

McCORMICK THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY


**TOWARD A MORE OPEN AND WELCOMING TABLE:
EUCCHARISTIC THEOLOGY AND SOCIO-POLITICAL ETHICS
IN THE REFORMED TRADITION**


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ABSTRACT

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TOWARD A MORE OPEN AND WELCOMING TABLE: EUCCHARISTIC THEOLOGY AND SOCIO-POLITICAL ETHICS IN THE REFORMED TRADITION

Prior to 312 CE the Eucharist was a subversive act in protest of the exclusionary social, political, and economic stratification of the Roman Empire, and an eschatological statement of solidarity with those oppressed and marginalized by empire. Since the Church was adopted by the empire, it has suffered from a schizophrenic battle of identity between its collusion and its call to radical grace, hospitality, inclusion, and solidarity with those Empire seeks to marginalize. Using Cláudio Carvalhaes' concept of "borderless borders," this paper challenges the Christian Church to consider the broader social, political, and ethical implications of Eucharist. A truly open table should be the hallmark and practice of the Church of Jesus the Christ, who ate with tax collectors and sinners. It should be a practice that guides our lives, individually and collectively, at all of our tables of fellowship, including the ones we still need to build.

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*Dedicated to
my wife and children,
that they may find in the Church a community of welcome and
encouragement in their faith journeys,
to those who struggle to find a community to which they can belong,
and to the Christian Church that she may continually discover new ways of being in the world
for the sake of the oppressed and marginalized.*

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Unfortunately, for too many worshipers today, the Sunday ritual enactment of the Lord's Supper, born of such divine-human intimacy, is neither mighty nor dangerous. It has become an empty shell or irrelevant formality. The Eucharist is no longer the enactment of an ancient or timeless tale; rather, it is a meaningless repetition of a dead story.

Herbert Anderson and Edward Foley,
Mighty Stories, Dangerous Rituals (1998)

Tradition is not the past. Tradition is the life of the church today in dynamic continuity with all that has come before. The past is dead, but tradition is alive, tradition is now.

Fr. Robert F. Taft, J.S.
"Mass Instruction," an interview in *U.S. Catholic* (2009)

In the same way that there is no theology that is not also political, so there is no Eucharistic sacrament that does not, passively or actively, support or resist, in one way or another, political views and ideological programs.

Cláudio Carvalhaes,
Eucharist and Globalization (2013)

To tolerate the existence of another, and allow the other to be different is still very little. To offer toleration is only to concede, and this is not a relationship of equality, but superiority of one over the other. We should create relationships between people that excludes any sense of tolerance and intolerance.

José de Sousa Saramago
Author and recipient of the 1998 Nobel Prize in Literature
(Quoted in *Eucharist and Globalization*, 242)

INTRODUCTION

Like most empires, for the Roman Empire the production, distribution, and consumption of food reinforced socio-political order and power. In Judeo-Christian scripture food is central to identity and communal survival, but in a different way than for empire. In Jesus' meal practices, including, but not limited to, the Last Supper, a code of ethics is introduced that subverts the known social orders of empire and shifts value from wealth and power to a more fundamental value of "community" within God's creation.

Early Christian meals, particularly the practice of Eucharist, was a prophetic act of solidarity with the marginalized and vulnerable people against systems of control and exclusion.¹ Today, however, Christian meal practices have been reduced to morsels of food, acts of personal piety with little regard for their socio-ethical implications, and neutered of their socio-political and transformative power. This project was born from three observations over twenty-five years of ministry, the last fifteen as an ordained teaching elder (minister) in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.): 1) Jesus used meals and banquets to cast a broad, subversive, and radically inclusive vision of the Kingdom of God that he witnessed as very present and very tangible; 2) many people in the congregations I have served describe their experience of Eucharist in primarily personal and private terms; and 3) the Church has encouraged privately pietistic practices of Eucharist with its rules and pre-requisites around how it celebrates the meal, from who may officiate to who may participate, resulting in a neglect of its justice-oriented character.

The *Book of Order* of the PC(USA) dictates that only teaching elders (ministers) may administer Eucharist (or Lord's Supper), ruling elders and deacons may serve, and only those

¹ Margaret Scott, *The Eucharist and Social Justice* (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 2009), ix.

previously baptized may receive the elements.² There is a disconnect between Jesus' radically subversive and inclusive practice at tables and the rules of exclusion my denomination, the PC(USA), imposes around who may have access to the Eucharistic Table.

This paper explores the biblical stories of Jesus' table ethic, how he embodied a broader socio-political ethic through table fellowship, and how his behavior and teachings shaped the social ethic of first century Christians. I then briefly track the shaping of Eucharistic practices through the 16th century Reformation to present-day, primarily in the PC(USA) and at University Presbyterian Church in Tempe, Arizona (UPC-Tempe), where I serve as pastor. Finally, I share a process of discovery, discernment, and practice through which I invited the people of UPC-Tempe to consider the broader social, political, and ethical implications of Eucharist.

In its constitution, the PC(USA) describes the Eucharistic³ meal as more than a remembrance⁴ of Jesus' Last Supper, death, and resurrection. It is spiritual nourishment for doing the work of compassion, justice, and peace.⁵ However, it is suggested here that it is also a

² Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), *Book of Order 2015-2017: The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Part II*, (Louisville, KY: Office of the General Assembly, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 2013), G-1.0401, G-1.0404, G-2.0202, W-2.4006. An overture was presented to the 222nd General Assembly of the PC(USA) in 2016 to remove the baptismal requirement. It passed the General Assembly in a 516 to 45 vote, but with alternative language that calls on leadership to counsel those not baptized to consider baptism. The overture will be presented to the presbyteries for ratification in the coming year.

³ I use "Eucharist," rather than the more common "Lord's Supper" to emphasize the broader implications of the thanksgiving meal and Jesus' meal practices, beyond Jesus' Last Supper with which it is most often associated. I propose that "Communion" is another appropriate label as it denotes the bringing together of diverse people without the nearly exclusive connection to the Last Supper of Jesus.

⁴ *Book of Order (2015-2017)*, W-2.4004.

⁵ *Ibid.*, W-2.4007.

political act or protest against the social norms of oppression, subjugation, and marginalization.⁶ It is an act of solidarity with vulnerable people who are often the targets and victims of prejudicial systemic norms. The Eucharistic meal is in itself an exercise of justice during which we are confronted with issues of injustice: racism, xenophobia, immigration, war, violence, poverty, food insecurity, mental illness, as well as fear, hate, and prejudice—who is welcome at the Table and who is not. In fact, it has been referred to as “the most political act of the church.”⁷

For the Eucharist to be efficacious in our lives, it must be embodied as a communal act that moves us beyond the Table, even to extend the Table of welcome and inclusion to the most vulnerable of God’s children. As free and open as is God’s gift of grace, the invitation to the Table—where we receive, recognize, and seek to practice living in that gift—must be open to all who wish to share in it, with no ecclesial boundaries or preconditions. With an open invitation in the midst of and through community one is offered more *capacity* to receive and embody God’s radical and counter-cultural gift of mutual love as revealed in and through Jesus. In other words, it is not about the *mechanics* of the elements, as has been argued for centuries, but the *meaning* of gathering, sharing, and communing that makes the meal efficacious. Sharing in the meal offers us God’s counter-narrative to corporate greed and self-serving politics.⁸ In the very act of Eucharist we are challenged to see ourselves not as mere individuals, but as individuals

⁶ I am thankful to Aldrin M. Peñamora and his Ph.D. dissertation for the Center for Advanced Theological Studies at Fuller Theological Seminary, “The Politics of the Eucharist: Theological Ethics of Justice, Community and Peace for the Moro-Christian Conflict in Muslim Mindanao” (October 2013), particularly Chapter Four, “A Revisitation of the Upper Room: Recapturing the Social-Ethical Dimension of the Eucharist” and Chapter 5, “The Politics of the Eucharist: Following in the Revolutionary Ways of Jesus.” Peñamora lays out a convincing argument to support his premise that “The Eucharist...is a *social, political, and ethical practice* of the faith community” (112-113, emphasis in original).

⁷ Brent Peterson, “Eucharist: The Church’s Political Response to Suffering and Vocational Empowerment to Suffering Love,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 43, no. 1 (September 2008), 148, quoted by Aldrin M. Peñamora, Ph.D. dissertation, 113.

⁸ Scott, ix, 20, 27-28.

intricately connected in a web of mutuality that binds us to one another relationally, spiritually, and even metaphysically. When any part of the web vibrates, the whole system is affected and changed by our individual and communal frequencies, for good or ill.⁹ In Eucharist we participate together with God in the orchestra of Creation. It is a *means* by which we experience our mutuality—realizing it, wrestling with it, naming it, and practicing it. It proclaims a much larger truth about our reality that is often unrealized.

BACKGROUND

UPC-Tempe is a member congregation of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). It began its life in 1952, during the hay-day of church-planting in the United States,¹⁰ as the partner congregation to the Westminster College Fellowship at what was then Arizona State College. UPC-Tempe worshiped for the first ten years both on campus and in a fellowship hall just east of campus. In 1961, the congregation moved 1 mile south of what had become Arizona State University (ASU). Within its first twenty years, the community grew from a charter of 38 members to over five hundred members, with strong ties to ASU.¹¹ In its early years, the U.S. was engrossed in the challenges of the Civil Rights movement, anti-war sentiment, and shifting sexual norms. Amidst the tumult, the 1977 General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. (UPCUSA), one of two predecessor denominations to the present day PC(USA),

⁹ Barbara Brown Taylor suggests in *The Luminous Web: Essays on Science and Religion* (Chicago, IL: Cowley Publications, 2000) that we need to look at Creation, what she calls “our life in God,” differently than we have to this point. Rather than a “clockwork universe” running along in a linear forward motion, the universe (including humanity) is more like a “luminous web, in which the whole is far more than the parts” (43). In the universe “there is no such thing as an individual apart from his or her relationships. Every interaction—between people and people, between people and things, between things and things—changes the face of history” (43-44).

¹⁰ According to denominational statistics, 1965 was the last year of positive membership growth in the PC(USA) and its predecessor denomination.

¹¹ Lawn Griffith, *Hand in Hand—50 Years Together (1952-2002): A History of Faith, Ministry and Service* (Tempe, AZ: University Presbyterian Church, 2002), 26, 43, 66.

charged congregations to begin a biblical discussion of homosexuality and changing norms around sexuality.¹² Though the impact of these social challenges were being experienced at UPC-Tempe, the session voted to postpone any formal discussion about homosexuality until 1978.¹³ There is no record of any such discussion happening until 2004.

In 1980, civil war broke out in Central America, pushing nearly 1 million refugees north across the U.S. border. Though the U.S. government was funding the wars, it regularly refused asylum to those fleeing the violence.¹⁴ Faith communities responded, working under the radar of the federal government, with ground zero for what became the Sanctuary Movement being Tucson, Arizona. In 1985, a number of leaders in the movement were arrested, and were later convicted of smuggling undocumented aliens into the U.S.¹⁵ By then, the number of religious institutions participating in the Sanctuary Movement increased to several hundred, actively helping undocumented immigrants secretly move to the interior of the U.S.¹⁶ The session of UPC-Tempe voted to “morally endorse and support defendants on trial,” and approved \$500 toward the AZ Sanctuary Legal Defense Fund.¹⁷ It was their first foray into faith-based political action.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, UPC-Tempe membership was shrinking, as it was in

¹² Griffith, 75.

¹³ Griffith, 58.

¹⁴ Linda Rabben, *Give Refuge to the Stranger: The Past, Present, and Future of Sanctuary* (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, Inc., 2011), 131; Lane Van Ham, “Sanctuary Revisited: Central American Refugee Assistance in the History of the Church-based Immigration Advocacy,” *Political Theology* 10, no. 4 (October 2009): , 621-622.

¹⁵ Van Ham, 622.

¹⁶ Gary MacEoin, “A Brief History of the Sanctuary Movement,” in *Sanctuary: A Resource Guide for Understanding and Participating in the Central American Refugees’ Struggle*, ed. Gary MacEoin, (San Francisco, CA: Harper and Row, 1985), 25-28; Rabben, *Give Refuge to the Stranger: The Past, Present, and Future of Sanctuary*, 622.

¹⁷ Griffith, 90, and session records.

protestant churches across the country.¹⁸ UPC-Tempe was also shifting from a theologically and politically “big tent” congregation, where a broad spectrum of liberal and conservative views were held and shared, toward a more liberal and progressive ethos. The congregation engaged ever deeper in contemporary social issues like sexuality/gender-identity and immigration, asking deeper questions about their socio-ethical responsibilities as understood through the lens of their Christian faith.

Homosexuality would eventually come back into view at UPC-Tempe in 1996 when an overture to the PC(USA)’s General Assembly sought to prohibit the ordination of anyone who was not proven to be living “in fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman, or chastity in singleness.”¹⁹ In April, just two months before the General Assembly was to consider the overture, a survey of UPC-Tempe members revealed overwhelming support for LGBT ordination. The overture passed the assembly and was ratified by the presbyteries in 1998.²⁰ For the next two decades LGBT inclusion would consume and divide the denomination and UPC-Tempe. In 2004, the session of UPC-Tempe appointed a task force to develop and implement a congregation-wide study of homosexuality and Christian faith. After more than a year of study and conversation, the congregation voted in 2006 to become “open and affirming” to LGBT people. As a result, a number of people left the church.²¹

¹⁸ As previously noted, 1965 was the last year the PC(USA) or its predecessor denominations saw an aggregate membership increase. UPC-Tempe reached its maximum membership of 757 in 1986 (Griffith, 91).

¹⁹ Sacrament Study Group Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), *Book of Order 2015-2017: The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Part II* (Louisville, KY: Office of the General Assembly, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 2013), G-6.0106b.

²⁰ Griffith, 112.

²¹ Noted by members of UPC-Tempe, as well as in session and membership records in subsequent years.

At the same time UPC-Tempe was being challenged by expanding ideas around inclusivity, the congregation was being introduced to a new way of practicing Eucharist. For most of its life UPC-Tempe practiced Eucharist like many protestant congregations: once per month in the pews, passing trays of neatly cut bits of bread and nearly thimble-sized cups of grape juice. The pastor then, the Rev. Al Gephart, introduced the *intinction* method whereby congregants are invited forward to one of several pairs of ordained elders and deacons, receive a piece of bread torn from a large loaf, dip the bread in a shared cup of grape juice, and eat both elements together before returning to their seats. For those unable to come forward, two servers walk around the sanctuary offering the elements in the aforementioned trays. *Intinction* was met with a fair amount of discomfort, but over time was accepted.²² Eventually, UPC-Tempe alternated between *intinction* and the more traditional method of passing trays, slowly increasing the frequency of *intinction*.

In 2014, at my behest, the Worship Committee and session spent 6-months discussing how we practice Eucharist at UPC-Tempe, and the possibility of using the *intinction* method full-time. I suggested that the act of coming forward has stronger theological implications than sitting in the pews—it requires active engagement of the body toward the Table; seeing the whole loaf reminds us of our part in the Body of Christ; and sharing a cup more clearly embodied our being in solidarity with one another and all whom God loves. Also discussed was the labor intensity of preparing 160 or so small thimble-like cups of juice and cutting the bread into small bits for the traditional method, versus preparing four goblets and two large loaves of bread for *intinction*. After much discussion, and overwhelming support, the decision was made to use the *intinction* method full-time, with the continued practice of two “roaming” servers offering the elements in

²² Interviews and conversations with parishioners. The method was eventually adopted and is now cherished by most, according to surveys.

the traditional manner to those unable, or unwilling, to come forward. This laid the groundwork for an even deeper congregation-wide conversation about Eucharist and its socio-ethical implications.

RESEARCH & LITERATURE

In 2013 Cláudio Carvalhaes published *Eucharist and Globalization: Redrawing the Borders of Eucharistic Hospitality* (2013). Drawing from decades of work by Dennis Smith and Hal Taussig, Carvalhaes presented the modern-day Eucharist as a simplification and ritualization of first century Christian communal meals. Where the Greco-Roman banquets, Smith and Taussig argue, served to re-enforce socio-economic and political stratification among the elite, Christian banquets sought to reinforce mutuality, model relationships in the Way of Jesus, and resist the empire's culturally enforced hierarchies.

Christian churches today often place the historical beginnings of the Eucharist in Jesus' Last Supper, particularly with Paul's instruction in 1 Cor. 11.17-34. As a result, many have assumed that there was a singular Eucharistic tradition from which we draw. However, when Paul's description of the Eucharistic meal (which he calls the Lord's Supper) is compared with the gospel accounts of Jesus' final meal, significant differences arise in the ordering and shape of the meal (e.g., in Luke's gospel Jesus shares two cups compared to a single cup in Paul's and Matthew's telling, and in John's version a foot washing replaces the bread and cup).²³

²³ Paul Bradshaw, *Eucharistic Origins* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Pub, 2012-05-01), suggests several scholars who advocate for the Last Supper being an early church creation (Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament, vol. 1* (New York: NY: S.C.M. Press, 1952), 144-51; Willi Marxsen, *The Lord's Supper as a Christological Problem* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1970); John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins, 1991), 360-367. Bradshaw also lists a number of scholars who still advocate for the historicity of the Last Supper, albeit influenced by the practices and theology of the early church (E. P. Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1993), 263-64; John Meier, "The Eucharist at the Last Supper: Did it

Carvalhaes postulates that the early meals of the Christian community were shaped heavily by the stories of Jesus' broader meal practices, including the "eating and drinking with sinners" (Luke 15.2), and the yet broader cultural context of the first century, especially the upper class Greco-Roman banquet. Carvalhaes, et. al., fervently suggest that the early Christian Eucharist served as a protest against the ethics of privilege and classism re-enforced by the Greco-Roman banquet.

Greco-Roman Banquets

According to Smith and Taussig, the Greco-Roman banquet developed over hundreds of years and followed a fairly standard structure with regional variations. After invitations were sent a few days in advance, the Roman Empire's upper class would gather either in a home or a reserved temple room, recline, and share: a full and complete main meal, or supper (δειπνον, *deipnon*); followed by a libation, or wine dedication; and then a symposium (συμπόσιον, *sumposion*), or drinking party with entertainment and often topical conversation.²⁴ Philosophical clubs shaped their own symposiums along the same model, but with themed philosophical conversations rather than entertainment.²⁵

As invited guests arrived, typically men, they were shown to their places on couches situated in a semi-circle or "U" formation (see Appendix A). The meals reflected the social order of Greco-Roman society as the attendees reclined on their left arm in order of status, starting

Happen?," *Theology Digest* 42 (1995), 335-51; John Koenig, *The Feast of the World's Redemption: Eucharistic Origins and Christian Mission* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2000).

²⁴ Dennis E. Smith, and Hal E. Taussig, *Many Tables: The Eucharist in the New Testament and Liturgy Today* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1990/SCM/Trinity International Press, 1990), 25.

²⁵ Dennis E. Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist: The Banquet in the Early Christian World* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2003), 47ff.

with the guest of honor seated to the right of the host.²⁶ Luke's gospel mentions the ranking custom when Jesus warns to not assume one's position at a banquet (14.7-11).²⁷ The main meal (*deipnon*) was then served. Marking the transition from the *deipnon* to the *sumposion* was the ceremonial libation. For this, the dinner tables were removed and a large bowl filled with wine was brought in. The host ladled out a cup from the bowl, audibly dedicated it in honor of the emperor or to a deity, spilled some on the floor as an offering, took a drink himself, and then passed the cup to his guests for each to sip. A song was sometimes sung at this point. Then the wine was diluted with water, and the drinking party began. Or, in the case of the philosophical associations, the discussion was initiated.²⁸ The *sumposion* was not so much about drunkenness as it was about building relationships and conversation about the issues of the day.

Lower class clubs and associations often mimicked the banquet customs of the elite. Social classes tended to dine within their own circles—the elite dined with the elite, and the poor dined with the poor.²⁹ At all levels of society these banquets provided an opportunity to build connection within an increasingly diverse culture as more nations were conquered and more cultures were incorporated into the empire.³⁰

The Greco-Roman period had a lasting impact on the social norms of the western world. Today it is not uncommon for dinner hosts to place guests in particular chairs according to some ordering, though the rubric may differ from home to home. After dinner, the party moves to the living room or some other casual setting where guests can enjoy after-dinner drinks and

²⁶ Smith and Taussig (1990), 25.

²⁷ Smith and Taussig (1990), 24.

²⁸ Ibid., 28-30; Hal Taussig, *In the Beginning was the Meal: Social Experimentation and Early Christianity* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2009), 109-112; R. Alan Streett, *Subversive Meals: An Analysis of the Lord's Supper under Roman Domination during the First Century* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publishing, 2013), 19-20, 39-40.

²⁹ Streett, 15.

³⁰ Smith and Taussig (1990), 36-37; Streett, 11-12, 25.

conversation. Dinner parties sometimes even include performances by the host's children or discussion of the issues of the day, similar to a Greco-Roman and philosophical *sumposion*.

Equality may seem odd within the socio-economic and political stratification of the ancient world, but, as we find even today, shared meals served to break down some social barriers.³¹ Everyone was expected to participate in the meal and discussions regardless of social class. In a way, banquets served to foster peace *within* an increasingly socio-economically and socio-politically diverse society.³² Carvalhaes suggests, "*Koinonia* was the guiding principle. If *koinonia* was not in place, the *koinon*, the common good of society, would be in danger and the society could lose its social order."³³ These same principles true today.

Christian Banquets / Eucharistic Communion

The early Christian banquet borrowed from the banquet patterns of the dominant Greco-Roman culture, but with significant differences. Like their elitist and philosophical counterparts, early Christians contextualized the banquets to help form and continually re-form the communities' identities. Contextualization is vital for *meaning* and communal identity. Today the Eucharist is contextualized globally by replacing the wine with what is available in a given region: pineapple juice, banana juice, or even soda.³⁴ Consider also the contextualizing of the image of Christ—e.g., dark-skinned image of Jesus in Africa and South America.

In Paul's first letter to the Corinthian Church we learn that the early Christian communities gathered on Sunday evenings for a full meal. In the spirit of Jesus' own meal

³¹ Ibid., 33.

³² Streett, 24-25.

³³ Carvalhaes, 37; Streett, 11-12.

³⁴ "Eucharistic Food and Drink: A Report of the Inter-Anglican Liturgical Commission to the Anglican Consultative Council," (Secretary General of the Anglican Consultative Council, 2005), http://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/42392/ialc_report_on_elements_used_in_communion.pdf (accessed February, 23, 2016), 2, 9.

practices of eating with “sinners and tax collectors,” the social and political forces of hierarchy within Greco-Roman society were subverted. In Christian banquet practices, rather than reinforcing socio-political subjugation of some, the wealthy and poor were instructed to share in the meal together *as equals* in protest against the dominant culture.

Stephen Bevans, in *Models of Contextual Theology*, writes, “There is no such thing as ‘theology’; there is only *contextual* theology.”³⁵ There is no such thing as a singular Eucharistic practice; we must speak in terms of “practices,” contextualized by various communities given their varied situations. As Bevans suggests, quoting Charles Kraft, “reality is ‘mediated by meaning.’”³⁶ One community may view Eucharist served in the pews as proper and life-giving, another may view *intinction* as more meaningful and informative to their communal and individual identities. Over the years, communal understandings change as contexts change.

Five versions of Jesus’ Last Supper are offered in Christian scripture, with each writer offering their own theological and practical perspective, with Paul offering the oldest in 1 Cor. 11.17-34. In the Roman Empire slaves often ran the households and businesses of the wealthy and powerful, leaving the slave owners mostly to lives of leisure.³⁷ Paul challenges the context of wealthier slave-owning members of the Corinthian community showing up early, starting the *deipnon* before others arrive, and moving to the *sumposion* and the wine without regard for the poor or working class members of the community. By the time others showed up—presumably the poorer members or those who worked for a living—the food was gone and the early arrivers were drunk. Paul admonishes them, claiming what they are doing is not the Lord’s Supper

³⁵ Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology, Revised and Expanded* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 3, emphasis in original.

³⁶ Ibid., 4., quoting Charles H. Kraft, *Christianity in Culture* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1979), 300.

³⁷ Streett, 16.

(κυριακὸν δεῖπνον, *kuriakon deipnon*). It is a perversion of the Lord's Supper, which was itself a subversive act against the classist and oppressive culture of the Roman Empire. The Christian Church was to be in opposition to the greedy and privileged world of the rich and powerful, and instead be the embodiment of the egalitarian vision of God's kingdom revealed through Jesus.

Carvalhaes and others suggest that the Christian banquet was modeled after the Roman banquet with a full *deipnon*, a Eucharistic libation of sorts (similar to the libation of the Roman banquet), a hymn of praise, and a *sumposion* where the teachings of Jesus were explored and God was worshiped. In the context of the synoptic gospels, the Last Supper was the Passover meal—another “subversive, anti-imperial meal that Jews ate as they anticipated divine liberation”³⁸ from the tyrannical rule of the Egyptian Pharaoh, and later the Babylonian, Persian, and Roman Empires. R. Alan Streett claims that ancient Israel itself “was born as an anti-imperial resistance movement.”³⁹ The act of remembering the Passover became for the Jews, and later for early Christians (many of whom were Jewish), an identity forming act of resistance as an anti-imperial people.⁴⁰ As Streett suggests, “To be a Jew *is* to remember the Exodus,” and allow that memory provide meaning, purpose, and an interpretive lens for the present.⁴¹

To be Christian was and is to remember the Last Supper of Jesus, but within the context of all of Jesus' broader teachings and meal practices, his radical inclusion of vulnerable or outcast people who were excluded from the banquets of power and prestige, and his attempt to undermine the arrogance and social blindness of those with power. The Last Supper, especially in

³⁸ Ibid., 3, 52; Taussig, 138-139.

³⁹ Streett, 52, quoting Norman K. Gottwald, “Early Israel as an Anti-Imperial Community,” in *In the Shadow of Empire*, ed. Richard A. Horsley (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2008), 9.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 56, borrowing from Miroslav Volf, *The End of Memory: Remembering Rightly in a Violent World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 97-102.

⁴¹ Ibid., 56 (emphasis added).

Luke's gospel, becomes not an isolated event, but a culminating and archetypal event that sums up the entire gospel narrative.⁴² The meals of the early Christians were a call to, a reminder of, and a practiced embodiment of a counter-cultural ethic of inclusion. They were a recognition of the cosmic mutuality of God's whole creation.

While serving as an act of radical inclusivity, the Eucharist also serves as sacred memory, helping to define and shape communal identity, unite a people, produce hope in the midst of suffering, and further reveal the presence of God in and among the oppressed⁴³—what Carvalhaes calls “borderless borders” (open and inclusive, yet also identity forming and defining). The Eucharist was and is a lens through which followers of Jesus can see themselves as intricately part of and in relationship with “the other,” regardless of social standing. Both Jews and Christians in the first century Roman Empire were occupied people. The banquet was a rebellious expression of their refutation of the forces of social stratification and isolation, while also celebrating the presence of God, even in the midst of occupation.

After the destruction of the second temple in 69/70 C.E., Christian communities became targets of fear and contempt from both Jewish and Roman leadership. They were viewed with suspicion. “[T]he disciples were behind closed doors because they were afraid of the Jewish authorities,” John writes in his gospel at the beginning of the second century (John 20.19, CEB). By the mid-second century, the Roman Empire perceived the evening banquets of lower class clubs and associations, like the Christian gatherings, as threats to its power. The gatherings were eventually outlawed.⁴⁴ The Eucharistic meal had to shift if it and the community were to survive.

⁴² Dennis E. Smith, “Table Fellowship as a Literary Motif in the Gospel of Luke,” *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 106, no. 4 (December 1987), 628.

⁴³ Miroslav Volf (2006), 97-102, quoted in Bevans (2002), 56-58.

⁴⁴ Peter C. Bower, ed., *The Companion to the Book of Common Worship*, (Louisville, KY: Geneva Press, 2003-07-31), 15.

Instead of a full Sunday evening meal where all were welcomed and included, Eucharist became a *ritualistic* “break-fast” on Sunday morning before work, with the essential elements of bread, a shared cup, prayers, and more discrete forms of worship.⁴⁵

Under Emperor Constantine in the 4th century the Christian Church was legitimized and given a special place at the table of the empire, and was thus able to come out of the shadows of oppression. It would not take long for Church to absorb the ethos of empire. Tables turned as Eucharist began to embody the ethic of empire and became a tool of control and suppression. Bread and cup were withheld from those deemed unworthy by the increasingly powerful Church leadership. This, among other things, birthed the 16th century reformation in which some sought to re-capture the grace and mutuality of God revealed in and through the Eucharistic Table.

Eucharistic and the Reformed Tradition

As the early Christians sought to follow in the anti-empire Way of Jesus, the wider culture still crept in and influenced Christian practices. More formalized and codified liturgy emerged that enforced order and rank. The Church moved from embodiment to debating the *mechanics* of God’s grace within the Eucharist: was Jesus actually in the bread and wine, or was it something else?; how did the mysterious nourishment work?; and what happens if such precious nourishment got in the mouth of an unbeliever? With legitimation came codification. With codification came regulation. With regulation came the power to exclude.

By the 16th century the Church became that which it originally fought to undermine. Replacing God’s love and grace, the Church itself was preached as the people’s only true source of hope. Eucharist became one among many tools used to control the masses, shifting the focus of faithfulness from service to God through Christ, and from being among community, to

⁴⁵ Carvalhaes, 124; Bower, 15-16, quoting Frank C. Senn, *Christian Liturgy: Catholic and Evangelical* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 73.

personal piety and making people dependent on the power of the Church to mediate their salvation on their behalf.⁴⁶ But, salvation from what?

The first great reformer of the 16th century, Martin Luther, rejected the Church's doctrine by which it controlled the means to God's grace. He pushed the pendulum of faith away from the elements themselves as a means to grace toward a more individualistic view of salvation: it was not what was "out there"—i.e., the elements of Eucharist—that would save a person, but what was in one's heart as an offering to God.⁴⁷ He could affirm Christ's "real presence" alongside the bread and cup (*consubstantiation*), but not the Church's fanciful doctrine of *transubstantiation* whereby the elements magically changed into the real body and blood of Christ once blessed with certain words and then consumed.

Another reformer, Ulrich Zwingli, argued against any sort of "real presence." The resurrected body of Jesus could not at the same time be both in heaven and present at every Eucharist. For Zwingli, the Eucharistic meal was purely a memorial *in honor* of Jesus' sacrifice.

John Calvin later rejected the question of "real presence" altogether. He advocated for a real but *spiritual* presence and saw it unnecessary, let alone impossible, to explain how it worked.⁴⁸ For Calvin, the sacrament was "an instrument that channels God's grace."⁴⁹ It could not be controlled or fully understood by anyone other than God. Calvin considered carefully the scriptural understanding of the μυστήριον (*mysterion*, "mystery") of God in Christ—

⁴⁶ *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, ed. F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone (Oxford University Press, 1997-03-13), 1637.; see also Carvalhaes, 98-99, for a discussion of Eucharist as a tool of control.

⁴⁷ Carvalhaes, 99.

⁴⁸ William C. Placher, *A History of Christian Theology: An Introduction* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1983), 189-190, 223-224.

⁴⁹ Carvalhaes, 104.

unfortunately translated into Latin as *sacramentum* which signifies more of an oath than a mystery.⁵⁰

Rather than the mechanics, Calvin emphasized the mysterious *efficacy* of Eucharist as communion with God through Christ, and thus with God's created world. Through Eucharist, the Holy Spirit shaped the lenses of participants through which they could see God in the world, thereby shaping the relationships of God's people with one another and with God.⁵¹ Carvalhaes understands Calvin as saying that "through the sacrament the Holy Spirit is at work, using the elements, word, gesture, and the faith of the believers to *effect* an intimate encounter with the reality of Christ."⁵² Thus the entire sacrament—both ritual and elements—becomes a *means* of receiving, practicing, and embodying God's grace in the world (how we think and behave in the socio-political world; how we approach and respond to issues of racism and privilege, borders and immigration, gender equity and identity, and other issues of inclusion/exclusion). Unfortunately, as Carvalhaes notes, the efficaciousness of the encounter is still limited by the Church. Is not God bigger than even Christian faith?

Yet, not even Calvin could escape the power of cultural norms. He still limited access to the Table to those who professed certain "beliefs." Power and control, even of God's means of grace, continues to be the Church's most challenging sin.

⁵⁰ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion In Two Volumes*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, *The Library of Christian Classics*, vol. XXI (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1960; repr., Philadelphia, PA: Westminster John Knox Press, 1990), 4.14.2.

⁵¹ Martha L. Moore-Keish, *Do This in Remembrance of Me: A Ritual Approach to Reformed Eucharistic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2008), 16.

⁵² Carvalhaes, 102 (emphasis added).

Ways of Living Influencing Ways of Believing

In various times and by many standards, the Eucharist has had and continues to have strong political⁵³ dimensions. It provides an invitation to receive and embody Kingdom-of-God ethics and values as revealed in and through Jesus. Carvalhaes gleans from Calvin that “ways of living influence ways of believing,” as much, if not sometimes more, than ways of believing influence ways of living.⁵⁴ The Church’s espoused “beliefs” have, at times, resulted in both radical inclusion (e.g., in the PC(USA) around the ordination of women, and the ordination and marriage of LGBT persons) and radical exclusion (e.g., the biblical justifications for slavery and the subjugation of African Americans, women, and anyone else deemed “other”; exclusions of those deemed unworthy to receive the elements of Eucharist; immigrants labeled as “criminals” for merely crossing the border and escaping violence in their home countries).

The “Directory for Worship” in the PC(USA)’s *Book of Order* directly links our worship with our social ethics: “This Directory for Worship reflects the conviction that the life of the Church is one, and that its worship, witness, and service are inseparable.”⁵⁵ Each informs and shapes the others, shaping how we engage the reality of God’s Kingdom within and among the community, for, indeed, “the kingdom of heaven has come near.”⁵⁶ Fundamentally, Eucharist is about the presence of God in and among God’s people—all of them.

The Eucharistic Table has the potential to broaden the beliefs and behavior of the Church in the social sphere beyond its walls. But the converse is also true: our social ethic (how we think, believe, and live in the world) continues to have significant influence on, and even pervert,

⁵³ “Political” in Aristotle’s use of the word πολιτικά, referring to the affairs of the city (πόλις), community, or society.

⁵⁴ Carvalhaes, 83.

⁵⁵ Directory for Worship, “Preface,” *Book of Order* (2015-2017), 74.

⁵⁶ Matt. 10.7; Mark 1.15; Luke 10.11 (NRSV).

our ethic and practice at the Table. Our fears and exclusions have resulted in a table, at best, cut in half by borders and boundaries that divide God's people rather than unite them (see the second image in Appendix B); or worse, a table surrounded by barriers of exclusion formed by a perverted theology and practice of trying to "protect" the Table (see the first image in Appendix B). Either way, to borrow from Paul, it is not really the Eucharistic Table unless the barriers are removed and all are invited to share equally in the great banquet of love, grace, and thanksgiving (see Luke 14.13, 16-24).

The PC(USA) *Book of Order* acknowledges the efficacious nature of Eucharist, stating: "The Lord's Supper is the sign and seal of eating and drinking in communion with the crucified and risen Lord. During his earthly ministry Jesus shared meals with his followers as a sign of community and acceptance and as an occasion for his own ministry."⁵⁷ But, in the very next section the denomination connects the Eucharist almost exclusively with Jesus' Last Supper and death: "In his last meal before his death, Jesus took and shared with his disciples the bread and wine, speaking of them as his body and blood, signs of the new covenant. He commended breaking bread and sharing a cup *to remember and proclaim his death*."⁵⁸ John has Jesus telling his disciples after he washed their feet, "[J]ust as I have done, you also must do."⁵⁹ John's use of Jesus' command seems to refer not just to the Table or washing feet, but to Jesus' entire way of being in the world, which includes broad and inclusive table fellowship with "tax collectors and sinners," as well as Pharisee elites who plot to kill him.

While the PC(USA) acknowledges the broad reaches of the Table as a "foretaste of the Kingdom Meal," it still comes short of Jesus' radical invitation by enforcing exclusion through

⁵⁷ *Book of Order 2015-2017*, W-2.4001a.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, W-2.4001b (emphasis added).

⁵⁹ John 13.15, CEB.

baptism as a prerequisite to participating at the Table: “All the *baptized faithful* are to be welcomed to the Table and none shall be excluded because of race, sex, age, economic status, social class, handicapping condition, difference of culture or language, or any barrier created by human injustice.”⁶⁰ It’s a mixed message and an example of “ways of living” perverting our “ways of believing”:

In the same way that the meals in the early Christian church followed the social pattern of the Greco-Roman society, the eucharistic tables within the Reformed churches in [the] United States follow the same social pattern found in North American culture, where fences of individualism and safety surround these tables with high borders, leaving the stranger as stranger unless the stranger becomes ‘known,’ i.e., adapted to the demands of the table.⁶¹

The first century Christian tables negatively critiqued the social pattern of the empire. Yet, the modern Church follows the patterns of post-Constantinian ecclesiastical orders and raises similar walls of exclusion before an invitation can even be offered, let alone accepted.

Eschatological Imagination

Marva Dawn dedicates an entire chapter in one of her books to worship itself as a subversive act against our modern culture of socio-economic and political exclusion.⁶² Though

⁶⁰ *Book of Order*, W-2.4006, emphasis added. This exclusion is more specifically stated in the Directory for Worship at W-2.4011 under the heading: “Who may receive.” It is also included in the Form of government at G-1.0404: “The invitation to the Lord’s Supper is extended to all who have been baptized, remembering that access to the table is not a right conferred upon the worthy, but a privilege given to the undeserving who come in faith, repentance, and love (W-2.4011).” An overture to the 222nd General Assembly (2016) seeks to revise W-2.4011 by removing the baptism prerequisite for participating in the Eucharist. However, the original overture was replaced in committee by language that still removes the pre-requisite but orders that “If some of those who come have not yet been baptized, an invitation to baptismal preparation and Baptism should be graciously extended.” The alternative language passed in Committee in a 73-3-1 vote, and the assembly in 516-45 vote. The presbyteries will now consider the overture in the coming months as an amendment to the Constitution. This language may put the *Book of Order* at odds with itself in G-1.0404 and W-2.4006.

⁶¹ Carvalhaes, 71.

⁶² Marva J. Dawn, *Reaching Out Without Dumbing Down: A Theology of Worship for This Urgent Time* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995-07-10), 57-72.

we are in the world, she admits, we are called to not be *of* the world: “We must resist the world’s temptations and remain outside the culture’s idolatries... If the Church’s worship is faithful, it will eventually be subversive of the culture surrounding it, for God’s truth transforms the lives of those nurtured by it.”⁶³ The temptations faced today appear to be the same temptations that have challenged God’s people for more than 2,000 years: privilege, power, and prestige.

Empire will react, often violently, against anything that undermines or does not reinforce its systems of control. Eucharist pushes against the narcissistic laws of self-gratification and extreme individualization that bolster the empire. The laws of God, as understood by ancient prophets and taught by Jesus, are not merely about devotion and thinking kind thoughts. They are about the work of recognizing our common mutuality—our inseparable connection as created beings in a created world.

Just as empire subverts the notions of mutual and unconditional love and compassion (*agape*), Christian meal practices subvert the idolatries of empire-like thinking in a culture of domination drunk on the pursuit of wealth and power. Eating and drinking is a necessity for human life. But how food is distributed and received also serves as a code for the ordering of society.⁶⁴ Empire uses food to dominate and control. The Church has sadly succumbed to using access to spiritual nourishment in the same way. But for centuries people of faith have gathered and shared food as a sign and practice of their interconnectedness. Food shapes and defines communal identities and relationships, from how the food is harvested and prepared to who gets to share in eating it. The very word “companion” comes from the Latin *companis*, meaning “together with” (*com-*) “bread/food” (*pan*). It is at the core of who we are as human beings, and

⁶³ Ibid., 57.

⁶⁴ Mary Douglas, “Deciphering a Meal,” *Daedalus*, 101 (1972), 61, quoted in Smith, *Many Tables: The Eucharist in the New Testament and Liturgy Today*, 30.

it is at the heart of our identity as followers of Jesus the Christ who welcomed sinners and broke bread with them (Luke 15.2).

In the Christian Church “breaking bread” became synonymous with the community as Jesus was identified throughout the gospels as one who eats and drinks with many different kinds of people. On the road to Emmaus the risen Christ was not recognized until he broke bread in the midst of a meal (Luke 24.30-31)—a theological statement about the centrality of meal fellowship. In our ritualized Eucharist we are nourished in body, mind, and spirit. But for what? At the Table we are called together and reminded of our mutual connection in God through Christ, both at and beyond the Table. We are reminded again and again of our call to live *Eucharistic lives*, working for the kingdom of God here on earth. The constitution of the PC(USA) states that in the Eucharist,

the Church celebrates the joyful feast of the people of God, and anticipates the great banquet and marriage supper of the Lamb. ... *Nourished by this hope, the Church rises from the Table and is sent by the power of the Holy Spirit to participate in God’s mission to the world*, to proclaim the gospel, to exercise compassion, to work for justice and peace until Christ’s Kingdom shall come at last.⁶⁵

Jesus challenged the exclusivist and stratified social norms of the culture around him with sayings such as, the “first will be last” and the “last will be first.”⁶⁶ He offered an eschatological vision of kingdom that lifts up the marginalized and challenges the privileged. The Tables of the early Christian communities presented an opportunity for “practicing what society should be about. ... The social reimagination entailed both the reimagination of the meals and society and its constant practice, a testimony of resistance against the structures of exclusion and injustice.”⁶⁷

⁶⁵ *Book of Order (2015-2017)*, W-2.4007 (emphasis added).

⁶⁶ Matthew 19.30; Mark 10.31; Luke 13.30.

⁶⁷ Carvalhaes, *Eucharist and Globalization: Redrawing the Borders of Eucharistic Hospitality*, 75.

Early Christians adapted the Greco-Roman banquet to “engage, struggle, resist, dismantle, organize, negotiate” and otherwise “practice” their growing identity (trying things on for size, so-to-speak).⁶⁸ The tables were radically inclusive *and* identity shaping—“borderless borders” in the sense of a radically inclusive subversion of the social norms of hierarchy and exclusion, while simultaneously informing and shaping communal definition.

Over the centuries Christian identity has been somewhat fluid, shifting and moving with the ever-changing context of social norms—contextualized faith. As Carvalhaes suggests, “Our world is not just *there*; we are involved in its construction.”⁶⁹ The Eucharistic Table, then, becomes a place for us to continually wrestle with our identity within a world of exclusion while still engaging God’s kingdom of radical inclusion. In this we create meaning in the world *with* God, co-creating an always new (“reformed and always being reformed”) communal harmony and order. A project was needed at UPC-Tempe to present a radically inclusive Table that pushed members beyond themselves and invited the community as a whole to imagine what such a Table might look like in this season of their faith life together.

The Last Supper is more than just Jesus’ final meal to be “remembered.” Collectively, the meal images of the gospels function as an eschatological vision, but not in some far off end-times—“eschatological” in the sense of a culmination of the whole.⁷⁰ Thus the command to “remember” Jesus in the breaking of bread and sharing the cup invites us to consider our deeper connection with both those gathered around the Table and those not present, whether they are being excluded intentionally or unintentionally, be it our exclusion or their self-exclusion. In this deeper understanding we might become more deeply invested in God’s vision for the world

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 4 (emphasis in original).

⁷⁰ Smith (December 1987), 628-629.

revealed through Jesus' radically inclusive way of life, and more bound to one another as we seek to realize this vision.

Where the first century Christians re-imagined through their meal practices another way beyond empire, at our tables of fellowship we find ourselves “[r]ehearsing what life should be about, ... a testimony of resistance against the structures of exclusion and injustice” that cross the borders of nations and hearts.⁷¹ Carvalhaes invites readers to consider the liturgical spaces of our sanctuaries as “places where social reimaginings are always at stake.”⁷² He suggests that,

[i]f the Reformed churches could expand the vocabularies of their liturgies, see more clearly ritual practices as the negotiation of liminal spaces between the private and public systems, where worlds are constructed through beliefs and practices, and let our worship and ritualizing be a *performance of our identities, our beliefs and possibilities for a new world*, we will be able to expand the hospitality around our eucharistic tables and think, dream, pray and practice the possibilities of a new world of justice.⁷³

What if the Church were to consider every and any table as a liminal space pregnant with Eucharist—a table that holds the potential for radical inclusion and thanksgiving, whether it be a coffee shop table, a restaurant table, or our own kitchen tables?⁷⁴ What if the Church were to see its purpose as trying to set up as many Eucharistic tables as possible in as many contexts as possible? What if the Church sought through its own practices of table fellowship to establish a cultural norm of seeking mutual understanding across cultural, social, religious, political, or economic borders, and an ethos of living in the acceptance and love of God? Could the wounds of our ideological divisions be healed at these kinds of tables?

If one chooses to follow the individualistic (and possibly self-servingly pietistic) view of Eucharist, then the meal points to the value of worshipping merely as a means of *showing*

⁷¹ Carvalhaes, 75.

⁷² Ibid., 76.

⁷³ Ibid (emphasis added).

⁷⁴ Ibid., 72.

devotion to God. But if following Jesus means to “do as I do,” the Table moves us beyond ourselves to loving God, yes, but embodied within the context of loving our neighbors. The Eucharist takes on difficult-to-ignore social implications. At the Table our values are called into question as we take a broad view of our lives, from our jobs or career paths, to the friends and fellowship we share (and don’t share), and even to how we manage our households. It challenges us to love neighbors as “self,” rather than as we might love ourselves—our “selves” are enmeshed, entangled, with the “self” of the “other.”⁷⁵

The implications of the Eucharistic meal, when discerned in terms of our social ethic, can help us realize that starvation and economic turmoil half-way around the world in countries like Nigeria or Ethiopia, or the current Syrian refugee crisis, let alone Central American immigration to the U.S. and continued anti-LGBTQ crises, are an “us” issue and not a “them” issue—we see us in them, and them in us (to truly love neighbor as self). If people living in violent countries like Honduras or El Salvador are to be seen as fellow children of God, neighbors at the Table of thanksgiving, then the borders we attempt to draw between us and them—whether national, social, economic, or ecclesiastical—are artificial at best and blasphemous at worse. For “nothing can separate us from God’s love in Christ Jesus our Lord: not death or life, not angels or rulers, not present things or future things, not powers or height or depth, or any other thing that is

⁷⁵ Barbara Brown Taylor wrote a book called *The Luminous Web* [(Lanham, MD: Cowley Publications, 2000)] about what in quantum physics is called “quantum entanglement.” From that she extrapolates a theological understanding as old as the Celtic Christians that everything in the universe is connected in a “luminous web” that is in constant motion. Each connection point (a person, a thing, a body) is continuously in relationship and behaving in concert with other network nodes. In quantum entanglement, two particles are forever entangled whereby one instantaneously acts complimentary to the other’s behavior. In other words, touch one node and the whole web lights up. Brown suggests that in this web of interconnectivity and mutuality God is revealed.

created.”⁷⁶ “Us” includes all those Jesus invites to the Table, be they Black, White, Hispanic, Latino, Gay, Straight, Transgender, or any other identifying border we might use to separate God’s people. “Us” means all of us.

Carvalhaes argues that "eating together, either in the morning or in the evening, inside the sanctuary or around a kitchen table, during a trip or in a picnic, in all of these places, sacrament(s), i.e., the presence of God, can happen."⁷⁷ The Sunday morning Eucharist, then, becomes the practice of *anticipating* the presence of God made real, whether in bread and cup, donut and coffee, or a lovingly made casserole.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This project focuses on the *efficacy* of the Table experience to move us beyond the ritual to an embodied Eucharistic ethic and way of life:⁷⁸ what is happening in our practice at the Table?; why might this be?; how ought our Table practice inform our way of life?; what might our practice at the Table mean for our lives at and beyond the Table (around other tables)?; and, conversely, how might/ought our behaviors and attitudes in the social, political, and ethical realms beyond the Table be influencing our experience at the Table?⁷⁹

As previously suggested, a person’s or community’s way of being in the world is shaped implicitly and explicitly by what they believe. But, also, their beliefs and faith practices can be

⁷⁶ Romans 8.38-39, CEB.

⁷⁷ Carvalhaes, 72.

⁷⁸ A shift from the mechanics of how the bread and wine “work” to what do they mean was at the heart of the 16th century Reformation. A nice summary may be found in Martha Moore-Keish's *Do This in Remembrance of Me: A Ritual Approach to Reformed Eucharistic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2008), and more extensively in Edward Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1997), from which Moore-Keish draws.

⁷⁹ Utilizing the four basic questions of Practical Theology presented by Richard R. Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2008), 4. These questions line up with Jerome Brunner’s functional approach to Narrative Inquiry (how our stories shape our realities and beliefs).

influenced by the way they live in the world. As with Jesus' ministry, the Eucharist is to be practiced in light of a ministry of hospitality, which is "of critical importance" as we "continue to meet the risen Christ by welcoming those whom Christ loves."⁸⁰ If this is so, then the Church must re-examine its practices regularly, including Eucharist, being especially mindful of the way of life that is being intentionally and unintentionally re-enforced, especially around the exclusion and inclusion of the ones Christ especially loves, the "least of these":

Within this space of communion *with the forgotten other*, ethical commitments are constantly being developed, fostered, shaken, challenged, and replaced if necessary. The communal meal not only defines us our place in our community and in the world but also reveals the displacement of many others within our communities and around the world.⁸¹

Among the current barriers to the Eucharistic Table are the privatization and personalization of the experience—reflective of western obsessiveness with individualism and symptomatic xenophobia.⁸² The place for us to address these identity and fear issues is *at* the Table of radical love and inclusion—where *even we* are welcomed by Christ.

Participants in the community at UPC-Tempe were invited to consider the broader social, political, and ethical implications of the practice of Eucharist—especially in light of the strong emphasis on social justice in both UPC-Tempe and the PC(USA). The project also sought to suggest how our experience of the world can have a great and even perverse influence on our faith and our experience at the Table. Sarah Drummond encourages congregations to develop a spirit or culture of assessment and evaluation,⁸³ wherein we move in and among the primary

⁸⁰ Bower, ed., 45.

⁸¹ Carvalhaes, 125 (emphasis added).

⁸² Jean M. Twenge's book, *Generation Me: Why Today's Young Americans Are More Confident, Assertive, Entitled—and More Miserable Than Ever Before* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2007), recently revised (2014) is a great resource for generational studies of entitlement and obsessive individualism.

⁸³ Sarah B. Drummond, *Holy Clarity: The Practice of Planning and Evaluation* (Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2009), Kindle edition, loc. 247.

tasks of practical theology: listening/paying attention, interpreting through our theological values to seek understanding of what is happening, strategizing about possible interventions, implementing the interventions, and returning to the posture of listening/paying attention.⁸⁴

There are three fundamental areas of influence in a people's life together: personal, social, and structural.⁸⁵ But within these areas of influence, in addition to proper motivation, people require *capacity* (the tools and knowledge) to effect change or seek stability in their lives. In Eucharist, the potential for all three areas of influence to be both tested and nurtured simultaneously, thus creating capacity. As the Apostle Paul suggests in his admonishment of the Corinthian church (1 Cor. 11), when one sphere (e.g., the personal) is lifted above all others (e.g., the social and structural) the others are severely hampered, and the community suffers. For instance, when we seek to truly love our neighbors, as though they *are* us (as “self”), we are motivated by the love of God revealed in Jesus (will) to reach out to our neighbors far and wide, thus living into our already embodied mutuality for the sake of the community (capacity).

If the goal of practical theology is to invite inquiry into the current state of things and consider what it is that God might be inviting us into in our current context, there are two primary assumptions.⁸⁶ The first is that God is inviting us into something that is both within and beyond ourselves.⁸⁷ The second is that there are practices already a part of our religious culture

⁸⁴ These tasks, broadly interpreted here, are fundamental to practical theology as described by Richard R. Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2008), 4.

⁸⁵ Joseph Grenny, et. al., *Influencer: The New Science of Leading Change, Second Edition* (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Education, 2013-05-14), 69-73.

⁸⁶ Osmer, (2008) offers four basic questions that guide the task of practical theology: 1) What is going on?; 2) Why is this going on?; 3) What ought to be going on?; and 4) How might we respond? (4).

⁸⁷ In advertisements about books and conferences on “church growth” there seems to be an emphasis on “new” things. Often I wonder if it is “ancient things” we need to re-discover in new ways: e.g., a deeper sense of mutuality and relationships.

that might help us gain a deeper understanding of—or at least a clearer glimpse at—what it is God is inviting us into (the *mysterion* of our oneness with God and the “other” who was at the core of Jesus’ ministry). One of those practices is Eucharist.

At the Table we are confronted with our prejudices as we are called upon to notice who is and is not present. At the Table we remember our calling as followers of Christ to “be in the world” but not “of the world.” We are called to be advocates for justice and peace in the world, challenging the ways of greed and selfishness, and amplifying the voices of the hungry and marginalized. We are called to live by the values of compassion and peace, gathering around the Table *with* the marginalized (preferably in person, not only in spirit), living into and embodying the radically inclusive love of God for all creation. The Table is where we practice these values and where our Christian social ethics and politics are shaped—in community, with others, especially those who are labeled “other.” Thus, the feast of Eucharist reaches much farther than the Tables we have ceremoniously placed in our sanctuaries.

OBJECTIVES, STRATEGIES, AND IMPLEMENTATION

Utilizing Appreciative Inquiry (AI) as a general framework for thinking about how our faith and ritual, particularly Eucharist, already informs and shapes our social ethic, and vice-versa, a series of practices and reflections were crafted around UPC-Tempe’s current experience of Eucharist. The community was challenged to consider more broadly the social, political, and ethical implications of Eucharist. Mark Lau Branson, following one of the early architects of AI, describes the process of inviting people to think positively about (4-D’s model): what is (*discover*), what could be (*dream*), what should be (*design*), and what will be (*destiny*). AI has also been described using a 4-I’s model: *initiating* research around a particular topic (*discover*), *inquiring* about people’s positive experiences of the topic (*discover*), *imagining* what could be

based on the stories (dream), *innovating* steps or interventions to make the “could be” real (design and destiny). John E. Schmidt offers a fifth step of discerning *insights* from the experience that lead to further discoveries.⁸⁸ A community can create *meaning* from “what was” that informs “what is,” in order to further discern what could, should, and will be.⁸⁹ As opposed to “problem solving,” AI “enhance[s] [positive] forces” for adapting to ever changing contexts.⁹⁰ Through education, ritual experiments, practices of discernment, writing narrative reflections, and casual as well as small group conversation, the congregation was invited to use a Eucharistic lens to explore more deeply the community’s vast socio-ethical and political practices and norms, with an eye toward where God might be leading us.

Within the AI framework, Narrative Inquiry (NI) served as a means of eliciting congregational reflection around table fellowship (developing the question, selecting and producing data, and organizing the data for interpretation). NI was perfect for this project as it allowed the researcher and a small team to discern themes within the narratives, and then explore how people *create meaning* in their lives. Evaluating the stories, discussions, and questions throughout the project using William Labov’s thematic approach to NI invites attention to patterns and themes in order to understand how people’s narratives create meaning.⁹¹ This meaning is then unconsciously used by individuals to shape understanding in future experiences.

⁸⁸ John E. Schmidt, Ed.D., “Transformative Learning and Leading” (class lecture, McCormick Theological Seminary, Chicago, IL, January 11-18, 2016).

⁸⁹ Mark Lau Branson, *Memories, Hopes, and Conversations: Appreciative Inquiry and Congregational Change* (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2004), 19-21.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁹¹ As described in “Narrative Inquiry,” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Narrative_inquiry (accessed January 10, 2014).

The Project

The project sought to help the congregation unpack some of the deeper meanings of meal practices in scripture and the early Christian communities, invite the congregation to discern broader socio-ethical and political implications of table fellowship, apply that thinking to the Eucharist, and consider how Eucharist might inform and reform broader relationships. The project started with inviting the congregation to remember positive experiences they remember at tables (the inquiry phase of AI, using Labov's thematic approach to NI). Next came a 5-week adult education class unpacking biblical meal practices with emphasis on Paul's writings and Jesus' broader meal practices (inviting the congregation to imagine what could and should be based on their broader experiences of table fellowship and the research of early Christian communities previously presented here, see Appendix C). Concurrently a 5-part sermon series provided some of the foundational biblical and theological scholarship and reflection for the class discussions (further invitation to share in the inquiry and imagining phase, see Appendix D). The class and the sermon series led the congregation to the first of several practical experiences of Eucharist on World Communion Sunday (interventions, see Appendix G for a complete list of experiences). At the end of the project, members were invited to either write about or be interviewed about their experiences and any new insights about Eucharist they may have gleaned.

Table Fellowship Narratives

The first exercise asked the congregation to consider tables in broad and general terms, and write two to three page stories of positive experiences they have had around tables (AI's

inquiry).⁹² Twenty-five narratives were received. A small advisory group comprised of members of the congregation was gathered to read the narratives and look for common themes (Labov's approach to NI) that might help the community connect these common tables to the Eucharistic Table (life informing faith).

Half of the narratives reflected on specific meal experiences, while the other half reflected on table fellowship in broad terms. In each narrative *location* mattered, but it was *part* of the story and not crucial to having a profound or positive experience. Interestingly, only a few of the narratives were about congregational fellowship.

One of the most common threads was the observation that food was a means of both nourishment and relationship building. These experiences were formative for the respondents and seemed to shape much of their present thinking about community and friendships.⁹³ The advisory group noted that these table experiences seemed like "moments of validation, healing, and even grace."

Questionnaire

After the narratives were received a short questionnaire was developed to establish a baseline of understanding about Eucharist among the congregation:

- 1) Briefly, what beliefs do you hold around Communion, also called *Eucharist* or the Lord's Supper? (e.g., what is it? Why do we do it? What does it mean?).
- 2) In general, what do you enjoy most about Communion? Why?
- 3) What do you enjoy most about how UPC-Tempe practices Communion? Why?
- 4) Does the practice of Communion positively challenge you in any way? If so, how?
- 5) Do you experience any challenges in the way UPC-Tempe practices Communion? If so, how?
- 6) Do you have any questions about Communion?

⁹² All interviews were confidential; the names of interviewees are withheld by mutual agreement. Signed "Informed Consent Forms," approved by McCormick, were received by all participants.

⁹³ This was surprisingly very much in line with the assumptions and reflections that gave rise to this project.

I was surprised to hear that out of 49 responses, 31 shared a strong personal *and* communal experience during Eucharist. There were 18 who focused solely on the personal or private aspects of their experience: “communion with *my* God,” “forgiveness of *my* sins.” Twenty-three respondents appreciated what they called UPC-Tempe’s “inclusive” practice of Eucharist, with six specifically citing the inclusion of children. Given the strong sense among respondents of the communal nature of Eucharist, I was equally surprised by the common view that Eucharist is merely remembrance, symbol, or re-enactment of the Last Supper—confirming my belief that the Church has taught a very narrow perspective of Eucharist. Only one response included a reference to Jesus’ broader meal practices with the marginalized.

With only a few exceptions, the respondents shared a positive attitude toward practicing Eucharist through *intinction*. It is interesting to note that during the group interviews at the end of the project, several people commented how much they appreciated the spiritual act of “coming forward as a community” for *intinction* and symbolically gathering around the Table—something, they indicated, that they had not considered much prior to the project. They admitted they had never really thought about the broader socio-ethical and political implications of Eucharist beyond the sanctuary Table.⁹⁴

Sermon Series

The basic thrust of the sermon series (Appendix C) was to explore and unpack some of the texts that point to the broader social, political, and ethical implications of meals in scripture,

⁹⁴ Coincidentally, the session (board of elders in the PCUSA) was simultaneously engaged in a lengthy reflection around issues of outcomes, evaluation, and resources, led by a member of session who is a retired professor of business sustainability from Arizona State University. Session’s work focused on trying to create a “culture of evaluation” using Sarah Drummond’s book, *Holy Clarity: The Practice of Planning and Evaluation* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009). It was interesting to note that the congregation-wide reflections on Eucharist found their way into session’s ongoing reflection and evaluation of the culture and work of UPC-Tempe as a whole.

laying the foundation for understanding the subversive nature of Jesus' meal practices. The Table draws us to one another so that we might more fully be our true selves, equal in God's eyes as we offer ourselves, as Jesus did, to one another and for one another.

The sermons drew heavily from Bieler's and Schottroff's concept of "Eschatological Imagination" and "Sacramental Permeability," and how our Eucharistic practice can be a vehicle that "make[s] transparent the Holy One who gives birth to the Eucharistic life" in the midst of "the reality of brokenness and a hope for wholeness."⁹⁵

Adult Education Class (outline)

The five-week adult education class (Appendix D) expanded on the sermon themes. Participants were invited to consider the possibility that the adoption of the Greco-Roman banquet format was both a contextual reality (life/cultural ethics informing faith) and a form of resistance against the cultural norms of exclusion (faith informing life/cultural ethics).

Throughout the class participants confessed they had not considered the broader implications of Eucharist as presented, and how it reached into much of what UPC-Tempe was already doing: hosting homeless shelters, serving in soup kitchens, delivering meals to elderly people through "Meals on Wheels," and even filling water barrels in the desert.⁹⁶ Toward the end of the class, one participant responded to the whole experience by suggesting that even the water barrels in the desert could be viewed as the cup of Eucharist—a cup of hope, recognition, and

⁹⁵ Andrea Bieler and Loise Schottrof, *The Eucharist: Bodies, Bread, and Resurrection* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007), 127.

⁹⁶ UPC-Tempe has been involved with taking water into the desert for many years previously through the organization No Más Muertes (No More Deaths, <http://forms.nomoredeaths.org/en/>), and for several years prior to and during this project with Humane Borders (<http://www.humaneborders.org/>).

even solidarity within God’s Kingdom—despite rarely ever meeting those who drink the water.⁹⁷

It was a powerful moment of recognition for many in the room.

Eucharist Experiments/Experiences

Our first experiment in practicing theological ethics was on World Communion Sunday, October 4, 2015. Six small tables were placed around the sanctuary, covered in cloths that represented six of the seven world continents, excluding Antarctica. The elements of Eucharist were all placed on the communion table up front. The usual liturgy was altered slightly to incorporate the themes of the sermon series and class (Appendix F). Worshippers were instructed to go to any table that was convenient for them, meet whomever was already there, and serve one another the elements by *intinction*. The servers came forward and took part of a loaf of bread and a goblet of grape juice to each smaller table. For added effect, it was noted that the goblets and plates were from the communion services at various General Assemblies of our denomination, connecting us to the wider fellowship at least of the PC(USA). What was later described as “controlled chaos” ensued. People got up, gathered around these small tables, talked, engaged, and struggled together to figure out how to do what they were asked to do. Amidst the hum of conversation and interaction around the sanctuary, there was some visible awkwardness and even laughter. Some partners hugged after serving each other, while others just returned to their seats without another word. A few shook their heads, but with smiles on their faces.

After all were served, everyone was invited to take a moment and reflect on how their experiences, including the awkward or difficult, might help us consider what it means to be community in the way that Jesus taught. At the end of the project, this experience was lifted up

⁹⁷ Class participant, researcher’s field notes, Tempe, AZ, October 11, 2015.

by a number of people in the congregation as what “real Eucharist should look like”—a first step toward a more generous and broader application of Eucharist.

Border Fence Experience (UKIRK)

In March 2015, a four-day, three-night trip was taken to the U.S.-Mexico border with Frontera de Cristo, the Presbyterian Mission Agency in Douglas, Arizona, U.S.A., and Agua Prieta, Sonora, Mexico. The purpose of the trip was to explore Carvalhaes’ concept of “borderless borders” by looking at a real border through the lens of the Eucharistic life.

Unfortunately, no one from UPC-Tempe was able to participate, but three students signed up from the UKIRK Presbyterian Campus Ministry at ASU. In addition, my own two children participated (8 years old and 12 years old). Our first night in Agua Prieta we were hosted by a family in their small, simply constructed, three-room home. The mother served us a meal of tortillas, beans, and meat.⁹⁸ The students later commented that this was the first time they had ever seen such poverty and were overwhelmed by the hospitality of their host.

Much of the trip was spent exploring the border. Students learned about the hardships along the border, the dangers imposed by the drug cartels, and the suffering in the communities caused by trade deals like the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).⁹⁹ We were led along the arroyos near the border in Mexico used by those crossing into the U.S. illegally to hide

⁹⁸ I am vegetarian, but without thinking much about it, I shared in the meat out of respect for our hosts. It made me wonder about the hospitality of guests to their hosts, and the mutuality that exists between host and guests. Or, was my behavior paternalistic in an attempt to save our hosts from embarrassment?

⁹⁹ According to Jocabed Gallegos, the Frontera de Cristo co-coordinator who led us, as a result of NAFTA goods can cross the borders of partner countries tariff free. As a result, heavily subsidized farm products (soy beans, corn, etc.) can pass easily into the Mexico economy. Because these crops are so heavily subsidized by the annual Farm Bill in the U.S., farmers in Central America cannot compete and have been put out of business. When they lose their farms, many have headed north looking for work. They end up at the border, are forced by the cartels to help cross drugs into the U.S. If they refuse, they are often killed.

as they moved toward the border fence. Several students touched the border fence itself for the first time—a powerful experience for them. We visited the CRREDA¹⁰⁰ drug and alcohol rehab center full of former cartel members and drug mules, and learned that the cartels hold border crossers hostage by manipulating them to carry backpacks full of drugs or risk being killed. Students reflected on how borders affect people on both sides, and the importance that Jesus puts on crossing borders.

The trip also included a visit to Café Justo, a coffee cooperative formed with the help of the Rev. Mark Adams, the director of Frontera de Cristo, and mission partners in Mexico.¹⁰¹ They were in the process of completing a new coffee shop addition: Café Justo y Más.¹⁰² The coffee coop is a response to the borders that divide our country and our people by bringing growers, roasters, and consumers together in partnership with one another. Rev. Adams commented while we were planning the trip that the coop is a kind of sharing similar to the mutuality shared in Eucharist: “What you’re talking about with Eucharist is what we’re trying to do here on the border and between our two countries”—building relationships across borders.¹⁰³ For Rev. Adams, the language of Eucharist was important in making meaning for what they were doing, beyond the economic aspects and into the socio-ethical implications of such relationships.

On the last day of the trip we hosted an *agápe* feast through the border fence between Douglas, Arizona and Agua Prieta, Sonora (see Appendix E for the liturgy). Because many of our

¹⁰⁰ Centro de Rehabilitacion y Recuperacion para Enfermos de Drogadiccion y Alcoholismo, Agua Prieta, Sonora, established in 2007. CRREDA is one of 29 rehab centers along the border between Baha and Chihuahua.

¹⁰¹ The coop brought together displaced coffee growers at the U.S.-Mexico border with coffee growers in Southern Mexico. The vast majority of orders come from the U.S. More information at <http://www.justcoffee.org>.

¹⁰² My family and I had the privilege of returning in June to celebrate the dedication of the completed coffee house, which had its soft open several weeks later.

¹⁰³ Rev. Mark Adams, telephone conversation with author, February 16, 2016.

partners in Mexico were Roman Catholic, we needed to respect their theology and not call it Eucharist—words matter, but meaning can still be made even across the borders and boundaries of theological language.

After sharing liturgy in English and Spanish, and as U.S. Border Patrol agents watched closely, we fed one another through the fence with small pieces of bread and small cups of juice as both a symbolic gesture and an embodying of the reality that God knows no borders between God's people. After the *agápe* meal concluded, the U.S. partners crossed the border and joined our partners in Mexico for a real feast at the Migrant Resource Center¹⁰⁴ only 100 feet from the border crossing.¹⁰⁵

STORIES OF EXPLORATION AND LEARNING

The Radical Inclusiveness of God's Love

On the last day of the trip I led the UKIRK students in reflecting on their experience. About one month later I interviewed them separately. I specifically asked them about the connection between the U.S.-Mexico border and the borders we create in our daily lives. I asked them to reflect on how their Christian practice of Eucharist informs or challenges them. Each of them shared how surprised they were to hear that those from Mexico or other places do not necessarily want to leave their home countries, but feel they have no choice if they are to

¹⁰⁴ The Migrant Resource Center is a partnership of Frontera de Cristo, La Sagrada Familia Catholic Parrish (Agua Prieta), No More Deaths (Tucson, Arizona), No More Deaths (Phoenix, Arizona), and Centro de Derechos Humanos del Migrante (Agua Prieta and Douglas). When immigrants are deported by U.S. Immigration and Customs and Enforcement, they are often dropped off at the border in towns like Nogales and Douglas. They are walked across the border and left with no food, water, shoe laces (removed and discarded during detention as a “suicide precaution), or clothes other than what they are wearing. The Migrant Resource Center provides food, water, clothes, shoelaces, and social services to try to connect deportees with either family or other needed resources, including temporary housing. More information can be found at <http://fronteradecristo.org/migrant-resource-center/>.

¹⁰⁵ Sadly, I did not get a chance to interview anyone on the Mexico side due to a lack of time.

survive. “They have lives here [in Mexico],” one student remarked. He reflected on his own preconceived notions about immigrants and said,

I feel like in our minds, before the trip, we had a misconception that the majority of people in Mexico want to go to America or would like to or are trying to immigrate. There’s so many people we met that their lives are in Mexico, and are not trying to emigrate. . . . We assume that Mexicans want to come to America because ‘America is great.’ But really they are just as proud to be Mexicans as we are to be Americans.¹⁰⁶

In reflecting on Eucharist as a ritual that professes that *all* people are God’s children, the students agreed that the Table should be completely open as an expression of our relationships to one another and the inclusiveness of God’s love and grace. All three students attend Presbyterian Churches in their hometowns, and all three responded that their home churches practiced an open Table. They did not remember their pastors ever saying, “All who are baptized are welcome,” despite the instruction in the *Book of Order*. How to embody such inclusiveness beyond the Table remained a challenge, however.

The Power of the Table

Like other interviews conducted in the last months of the project, the conversations often focused on racial divisions juxtaposed against an ethos of an open Table.¹⁰⁷ One student asked in response: “Do those people even want to eat with us?” It’s a good question that challenges our paternalistic presumption of superiority as citizens of the U.S.—the dominant cultural, economic, and political empire in the world. It raised other questions about whose Table we are eating at,

¹⁰⁶ Interview with a border trip participant, Agua Prieta, Sonora, Mexico, March 11, 2016.

¹⁰⁷ For the congregation, this may have been because only about a year before the congregation dedicated an entire month to the theme of “Race, Racism, and the Bible.” Each February for the past 20 or more years UPC-Tempe has hosted what it calls “Mission Month,” though the topics interpret “mission” very broadly. Topics have included various regions or cultures, but also topics that intersect with theology: race and racism, science and religion, “peace” in broad terms and from an inter-religious perspective (this was my first month as Pastor, and included a Muslim speaker reading the Qu’ran from the pulpit and preaching from Islam as the sermon, which ruffled some feathers but was generally accepted and well received).

who does the inviting, and what power structures are in place when we are the ones already around the Table and others are not (or are they around other Tables where we, those in the dominant culture, are not welcome or invited?).

Re-imagining the Eucharistic Table

During interviews, several members of UPC-Tempe shared stories of their early childhood experience of Eucharist in their Churches: men in dark suits somberly passing trays of neatly cut pieces of bread and small cups of juice, the trays being passed over the children who were deemed not old enough to understand and, therefore, not old enough to participate—the domestication of a radically inclusive feast of mutual love? The focus of their early experiences of the meal was on personal piety.

“Communion was very formal,” one respondent shared from when she was a child growing up in upstate New York. “As a child, I was afraid. ... It was a frightening experience when I was little. We weren’t allowed to take communion until we were confirmed in junior high school.” After raising her own children in much the same way, she now believes “it’s important that the children feel included in all the rights and rituals of the Church.” Reflecting specifically on this project, she realized during the interview, the practice of Eucharist is about “not just me. It’s the whole world.”¹⁰⁸

Others shared similar sentiments about this new understanding of the broader social, political, and ethical implications of Eucharist. Though she was not raised with quite as open a Table as was being suggested in the project, one member responded, “I was very comfortable with where you were going because that’s where I am.” The community of her youth literally gathered in a circle around the Table, holding hands to pray, and then passing the elements to one

¹⁰⁸ Group interview with members of UPC-Tempe, University Presbyterian Church, Tempe, Arizona, June 5, 2016.

another. “You did have that feeling of community,” she recalled. “I can remember a peacemaking conference years ago at Montreat [Presbyterian Conference Center] when Eric Law was actually in charge that time, and we had pineapple juice and something else for communion, talking about what people around the world use for communion.” She quickly added, “The elements are not important. It’s what you’re doing that’s important, and what that means.”¹⁰⁹ She even suggested that the plastic bags that we pack for our homeless neighbors with snack foods, a water bottle, socks, and small hygiene items could be considered an extension of the Eucharistic Table.

Eucharist Beyond the Table

Interestingly, the students who went on the border trip were less surprised by the broader socio-ethical and socio-political implications of Eucharist (life informing belief, and belief informing life). It seemed to make sense to them, as they had not experienced the rigidity of Eucharist that some of the older members of UPC-Tempe had experienced as children.

One student suggested that just because she called an experience Eucharistic, doesn’t mean she needs to openly and verbally declare it or demand those with whom she is sharing to also call it that. “I think Communion is just as much a personal thing as a group thing,” she said. However, she went on to suggest that she could even have Communion by herself. When I pointed out the meaning of communion as “coming together,” she back pedaled a bit and began to rethink that statement. As might be expected, the young adults’ understandings of Eucharist were less developed than the older members of UPC-Tempe.

¹⁰⁹ This is reminiscent of Matthew 15.11, when Jesus says, “It’s not what goes into the mouth that contaminates a person in God’s sight. It’s what comes out of the mouth [or one’s behavior?] that contaminates the person.” (CEB, with author’s insertion)

Deipnon of Fellowship and Mutuality

For several years UPC-Tempe has offered a Wednesday night meal at church. Four or five weeks per year UPC-Tempe shares those Wednesday night tables with homeless families sleeping at the church through a transitional housing program called Family Promise. These families do not know the UPC-Tempe community, and sometimes their way of being in the world is very different from those of the congregation. Yet, I watch members of UPC-Tempe engage these guests, welcome them, sit and eat with them, and listen to their stories. Sometimes the families are shy and sit off by themselves. But eventually someone from the congregation asks to sit with them, introduces themselves, and shares in a *deipnon* of fellowship and mutuality—it is a powerful sight to witness. Several members of UPC-Tempe shared in interviews and casual conversation that they now view those moments explicitly as Eucharistic.

Several participants saw a direct link between the Table of Eucharist and UPC-Tempe's work through the myriad of homeless and meal programs in which we participate, including our Wednesday night dinners. They saw links with our advocacy work around immigration and LGBTQ equality. They borrowed some of the project's language and suggested that some of this work involved the same subversive ideology of protest against the social norms that tend to shut certain people out of the centers of power, privilege, and access. Two members of UPC-Tempe separately suggested in private conversation that the project did not go far enough to paint the church itself as a subversive and anti-empire institution—counter-cultural to the ways of excess, class distinction, and privilege so often embodied in our 24/7 society. This gives me hope that we may be able to push further our understanding and practice of Eucharist.

Restructuring for a Eucharistic Life

However, I also heard in casual conversations and recorded in my field notes that some of the younger families wondering how they were supposed to do what they felt was being asked of them when they barely had time to breathe as they get up before dawn to get the kids ready for school, work full time (several at professional jobs with irregular hours), cart their children to practices and performances of all sorts, and make sure food is on the table when it needs to be. It seems the norm for meals among younger families with children is to eat in the car on the way to an event or around a coffee table in front of the TV, rather than at a dining table engaging one another. So, what vision might the Church have to offer them? A sit-down meal is a challenge for them, but maybe it is a worthy challenge as they reflect on their values, both the ones they are living (busyness) and the ones they seek to honor (togetherness, meal time, spiritual aspects of food and meals). This seems like a perfect opportunity for the Church to come along side these young families and help them, and the Church, more intentionally seek meaning in their meal times, and connect it to their church community and the mission of the Church itself with regard to how we are called to live in the Kingdom of God here and now.

CONCLUSION

This project sought to invite reflection on the power of Eucharist to shape our way of living the Christian faith. It did that, and further lifted up the power of *narrative* to shape and clarify our sense of identity and purpose. Words matter as they help us make meaning out of our experiences. Narrative invites dialogue and helps us explore more deeply the nuances of lived experience and beliefs that can easily be overlooked. We are a people of story. Our scriptures tell story after story of people's experiences of the Divine in daily communal life. The Eucharist tells a story, both ancient and contemporary. It is the story of "us," together with God, with rich

symbols of table, bread, and cup, and deep practices of gathering, blessing, sharing, and receiving. The gospel stories, including the Last Supper and *all* of Jesus' meals, continue to shape us as we continually re-interpret them within our ever-changing contexts. The pattern of "living, telling, re-telling, re-living"¹¹⁰ of stories emerges throughout history and is fundamental to being human¹¹¹—almost as fundamental as food and drink. It is the spiritual practice of evaluation and discernment suggested by Sarah Drummond: paying attention, interpreting, engaging, and paying attention again.

As the depth of the Eucharist is rediscovered as more than a personal spiritual experience, we are invited to see it as increasingly "about the real stuff: bread and hunger, food and pleasure, eating disorders and global food politics, private property and the common good,"¹¹² and the realities of global injustice. The Eucharist is the foundation of the Church's "eschatological imagination."¹¹³ The counter-cultural nature of the meal can and should inform our "politics" as followers in the Way of the One who was executed as a threat to the Empire's system of exclusion and control. In ancient societies "[f]ood was a social symbol that meant status."¹¹⁴ For Christians these meals are core to our eschatological imagination of radical hospitality and

¹¹⁰ D. Jean Clandinin, and F. Michael Connelly, *Narrative Inquiry: Experience and Story in Qualitative Research* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 71.

¹¹¹ Narrative Theology lends itself to consider the contextualization of the Christian faith (UPC-Tempe, PC(USA), Arizona, U.S., and even global). All theology is contextualized theology (Bevans, 3) in that thinking about God is not done in a vacuum. Different cultures and locales discover the presence of God through existing cultural norms as well as new noticings and incites. Geography can also have an impact on how God is experienced in the world (desert, mountain, rain forest, rolling hills, hot, cool, etc.), as suggested previously with images and icons of a Caucasian Jesus in Europe and much of the U.S., a black Jesus in Africa, or a brown skinned Jesus in South and Central America.

¹¹² Bieler and Schottrof, 5, 7.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Carvalhaes, 59.

inclusivity in a culture that continues to bind “self-worth” to exclusive social hierarchies.¹¹⁵ The implications of Eucharist flow far out from the Tables of Christian worship and into the tables of our everyday lives.

Sacramental worship embraces a permeability in which the bread we consume at our kitchen tables, the bread we steal from the poor, and the bread that is consecrated and consumed during Holy Communion are related. Sacramental permeability means that physical matters and actions such as eating and drinking can become vehicles that make transparent the Holy One who gives birth to the Eucharistic life.¹¹⁶

“Eschatological imagination” leads us to the embodiment of a new social order where the hopeless discover hope at the Table, the grieving are consoled at the Table, the hungry and thirsty are fed at the Table, and peace is realized at the Table (Matt. 5.1-11). Many at UPC-Tempe began to see that their varied tables of fellowship have the potential to embody this vision—any table can become such a place. Carvalhaes calls it “social reimagination.”¹¹⁷

Stephen Bevans suggests that “reality is ‘mediated by meaning.’”¹¹⁸ In terms of Christianity’s theology of creation, wherein humans are invited by God to be partners in creation, contextualization (or re-interpreting) creates space for us to consider our part in co-creating with God and giving witness to the simultaneously eschatological and ontological vision God invites us into (and where we might be working against God’s purposes through exclusion). The Christian faith has experienced an ever-changing context since the first century: from a Jewish peasant movement within a system of oppression and manipulation, to revolt against empire, to being adopted by the empire it previously opposed, and then being codified in the social and

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Bieler and Schottroff, 5.

¹¹⁷ Carvalhaes, 74.

¹¹⁸ Charles H. Kraft, *Christianity in Culture* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1979), 300, quoted in Bevans, 4.

political norms of empire.¹¹⁹ Now, in what has been labeled as post-Christendom,¹²⁰ the Church in the West is having to once again re-evaluate its place, purpose, and way of being in the world, especially as it sheds its former place of privilege within empire.¹²¹ This project provided a glimpse into how broadly socio-political and socio-ethical understandings of Eucharist can aid in our discernment.

Following Carvalhaes' lead, this project sought to suggest that at the Eucharistic Table, and within our general meal practices, there is a connection to both a local and a broader global context. Any time we cross social borders—culturally or personally imposed—we risk losing our preconceived individual identity. But in that loss, we gain the opportunity to grow deeper in our understanding of our mutuality with one another, God, and all of creation. Maybe this is what the Church needs to do in order to re-discover her identity as a community of radical love living in the radical grace of a radically inclusive God who especially cares for the outcasts? And at the Table is where this radical life is practiced in order to embody the ethos and ethics of the Table out in the world. Carvalhaes puts it this way in his conclusion:

¹¹⁹ Bevens, 8.

¹²⁰ Referring to the era from Constantine's establishment of Christianity as the official cult of the Roman Empire to the decline of the Christian Church in the west in the 1960s.

¹²¹ Bevens goes so far as to state: "The doctrine of the incarnation proclaims that God is revealed not primarily in *ideas* but rather in concrete reality" (Bevens, 12). He then offers the "sacramental" nature of reality: a way through which God is revealed. The sacraments point to a larger reality, a reality even beyond the elements themselves in which God is fully present *to* the world *for* the world. Indeed, "the kingdom of heaven has come near" (Matthew 10.7, CEB). Engaging the sacraments "proclaim[s] a deep faith in the fact that the world and its inhabitants and their deeds and events are holy and that, at any time and in any place and through any person, these persons and things can become transparent and reveal their creator as actively and lovingly present to creation" (Bevens, 12-13). The sacramental nature of life itself is discerned through ordinary things like bread and wine (or whatever culturally contextual elements are appropriate), inviting participants to discover and discern the *mysterion* of God's grace in the world. Thus, the Eucharist is more than a ritual. It is an expression and embodiment of the reality of God's incarnation in all contexts, whether or not the "other" at the table understands or is willing to label it "Eucharist." This is the continuing task of practical theology—to reveal God's presence in a truly sacramental world (Bevens, 13). Ultimately, this *is* our story.

The hope is to expand Eucharistic practices and consequently spread and open the frontiers of the church in the world. ... The hope is that the eucharist (sic) should be more visibly marked by the troubling global migration, by situations and places of death, oppression, poverty and disasters around the world, so that, the church and the eucharist (sic) could explain and be explained by the [law of action], by the daily life of people, and by the movements of Jesus Christ around us.”¹²²

Carvalhaes asks, “In what ways are we working as a people of God, practicing our Christian faith, from a liturgical space that is *tainted* by the blood, hunger, violence and exclusion of the world?”¹²³ He responds by suggesting that “[a]s we negotiate the borders around the table we honor God and open up spaces for the unwanted, the disfranchised, the immigrant, and create visions of justice and practices of solidarity.”¹²⁴ We mark our lives as Eucharistic people by living the ethics of an open Table where God welcomes everyone, and thereby shapes that Table with the fragile and broken lives of God’s people—faithful, unfaithful, tax collectors, sinners, prostitutes, immigrants (documented or undocumented), men, women, straight, gay, bisexual, transgendered, queer, black, brown, white, and even bullies and terrorists. The Table is shaped and re-shaped into a well-used sacred space of hope against the imperial forces of isolation—dinged and dented by the challenges of hate, violence, and division—but made all the more beautiful when the connections between us are illumined and made visible across and through the grains of wood before us, as well as in the bread we break and the cup we share.

Eucharist is more than a private practice of personal piety on Sunday mornings, *incidentally* in the midst of community. Eucharist *is* the community, coming together to “practice” embodying an eschatological vision of the Kingdom of God here and now in the midst of tragedy and suffering. By this, a cup of coffee with a friend is Eucharist. By this, sharing a

¹²² Carvalhaes, 245-246.

¹²³ Ibid., 246-247.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 247.

meal or even a bottle of water with a hungry person on the street becomes Eucharist. Challenging the powers that be on laws that seek to exclude or further marginalize already marginalized people, whether it be through public protest or writing letters, can become a Eucharistic act, drawing God's people together and illuminating the ever-present web of mutuality that inspires the eschatological imagination of God's own Spirit within us. Carvalhaes argues:

[T]he presence of bread and wine does not need to be there in order to make the eucharist (sic) a sacrament. The argument is not against the presence of the bread and wine or to say anything goes, but rather, to see that what we call Eucharist, the elements we use, and the actions we portray, are open to the movement of the Holy Spirit around different communities. ... Thus, we don't need borders against my brothers and sisters, be they baptized or not, or from one or another denomination or religion, since what is at stake at the celebration of the Eucharist is our deep care for these sacred things as an assembled community, under the movement of the Holy Spirit. The borders that we need are to protect those who are bruised, harmed by the system of exclusion; those who cannot afford a dignified life, the least of these. We need borders to save the lives of those who are in danger. The Eucharist gains its specificities as the people of God do it in different contexts by listening to the movements of the Spirit.¹²⁵

This project successfully helped UPC-Tempe consider the broader implications of the Table in much of what they are already doing, as well as in what God might be calling them further to do and risk. In the public and private realms of our lives, the Church needs to re-embrace and ever-expand meal practices that draw people together especially across divisions (e.g., race, income, education, political affiliations, etc.), and seek to heal brokenness and nourish souls.

Is it too radical to ask if Eucharist needs to involve food? Could the elements of Eucharist also be our behaviors or traditions, similar to banquets of the first Christians? How might we re-work our Eucharistic liturgy to be more inclusive, to reach out more broadly and see the kingdom of God as near as our neighbor, however they define themselves. Is the work of maintaining water stations in the desert for undocumented immigrants walking through the arid deserts of Arizona an act of Eucharist, even if we never see those with whom we are sharing the

¹²⁵ Ibid., 257.

experience? Is advocating for immigration reform in the U.S. so people coming from countries torn by violence might find refuge here a form of Eucharistic advocacy? Can any social act that seeks to embody the eschatological vision of the Kingdom of God, as has been suggested here, be considered Eucharistic in nature? We have but scratched the surface, and I'm thankful for the opportunity to discover and discern with this community, and look forward to how the learnings from this project might challenge us to take some risks in our faith life together for the sake of healing in an increasingly fractured and yet connected world.

APPENDIX A – IMAGE OF TYPICAL GREEK AND ROMAN BANQUET

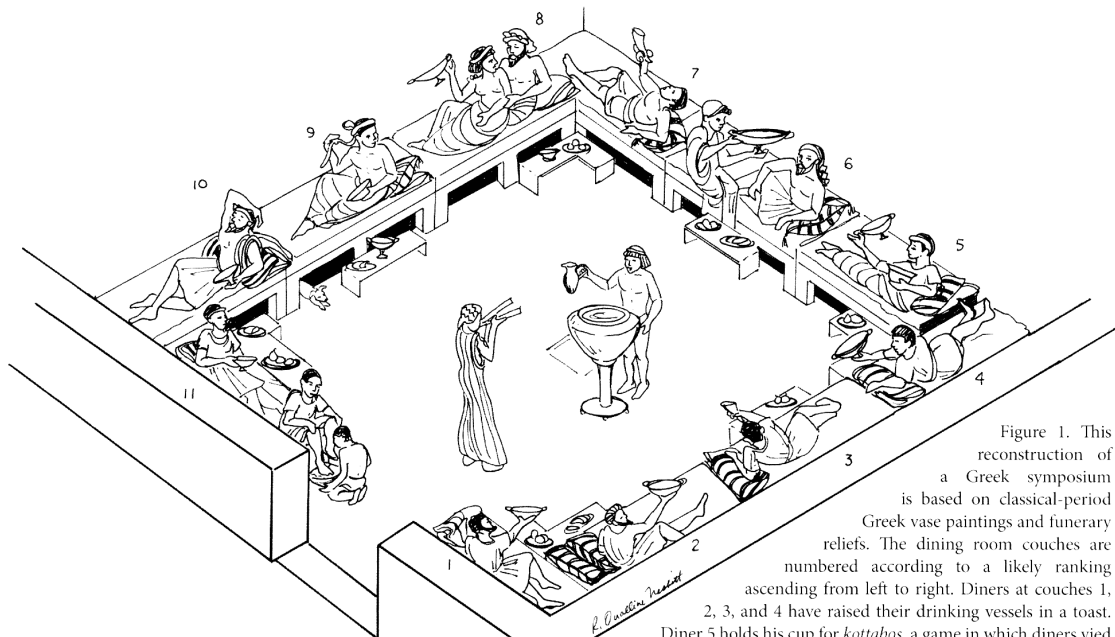


Figure 1. This reconstruction of a Greek symposium is based on classical-period Greek vase paintings and funerary reliefs. The dining room couches are numbered according to a likely ranking ascending from left to right. Diners at couches 1, 2, 3, and 4 have raised their drinking vessels in a toast.

Diner 5 holds his cup for *kottabos*, a game in which diners vied to hit a specified target with the last dregs of wine in their cups. Diner 6 is served wine by a female companion, apparently a courtesan. Diner 7 drinks from a horn-shaped *rhyton*. Diner 8 embraces a woman clearly pictured as a courtesan; diner 9 arranges a festive headband. (Note the dog poised beneath his couch to clean up any crumbs.) Diner 10 looks as though he is about to fall asleep. Diner 11 holds out his cup for more wine, looking toward the center of the room at the servant who dips wine from a *dinos*, a large mixing and serving bowl. Also in the center is a flute girl who provides the evening's entertainment. Near the door, a servant washes the feet of a late-arriving guest who will share couch 11.

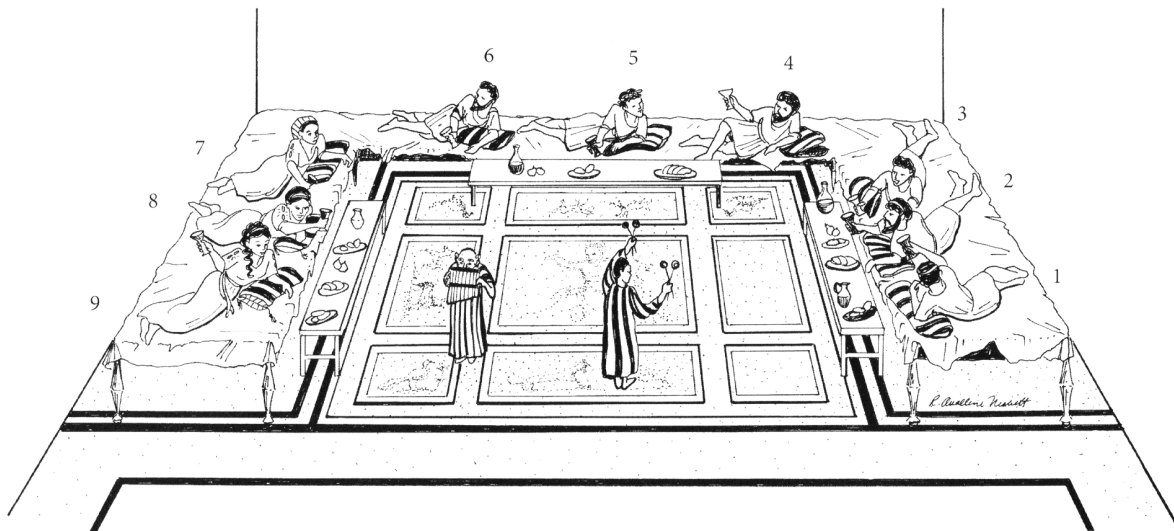


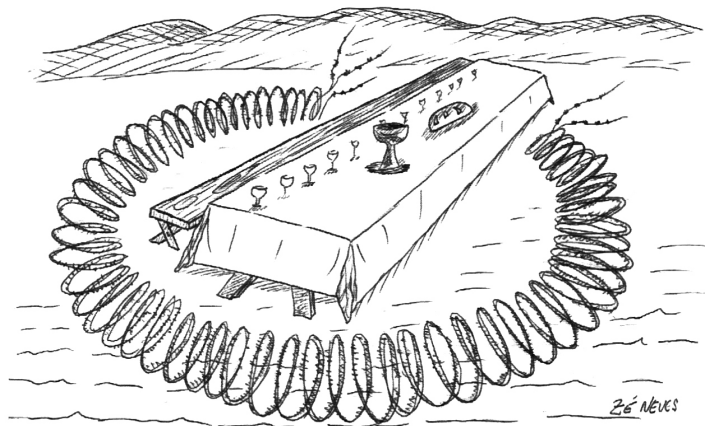
Figure 2: This reconstruction of a Roman banquet in a triclinium is based on a Roman-era mosaic floor (now on display at the Pergamon Museum in Berlin). The mosaic's design marked the area along the dining room walls where three couches were to be arranged in the typical Pi shape, holding a total of nine diners. As in the Greek symposium, the couches generally marked rank ascending from the left to the right; but the custom evolved of placing the highest-ranking guest at position 6, where the middle couch joined the lower couch. This position was designated *locus consularis*, "the consul's position" (Plut., *Quaest. Conv.* 1.3). The host could be placed either at position 1 at the highest table (as in Petronius's depiction of the banquet of Trimalchio, *Sat.* 31.8; Smith, *Cena Trimalchionis*, 66–67), or, more commonly, at position 7 at the lowest table (and thus close to *locus consularis*). Here the three diners at the low table are all women, following a reference in Lucian's *Symposium* in which the women at a wedding banquet all reclined on the same couch (Luc. *Symp.* 8). The musicians in the center of the room providing the entertainment and the style of the tables in front of the couches are based on a fifth-century-C.E. Roman banquet scene.

Hal Taussig, *In the Beginning Was the Meal: Social Experimentation and Early Christian Identity* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2009), 24, 25.

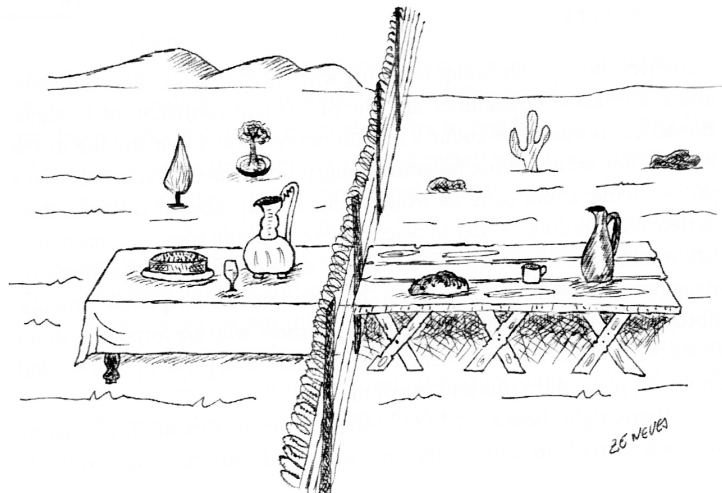
APPENDIX B – IMAGES OF UN-EUCHARISTIC COMMUNION

Cláudio Carvalhaes' critique of Communion in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is dramatically presented in two images by José Neves (signed Zé Neves), a former undocumented immigrant from Brazil, who was a part of a church where Carvalhaes served as pastor in Fall River, Massachusetts. The drawings were created based on conversations between Carvalhaes and Neves in the writing of Carvalhaes' book, *Eucharist and Globalization* (2013).

*"In the same way that there is no theology that is not also political, so there is no Eucharistic sacrament that does not, passively or actively, support or resist, in one way or another, political views and ideological programs."*¹²⁶



José Neves in *Eucharist and Globalization: Redrawing the Borders of Eucharistic Hospitality*, 6.



José Neves in *Eucharist and Globalization: Redrawing the Borders of Eucharistic Hospitality*, 30.

¹²⁶ Cláudio Carvalhaes, *Eucharist and Globalization: Redrawing the Borders of Eucharistic Hospitality* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2013), 6.

APPENDIX C – SERMON SERIES: “DO THIS IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME”

Part I

By the Rev. Eric O. Ledermann
September 13, 2015 – 24th Sunday in Ordinary Time / Sunday School Kickoff
University Presbyterian Church of Tempe, Arizona

Galatians 3.26-29 (NRSV)

²⁶[F]or in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. ²⁷As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with

Christ. ²⁸There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.

²⁹And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to the promise.

Mark 7.24-30 (NRSV)

²⁴From [Gennesaret, on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee, where he had healed many sick people,] [Jesus] set out and went away to the region of Tyre [in Syria, a gentile region northwest of Gennesaret on the shore of the Mediterranean Sea]. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know he was there. Yet he could not escape notice[.] ²⁵[In fact] a woman

whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately heard about him, and she came and bowed down at his feet. ²⁶Now the woman was a Gentile [a non-Jew], of Syrophenician origin [in other words, she was a local]. She begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter.

²⁷[Jesus] said to her, “Let the children [that is, the people of Israel] be fed first, for it is not fair to take

the children’s food and throw it to the dogs.”

²⁸But she answered him, “Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs.”

²⁹Then he said to her, “For saying that, you may go—the demon has left your daughter.”

³⁰So she went home, found the child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.

If you’re experiencing a bit of *déjà vu*, yes, if you were here last week you are hearing the same Gospel passage. One can never hear a Bible story too often. Last week Rev. Darin shared how this Gospel story and the letter of James challenges our notion of social status and rankings. That is definitely a central theme of the story, and an important part worth exploring again and again.

This week, in pairing *Galatians* with Mark 7, we begin to see that challenging systems of privilege is a common theme throughout scripture, but not just from a position of social justice and equity. You see, the Galatian Christians, like us today, were struggling with their place in God’s kingdom, especially since they were Gentile Christians, not Jewish Christians. The first Christians were Jewish. Paul, a Jew, established the Galatian church by reaching out mostly to non-Jewish people—this was a new thing. Some questioned whether these non-Jewish Christians were really Christian if they were not first Jewish. Paul clearly affirms that they are “all children of God through faith, ... there is no longer Jew or Greek,” or any other thing that might divide or exclude someone from the redeeming grace of God revealed in and through Jesus.

In Mark, the story of Jesus’ encounter with the Syrophenician woman is bookended by stories of healings, responses to questions about ritual purity, and the feeding of the 5,000 in chapter 6 and feeding of the 4,000 in Chapter 8. Why is this important? Jesus’ encounter seems to be a part of Mark’s attempt to show how God challenges the cultural lines in the sand we so often draw in order to protect our fragile egos and sense of connection. Using healings, teachings, and the feeding of multitudes, Mark’s gospel paints an image of the table of God’s grace that is bigger than our often-limited notions of inclusion. The cultural norms of separation are challenged by the notion of God’s diverse and radically inclusive kingdom.

Some have suggested that Jesus' interaction with the woman was to make explicit for his disciples the crossing of these social boundaries that separate people (in other words, Jesus intended to heal the woman's daughter all along and used her to offer a lesson to his disciples). But other scholars have suggested that Mark is trying to show that even *Jesus'* notion of the kingdom needed to be broadened—emphasizing Jesus' humanity, as Mark often does, and the fact that both Jesus and we have a lot to learn about God's grace.

This is not the first time Jesus has interacted with or healed a Gentile in Mark's gospel. But it is the only time when Jesus seems to lose an argument. Here the miracle is not so much the healing of the woman's daughter, but the breaking down of the barriers of prejudice that too often separate us from one another and serve to exclude so many.

Jesus affirms the argument that even Paul offers: the Jews first, everyone else after and as a result. But here, this Gentile woman challenges those assumptions and even Jesus' own understanding of his mission and purpose. Both of these texts, and so many others, challenge anyone who wishes to restrict God's grace by *any* standards.

Within the Christian faith, and within most cultures and religions around the world, boundaries or norms are established and maintained for the express purpose of helping a group respond to the age-old question: Who are we, and, more importantly, who are we in relation to "others"?

According to Mark, Jesus is trying to keep his presence in the Gentile region of Tyre on the "down low"—he has no intention of preaching to the people there. In fact, it would seem he is trying to get away from the crowds that are following him, to retreat for a while, let things cool down a bit, and maybe even re-connect with his core sense of call from God.

But in doing so he crosses several significant boundaries that would have been considered at least unorthodox if not even taboo at the time, and he both brings the Gospel with him and, at the same time, is challenged by it himself:

- 1) He leaves his home territory of Israel and enters Gentile or pagan country—he has crossed a significant boundary and he brings his ministry with him;
- 2) He engages with a Gentile (non-Jew) about theological things—some may have asked: "Why? What's the point?";
- 3) He engages with a woman, verbally spars with her, acknowledges that he loses the argument, and then blesses her and her faith, despite the racial, gender, and religious boundaries that might otherwise keep them separated—what self-respecting Rabbi in Jesus' day would do that?

In crossing these boundaries, Jesus does not lose his Jewish identity and the woman does not lose her Syrophonecian identity. Rather, Mark is able to offer a challenge to the structures of status, cultural identity, and privilege, and reflect the reality of God's radical grace.¹

To add insult to injury, Jesus uses what many understand to be a common ethnic slur by referring to her as a "dog," a derogatory Jewish term for anyone who is not a Jew. In spite of the insult, while *Jesus* is crossing boundaries, the woman crosses some of her own: she crosses *Jesus'* boundary of purpose and intention, challenging his seemingly narrow focus. She reflects back to Jesus, and to the hearers of this Gospel, their own prejudice, forcing Jesus and the gospel's listeners to expand *our* tables to include this woman, in essence forcing us to *create* a place for her.²

¹ Cláudio Carvalhaes, *Eucharist and Globalization: Redrawing the Borders of Eucharistic Hospitality* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2013), 55.

² Carvalhaes, 58.

Even within the community of Jesus, inclusion cannot be assumed, presumed, or taken for granted—the woman had to fight for and negotiate a place at the table. Then, her place had to be made explicit for the kingdom of God to become a reality.

Our own boundaries provide us with a sense of identity and belonging (as Christians, as Presbyterians, and as participants in this community of faith), and that is good—there is nothing wrong with having a sense of identity. In fact, it is healthy and critically important. But, in the absence of intentional critical reflection, those same identity boundaries can form walls of exclusion for those who do not fit in: either as members of UPC-Tempe, as Presbyterians, as Protestant and Reformed Christians, or any of the other identities we use to define ourselves—do you live in Tempe, or somewhere else?

Paul’s proclamation that there are no longer any distinctions among the faithful challenges us to consider the distinctions we claim or embody between those who are a part of our tribe as we have defined it and those who are not. It begs a question: as followers in the Way of Jesus, who do we readily welcome and who do we possibly intentionally or unintentionally exclude from our tables of fellowship?

Today as we commission some among us to lead us in walking the Way of Jesus, I wonder how the Gospel, the good news of God’s grace, might challenge us to continue broadening our tables of fellowship to see the “other” in our lives not as “other,” but as sister or brother. I wonder how the Gospel might challenge us to challenge the norms of the social orders of our communities and even our nation and world.

When Jesus instructs his disciples at the Last Supper to “Do this in remembrance of me,” we have to ask: what does he mean by “this”? Is it the meal? Or is it more than that? As we teach our children our faith, how intentional are we being about encouraging *one another* to embody an image of the kingdom of God that accepts the challenge of the Syrophenician woman, her fight to be included, and her persistence in demanding to be recognized? Who is demanding to be recognized around us? Are we paying attention to them? Are we setting aside our privilege in order to allow their voices to be heard? I hope you will join us as we address these and other questions in the coming weeks.

In the name of God the Creator, God the Redeemer and God the Sustainer of all things.
Amen.

Part 2

By the Rev. Eric O. Ledermann
September 20, 2015 – 25th Sunday in Ordinary Time
University Presbyterian Church of Tempe, Arizona

Acts 2.37-47 (NRSV)

³⁷Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, “Brothers, what should we do?” ³⁸Peter said to them, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him.” ⁴⁰And he

testified with many other arguments and exhorted them, saying, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” ⁴¹So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added.

⁴²They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. ⁴³Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the

apostles. ⁴⁴All who believed were together and had all things in common; ⁴⁵they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. ⁴⁶Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, ⁴⁷praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

Luke 14.12-24 (NRSV)

[Jesus had been invited to the house of a Pharisee for a Sabbath meal. In front of the host and his guests, Jesus healed a man. He then engaged the host and his guests in a conversation about healing on the Sabbath.] ¹²He said also to the one who had invited him, “When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, in case they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid. ¹³But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. ¹⁴And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection

of the righteous.”

¹⁵One of the dinner guests, on hearing this, said to him, “Blessed is anyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!”

¹⁶Then Jesus said to him, “Someone gave a great dinner and invited many. ¹⁷At the time for the dinner he sent his slave to say to those who had been invited, ‘Come; for everything is ready now.’ ¹⁸But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, ‘I have bought a piece of land, and I must go out and see it; please accept my regrets.’

¹⁹Another said, ‘I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out; please accept my

regrets.’ ²⁰Another said, ‘I have just been married, and therefore I cannot come.’ ²¹So the slave returned and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and said to his slave, ‘Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame.’ ²²And the slave said, ‘Sir, what you ordered has been done, and there is still room.’ ²³Then the master said to the slave, ‘Go out into the roads and lanes, and compel people to come in, so that my house may be filled. ²⁴For I tell you, none of those who were invited will taste my dinner.’”

Last week I suggested the idea that for ancient peoples identity was vitally important to survival. In Mark 7, Jesus enters Gentile country northeast from where he had grown up and had been teaching and preaching. There he meets a Gentile woman who seems to challenge even Jesus’ own boundaries of his mission and ministry. One of the things I enjoy about Mark’s Gospel is that it is one of the earlier writings about Jesus, so it has some rawness about it. In Luke and Matthew, the stories are smoothed over a bit—still raw in some respects, but a little more digestible. There is a purity about Mark.

Paul’s letters are the earliest writings we have of the early Christian communities, and they have a certain rawness as well. In his letter to the Galatian Christian community he challenges the divisions they are making among themselves by saying, “There is no longer Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.” The idea is spreading that

the divisions we like to create to help us make sense of the world are not a part of the kingdom of God. By the time Paul's writings are circulating, and certainly by the time the earliest Gospels were being recorded, Christianity is becoming a direct threat to the world's hierarchies of wealth and power, reversing the polarities that, according to many even today, keep the world going. It is the great social reversal of Mark 10.31, repeated Matthew's and Luke's gospels: "the last will be first, and the first will be last."

Today we still struggle with our identity. We still try to create identities that will improve our social leverage—whether it is trying to build ourselves up to be strong, wealthy, powerful, smart, clever, or even creative. We build in our minds a vision for the place in society we imagine ourselves, and then we set out to make that image real.

But, much of Jesus' ministry, as well as the ministry and mission of many of the Hebrew prophets, was to upset this false hierarchy that ultimately leads to broken relationships, dysfunctional community, and systemic humiliation. Among the many lessons history has to teach us, systems of humiliation and oppression fail to maintain social order. Scripture shows us the fallacy of these models and tries to help us see the truth that the less we focus on our own status and the more we focus on trying to build others up, the better we all become.

In Luke's Gospel as well as his follow up volume, the Book of Acts, meals are the great equalizers. Like in ancient times, we are often judged by the company we keep. In the first century, it seems, this was even more so. In Luke 7.34, Jesus is called "a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!" Here, it would seem, according to some biblical scholars, Luke is reflecting the reality of the great reversal and how the Christian community in Luke's time were threatening the social norms of the day.¹ The vision and values of the Christian community was being embodied in their practices, shared in Jesus' parable in Luke 14 and Peter's words in Acts 2, which we read today. The early Jesus communities were challenging the social boundaries of their day, with meals as the boundary markers that define community—either exclusionary or, in the case of Jesus' early followers, inclusionary.²

This might lead some to consider, or re-consider, the meaning of Jesus' Last Supper as we have received it, as well as our Communion or Eucharistic practices. When we engage the Jesus meal, with bread and cup, we might want to ask ourselves: are we merely re-enacting an historical event, or do we become connected at a deeper level to a lived reality shaped by Jesus and the early Christian community?

In the 16th century Reformation, Martin Luther of Germany, Ulrich Zwingli of Switzerland, and John Calvin of France and later Geneva, Switzerland, each had different ways of challenging the Roman Catholic understanding of communion. In the Roman Catholic Church, it came to be understood that in the Eucharist—what we often refer to as Communion or the Lord's Supper—the bread and wine literally, upon consumption, transform into the very body and blood of Jesus, though they retain the look of bread and wine. This is known as transubstantiation. And this was the basis for the Roman Catholic Church imposing strict boundaries around who could receive these elements and who could not—it is, after all literally the body and blood of Jesus.

Martin Luther understood the elements of the Eucharist continue to be bread and wine, but that Christ's Spirit comes and joins the elements, side-by-side, in what became known as consubstantiation. Ulrich Zwingli took the stance that many Baptists hold today, that the Eucharist is purely a memorial meal in honor of Jesus, that there is no "real presence" in the

¹ Dennis E. Smith and Hal E. Taussig, *Many Tables: The Eucharist in the New Testament and Liturgy Today* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2001), 48.

² Ibid., 50.

bread or wine as the Roman Catholic Church and other reformers believed.

John Calvin, however, the closest thing the Presbyterian Church has to a patron saint, had yet another way to understand the Eucharist. For Calvin, the Eucharistic meal was about a very real spiritual presence but within the context of communal relationships, rather than the elements themselves. In the words of one author, Calvin's understanding of the Eucharist was as an event "through which the Holy Spirit works to shape people over time into relationships with one another and with God's own self."³ Isn't this the result of communal meals in general? They bring people together and, over time, shape relationships.

Last spring I invited you all to consider meals during which you had positive experiences. Some of you wrote some of those experiences down. Many were from growing up and sitting around the dinner table with your families. Others of you shared specific meal experiences, some recent and others a long time ago. I couldn't help but notice how many of you shared a little that you were significantly shaped by those experiences of coming together and building up.

Of course, the converse can also be true: meals have the potential to separate and destroy. In Jesus' times, who you ate with shaped not only your relationships, but your identity and social status. Therefore, it can be assumed that meals were used to not only identify *with* certain people, but also to disassociate *from* other people.

Today we see this played out in the stories we hear from the United States Congress. Some of the retired congressional leaders share stories about when representatives and senators from different political party affiliations dining together, either in the congressional dining rooms, in public, or at one another's homes. Now, Congress seems to reflect the social reality of our time: in a time of social media gone wild, no Democrat would dare risk a photo leaking of them dining with a Republican, and no Republican would risk dining with a Democrat. Relationships, associations, as well as disassociations are being established every day.

In Luke 14, Jesus responds to a similar social reality in his time. In fact, one might even say that his Last Supper, on the eve of his death, was a reflection of his vision of the kingdom of God as shared in the parable of the great banquet we read today. When we share in a meal, we share ourselves with one another.

There are many things that can shape or destroy a sense of communal relationship. But coming together and sharing a meal, even a ritualized meal like our Communion practices, shapes us and our vision of the world in a particular way. It draws us to one another, to share in communal order, communal accountability, and communal love. Even the act of showing up on Sunday morning is an act of communal connection. Our worship is less an act of individuals than the act of a trusting community. Our liturgy, our prayers, our songs, our listening and discerning, as well as our giving, are all acts of communal identity and relationship shaping. No longer are we identified as Jew or Gentile, male or female, Republican or Democrat, protestant or Catholic, Presbyterian or Lutheran, gay or straight, rich or poor—we are all one, drawn together by the love of God revealed in Christ Jesus.

Now, we have all been invited to a very special banquet that is to be held here next Sunday, which will start when we gather to worship. During that service we will be asked to make a commitment to God and one another. It is more than a financial commitment we are being asked to make. It is a spiritual commitment to use the resources God has given us—time, talent, as well as treasure—to help build up and continue shaping this community into a vision of the kingdom of God where everyone is valued and no one person is more important than any other. We each

³ Martha L. Moore-Keish, *Do This in Remembrance of Me: A Ritual Approach to Reformed Eucharistic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2008), 16.

are called to give what we can from the means we have been given. It is but one among many ways we live into the Eucharistic vision we have received through Jesus and the communities of Jesus that have gone before us. We have all been invited, and there is always room for more.

So come, the banquet is already being prepared. By joining in, we each accept our place at the table, a table of equals, a table of inclusion, a table of visionary hope. By joining in, we receive God's gracious invitation to be part of a community wrestling with what it means to be faithful. Each and every one of us has a part to fulfill in this kingdom vision. So come, celebrate! Come, worship! Come, be renewed in your true identity as a child of God! Come, and may all of us be nourished and nurtured so that we might live more fully into the radically inclusive kingdom of God no matter where we go. Come.

In name of the Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer of all things, come. Amen.

Part 3

By the Rev. Eric O. Ledermann
September 27, 2015 – 26th Sunday in Ordinary Time
University Presbyterian Church of Tempe, Arizona

1 Corinthians 11.17-34 (NRSV)

¹⁷Now in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. ¹⁸For, to begin with, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you; and to some extent I believe it. ¹⁹Indeed, there have to be factions among you, for only so will it become clear who among you are genuine. ²⁰When you come together, it is not really to eat the Lord's supper. ²¹For when the time comes to eat, each of you goes ahead with your own supper, and one goes hungry and another becomes drunk. ²²What! Do you not have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you show contempt for the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What

should I say to you? Should I commend you? In this matter I do not commend you!

²³For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, ²⁴and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." ²⁵In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." ²⁶For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

²⁷Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be

answerable for the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸Examine yourselves, and only then eat of the bread and drink of the cup. ²⁹For all who eat and drink without discerning the body, eat and drink judgment against themselves. ³⁰For this reason many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. ³¹But if we judged ourselves, we would not be judged. ³²But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.

³³So then, my brothers and sisters, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. ³⁴If you are hungry, eat at home, so that when you come together, it will not be for your condemnation. About the other things I will give instructions when I come.

This letter, like most of the letters written by the Apostle Paul, is an impassioned plea to these young Christian communities to think deeply about what they are doing and how they are doing it. There should be but one fundamental reason for anything we do: building up the Body of Christ so that all may know and experience the love of God revealed in and through Jesus the Christ.

It does not take much to read into Paul's letter to see that, according to Paul, the church in Corinth was a mess. There was all kinds of infighting and self-destructive behavior: gossiping, politicking for position, succumbing to the temptations of the culture around them, and even allowing some members of the community to be thought of as more important than others.

In the portion of the text just read, it would seem that some of the more well-to-do members were able to use their privileged positions in society to get to the Sunday evening meal gatherings earlier than others who had to work later. By the time those who were possibly day laborers arrived, most of the food was gone. Some of what Paul suggests is practical. If you're going to be hungry when you arrive before others at a communal meal, have something to eat at home before you leave. Then, when you arrive, you can wait until everyone has arrived to begin the meal.

It's believed that in those days the Lord's Supper was a full meal, typically shared on Sunday evenings after work and in celebration of the resurrection of Jesus. Part of their worship on the day of the resurrection was to break bread together as an act of inclusion, of embracing one another, of participating in and building up the Body of Christ. In the very next chapter in 1 Corinthians, Paul unpacks the meaning of the Body of Christ with his famous metaphor of: "For just as the body is one and has many parts, and all the members of the body, though many, are

one body, so it is with Christ. ... Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.”¹

Paul understands that when we gather to share in breaking bread and sharing in the cup, God meets us there. When we receive the bread and share in the cup, we join God in the work of joining the body together in Jesus Christ; we become partners with Jesus in the work of reconciling the world by the grace of God.

I think Paul would agree that it is only in being reconciled to one another, recognizing our connection to one another, that we can be whole and fully ourselves as God created us. Until we recognize that, as Paul wrote, when “one member suffers, all suffer together it,”² we will never fully realize the incredible, self-sacrificing love of God revealed through Jesus in his life, teachings, and death.

The Lord’s Supper is but one way we are given to recognize and even embody our connection to God and one another. This is one of the very foundations of the Church, gathering to recognize and embody the connection we have with one another and those beyond these walls. Then, once we are able to witness the connection, our lives begin to reflect it as we realize that when we hurt one, we hurt all, including ourselves. We might then think more deeply about our behavior and way of life. Are we the ones who show up early because we can and forget to wait for those who have to work late? Are we the ones who eat up all the food before others arrive to share in the feast?

Paul is trying to help the Corinthian church realize that we can only be the church when we decide to do it together. He is trying to help them, and us, realize that we are better together. We are better in community than separately as individuals. We are more fully our true selves when we are able to give of ourselves for the sake of the community, each according to our own means, so that all may share equally in the abundance God has given us.

Today we make our commitments for next year. And we will consecrate those commitments—that is, we will dedicate them and bless them and ourselves for the purpose of building up the whole body of Christ for the sake of our community and for the whole world.

Today we give thanks to the God of abundance, and we each recognize God’s call on our lives to give what we can of what we have been so graciously given for the benefit of others. We commit ourselves to supporting the ministry of the Church here at UPC-Tempe, in the Presbyterian Church (USA), and beyond. We re-commit ourselves to supporting one another and those in need outside this community of faith. We re-commit ourselves to a life of prayer so that we might continue to learn to be aware, at all times, of God’s presence among us and in others. We re-commit ourselves to Christ’s ministry of hope and reconciliation.

So let us pray, seeking God’s wisdom and committing ourselves, once again, to the life of grace and service to which we have been called. Let us join together in prayer:

God of grace and wisdom, today we commit ourselves, once again, to your ministry of abundance and hope, especially for those who have been pushed to the margins of our society. We commit our lives to the lifting up of the whole Body of Christ. May this place be a place of welcome where hope and grace abound. May the resources you have given us be used to relieve suffering, lift up the lowly, and give hope to the hopeless. May we think ever more deeply about what we are doing and how we are doing it, so that we might more fully embody your vision of your kingdom, where no one is hungry, thirsty, or left out. By the example of Jesus, whom we seek to follow, we offer these prayers. Amen.

¹ 1 Corinthians 12.12, 27 (NRSV)

² 1 Corinthians, 12.26 (NRSV)

Part 4

By the Rev. Eric O. Ledermann
October 4, 2015 – 27th Sunday in Ordinary Time / World Communion Sunday
University Presbyterian Church of Tempe, Arizona

Deuteronomy 24.19-22 (NRSV)

¹⁹When you reap your harvest in your field and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be left for the alien, the orphan, and the widow, so that the LORD your God may bless you in all your undertakings. ²⁰When you beat your olive trees, do not strip what is left; it shall be for the alien, the orphan, and the widow. ²¹When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, do not glean what is left; it shall be for the alien, the orphan, and the widow. ²²Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt; therefore I am commanding you to do this.

John 6.32-35, 53-59 (NRSV)

In John's Gospel, Jesus reveals himself early in his ministry with three signs: turning the water into wine at the wedding at Cana, feeding the 5,000, and calming the storm on the Sea of Galilee. The crowds have followed him to the other side of the lake.

³²Then Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. ³³For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to

the world." ³⁴They said to him, "Sir, give us this bread always."

³⁵Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."...

⁵³[Then] Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. ⁵⁴Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day; ⁵⁵for my flesh is true food and

my blood is true drink. ⁵⁶Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. ⁵⁷Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me. ⁵⁸This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like that which your ancestors ate, and they died. But the one who eats this bread will live forever." ⁵⁹He said these things while he was teaching in the synagogue at Capernaum.

In ancient times, hospitality, especially for the poor, was an important value. A number of times in our Hebrew scriptures the people of Israel are charged to welcome the immigrant, feed the poor, and provide for those who struggle to provide for themselves. In Deuteronomy, which is a series of "last speeches" or instructions from Moses during the great Exodus from Egypt, the people are reminded that when they get into the Promised Land, to remember their own stories as orphans and wanderers by leaving some harvest in their fields for the "immigrants, the orphans, and the widows" (CEB) to glean.

In the Hebrew scriptures the poor are often depicted as being allowed to scrape the left overs of the wealthy. The prophets rail against the rich for their disregard for the poor and hungry. But in the gospels of Jesus Christ, the poor are brought in from the margins and up from the floor, and given a seat at the table. It is a remarkable thing to consider. It is a challenging thing to imagine.

For the past several weeks we have been exploring the meaning of food in terms of how we build and shape relationships, especially across socio-economic boundaries that cultures often create. Jesus very directly challenges those boundaries that cause some to be full while others go hungry. He lifts up the challenge from the Hebrew scriptures to take care of the poor and feed the hungry and to welcome the immigrant as one of our own. He uses the metaphor of the Kingdom of God to explain another way of life that is counter-cultural to the ways of the world's kingdoms. In God's kingdom, no one is excluded from the banquet table. No one is not invited.

We've looked at Jesus' Last Supper with his disciples and how he shared the bread and wine with them as a sign of the kingdom, and as an instruction to keep working for the kingdom—to make the kingdom a reality in their lives.

It's interesting to note that in Gospels according to Mark, Matthew, and Luke, as well as in Paul's first letter to the Corinthian church, Jesus, at his last supper with his disciples, uses the bread and wine as metaphors for his disciples' participation in the life after his death. We're all pretty familiar with that. But in John's Gospel, the Last Supper in chapter 13 has no mention of bread or wine, body or blood. It is a Passover meal, but instead of bread or wine, Jesus puts on a loin cloth, takes on the role of a servant, and begins to wash the disciples feet as a depiction of what the kingdom looks like.

Instead of at the end of the Gospel, we find Jesus using the sacramental imagery of bread and drink at the beginning of the Gospel as symbols of participation in the life of God's kingdom. The wine and bread are alluded to here, but not specifically mentioned. "I am the bread of life," Jesus says. This imagery of Jesus being the life-blood of what it means to live in the kingdom is emphasized in John more so than in the other gospels. The meaning is the same as the other Gospels: to live in the kingdom is to embody the life of Jesus—to live and behave like Jesus, to see the world as Jesus saw, to sacrifice one's self for the sake of the world as Jesus did. We are called to "embody" in ourselves the reality of God's kingdom here "on earth as in heaven."

Though many scholars believe this passage from John 6 was a later addition to the gospel, it helps shape the entire rest of the story and teachings of Jesus' life. Though not specifically mentioned, the bread and wine of the sacramental communion practice become both an invitation to share in something that recognizes the value of all people, and a form of sending out to go find others who are hungry and share with them the bread of life and the cup of hope.

I have been told by many nutritionists that bread is the enemy of good health. It is full of empty calories that will actually leave you feeling more hungry and wanting more. It might temporarily fill you up, but it will not satisfy your hunger. But the bread of Christ is different. It not only fills us, it completes us and makes us whole. Through it we begin to live into the truth of God's kingdom, that we are all connected to one another, just as we are all connected to God. Eating the bread of life helps us see that all life is sacred and worthy of our love, compassion and care.

It's not just about helping people out, but building relationships. I wonder if the harvesters who sought to obey the instruction in Deuteronomy to leave things in the field for the poor ever took the time to get to know those who were gleaning their leftovers.

When we serve food and join our guests in breaking bread together here at UPC-Tempe when we host the I-HELP and Family Promise programs, when we take meals to people who are homebound with Meals on Wheels and ask them how they are doing, when we lovingly and regularly prepare and serve meals at Paz de Cristo or on Wednesday nights here at UPC-Tempe, when we provide water in the desert for those who are dying of thirst as they cross, or any of the other ways that we help provide food and sustenance, we are living in the kingdom of God—we are practicing the Eucharistic kingdom of the living God that Jesus himself embodied. We are seeing people with the eyes of God—deserving of our love and compassion, and worth welcoming.

In verse 56, Jesus says that those who participate in the Eucharist, who eat the bread of his life and share in the cup of his sacrifice, "abide" in him and he abides in them. It is yet another way of describing our interrelatedness as it reflects our interrelatedness with God—a vision of what it means to be "kingdom of God" people (all for one and one for all!). God literally shares

God's life with Jesus, and, by extension, with us.

In John's gospel the people are eager to share in this bread and cup that Jesus talks about. They recognize their desire to live deeper. It begs a question for us: what are we eagerly seeking? What kind of life do we really want to live? Do we want the things that will give us true life? Or are we chasing after something else? Here, Jesus is basically asking his hearers if they want true life, a deep life that is shaped by and full of the everlasting love of God. Or, are they chasing after bread that will just leave them hungry and wanting more?

The bread of life challenges us to recognize our need for one another. In sharing in the life and ministry of Jesus, our eyes are opened to the pain and suffering of others. In fact, when we receive the bread of life, we may even begin to share in their pain, as Christ did. We might ask ourselves what a kingdom-shaped life might look like. And, then we may begin to see the world differently. So many of you do already. But we still have a ways to go. May God's Holy Spirit and the teachings of Jesus continue to lead us.

In the name of the Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer of all things, thanks be to God. Amen.

Part 5

By the Rev. Eric O. Ledermann
October 18, 2015 – 27th Sunday in Ordinary Time / World Communion Sunday
University Presbyterian Church of Tempe, Arizona

Jeremiah 31.1-3, 8-9, 15-17, 31-34 (NRSV)

¹At that time, says the LORD, I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people.

²Thus says the LORD:

The people who survived the sword
found grace in the wilderness;

when Israel sought for rest,

³the LORD appeared to him from far away.

I have loved you with an everlasting love;

therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you.

⁸See, I am going to bring them from the land of the north,

and gather them from the farthest parts of the earth,
among them the blind and the lame,

those with child and those in labor, together;

a great company, they shall return here.

⁹With weeping they shall come,

and with consolations I will lead them back,

I will let them walk by brooks of water,

in a straight path in which they shall not stumble;
for I have become a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn.

¹⁵Thus says the LORD:

A voice is heard in Ramah,

lamentation and bitter weeping.

Rachel is weeping for her children;

she refuses to be comforted for her children,

Luke 1.45-55 (NRSV)

⁴⁵And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord.”

⁴⁶And Mary said,

“My soul magnifies the Lord,

⁴⁷and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

⁴⁸for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.

Surely, from now on all
generations will call
me blessed;

⁴⁹for the Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.

⁵⁰His mercy is for those who fear him

because they are no more.

¹⁶Thus says the LORD:

Keep your voice from weeping,

and your eyes from tears;

for there is a reward for your work,

says the LORD:

they shall come back from the land of the enemy;

¹⁷there is hope for your future, says the LORD:

your children shall come back to their own

country.

³¹The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. ³²It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the LORD. ³³But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, “Know the LORD,” for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

from generation to generation.

⁵¹He has shown strength with his arm;

he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

⁵²He has brought down the powerful

from their thrones,

and lifted up the lowly;

⁵³he has filled the hungry with good things,

and sent the rich away empty.

⁵⁴He has helped his servant Israel,

in remembrance of his mercy,

⁵⁵according to the promise he made to our
ancestors,

to Abraham and to his descendants forever.”

Cláudio Carvalhaes, Associate Professor of Preaching and Worship at McCormick

Theological Seminary in Chicago—where I am doing my doctoral studies—writes about how we need to redraw our social and political borders as Christians. He understands the need for some borders, but, he writes, as in Mary’s song, “[t]he borders we need are to protect those who are bruised, harmed by the system of exclusion; those who cannot afford a dignified life, the least of these. We need borders to save the lives of those who are in danger.”¹ He then goes on to say that “the measures of the sacrament are grounded in *koinonia*”² (the Greek word that is often translated into English as “communion,” coming together, mutual participation).

“[T]he real presence of Christ,” Carvalhaes writes, “will neither be in the words of institution [the words said before the bread is broken and the cup is poured] nor in Christ’s presence in heaven, but rather in the presence of the Holy Spirit in, under, through, and around *us*, in the presence *and absence* of those who are there with us, in the care of each other and the ecological systems that sustain us. In one word, Christ incarnate in the people, in the food, in the hands of those who planted and harvested it, in those who prepared it and those who are eating with us: Christ incarnate in my *neighbors*.”³

Carvalhaes shares that “[a]t the table, [we] are called to strengthen the community, turn the sacrament from one sole table to *many tables* [like we did symbolically a few weeks ago], so [we] learn to welcome others in radical hospitality . . .”⁴

Brazilian writer Clarice Lispector wrote a story called “The Sharing of the Bread.” It is kind of a sad story of bitter people being invited for lunch at a woman’s house. They accept the invitation “out of obligation,” she writes. But when this diverse group of people show up, they find that this woman has prepared a feast of “solemn abundance,” as Lispector describes it. Awkwardly, the guests watch as the hostess finishes preparing the table, invites them into the dining room, and then bends down to wash their feet. It is an awkward meal, as Lispector describes it, filled with apprehension and not knowing, but also with abundance and fullness. Then the story ends with these words: “With a single word of love. Without a word. But your pleasure comprehends mine. We are strong and we eat. *For bread is love among strangers*.”⁵

Sharing this story, and reading the gospel story of the feeding of the 5,000, Cláudio Carvalhaes invited those gathered at Massanetta Springs Presbyterian Camp and Conference Center in Harrisonburg, Virginia, to share in the breaking of bread, and allowing themselves to be anointed with oil, thereby sharing in the healing of one another: “Healing,” he says, “[that] will come through sharing love among strangers.”⁶

Over the past several weeks, I have been asking all of us to consider more deeply how our faith and our faith practices inform our way of life. More specifically, I’ve been trying to gently encourage us to consider the radical challenge of how the Eucharist—the Lord’s Supper, Communion—informs and shapes our behavior here in this community and out in the world. I’ve been trying to share an idea that our sacramental practice is not a practice of personal piety, but an act of radical grace and counter-cultural inclusion. Even our youth, just last week, as they

¹ Cláudio Carvalhaes, *Eucharist and Globalization: Redrawing the Borders of Eucharistic Hospitality* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2013), 257.

² Ibid., 258.

³ Ibid., 258-59 (emphasis added).

⁴ Ibid., 272 (emphasis in original).

⁵ Clarice Lispector, “The Sharing of Bread” in *The Foreign Legion: Stories and Chronicles*, translated by Giovanni Pontiero (New York, NY: New Directions Publishing, 1986), 29 (emphasis added).

⁶ Cláudio Carvalhaes, “Bread is Love Among Strangers,” (sermon, Massanetta Springs Presbyterian Camp and Conference Center, Harrisonburg, VA, July 29, 2015), accessed October 14, 2015, <http://www.claudiocarvalhaes.com/sermons/bread-love-strangers/>.

shared their stories of engaging with others during their mission trip experiences, challenged us to consider how God invites us to discover connections with people who may seem vastly different from us, and in the process discover that, through God, we are more deeply connected than we could have imagined. Jesus invited his disciples, and through the scriptures invites us, to discover the reality and truth of the presence of the kingdom of God right here, right now.

God's holy kingdom becomes a reality every time we choose to live in it by allowing our eyes to be opened to see those who are vulnerable, seeing them as God's children worthy of our love and respect. It becomes a reality every time we allow ourselves to be filled with compassion for those living on the margins of our society, and then inviting them into the center to be listened to and truly heard. It becomes a reality every time we weep for those who are suffering, and even enter into their suffering as Jesus did.

Yes, the kingdom of God is real, and it is right before us. And every time we participate in this meal, when we share in Jesus' taking the bread, giving thanks for it, breaking it, and sharing it we declare our willing participation in God's radical and always more inclusive kingdom. Every time we share in the cup, we are committing ourselves, once again, to the work of reconciling humanity to itself; breaking down the barriers and borders that separate us, whether it be walls of racial divide, fences of gender inequality, or borders of economic exploitation, to where there is no longer Jew or Gentile, male or female, Democrat or Republican, protestant or Catholic, Christian or Muslim, gay or straight, rich or poor—for we are all one, drawn together by the love of God revealed in Jesus Christ, present in each one of us.

Andrea Bieler teaches Christian Worship at Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, California. Luise Schottroff, who died in February of this year, was a retired professor of New Testament in Germany, and in her "retirement" she taught at the School of Religion at University of California in Berkeley. In 2007 they wrote a book together entitled *The Eucharist: Bodies, Bread & Resurrection*. In their book, they write:

By focusing on bodies, bread, and resurrection, we seek to draw connections between the real bodies that gather around the Christian holy meal, eating and drinking actual bread and wine, as an active participation in, expression of, and hope for God's reign.⁷

They go on to unpack in the rest of the book these concepts of "Sacramental Permeability" and "Eschatological Imagination." Briefly, Sacramental Permeability means, in their words, "that physical matters and actions such as eating and drinking can become vehicles that make transparent the Holy One who gives birth to the Eucharistic life."⁸

In both sacraments, Eucharist and Baptism, the invisible work of God becomes visible for us, pointing us toward the reality of God's abundant presence in us and in the world, and pushing us into both Baptismal and Eucharistic ways of life.

They describe Eschatological Imagination as the "reality of brokenness and a hope for wholeness"⁹—and holding these two things in tension with one another. As we join in the breaking and sharing of bread, as we together share the cup, "we give voice to those who are not heard in the public square."¹⁰ In this meal, they write, we become initiated "into the Eucharistic

⁷ Andrea Bieler and Luise Schottroff, *The Eucharist: Bodies, Bread & Resurrection* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007), 3.

⁸ Ibid., 5.

⁹ Ibid., 7.

¹⁰ Ibid.

life as a protest against the powers of death.”¹¹

But, what are the “powers of death”? They are powers within us that seek to protect our insecurities and vulnerabilities by keeping some people down, sometimes even ourselves, while others are allowed to trample over the bodies of the suffering in order to get to the top of the social heap.

Like Dante’s levels of hell, the powers of death seek to keep everyone imprisoned and locked in. But through the Eucharist, the meal of thanks, we give witness to the power of God’s compassionate justice to break the chains of subjugation and oppression, even for those at the top who are compelled to perpetuate the systems of death, and free all of us from the bonds of our own lack of imagination. This meal can truly help us see the “reality of brokenness” and find a “hope of wholeness.”¹² In this meal, the walls of fear and the borders of insecurity are dismantled, as Jesus invites everyone to the table and shares the bread of life and cup of hope with all who choose to receive it.

The pain and suffering of the people when the prophet Jeremiah wrote and the hope of Mary’s song at the beginning of Luke’s gospel come to life in the breaking of bread and sharing the cup. Every time we break bread, whether in sacramental ritual or around kitchen or dining room tables, or even at the coffee shop down the street, we give witness to God’s ever re-newing covenant, that it is already written on our hearts (it is part of our DNA)—we cannot escape it, and trying only leads to more despair. Every time we share in the cup of this covenant—whether in sacramental ritual, a glass of wine, a pitcher of iced tea on a hot day, or a pot of coffee each shared with friends and especially strangers—we give witness to Mary’s vision, that in God’s kingdom everyone is invited, where the powerful are lowered and the lowly are lifted up, where the hungry are filled with good things, and God’s strength and mercy are enough for us to trust.

When we share in these moments of sacramental permeability, we give witness to God’s eschatological imagination, culminating in this meal where the chasms that separate us are closed as we sit next to one another; where God’s compassion and justice are shared as we pass the bread; where God’s love is revealed in each one of us as we sip from the same cup. No pain is too great for this gathering. No tears are too plentiful for this bread. No suffering is too deep for this wine. No shame is too awful for this table. For at this table, and every table, in the words of Cláudio Carvalhaes, “we can have life-changing encounters with God, . . . [where] we might learn to worship God, pray, eat and live, and finally love each other.”¹³ And as we do, we might remember, “bread is love among strangers.”

In the name of the Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer of all things, thanks be to God. Amen.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Carvalhaes, *Eucharist and Globalization*, 305.

APPENDIX D – ADULT CHRISTIAN EDUCATION CLASS OUTLINE

Eucharist and Social Ethics Teaching Outline

Class 1 – Boundaries and Meal Practices

Review Questionnaire Responses from previous week – Communion as Boundary Setter/Identity Shaper

- I. The Practice of Boundaries and Identity
 - a. Most societies establish boundaries for purposes of defining the society's or community's identity (who is in and who is out, what's permissible and what is not, e.g., which side of the road will we drive on) – physical, cultural, relationships, etc. – What are some boundaries established in North American culture past or present?
 - i. Interracial/Interfaith marriage
 - ii. LGBTQ / gender
 - iii. Professional ethics – some say boundaries around professional ethics have been heightened, and conflicts of interest in business dealings have been expanded.
 - b. First Century Boundaries
 - i. Crucial to identity – Jews and Gentiles
 1. Mary Douglas, anthropologist: “It is a mistake to suppose that there can be religion which is all interior, with no rules, no liturgy, no external signs of inward states. As with society, so with religion, external form is the condition of its existence.” (Smith, 17)
 2. Don Saliers, professor emeritus of Theology and Worship at Candler School of Theology at Emory University, wrote: “How we pray and worship is linked to how we live—to our desires, emotions, attitudes, beliefs and actions.”¹
 3. We live as we believe: so it was with ancient Judaism.
 - a. 10 Commandments (covenant) – Exod. 20.2-17; Deut. 5.5-21 (all about relationships, with God and one another)
 - b. Leviticus – priestly handbook, how to organize the faith/faithful in order to organize community (external form is a condition of its existence: how we live reflects what we really believe (we live as we believe and as we practice).

¹ Don Saliers, “Liturgy and Ethics: Some New Beginnings,” in *Liturgy and the Moral Self: Humanity at Full Stretch Before God*, ed., E. Byron Aderson and Bruce T. Morrill, 15-38 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1998), 16, quoted in Carvalhaes, *Eucharist and Globalization*, 7.

- ii. Jesus and boundaries (Mark 7.24-30 – Syrophoenician Woman)
 - 1. Crossed boundaries
 - a. Geographic boundaries – Left the territory of Israel into the Gentile region of Tyre (v. 24).
 - b. Gender boundaries – regularly interacts with women, women are included in many of his teachings (v. 27-30).
 - c. Social-Theological boundaries – Interacts with a Gentile (v.25).
 - i. Was Jesus “testing” the woman? Or was he tripped up with the limits of his own imagination around the boundaries of God’s love and hospitality?
 - d. Other examples:
 - i. Matt. 15.1-20 and Mark 7.1-23 (Jewish meal etiquette, no washing hands);
 - ii. Mark 2.13-17, Luke 5.27-32 (calls Matthew/Levi the tax collector to be a disciple);
 - iii. Luke 15.1-2 (eats with tax collectors and sinners)
 - iv.
 - 2. Boundaries challenged by Syrophoenician woman?
 - a. What were the limits of Jesus’ ministry as he understood them before and then after the interaction?
 - b. Was Jesus testing the woman, or, as more and more scholars have suggested, were the limits of Jesus’ own imagination about God’s hospitality challenged?
 - i. Calls her “dog”
- c. Where do we place our boundaries? What overt and subliminal messages/boundaries do we project by our practices?
 - i. Personal?
 - 1. Geographic boundaries?
 - 2. Personal/relational boundaries?
 - ii. As a congregation?
 - 1. Who is welcomed? Who is not?
 - 2. What kind of behavior is allowed or not allowed?
 - iii. Public?
 - 1. As a society, what boundaries do we establish? How do they help us, challenge us, and maybe even unintentionally hurt people? (e.g., earlier understandings of the place of women, segregation/racism, physical boundaries, community/neighborhood boundaries, state vs. local or federal rights)
 - 2. Could this relate to our immigration policies as a country?

- d. God's Boundaries
 - i. What boundaries do you think God establishes?
 - 1. 10 Commandments – What are they about?
 - 2. Shema – Love the Lord your God (Deut. 6.4-9)
 - ii. Often different from our own: “Learning to practice kingdom hospitality takes a life-time; it is a spiritual discipline with real world consequences” (e.g., the Sanctuary Movement of the 1980s or in recent years) (Campbell, 23)
 - iii. Read Luke 14.12-14 (15-24)– Reflections?
 - 1. What happens when our ministries and lives are shaped by the boundaries of God's kingdom hospitality?
 - 2. What is our role in extending God's compassion beyond the boundaries of our comfort zones?

Class 2 – Eucharistic Practices

II. History of Eucharistic Practices

- a. Biblical
 - i. Gospels
 - 1. Mark 14.17-31
 - 2. Matthew 26.20-34
 - 3. Luke 22.14-38
 - 4. John 6.48-58, 13.1-15
 - ii. 1 Cor. 11-17-34
 - 1. Some were eating well, others were going hungry (vv. 21, 33-34)
 - 2. Issues of inequality (wealthy/poor) (v. 22)
 - 3. People weren't sharing, selfishness (v. 21)
 - iii. Acts 2.37-47
- b. Roman Banquet
 - i. A social element that provided structure within a very diverse society in the form of belonging and social obligation—food/meals served as a “social code within culture.”²
 - ii. Elements: secular and sacred (often held in banquet halls at various temples, as well as hosts' homes); relative similarity in social status, though guests were ranked (highest to the right of the host, lowest to the left).³
 - iii. Order:⁴
 - 1. First course: meal (*deipnon*) – bread was used as a napkin to clean hands and mouth, then thrown on the floor (consider the

² Carvalhaes, *Eucharist and Globalization*, 36-37.

³ Ibid., 38, 39.

⁴ Ibid., 39.

Syrophonician woman and the crumbs).

2. Ceremonial Libation

3. Second Course: floor is cleaned, second course of the meal (*symposion*), included extended drinking (wine mixed with water); entertained by music or pleasant discussion often around a pre-determined theme (2-4 hours). All kinds of rules around what was and was not appropriate.

iv. Banquet meals were adapted to various contexts:⁵

1. Family gatherings
2. Funerary banquets
3. Sacrificial banquets
4. Philosophical society meetings
5. Trade guild meetings
6. Religious society meetings
7. Jewish festival meals
8. Christian meals (esp. in early 1st century, “clubs”) –
countercultural to Roman banquet, enforcing themes of equality

III. Early Christian Meals

- a. Full Meal – Clubs,
- b. Roman Outlawing Club meals – Reduced to Sunday morning (symbolic)
- c. “[T]he Eucharist (the ‘thanksgiving meal’ of the church) is far more than a reenactment of the meal in the Upper Room. Rightly understood, the Lord’s Supper is connected to Jesus’ entire ministry, to the entire story of God’s relationship with God’s people, to our everyday meals, and to the ministry to which each of us is called as Christ’s followers.” (Campbell, ix)
 - i. Bread and wine become “summary” of the Eucharist (full *deipnon*) as early Christians remember their connection to God through Christ and to one another in the shared bread and shared cup. In 1 Cor. 11, food itself in the Lord’s Supper becomes the element of counter-cultural and subversive justice (who controls the bread?)
 - ii. Smith & Taussig, *Many Tables* (2001): On the one hand, liturgy must respond to the recognized foundations of the tradition. That tradition is to be found especially in the New Testament and other documents of the early church. On the other hand, liturgy must also respond to the ‘social and cultural circumstances of our time.’ (14)
- d. Etymology:
 - i. “Companion” – etymology: lit., “one who breaks bread with another” (Latin *com* – “together with” + *panis* – “bread”). With whom are we breaking bread? With whom is Jesus calling his disciples to break bread?

⁵ Ibid., 40, borrowing from Smith and Taussig, *Many Tables*, 21.

- Begs the question: with whom are we not breaking bread?
- ii. Similarly, “communion” – Latin, “fellowship, mutual participation, sharing,” com – “together with” + unus – “union, oneness.”

Class 3 – The Reformation and Efficacy of Eucharist

IV. The Reformation and the Eucharist

- a. Transubstantiation – Roman Catholic (Council of Trent, 1545-1563; “real presence” in which the whole substance of bread and wine becomes the physical body and blood of Jesus, though appearance remains the same; in Eucharist is the whole body—flesh, blood, soul, and divinity—of Jesus; true believers are nourished, non-believers condemn themselves by receiving the elements).
- b. Consubstantiation – Anglican Church, Methodist Church (Elizabeth I, 1673; a form of “real presence” through the “substance” of the body and blood of Christ becomes present alongside the substance of the bread and wine).
- c. Sacramental Union – Martin Luther (also a form of “real presence,” both elements are united with the body and blood of Christ in that anyone who eats the consecrated elements are also eating the body and blood of Christ along with the bread and wine, even non-believers)
- d. Memorial – Huldrych Zwingli, Swiss Reformer (common among Baptists, strictly symbolic, it is merely a remembrance of Christ’s sacrifice, nothing miraculous or significant occurs)
- e. Spiritual Presence – John Calvin, French Reformer (God’s Holy Spirit unites things separated; the “symbols” of a thing indicate the real presence of the invisible thing; directs attention toward Christ’s return; Jesus’ body ascended, how can it be here on earth?)
 - i. rejected any attempt to understand the mechanics (transubstantiation or consubstantiation), and sought for the *meaning* of it all for the faithful, both the relationship with God and with one another.
 - ii. It was about the *efficacy* of the meal, and advocated for the meal to be received as much as weekly for that purpose.

V. Believing informs Behavior / Behavior informs Believing

- a. In keeping with Don Salier’s idea that how we pray and worship is linked to how we live, we need to look at how we practice our faith and try to understand how it is or isn’t informing or shaping how we live in the world—specifically around the two central pieces of our worship: the sacraments.
 - i. The texts we have, according to Smith and Taussig, are an “etiological legend”: not recorded as historical event, but as a means of explaining the origin and meaning of a current practice in the community (esp. Mark and 1 Cor. 11)—“the meal came to exist as a center of communal self-identity

- based on its own inherent meaning in the culture.”⁶
- ii. Table (communion) and font (baptism) are visible and central features of our worship.
 - iii. How might these practices be linked to how we live?
- b. Focusing on Communion (Eucharist, Lord’s Supper): Christian Scriptures (*suggesting that the Eucharist or Lord’s Supper or the practice of communion is, in its initial formation and shape, a subversive act, counter-cultural against the norms of social power and influence*).
- i. Luke 14.12-14 – the kingdom of God banquet, versus the Roman banquet (reversal of social boundaries)
 - ii. Acts 2 – Early Christian meals
 - iii. John 6.48-58 – “Kingdom Hospitality”⁷
 - 1. The banquet and Eucharistic invitation defines not just one moment in Jesus’ ministry, but his entire life and ministry.
 - 2. In Luke the banquet becomes the symbol of Jesus’ invitation to those who had previously been refused invitation (marginalized)
 - 3. In John 6, it is the foundation that shapes the rest of the Gospel. In John 13.1-15, the Last Supper is no longer an occasion for shaping covenant, it is a fulfillment of covenant.
- c. Eucharistic Theology/Practice & Social Ethics
- i. Cynthia Campbell: “Learning how to practice kingdom hospitality takes a lifetime; it is a spiritual discipline with real-world consequences.”⁸
 - 1. What happens when the church’s ministry is shaped by kingdom hospitality? What might that look like? Here at UPC-Tempe? In the PC(USA)?
 - 2. How would mission take on new forms in this paradigm?
 - 3. Where are the poor, the vulnerable, the isolated, the overlooked in your communities? (at home, at church, at work, in the world?)
 - 4. What is your role in extending God’s compassion (the table of the kingdom) to the marginalized and vulnerable

Class 4 – PC(USA) and Identity Shaping

VI. PC(USA)

a. Book of Order

- i. W-2.4000 – The Lord’s Supper
 - 1. W-2.4001 – Purpose
 - 2. W-2.4002 – The “common meal” from Acts 2

⁶ Dennis E. Smith and Hal E. Taussig, *Many Tables: The Eucharist in the New Testament and Liturgy Today* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2001), 42-43.

⁷ Cynthia, Campbell, *God’s Abundant Table* (Louisville, KY: Witherspoon Press, 2011), 23.

⁸ Ibid, reflecting on Luke 14.12-14; Questions from Campbell, 24.

3. W-2.4003 – Thanksgiving (*Eucharist*)
 4. W-2.4004 – Remembering (critical to Israel’s identity)
 5. W-2.4005-W-2.4010 – Mechanics
 6. W-2.4011 – Baptism prerequisite (discussion)
 7. W-2.4012 – Administration
 - ii. W-3.3600 – More on the Sacraments
 1. W-3.3609 – Preparation
 2. W-3.3611 – The Cup (juice vs. wine)
 - b. UPC-Tempe: Who is welcome? Who is not?
 - i. Who does Jesus invite? Who, intentionally or unintentionally, is not included/invited?
 - ii. Who do we invite? Who, intentionally or unintentionally, is not included/invited?
- VII. Hospitality
- a. Hebrew Scriptures – welcome the alien/immigrant; feeding the poor and widows (Deut. 24.19-22)
 - b. Christian Scriptures – Luke 14.7-11, 12-14 – the banquet (*lectio divina*)
 - c. Hunger – Bread for the World handout:
<http://www.bread.org/file/300/download?token=jv1qtrec>
<http://www.bread.org/file/291/download?token=p2yxZbKd>
 - d. Rules of inclusion & exclusion
 - i. Restrictions
 - ii. Immigrant hospitality
 - e. How does our Practice of Communion “inform” and shape our Social Ethics and Behaviors?
 - f. Review Communion Liturgy (Handout)
 - g. Compare to Book of Common Worship (Handout)
- VIII. Q&A

Class 5 – Impressions & Reflections

- IX. Impressions
 - a. So what stands out for you? Any new noticings, new incites?
 - b. What are you struggling with? What doesn’t seem right in all this? What is hard to accept?
- X. Reflections
 - a. How were the practices for you? World Communion Sunday, going to the various tables?
 - b. How is UPC-Tempe already embodying a Eucharistic life (taking the table beyond our Sunday morning ritual)?
 - c. What might UPC-Tempe to more fully embody a Eucharistic life?
- XI. Closing

- a. John Dominic Crossan: “Bread and wine should summarize, not substitute for, the Eucharist: otherwise, it is no longer the Lord’s Supper.”⁹
- b. Final comments or questions?

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⁹ John Dominic Crossan, *Birth of Christianity: Discovering What Happened in the Years Immediately After the Execution of Jesus* (San Francisco, CA: HarperOne, 1999), 438.

APPENDIX E – LITURGY FOR AGAPE FEAST:

REDRAWING THE BORDERS OF LOVE

FIESTA AGAPE: NUEVO TRAZADO LAS FRONTERAS DE AMOR

March 12, 2016 / 12 Marzo 2016
in Agua Prieta, Sonora and Douglas, Arizona

Introduction

Agape is Greek for “self-giving love.” In the early Christian tradition *agape* was also the name of the communal meals and times of gathering and mutual sharing. Often these *agape* feasts were Eucharistic (that is, they were meals of “thanksgiving” in remembrance of Christ). Today, we celebrate the gift of God’s love and honor our mutuality through a fence that seeks to separate God’s people. Through this feast, we are joined in spite of these fences and borders of exclusion, as we celebrate God’s radical inclusion in Jesus.

We will share words in Spanish or English. The words in left column will be said, with words in bold said together. The words on the right are translations available to aid understanding.

Introducción

Agape en griego significa “entrega de amor”. En la tradición cristiana primitiva *ágape* era también el nombre de las comidas comunales y los tiempos de reuniones el intercambio mutuo. A menudo, estas celebraciones fueron ágape eucarístico (es decir, que eran las comidas de “acción de gracias” en memoria de Cristo). Hoy celebramos el don del amor de Dios y honramos nuestra reciprocidad a través de un muro que busca separar al pueblo de Dios. A través de esta celebración, estamos unidos a pesar de estos muros y fronteras de la exclusión, al celebrar la inclusión radical de Dios en Jesús.

Vamos a compartir palabras en español o inglés. Las palabras en la columna izquierda son las que se pronuncian, las que están en negritas se dicen juntas en el idioma ahí escrito. Por lo que las palabras de la derecha son traducciones disponibles para ayudar a la comprensión.

Las palabras que se dicen/Words to be said Traducción /Translation

CALL TO THE FEAST / INVITACIÓN A LA FIESTA

Leader/Líder:	<i>This is a table of welcome. It is a table of radical and mutual hospitality. All are free to come and eat, as we share with one another the fruits of our lives. As we gather at this table, we remember the words that Jesus shared with his disciples: “I am the bread of life, whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever trusts in me shall never thirst.”</i>	Esta es una mesa de bienvenida. Es una mesa de hospitalidad radical y mutua. Todos son libres de venir y comer, mientras compartimos unos con otros los frutos de nuestras vidas. Al reunirnos en esta mesa, recordamos las palabras que Jesús compartió con sus discípulos: “Yo soy el pan de vida, que viene a mí no tendrá hambre, y el que cree en mí nunca tendrá sed.”
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ALL/TODAS:	Venimos a esta mesa hambrientos de justicia y sed de esperanza.	<i>We come to this table hungry for justice and thirsty for hope. Satisfy</i>
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Satisfácenos, oh Dios.

us, O God.

Leader/Líder: Al reunirnos en esta mesa, trazada a través de los muros y a través de las fronteras y los límites que dibujamos en nuestras vidas para separar y excluir, recordamos las palabras de nuestro hermano, Jesús: " Venid a mí todos los que están cansados y llevando cargas pesadas, y yo los haré descansar."

As we gather at this table, drawn through the fence and across the borders and boundaries we draw in our lives to separate and exclude, we remember the words of our brother, Jesus: "Come to me, all you who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest."

ALL/TODAS: We come to this table weary from our fear of one another and burdened by God's call through Jesus to love our neighbor. Give us rest, O God.

Venimos a esta mesa cansados de nuestro miedo del uno al otro y agobiados por el llamado de Dios a través de Jesús de amar al prójimo. Danos descanso, oh Dios.

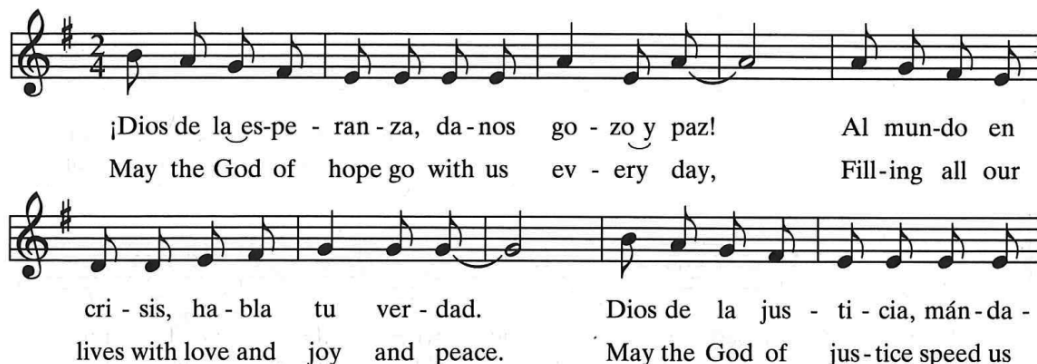
Leader/Líder: As we gather at this table, divided by walls of fear and hate, we remember that Jesus comes to us in the stranger, in the hungry, in the thirsty, and in the one needing warmth.

Al reunirnos en esta mesa, dividida por muros de miedo y odio, recordamos que Jesús viene a nosotros en el desconocido, en el hambre, en el sediento, y en el que necesite calor.

ALL/TODAS: Venimos a esta mesa como extranjeros en una tierra extraña con líneas arbitrarias dibujadas en la arena que no significan nada en el reino de Dios, que se acercan cada vez que damos la bienvenida a uno al otro. Danos la bienvenida en tu familia, oh Dios.

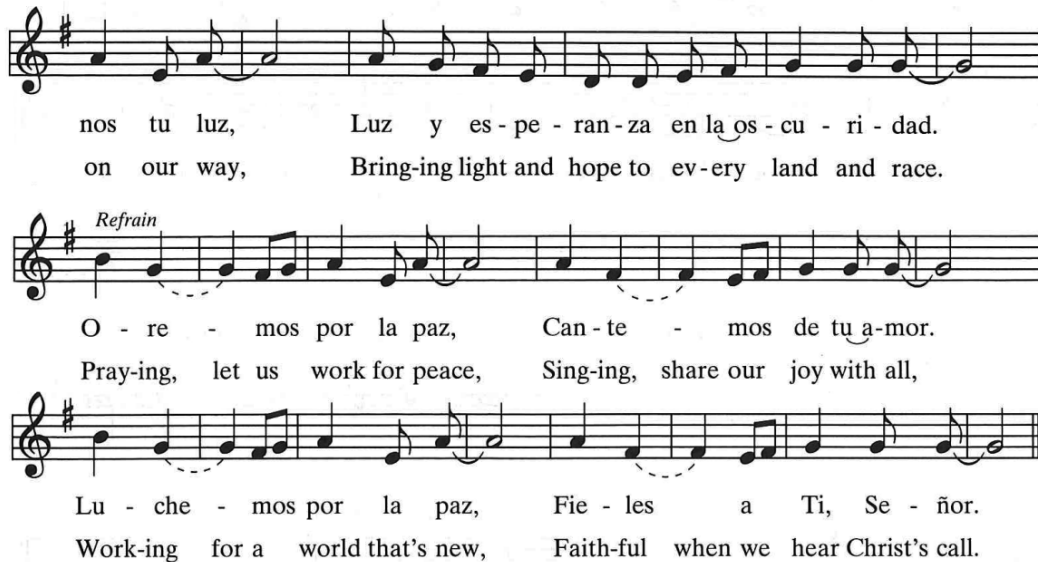
We come to this table as strangers in a strange land with arbitrary lines drawn in the sand that mean nothing in the kingdom of God, which comes near every time we welcome one another. Welcome us into your family, O God.

SONG OF HOPE¹



¡Dios de la es-pe - ran - za, da-nos go - zo y paz! Al mun-do en
May the God of hope go with us ev - ery day, Fill-ing all our

cri - sis, ha - bla tu ver - dad. Dios de la jus - ti - cia, mán - da -
lives with love and joy and peace. May the God of jus - tice speed us



nos tu luz, Luz y es-pe-ran-za en la os-cu-ri-dad.
on our way, Bring-ing light and hope to ev-ery land and race.

Refrain
O-re-mos por la paz, Can-te-mos de tu a-mor.
Pray-ing, let us work for peace, Sing-ing, share our joy with all,

Lu-che-mos por la paz, Fie-les a Ti, Se-ñor.
Work-ing for a world that's new, Faith-ful when we hear Christ's call.

PRAYER / ORACIÓN

Leader/Líder: Let us pray, inviting God to be at our table and fill us with good things that draw us together.

Oremos, invitando a Dios a estar en nuestra mesa y llenándonos de cosas buenas que nos unen.

ALL/TODAS: Dios del amor,
Dios de la esperanza,
Dios de bienvenida,
Dios de la inclusión,
Ayúdanos a confiar en que estás en nuestras mesas.
Ayúdanos a confiar en que estás presente
en nosotros
y los que nos rodean.
Estás derribando los muros
de alienación y exclusión.
Nos has mostrado
un Camino de Hospitalidad,
un Camino de simplicidad,
la oración, el establecimiento de la paz,
y la resistencia.
Porque tu Espíritu
hace un nuevo camino para nosotros,
mientras luchamos para vivir
en el vientre del imperio,
te alabamos.
Llénanos de tu esperanza,
aliméntanos con tu alegría,

*God of love,
God of hope,
God of welcome,
God of inclusion,
help us to trust you are at our tables.*

Help us to trust that you present in us

*and those around us.
You are tearing down walls
of alienation and exclusion.
You have shown us
a Way of Hospitality,
a Way of simplicity,
prayer, peacemaking,
and resistance.
Because your Spirit
makes a new path for us,
as we struggle to live
in the belly of Empire,
we praise you.
Fill us with your hope,
nourish us with your joy,
so that we praise you
no only with our lips,*

de manera que te alabemos
no sólo con nuestros labios,
pero con nuestras vidas.
Amén.

but with your lives.
Amen.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION/ORACIÓN DE CONFESIÓN

Leader/Líder: In our sacred scriptures, Jesus reminds his disciples: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment."

En las sagradas escrituras, Jesús recuerda a sus discípulos: "Amarás al Señor tu Dios con todo tu corazón, y con toda tu alma, y con toda tu mente. Este es el mayor y el primer mandamiento."

ALL/TODAS: Dios misericordioso, confesamos que no te hemos amado con todo el corazón. Es fácil distraerse con los sueños y volubles deseos egoístas. Perdónanos.

Merciful God, we confess that we have not loved you with our whole heart. It is easy to be distracted with fickle dreams and selfish desires. Forgive us.

Leader/Líder: Y Jesús recordó a sus amigos de un segundo mandamiento: "Amarás a tu prójimo como a ti mismo. De estos dos mandamientos depende toda la ley y los profetas."

And Jesus reminded his friends of a second commandment: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

ALL/TODAS: Loving God, we confess that we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. Our hearts have been buried in fear of those who are different, putting our needs above the needs of others. Forgive us for our greed, our selfishness, and our forgetting to follow the teachings you have given us through Jesus.

Amando a Dios, confesamos que no hemos amado a nuestro prójimo como a nosotros mismos. Nuestros corazones han sido enterrados en el miedo de los que son diferentes, poniendo nuestras necesidades por encima de las necesidades de los demás. Perdónanos por nuestra codicia, nuestro egoísmo y nuestro olvido de seguir las enseñanzas que nos has dado a través de Jesús.

Moment of silent confession:

- *Am I reconciled to all those at this table?*
- *Does anyone here have a need that is within my power to meet?*
- *Is there anything I cling to that keeps me from offering love to those at this table?*
- *Is there anything I cling to that keeps me from receiving love from those at this table?*

Momento de confesión en silencio:

- *¿Estoy reconciliado con todos los que en esta mesa?*
- *¿Hay alguien aquí tiene una necesidad que está en mi poder satisfacerla?*
- *¿Hay algo que a lo que me aferro que me impide ofrecer amor a los que en esta mesa?*
- *¿Hay algo apegado a mí que me impide recibir amor de los que están en esta mesa?*

Leader/Líder: Escuchen las buenas nuevas, mis amigos:
En la vida de Jesús, se puso de manifiesto la realidad de la presencia santa de Dios dentro de nosotros. En la muerte y resurrección de Jesús, la verdad del perdón de Dios se hizo conocida.
En el nombre de Jesús, somos perdonados.

ALL/TODAS: ¡En el nombre de Jesús, somos perdonados!

*Hear the good news, my friends:
In the life of Jesus, the reality of God's holy presence within us was revealed. In the death and resurrection of Jesus, the truth of God's forgiveness was made known.
In the name of Jesus, we are forgiven.*

In the name of Jesus, we are forgiven!

LITURGICAL DANCE/DANZA LITURGICA

By the children from the New Hope Community Center in Agua Prieta.

Por los niños del Centro Comunitario Nueva Esperanza en Agua Prieta.

SETTING THE TABLE / PONIENDO LA MESA

Leader/Líder: Las comidas están en el corazón del ser humano. Tomamos alegría en nuestras comidas, dando nuestro amor y atención a los otros. En las mesas Jesús se reunió especialmente con aquellos a quienes la cultura dominante no dio bienvenida. Jesús se reúne con nosotros en esta mesa. En medio de este ágape, esta fiesta de amor, que establece tres símbolos para recordarnos de nuestra conexión mutua a través de Dios.

Meals are at the heart of being human. We take joy in our meals, giving our love and attention to one another. At tables Jesus gathered especially with those the dominant culture did not welcome. Jesus gathers with us at this table. In the midst of this agape meal, this love feast, we set three symbols to remind us of our mutual connection through God.

Reading 1/
Lectura 1: Una vela, para recordarnos que el Espíritu de Dios se derrama sobre nosotros, que nos da una nueva vida, un nuevo poder y una nueva esperanza. Llena de la luz de este Espíritu, traemos la presencia de Dios en un mundo quebrantado y herido.

A candle, to remind us that God's Holy Spirit is poured out upon us, giving us new life, new power, and new hope. Filled with the light of this Spirit, we bring the presence of God into a broken and hurting world.

Reading 2/
Lectura 2: Bread, for God, revealed in Jesus, is the bread of life. We are nourished by God's love, embodied in Christ, and we put our trust in the Holy One who provides for us.

Pan, por Dios, revelado en Jesús, es el pan de vida. Somos alimentados por el amor de Dios, encarnado en Cristo, y ponemos nuestra confianza en el Único Santo que provee para nosotros.

Reading 3/
Lectura 3: Una copa, un recordatorio de que Jesús tomó la copa con sus amigos antes de ser crucificado y antes de su sangre

A cup, a reminder that Jesus took up the cup with his friends before he was crucified and before his blood flowed.

fluyera. Dios aún sufre cuando los oprimidos sufren lesiones en las manos de los poderosos, cuando el hambre se mantienen fuera de la mesa de alimentación, y cuando los muros y las cercas tratan de separar el pueblo de Dios.

God suffers still when the oppressed suffer injury at the hands of the powerful, when the hungry are kept away from the table of nourishment, and when walls and fences seek to separate God's people.

ALL/TODAS: **Jesus is with us! Let us open our hearts to God and to one another. Amen.**

¡Jesús está con nosotros! Abramos nuestro corazón a Dios y unos con otros. Amén.

PASSING THE PEACE / PASO DE LA PAZ ACROSS BORDERS / A TRAVÉS DE LAS FRONTERAS

You are invited to take a piece of bread and a small communion cup, go to the border fence, and share the fruits of community through the fence with another on the other side, remembering that in Christ and at this table we are one.

Se les invita a tomar un trozo de pan y una pequeña copa de comunión, ir al muro fronterizo, y compartir los frutos de la comunidad a través del muro con otro en el otro lado, recordando que en Cristo y en esta mesa somos uno.

Share the bread and cup with these words:
"You are my neighbor. And as God loves you, so I seek to love you."

Compartan el pan y la copa con estas palabras:
"Usted es mi prójimo. Y como Dios te ama, yo busco amarte."

THIS IS THE DAY / ESTE ES EL DIA

Éste es el día, éste es el día
Que hizo el Señor, que hizo el Señor
Nos gozaremos, nos gozaremos
Y alegraremos y alegraremos
Éste es el día que hizo el Señor
Nos gozaremos y alegraremos
Éste es el día, éste es el día
Que hizo el Señor

This is the day, this is the day.
That the Lord has made, that the Lord has made.
We will rejoice, we will rejoice,
And be glad in it, and be glad in it.
This is the day that the Lord has made.
We will rejoice and be glad in it.
This is the day, this is the day
That the Lord has made.

BLESSING/ BENDICIÓN

Leader/Líder: Just as the prophets spoke truth to power, so must we raise the moral urgency of the crisis of forces that seek to separate, isolate, and exclude. We pray that all people, regardless of origin or nationality, may be treated as equals. May we find ways of being at table with one another more often, to learn from one another, appreciate

Al igual que los profetas hablaron la verdad al poder, así nosotros debemos plantear la urgencia moral de la crisis de las fuerzas que tratan de separar, aislar y excluir. Oramos para que todas las personas, independientemente de su origen o nacionalidad, pueden ser tratados como iguales. Podemos encontrar formas de estar en la mesa así

one another, and love one another.
May we practice in our lives the Way
of Jesus, who gathered with others to
share in the communal love of the
Living God. May this inclusive God
break down the walls of fear and bless
us so that we might live more
peacefully together. Amen.

más a menudo, para aprender unos de
otros, apreciar el uno al otro, y amarnos
unos a otros. Podemos practicar en
nuestra vida el camino de Jesús, quien
se reunió con otros para compartir el
amor comunal del Dios vivo. Que este
Dios inclusivo derribe los muros del
miedo y nos bendiga para que podamos
vivir más en paz juntos. Amén

Please join us for a lunch, at the Migrant Resource Center near the border gate.

Por favor, únase a nosotros para un almuerzo, de traje en el Centro de Recursos para
Migrantes cerca de la puerta de la frontera.

¹ From *The Presbyterian Hymnal* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1990).

This service is adapted by the Reverend Eric O. Ledermann from a service from The Mennonite Worker of Minneapolis
(<http://www.mennoniteworker.com/agape-liturgy>).

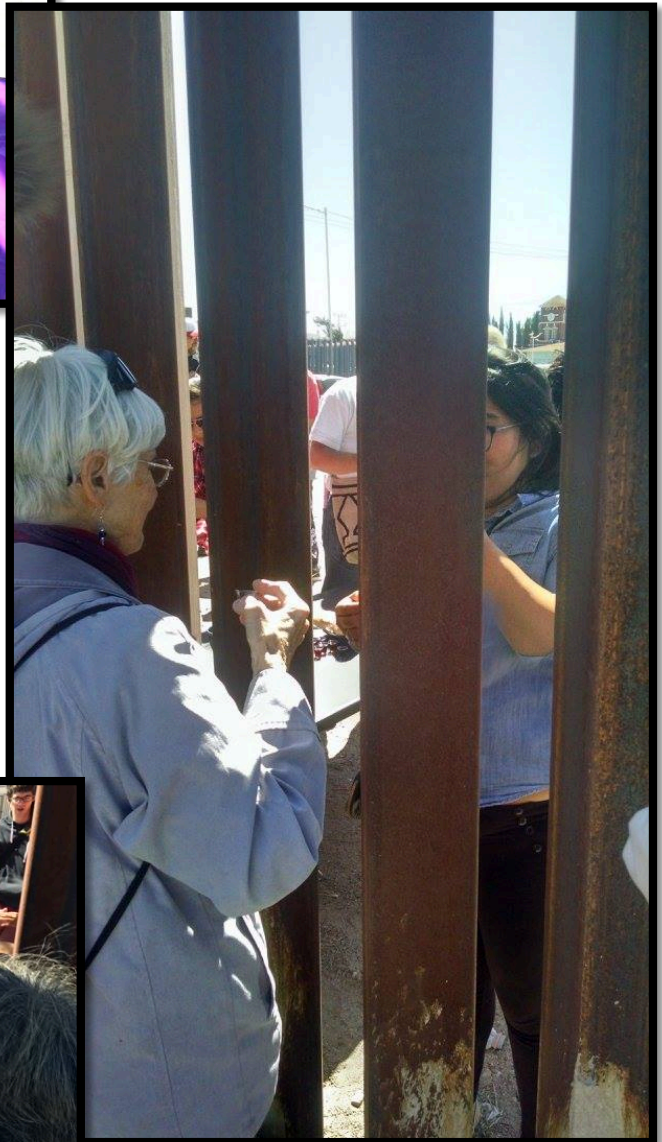
Este servicio está adaptado por el Presbítero Eric O. Ledermann de un servicio del El Menonita Trabajador de Minneapolis
(<http://www.mennoniteworker.com/agape-liturgy>).

Spanish translation by Jocabed Gallegos of Frontera de Cristo Presbyterian Border Ministries in Douglas, Arizona.

Photos of the Agape Feast



Above: Preparing the elements in the shadows of the border fence (and taping down the table cover so it doesn't blow away).



Above and Right: Participants from both sides of the border fence take turns sharing the elements with one another.

APPENDIX F – WORLD COMMUNION EUCHARISTIC LITURGY

Text in *italics* is only included in the worship leaders' printed orders for worship, but removed for the congregation's printed orders of worship.

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S TABLE

Pastor

- *This table is a table of radical hospitality, radical inclusion; where all are welcome; where Jesus ate with prostitutes, tax collectors, thieves, and all sorts of broken, sinful people; where, to borrow the words of the Apostle Paul, there is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male or female, rich or poor, straight or gay, black, white or brown, for we are all one in Christ Jesus.*
- *In this meal, God's Holy Spirit is present and nourishes us for the work of reconciliation for the sake of the world. When we receive the bread and share the cup, we join God in God's transformation of all of our pain into hope for the future, into hope for the kingdom of God.*
- **In honor of World Communion Sunday**, and as an act of solidarity with one another, you will be invited to go to one of six tables set around the sanctuary, each covered with a cloth representing the six continents of the world primarily inhabited by people. There are two tables in the back corners, two in the front corners and two front and center. There you will meet whoever is there and feed one another, offering the bread of life and cup of hope. You do not need to touch the bread or lift anything. Simply motion with your hand to the plate and then the cup, as a gesture of offering the gifts to one another. Aftering being offered the elements, one person will take a piece of bread, dip it into the cup, and receive the elements. That person will then offer the elements to the other in the same way.
- *This might be new, so a little awkwardness is okay. Trust the Spirit and trust one another.*
- **Gluten free bread** is available at the table on the left in front of the pulpit. If you are unable to come forward, servers will be walking around with bread and cup. Simply signal to the servers with the trays as they walk by so we can all share in the gifts God has prepared for us.
- **Do not hurry, take your time; be prayerful.** An appropriate response may be: "Amen" or "Thanks be to God."
- **Participation:** *Though we practice an open table and welcome everyone to share in this sacrament, it is your choice to participate. If you do not wish to share in the meal, you are welcome to stay in your seat and if the roaming servers come to offer the sacrament to you, just simply say, "No thank you" and your decision will be respected.*
- **Children:** *Parents, children are welcome to receive at your discretion. If you would rather your child did not participate, please simply indicate that to the server, and the server will offer a blessing on them.*
- **Lord's Prayer:** *In honor of World Communion Sunday, we will be saying the Lord's Prayer today using the Ecumenical version developed by the English Language Liturgical Consultation in 1988. The language is more contemporary and invites us to consider how, like language, Christian faith has shifted and been shaped for the past 2,000 years.*

Pastoral Care Updates:

-We will have an opportunity during the Great Prayer to lift up either silently or out loud the names, places or situations that are on our hearts, whether joy or sorrow. Please pay attention to those listed under our Prayer Concerns toward the back of your bulletin.

[Specific Prayer Concerns are shared]

Come, let us offer thanks to God as we share in the Great Prayer of Thanksgiving.

GREAT PRAYER OF THANKSIVING

Liturgist

The Lord be with you.

✠ **And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.

✠ **We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

✠ **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

O God, we praise you . . .

for you feed your own. You give hope to the hopeless and strength to the weak. You have carried your children through fierce storms. You have fed your children during famines. In times of selfishness, through Prophets you have called your people out to remind us of both who we are and whose we are, and once again invited us to seek peace in our homes and in our lives.

Again and again, despite our shortsightedness and our doubts, our uncertainty and fear of what lies ahead, you invite us to not be afraid, for you meet us here, always giving more than we ask or could imagine.

. . . And so, with heavenly choirs and the faithful of every time and place, we sing of your glory:

***SANCTUS**

[Sung, not included here due to copyright]

In Christ you revealed your truth . . .

Pastor

that that there is no longer Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female, rich or poor, straight or gay, or any of the other things we allow to divide us. In this meal, you proclaim your kingdom where the first shall be last and the last shall be first. In Jesus' life and death our capacity for both violence and grace was revealed. And in his resurrection and ascension you revealed the hope you have for us to realize the presence of your kingdom which has, indeed, come near.

As we share in your gifts and are reminded of our inclusion in your kingdom of peace and wholeness, make us mindful of those who do not have enough bread, and those who long for justice or who are desperate for a sign of hope. We know this meal is for the whole human

family. We are given this Bread of Life that we might share it by living into the peace and passion you give us and be released of the anxieties that so often hold us back from living fully into your kingdom. Hear us as we remember those people, places or situations, as well as ourselves, who need your care this day and lift them up to you as we hear your invitation to be your hands and voice to seek peace. <pause>

By your grace, lead us. By your Word, nourish us. By your love, transform us into the people you are calling us to be. Help us to give thanks for the many blessings you offer each and every day. Hear us, O God, as we lift up to you those things for which we are truly thankful. <pause>

[Hands lifted] Gracious God, pour out your Holy Spirit upon us and upon these gifts of grain and fruit, that the bread we break and the cup we bless may be the communion of the body and blood of Christ.

May we be nourished by your gifts as we seek to be one in Christ and with all your people as you lead us to be faithful in the ministries to which you have called us.

Through Christ, with Christ, in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, we pray the prayer that Jesus taught:

THE LORD'S PRAYER (Ecumenical Version)

**✠ Our Father in heaven,
holy be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who have sinned against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and forever. Amen.**

BREAKING OF THE BREAD

Pastor

[As bread is broken, the minister says]

*On the night before he died,
Jesus gathered his friends for the Passover meal,
when Jews around the world celebrate even today
the saving grace of our Lord God.
In the midst of that meal he took bread,
and after giving thanks to God,
he broke it, and gave it to his disciples saying:
Take, eat. This is my body, given for you.
Whenever you gather to eat, do it in remembrance of me.*

[As the wine is poured, the minister says]

*In the same way he took the cup, saying:
This cup is the new covenant sealed in my blood,
shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.
Whenever you drink it,
do it in remembrance of me.*

*In Jesus' life and ministry
we learn that this bread represents our connection
to God and one another.
When we receive these gifts,
we are joined to God's reconciling work
through Christ.
These are the gifts of God for the people of God.*

Will the servers please come forward.

[Elements are given to the servers with the words, "Feed God's people!"]

COMMUNION OF THE PEOPLE

*Children are welcome to share in this feast
according to the desires of parents.*

*Those who are able will be invited by the ushers to come forward to one of four stations in the front of the sanctuary. Those in the front row of each section will be invited first. Leave from the left side of the row and return by the right side. Take the bread, dip it into the cup, and eat. Do not hurry.
Return to your seats when you are finished.*

*Those who are unable to come forward, or who wish
to remain in their seats, will be served by a roaming server.*

*Those who are unable to come forward, or who wish
to remain in their seats, will be served by a roaming server.*

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Liturgist

*Friends, let us pray.
God of abundance, with the fruits and abundance of the earth you have nourished us in body and spirit. As we share in your abundance you unite us with Christ and the whole of Creation. Now send us forth in the power of your Spirit, that we may proclaim your redeeming love to the world and join your work of transforming this world into a place of compassion and mutual trust. Amen.*

APPENDIX G – REFLECTION NARRATIVE/INTERVIEW REQUEST

Note: The following is the text published on the church website (www.upctempe.org/dminproject) on March 11, 2016, and printed on an insert in the Order of Worship at UPC-Tempe on March 13 and 20, and then again on April 10, 17, and 24, after the deadline was extended into May.

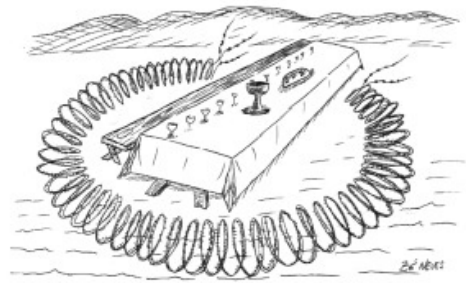
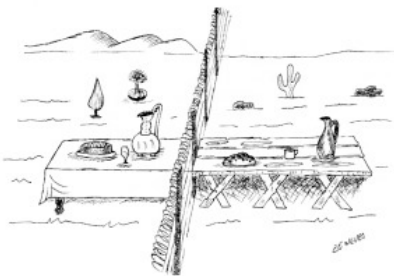
Doctor of Ministry Project Eucharist and Social Ethics: Reflection Narratives

The image to the right is from *Eucharist and Globalization: Redrawing the Borders of Eucharistic Hospitality* by Cláudio Carvalhaes (2013), which is one of the central texts of my Doctor of Ministry thesis, and invites us to consider how we engage in our Eucharistic practice.

Since April 2015 I have attempted to invite our community at UPC-Tempe to consider the potentially broader implications of our Eucharistic practice (commonly referred to as Communion or Lord's Supper). I've tried to invite us as a community of faith to consider how our practice around the table pertains to our social ethics (broadly defined as how we engage the world around us):

- **In April and May** I invited you to write stories about positive experiences they have had at tables. I received about 25 such stories, diverse and rich with traditions and insights.
- **In early September** I invited you to participate in a survey about your understanding and beliefs around Eucharist, and I received over 120 responses. The vast majority of the responses indicated a belief that communion is a very personal and almost private matter between each individual and God.
- **In September** I taught a 5-week class on Eucharist and Social Ethics, during which we explored some of the history of meal practices within the Christian tradition, especially in the first century or two (if you were there, remember the Roman banquet and symposium?), I invited us to consider communion as very personal but not a private matter.
- **In September and October** I preached a 5-part series of sermons entitled: "Do This In Remembrance of Me." I challenged all of us to consider the Eucharistic meal as a practice of inclusion, and the dangers inherent in the practice that may cause exclusion. (You can go to upctempe.org/sermons to listen to them or read the manuscripts).
- **On World Communion Sunday, Oct. 4, 2015**, we engaged in an alternative experience of communion during which the congregation was invited to go to one of six tables around the sanctuary, each representing a different continent, meet whoever is there, and share communion together (a similar practice to what we did on Maundy Thursday the past two years). One person described it as "controlled chaos, both exciting and frustrating at the same time."
- **In March 2016** I led a small group of ASU students to the U.S.-Mexico border to consider some of the broader implications for Eucharistic practice, which included sharing an *agape* meal (a love-feast from the early years of Christian community) through the fence.

Since September, through liturgy, sermons, as well as communion practices, I have attempted to draw us toward a more generous, communal, and even global understanding of our Eucharistic practice as a visible sign of the kingdom of God among us, one that pushes us out into the world to then live Eucharistic lives that seeks to build relationships among disparate people.



When I arrived at UPC-Tempe I was delighted to hear that our congregation already practiced an "open table," which means we do not follow the typical Presbyterian or Protestant practice of inviting "all baptized" people to come share in the meal. Rather, we invite "all people" to come and share in the meal during which we experience the real presence of God through Christ, the bread and cup, as well as each other.

Now, as we close out our 2015-2016 ministry year at UPC-Tempe, I am inviting you to reflect on all that we have experienced together and share your reflections with me.

As the final step in preparation for writing my thesis paper, I am asking you to write out your reflections in 1000-1500 words (about 3 pages or so). You may want to sketch your ideas out first in an outline, and then give it some flesh in a final narrative.

The purpose of this exercise is to invite reflection and to glean from your insights for possible future engagement. Below are a series of questions that might help or guide your reflection. But I realize there may be other questions that you have already reflected upon.

- What are your “take aways” from all this?
- Has your understanding or expression of Christian Faith out in the world changed in any way? If so, how? If not, why not?
- How has your understanding of Eucharist been affirmed and/or challenged or expanded over the past year?
- Have you discerned any broader social implications for our practice of the Eucharistic table? If so, what exactly?
- What might it look like, or what might you do, to embody a Eucharistic way of life, following in the Way of Jesus, out in your day-to-day life?
- How might some of the questions and challenges raised around our Eucharistic practice inform or shape our mission and social justice work at UPC-Tempe? (Consider our involvement with immigration, the U.S.-Mexico Border, our neighbors, especially the poor or those who do not look, speak, or act like most of us).

Please submit your narratives to me by March 29th.

That gives you about four weeks to work on it. These narratives are very important for my project, and for this project to have any impact on UPC-Tempe and the wider church. Please be sure to include:

1. your name on your narrative,
2. contact information (address, phone, and email),
3. and attach an **Informed Consent Form**.

Submissions cannot be considered for the project without the above information and the Informed Consent Form. Then email them to me at coledermann@gmail.com or drop them off at the UPC-Tempe church office.

Alternative Option: Personal Interviews

I am also inviting people to sign up for a limited number of group in lieu of writing a reflection. The interviews will be in dialogue form with up to four people at a time, with me moderating. They will be recorded and transcribed. To sign up for a group, go to www.upctempe.org/dminproject and click on the interview link at the bottom of the page. Or you can contact me directly at coledermann@gmail.com or at the church office at (480) 966-6267 ext. 1.

Peace,
Pastor Eric

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