

World Communion Sunday

LITURGICAL GUIDE



Ministry
Leadership
Center

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Intergenerational Worship: World Communion Sunday
Liturgical Guide

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Weekly Synopsis

World Communion Sunday reminds us that we belong to a community that spans time and place. At Christ's table, we gather as equals—young and old, clergy and laity, wealthy and poor, privileged and under-resourced. There, we receive the same meal that nourishes us as we seek to live as Christ's body in the world. This week, we intentionally practice and honor what it means to live as a diverse community of believers through every element of worship. Together, we will listen to and honor the voices of our neighbors, pray and sing as one, be formed by our shared meal, and be sent out to live lives shaped by the radical love and welcome Jesus embodied at the Last Supper.

Guide Overview

This guide contains the menu of intergenerational worship elements for the week. As you read over this document, choose the elements that most fit in your context. Share it with the key stakeholders who help you plan and implement worship each week. As a team, review this guide together to ensure the service flows as one unified, intergenerational whole rather than a collection of separate parts.

This guide contains:

- The Synopsis of the week
- Guiding Texts—the week's scriptures, printed in full
- An Intergenerational Proclamation Method for the week
- Liturgical Elements: Call to Worship, Prayer of Confession/Assurance, Call to Offering, Communion Guidance, Benediction
- Children of God Moment—with stage direction and Notice and Tend coaching
- Music Suggestions

Guiding Texts

New Testament

Colossians 3:12-17 NRSVue

Therefore, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Old Testament

Isaiah 2:1-5 NRSVue

The word that Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

In days to come

the mountain of the Lord's house
shall be established as the highest of the mountains
and shall be raised above the hills;
all the nations shall stream to it.

Many peoples shall come and say,
"Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,
to the house of the God of Jacob,
that he may teach us his ways
and that we may walk in his paths."

For out of Zion shall go forth instruction
and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

He shall judge between the nations
and shall arbitrate for many peoples;
they shall beat their swords into plowshares
and their spears into pruning hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation;
neither shall they learn war any more.

O house of Jacob,
come, let us walk
in the light of the Lord!

Intergenerational Proclamation

This section provides a model for an intergenerational moment of proclamation. Unlike a sermon, where the Word is often proclaimed in a way most accessible to the adults in the room, an intergenerational proclamation assumes and welcomes children, youth, adults, and elders alike—offering guidance for making the message accessible and participatory for each generation, so everyone has the opportunity to both connect with the community of faith present in the moment and with the Holy Spirit. The goal is not to water down the moment of proclamation or turn it into entertainment, but to include each person present as a full participant in a moment of profound faith formation.

Below is one method for intergenerational proclamation. It may need to be adapted to fit your context, or it may not work for your congregation at all—if that's the case, several other methods of intergenerational proclamation are suggested in the Leader's Guide. As always, you are the expert on what will work best for your congregation.

Proclamation at the Shared Table



INSTRUCTIONS

Theological Background:

From the very beginning of the Christian tradition, the church has gathered around a table. Not a stage, or a pulpit, but a table. The earliest Christian communities broke bread together in homes, in courtyards, in borrowed rooms, passing food hand to hand and speaking of the one who had broken bread in an upper room alongside his disciples. The meal has never been incidental to the message. It is the message.

Over the centuries, the Eucharist has persisted as a central communal act of Christian faith, a participatory meal, a feast for the whole people of God. On World Communion Sunday, we have a special opportunity to break out of our habits and routines and encounter Christ's meal in a different way, recentering the role of community in the shared meal alongside generations of Christians who have come before us and will come after us.

The approach below moves the Eucharistic ritual to the time of proclamation, recentering it in our order of worship. The activity is grounded in the conviction that communion is not simply a rite administered from one person to many—it is a shared meal in which every person at the table is invited to serve and receive. When a child pours juice for an elder, when a teenager passes the bread to their parent, for a moment, the individuals at the shared table become the body of Christ to one another. This is a proclamation—the Word made flesh, again, among us.

We understand that this is an ecumenical resource and that different traditions have varied theological perspectives and liturgical requirements around the communion table. Please adjust anything below to fit your particular context. This is just meant to be a jumping-off point for considering an alternative and intergenerational approach to this Special Sunday.



INSTRUCTIONS

Preparing the Space:

This activity will work best in a space where you can seat all members of the congregation at tables, such as a fellowship hall, an outdoor courtyard, or a sanctuary where seating can be reconfigured. This may require a change of venue for the entire service, OR you could take a group exodus from the sanctuary to the alternative worship space at the right point in the service. The shift in physical arrangement also reorients the community around a shared table, an important symbol for World Communion Sunday.

Arrange seating at tables. Round tables or small clusters of chairs where people face one another will work best.

Mix the tables intentionally. Have your ushers or welcome team encourage people to sit with someone from a different generation as they arrive. A sign or a warm announcement could also work: "Today, we are inviting you to sit at a table with someone you don't usually sit next to—especially someone of a different age or stage of life."

Prepare each table in advance. Set the following on each table before the service:

- A printed copy of Isaiah 2:1-4 and Colossians 3:12-17
- Cups and plates for each person at the table
- A printed Table Talk Card (see supply guide)
- Optional: simple art supplies or tactile manipulatives for children and adults such as coloring materials, pipe cleaners, or simple fidget toys.



INSTRUCTIONS

The Flow:

Words of Institution. Lead the Words of Institution from the front or a central location set up with an altar. Prepare a selection of breads and pitchers of grape juice—or a small amount of wine—for each table in advance of the service. You may use the liturgy included in this service or a traditional liturgy of your choice.

Serve one another. Invite a representative from each table to approach the altar to receive a plate and pitcher for their table. When they return to their table, pass the plate of bread around the table. As each person passes it to the person next to them, they can say “The Body of Christ” OR “This is for you.” After everyone has received a piece of bread, each person can pour juice for the person next to them and say “The Blood of Christ” or “This is for you.” These words are included on the Table Talk card for reference, but it is also okay if they are not said. Allow this to unfold unhurriedly. Small children or others with limited mobility may need additional assistance with serving—this is welcomed and all a part of the process.

Table Talk. Once everyone has received the elements, invite the tables to open their prompt cards and begin reflecting together. They are encouraged to enjoy their “meal” while doing this exercise. Allow ten to twelve minutes for reflection. Move through the room quietly, listening and being present—but do not interrupt the conversations at the tables.

Gather and Continue. When the time is complete, offer a brief closing prayer of thanksgiving from the front, and transition the service forward. The communion elements may remain on the tables through the rest of the service as a continued reminder of what has been shared.

Table Talk Prompt Card: (Formatted copies are in the Supply List/Overview document)

1. Take a piece of bread and pass the plate to the person beside you. As you serve one another, say “The Body of Christ” or “This is for you.”
2. Pour some grape juice into a cup (with assistance, as needed), and pass it to your neighbor, saying, “The Blood of Christ” or “This is for you.”
3. After receiving the elements, reflect on the following: What does it feel like to be served by someone at the table?
4. This meal has been shared by Christians across every century, culture, and language. Who do you imagine at this table with you—from history, from another country, from your own past? Say their name out loud.
5. Close by going around the table and finishing this sentence: “Today, I am grateful for...”

A Note for Leaders:

You know your context best. When setting the space and flow, consider how to accommodate your congregation's needs. Plan to have gluten-free and non-alcoholic options available. Encourage helping each other with serving. Consider mobility concerns and accessibility when deciding whether to change the worship space. Make modifications to the communion liturgy based on your theological tradition. This is meant to be a guide to spark your creativity, but you can modify it to best serve your community.

Liturgical Elements



INSTRUCTIONS

The elements below offer a variety of options for fostering intergenerational engagement throughout the service. We encourage you to select one or two of these suggestions to implement, rather than trying to incorporate them all at once. Allow space for some parts of the service to remain familiar and traditional, creating a balance between disorientation and the comfort of ritual.

Call to Worship



LEADER INSTRUCTIONS

This activity invites the whole congregation to participate in a call to worship through the first verse and chorus of “We Are One in the Spirit” sung in a round. The goal is to celebrate intergenerational and global unity from the very start of worship. The round is organized by age groups. Children, teens, and young adults (ages 0–30) will go first, midlife adults (ages 31–60) will go second, and elders (ages 61–99) will go last. Each group enters sequentially, creating overlapping voices that reflect the harmony of the body of Christ.



SINGING INSTRUCTIONS

Before the round starts, sing the song all together a few times so that everyone knows the tune before you break into age groups. Then the round singing can begin.

- 1.Round 1 – Ages 61–99+
- 2.Round 2 – Ages 31–60
- 3.Round 3– Ages 0–30

Tips for Singing the Round:

- Maintain a steady tempo so the overlapping voices blend beautifully.
- Have a representative with a microphone at the front to lead each group
- Consider singing the round several times through
- Have someone to help maintain a steady tempo.



Welcome! Today, on this World Communion Sunday, we celebrate the unity of God's people across generations and around the world. We are going to begin worship with a special call to worship: the first verse and chorus of 'We Are One in the Spirit' sung as a round.

This round is organized by age groups. Elders, ages 61–99, will start first. When your group starts, sing the verse at a steady tempo. Middle adults, ages 31–60, will enter next while the first group continues. Children, teens, and young adults, ages 0–30, will enter last. Each group will enter sequentially, so our voices overlap and blend together, reflecting the harmony and unity of the body of Christ. Before we start the round, we will sing the verse all together a few times so that everyone is familiar with the tune.

Lyrics:

We are one in the Spirit,
we are one in the Lord,
we are one in the Spirit,
we are one in the Lord,
and we pray that all unity
will one day be restored
and they'll know we are Christians
by our love, by our love,
and they'll know we are Christians
by our love.

[Sing the verse together a couple of times to help the congregation learn the tune and words with confidence]

Beginning the Round:

Leader: Now we will sing in a round. Elders, ages 61–99, will start first. When your group starts, sing the verse at a steady tempo. Middle adults, ages 31–60, will enter next while the first group continues. Children, teens, and young adults, ages 0–30, will enter last. Let's begin!

[Sing through the round a couple of times, then open worship with the words below]

Leader: As our voices blend across ages and around the world, we are reminded: we are gathered, we are included, we are equipped, and we are sent into the world to share God's peace and love.

All: Thanks be to God!

Prayer of Confession/Assurance



LEADER INSTRUCTIONS

This prayer invites the congregation to acknowledge brokenness and receive God's grace or forgiveness. By offering our confession with accompanying hand gestures, we invite participants of all ages to embody our confession and assurance of pardon. Invite everyone to mirror the gestures as they are able. Encourage children to participate (you may choose to invite children up to the front to help demonstrate the hand motions). Keep the pace unhurried.



SAY

Call to Confession:

Leader: With our hands over our hearts—When we have chosen comfort over compassion,

People: God, have mercy.

Leader: With our arms crossed over our chests—When we have closed ourselves to neighbors near and far,

People: Christ, have mercy.

Leader: With our hands covering our ears—When we have refused to listen to voices different from our own,

People: Spirit, have mercy.

Leader: With our arms stretched towards our neighbors—When we have forgotten that we belong to one body in Christ,

People: Lord, have mercy.

[Pause briefly.]

Leader: Now open your hands in front of you—God of mercy, clothe us again in compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Teach us your ways of peace.

People: Amen.

Assurance of Pardon:

Leader: Friends, hear now the good news: In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven.

People: In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven. Glory to God. Amen.

Call to Offering



LEADER INSTRUCTIONS

This activity helps the congregation, across all ages, recognize that every gift matters and is valuable in God's work, making visible the spiritual, emotional, and material contributions each person brings. The goal is to shift the offering moment from a financial transaction to a communal act of worship, reflecting the unity of the body of Christ at the table: here we are included, equipped, and sent together into the world. Everyone has something to offer: gifts aren't just money, but also time, talent, care, prayers, creativity, and presence. Often, people hold back their gifts because they feel a sense of scarcity—not enough money, time, or energy—and this moment reminds us that God uses even the smallest offering. The activity engages all generations: children can draw, teens and adults can write or name gifts, and elders can model reflection and gratitude. Using Post-it notes and pens/pencils, participants will write or draw the gifts they want to share this week and place them on the altar alongside their financial gifts. As they return to their seats, they will pass the peace with those around them as a reminder that community is one of the greatest gifts we receive and share within the church and outside of it.



SAY

Imagine a table that stretches all the way around the world. At this table, everyone has a seat, and everyone has something to share. Some of us bring money, some bring time, some bring love, some bring wisdom, and some bring gifts we may not even be able to imagine yet. Whatever your gift, today we get to bring it forward and join together at this table of grace, where God takes what we offer and sends us back out into the world to bless others.

Take a Post-it note and a pen/pencil and write or draw one gift you are offering to God. It could be a talent, a prayer, a word of encouragement, a simple act of kindness, or even a financial gift. If you're young, a simple drawing is perfect. If you'd rather use just one word, that's wonderful too.

When you are ready, come to the table at the front. Place your Post-it note on the table and, if you are giving financially, place your offering in the basket. As you return to your seat, pass the peace to someone nearby, saying, "The peace of Christ be with you."

Take your time, honor each other's gifts, and remember that every contribution, no matter how small it feels, is a vital part of our shared ministry.

Communion Guidance



LEADER INSTRUCTIONS

If your congregation's tradition is to use the Eucharistic Prayer/ The Great Thanksgiving as your liturgy for communion, there's no reason to change that for this service. A few ideas to accommodate non-readers: consider repeating the litany of the Sursum Corda (Lift up your hearts) twice, so that the second time around, listeners can repeat the phrases.

As an introduction to the liturgy, the leader might say, "As we celebrate this feast on this special day, World Communion Sunday, it is humbling and exciting to think that these prayers will echo across the globe in churches everywhere. Today, let's pay attention to the sections of this prayer; you could close your eyes and listen to the familiar rhythm of the words, imagine them being spoken in Latin, Russian, Mandarin, Tagalog, Spanish, and ASL. But let's pay attention to our part and add our voices to this prayer. Right before the Sanctus (Holy, Holy, Holy Lord), we mention that we are joining our voices with those who have gone before us, and even those who come after us; we join our voices with the angels and the very universe. To make sure everyone can participate, we're going to repeat some phrases twice. Let us add our voices to this prayer spoken "round the world!"

The words of institution could be spoken in a call-and-response form:

For example:

On the night—on the night...

That Jesus—that Jesus...

Was betrayed—was betrayed...

[Continue the repeated liturgy throughout the words of institution]

Elements offered for communion could include types of bread that have been on the Focus Table throughout the service. It might be wise to have a backup; it is possible that all the elements have been consumed before communion.

Benediction



LEADER INSTRUCTIONS

For this benediction, choose three lay people to read one paragraph. Select readers who represent different ages or life stages, making the group as diverse as possible. Either bring them to the front to read the benediction, or have them read it from their seats in the congregation.



SAY

Having shared one bread and one cup,
Go now as one body in Christ.

Where there is division, sow reconciliation.
Where there is fear, bear hope.
Where there is despair, live resurrection.

In the name of the Triune God,
Who gathers us, feeds us, and sends us.
Amen

Children of God Moment



INSTRUCTIONS

This moment is the congregation's window into what children have been experiencing throughout the service.

It is not a performance or a lesson—it is an invitation for the whole community to wonder together. The leader does not explain what children have done; they name it simply and open a door for shared curiosity.

Say: Welcome, young friends! Your thoughts and ideas matter to everyone here, so I'd like to spend a few moments learning about what you're thinking and feeling. Happy World Communion Sunday! Today is a day we celebrate the wonderful meal of communion with Christians all over the world. We usually celebrate with the people in our congregation when we come forward and receive a piece of bread and a taste of juice. It's a gift from Jesus to us. But did you know that when you come to the table, we are coming with all the people who have ever come to this table before. Can you imagine?! Can you think of other places in the world where people might come to this table?

[Allow responses. As necessary, repeat phrases you hear: "Africa. Perhaps the North Pole, your grandmother's house..."]

Say: Thank you for sharing your ideas. Today, I notice you have food available on this table. What food have you tasted?

[Allow and repeat responses]

Did you like those foods?

[Allow and repeat responses, "You weren't able to eat that because you think it's icky. I understand. We don't all like the same things."]

Say: I wonder what other kinds of foods might fit into the bread category—what other kinds of bread have you tried?

[Allow and repeat responses]

Say: What colors do you see on the table?

[Allow and repeat responses]

Say: You also have great things to work with today. I see water and cups for pouring; it looks like some of you have been setting the table for a feast, and you made bread with your play dough. What did you like about pouring water into the cup?

[Other open-ended questions based on what the children have been working on. Get curious about their work. Share responses]

Say: Will you share in a breath-prayer with me? Let's put our hands on our hearts and feel the breath coming in and out of our bodies. When we breathe in, let's think, "Thank you for giving us food," and when we breathe out, let's think, "Help us to share your gifts with the world."

[Take a few deep breaths together; you might whisper the ideas as they breathe.]

Say: Thank you for sharing your work with us today. We would love it if you want to stay and keep working here with us, or you can return to your seats with your adults. Feel free to take items with you to work on.

Notice: *Children might not have had time to try the foods on the table, or may not understand that they're allowed to eat the items.*

Tend: *Invite children right then to choose something from the table if they want.*

Notice: *Not all children will have had a meal today.*

Tend: *Encourage children to take what they want, and even have some extra on hand to send home.*

Music Suggestions

Music has a divine ability to draw all generations into shared worship, often in ways that transcend words alone. Different styles, languages, and tones can resonate with people in distinct ways, reflecting the diversity of experiences present in your congregation. Below are song suggestions that creatively engage the worship service's theme, offering a range of musical expressions. We encourage you to choose a few selections that best fit your context.



INSTRUCTIONS

Suggestion 1: "Come to the Table of Grace", Barbara Hamm, Hope Publishing

Suggestion 2: "For Everyone Born", Words by Shirley Erena Murray, alt.

Suggestion 3: "One Bread, One Body" (John B. Foley) —Traditional

Suggestion 4: "Come to the Table" (Common Hymnal) —Contemporary