

## Communion Conversation

Resource: *Come, Lord Jesus, Be Our Host*, by Elsie H. R. Rempel

### *Session 1: The Heart of Communion*, p 4 – 11

Talks of the mystery and attraction; why communion matters; reflects briefly on communion history, new perspectives and the impacts of change on our practice.

*Background overall and for questions on what we are enacting in communion; connections of communion with beliefs about grace, church, mission.*

*At our **March discernment meeting**, we went over the key points, along with a quick look at Open Table's earlier discussion and decision to offer the bread to all present and the cup to those who have made a public commitment to follow Jesus. We will return to it on **May 8**.*

### *Session 2: Many Tables*

Focuses on biblical meals where Jesus is host. "If the 21<sup>st</sup> century church finds renewal around tables that combine food, fellowship, and worship as Noel Moules and other emerging church folk predict, then we can learn much from studying the practices of Jesus as table host." p. 13

*Background for what scriptures says/shows about communion.*

*We are engaging with this section in a variety of worship settings, mostly over a six week period from **Easter through Pentecost**:*

1) *Passover, p. 14*

***March 23**, Maundy Thursday service: Last Supper in Passover context*

2) *Covenant Celebration and Renewal, p. 15*

*Rempel describes two expressions of covenant celebration: Holy Week separate closed communion services that emphasize the new covenant and annual ritualized membership renewal services. We had a shared bread ritual and a South African handshake circle at our membership signing service in **November**.*

3) *Paul's Communion Instructions (1 Cor 11: 23-26) p. 15 – 16*

***May 1**, Sally will work with 1 Corinthians and the synoptic Last Suppers; celebration of communion the way Open Table agreed to do it several years ago*

4) *Meals of Recognition, pp 17 - 18*

*Luke's Emmaus Road story, John's post-resurrection breakfast on the beach.*

*We heard John's story and shared fish, bread and coffee at the Easter sunrise service; this story comes to us in the lectionary on **April 10** and we'll look at it again, along with*

*the Anabaptist emphasis on remembering Jesus and being in right relationship with God and each other. On **April 17** we'll look at the Emmaus Road story.*

5) *God's Nourishing Miracles, p. 18*

*Exodus stories, Elisha's multiplication of loaves, Jesus' feeding thousands, etc.*

*We worked with many of these texts at our **Friedenswald retreat**.*

6) *Heavenly Foretastes, p 19-20*

*Isaiah's banquet vision, Revelation's Marriage Supper of the Lamb*

*We will do some sort of Love Feast celebration on **Pentecost Sunday, May 15**.*

*Session 3: What about the Church and Communion? p. 23 – 28*

Looks at the Confession of Faith, offers some more recent communion litanies, and briefly covers some recent church-wide conversations.

*Background for role of tradition, practices of other congregations we connect with, ways of expressing intention and commitment*

*We will look at this at our **April 13 discernment meeting**.*

*Session 4: What about Children? p 30 -32*

Looks at the church and children; children's spiritual and faith formation

*Background for children's participation.*

*We will look at this at our **May discernment meeting**.*

*Session 5: Our Varied Practices, p. 34 – 39*

Looks at the range of practice in MC Canada, traditional and emerging objectives, the open and closed spectrum, and living faithfully with diversity.

*Background for people's experiences; meaning of "open communion."*

*We will pick up some of this at our **April 13 discernment meeting**, continue in **May**.*

*Session 6: Moving Forward, p. 41 – 44*

Suggestions for creating a community of many tables, building elements of communion into a variety of cultural meal traditions; a "church year of expanded communion tables."

*Background for what we are enacting in communion; how we communicate our practice; variety of ways for approaching communion and commitment.*

*We will pick this up at our **May discernment meeting**.*

For those who want more reading, there is a Bibliography on pages 52 – 53.