

Oct. 2, 2005  
World Communion Sunday  
Luke 24: 28-35  
First Parish Church  
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## *Breads of the World*

Today we are part of a great procession, an incredible wave of Christians all around the world who are traveling by foot, by wheelchair, by bike, by rickshaw, by mule, by horse, by boat, by train, by bus, and maybe even by plane to get to their places of worship – to gather at Christ’s table. People are gathering in homes, in cathedrals, in hospital chapels, in prison meeting rooms, in churches of all forms. People who are able bodied and those who must be carried; people who are sure of their beliefs and those who are still questioning; people of all ages, tongues, and races gather as God’s people to be nourished in body and spirit at Christ’s table.

Oct. 2 dawned many hours ago in Fiji and New Zealand, where this great procession began, and will continue for many more hours until it reaches Hawaii. There are millions, and millions, and millions of people today gathering for communion.

Although, as today’s scripture reminds us, communion is at the very roots of our Christian tradition, the celebration of World Communion Sunday is only about seventy years old. The idea came from a couple who traveled around the world in the 1930s and worshipped in many places. This couple was Jesse & Golda Bader, who were members of the Disciples of Christ denomination. The

Baders found that no matter where they were – no matter the difference in language and culture – they felt at home at the communion table. When they returned from their travels they advocated for the church to designate a World Communion Sunday, which is now recognized as the first Sunday in October.

Our ritual of gathering at table is really an ordinary activity, something we do regularly at home with family and friends. In its very ordinariness lies a most extraordinary reality of God’s ongoing and abiding presence.

However, Jesus in his ministry also transformed table fellowship. In first century Palestine, if you walked into a good Jewish home and sat at table you would find only one group of people there – upstanding, adult, Jewish men. Jesus opened the table to include women, and children, and tax collectors, and lepers, and street people, and Samaritans, and.... Jesus’ table was a table of welcome – a table clothed with compassion, forgiveness, peace and thankfulness. At Jesus’ table all the “nobodies” became “somebodies, because in God’s eyes everybody is somebody.

When Jesus sat at table with his friends, he named and claimed the bread and wine as signs of God’s love and Christ’s

presence. He didn't have the disciples go out and get a rare and unusual food. He choose the simplest foods that he had shared with them every day. In the ordinary everyday foods we know the extraordinary love of God.

In other parts of the world, where bread and wine are not common foods, people use foods that are familiar to their people for communion. Today, we bring "breads" of the world to our table to remind us of all our brothers and sisters who gather this day at Christ's table.

*(Six people bring forward different breads as the choir sings, "As the Grains of Wheat.")*

#### EUROPE

I bring bread from Norway. It reminds us of the people of Europe, from which many of our ancestors came. We are reminded that people move to new lands when there is hunger, persecution and overcrowding. May we learn to share our planet with justice and peace.

#### ASIA

I bring rice cakes to our table. For many centuries, rice has been the staple food for people throughout Asia. These rice cakes remind us of rich and varied cultures that are often unfamiliar to western peoples. May these cakes remind us that in Christ there is no east or west.

#### AFRICA

I bring bread from the continent of Africa, the birthplace of human life. Africa is a huge continent ranging from Egypt to South Africa, from arid deserts to tropical rain forests. We recognize

with grief the ways that our country's history has been intertwined with Africa's through the practice of slavery. May our unity in Christ strengthen us to work against racism and all vestiges of slavery throughout the world.

#### PACIFIC ISLANDS

I bring a coconut to represent the Pacific Islands. In Papua New Guinea, bread and wine are not common foods. So for communion they use the basic food of their people-the juice and the flesh of the coconut. The simplest, everyday foods remind us of Jesus.

#### SOUTH AMERICA

I bring corn tortillas from our Central and South American neighbors. Corn is an ancient food and continues to this day to provide basic sustenance for many in the Americas.

#### NORTH AMERICA

I bring bread made from wheat grown in Aroostook County here in Maine. We give thanks for all those right around us who till the soil and produce food. We celebrate their stewardship of God's creation.