

Today is World Communion Sunday when churches around the world celebrate their oneness in Christ by gathering at the Lord's Table. The institution of this table is in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. The passage from the book of Acts tells the story of the first Christian community formed around this table.

People were gathered from all over the world for a festival in Jerusalem and began their life together around the table. That community 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 celebrating Christ while eating together.

Table fellowship was just as important as worship and stewardship. Several years ago, TIME magazine ran a couple of photo essays on its website based on pictures taken in the 2005 book, *Hungry Planet: What the World Eats*<sup>1</sup>. In each one of the photos, members of a family are gathered in their kitchens, with the food they would consume in a normal week spread all around them. Here are the food choices from all over the world:

**Slideshow: ["Hungry Planet: What the World Eats"; 2:15]**

With Bob Marley's "One Love" as a background music [\[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CCK3luJOHho\]](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CCK3luJOHho)

Although their food choices are different, the common image is the table fellowship of each family. Some sit on the floor, some sit in chairs or in their living rooms, and others sit outside. Wherever they gather, eating together, sharing a meal, is what constitutes their family.

Similar to the book *Hungry Planet*, today we will bring the world communion to us by having different kinds of bread such as sourdough, pita loaves, rice cakes, muffins, flatbread, unleavened wafers, and gluten free bread. We will use grape juice for communion as we always do. While many churches use grape juice, others celebrate communion with wine, some red and some white. The areas that don't have grapes locally use a common drink for their people like coffee, tea or rice juice.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://time.com/8515/hungry-planet-what-the-world-eats/>

Despite all this diversity, the point is that the Church, all over the world, gathers around one table. Like the 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.

This kind of diversity should not be news to us. When I looked at some of the images in the book *Hungry Planet*, the foods on those tables can be found all over our county. Very few of the meals were images I had never seen. They may not be on my dinner table each night, but our diverse county is full of various dining options and grocery stores. It would be all too easy in one week, to eat meals from all over the world and never leave Contra Costa County.

In this diverse area, it might be easy to overlook a day like World Communion Sunday. After all, we hear multiple languages in our own neighborhoods and we live in the midst of a plethora of ethnic food options. We are surrounded by our world's diversity. We couldn't ignore it if we wanted to; it's as much a part of our county's culture as our own heritage.

Diversity is such an integral part of California life that we often take it for granted. That's why we need this Sunday all the more. World Communion Sunday does not highlight how much we love ethnic food or how many languages we or our children can speak. It 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 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, together, are the body of Christ. When we eat that bread and drink that cup, we proclaim that we are a part of something unique—Jesus' globe-spanning body. This is a table for all nations. We take on the international flavor of Christ's body and his unifying power. 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...and we will as one. Thanks be to God. Amen.