

## **Devotion for Week of October 2, 2022**

### **Rev. Jeanne Simpson**

This past Sunday we celebrated World Communion Sunday. Did you know it started in the Presbyterian Church? World Communion Sunday is a gift of the Presbyterian Church to the larger ecumenical church. The first celebration occurred at Shadyside Presbyterian Church in Pittsburgh, PA, in 1933 where Dr. Hugh Thompson Kerr served as pastor. It was the attempt of Shadyside to bring churches together in a service of Christian unity—in which everyone might receive both inspiration and information, and above all, to know how important the Church of Jesus Christ is, and how each congregation is interconnected one with another. Dr. Kerr's son, the Rev. Dr. Donald Kerr (also a Presbyterian pastor) said that "The concept spread very slowly at the start. People did not give it a whole lot of thought. It was during the Second World War that the spirit caught hold, because we were trying to hold the world together. World Wide Communion symbolized the effort to hold things together, in a spiritual sense. It emphasized that we are one in the Spirit and the Gospel of Jesus Christ."

Celebration of World Wide Communion Sunday was adopted as a denominational practice in the Presbyterian Church (US) in 1936. Churches in other denominations were invited to celebrate with us from the beginning, but it wasn't until 1940, when the Department of Evangelism of the Federal Council of Churches (a predecessor body of the National Council of Churches) promoted extending the celebration to a number of churches around the world, that the practice became widespread.

I share with you part of a poem that Rev. Molly Spangler, the associate pastor at Unity Presbyterian Church in Fort Mill, South Carolina, wrote for World Communion Sunday.

God of wheat and wine,  
long after your son first gathered his friends around a table in an upper room,  
your Holy Spirit has continued meeting us at tables:  
hand-crafted tables painted with intricate designs  
and weathered park benches that serve as a place to eat when needed;  
tables that are covered with homemade casseroles  
and tables with quickly opened fast food bags being passed around;  
tables that are surrounded by friends and families  
and tables where only one seat is filled.  
No matter what each table looks like,  
the food that is served,  
or the people gathered around it,  
your Spirit meets us still.  
For your ever-present Spirit, O God, we give you thanks.

Amen to the grace of God's table for all.

*Jeanne*