

**World Communion Sunday & Taize Service**  
**Compiled by Co-Pastor Susanne Guenther Loewen**  
**NPMC – October 3, 2021**

**Readings and Songs**

**Prayer**

God, our Mother and Father,  
You have given us this earth rich and vibrant.  
Its renewing life sustains us.  
Its unfailing goodness nourishes us.  
Blessed be your name.

Jesus, our Saviour and Healer,  
You ate with friends and enemies.  
At a meal you brought the gift of hope.  
At a meal you gave the word of life.  
Blessed be your name.

Spirit, our Comforter and Disturber,  
You do not leave us on our own.  
Here are companions to know our joy.  
Here are companions to share our sorrow.  
Blessed be your name.<sup>1</sup> AMEN

**Proverbs 9:1-6:**

“Wisdom has built her house,  
she has hewn her seven pillars.  
She has slaughtered her animals, she has mixed her wine,  
she has also set her table.  
She has sent out her servant-girls, she calls  
from the highest places in the town,  
“You that are simple, turn in here!”  
To those without sense she says,  
“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.”

***Song: In the Lord I'll be Ever Thankful – VT 118***

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from: Graham Sparkes and Anthea Sully (England), “Agape Liturgy” in *Gifts in Open Hands: More Worship Resources for the Global Community*, ed. Maren Tirabassi and Kathy Wonson Eddy (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2011), 140-143.

**John 6:5-13:**

<sup>5</sup> When he looked up and saw a large crowd coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, “Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?” <sup>6</sup> He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do. <sup>7</sup> Philip answered him, “Six months’ wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little.” <sup>8</sup> One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, said to him, <sup>9</sup> “There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?” <sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> 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. <sup>12</sup> When they were satisfied, he told his disciples, “Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost.” <sup>13</sup> So they gathered them up, and from the fragments of the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten, they filled twelve baskets.

**A Hymn of the *Ausbund*:**

In Europe in the 1500s, the early Anabaptists faced persecution and martyrdom for their beliefs. While in prison, many passed the time composing and singing hymns to encourage themselves and others to stay true to their faith. Singing through prison bars was another way of peacefully resisting the violence being done to them, reflecting a defiant hope in the God of Life. These became known as the hymns of the *Ausbund*. One such hymn from 1564 speaks of Communion this way:

“Just as one bread [is made] from many kernels,  
And one drink from many berries [or grapes]  
So all true Christians  
Are one bread and one drink . . .  
In Christ the Lord. He nourishes us,  
Multiplying true love and communion.”<sup>2</sup>

What a beautiful image: our individual stories and experiences being mixed and baked together like kernels of wheat into bread, or pressed together like many grapes and aged into wine. Christ really is present at this Table. Christ is present and alive in us, the beloved, gathered members of the Body of Christ.

***Song: Taste and See – VT 467*****John 6:30-35:**

So they said to him, “What sign are you going to give us then, so that we may see it and believe you? What work are you performing?” <sup>31</sup> Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’” <sup>32</sup> Then Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. <sup>33</sup> For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” <sup>34</sup> They said to him, “Sir, give us this bread always.”

<sup>35</sup> Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.”

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<sup>2</sup> From Hymn 55, stanza 23 of the *Ausbund* hymnal (early 1500s), quoted in C. Arnold Snyder, *Following in the Footsteps of Christ: The Anabaptist Tradition* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2004), 102. See also 103.

### **A reading from Sara Miles:**

“Early one winter, ... I walked into St. Gregory’s Episcopal Church in San Francisco. I had no earthly reason to be there. I’d never heard a Gospel reading, never said the Lord’s Prayer. I was certainly not interested in becoming a Christian... We sat down and stood up and sang, and it was all pretty peaceful and sort of interesting. ‘Jesus invites everyone to his table,’ the woman announced, and we started moving up in a stately dance to the table in the rotunda. It had some dishes on it, and a pottery goblet.

And then we gathered around that table. And there was more singing and standing, and someone was putting a piece of crumbly bread in my hands, saying, ‘the body of Christ,’ and handing me the goblet of sweet wine, saying, ‘the blood of Christ, and then something outrageous and terrifying happened. Jesus happened to me.’<sup>3</sup>

“Eating Jesus cracked my world open and made me hunger to keep sharing food with other people. That desire took me to an altar, at St. Gregory of Nyssa Episcopal Church ..., where I helped break the bread for Holy Communion, then to a food pantry that I set up around the same altar, where we gave away free groceries to anyone who showed up. . . . Soon they began to feed and take care of each other, then run things, then start other pantries. It was my first experience in discovering that regular people could do Jesus’ work.”<sup>4</sup>

*Song: Eat this Bread, Drink this Cup – VT 476*

### **John 21:9-14:**

<sup>9</sup> When [the disciples] had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread.

<sup>10</sup> Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish that you have just caught.” <sup>11</sup> So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred fifty-three of them; and though there were so many, the net was not torn. <sup>12</sup> Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.” Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, “Who are you?” because they knew it was the Lord.

<sup>13</sup> Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. <sup>14</sup> This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

### **A traditional Jewish proverb:**

“Rabbi Mendel wanted to know what heaven and hell looked like, so Elijah took him to show him. Elijah led him to a large room where a big fire was burning and where there was a large table with a huge pot of steaming soup on it. Around the table sat people with long spoons that were longer than their arms, and because the people could not eat with these spoons, they sat around the table and starved. Rabbi Mendel found this room and what he saw there so terrible that he quickly ran outside.” . . . “Then Elijah took Rabbi Mendel to heaven and into another room where a big fire was burning and where there was a large table with a big pot of steaming soup on it. And around this table sat people with the same [long] spoons, but they did not have to starve because they were feeding each other.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Sara Miles, *Take This Bread: A Radical Conversion* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2007), 57-58.

<sup>4</sup> Sara Miles, *Jesus Freak*, xi.

<sup>5</sup> Retold in: Dorothee Soelle, *Strength of Weak* (Fortress Press), 159-60.

## **And the Table Will Be Wide**

*A Blessing for World Communion Sunday* by Jan Richardson<sup>6</sup>

And the table  
will be wide.  
And the welcome  
will be wide.  
And the arms  
will open wide  
to gather us in.  
And our hearts  
will open wide  
to receive.

And we will come  
as children who trust  
there is enough.  
And we will come  
unhindered and free.  
And our aching  
will be met / with bread.  
And our sorrow  
will be met / with wine.

And we will open our hands  
to the feast  
without shame.  
And we will turn  
toward each other  
without fear.  
And we will give up  
our appetite  
for despair.  
And we will taste  
and know  
of delight.

And we will become bread  
for a hungry world.  
And we will become drink  
for those who thirst.  
And the blessed  
will become the blessing.  
And everywhere  
will be the feast.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://paintedprayerbook.com/2012/09/30/and-the-table-will-be-wide/>