

A charter boat captain in Ft. Myers said yesterday, "You know, boats are supposed to be in the water, not in parking lots." His boat is severely damaged. Yesterday the number of lives lost to Hurricane Ian continued to rise. Yesterday was also President Jimmy Carter's 97th birthday. He was not noted for being one of the most effective presidents of our country, but he is noted for his and his wife's humble humanitarian actions towards others for at least the past four decades. And yesterday we raised funds to support Thomaston's food pantry. The news, from beyond our local borders, and right around town, is a jumble of tragedy, celebration, and grit....

It's World Communion Sunday – around the world. I'll be talking about that in my sermon this morning. As we continue to try to "hold things together" just as the creators of the idea of World Communion Sunday envisioned, it is easy to become disillusioned with our progress toward any sort of unity, goodwill or charity towards those with whom we believe we have little in common. It is easy to become cynical in the midst of the meanspiritedness that feels like a deadening and life-sucking force in our midst. It is easy to feel useless in the face of horrifying and life taking natural disasters like Hurricane Ian. But we have to keep trying.... to "hold things together" for the sake of the children, for ourselves. It's not easy to keep one's chin up each day. It's not easy to be hopeful in the midst of such disarray all around us for too many reasons. But we must, for this reason – we're all in the same boat, whether we like it or not, whether we like one another or not, whether we feel helpless or not, whether we dread what is approaching in these coming months of political disarray and disagreement, or in the midst of tragedies yet to be played out all around us, near and far....

Let us "hold things together" together, o.k.? We can't get through all of the above alone. We have to remember Thomas Merton's words each day, "We're not alone, we only imagine that we are."

Blessings to each one this early October morn.... Susan
p.s. I will attempt to get my sermon posted later today on both my Facebook page, freerangepastor, and the church's Facebook page, the federated church of Thomaston.... Stay tuned.....

"Take this and divide it among yourselves"
A Sermon for the Federated Church of Thomaston
Thomaston, Maine
Sunday, October 3, 2021

Rev. Dr. Susan Stonestreet
Scripture: Luke 22:14-20

When the hour came, [Jesus] took his place at the table, and the apostles with him. He said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I tell you, I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he said, "Take this and divide it among yourselves; for I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to [the apostles], saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood."

Luke 22:14-20

Will you pray with me. Bountiful and nourishing God, unite us in the hearing, the understanding and the sharing of the acting out of Jesus' last meal with his disciples. Sharpen our openness to the power of communion in our lives together. Lead us into new and renewed ways of offering compassion and hospitality to all who come to seek out your sustenance in this faith community. Show us how to take the cup and the bread that are Jesus Christ enfleshed and divide them among ourselves and with others in new ways. Amen.

This morning our focus is on holy communion, not only because we will share in the holy meal today, as we usually do on the first Sunday of the month.... but because it is World Communion Sunday, around the world today. I did a little research this week to find out how this day in the Christian church came about. It was "a gift of the Presbyterian Church to the larger ecumenical church. The first celebration occurred at Shadyside Presbyterian Church in Pittsburgh, PA, in 1933 where Dr. Hugh Thompson Kerr served as pastor.

John A. Dalles, a PCUSA [Presbyterian] pastor who has researched the history of World Communion Sunday noted in 2002 that "David S. Bell (the late Clerk of Session and church historian at Shadyside) recalled that Dr. Kerr first conceived the notion of World Communion Sunday during his year as moderator of the General Assembly in 1930. [His son], the Rev. Dr. Donald Craig Kerr, was sixteen in 1933. He has related that World Communion Sunday grew out of the Division of Stewardship at Shadyside. It was their attempt to bring churches together in a service of Christian unity – in which everyone might receive both

inspiration and information, and above all, to know how important the Church of Jesus Christ is and how each congregation is interconnected one with another.

The concept spread very slowly at the start. People did not give it a whole lot of thought. [Rev. Kerr's son continues,] it was during the Second World War that the spirit caught hold, because we were trying to hold the world together. World Wide Communion symbolized the effort to hold things together, in a spiritual sense. It emphasized that we are one in the Spirit and the Gospel of Jesus Christ." (www.presbyterianmission.org)

And aren't we struggling to hold things together now.... the Covid pandemic with over one million dead in our country alone, political in-fighting and between political parties, social unrest, violence of all kinds, natural disasters like Hurricane Ian to our south just this past week.... Can't we get a break here somewhere? Apparently not. And so it seems all we can do is try to "hold things together" as best we can.

Our church yard sales are a good example of our holding things together for the sake of others in our community. Supporting the needs of the local food pantry, like we did yesterday, is another good example of our doing whatever we can to help hold things together for others. Hosting Thanksgiving dinners for those who are alone or just want to share a good meal with total strangers is yet another good example of our attempting to "hold things together."

Wanting to try to "hold things together" is why Dr. Kerr came up with the idea of World Communion Sunday in 1933. At that time it was an experiment in trying to "hold things together" among all the Christian denominations of the day. Today World Communion Sunday is still an experiment in trying to "hold things together" not only in Christian churches, but in this crazy, stress filled, exhausting, angry and sick time we are experiencing.

Holy communion is an act, an action that does something, or rather has the power to do something if we are open to that happening. In the act of holy communion we believe Christ lives. In our sharing in that act Christ lives in us. Jesus lived and ate with his companions. He died at the hands of those who would *not* hear his message from God. He lives in us in *our* hearing of his message and in our eating at his holy table, whenever we come together to share in the blessing of the sustenance we receive from being the church of Jesus Christ together.

My favorite theologian and writer, Frederick Buechner, wrote of holy communion, "To eat any meal together is to meet at the level of our most basic

need. It is hard to preserve your dignity with butter on your chin, or to keep your distance when asking for the tomato ketchup. To eat this particular meal together is to meet at the level of our most basic humanness, which involves our need not just for food but for each other. I need you to help fill my emptiness just as you need me to help fill yours. As for the emptiness that's still left over, well, we're in it together, or it in us. Maybe it's most of what makes us human and makes us brothers and sisters."¹¹

When we have communion I am always reminded of Maggie, a young member of the church I served in Lincolnville. I ran into her mother in Staples the other day and she told me Maggie is about to get her driver's license! But when she was about six or so I remember her announcing to the whole congregation on a communion Sunday, as the elements were being served, first, "Here comes the bread!" And then she pronounced, "Here comes the drink!"

And isn't it true? At its most authentic level holy communion gives us the opportunity each month to remember how important it is to share the bread and the drink together. And this particular Sunday, the first Sunday of October, we have the opportunity to experience this holy bread and drink with every Christian around the world sharing each in their own style, their own language, and their own "bread and drink."

In our text for today, the story of the telling of the first holy communion, Jesus invites his disciples to share bread and wine with him. The verse that most stands out for me is 22:17, "Take this and divide it among yourselves..." We are not to covet what we have and keep it from others. We are to share. We are to invite everyone and anyone to join us for worship and service.

We are to have "lawn sales" for the benefit of those whose needs are so much greater than our own. We are to raise funds for the food pantry so those who don't have enough food to feed their families can be assured of being able to serve nourishing meals to their children. We are to host a Thanksgiving meal for those who hunger for more than turkey and mashed potatoes, but for connection, for fellowship, for belonging, even if only a little while.

You see, here's the bottom line of what it means to be people of faith -- it's all about the food -- the food of all kinds that we are called to share with others. We are to divide what we have among others as we try to "hold things together" as best we can in this challenging, scary and exhausting time.

Perhaps a prayer we could be saying to ourselves and to one another is this, “Dear God, help us to hold things together” on this World Communion Sunday and every day of our lives....

Let the people say, “Amen.”

Federated Church in Thomaston
United Church of Christ United Methodist Church
All Are Welcome
Sunday, October 2, 2022 – World Communion Sunday

Rev. Dr. Susan Stonestreet, Pastor Alice Billheimer, Organist/ Choir Director
Lector: Julie Brooks

Please be respectfully silent once our worship service has begun.

An asterisk () indicates where you are invited to stand.*

***Bold print** indicates that the people speak these responses & prayers.*

GATHERING FOR WORSHIP

Welcome and Announcements

Prelude Fill My Cup, Lord -- hymn arrangement by Edward Broughton

Call to Worship

Leader: We come together with Christians around the world this day to share in Holy Communion!

People: We come together seeking fellowship with one another and longing for the day it may be so for all people.

All: We come together with faith, hope and love, and the greatest of these is love. Let us Worship God!

***Opening Hymn** “This Is My Father’s World” 144 Blue hymnal

A Moment of Silence

Responsive Reading “Faith is a gift of God” (see bookmark insert)

SERVICE OF THE WORD

Scripture Reading Luke 22:14-20

***Gloria Patri No. 70 Glory Be to the Father....**

Message "Take this and divide it among yourselves" Rev. Dr. Susan Stonestreet

***Hymn of Meditation** "Let Us Break Bread Together" 618 Blue Hymnal

RESPONDING IN FAITH

Sharing Our Joys and Concerns with God and Each Other

Pastoral Prayer & The Lord's Prayer.....

Our Father who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on Earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever, Amen.

Offertory Peace within my Soul

***Prayer of Dedication**

***Doxology No. 95 Blue "Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow...."**

Service of Holy Communion for World Communion Sunday (see insert)

***Closing Hymn** "How Great Thou Art" 77 Blue Hymnal

Benediction

Postlude Musette" -- J. S. Bach

Revised Common Lectionary Readings for Sunday, October 9, 2022
Jeremiah 29:1, 4-7; Psalm 66:1-12; 2 Timothy 2:8-15; Luke 17:11-10

Prayer List -- Hold in your prayers all those affected by the corona virus and the families of those who have died from the virus.... And all those families affected by the use of addictive drugs and alcohol among their members.... And all those dealing with the ravages of cancer near and far.... And all those living through the aftermath of Hurricane Ian....

Please hold in your prayers all those affected by the coronavirus and the families of those who have died from the virus..And all those families affected by the use of addictive drugs among their members And all those dealing with the ravages of cancer near and far..And all those affected, which should be every one of us, by the cruel condition of racism which continues to take the lives of too many of our Black brothers and sisters..And all those who have worked tirelessly for the building and rebuilding of our nation into one people, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all And, from Jackie a request for prayers for Kyle Cloudier..and for Parker's daughter, who has had brain surgery and is home now!; Enid, Ann Foster, Carol Moss, Julie Pollitt, Zeke Bryant, John Flaherty,

Heather Van Buskirk, and for Tiffany, Lucy’s granddaughter... And for Arlene from NH..And for Rev. Wayne Sawyer, And for Amber Thomas.... And for James Armstrong and family...And Dale O’Neal (Kristen O’Neal’s husband who has tonsil cancer). And Jeffrey Northgraves who is receiving treatment for lung cancer.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Thursday-10/6/22.....10:00 am -1:00 pm: Quilters
Friday-Saturday-10/7 – 8/22.....Kairos
Sunday-10/9/22.....9:30 am: Worship Service
Suggested Food Pantry Donation.....Canned Vegetables

The flowers for the Alter this week are given by Arlene and Chandler Woodman in loving memory of parents, sisters and brothers.

Deacon for October: Galo J. Hernandez III

Reminders for next Sunday, 10/9/22
Greeter/Usher: Kathleen Anderson
Lector: Arlene Woodman

Flowers:
Collection Total for Sunday, September 25, 2022:
Pledges - \$130.00
Loose - \$ 68.00
Total - \$198.00

The 2022 weekly budgeted operating cost for the Church and parsonage is \$1623.00 per week.

**Federated Church of Thomaston
United Church of Christ
&
United Methodist Church
Together Since 1929**

Sunday, October 2, 2022
World Communion Sunday

8 Hylar Street, Thomaston, Maine 04861 (207) 354-6105
To contact the pastor via e-mail: freerangepastor@gmail.com
WiFi password is #1Church

^[1]Frederick Buechner, *Wishful Thinking, A Seeker's ABC*, New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1973, 1993, p. 63-64.