

# SERMON STARTER

## WORLD COMMUNION SUNDAY



These worship resources are part of the World Communion Sunday pastor and leader kit. They can be adapted for your context and integrated into your worship service with the other material in the kit.

### SERMON STATEMENT:

At the Lord's table, Christ unites us by grace and sends us beyond the walls of the Church to live as one body in the world.

### OPENING OVERVIEW

World Communion Sunday reminds the universal Church that the Lord's table belongs to Jesus Christ. Through the holy mystery of Holy Communion, believers are united as one body in Christ across nations, ethnic groups, languages, cultures, classes, and communities. In United Methodist theology, Holy Communion is a means of grace through which Christ nourishes the Church for holiness, discipleship, evangelism, compassion, reconciliation, justice, and peace. Official United Methodist teaching says that Holy Communion "expresses our oneness in the body of Christ," and ResourceUMC's current handbook identifies Holy Communion as the foundation of World Communion Sunday, reminding the Church of "our unity in Jesus Christ."

In a fractured world marked by division, racial pain, war, loneliness, distrust, and fear, World Communion Sunday offers a counter-witness. It declares that Christ is still gathering people to be one in Christ. Grace is still stronger than division, and the Church is still sent beyond the Church walls, into communities to love and serve God's people in Jesus' name. The table does not belong to one nation, one race, one culture, one human being or one denomination. The table belongs to Jesus Christ.

World Communion Sunday matters because the church is called to be more than a local gathering, we are called to Move Beyond our Church Walls to share Jesus Christ with our neighbors, communities, our cities and the world. We are a part of the worldwide body of Christ. Even in a world marked by division, conflict, loneliness, and injustice, this sacred day reminds us that our deepest identity is not found in nationality, ethnic groups, politics, or preferences, but our identity is in Jesus Christ.

The Lord's table is Christ's table. It is a place of grace, forgiveness, reconciliation, remembrance, welcome, and renewal. So today we come, and we remember:

- Jesus Christ is the host.
- God's Grace is the invitation.
- The Church really is One Body of believers.
- We are sent into the world to love and serve.

Holy Communion reminds us that all are welcomed to the table and that afterwards, we are called to leave the sanctuary and GO into our communities, cities, nations and the world! We are called to exercise these teachings through discipleship and evangelism, meeting people where they are and working together to share God's healing, reconciliation, justice, peace, and presence.

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### SCRIPTURAL FOUNDATION

#### PRIMARY SCRIPTURE

##### **1 Corinthians 10:16–17**

*“Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.”*

Paul writes to a divided church in Corinth and reminds them that the bread and the cup are not empty symbols. They are signs of shared participation in Christ and shared identity with one another. This text is central for World Communion Sunday because it teaches that though we are many, we are one body through the one bread. Official United Methodist teaching also draws on this text to describe the unity signified in Holy Communion.

### SUPPORTING SCRIPTURE

(Choose what works for your church)

##### **John 17: 20-23**

Jesus prays that his followers “may all be one.” This prayer comes on the night before the crucifixion and reveals that unity is not optional for the Church. It is part of Christ’s own desire for his people and part of the Church’s witness to the world.

##### **Luke 24: 28-35**

In the Emmaus story, the risen Christ is recognized in the breaking of bread. This passage teaches that Holy Communion is not merely memory; it is also revelation. In the breaking of bread, Christ is made known.

##### **Acts 2: 42-47**

The early Church devoted itself to the apostles’ teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayers. This passage shows that Communion belongs to a whole way of life marked by worship, generosity, shared life, and public witness.

##### **Ephesians 4: 1-6**

Paul reminds the Church that there is one body, one Spirit, one Lord, one faith, and one baptism. This passage grounds Christian unity not in human effort alone, but in God’s own work and identity.

##### **Isaiah 25: 6-9**

The prophet gives a vision of God preparing a feast for all peoples. This feast points toward God’s saving purpose for the nations and the promise that sorrow, shame, and death will not have the final word.

##### **Revelation 7: 9-10**

John sees a great multitude from every nation, tribe, people, and language standing before the throne and before the Lamb. This is the great vision of redeemed diversity gathered in worship before God.

Together, these texts teach that Holy Communion is not a private religious ceremony for some people. It is a visible witness to the reconciling power of God, forming and shaping the people of God throughout the world. United Methodist teaching explicitly connects Holy Communion to discipleship, compassion, justice, reconciliation, peace and being sent Beyond the Walls of the Church, evangelism.

### THEOLOGICAL FRAME

This sermon starter stands firmly in the Wesleyan tradition. John Wesley understood the Lord’s Supper to be a “means of grace,” it has never been an empty ritual, but always a God-given gift, through the power of the Holy Spirit, who nourishes us believers in holiness and strengthens the Church for faithful living internally and Beyond the Walls of the Church. That same Methodist stream continues in contemporary scholarship.

Gayle Carlton Felton’s *This Holy Mystery, United Methodists and the Sacraments* provides some of the clearest sacramental

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language in the United Methodist tradition for Communion as grace, unity, and mission.

Geoffrey Wainwright in his book *Eucharist and Eschatology* writes that the Eucharist is a foretaste of the heavenly banquet. It shows how the Lord's Supper embodies the Christian vision of the final goal for individuals, the Church, and the entire cosmos together.

Randy Maddox keeps grace, sanctification, and practical discipleship at the center of Wesleyan theology. The open table derives from John Wesley, the founder of Methodism. Randy Maddox says, "The only initial requirement of the communion recipient was a desire to receive God's grace and to live in faithful response, not some prior fitness or assurance." He continues, "The Solicitation in our Communion Liturgy reads, 'You that do truly and earnestly repent of your sins, and are in love and charity with your neighbor, and intend to lead a new life, following the commandments of God, and walking from henceforth in his holy ways: Draw near with faith, and take this Holy Sacrament to your comfort, and make your humble confession to Almighty God meekly kneeling on your knees.'" This witness is also strengthened by broader voices who help the Church practice World Communion Sunday with moral and pastoral clarity.

Bishop LaTrelle Easterling captures brilliantly the spirit of World Communion Sunday when she declared, "Beloved, We Are. One," and urges the Church to "live our faith out loud." Her words remind us that unity at the Lord's table is not only something we celebrate; it is something we must embody in discipleship, justice, evangelism, and public witness.

United Methodist liturgical reflection also reinforces this movement from Table to mission. As Taylor Burton-Edwards explains, "Communion is our meal, it is our feeding. We need the sustenance and we need it regularly." He further notes,

"We are fed with the body of Christ by God and empowered by the Spirit to live as Christ's body in the world."

### WHY THIS MATTERS IN 2026

In 2026, Christ is still gathering the people of God. Grace is still stronger than fragmentation, discord, and uncertainty. The Lord's table still forms disciples who belong to God and are called to love one another regardless of class, ethnicity, language, sexual orientation, nationality, or neighborhood. World Communion Sunday matters because the Church is called to be a credible witness in a divided world. It reminds us that the Church is one body, Christ is still Lord, and love is still stronger than hatred. UMC resources for this day emphasize "the unity and interconnectedness of all Christians" and connect the observance to developing diverse leadership across the denomination.

### SERMON MOVEMENT

#### 1. The Table Belongs to Christ

This is not our table to control, narrow, politicize, or privatize. It belongs to Jesus Christ. He is the host. He is the bread of life. He is the one who invites us to come.

#### 2. The Table Makes Us One Body

At this Table, many become one. Different races, cultures, classes, languages, and nations are joined in Christ. Holy Communion does not erase difference; it redeems difference into shared belonging.

#### 3. The Table Sends Us Into the World

We are not fed merely for comfort. We are fed for calling. We are nourished by grace so that we may go beyond the walls of the Church in evangelism, compassion, justice, reconciliation, and peace. In United Methodist worship, the prayer after receiving asks that we may go "into the world in the strength of your Spirit, to give ourselves for others."



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### CELEBRATORY PASTORAL TURN

World Communion Sunday is not small. It is not shallow. It is not merely ceremonial. It is a declaration that Jesus Christ is still gathering his people. It is a holy sign that grace is still at work. It is a witness that the Church is bigger than one congregation, one ethnic group, one nation, or one style of worship.

The Table of Remembrance is not only about personal comfort; it is about a people being formed for testimony, endurance, holiness, mission, and witness. Communion is both sacred memory and sacred sending. We remember the sacrifice of Christ, but we also rise from the Table commissioned to go beyond the walls of the Church, to build relationships, embody holiness, pursue justice, and bear witness to the love of Christ in our communities and throughout the world.

This movement from “Table to Testimony,” from “Grace to Service,” and from “Discipleship to Evangelism,” reflects the Church’s call to love boldly, serve joyfully, and lead courageously in our neighborhoods, cities, nations, and worldwide connection. Today, we put this into action through our World Communion Sunday offering, supporting scholarships and developing Christian leadership for students around the world, making this a day of both worship and connectional witness.

### CONCLUSION

*“Having received the bread and the cup, let us now go Beyond the Walls of the Church, to share the love of Christ in our neighborhoods, our communities, and throughout the world. We are blessed at the Table, so that we may be a blessing in the world.”*

### NOTE:

Remember this sermon starter is not a narrow lens on power of World Communion once a year. It is an invitation to teach that the Remembrance Table is a place of grace, unity, memory, justice, mission, hope and redemption where all are welcomed, yes ALL. It gives the congregation language to understand that the church is bigger than one congregation, one ethnic group, one nation, or one style of worship. At Christ’s Table, believers are nourished by grace, joined to the global body of Christ, and sent into the world as evangelist of reconciliation and peace. This is why World Communion Sunday matters, and this is why World Communion still speaks with urgency in 2026, to GO Beyond the Church Walls.

### REFERENCES

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