

Table Talk

1 Corinthians 11:23-26 Crossroads Christian Church

Mark 10:13-18 October 4, 2015 Pentecost

By Sandy Dixon World Communion Sunday

Mike and I had a friend at Northside Christian Church in St Louis where we were members. Some of you may have known him, Norman Garrett. He had been active in the SEGA area board and for a long time was instrumental in the Prime Timers' Event that took place for many years at Orchard Crest. When Norman heard Mike was going to be doing an interim at Fredericktown 5 years ago, he said, "That church has the smallest communion table I have ever seen." And when he heard that we were fortunate enough to do another interim there, he again commented on this congregation's small communion table. Of course he is comparing it to Northside's table which is 3 foot wide and a generous 7 feet long!

As I shared in communion my first Sunday back in Fredericktown a few years ago, I looked carefully from the pew at our communion table. Yes, it is physically small—4 feet by 2 feet. But there is room for the brass cross on the table—reminding us of why we are here in the first place. There is a clever shelf under each side of the table to hold the offering plates prior to the offering. The stacks of bread and juice trays fit just right on the table. The Communion Table is just the right size; there is room for everything we need for Holy Communion.

Now Mike and I are members at Crossroads Christian Church which has a communion table that adds more dimensions to this meditation: It is triangular in shape which represents the Trinity, just as the three steps going up to it. And it is placed right under the cross—the whole reason for any Church to exist. Because we are Disciples and baptism as well as communion are at the essence of our faith, the baptistry is right there also.

But there is more to this than just comparing physical sizes and shapes of Communion Tables. Every Communion Table is just the *Right Size and Shape!* Communion Tables, like ours, are near to or hold a cross that reminds us of God's great love for us and his Son's supreme sacrifice. Communion Tables hold the bread for Communion—it may be small square or rectangular pieces, circles with a cross stamped on them, pieces of crackers, matzo bread, a whole loaf to be shared, gluten free bread, or squares of unleavened bread. Communion Tables hold the juice or wine, in a chalice, or in trays of small cups reminding us of Jesus on the Cross, facing death to bring eternal life for all.

But every Communion Table is the place where transformation happens. These offerings of bread and juice—the act of taking Communion, is done with all Christians everywhere. Especially this World Communion Sunday, but each Sunday as well, as we share the bread and cup, we remember all those with whom we have taken Communion through the years; as newly baptized young Christians, or when we may have moved from place to place in our lives and found new church homes with a Communion Table welcoming us. We take Communion and remember those who may be shunned at some Communion Tables and pray for their inclusion. We take Communion and remember our loved ones and the saints of the congregations of whom we have been a part.

We take Communion and remember Christians in all the traditions of Christianity—here at Crossroads with our symbolic triangular table, at Fredericktown with its small size table, at Northside which had a very long table, and the world over with communion tables of all sizes and shapes, in churches or under tents,--wherever God's people worship. We take Communion and remember Christians in the entire world—some of whom risk their lives to be a part of the Christian Community in their countries, and we pray for their safety and thank God for their dedication and perseverance.

Communion Tables come in many physical sizes—some generous as Northside's Table.—Some smaller like Mr. Garrett noticed at Fredericktown Christian Church, some in a symbolic shape such as ours. But every table is just the right size to hold that which is central to our belief in Jesus Christ—the symbols of Bread and Body of our Lord, for all. Amen.

Communion Meditation: The tunic that I wear today is a reminder to me of how our Christian community is one over the whole world. It was a gift to me from when I served as an interim pastor at Second Baptist Church in Richmond Heights. The church there had a community of Burmese immigrants, of the Karen tribe, and men wore tunics like these, and women wore dresses of a similar style, when they would gather from worship.

The Karen first became Christian about 200 years ago, when Adoniram and Anna Judson first started working among them as missionaries, out in the rural areas of Burma. Many of their descendants, in the last few decades, have been driven out of Burma and some of them have formed a community in St Louis. They are a delightful people, who are poor, but generous, and very family-oriented.

Getting to know them and worship with them made me realize all over again how our Christian family spreads around the globe. That comes to mind on World Communion Sunday. The matzo bread that we will be sharing today is just one reminder of the world's diversity.

It's wonderful to look at the table in front of us, and to remember that Christians are gathering at tables and altars all around the world, in great cities and open country, in steamy jungles and frozen tundra, in refugee camps and towns like ours. Jesus Christ is being honored and remembered in both the Americas, in Europe and Asia, in Africa and Australia, and on islands scattered in between.

Come, let us join with our brothers and sisters around the world, at the Lord's Table.