

Sunday we celebrated World Communion Sunday. The Neighbors in Need offering taken Sunday will go to the UCC fund to help the Syrian refugees.

We were happy to have Penny's friends, Laura and Hans, and Sue Erskine join us Sunday. We held Roger and Jane in prayer as they travel and Penny as she prepares to go back to CT. I have always loved fall, but I hate that so many are leaving now. We pray that all will be well when Roger and Jane get home to South Carolina. It is wonderful to have Viola back.

Please hold in prayer Wendy Dinsmore who is in Maine Medical Center.

I had a lovely weekend with Savhana and now I am happy to be in Ludlow, MA, with Nolan, Laura and Abigail for a couple of days. I will return Wed. night or Thursday morning for backpacking Thursday. I plan to make some visits while I'm up there Thursday.. If anyone is interested in Bible or book study, I can be there for that too.

Please remember that we are collecting food for the Food Bank all this month.

Make it a wonderful week!

HEBREW SCRIPTURE READING Genesis 2:18-24-contains part of the second story of Creation. In this version of Creation, God has made a human being (adam, often translated as man) before making all of the animals. God decides that it is not good that adam is alone, and wants to make a helper for adam, but after God creates all the animals, and adam names them all, God recognizes that this is not satisfactory. God creates out of adam a woman, and it is in that moment that you have men and women, according to this creation story, and the two become one flesh, because the two were once one.

EPISTLE Hebrews 1:1-4, 2:5-12 –For the next several weeks the Epistle readings are from Hebrews. The letter of Hebrews explains the role of Jesus the Christ to Jewish followers of Jesus in the first century.

GOSPEL Mark 10:2-16-The Pharisees were trying to trap Jesus on the law. In Jesus' day, men had more power, and women could easily be thrown out on the street and have nothing. This passage is not just a cultural statement of his time. Jesus believes that what God has brought together, let no one separate. This is an argument against domestic violence and abuse as well, and certainly Jesus would not want someone to stay in a situation where they were a victim. The one who abuses is the one who causes the separation. God's intention is not separation, but the joining together. In the same way, God's intention is not to leave out, but to draw in, as Jesus draws in the little children who were being kept out. God's intention is for us to join together, to be one body.

Help us to hear Your words, O Lord, and follow Your ways. Amen

MESSAGE

Beth Hood

Thursday morning as I was getting ready to go pick up Savhana, Jack came into the room and asked if I wanted to go take our son, Daniel to the hospital or should he. Part of a falling tree had fallen on Daniel's head. We decided that it was best if I spent the afternoon with Savhana as planned and Jack would go take care of Daniel. I was torn. I also wanted to be with my son. So, the next best thing seemed to come naturally and I placed him in God's hands. But as a mother, wanting to do more, unable to do much, I turned to all of you. And I went to do what I could do, be with Savhana. Thank you to all who added Daniel and our family to your prayers. The thought that others were thinking of Daniel and us as a family gave me great comfort, encouragement that all would be well. We do more in community than as individuals.

God knew this, God knew that to be complete, we need each other. "Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner." Jesus knew this, "From the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female. And the two shall become one flesh.'" The theme in the readings this morning is that God's intention for us is not suffering, is not misery, is not division and divorce and separation, but unity, wholeness and healing. The invitation to the Table of Christ is this invitation: to a life of wholeness, unity, belonging, healing and restoration. It doesn't mean it I not painful. It doesn't mean that it is perfect, for we are still human beings. But it means the invitation is open for all.

On the outskirts of Nairobi, Kenya, the African Church of the Holy Spirit begins their worship service by marching through the streets of their village singing and dancing with instruments in order to rally more believers into their church.

In Basel, Switzerland, the ecumenical patriarch blesses a new Orthodox Church and pours holy oil over the altar. This oil is a visible sign of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. After the space is blessed, the community gathers together to celebrate Holy Communion.

In eastern Syria, the worship of the Syrian Orthodox Cathedral in Hassake includes ancient liturgy and the practice of the sacraments. Many of the Christians living there can trace their roots back to the time of Jesus, and some of them even still speak Aramaic, the ancient language of that time. In the midst of violence and war, they draw together to witness to the love of Jesus.

In Seattle, Washington, in the middle of the financial district, the Church of Mary Magdalene is an ecumenical congregation comprised of former and current homeless women. This church provides social services and counseling as well as worship where all of the women are able to take part. They provide 'a safe environment to build relationships, experience hope and love, and explore faith."

And in South Bristol, at Union Church we gather this morning to worship with liturgy and music, to hear the voice of Scripture, and to come to the table for the Lord's Supper. All over the world today, Christians are praising God through varieties of worship styles and in thousands of languages. Today, on World Communion Sunday we celebrate how the Holy Spirit is moving and working all over the world, from Africa to Europe, and from Asia to the Americas. We rejoice together in the feast Christ has prepared for all Christians of the world.

About two thousand years ago, in a growing community in Jerusalem the Church was just getting started. "Day by day, they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people." As we give thanks for the Christian Church throughout the world, we remember that first Church and those first Christians two thousand years ago.

Today, as we celebrate the Christian Church in all its forms, we reflect back on its first days. That first community of Christians began with worship, shared fellowship and shared possessions. Most important for today, that community began their life together around the table. That community, like the millions of churches that grew out of her, celebrated Jesus' life, death and resurrection with potluck meals, a little wine and fellowship, and one family meal after another. They were a loving Church, adding more and more people to their number each day, and they devoted themselves to eating together. Table fellowship was just as important as worship and stewardship.

Around the world there are sourdough breads, pita loaves, rice cakes, muffins, challah, flatbread, and unleavened wafers. Some churches use the same grape juice we do, but others celebrate with wine, some red and some white. Even more, those who don't have grapes growing in their land use a common drink for their people like coffee, tea or juice. Then there is the tableware: from silver to gold to pottery to baskets—the cups and plates we use in the Church span the globe as well. But despite all this diversity, the point is that that Church, all over the world, gathers around one table. Like that first Church community two thousand years ago, we hold table fellowship as a mark of the church. As a family, we join together in this shared meal, and become united by the food we eat.

World Communion Sunday highlights that the Church is much bigger than our congregation, our traditions or our faith practices here. "The Body of Christ goes far beyond those who circle the table in our little church...it is extended to those whom we will most likely never meet, which in turn compels us to live in the world as if every person is a brother or sister in Christ."

We are called to remember the entire body of Christ when we gather for communion. You are what you eat. We, together, are the body of Christ, and when we eat that bread and drink that cup, we proclaim that we are a part of something unique—Jesus' globe-spanning body. His table is a table that includes people from all nations, breads from all over the world. When we eat at this table we take on the international flavor of Christ's body and the unifying power of his Lordship. The body of the Church is celebrated, in all its diversity and beauty, each time we gather. Jesus told us that people would come from east and west, north and south to sit at table with him, and we do.

This morning as we sit at his table, sadly, we remember 9 who stood in a classroom in Oregon proclaiming that they were Christians. We remember Christians in Syria and Iraq who are crucified because they are Christians. And can we help but wonder, if in similar situations, would we stand up and say, "I am a Christian."