the cup (**).*

A

All glory be to you Creative Spirit, from whom we receive life and all the fruits of the earth. Spirit of holiness and truth, who nourishes our souls, be a light within our hearts, a quickener of righteousness, a fire of devotion, a blessing of peace, a song of joy.

We rejoice that many of the children of earth manifest your light and grace. And especially we give thanks and praise for Jesus's word of truth and his spirit of love, who, the same night on which he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, break it and said:

* This is my body which is broken for you; this do in remembrance of me.

And after the same manner also took the cup when he had supped saying:

** This cup is the New Testament of my blood; this do as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.

Wherefore, O Life of Life, we too would be your servants, offering here not alone thanksgiving, but also labour and love, praying a blessing upon our offering that we may be cleansed and strengthened in spirit, and so bring forth new fruits of generous living.

B

We remember, in this our communion, the multitudes joined with us by faith in the spirit of Christ and other multitudes also of other names, seeking the truth.

We remember the needy of body or spirit, wherever they may be in all the world. We remember the whole human family, of every tribe and kindred and tongue. We remember the whole community of the living earth.

May your presence in the hearts of all beings lead us together to new heights of fellowship, peace, and joy.

Adapted from *Celebrating Life*

Invitation to the Table

A

Wisdom has set her table.

Come eat of my bread and drink of the wine I have mixed.

Lay aside immaturity, and live, and walk in the way of insight.

Proverbs 9:2,5-6

Sharing the Bread and Wine

The sharing is most effective when people serve their neighbours. Large pieces of bread may be passed around, from which each recipient can break a smaller piece. People should also be given permission simply to pass the bread and wine without eating and drinking. Helpers should be ready to assist as necessary.

People may either choose their own words when sharing bread and wine with their neighbour, or use these suggested words, or share silently.

"The bread of life."

"The cup of blessing."

After Sharing the Bread and Wine

Everyone

To live we must daily break the body and shed the blood of creation.

When we do this ignorantly, greedily, clumsily and destructively it is desecration.

When we do it knowingly, lovingly, skilfully and reverently it is sacrament.

Wendell Berry

4 CLOSING

Departing Prayer *introduced and led by **B***

Everyone

God of joy, you have called us to serve you. Grant that we may walk in your presence: your love in our hearts, your truth in our minds, your strength in our wills. Until, at the end of our journey, we know the joy of our homecoming and the welcome of your embrace.

in Christ's spirit, Amen

from *Celebrating Life*

Hymn

- 1) God who is everywhere present on earth,
No one can picture completely;
Yet to the eye of the faithful she comes
And shows herself always uniquely.

Singing or sad, weeping or glad
Such are the glimpses of God that we're given.
Laughter and cheers, anger and tears
These we inherit from earth and from heaven.

- 2) Shrouded in smoke or else high on a hill,
Quaking with nature's own violence,
Thus was the Lord found, frightening his folk,
But later he met them in silence.

Singing or sad . . .

- 3) God is the father who teaches his child
Wisdom and values to cherish;
God is the mother who watches her young
And never will let her child perish.

Singing or sad . . .

- 4) Spear in the hand or with tears on the cheek,
Monarch and shepherd and lover:
Many the faces that God calls her own
And many we've yet to discover.

Singing or sad . . .

Let us Sing no. 14

Blessing

A

Christ has no body now on earth but ours,
No hands but ours, no feet but ours.

Ours are the eyes through which Christ's compassion looks out to the world,
Ours are the feet with which Christ goes about doing good
and ours are the hands with which Christ blesses us now.

Attributed to Teresa of Avila

Dismissal

B

When the people were satisfied, Jesus told his disciples, "Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost."

So they gathered them up, and from the fragments of the five barley loaves left by those who had eaten, they filled twelve baskets.

John 6:12-13

After the General Assembly communion service, people took pieces of the remaining broken bread out with them to share with the wider community of delegates and friends.

Alternative Hymns from *Hymns of Faith and Freedom*

1. "Lift up your hearts!" no. 282 or "Spirit divine, attend our prayer" no. 175
2. "He whom the master loved has truly spoken" no. 190

Also, "To Worship Rightly" *Hymns for Living* no. 191

A GENEROUS COMMUNION

Words to Be Said by Everyone

Confession

We speak of love; sometimes we are loving, sometimes we are not.
We speak of peace; sometimes we are peaceful, sometimes we are not.
We seek community but may find alienation. We seek integrity but may find fragmentation.
Sometimes we are lonely, sometimes we are lost.

Search me, O God, and know my heart, test me, and know my thoughts.
See if there be any hurtful way in me, and guide me in the way everlasting.

Sharing the Peace

Our gift is our presence here. Our neighbour is represented by those who are around us.
So let us make peace with our neighbours.

People move around, greeting one another - by word, hand clasp, kiss or hug as feels appropriate.

Prayer of Jesus

God, lover of us all, most holy one,
help us to respond to you, to create what you want for us here on earth.
Give us today enough for our needs;
Forgive our weak and deliberate offence, just as we forgive others when they hurt us.
Help us to resist evil and to do what is good;
for we are yours, endowed with your power to make us whole. Amen

After Sharing the Bread and Wine

To live we must daily break the body and shed the blood of creation.
When we do this ignorantly, greedily, clumsily and destructively it is desecration.
When we do it knowingly, lovingly, skillfully and reverently it is sacrament.

Departing Prayer

God of joy, you have called us to serve you. Grant that we may walk in your presence:
your love in our hearts, your truth in our minds, your strength in our wills. Until, at the
end of our journey, we know the joy of our homecoming and the welcome of your
embrace. In Christ's spirit, Amen