WORLD COMMUNION OFFERING

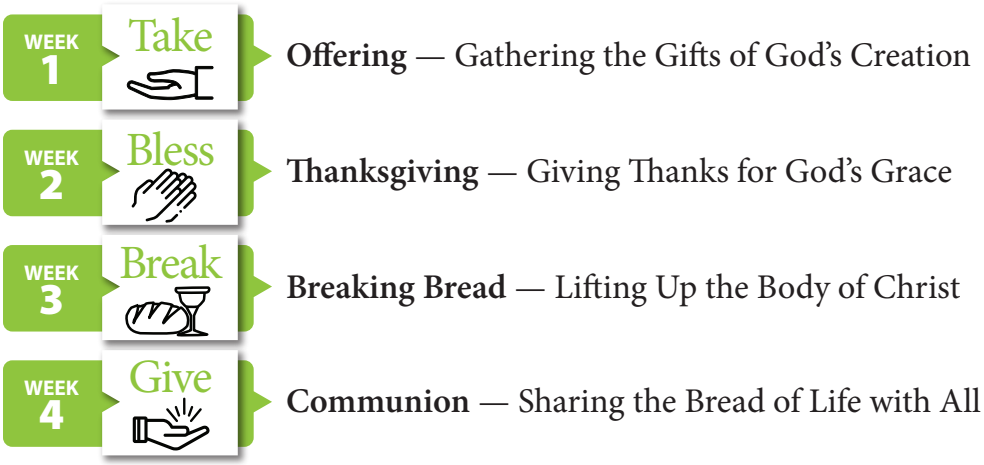
A Season of Preparation

WHAT IS A SEASON OF PREPARATION?

A season of preparation is a special period dedicated to getting ready for something significant, involving spiritual growth, skill-building and gathering the many ways to prepare. It is often characterized by challenges and anticipation that cause our faith to be tested, confirmed, and affirmed by God and the movement of the Holy Spirit. It's a time of active commitment to spiritual growth through prayer, study and discipline.

A Season of Preparation before congregations receive the World Communion Offering, created by the 226th General Assembly (2024), will invite members of the church community to learn more about the practice of communion and how it is a vital part of their congregation's worshiping life. It will also prepare the community for what happens after the sacrament is shared and the Offering is received by engaging in learning about and engaging in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s mission and ministry around the World Communion Offering cause areas identified by the General Assembly: racial justice, gender justice, peacemaking, global witness, and ecumenical and interfaith relations.

We have provided four weeks of resources.



A Season of Preparation –

WEEK 1

SEPT. 6

Take - **Offering** — Gathering the Gifts of God's Creation

Introduction

The logistical plan for the World Communion Offering echoes the liturgical rhythm of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper in our Presbyterian tradition. Communion or the Eucharist is comprised of a fourfold pattern of

- Gathering
- Blessing/Thanksgiving
- Breaking
- Giving

So, too, is the World Communion Offering organized around those same four faithful exercises of

- Gathering
- Blessing/Thanksgiving
- Breaking/Dividing
- Giving

Perhaps these are, in fact, the immutable rhythms of the life of faith in Christ. These are the fourfold approaches to reconciliation and to the unity for which Jesus prayed "*May they be one…*". World Communion Sunday, with its special offering is, therefore, a unique opportunity to express in word and in deed our commitment to reconciliation and unity. As we approach and share in this meal alongside Christians around the world, sacramentally the day set aside for Christians throughout the world to participate in the Lord's Supper and in gratitude take up an offering intended to address the world's brokenness, it is well to reflect upon these four themes.

Gathering

To gather means to join together, to assemble, to enjoin or draw together. It is an active verb and one characteristic of Jesus' ministry. Throughout his life, Jesus gathered people together. He summoned fishermen. On hillsides and in homes, in temples and on plains, on roadsides and in the streets of Jerusalem, Jesus drew people to himself. But this holy gathering did not simply mean bringing people together in one spot. Jesus gathered the people to be **community** for one another. Indeed, he would go so far as to refer to this gathered community as his body — the ultimate expression of Christian unity.

The people are gathered for World Communion Sunday as hymnist Marty Haugen reminds us, "*Gather us in the lost and forsaken … gather us in the rich and the haughty … gather us in the proud and the strong*" (Glory to God #401). On World Communion Sunday we will be gathered in, from every continent and tongue; gathered from places of grandeur and gruesomeness, from grand cathedrals and simple storefront churches. Once assembled, the people gather their thoughts, their hopes and their dreams as they prepare their hearts for worship.

The Communion elements are gathered in preparation for World Communion as well. Here in North America, most commonly a simple loaf of bread and grape juice, but elsewhere the yield might include pita bread, rye or molasses-based bread, baguette or even breadfruit. The cup might hold red or white wine, honey mead, papaya juice or even water. The table is made ready as the elements are gathered using sustenance local to the worshiping body.

The World Communion Offering is gathered as well. It is gathered in coins and dollar bills but also in euros, yen, pesos and pounds. In some instances, the gathered offering will consist of just a few coins, while in other locales the offering will be abundant. In its totality the offering gathered will be the means by which the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) will fulfill its mission purposes that address the needs of the human community fractured by issues of race, gender, poverty and inequity as set forth by the General Assembly.

"*Gather us in and hold us forever;*
gather us in and make us your own;
gather us in all people together,
fire of love in our flesh and our bone."

Worship Resources

15th Sunday after Pentecost
Exodus 12:1–14 or Ezekiel 33:7–11
Psalm 149 or Psalm 119:33–40
Romans 13:8–14
Matthew 18:15–20

Call to Worship

Awake! Today is the day God has made.
Sing to God a new song and praise God's holy name.
We come with our songs of praise to our faithful God.
Where two or three are gathered in God's name, God is here among us.
Praise be to God!

Prayer of Confession

God of hope and peace, God of strength and gentleness,
remind us again of the holy way for God's people to travel.
Forgive us for failing to see your joy and majesty.
Forgive us for being weak in serving you.
Forgive us for failing to see the glory of your creation
where waters can break forth in the wilderness
and the deserts shall bring forth beauty.
Open our eyes to see your promises.
Open our ears to hear the good news of your love for all your children.
Quench our thirst with showers of your love for us.
Through Christ we pray.
Amen.

Suggested Hymns: Gather Us In (Glory to God #401)
Seek Ye First (Glory to God #175)
Fight the Good Fight (Glory to God #846)
Blessed Assurance, Jesus is Mine! (Glory to God #839)

Activities

— September is often an in-gathering time following the summer break with trips, camps, conferences and vacations. Consider recruiting a small team of people to reach out to members (especially those who have been out of touch) and inviting them to come to church. Ask them to say, "We are being gathered back together by God, and we hope you will join us for worship!"

— Think about how you can make worship more accessible to those who are home-centered by offering transportation or showing them how to access online streaming.

— How might you make worship more inviting for children? Consider creating worship bags with crayons, markers, color sheets or children's bulletins. There might even be a small snack. The bags would be returned and refilled the following week. Add in a copy of the Presbyterian Giving Catalog so families can consider how they might give.

— Invite members to gather items that represent their summer memories: seashells, rocks, dried flowers, postcards, brochures, name tags or photos. The items could be placed on the communion table and displayed again on Sept. 13 to be used as part of the theme "Blessing/Thanksgiving."

— Consider how your congregation can be engaged in the ministries supported by the World Communion Offering: racial justice, gender justice, peacemaking, global witness, and ecumenical and interfaith relations. Or perhaps there is a ministry or agency focusing on these issues that you would want to support.

— Involve your young people in promoting the World Communion Offering by having them choose a gift related to reconciliation and justice from the Presbyterian Giving Catalog. Have them present it to the congregation along with how they think their gift will make a difference for others.

Did You Know?

Since 1980, the Presbyterian Church has received a denominational offering on World Communion Sunday. It began with the action of the General Assembly to adopt Peacemaking: The Believer's Calling. In order to turn these theological commitments into tangible action, the denomination initiated the annual Peacemaking Offering usually received on World Communion Sunday. In 2014, it was named the Peace & Global Witness Offering. By action of the 226th General Assembly (2024), it was renamed the World Communion Offering

focusing on the values and causes of reconciliation and justice. It represents a shift from structural, program-based support to cause-based support — including ministries of racial justice, gender justice, peacemaking, global witness, ecumenical and interfaith relations. An important aspect of the World Communion Offering is the establishment of World Communion Grants. These grants are available to any council of the church, which includes congregations, presbyteries or synods that are engaged in local mission and ministry related to the causes supported by the World Communion Offering.

Additional Resources

Everyday Faith Moments is a beautifully designed set of 60 durable 4x6-inch cards created with busy households of all shapes and sizes in mind. Each card offers a simple, meaningful faith practice that connects everyday life to God's presence, helping families grow in faith together — no matter the season or situation.

Use the cards to nurture faith during:

Ordinary Days – while playing, learning or sharing a meal …
Significant Moments – in times of celebration, change or grief …
Sabbaths – through connection, rest and reflection …
Sacred Celebrations – including Advent, Lent and Baptism …
bit.ly/EverydayFaithSampler

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Questions?
Feel free to contact us at **800-728-7228, ext. 5047** or email special.offerings@pcusa.org
pcusa.org/oghs/resources