



Come to the Table...

Worship Celebration
September 24, 2023

Twin Towers United Methodist Church
1411 Oak Street, Alameda, CA 94501
510.522.6744 | twintowers.office@gmail.com | 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 often invoke the idea of “grace” when we say a blessing over our meals.

All: We know that grace is an essential need for our survival.

Leader: We “say grace,” but do we always share grace with others?

All: We need reminders that we are all human.

Leader: We thank God for another opportunity to make room at the table for others.

All: We give thanks for such a large table!

SCRIPTURE READING – Philippians 1:21-30 MSG

On the contrary, everything happening to me in this jail only serves to make Christ more accurately known, regardless of whether I live or die. They didn’t shut me up; they gave me a platform! Alive, I’m Christ’s messenger; dead, I’m his prize. Life versus even more life! I can’t lose.

22-26 As long as I’m alive in this body, there is good work for me to do. If I had to choose right now, I hardly know which I’d choose. Hard choice! The desire to break camp here and be with Christ is powerful. Some days I can think of nothing better. But most days, because of what you are going through, I am sure that it’s better for me to stick it out here. So I plan to be around awhile, companion to you as your growth and joy in this life of trusting God continues. You can start looking forward to a great reunion when I come visit you again. We’ll be praising Christ, enjoying each other.

27-30 Meanwhile, live in such a way that you are a credit to the Message of Christ. Let nothing in your conduct hang on whether I come or not. Your conduct must be the same whether I show up to see things for myself or hear of it from a distance. Stand united, singular in vision, contending for people’s trust in the Message, the good news, not flinching or dodging in the slightest before the opposition. Your courage and unity will show them what they’re up against: defeat for them, victory for you—and both because of God. There’s far more to this life than trusting in Christ. There’s also suffering for him. And the suffering is as much a gift as the trusting. You’re involved in the same kind of struggle you saw me go through, on which you are now getting an updated report in this letter.

LISTEN – Sermon: Come to the Table of Grace

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

HYMN OF RESPONSE – “Water, River, Spirit, Grace” TFWS 2253

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>).

CLOSING HYMN – “The Spirit Sends Us Forth to Serve” TFW 2241

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 (2nd Tuesday and 4th 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!

Join us on Sunday, October 15, 2023 for our 170th Anniversary Celebration and RSVP [here](#) for our Anniversary Luncheon.

TWIN TOWERS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

170TH ANNIVERSARY EVENTS

FOLLOWING JESUS. THRIVING IN COMMUNITY. HEALING THE WORLD.



 <p>Sunday, 10/1 11:30 AM World Communion Sunday</p>	 <p>Saturday, 10/7 11:00 AM Blessing of the Animals</p>	 <p>Saturday, 10/14 8:30 AM - 4:00 PM Art of Healing Workshop with Donna Fado Ivery RSVP REQUIRED</p>	 <p>Sunday, 10/15 10:30 AM Celebration 12:00 PM Lunch RSVP REQUIRED</p>
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RSVP AT [TWINTOWERSUMC.ORG](https://www.twintowersumc.org) |   [TTUMCALAMEDA](https://www.facebook.com/ttumcalameda)

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 - 4:00 pm

WHERE?

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

**SCAN QR
CODE TO
REGISTER
BY OCT. 5**



**\$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

9/24 Sermon Transcript

Thank you again for joining us in worship today in the building and on Zoom. We continue our series called “Come to the Table.” Throughout this month, we have heard the call to dine with Jesus — an invitation that means much more than a simple eating experience. This because with Jesus, it never was simply about eating. 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.

When we say “yes” to the place at Christ’s table, we accept a way of life that embraces God’s definition of 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 3 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, the second week we focused on Jesus’ table of LOVE, last week we looked at Jesus’ table of peace through forgiveness and had a chance to participate in small group conversations exploring examples of extending welcoming love and peace to strangers and sharing why forgiving others is hard.

Today, we will be looking at Jesus’ table of grace. We hear the word grace used a lot in our church vocabulary but what does it mean? Well, I’m glad you asked. United Methodists understand grace as a gift from God, ‘the undeserved, unmerited, and loving action of God in human existence through the ever-present Holy Spirit.’ That’s a lot of words and what does that mean?

The Bible teaches us that everything we have from God is given because of God’s great love for us; that we are saved by God’s grace because of our faith. Ephesians 2:8-9 tells us that salvation is God’s gift, it is not something you possess; it is not something you did but rather, it is God’s gift to us. When we hear the word salvation, we understand that to be the assurance that God’s grace is for each of us regardless of what we have done in the past, today or tomorrow. United Methodists recognize God’s grace at work throughout our spiritual journey.

John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist movement, wrote and preached about God’s grace to prepare us, restore us, and continually shape us into the people we were created to be. UMC Bishop Will Willimon described grace as “the power of God working in you to give you a transformed life.” The understanding again from Ephesians 4:7 that “to each of us, grace has been given.”

Some examples of grace is receiving forgiveness from a loved one when you say something you should not have said or have done something very painful to your partner and they are willing to forgive you in spite of the pain caused. Or choosing to treat yourself with kindness when you may feel guilty at putting yourself first. Learning to let go and not want to control all things is an act of grace. A big one is apologizing when you do not feel like it or apologizing for something that caused harm to someone else even though that was not your intent.

But for us Christians, the greatest example of grace is what Jesus did for us on the cross. Luke 23 tells us that even while Jesus was on the cross, people made fun of Him, yelled at Him, and even stripped Him naked. Yet, He asked God to forgive them. Jesus gave them grace in His darkest moment. How would you and I respond if that were us being treated badly when all we did and desired to do was to share and show love?

In this morning’s epistle to the Philippians read by P. Bob, the apostle Paul expresses his joy for a community that he loves. This is a community Paul gladly suffered and struggled for; Paul wrote one of his most joyous letters while imprisoned for his faith. Paul’s story is a helpful example of how grace works, and I think his joy in the midst of imprisonment demonstrates how aware he is of the grace he has been offered. Because before Paul was Paul, he was Saul — a persecutor of Christians and a danger to the growing Christian community before his own transformative moment.

When we think about just how broadly we can manage to miss the mark, harm one another, and defy the call God has placed on our lives, we have to admit that only an abundant amount of grace will do to meet us where we need it in order to restore our relationship with God and one another.

Communion is a "means of grace." This is a belief shared ecumenically across many Christian denominations and it is a theological claim that what we are doing at the table of Holy Communion is receiving, in a unique way, an experience of God's grace. For myself, I find the theology of epiclesis in Holy Communion helpful here (thank you, Eastern Orthodox Christianity!). Epiclesis in relation to the sacrament of Holy Communion is a theology that the feast we share is an agent of transformation for us on our journey toward wholeness and salvation. When I say, "Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here and on these gifts of bread and wine," transformation happens at the table, a transformation of the simple elements of bread and juice, cracker and water, into something miraculously and uniquely the presence of Jesus (or completely the body and blood of Christ). But did you notice the first transformation mentioned is also a transformation for those who are gathered in the prayer of thanksgiving when we gather to receive (when I say "Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here...")?

This grace that is poured out upon us is a means by which we are continually transformed. The parable in Matthew 20 of the generous vineyard owner is a story that reveals that how long you have been a Christian, how much you have done as a Christian, how "good" you are at Christianity... doesn't really matter. What matters is our openness to receive more grace than we can perceive or imagine. Whether you have lived as a Christian from the cradle or found your faith in your fifties or yesterday, you can be transformed and seek new life at this table. Whether you are hired in the morning or an hour before closing time, grace means you receive the wages you need to survive until the next day.

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; it is inconceivable. God's grace is extended at all times, even and especially in the midst of anxiety or suffering. What incredibly Good News this is, indeed.

My hope for you as we come to the end of our journey through this series next Sunday on World Communion Day is to not only experience Jesus' table of Grace as you gather at the tables in your homes to share deeply, but that you share deeply the grace extended you with others that we welcome when they come through our doors and those we will welcome as part of our 170th Anniversary.

Sharing deeply of grace for the other is what connects us to others and helps to develop meaningful relationships and bonds that make lasting friendships and community. I experience this growing bond of special friendship and community not only on Sundays with you but see it among you. I say among you because each Sunday morning before worship there is a buzz in the building as you greet each other before service begins in the building and on Zoom.

I also experience that welcoming grace and hospitality each time we meet monthly at Steve & Marjorie Garner's home for the small group gathering where they have prepared a place for each person. Marjorie's fresh baked cookies are ready in abundance, and Steve welcomes us by wanting to pour that first cup of coffee. Or when the ladies of Ruth Circle gather each month for devotion, discuss ways to serve, and come to the table to share a meal.

Through this journey of coming to Jesus' table, it is my hope that we as a community are open to invite those who feel isolated and who may be feeling a lag in hopefulness to our table of love and joy which we will offer through our 170th Anniversary on October 15, and beyond. And it is also my hope that our habits of gathering will also bring more peace in turbulent times for ourselves as we lean on each other in this community of faith and love but also offer that same faith and love you receive here with those that come along side us who can be blessed by your welcoming hospitality, by the sharing of your love and care, by your sharing peace through acceptance and forgiveness, and in the ways you, me, and we extend grace.

At the table of grace, there is always more than enough to go around. Everybody makes mistakes, and we have all needed forgiveness at some point and gentle guidance to adjust and make amends. Grace doesn't keep track of how many times we've messed up, and it doesn't hinge on the condition that next time, we'll do better. God's grace exists outside of time and says we are enough, right now and always, no matter what.

God's table is one of plenty! God decides how much to give and gives more than we can ever imagine; more grace than we expect. God even gives more than we would give ourselves. In the face of such abundance, we are called to be generous as God is generous. Indeed, at God's pot-luck of grace, even the last in line have more than enough to eat! Let us proclaim grace for ourselves and for one another, Amen.