

Philippians 2:1-15

**Global Lights©
World Communion Sunday**

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World Communion Sunday is a very special day in the life of the church.

World Communion originated in 1933 by the Shadyside Presbyterian Church in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania. It was soon adopted by our denomination and quickly spread through other denominations as well. In 1940, what is now called the National Council of Churches endorsed and promoted World Communion Sunday worldwide.

The focus, of course, is on Christian unity; working together as the universal church to serve Christ in the world. It brings to mind an image of people all over the world coming to the Table to share in The Lord's Supper – this meal that Jesus gives his followers to sustain and nourish us – it is the meal that not only feeds us but binds us together, along with baptism, as a part of the Body of Christ Jesus.

When we come to this table, keep in mind that there are many others – people all over the world – who are sharing in this meal today. Yesterday, we joyfully served our sisters in Christ – the Presbyterian Women of the Presbytery of Lake Huron – as they came here for the Fall Gathering.

Our congregation did a fantastic job of welcoming and feeding them with international foods. We thought of Christian women from different places in the world, and we heard from a wonderful speaker, Juliana Boamah-Acheampong, the 2014 PW Global Exchange to the Caribbean.

As we come to the Table today, we come aware that men and women all over the world are serving in the name of Christ Jesus. They, like us, have heard the call from Jesus to follow him, and take that call very seriously, letting their lights shine like stars in the world, as Paul encouraged the Philippians to do.

Cathy Chang, who was serving as Associate Pastor at Midland Presbyterian Church, was deeply moved because of research she did for a sermon for the Presbyterian Women on Human Trafficking.

At the last presbytery meeting, we commissioned and said good bye to Cathy as she and her family move to the Philippines so she can work to help eliminate human trafficking and help victims recover, to be a light shining like a star in the world.

We support missionaries Allen and Deedee lobsts as they serve in Spain, talking to people and giving them Bibles, helping as the Holy Spirit works through them to change hearts and minds – lights shining like stars in the world.

Our other missionaries are right here at home, serving Christ through Athletes in Action at the University of Michigan, sharing the good news with students. They are lights shining like stars in the world.

But the call to serve isn't just to those who are called to serve as missionaries. The call is to all believers, wherever you are, to be a shining light, like stars shining in the world.

Right here, in Holly, Michigan, we need light. This is a great place to live, with many people who are believers. But, I'll bet if I asked you to think of places where there is darkness, you could probably think of something.

Everywhere we go, we carry the light of Christ Jesus with us. It shines from our eyes, as we reflect His love.

I love the liturgical arrangement Laura has done for us. There are lots of lights shining, casting the light on the dark places of the world. Yet, there is still darkness that needs more light.

The gospel of John begins with telling about the light. He says Jesus (the *Word, Logos*) is the light of the world; that the light shines in the darkness and the darkness could not overcome it. Some translations say "the darkness did not comprehend it; did not understand the light that Jesus was."

Either way, it is still true, don't you agree? There continues to be plenty of dark places in the world today, just as there was in Jesus' time.

The darkness was so bad, and they so misunderstood who Jesus was – that they tried to snuff out that light that was the Messiah, the Christ, the Savior. But even death could not put out that light.

Still today, there is darkness; there are still many who do not comprehend who this light of the world is.

One of the most meaningful services of the year is the Christmas Eve Candlelight service. We gather here to celebrate the birth of Christ – the Word that became flesh to live among us. We hear again that he is the light of the world.

We sing carols announcing his birth, welcoming him again into our hearts and lives, we share Communion at the Table he prepares for us, and then ...

Then, we light a candle from the one big candle that represents Christ. And from that one light, we pass the light around – lighting the candles that each of us hold.

It starts with just that one light and it spreads – sometimes rather slowly as people get the knack of it. But eventually the light has grown until we can see the faces of all who are here holding a candle, symbolizing that we are all lights in the world, having been ignited by the master Light – Jesus, our Lord.

We've been talking quite a bit lately about what it means to be a true follower of Jesus. The gospel of Mark has clearly challenged believers with Jesus' words about putting ourselves last instead of first; being the least instead of the greatest; being a servant of others. Those have been our themes for the last three weeks.

Today hear that same challenge through the Apostle Paul, who had stayed in Philippi and started the church there. But now, he writes from a prison cell, after learning that conflict has arisen with this beloved congregation.

Paul says the same thing Jesus said. Be humble. Be compassionate, be self-giving, not selfish. Put others before yourselves. Be a slave to others – sacrificing your best interest for the best interest of one another.

In other words – think like Jesus. Model your behavior to be like Him. He says we should have the same mind as Jesus. That means we would ALL be in unity, serving, loving, helping as Jesus did because we would understand Jesus' call to us.

If all believers had the same mind as Christ, can you imagine how it would change the world? If Christians could just be in unity with how we act, how we love, how we serve others – what would it look like?

Wouldn't it be something if churches of different traditions actually held one another in prayer, helped one another in serving; what if we didn't criticize each other on the areas where we disagree theologically, but we just prayed for the Holy Spirit to illumine for us what is God's intention?

How would it change the world if we were in unity with our Christian brothers and sisters in other parts of the world? What if we did more to communicate with them, to help those who are suffering?

All these things, I believe, should be in our prayers and meditation as we come to this Table today to share in the meal that our Lord Jesus Christ gives to us, the meal that brings all believers together in unity.

Let your lights be like shining stars – lights shining in the darkest places so that we are reflecting the source of light – Jesus Christ, our Lord. May we, the Church Universal, be like a galaxy of stars shining in the darkness.