Messy Church Session

GATHER AT THE TABLE

LUKE 22: 19-20, I CORINTHIANS 11: 23-26

Bible Reflection

Jesus gathered around a table for many meals during his ministry on earth. He was frequently criticized by religious leaders because he chose to eat with people, they considered to be outcasts. On the night before he was arrested, Jesus gathered at the table with his closest followers to eat the Jewish Passover meal. This is now known to many as "The Last Supper" since after this meal. At the end of the meal, Jesus prepared his followers for his impending death and resurrection by sharing the bread and cup as an act of remembrance.

The early Christian church of the first century, continued this tradition of using the breaking bread and drinking from the cup when they gathered to remember the life, teaching, death and resurrection of Jesus. Today, thousands of years later, those who follow in the way of Jesus Christ, continue to gather around a table to remember and give thanks. There are many different traditions and customs throughout the Christian church when it comes to the sacramental/ spiritual practice of Holy Communion. What remains constant is that when we remember the life of Jesus, we celebrate his love for us all.

We gather at a table of love, a table of inclusion, a table where we bring all of ourselves to remember Jesus the Christ. We are invited to bring our joy and our sorrow, our beliefs and our doubts. We gather to remember and give thanks.

Reflection Questions

- Share a particular communion experience that was meaningful to you. What made it significant?
- We celebrate communion to remember Jesus. What do you think we should remember about Jesus?
- Who may be missing from your Messy Church table? What are some welcoming practices that invite those missing into the community?

Session Key


Welcome Zone (a good activity for Welcome Zone)


Continue at Home (a good activity to encourage families to use at home)


Could be used as a service/mission project


Could be used in your Celebration time

CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

Give Thanks Altar Cloth

Materials Needed: Drop cloth to fit the size or your Communion table, fabric paint, (there are roll on varieties), paint brushes if not using roll on fabric paint, sanitizer wipes or area for people to clean up.

Directions & Notes: Prior to Messy Church, someone paints the words, "With these hands... we give thanks!" People paint their hand in the color they choose and then place their handprint on the drop cloth. Start handprints in the middle of cloth and then unroll for more handprints to be added.



Talking Points: Do you use a special tablecloth for a birthday celebration? Celebrating Holy Communion is a special event in Messy Church. We give thanks to God for the gift of being together as we remember Jesus.

Share with Others

Materials Needed: Large Ziplock bags, Items for a ready to share bag such as high protein granola bars, fruit snacks, crackers with Peanut butter, bottled water, trail mix, etc.

Directions & Notes: Fill your plastic bag with items that you can give to people in need of food and water. You can keep the bags in your family's car and give the food bags to those in need that you encounter.



Talking Points: Jesus said "remember me" when he shared bread with his followers. We remember Jesus by sharing with others in love.

CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

Making Unleavened Bread

Materials Needed: Recipe for Unleavened Bread (Included), bowls, measuring cups, measuring spoons, salt, flour, water, mixing spoons, rolling pins and electric griddle. You may want to use several bowls for people to use to make the bread dough. An electric skillet with an adult operating it.





Directions & Notes: Combine salt and flour in a bowl. Stir in the water until the dough comes together in a ball. Knead for 5 minutes. Pinch off smaller pieces of dough and form into small balls. Roll out the dough with the rolling pins upon a floured surface. With the help of host, cook the bread on the hot skillet for 2 minutes on each side.

Talking Points: What kinds of bread are your favorites to eat? Think about the different types of bread that people eat every day all over the world. Say a prayer of thanks to God for all our neighbors and all the tasty bread we eat!

Setting Communion Table Relay Game

Materials Needed: 2 Table Clothes, 2 Unbreakable plates, 2 plastic wineglasses, 2 candles, 2 loaves of bread (could use a picture) , 2 clumps of grapes (could use a picture)



Directions & Notes: Divide groups into sets of six people, (or have smaller groups repeat), Put two tables at least 10 feet away from the start where all the items are placed on a small table. Teams race each other to get the communion table set. Team members receive a treat of fruit snacks.



Talking Points: When we have special dinners at home such as a birthday, Thanksgiving or Christmas we may use special dishes. As you set the communion table, think about how Jesus made bread and grapes a symbol to remember him.

CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

Communion Candles

Materials Needed: Plastic cups, colored tissue paper, glue mixture (2 parts glue to one part water), paint brushes, battery tea lights, marker to write name on cup.

Directions & Notes: Tear various colors of the tissue paper into small pieces (approximately 1 in square). Write your name on the bottom of the plastic cup. Using the paint brush, glue the small pieces of paper onto the plastic cup using the paint brushes. Let your cup dry then place the candle inside the cup.



Talking Points: What do you notice as the light shines through the colors of your cup? As we love others as Jesus loved others, we let the light of Jesus shine through us. We remember Jesus when we let our lights of love shine bright.

Writing on Bread

Materials Needed: Food coloring gels, white or brown bread slices, small paint brushes, sugar, hot water and small bowls for the colors used to paint. Prior to Messy Church prepare the food colored gels by placing one tablespoon of sugar and 1 tablespoon of water into the small bowl.Use the food coloring gels to prepare edible paint to use on the bread.

Directions & Notes: Cover the table with paper. Use paint brushes (keep paint brushes separated into different colors) to draw a picture or write on your bread. Draw a heart or a cross or use words like “Remember Me”, “Give Jesus thanks,” or “Eat this bread.” You can eat the bread right away or save it for later.



Talking Points: Can you think of a time when you have been able to share a piece of bread or sandwich with a friend? How did that make you feel? Did it make you happy to share?

CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

Playdough Communion Placements

Materials Needed: Template for Placement, (Included), colored pencils, playdough

Directions & Notes: Print the placement template prior to Messy Church. Use colored pencils to color the "Remember Me". Use the playdough to make the goblet, bread and plate. Place your name on the placement.



Talking Points: What items do you use to set the table at your home? I wonder why Jesus used ordinary bread and wine to instruct his followers to remember him? What ordinary food reminds you to follow in the path of Jesus?

Communion Memory Game

Materials Needed: A tray, pictures of the following: cross, wheat, grapes, plate, goblet, candle, table, tablecloth, Give Thanks card, Remember me card (Included) and a towel or cloth to cover the entire tray. (Option: Print two of the picture pages, cut out and then play a traditional memory game where pictures are matched)

Directions & Notes: Place the pictures of all eight items on the tray and cover with a cloth. Invite a group to gather around to play the memory game. Uncover the tray and ask everyone to memorize the items. Cover the tray once more. Pick up the tray and turn around, carefully removing one item and hiding it so that no one can see. Turn back and remove the cover. Ask what is missing? When someone answers correctly, show the missing picture and talk about its significance. Repeat with other pictures.





Talking Points: Did you remember all the items that represent Holy Communion? How can we remember the love of Jesus when we gather at the table? Is there anything that you think is missing from the game?

CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

Jesus Loves you Bunches!

Materials Needed: Template for Bunches of Grapes, colored pencils, stamp pads for fingerprints, (alternate is to have people color the grapes or use bingo dotters), hand sanitizer wipes.

Directions & Notes: At the top of the page, draw a picture of yourself or write your name. place your fingerprints in the bunches of grapes by using the stamp pads. When you are finished, be sure to clean up your hands!



Talking Points: There is no limit to how much Jesus loves us! When Jesus shared the bread and juice with his disciples at the first Holy Communion, it was to remind them that God's love would never go away! Can you think of something or someone that you love 'a whole bunch'? Be sure to tell them!

Decorating a Chalice

Materials Needed: Clear plastic glasses or goblets, waterproof markers, tissue paper, hand sanitizer wipes.

Directions & Notes: Put your name on the bottom of the goblet. Decorate the chalice with the markers. You could make bunches or grapes or any design you choose. Use small pieces of tissue paper to place inside the glass if desired.



Talking Points: A Chalice is the word used to describe the cup that is used at Holy Communion. It may look like a traditional goblet. What are your favorite juices to drink? Have you ever used a special glass at a meal? Jesus took the wine/ grape juice and told his followers to remember him every time they gathered at a table to celebrate Holy Communion. What do you remember when you gather with your friends to eat a favorite meal?

CELEBRATION

GATHER AT THE TABLE

Celebration Outline

Items Needed: A table to place communion elements. 5 participants to read a short sentence, four participants to set the communion table with the following four items: 1) Tablecloth made in Activity, 2) a candle made in activity 3) Loaf of bread or unleavened bread that was made in activity 4) a goblet(s) and a carafe of grape juice.

Script: When you have a special meal at home, how do you prepare? Do you use a tablecloth? Light a candle? Use special dishes? We are celebrating a special meal that Jesus shared with his closest followers. So, we are going as we hear our story, we are going to make this table special. Can those who are helping to read and set the table come join us?

Now we are ready… let's all take a few deep breaths to listen!

Reader 1: It was time for the special time of Passover, a Jewish tradition that Jesus and his followers observed.
(Altar cloth is placed on table)

Reader 2: Jesus gathered in a special room with those followers that he loved deeply and shared a meal. After the meal, Jesus stood up from the table where all had gathered.
(Candle is brought to table and lit)

Reader 3: Jesus said to them: "I have been looking forward to eat this Passover meal with you before I suffer. I tell you this, I will not eat another meal with you until we feast in heaven.
(Plate with bread and a chalice and a pitcher of grape juice (or wine).

Reader 4: Jesus then took a piece of bread, gave thanks, broke the bread and shared it with his followers as he said, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this to remember me."

Reader 5: Then, Jesus he took the cup and said, "This cup is the new covenant of my love which is poured out for you through my life-blood." Drink from this cup and remember me.
(adapted from Luke 22: 19-20)

Thank you for sharing the story and setting our table. From this example of Jesus sharing the bread and cup with his followers, people who follow Jesus have gathered around a table for thousands of years. We remember and give thanks for the life of Jesus by sharing together as we eat bread and drink wine/ juice. I wonder how bread and juice help us remember Jesus? I wonder why Jesus gave thanks for the bread before he broke it and shared it?

CELEBRATION

GATHER AT THE TABLE

Celebration Outline (continued)

As we get ready to share together, we are going to share in a prayer of thanks. Here is a short song we will use as we say our prayer of thanksgiving. (Learn Chant at YouTube recording) (Note, if you do not want to use the chant you can simply use the words as a spoken response)

We gather here in Jesus' name, to remember and give thanks. (practice several times before moving into the Communion Prayer)

Communion Prayer

(*adapted from Messy Communion at International Messy Church Conference, 2019 by Roberta Egli)*

My Messy friends, as we gather at this table, take a moment to think about what makes you happy, what makes you sad, what makes you anxious. Jesus invites us to come to this table. No matter what you may be experiencing in your lives, you are welcome here to share in the love of Jesus. We give thanks.

We gather here in Jesus' name, to remember and give thanks.

This is a special table because it is big enough for all of us. We gather at this special table that is made from the stuff of the earth: wood and cloth, grain for the bread and grape for the juice. All are gifts from God. We give thanks.

We gather here in Jesus' name, to remember and give thanks.
Let us tell the story of God our Creator. We give thanks to God who created this wonderful world. Who formed us and gave us the breath of life. Whose love remains steadfast even when we turn away. We give thanks.

We gather here in Jesus' name, to remember and give thanks.
We give thanks for the life of Jesus the Christ. Who came to our messy world to preach good news. Who healed the sick, fed the hungry and gathered at the table with sinners. Whose life, death and resurrection revealed the depths and power of his love for us. We give thanks.

We gather in Jesus' name, to remember and give thanks.
We give thanks for the Holy Spirit. Who was present at the beginning and is with us this day. Who is the life-giving breath of the church. Who enlivens us to be sources of healing and forgiveness in our messy world. We give thanks.

We gather in Jesus' name, to remember and give thanks.

CELEBRATION

GATHER AT THE TABLE

Celebration Outline (continued)

Words of Institution

(Can be abbreviated per denominational tradition)

We heard this story earlier: *(Lift up bread)* Jesus took bread, gave thanks and then shared it with his followers saying, "take, eat; this is my body given for you… remember me."

(*Lift up cup*) Then he took the cup and share it saying: "This cup is the new covenant of my love which is poured out for you through my life-blood, remember me."

Let's all put our hands out to bless the bread and cup. (*Place hands over the bread and cup*)

Prayer: Come, Holy Spirit, and set this bread and juice apart. As we share it here today, it becomes for us, not just as a snack but the feast of love and the full story of your way. Then, as young and old, we all become your family gathered, and no one is forgotten.

And everyone says AMEN. **AMEN**

You are all invited to come to the table to taste the bread and cup. You can skip, walk or dance to the table! If you are not ready to share in communion, that is fine, we are glad that you are here with us! (Sharing of the bread and cup per denominational tradition)

Closing Blessing

Now that we have all shared at the table let us bless one another with our Messy Benediction.

(place hands like you are receiving a gift and repeat after me)
May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ
May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ
(place hands crossed in front of heart and repeat after me)
And the Love of God
And the Love of God
(Reach out to hold hand with those beside you and repeat after me)
And the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us now and forever
And the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us now and forever
(Jazz Hands)
AMEN.

SESSION NOTES

GATHER AT THE TABLE

Meal Ideas & Table Talk

Meal Idea

Simple Soup and Bread
Baked Potato Bar

Table Talk Ideas

- We celebrate Holy Communion to remember Jesus. What do you suppose we should remember about Jesus?
- I wonder what Jesus would like for us to think about when we take Holy Communion?
- At most mealtimes we eat food so that we can have strength. I wonder how receiving Holy Communion gives us spiritual strength?

Song Suggestions

We Gather Here Chant
Used in Celebration of *Gather at the Table*
Roberta Egli, Messy Church USA

There is Enough - Song from Music that Makes Community

Come to the Feast- Song from Music that Makes Community

Love, Take a Walk with Me- Charles Murphy- Song from Music that Makes Community

Extras and At-Home Ideas

Resources:

Gathered at the Table: Celebrating Communion. Written by Glenys Nellist, Illustrated by Anna Kazimi. 2024. Zonderkidz

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Gather at the Table Resource Packet

Quick & Easy Unleavened Bread

Ingredients:

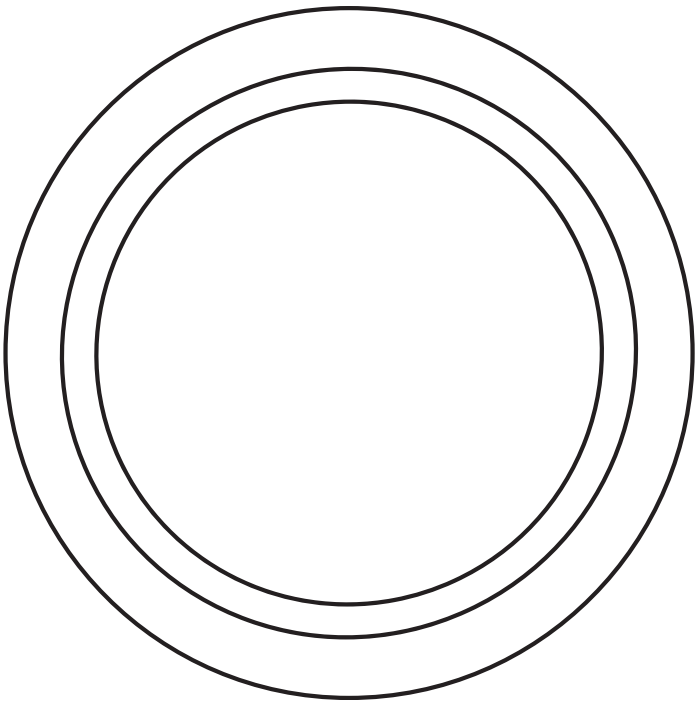
- ½ tsp salt
- 2 Cups flour plus 2 tablespoons
- 1 Cup cold water
- (Skillet)

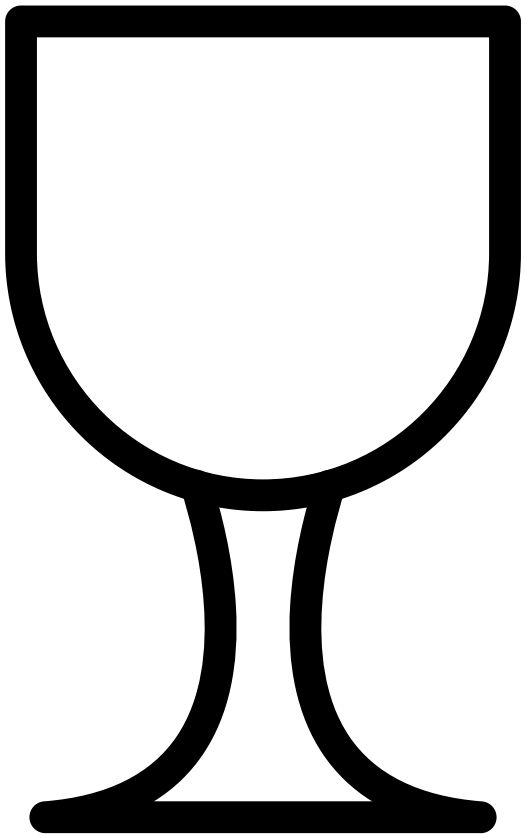
Instructions

- Combine salt and flour together in a bowl
- Stir in the water until the dough comes together in a ball
- Knead for 5 minutes
- Pre-heat skillet over medium-low heat
- Pinch off 5-7 pieces of dough and form into small balls
- Roll out each piece on a lightly floured surface about 6 inches
- Cook on hot skillet for 2 minutes on each side

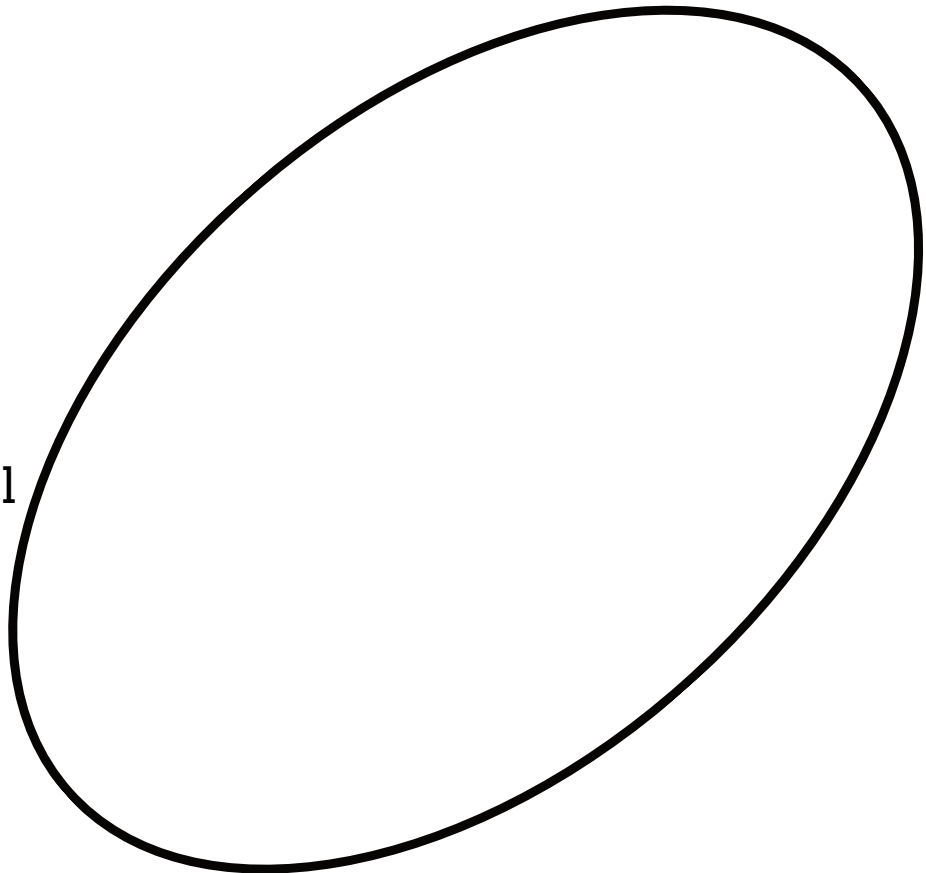
REMEMBER ME

At a special meal, Jesus sat down with his disciples for a meal. When the meal was over, he took bread, blessed it, broke it and gave it to them saying "Remember Me"





Then Jesus took a glass of wine, blessed it and gave it and gave it to them, saying "Remember Me"



Do you have a special meal at your home? Use the playdough to represent it on the platter.
Give thanks!

JESUS LOVES ME BUNCHES!

My Self Portrait!

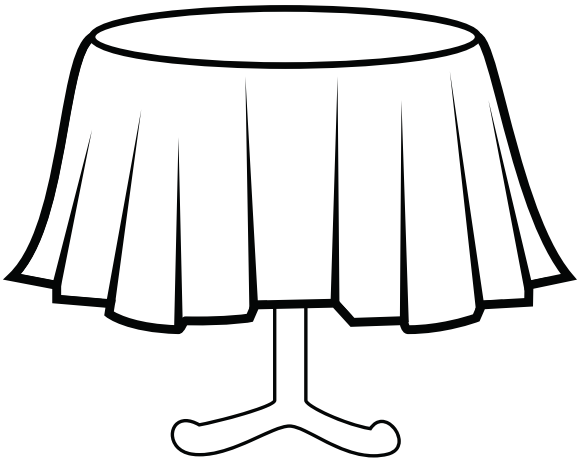












Remember Me

Give Thanks



Ivo Dulcic, Croatia, *Meal at Emmaus*, 1971, oil, 80 x 108 cm