WORLD COMMUNION OFFERING

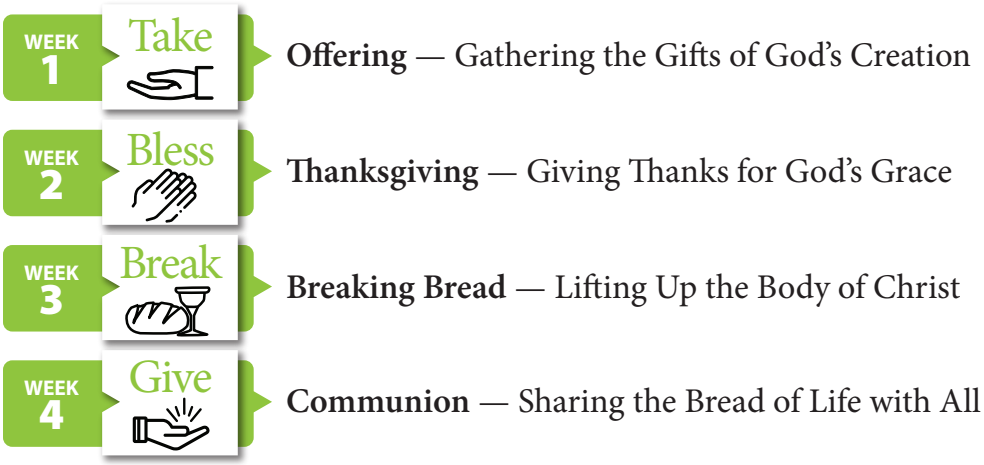
A Season of Preparation

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 3

SEPT. 20

Break - **Breaking Bread** — Lifting Up the Body of Christ

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.

Breaking/Dividing

When Jesus instituted the sacrament of his table, he took bread and broke it, reminding us that his body was broken — rent asunder — for us. We, too, in his name break the bread, remembering Jesus and recalling his life, death and resurrection.

We also break the bread so that it can be shared. A whole loaf is overwhelming for one person. But that same loaf may be broken many times so that all who are hungry might be fed. Indeed, we recall the feeding of the 5,000 at which the store of bread was extended endlessly (Matthew 14:13–21).

Even in the secular culture around us the idea of "breaking bread together" is taken to be a gesture of hospitality, fellowship and neighborliness. At Christ's table we break bread and share the cup with all those who wish to live in love and charity with their neighbors. We remind ourselves of this "open table" when we sing, "*This is God's table; it is not yours or mine … come to the table of grace, love, joy, peace*" (Glory to God #507).

On World Communion Sunday, it is not only the bread that is broken. The offering received, blessed and dedicated, too, is "broken," divided to serve many purposes. Just as a single loaf of bread would be overwhelming to one person, so the whole offering designated for a single purpose in a single place would likely exceed the need. To break the offering into portions is to remind ourselves that the needs are many. The places of hurt and want are numerous. The offering is "broken," ironically, to achieve a kind of wholeness of response to a world in peril.

"*Be known to us in breaking bread, (and offerings) but do not then depart; Savior, abide with us, and spread your table in our heart*" (Glory to God #500).

Worship Resources

17th Sunday after Pentecost
Exodus 16:2–15 or Jonah 3:10–4:11
Psalm 105:1–6, 37–45 or Psalm 145:1–8
Philippians 1:21–30
Matthew 20:1–16

Call to Worship

Seek God and God's strength
God is our protector and provider. God gives light in the darkness.
Seek God's presence and healing
Christ was broken that we might be made whole.
God gives water to the thirsty and food to the hungry
Let God's people sing out with joy. Let us worship God.

Prayer of Confession

Almighty God, we are like the Israelites in our quickness to complain.
We grumble when we are hungry and thirsty,
not only for daily food but for spiritual nurture as well.
We complain when our homes seem inadequate
and fail to realize that our shelter is more than adequate.
We are always searching for more.
We are quick to feel that life is unfair to us,
that others have more than we do.
Make us conscious again, O God,
of the homeless, the poor, the hungry, the hurting.
Give us courage to reach out to them
and share our bread and resources to address their need.
Fill us and them with your Holy Spirit.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Suggested Hymns: Come! Live in the Light! / We Are Called (Glory to God #749)
The Steadfast Love of the Lord / Psalm 105 (Glory to God #59)
O Jesus, I Have Promised (Glory to God #724, #725)
There's a Wideness in God's Mercy (Glory to God #435)

Activities

— Distribute coloring pages for the World Communion Offering among the children and display them on a bulletin board or poster. Visit pcusa.org/sites/default/files/2026-06/1022-SFD-WCO%202026%20Resources%20-%20%20Coloring%20Page.pdf (also available in Spanish and Korean).

— Some congregations make use of members for whom English is a second language or those who have learned other languages to be readers in worship on World Communion Sunday. This reminds us of our siblings in Christ all around the world. Now would be a good time to recruit such liturgists or Scripture readers for World Communion Sunday.

— Ask members if they would be willing to bake bread for use on World Communion Sunday. There are a few recipes provided below under "Additional Resources," or they may have a favorite bread recipe of their own.

— Like the bread at communion is broken and divided in order to make us whole, the World Communion Offering is divided in ways to bring wholeness to our communities and the world. Your congregation can apply for a World Communion Grant, which range from $500 to $5,000 and are to be used within 12 months of receiving them. Any council of the church, which includes congregations, presbyteries or synods who are engaged in local mission and ministry related to the causes supported by the World Communion Offering, can apply. Causes supported by the World Communion Offering include racial justice, gender justice, peacemaking, global witness, and ecumenical and interfaith relations. The application process opens in September and closes in December. Grants will be awarded in March or April of the next year by the Presbyterian Life & Witness Grants Office. Please see the WCO website for more details: pcusa.org/wco.

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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

Additional Resources

Here are some bread recipes that members might use to bake bread for World Communion Sunday.

Gluten-Free Rustic Bread

modified from *Gluten Free Living* magazine

Ingredients:

1/2 cup millet flour
1/4 cup flax meal
3/4 cup brown rice flour
1/4 cup tapioca starch
1 teaspoon kosher salt
1 teaspoon baking powder
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
2 teaspoons xanthan gum*
2 teaspoons guar gum*
2 large eggs
1/2 cup plain yogurt
1 tablespoon oil (i.e., canola)
1 tablespoon dark molasses
2 tablespoons honey
1/4 cup water

Instructions:

Preheat oven to 400 degrees F.

Lightly oil baking sheet. Mix all dry ingredients in a bowl. Mix all liquid ingredients in a second bowl. Slowly add liquid mixture to flour mixture while stirring with a spatula.

You will probably need to add more water to the mixture as the stated amount tends to be a bit dry. The dough should be only slightly sticky. There is no need to knead the dough. It should be ready to bake after only 1–2 minutes of stirring by hand.

Place the ball of dough on the baking sheet and flatten slightly. Make a few knife cuts across the bread about 1/4 inch deep. Bake until brown and crusty, about 25–30 minutes.

* Guar gum and xanthan gum are used in gluten-free baking to add some of the properties that gluten provides to yeast breads — elasticity and cohesion. Without this, the bread will be crumbly and have an odd texture. These are not actually gums (the name is a misnomer) but instead are sugars produced as part of the fermentation process. You can use only one or the other, but using both gives the bread a better texture.

Pita Bread (Palestine)

Pita bread is a staple throughout the Middle East, where people fill it to eat as sandwiches or break off bits of the thin crust to spoon up other food.

Ingredients:

1 cup warm water
2 1/4 teaspoons instant yeast (1 packet)
1 teaspoon granulated sugar
1 teaspoon fine sea salt
1 tablespoon olive oil
2 1/4 cups all-purpose flour

Instructions:

Make the dough by mixing water, yeast, sugar, salt, olive oil and 1 cup of flour together. Add more flour, a little at a time, until the dough comes together but is still a little sticky. Flour your hands and knead it in the bowl for a minute or so until it's smooth. The dough should be very soft and not overly sticky. Place dough in a well-greased bowl, cover and rest for 40 minutes (or refrigerate until ready to use). Divide dough into 8 equal pieces. Roll out each piece into a very thin circle.

Heat a griddle or large skillet over medium-high heat. Once the pan is hot, lightly grease the pan with oil and lay pitas flat. Cook for 2 minutes, or until lightly golden on the bottom. Flip and cook for another minute or so, then remove from heat and place inside a clean, dry kitchen towel to keep warm while you cook remaining pitas.

Store leftover cooked pitas in an airtight container at room temp for 2–3 days, in the fridge for 5 days or freeze.

Diphaphata (Botswana)

Diphaphata (stovetop muffins) are most often made with yeast, but this simple baking powder version is also common, producing a tasty, round bread similar to (but heavier than) an English muffin.

Ingredients:

4 cups flour
2 teaspoons sugar
4 teaspoons baking powder
Pinch of salt
1 cup milk or water

Instructions:

Stir together ingredients. Knead to rolling consistency on a floured board. Flatten with hands or a rolling pin. Cut into 3–4-inch circles. Place a heavy frypan over low heat. Sprinkle with a little flour or spray with vegetable spray to keep the bread from sticking. Place the bread circles in the pan and brown both sides, about 10 minutes per side. Serve immediately.