

Two Liturgies for Communion when children are present. Roddy Hamilton

An Original All-Age Communion Liturgy

At the beginning of this service everyone was invited to write their name on a slip of paper, or have someone else write it if necessary (those disabled, young children not able to write yet etc). These were collected and scribed onto a large 6 foot high by 12 foot across board that had been painted white and sat behind the communion table. Everyone's name was placed on the board. These were the people of that community that morning. Everyone was equal.

A traditional Communion Table was not used but a series of smaller tables covered in white cloth obviously children sized tables which took away some formality and enabled children to see Jesus wasn't too big to sit with them.

Invitation

Come everyone who wants to:
Come if you can recite the creeds,
Come if you can't remember the words to Jesus loves me;
Come if you've been in the church since birth,
Come if you've lost your way a few times but found your way here today;
Come if you like to study theology,
Come if you like to finger paint;
Come if you like tradition and ritual and ceremony,
Come if you like balloons and laughter and jumping in puddles.
Come if you like all these things
and find the wonder of heaven in them all.
Come as you are:
old and young.
Just as you are:
one family,
right now,
each of you,
every one of you,
and have a seat right here.

Hymn

Welcome

It looks like bread,
and it is bread.
But God is incredibly imaginative.
There is a surprise in this bread,
for within each crumb,
God has folded nothing less,
than heaven.

And when we break it,
and everyone has a piece,
what we are doing is saying,
"Let's share together the story of Jesus."

It looks like a goblet of wine,
and it is wine,
but God, being God,
didn't leave it there,
and has squeezed into each drop,

a promise for the whole world.

And when we pass it among us,
and everyone has a taste,
it sort of whispers to our souls,
and sort of tangles with memories,
telling us:
God loves us,
God loves us,
God loves us,
completely.

So let's break bread and listen to the story,
and share wine and hear the promise...

Institution

One night Jesus and the disciples were sitting in a room and the meal table was spread before them. There was lamb and herbs and bread and soon they had all had their fill.

They were all talking to each other about the days and months that had passed. One of the disciples, Peter, was telling them about how he felt when he stepped out of the boat in the middle of the Sea of Galilee (do you remember that?) and wanted to walk toward Jesus over the surface and what it felt like when the water reached his knees and then his middle and then his neck.

Matthew was talking about the time before he was a disciple sitting in the sun counting out taxpayers' money enjoying the chink, chink, chink of the coins (does anyone recall that story?) when a shadow blocked out his sun and he lost count. He looked up and the silhouette of Jesus filled his view and asked him to put down the money and follow him.

Andrew interrupted Matthew to tell about the time he found a wee boy with two fish and five barley loaves (we all remember that one), hardly enough for one meal, and presented the boy and his basket to Jesus in front of that huge crowd of 5000. He could hear the titter from the front few rows at the thought of feeding them all with a 12 year olds packed lunch. But he did.

And all the other disciples told their memories of what had happened to them while they were following Jesus when eventually Jesus himself interrupted them all and said, "Here's another story" and he lifted the bread lying on the table.

He paused as everyone fell silent and listened, and he said, "This bread, this is the most important reminder you have of me. More than all these stories. This bread is an image of my body. I break it (**BREAK**) to show you that my own body will break. I want you all to break this bread so you all know what's happening to me and I want you to do it regularly, reminding yourselves of me each time and what I have done for you: dying because I love you all so, so much."

All the disciples were speechless as Jesus passed the broken bread around. They didn't understand in the same way that none of us understand.

And while the bread was passed Jesus lifted up the goblet and held it there in front of him in midair for a moment while everyone fell silent again. "This wine," he said, "is another reminder of me. But it is a symbol of my blood that will be spilled when I die. But do not be afraid because tucked within this is a promise, a covenant, that I will be with you always wherever you go. I will never let you go. Friends I love you so, so much even death cannot separate us!"

And again Jesus passed the wine round them all. They all took a sip and still none of them understood just as none of us could with honesty say we understand.

And today we share the very same meal that Jesus did with his friends: the bread and the wine that remind us of *our* stories of Jesus and what he did for us because he loves *us* so much.

“This bread is my body,” says Jesus. “Eat of it, all of you.”
“This wine is my blood and within it is a promise. Drink of it, all of you.”

A group of adults and children come forward from the congregation to take trays of bread and then wine to everyone. Adults always keeping an eye on the children to sensitively guide them to their serving places.

A formal liturgy when children are present

Invitation

This is God's Table
come all of you
you are invited to dine on the banquet of heaven

You are God's People
come all of you
you are invited to sit with your Lord

Here is God's feast
come all of you
you are invited to share in the bread and wine

The table is waiting for you
all of you
of every age
you are invited to be here

Great Entrance

Simply have two people read this and then process in with one loaf and one goblet (the other elements are already on the table)

Voice 1:
I bring bread.
Those who are hungry for food
and those who are fed but hunger for justice
this table is our meeting place,
this bread, our nourishment.
Come all who hunger.

Voice 2:
I bring wine.
Those who are thirsty for water
and those who are filled but thirst for righteousness
this table is where God's justice is met,
this wine, the sign of blessing.
Come all who thirst.

Welcome

This is an open table
and all those who love God
and seek to love God more
are welcome

so come with your questions and your doubts
come with your living done and undone

come with all that you are and all who you are
for here we meet Jesus in bread and wine
around a table God has set
Your seat is waiting.

Institution

On the Thursday night
Jesus gathered with his friends in an upper room.
They shared a meal together.
Then as darkness fell
Jesus broke some bread
and took some wine
and asked his friends
to remember him
every time they broke bread together.

And because we are his disciples today
we remember that story
and how the story continues in this place today
and we remember Jesus
as we break this bread together
and share this wine with each other

We are doing as Jesus asked us to do
and we are glad to do so.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Great God
of all the things you have created
we take the simplest food
and find you among us
as we eat together

In the great story of Jesus
we hear your love for us
being retold
and we remember all Jesus has done for us
because of that love

Through the Spirit
you set this bread and wine apart
to be used only as an image of you
and your love for us

For this gift of bread and wine
that reminds us of all those other gifts you have given us
we sing with every person who has been at this table
in every time and in every place

*Holy, holy, holy God
God of power and might
heaven and earth are full of your glory
Hosanna in the highest*

*Blessed is the one who comes in the name of God
Hosanna in the highest*

And so we thank you
that you have called us your children
sharing with us a love

that is more powerful than the universe
and that you sit here with us
blessing us in bread and wine

Amen

Breaking of Bread

Jesus took bread
broke it
saying:
'This is my body broken for you.
Remember me when you do this'

And Jesus too wine
lifted it
saying:
'This cup is a symbol of my covenant with you.
Remember me when you drink from it'