

Sermon Title: **“World Communion Sunday”**

Bible: **Psalm 107:1-3 & 1 Corinthians 12:12-13, 22-27**

When: on the World Communion Sunday, October 6, 2024

Where: about 25 people (plus YouTube Live Streaming viewers) at Gilroy UMC

Opening Prayer

O Lord, let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts, be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock, and our Redeemer. Amen.

1. World Communion Sunday

Many United Methodist churches and many Christian churches celebrate the first Sunday of October as World Communion Sunday. Originally, World Communion Sunday began at Shadyside Presbyterian Church in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania in 1933. The Shadyside Presbyterian church would like to celebrate the unity of Christian churches, regardless of denomination. There are so many different denominations and churches. But we are all children of God. And they chose the sacrament of Holy Communion to symbolize unity. At the Communion, there is one bread and one cup, because we are one body of Jesus Christ.

Afterwards, many Christian churches celebrate World Communion Sunday and add more meanings. It is not only to celebrate the unity of Christians but also to celebrate the diversity of Christians. For example, when I was in Korea, one church that I attended celebrated World Communion Sunday while decorating their Sanctuary with a lot of national flags just like the Olympic games. We also celebrate different cultures, traditions, languages, and heritages.

And just for your information, our United Methodist Church celebrates World Communion Sunday as one of the six special Sundays with special offerings. World Communion Sunday offerings will be used for scholarship for racial and ethnic minority students in the United States, and students worldwide. I learned that last year, our United Methodist Church raised \$443 thousand. Each local church might be small, but our United Methodist Church makes a big difference together!

2. Ecumenical Movement

World Communion Sunday can be regarded as a ecumenical movement. Ecumenical movement means to work on the unity and connections between or within Christian faith denominations and communities. For example, the United Methodist Church and the Episcopal Church are moving toward full communion. And the following list is our denonimaations's formal and ecumenical relationships with other Christians families, approved by our General Conference. It is from the United Methodist Council of Bishops. I do not know the detailed differences of the relational terms, and I do not know every detail about what made us have so many different denominations. But my intention here is to show how we, the United Methodist Church, work for the unity of Christians as a world-wide denomination. You might want to imagine where this church is located and to count how many churches you have heard of.

CONCORDAT CHURCHES

- The Methodist Church of Great Britain
- **Methodist Church in the Caribbean and the Americas**
- **The Methodist Church of Mexico**

- The Methodist Church of Puerto Rico

AFFILIATED AUTONOMOUS CHURCHES

- Evangelical Methodist Church of Argentina
- Evangelical Methodist Church in Bolivia
- Evangelical Methodist Church of Costa Rica
- Evangelical Methodist Church of Panama
- **Evangelical Methodist Church in the Philippines**
- **Korean Methodist Church**
- Methodist Church in Brazil
- Methodist Church of Chile
- Methodist Church in Cuba
- Methodist Church of Hong Kong
- Methodist Church in India
- **Methodist Church of Indonesia**
- **Methodist Church of Malaysia**
- **Methodist Church of Peru**
- Methodist Church in the Republic of China
- Methodist Church in Singapore
- Methodist Church of the Union of Myanmar
- Methodist Church of Uruguay

AFFILIATED UNITED CHURCHES

- Church of Pakistan
- Dominican Evangelical Church
- Eglise Protestante Unie de Belgique
- Evangelical United Church of Ecuador
- **United Church of Christ in the Philippines**
- The Hong Kong Council of the Church of Christ in China
- The United Church of Canada
- **The United Church in Japan (Kyodan)**

FULL COMMUNION RELATIONSHIPS

- The African Methodist Episcopal Church
- The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church
- The African Union Methodist Protestant Church
- The Christian Methodist Episcopal Church
- **The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**
- The Uniting Church of Sweden/ Equmeniakyrkan
- The Union American Methodist Episcopal Church

- **The Moravian Church, Northern and Southern Provinces**

KNOWN ECUMENICAL PARTNER CHURCHES SPECIFIC TO EUROPEAN CENTRAL CONFERENCES

- Churches with the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe
- The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Denmark
- The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Estonia
- The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland
- The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany/Kirchengemeinschaft
- The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Norway
- The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Sweden

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

- Church World Service
- The World Council of Churches
- The World Methodist Council
- The Global Christian Forum
- Religions for Peace International
- The World Evangelical Fellowship
- The Wesleyan Holiness Connection

3. Open Communion

What a long list! I am somewhat thankful for the ecumenical movement in our denomination, and I am somewhat surprised at this long list. Do you know how many churches there are in our community? Any guesses? On google maps, I typed “Hollister (Gilroy)” and “Church.” It showed that there are about 20 churches in Hollister(Gilroy). We are all one body of Jesus Christ, and we have many parts and many churches.

If you look at the Bible, and if you read the Bible from cover to cover, you cannot find the United Methodist Church. Is there anyone who found the United Methodist Church and came to our church? First of all, thank you so much for choosing and coming to our church. Our church is not from the Bible. But we confess that God calls all of us from east and west, north

and south. We confess that we are one body of Jesus Christ. We also confess that this communion table is not ours, not our denomination's, not our church's, but God's table. So, we practice open communion. That's because our Lord Jesus Christ welcomes everyone. Jesus Christ ate with sinners, tax collectors, women, children, and the marginalized. Jesus Christ ate with all the twelve disciples: the hot tempered Peter, the doubting Thomas, and even Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Jesus. That's because God's grace is unconditional and overflowing, and God loves all of us! Who can dare to stop God's love and grace? God loves you as you are. God welcomes you as you are. So, with this open communion, with God's table, we welcome you as you are. We would like to confess that we are one body of Jesus Christ together. If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it. If one part gets the glory, all the parts celebrate with it! So, come to the table. Come to God's grace and love! Let us come together as we are one body of Jesus Christ.

Closing Prayer

Loving and living God, thank you so much for calling us from where we are. Thank you so much for your love and grace at your table. We come to you, and your table to celebrate your love and grace, and to celebrate our unity, one body of Jesus Christ. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.