

COMMUNION

Earth Eucharist

Wendy Janzen

OVERVIEW

We are part of a community of creation, that could also be called a communion of creation. God created us to be in an interconnected relationship with all life, and God's great plan for salvation (restoration, healing, and wholeness) includes all of creation. And so, at Burning Bush Forest Church when we celebrate communion together we offer the first piece of bread back to the earth and the last drops of wine/juice back to the earth.

Communion is an earthy, embodied ritual. It connects us with the elements of life - water, wind, earth and fire. It engages our senses of taste, touch, sight, and smell. It reminds us that we are part of the food chain – in order to survive we must eat, and in turn our bodies support the lives of others (ie, mosquitoes and all the microbes that live on our skin and in our intestines). In this ritual Christ offers the bread of life and the cup of a new covenant through his broken body. Today we receive our physical communion elements through the broken body of the Earth, even as we understand them to also be the symbolic body of Christ.

The words of this communion liturgy have been adapted by me from the Eucharist held weekly at Church of the Woods, written by Episcopal priest Stephen Blackmer.¹

BURNING BUSH FOREST CHURCH COMMUNION LITURGY

Instructions are in parenthesis and italicized.

(Place bread & wine on your altar, which could be the earth, a stump, or a rock)

From before time, God made ready the creation. The Divine Spirit moved over the deep and brought all things into being: sun, moon, and stars; earth, winds and waters; rock, fire, and every living thing.

¹ Used with permission.

Today we join with all the earth and heavens in a chorus of praise that rings through eternity. We remember our oneness with all that exists and all that has life, and that it is a joyful thing to be in God's presence with each other, with this land, and with all creation.

This meal we are about to share is a miracle and a mystery—a gift of earth, water, wind, and fire, and of seeds buried in the earth and cracked open. This bread and this juice, with their many meanings, are gifts of life to the living.

For followers of Jesus, these gifts assume particular meaning. Jesus broke bread with outcasts, healed the sick, and proclaimed good news to the poor. He yearned to draw all of the world into the heart of God.

When Jesus' life was nearing its end, Jesus was eating supper with his friends. He took bread, gave thanks, broke it and shared it saying, "Take, eat: This is my body, offered to heal the whole world. Whenever you eat it, remember me." (*break bread*)

And as supper was ending, Jesus took a cup of wine. Again he gave thanks and offered it to his friends saying, "Drink this, all of you: This is the cup of the new covenant – a promise of eternal love poured out for you and for all beings. Whenever you drink it, remember this." (*pour cup*)

Here, with the Earth as our altar, we savour God with all of our senses. As we eat and drink together we get to taste, smell, and touch the sacred. We are reminded that we are one with God, with each other, and with all creation. Before we eat and drink, let's pray:

Divine Love, pour out your Spirit upon these gifts. Fill us with your breath, O God, opening our eyes and renewing us in your love. Send your Spirit over this land and over the whole earth, making everything a new creation. Amen.

(hold a piece of bread and cup of juice)

These are the gifts of God for all the creatures of God.

Remembering that Jesus came to renew us and the whole world, we will offer the first piece of bread and the last drops of juice to the earth. (*place the piece of bread on the earth.*)

Come, eat and drink one and all, whoever hungers and thirsts for renewal. All are welcome.

(Invite people forward to receive a piece of bread and a cup of juice. Ask someone to help with serving the bread and/or cup)

(after all have been served pour some juice onto the earth)

Our God of abundance has fed us with the bread of life and the cup of love. With deep appreciation and thanks for the communion we share with each other and with the earth, we pray:

Eternal Spirit, Earth-maker, Life-giver, Pain-bearer,
source of all that is and ever shall be,
you have showered us with abundance.
With the food we need for today, feed us.
For the hurt we cause, forgive us.
As we lose our way, restore us.
Enlarge within us the sense of fellowship
with all living creatures,
all part of the family of God.
Tune our hearts to live in harmony
with Christ, with the Earth,
with all creatures,
and with our neighbour.
Now and forever.
Amen.

Further Resources

For more on being in communion with creation, see this blog post from Richard Rohr:
<https://cac.org/a-communion-of-subjects-2020-06-26/>.

Stephen Blackmer's original liturgy from Church of the Woods:
<http://kairosearth.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/CotW-liturgy-Dec-2016.pdf>

A communion liturgy from Salal + Cedar:
<http://salalandcedar.com/resources/liturgical-resources/eucharistic-prayer/>

Communion Service Celebrating God's Creation by A Rocha:
<https://atyourservice.arochoa.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/WWWW-Order-of-Service-Biodiversity-Communion.pdf>