

World Communion Sunday

Last Sunday, Rev. Bob Morrison preached powerfully about the importance of Christ's body, which is the Church, being unified. This Sunday, October 2, we will celebrate World Communion Sunday. This is an ecumenical celebration organized by the National Council of Churches every year on the first Sunday of October. It is a time when we remember that we are all one body. It is also a time when PC(USA) churches collect the Peace & Global Witness offering; most denominations collect some similar globally-oriented special offering.

From <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/worship/churchcalendar/world-communion-sunday/>

World Communion Sunday (originally called World Wide Communion Sunday) is a gift of the Presbyterian Church to the larger ecumenical church. The first celebration occurred at Shadyside Presbyterian Church in Pittsburgh, PA, in 1933 where Dr. Hugh Thompson Kerr served as pastor.

John A. Dalles, a PCUSA pastor who has researched the history of World Communion Sunday notes this in his blog entry, reprinted from the October 7, 2002, issue of Presbyterian Outlook:

Davitt S. Bell (the late Clerk of Session and church historian at Shadyside) recalled that Dr. Kerr first conceived the notion of World Communion Sunday during his year as moderator of the General Assembly (1930). Dr. Kerr's younger son, the Rev. Dr. Donald Craig Kerr, who is pastor emeritus of the Roland Park Presbyterian Church in Baltimore, was sixteen in 1933. He has related that World Communion Sunday grew out of the Division of Stewardship at Shadyside. It was their attempt to bring churches together in a service of Christian unity—in which everyone might receive both inspiration and information, and above all, to know how important the Church of Jesus Christ is, and how each congregation is interconnected one with another. When I asked Donald Kerr how the idea of World Communion Sunday spread from that first service to the world wide practice of today, this is what he replied,

“The concept spread very slowly at the start. People did not give it a whole lot of thought. It was during the Second World War that the spirit caught hold, because we were trying to hold the world together. World Wide Communion symbolized the effort to hold things together, in a spiritual sense. It emphasized that we are one in the Spirit and the Gospel of Jesus Christ.”

Celebration of World Wide Communion Sunday was adopted as a denominational practice in the Presbyterian Church (US) in 1936. Churches in other denominations were invited to celebrate with us from the beginning, but it wasn't until 1940 when the Department of Evangelism of the Federal Council of Churches (a predecessor body of the National Council of Churches) promoted extending the celebration to a number of churches around the world that the practice became widespread. Today, World Communion Sunday is celebrated around the world, demonstrating that the church founded on Jesus Christ peacefully shares God-given goods in a world increasingly destabilized by globalization and global market economies based on greed.