

Watch this week's service on YouTube by clicking: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-EDOFNcBwcl>

Dear Friends

Welcome to worship for Sunday, September 6.

The approach to communion in our tradition has changed greatly during my life and career. While I was baptised in my grandparent's church in Kitchener, Ontario, I grew up at various churches in Winnipeg of which my parents were a part. As a teenager we were attending Westworth United (not so far away) and confirmation was a yearlong program that was a graduation of sorts from Sunday School. The highlight of our confirmation was that we took communion for the first time. Communion, in the church's understanding as well as that of my parents, was something reserved for 'members' of the church.

It was also a time when we still celebrated communion rather infrequently. Resources of the United Church of Canada at that time suggested that communion be held quarterly. If Christmas Eve was added you might have a fifth but that was the limit. Elders would deliver 'communion cards' to the house which you would then bring to church so that there was a record of your communion activity.

Things would begin to change in the 1980's as an ecumenical shift began that was known as the Liturgical Renewal Movement. Among other things, it was a time when scholars and church leaders began to advocate for Protestant worship that borrowed freely from the Catholic tradition (a by-product of the Second Vatican Council). Included in the shift was a desire for more frequent access to the Table. My friend, Bob Galston was a leading local proponent of liturgical renewal.

What that meant in practical terms was that many United Church congregations began celebrating communion monthly, as well as on special occasions. Another change was the introduction of musical responses. And most obviously, we began experimenting with new ways of receiving the elements such as coming forward to the front of the church, a practise I can remember doing for the first time in 1986, having always been served bread and cup in the pews prior.

Not surprisingly, changing the *practise of communion* also fomented changes in our *understanding of communion*. What were we doing? And what did it represent? How does our understanding of communion reflect our understanding of God? How does our understanding of God inspire and alter our understanding of communion?

Lengthy books and endless articles are written about these questions but there is a rather simple (and fairly orthodox) statement that says it all. *Sacraments are a sign of God's grace*. It is God's action that is celebrated in communion and baptism and not ours. Or, in other words, the 'membership' standard with which I grew up has evolved and expanded. If the bread and cup are signs of God's inclusive and gracious love, how can we possibly turn anyone away or deny them a place? So it is children are welcome. Visitors are welcome. The unconfirmed and the non-conforming are welcome. The first timer and the old pro are welcome. To say that someone is not welcome at the Table is akin to saying they are not welcomed by God. And nothing in the Gospel supports that.

We are having a virtual communion in the service this week. Wherever you, whoever you are, however you choose, you are welcome here.

Grace and peace,

Michael

As we continue on through these challenging times we are pleased to offer a video service on YouTube. Please enjoy and feel free to share with others. The link for sharing is:

Tell Your Neighbours:

Yazidi Farmers Market
Sunday, September 13, 2020
9:00 AM to 12:00 NOON
Charleswood United Church Parking Lot

DID YOU KNOW ...?

- The Life and Work of our church is updated by Janet weekly. Please have a look at the Life & Work insert: <https://charleswoodunited.org/media/life-work/>
- ***This Sunday Service includes communion.*** You may wish to prepare elements to partake while watching the service. But please remember that with or without bread and cup we are always One in Spirit and in communion with one another
- Congratulations to Lindsay Melvin and Alastair Komus on the safe arrival of their first child, a son, Carter. The first grandchild for Vivian and Jim Melvin. We are delighted to join them in offering thanks for this great blessing
- Our annual *Bereavement Support Course* with Linda Churchill of Crescentwood Counselling is going to be offered in an online format this fall. The sessions will be held Thursday evenings September 24 – October 29 from 7-9 PM. Please register by calling the church office.
- Look for YouTube church school with our Children's Ministry Director Rosalie Finch set to begin in the weeks to come.
- And finally, most of our expenses continue through the summer. If you would like to support the ministry of Charleswood United Church please visit: www.charleswoodunited.org/donate. Thank you to all those who have continued to contribute regularly.