



Come to the Table...

*Worship Celebration*  
**October 1, 2023**

*Twin Towers United Methodist Church*  
1411 Oak Street, Alameda, CA 94501  
510.522.6744 | [twintowers.office@gmail.com](mailto:twintowers.office@gmail.com) | [www.twintowersumc.org](http://www.twintowersumc.org)

## **WORSHIP GUIDE**

*Before you begin your time of worship, find a comfortable place to be and gather whatever you might need: your Bible, something to write on and with, your computer/connected device (if you intend to listen to music online), etc. Feel free to adapt this worship guide in any way that makes best sense to you and those you might be gathered with. (Consider inviting someone – a friend, a family member – to worship with you.) Commit to spending the next hour with God.*

**PRELUDE** – Listen and sing along to a song or hymn that blesses and centers your spirit.

**OPENING HYMN** – “Come to the Table” W&S 3168

### **CALL TO WORSHIP**

*Leader: We hear God’s calling to have joyful spirits as Christ’s followers.*

*All: We lift our hearts to be filled with energy and strength!*

*Leader: We know that sometimes it is difficult to be joyful in life.*

*All: We recognize that joy is a practice, not just a happy feeling.*

*Leader: We open ourselves to the joy that comes with justice.*

*All: We make room at this table for joy in all its forms.*

### **SCRIPTURE READING – Philippians 2: 1-13 MSG**

He Took on the Status of a Slave

2 1-4 If you’ve gotten anything at all out of following Christ, if his love has made any difference in your life, if being in a community of the Spirit means anything to you, if you have a heart, if you care—then do me a favor: Agree with each other, love each other, be deep-spirited friends. Don’t push your way to the front; don’t sweet-talk your way to the top. Put yourself aside, and help others get ahead. Don’t be obsessed with getting your own advantage. Forget yourselves long enough to lend a helping hand.

5-8 Think of yourselves the way Christ Jesus thought of himself. He had equal status with God but didn’t think so much of himself that he had to cling to the advantages of that status no matter what. Not at all. When the time came, he set aside the privileges of deity and took on the status of a slave, became human! Having become human, he stayed human. It was an incredibly humbling process. He didn’t claim special privileges. Instead, he lived a selfless, obedient life and then died a selfless, obedient death—and the worst kind of death at that—a crucifixion.

9-11 Because of that obedience, God lifted him high and honored him far beyond anyone or anything, ever, so that all created beings in heaven and on earth—even those long ago dead and buried—will bow in worship before this Jesus Christ, and call out in praise that he is the Master of all, to the glorious honor of God the Father.

Rejoicing Together

12-13 What I'm getting at, friends, is that you should simply keep on doing what you've done from the beginning. When I was living among you, you lived in responsive obedience. Now that I'm separated from you, keep it up. Better yet, redouble your efforts. Be energetic in your life of salvation, reverent and sensitive before God. That energy is God's energy, an energy deep within you, God himself willing and working at what will give him the most pleasure.

### **LISTEN – Sermon: Come to the Table of Joy**

*You can read Pastor Akesa's message [here](#).*

### **ANTHEM OF RESPONSE – “At This Table”**

**PRAYERS of the PEOPLE** – *Spend time in prayer. What did you hear for yourself through today's scripture and reflection? Talk to God about it. Then lift up the joys and concerns that are in your heart. You might write them down, speak them aloud, or pray for them in silence. We also celebrate July birthdays amongst our community.*

*We would be honored to pray with you and for you. Please send a note via text, mail, or email or give a call to our Healing Prayer Team.*

### **SHARING OUR GIFTS**

*How might you offer yourself and all that you have to God this week? How are you being invited to practice generosity? Spend a moment listening for God's direction.*

*You are invited to contribute financially towards the purpose and ministry of TTUMC. We are a congregation committed to being conduits of God's healing in our neighborhood and beyond, and in so doing, impact the last and the least. You can contribute by mailing in a check, dropping off cash, or giving online (visit <https://twintowersumc.org/give>).*

### **HOLY COMMUNION**

**CLOSING HYMN** – “Lord I Lift Your Name on High” TFWS 2088

### **BENEDICTION**

### **POSTLUDE**

**NOW GO AND PASS CHRIST'S PEACE!**

# CHURCH NOTICES, EVENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

## Midway Shelter Needs Our Help

We support Midway Shelter, the only women and children shelter operating in Alameda, by providing 30 meals twice a month (2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday and 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of each month). Donors can participate as financial donors or as meal preparers.

To participate, please complete the information by clicking [here](#) and we will contact you. We can really use more help with this needed ministry. Thank you!

RSVP [here](#) to join the Art of Healing Workshop

## THE ART OF HEALING WORKSHOP

with Donna Fado Ivery

Minister, Artist, Author

WHEN?

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 14

8:30 am - 3:00 pm

WHERE?

Twin Towers  
United Methodist Church Gym  
2259 Central Ave., Alameda, CA 94501

SCAN QR  
CODE TO  
REGISTER



\$20 Registration  
Fee includes  
materials and  
lunch.

### About Donna Fado Ivery



For 17 years after brain injury, Donna relied on a cane, wheelchair, and opiates. Now she walks freely, without these supports.

Donna shares her faith journey through paintings, poetry, and stories, highlighting her experience of a disabling head injury, chronic pain, spiritual resiliency, hope, and healing beyond the expected.

Her award-winning inspirational memoir, *Sleep, Pray, Heal: A Path to Wholeness and Well-Being*, tells her remarkable story. A popular speaker at conferences, seminars, retreats, and meetings across the US, Donna shares the good news of spiritual healing.

Questions? Contact the Twin Towers UMC Office at 510-522-6744 or [twintowers.office@gmail.com](mailto:twintowers.office@gmail.com)



Join us on Sunday, October 15 at 10:30 AM!

TWIN TOWERS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

# 170TH ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL GUESTS

FOLLOWING JESUS. THRIVING IN COMMUNITY. HEALING THE WORLD.



**Joey Harrison**  
Executive Director  
and Founder,  
Village of Love



**Rev. Dr. Kristin Stoneking**  
California-Nevada  
Annual Conference,  
Bay District  
Superintendent



**Mayor Marilyn Ezzy Ashcraft**



**Chris Tam**  
Founder, All  
Good Living  
Foundation



**Alameda  
Food  
Bank**



**Building  
Futures**



**Amos White**  
American Red  
Cross Community  
Coordinator



**Bay Area  
Music Project  
(BAMP)  
Choir**

Join us!!

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## 10/1 Sermon Transcript

Today is World Communion Sunday and on this day we celebrate our common communion table with people all over the world. Worldwide Communion Sunday (as it was originally called) began in earnest in 1940 as a program of the Federal Council of Churches in the United States to find one Sunday on which at least some of its member denominations would be willing to agree to encourage their congregations to celebrate communion. Some of those denominations, including Methodists, Congregationalists, Northern Baptists, and Presbyterians, also had churches outside the United States as part of their missionary efforts.

So, why was finding one Sunday on which several denominations would celebrate communion considered important in 1940? Because at the time, that would have been difficult to coordinate. Most American Protestants celebrated communion quarterly well into the middle of the 20th century, but their observances were not coordinated with each other, nor even within their own denominations. Finding a single Sunday in the year when several Protestant denominations would agree to urge all of their congregations to celebrate communion was a significant sign of Christian unity at a time in American history of much disunity, lingering effects of an economic depression, and renewed strife over civil rights, all just a year prior to America's entrance into World War II.

The original motivation for observing this day has become less relevant. Nearly all mainline Protestant denominations, including United Methodists, celebrate communion at least monthly, usually on the first Sunday of the month, with an increasing move toward weekly celebration. In churches that celebrate communion weekly, one can say every Sunday is, in effect, World Communion Sunday. The various denominations who have continued to support World Communion Sunday have found this observance helpful for calling attention to particular denominational emphases and fundraising to support those areas of service to and for others.

The United Methodist Church and our predecessor denominations have a long tradition of creating and supporting educational institutions, especially colleges, universities, and seminaries, in the United States and worldwide. This goes back to Methodist Founder John Wesley himself, who founded the Kingswood School in Bath, England, as a means of providing an education for the children of Methodist preachers and leaders, most of whom did not have the resources to send their children to school otherwise.

On this World Communion Sunday, we here at Twin Towers wrap-up our Come to the Table Series. A series that we are brought together believing in the host of this Table who is Jesus makes our joy complete! So, we will share our stories, our compassion, our sympathy as part of one human family that shares the love of Christ in the breaking of the bread. By being people of the Communion table, we have something in common with millions of people across the planet — people who speak different languages, live completely different lives, eat different food, and have different ideas about who Jesus is and what it means to be Christian. Even with people with whom we vehemently disagree, or communities from which we have been harmed historically in the past (or present), we still have the Table in common. We share a common meaning (more or less) of what it means to feast as the Body of Christ, breaking open our lives and partaking of a new covenant. It's healthy, even joyful, to remember we have things in common with people we cannot understand — or even people who anger or disgust us — because recognizing that we have something in common is the first step in healing the wounds that separate us as human beings from one another.

This past month we have heard about the call to dine with Jesus — an invitation that is much more than a simple eating experience. This because with Jesus, it never was simply about eating. The reminder that the table was the place where He fed people, and also where Jesus challenged them and us today to acts of love that reflect God's way. This because when we say "yes" to the place at Christ's table, we accept a way of life that embraces God's definition of hospitality, love, peace, grace, and joy; the topics we have been looking at this month as part of this series looking at our rituals of Holy Communion and the ways in which they can be connected to all the tables of our lives, families, and communities.

These last 4 weeks we have been on a journey as we prepare to receive our guests for our 170th Anniversary on October 15, by exploring the different characteristics of Jesus' table that we share each month through Holy Communion. The first week we focused on Jesus' table of hospitality and what it means to pursue hospitality to strangers and how it is easy to set up a nice meal and experience that is fun and enjoyable for friends and people we care about or are comfortable with. But what of strangers? Are we willing to sit next to a stranger we do not know or perhaps does not dress or talk like us?

Hospitality is defined as generous and friendly treatment of guests, visitors or strangers. It is radical because hospitality calls us to treat all people the same way; not just those we know, not just those we like, and not just those who look safe to us because those that look safe is based on our own interpretations and biases that we may not be even aware of. Hospitality is radical because when we live into the way Jesus teaches, it has the power to create relationships among unlikely people. Jesus was often accused of "eating with sinners" (this term usually applied to the outcasts and marginalized). The reminder to "make friends with nobodies; don't be the great somebody." That is how Jesus sees us all; the same and yet I bet most of us treat the people that society thinks are important differently than those we pass sleeping on the sidewalk or by our front steps.

The second week we focused on Jesus' table of love, and we explored how love is baked into the bread we break each time we gather in Jesus' name, around the communion table. The reminder that we do not need to save this love only for the times when we share in the ritual of Holy Communion. But that we invite love every day when we sit down at our kitchen tables for home-cooked meals or takeout, for game night with friends and family, or even for difficult conversations with our loved ones and difficult conversations with those we may not be related to at work, difficult conversations at school, and yes difficult conversations in church work. Love is present in the sweetest, the spiciest, the bitterest, and the blandest moments of our everyday lives, because love is God, and God is love. We see this in the way of Jesus and the accompaniment of the Holy Spirit who is with us.

Jesus often confused those for whom acceptance was conditional — those who required specific laws be followed "or else." For Jesus, the answer is always to simply love. He chose time and again to seek out the intention of someone's heart — to gather and engage in conversation as a way of moving toward right relationship. What happens when we seek to "do no wrong" to our neighbor, moving beyond boundaries into equal or mutual understanding? To simply desire to share and show love? To push aside that moment of hesitancy because of the difference in the other to simply just "see" and welcome the other in love? How could that change people here on the streets of Alameda if we were to be radical in our sharing love? How could that look like? I'm glad you asked as I have an idea that I will invite you to join me in pursuing out of simply sharing the love of Jesus when we gather at His table.

The third week of this Come to the Table Series we looked at Jesus' table of peace and how Jesus' table of peace requires much of us. This table of peace asks us to listen to others when we are bursting with words of our own and want to interrupt before others are done speaking. This table of peace asks us to speak with courage and grace when perhaps we would rather stay silent. This table of peace asks us to be patient when we want to point out someone's bad habits immediately because we feel it our responsibility to address others' shortcomings. This table of peace asks us to save a seat for people whose opinions differ from ours, look different from us, are from a different socio-economic from us. This table of peace asks us to treat everyone with kindness and dignity, because we need each other to survive. The table of peace requires us to forgive even when we do not want to because we have been hurt, disrespected or felt unheard or unseen. I understand this is not easy to do, especially when we have been hurt by others. We looked at Jesus' response to his disciple Peter about forgiveness in Romans Chapter 18 verse 21-22 that says in the Message translation, "21 At that point Peter got up the nerve to ask, "Master, how many times do I forgive a brother or sister who hurts me? Seven?" 22 Jesus replied, "Seven! Hardly. Try seventy times seven."

That my friends is the model and bar for us to work towards; forgiving and building that muscle of forgiveness seventy times seven times. Basically, until forgiveness becomes second nature. It will take practice over and over again and then we still have to do it some more. The reminder that you will have mastered forgiveness when you do not hang on to the irritations you have for others which then does not have room to grow into full blown anger; does not have room to grow into resentment. Basically, when we do not take others' actions into our mind and bodies that will harm us.

This past week I was in a very tough and uncomfortable conversation where I could have gone along with the tone of the conversation; however, our Series this month reminded me of the responsibility to speak truth in love about the need for forgiveness and I used this scripture about Jesus' words that we are to forgive our brothers and sisters seventy times seven especially when we do not want to because we have been wronged so greatly and wronged by those we trusted. It was not easy to be the only voice who was not focused on going along to get along but to consider perhaps what Jesus would want us to do in this pivotal time where healing and reconciliation is needed. I am not sure yet how my words were received, but I tell you I walked away from that meeting feeling comforted in saying what I felt was needed to be

said: that Jesus' table of peace and healing require forgiveness especially when it is hard for us to do so.

Last week, in the fourth week of our Series, we looked at Jesus' table of grace. The reminder from Ephesians 2:8-9 that salvation is God's gift, it is not something you or I possess; it is not something you did but rather, it is God's gift to us. The reminder that when we hear the word salvation, it is the assurance that God's grace is for each of us regardless of what we have done in the past, today or tomorrow. For us United Methodists, God's grace is at work throughout our spiritual journey; that God's power working in each of us so we can experience a transformed life. The reminder that regardless of when we miss the mark, harm one another, and perhaps defy the call God has placed on our lives, only an abundant amount of grace will do to meet us where we need it to restore our relationship with God and one another.

Holy Communion is a "means of grace." That when we gather at the table of Holy Communion, we are experiencing in a very unique way God's grace through the transformation of the simple elements of bread and juice or cracker and water into something miraculously and uniquely the presence of Jesus in the body and blood of Christ. This grace that is poured out upon us is a means by which we are continually transformed. There is no point in the life we have lived where we do not have access to transformation. God's grace is a gift without condition, it does not require any amount of merit or association. It comes from a place of generosity so vast and unbelievable. God's grace is extended at all times, even and especially in the midst of anxiety or suffering.

Once again, we end this Come to the Table Series with Jesus' table of joy. It makes sense that joy is what we look at last after hospitality, love, peace, and grace. Because joy, while similar to the emotion of being happy is stronger because it is lasting. Joy is an emotion motivated by inward peace and contentment while happiness is an outward expression of elation and temporary based on outward circumstances. Joy will warm a person's heart while happiness merely pleases. But this is also a result of the difference in the reasons behind these two feelings; happiness can bring pleasure, yet joy brings true contentment to one's heart.

On this World Communion Sunday, the primary message is that we share something throughout history and across continents: the holiness and meaning of this feast. We have the same mind with Christians who lived thousands of years in the past, and we will remain connected with Christians who haven't even been born yet. God is at work in us at Jesus' table across time and space! As Paul puts it in his epistle to the Philippians, we have the same love and a "partnership in the Spirit" through our connection to one another across the table of Holy Communion. Imagine what we can accomplish to abolish spiritual and physical hunger if we truly seek to be partnered in the Spirit!

It is this joy we celebrate at the table of Holy Communion, so deeply pleased that the Kin-dom of the Good reigns forever! Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be grasped but emptied himself. It is an expression of what is called kenosis — the act of Christ pouring himself out for humanity when we hear the following as part of our Holy Communion: "Drink from this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." Or, as The Message translation puts it, "When the time came, he set aside the privileges of deity and took on the status of a slave, became human!" Kenosis is the act of giving of yourself in the way Christ did — literally offering His body, His deity, His dignity. That humble act of love is hard for us to understand but unmistakable for us to recognize. And it is this pouring out on behalf of the good of the whole that is the ground of our joy. The scripture continues, "Be energetic in your life of salvation, reverent and sensitive before God. That energy is God's energy, an energy deep within you, God is willing and working at what will give the most pleasure!" Joy is a form of deep and abiding pleasure.

Remember when I asked earlier how can we share and show love? To push aside that moment of hesitancy because of the difference in the other so you can just "see" and welcome the other in love and how could such action change people here on the streets of Alameda if we were to share radical and inclusive love? How would that look like? I'm glad you asked as I have an idea that I invite you to join me in carrying it out simply by sharing the love of Jesus when we gather at His table at our 170th Anniversary.

We are preparing for a great gathering to celebrate Twin Towers' 170th Anniversary with food, good company with the many people we are inviting and leaders within our community whom we partner with; however, who has not been invited but also deserves a special place at our table? It is our friends whom we serve through Dine & Connect each first Monday like we are doing tomorrow. I am inviting your generous hospitality, your care and your love given with



peace, grace, and joy for our friends whom society may not even consider inviting to a banquet like we are offering in two weeks. At every table for our 170th Anniversary celebration there will be a seat reserved for a Special Dine & Connect Guest and if you are blessed to be seated with one of them, I would invite you to greet them, welcome them, and extend hospitality to them as if Jesus or the Mayor of Alameda was at your table.

As we prepare to come to the table, Jesus' table, please do so with a joyful heart with the image of a heavenly banquet where all are fed, all have enough, and all are one. This is because it is the Spirit that can make us one. This does not mean all are the same or all are of the same opinion, but simply one in our ministry of justice, healing and joy to all the world. Please make it be so, friends; may it be so in Jesus' name. Amen.