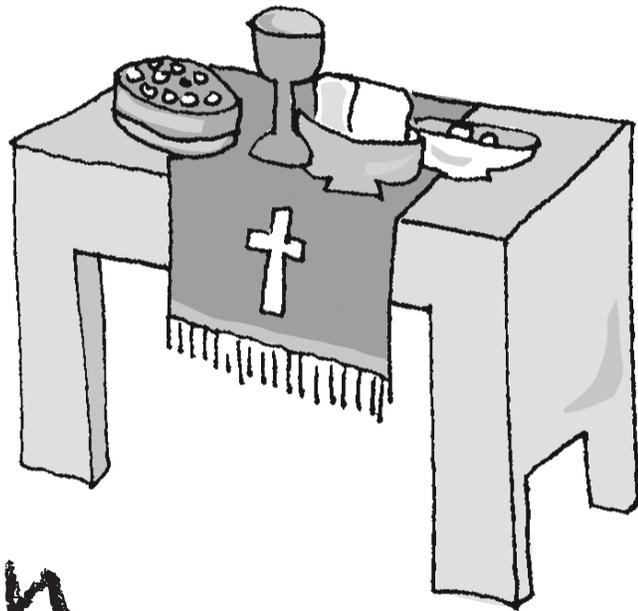


COME TO THE TABLE OF PEACE



Children's Lesson Plan

by Holly Purcell Albrecht



PEACE & GLOBAL WITNESS
SPECIAL OFFERINGS

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Setting the Table

Lessons from the Table is a study for children centered around the communion table. Each session talks about a different aspect of the communion table. The topics are: Table of Transformation or Change, Table of Welcome, Table of Grace, Table of Peace, and Table of Love. The five-session study is designed to be used for a broadly graded children's group during church school, weeknight programs, or a special Season of Peace study.

Prior to teaching this study, talk to the children about the Lord's Supper. Help them to understand why we share in this special meal of remembrance. If your church offers a communion class for children, remind them of what they learned in that class. This class is designed to be taught around a communion table. Teaching around the sanctuary's communion table is not necessary but would be wonderful if possible. Regardless, take the children in to see the communion table in your worship space or have pictures of the church's communion table for them to see. Designate a table in your teaching space to represent the communion table. Treat the table with the same respect you would the actual communion table. Place the chalice and plate on the table for each session. Gather the children around the table for teaching discussions.



The Table of Transformation/Change

Psalm 51:10, Romans 12:2, 2 Corinthians 5:17

Preparation: Collect and clean mayonnaise or peanut butter jars.

Materials Needed: Paper cups, paper plates, chalice and plate, clean mayonnaise or peanut butter jars, markers, paper, glue, scissors, tape, stickers, Bible

Gathering: Face Stacking (paper cups and plates)

As children arrive, help them find a partner. One partner will lie on the ground and hold a cup in their mouth. The partner will stack a plate on the cup and continue stacking cup, plate, cup, plate, etc. The record is nine cups! Switch roles after several tries.

Talk about it: Where do you use cups and plates in your home? What kind of cups and plates—paper, china? Are there different plates for special occasions? Why? Where do we see cups and plates at church? Where do we see cups and plates in worship? Why are they so special? What are we doing when we use the cup and plate in worship? Share what you know about communion or the Lord's Supper. Why is it such an important meal for the church?

Hearing the Story: *Sit around the table. Talk about the communion table. A communion table is God's table, not our church's table or a Presbyterian table. Today the table reminds us of transformation and change. When we come to this special table, we leave changed by what we've learned about Jesus. Read the following scripture verses: Psalm 51:10, Romans 12:2, 2 Corinthians 5:17*



Reflecting: What did you hear when these verses were read? What do they have in common? What do you think they are saying to us today? How are we changed or transformed by coming to the table?

Psalm 51:10 talks about a clean heart and a new and right spirit. How does knowing and learning about God and Jesus give you a new spirit and clean heart? How does knowing and learning about God and Jesus change us?

Romans 12:2 talks about transformation/change. It suggests that our encounter with God transforms us to seek out what God wants for the world. What do you think that means? How can coming to this table, this place of worship, this class of study, this community of faith change you?

2 Corinthians 5:17 says that if we are in Christ (have a relationship with Jesus), then everything is new. What does that mean? How do we act if everything is new? What type of things does someone who is in Christ do? Are you kinder to others? More welcoming? More loving? More caring? Is this kind of transformation/change appealing to you? How can anyone see that we have been transformed when we've come to the table?

Engaging: Changed Jars (jars, markers, paper, glue, scissors, tape, stickers)

Decorate the cleaned jars. They will be used for collecting coins during the next few weeks. Coming to the table changes us. We will use our monetary change to make changes in the world. Label the jars "Changed." Decide what the monies will be used for by referring to the Presbyterian Gifts Catalog <http://presbyteriangifts.org>. The children may want to save their money to provide bunk beds for children without a place to sleep or food baskets for refugees or a family of chickens to a struggling community. Explore the gifts catalog and decide as a group where your change will go to make positive change happen.

Closing Prayer: Leader says a line and the children repeat.

God of Change,

Help us to be changed by knowing you.

Help us to be kinder by loving you.

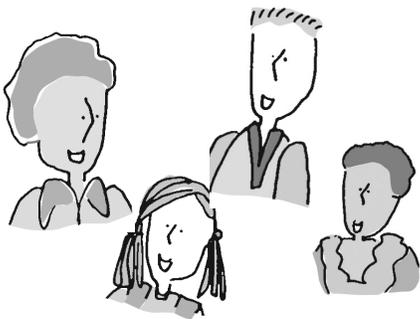
Help us to reach out by serving you.

Help us to change the world in ways that are pleasing to you.

Amen.

Table of Welcome

Luke 14:15-24



Preparation: Gather supplies. Cut out pictures of a diverse group of people from magazines. Place the tablecloth on the table.

Materials Needed: Place cards/index cards, pens or markers, permanent markers, magazine pictures, glue sticks, white plastic tablecloth, scissors, Bible, chalice, and plate

Gathering: As children arrive, tell them the communion table is a table for all God's children to share in a special meal. We are going to prepare place cards so that all God's children will know that they are welcomed and have a place around the table. Invite the children to write names or draw pictures of individuals or groups of people on the place cards. Have magazine pictures of people of different races, socioeconomic groups, physical abilities, etc. for the children to glue on the cards. Put the place cards all over the table.

Talk about it: Who are God's children? Who is welcomed at this table? Did we leave anyone out? Are people who are homeless welcomed at the table? Are people in prison welcomed at the table? Would someone with a mustache be welcomed at our table? How about girls or boys? Would someone who is sick or abusing drugs or lonely or sad be welcomed at the table? Are we welcoming grandmas and grandpas to the table? Would a refugee family feel welcomed at the table? Could someone in a wheelchair or someone who is blind come to the table? Would someone who is a

bully be welcomed at the table? What do all of these people have in common? Why do we need to help all of God's children know that they have a place at the table?

Hearing the Story: Share the story of the great dinner: Luke 14:15-24

Reflecting: What happened in the story? Why did the invited guests not show up? Sometimes we don't show up for church school or worship or a mission project. What are we missing out on when we don't show up? What did the man having the dinner do when the invited guests didn't show up? Who did he invite then? He kept inviting more and more people so that his house would be full. How is that like welcoming people to the communion table? How many people can we fit around the table? Is there always room for one more person? How do you think the people felt when they were at the banquet? How do you think the guests who didn't show up felt? Why do you think it is important for us to hear this story?

Engaging: *Decorate the tablecloth with the permanent markers. In the middle, write the words "All Are Welcomed." You can glue the pictures of God's children to the tablecloth as well.*

**Adaptation: Use a white fabric tablecloth and decorate it with fabric markers. Ask if the tablecloth can be used during worship when communion is served.*

Closing Prayer: *The leader will say a line and the children will repeat it.*

God of Welcome,

Help us to welcome others to this special table.

Help us to include visitors as a part of our church family.

Help us to remember that you welcome us all with open arms.

Amen.

The Table of Grace

Luke 15:11-24

Preparation: Gather materials. Wrap the gift boxes one inside another, with the innermost box having multiple pieces of paper with the word "grace" written on it. (The more layers to unwrap the better.)

Materials Needed: Gift boxes of different sizes, wrapping paper, the word "grace" written on many strips of paper (more than enough for each child to have a piece of grace), scissors, tape, music, sticky notes, markers, chalice, plate

Gathering: *As children arrive, have them sit around the table. The children will pass the gift around the group, and when the music stops, the person holding the gift will unwrap one layer of wrapping paper. Continue the game until the last box is unwrapped and opened. Give everyone a piece of grace.*



Talk about it: Today our table is the table of grace. What is grace? We talk about grace as an undeserved gift from God—what does that mean? We get gifts on our birthday or Christmas or a special occasion. Grace is a gift that God gives us just because God loves us, a gift that we could never do enough to deserve, which is why we call it an undeserved gift. Grace is God’s love and forgiveness and “do-overs.” It is God’s promise to love us always even if we don’t want God to love us, even if we aren’t acting nice. God’s grace is there. We can’t do anything to deserve this gift, but receiving God’s grace makes us want to respond by living a kinder, more loving life.

Hearing the Story: *Gather around the table and share the story of the prodigal son—Luke 15:11-24.*

Reflecting: What happens in the story? How do you think the younger son was feeling when he had spent all of his money? What do you think he expected to happen when he went back home? Were you surprised at the father’s reaction? Why or why not? How do you think the younger son felt when his father welcomed him home with a loving embrace? Who else welcomes us with open arms when we have really messed up? How does it feel to be loved when you don’t feel like you deserve it? When we come to the table, we experience God’s grace. How does that change the way you live each day?

Engaging: Grace it Notes

Have the children write loving notes on sticky notes. Words like “God loves you.” . . . “You matter.” . . . “Thank you for being you.” . . . “You are loved.”

Take the notes to the parking lot and place them on the windshields of the cars or take them home and place them around your house. Sometimes hearing kind and unexpected words reminds us of God’s grace.

Closing Prayer: *The leader says a line and the children repeat it.*

Loving God,

Thank you for your gift of grace.

Thank you for loving us no matter what.

Amen.

The Table of Peace

Matthew 5: 14-16

Preparation: Gather supplies. Stuff each sock with a small object from the materials needed list and hang the sock on the clothesline. Learn the words and tune to *This Little Light of Mine* if you don’t already know them.

Materials Needed: 15-20 clean socks, clothespins, clothes line or rope, objects (such as fork, spoon, pencil, small communion cup, cross, cotton ball, coins, peace sign, small toy, eraser, flashlight, Bible, a votive candle, matches), additional votive candles one for each child, paper, pencils, chalice and plate



Gathering: Sock Line

As the children arrive, have them gather around the clothesline of hanging socks. Each sock should contain one of the items from the materials needed list. Tell the children to feel each sock on the clothesline trying to figure out the object inside without peeking. No talking, so every child has an opportunity to figure out the hidden objects on their own. As children are finishing, they may give each other hints.

Talk about it: Was the sock line difficult or easy? Did you like people giving you hints or did you want to figure it out on your own? Why do you think the objects included an eraser, flashlight, communion cup, peace sign, and cross? What do those objects make you think of? What does an eraser make you think of? What do we erase or make clean at church? With the flashlight, who do we think of as the light of the world? What does a peace sign have to do with the community of faith? In what ways is peace important to Jesus?

Hearing the Story: Today we gather around the table of peace. What does a table of peace feel like? What is peace? Read the scripture—Matthew 5:14-16.

Reflecting: As we sit at the table of peace, what is the scripture telling us? What does the passage have to do with peace? How is letting our light shine like working for peace? In what ways is it difficult for the light of God to shine through you? What kind of help do you need to share the light of peace? As a group sing, *This Little Light of Mine*.

Engaging: *Light a candle for peace and place it in the middle of the table. Remind the children that Jesus is the light of the world, and he invites us to spread that light into the world by working for peace and justice. As a group, write a prayer for peace in our world. Help each child make a copy of the prayer. Give them each a candle with instructions to light the candle and say this prayer for peace with their family.*

Closing Prayer: *Use the prayer you wrote as a group or invite the children to repeat each line of the following prayer after the leader:*

God of Peace,

Help us to be a light of peace in your world.

Help us to speak out against injustice.

Help us to be peacemakers.

Amen.

The Table of Love

John 13:34-35 and 1 Peter 4:8-11

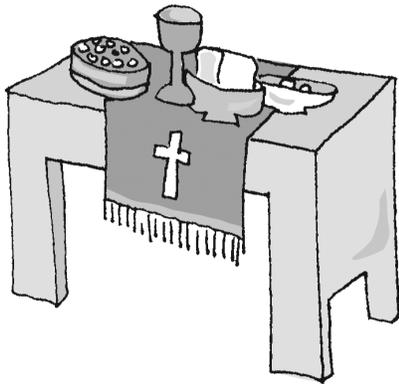
Preparation: Gather materials. Write down the words needed for the Claymation gathering activity.

Materials Needed: Play-doh® (or similar modeling clay), cards with words or pictures, Bible, card stock, markers, scissors, chalice, and plate

Gathering: Claymation

As the children arrive, have them sit in groups of three or four. Give each group a can of Play-doh®. The children will take turns being the sculptor. Have the oldest child in the group go first. The sculptor will go to the leader and look at the word on the card and without talking, go back and sculpt it for his/her group. The group will guess what the sculpture is, and when they guess it correctly, they will get a new word and a new sculptor. Some words to use are “love,” “communion table,” “church,” “cross,” “bread and wine,” “plate and cup,” etc.

Talk about it: Was it difficult to get your team to figure out the words? Why is it hard to sculpt a word? Would it be more difficult to sculpt a word or to act out or demonstrate a word? How would you act out the words?



Hearing the Story: *Gather around the communion table.*

Today we come to the table of love. When we come to the table to remember Jesus, we remember how Jesus loved and taught us to love one another. *Read the following scripture passages—John 13:34-35 and 1 Peter 4:8-11.*

Reflecting: What are these passages talking about? Why is it important for us to be reminded to love one another? What stands in the way of us loving each other? What does God expect from us? How does coming to the table change how we interact with each other? What do you think 1 Peter

4: 11 is telling us? Can we say mean things to each other while we are glorifying God? How do we show that we are Jesus’ disciples? (John 13:34-35) Is it easy to love one another? What are some of the ways that we show love to one another? To our family members? To people at school? To strangers? To visitors at church?

Engaging: When people have parties, weddings, or celebrations, they send out invitations. Invitations are a way of asking someone join you in celebrating something special. Sometimes invitations can come through the mail, email, or a phone call. An invitation can make you feel special and a part of a group. Today we are going to make invitations for people to participate in communion. Find out the next time your church celebrates communion. Make invitations for church members, neighbors, *people who live close to the church, and people in your community. Invite people to come to God’s table to remember Jesus and to share in his peace, welcome, love, and grace.*

Remind them that all are welcomed at God's table, not just Presbyterians. Distribute the invitations through the church newsletter, website, local paper, or on bulletin boards at nearby businesses. Invite your community to share in the love of Christ.

Closing Prayer: *The leader says a line and the children repeat it.*

God of Love,

Thank you for loving us.

Help us to love one another.

Help us to share your love with all.

Amen.

About the author:

Holly Purcell Albrecht is a graduate of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the Presbyterian School of Christian Education, now Union Presbyterian Seminary. She has served as an educator for churches in Texas, Wisconsin, and North Carolina. She currently works as a consultant in educational ministry. Holly lives outside of Annapolis, Maryland, with her husband Fred and their children Jane and Clint.