

The Table of Peace
Week Three
September 22, 2024

Notes: The featured table this week evokes a conference table where a peace summit could be imagined to take place. Perhaps use a plain conference table with a pitcher of water and glasses, pens and legal pads, and name cards that say “Peacemaker.”

This will require a change in scenery up front. Also, as this is a communion Sunday, we need to plan accordingly. Communion elements could go on altar with conference table (white folding table) in front.

Prelude

“Rondeau”

Jenry Purcell

Welcome and Announcements

Marcus Little

Passing of the Peace

Marcus

Pastor: May the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

People: And also with you.

Pastor: Let us rise and greet one another with words of peace and remain standing for our song of centering.

Song of Gathering

“Come to the Table of Grace”

1 Come to the ta - ble of grace. Come to the

ta - ble of grace. This is God's ta - ble; it's

not yours or mine. Come to the ta - ble of grace.

Chords: F, C, Dm, F7/C, B \flat , (A) C, (D) F, (A) C, (D) F, (Em) Gm, (D/A) F/A, (G) B \flat , (D/A) F/C, (A7) C7, (D) F, (G) B \flat , (D) F

- 2 Come to the table of peace...
- 3 Come to the table of love...
- 4 Come to the table of hope...
- 5 Come to the table of joy...

Call to Worship

Liturgist

Leader: The table of peace can take almost any shape. Our table this week is a conference table, perhaps depicting where two or more parties meet to negotiate the terms of a contract, a settlement, or a ceasefire. For Jesus, peacemaking was often found in the act of sharing a meal with people who would have been considered “outsiders.” We like to imagine Jesus in perfect harmony with everyone who gathered with him at the table — but perhaps sometimes even he held his breath when he brought people together with opposing viewpoints. Today we come to the table of peace, ready to practice patience and compassion, even when we disagree. Let us stand in body or spirit and sing “Come to the table of peace.”

ALL: Come to the table of peace
Come to the table of peace
This is God's table, it's not yours or mine
Come to the table of peace!

Leader: We gather today to listen, to learn, and to love.

All: We are ready to share and to hear what others have to say.

Leader: Though we are all different, we yearn to find a mutual understanding.

All: We are standing on common ground.

Leader: We take our seat at the Table of Peace.

All: We know that God is already here!

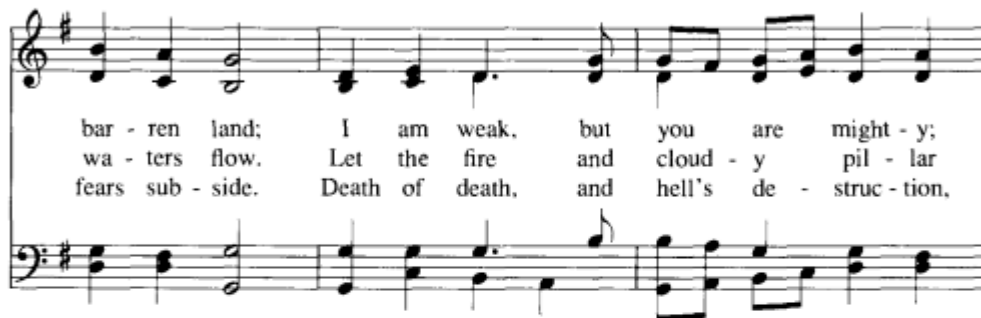
Song of Gathering

Guide Me, O My Great Redeemer

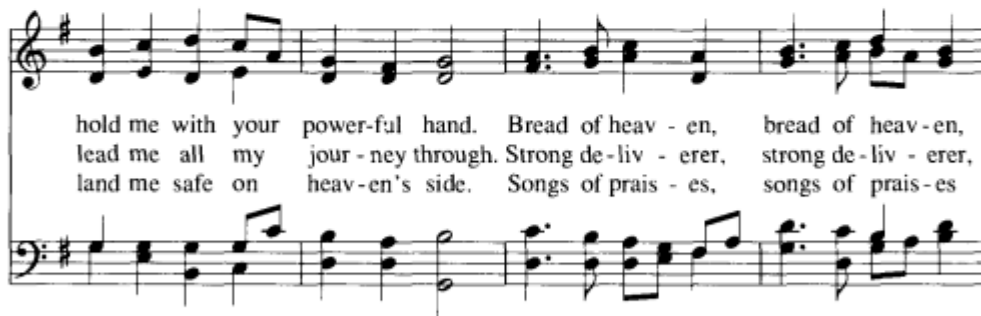
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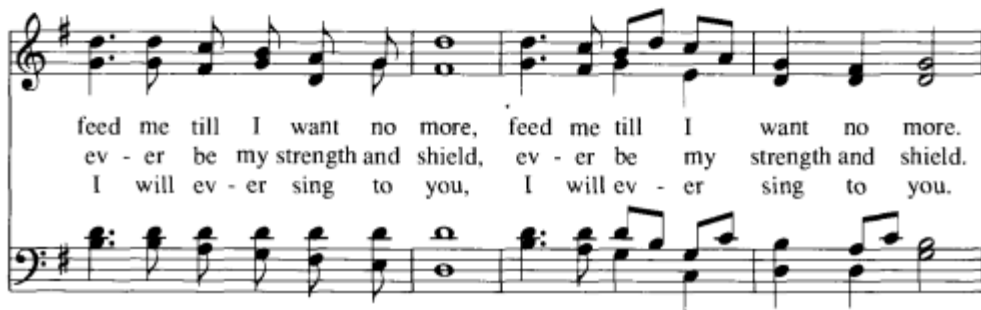
1 Guide me, O my great Re - deem - er, pil - grim through this
2 O - pen now the crys - tal foun - tain, where the heal - ing
3 When I reach the Riv - er Jor - dan, bid my anx - ious



bar - ren land; I am weak, but you are might - y;
wa - ters flow. Let the fire and cloud - y pil - lar
fears sub - side. Death of death, and hell's de - struc - tion,



hold me with your power - ful hand. Bread of heav - en, bread of heav - en,
lead me all my jour - ney through. Strong de - liv - erer, strong de - liv - erer,
land me safe on heav - en's side. Songs of prais - es, songs of prais - es



feed me till I want no more, feed me till I want no more.
ev - er be my strength and shield, ev - er be my strength and shield.
I will ev - er sing to you, I will ev - er sing to you.

Communion Service

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Invitation to Confession

Marcus

Words of Invitation

One: This Sunday we will be sharing together in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. At St. John's Church, all are welcome to participate in communion. Our table is open to everyone. You are welcome to participate today. Regardless of your faith, your doubts, your age or status, this table is open to you.

//This is a good spot to uncover the elements of communion, setting aside the cloth.

One: Our communion today will be served by intinction.

That means that when we are ready, I will invite you to come forward by way of the center aisle, take a piece of the bread, dip it into the cup, and eat it as you return to your seats by way of the side aisle.

If you would prefer to receive communion in your seat, please raise your hand and an usher will attend you.

Our bread is gluten-free and our cup contains grape juice so that all may feel welcome to participate

One: Before we celebrate communion it is our tradition to go to God with open hearts. Sometimes this is known as a "prayer of confession." It is not meant to be a time of guilt, shame, sadness or regret - but a time for receiving peace and grace. We are seeking mercy and forgiveness and we believe that God is faithful and will hear our prayers.

Let us pray together silently for our needs...

SILENCE IS OBSERVED

Unison Prayer of Confession

.One: Friends, let us pray together:

ALL: Loving God, we confess that at times we do not live out the reality and beauty that this meal represents, that we are one body united in Christ. Forgive us when we find it more comfortable to limit who we share our lives with than to risk new relationships and celebrate every person as a gift of God in Christ. Call us back to Your ways, O God, to seek hope and reconciliation, restoration and peace. In the name of the Risen Christ, we pray. Amen.

INVITATION TO CHRIST'S TABLE

Marcus

Words of Assurance

One: In the name of Jesus Christ who brings peace and hope, your sins are forgiven. Rejoice! You are loved! AMEN.

Blessing of the Elements

One: Let us bless the meal that we are about to receive.

One: God be with you!

Many: And also with you.

One: Lift up your hearts.

Many: We lift them up to God!

One: Let us give thanks to God Most High!

Many: It is right to give God thanks and praise.

One: Let us pray....

One: Holy and loving God, we thank you for the gift of this sacrament. Bless this food, bless this table, and bless the communion of saints here at St. John's United Church of Christ. Remind us of the power of this mystery. Bless this bread and this cup - that by receiving it we may be reminded of our communion through Christ Jesus - for we are all One Body, at work in the world, for the salvation of the world.

Amen.

Words of Institution

One: Let us hear again the story of our faith:

"On the night that he was to be betrayed, and again - following the events of the resurrection in the village Emmaus - our Savior gathered his disciples together and, taking bread, he blessed it.

//lift the bread

After he had prayed he broke it

//break the bread and hold it aloft.

He explained to them that this was his body, broken for the salvation of the whole world, and that each time they ate of it they would do so in remembrance of him.

//set the bread down

Likewise, after they had eaten, he took the cup and blessed it.

//Pick up the pitcher and the empty cup, and fill the empty cup. Set down the cup or hold it aloft.

After he had prayed he gave it to them, explaining that this was the cup of the new covenant, between God and God's creation, for its salvation eternal, and that each time they drank of it they would do so in remembrance of him.

Beloved, all is ready, I invite you to come.

SHARING THE BREAD AND CUP

Marcus

COMMUNION HYMN

"Bread of the World"

NCH#346

1 Bread of the world, in mer - cy bro - ken, Wine of the soul in
2 Look on the heart by sor - row bro - ken, look on the tears by

mer - cy shed, By whom the words of life were spo - ken,
sin - ners shed, And be your feast to us the to - ken

and in whose death grace our sins lives are dead,
that by your grace our lives are fed.

The Children Gather

Scripture

September 22: Pat Partridge, Bren Tooley, and Casey Berg

Romans 14: 1-12 and Matthew 18: 21-35 (MSG)

Leader: We welcome each other at the table even when we disagree. Coming to tables of peacemaking is hard work. We must be willing to suspend our propensity for making ourselves the judge of others. Accountability AND forgiveness are on the menu at God's table and we are called to sit down and find merciful ways to deal with one another despite our differences. Hear now this scripture advice from the 14th chapter of the Letter to the Romans, followed by a remembrance of what Jesus said in the Gospel of Matthew. Imagine those early Christian Romans gathered at a table, reading this advice from a letter to one another and remembering the words of Jesus:

Reader 1: Welcome with open arms fellow believers who don't see things the way you do. And don't jump all over them every time they do or say something you don't agree with — even when it seems that they are strong on opinions but weak in the faith department. Remember, they have their own history to deal with. Treat them gently.

Reader 2: For instance, a person who has been around for a while might well be convinced that he can eat anything on the table, while another, with a different background, might assume he should only be a vegetarian and eat accordingly. But since both are guests at Christ's table, wouldn't it be terribly rude if they fell to criticizing what the other ate or didn't eat?

Reader 3: God, after all, invited them both to the table. Do you have any business crossing people off the guest list or interfering with God's welcome? If there are corrections to be made or manners to be learned, God can handle that without your help.

Reader 1: Or, say, one person thinks that some days should be set aside as holy and another thinks that each day is pretty much like any other. There are good reasons either way. So, each person is free to follow the convictions of conscience.

Reader 2: What's important in all this is that if you keep a holy day, keep it for God's sake; if you eat meat, eat it to the glory of God and thank God for prime rib; if you're a vegetarian, eat vegetables to the glory of God and thank God for broccoli. None of us are permitted to insist on our own way in these matters.

Reader 3: So where does that leave you when you criticize a brother? And where does that leave you when you condescend to a sister? I'd say it leaves you looking pretty silly — or worse. Eventually, we're all going to end up kneeling side by side in the place of judgment, facing God.

Reader 1: Your critical and condescending ways aren't going to improve your position there one bit. Read it for yourself in Scripture: "As I live and breathe," God says, "every knee will bow before me; Every tongue will tell the honest truth that I and only I am God."

Reader 2: So mind your own business. You've got your hands full just taking care of your own life before God.

Reader 3: Do you remember what Jesus said about forgiveness? Peter asked, "How many times do I forgive a brother or sister who hurts me? Seven?" Jesus replied, "Seven! Hardly. Try seventy times seven."

All readers: "Hear! Hear!"

Sermon "The Family Table"

Marcus

Song of Response

"Forgive Our Sins As We Forgive"

1 "For - give our sins as we for - give," you taught us, Lord, to pray,
 2 How can your par - don reach and bless the un - for - giv - ing heart
 3 In blaz - ing light your cross re - veals the truth we dim - ly knew:
 4 Lord, cleanse the depths with - in our souls and bid re - sent - ment cease.

(F) (Em) (C) (Dm) (Em) (Am)
 B \flat Am F Gm Am Dm

but you a - lone can grant us grace to live the words we say,
 that broods on wrongs and will not let old bit - ter - ness de - part?
 what triv - ial debts are owed to us, how great our debt to you!
 Then, by your mer - cy rec - on - ciled, our lives will spread your peace.

Prayers of the People

Our Savior's Prayer

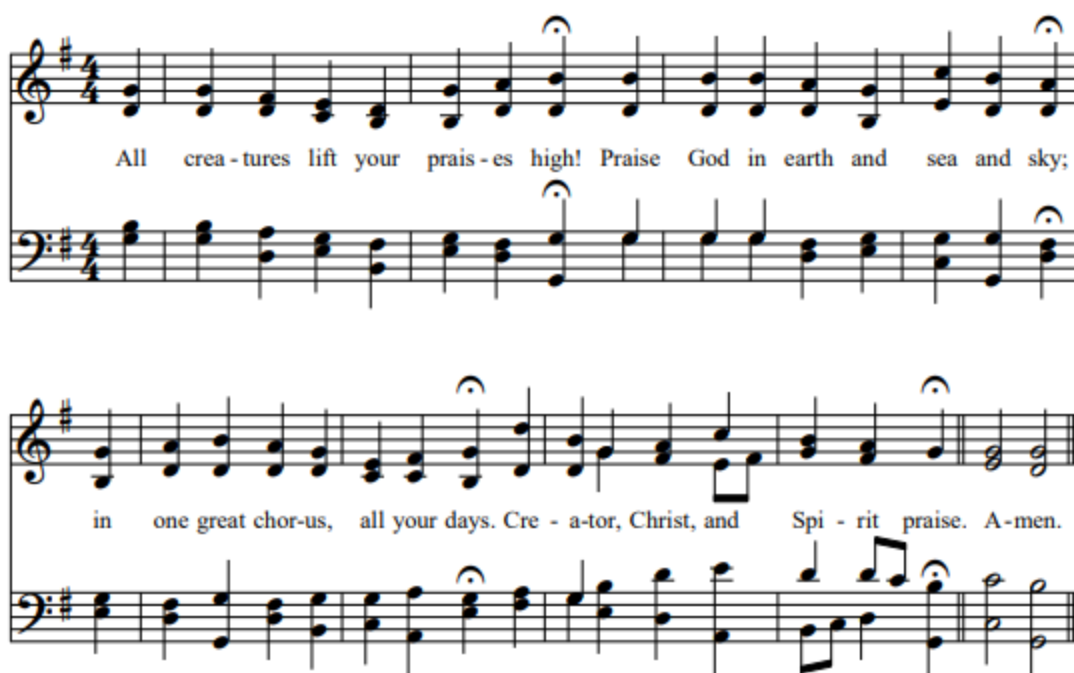
INVITATION TO THE OFFERING Pastor

Ushers will come forward to receive the offering.

THE OFFERING OF OUR LIFE AND LABOR

OFFERTORY

Doxology



Charge

Liturgist

Leader: This Table of Peace requires much of us.
It asks us to listen to others when we are bursting with words of our own.
It asks us to speak with courage and grace when perhaps we would rather stay silent.
It asks us to be patient when we are raring to go!
It asks us to save a seat for people whose opinions differ from ours,
and to treat everyone with kindness and dignity,
because we need each other — all of us — to survive.

**ALL: The grace of God abounds! The invitation of Christ is wide!
The power of the transforming Spirit will surprise us every time!**

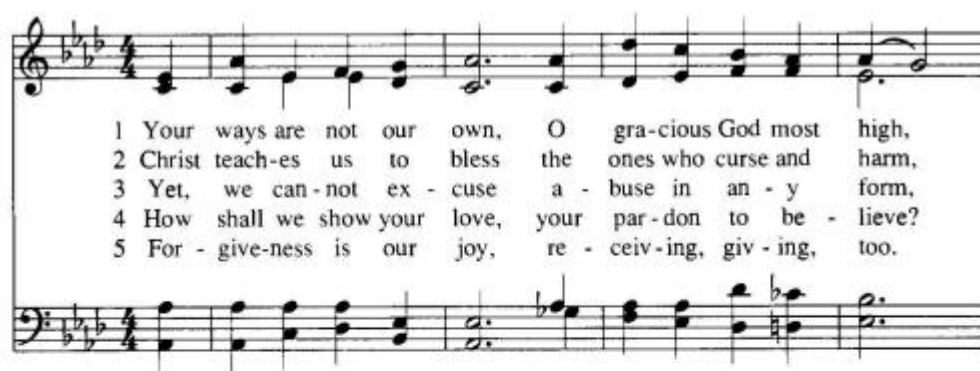
Leader: May the blessings of peace you find here go with you and move through you to others wherever you go this week. Let the people say, “Amen!”

ALL: Amen!

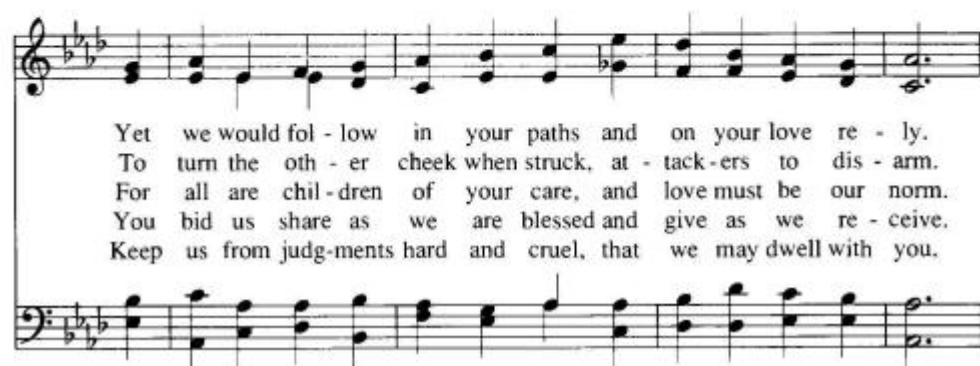
Closing Hymn/Song

“Your Ways Are Not Our Own”

NCH#170



1 Your ways are not our own, O gra-cious God most high,
 2 Christ teach-es us to bless the ones who curse and harm,
 3 Yet, we can-not ex - cuse a - buse in an - y form,
 4 How shall we show your love, your par-don to be - lieve?
 5 For - give-ness is our joy, re - ceiv-ing, giv - ing, too.



Yet we would fol - low in your paths and on your love re - ly.
 To turn the oth - er cheek when struck, at - tack - ers to dis - arm.
 For all are chil - dren of your care, and love must be our norm.
 You bid us share as we are blessed and give as we re - ceive.
 Keep us from judg-ments hard and cruel, that we may dwell with you.

BENEDICTION

Postlude
 "Rondo in G"

John Bull/Arr. Richard Ellsasser