

SPECIAL  
SUNDAY



WORLD COMMUNION SUNDAY

# Sermon Starter



Open Hearts. Open Minds. Open Doors.

The people of The United Methodist Church®

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United Methodists join Christians of different traditions to celebrate World Communion Sunday on the first Sunday in October. World Communion Sunday began in 1936 as a way to recognize our ecumenical oneness in Christ and to bring Christians together in a spirit of unity and peace.

In The United Methodist Church, congregations throughout the denomination will also join together to receive a Special Sunday offering that helps scholars from around the world reach their full potential through scholarships, training and mentoring. The World Communion Sunday Offering is one of six special offerings received throughout the year.

Adapt this sermon starter based on passages from Mark 10:13-16 to celebrate World Communion Sunday in your congregation. For a fully integrated service, coordinate them with the accompanying Children's Message, Offering Talk and Liturgy, available for download at [ResourceUMC.org/WCS](https://ResourceUMC.org/WCS).

### Let the Children Come

I recently read a story on a United Methodist website (<https://www.umc.org/en/content/world-communion-sunday-leadership-scholar-pursues-a-medical-degree-wcs>) about a young man named Karl Wesley E. Dillozon. Raised in the Philippines, he was used to a "happy simple life" but which became complicated when his father, a United Methodist pastor, got sick.

**"LET THE LITTLE CHILDREN COME TO ME; DO NOT STOP THEM; FOR IT IS TO SUCH AS THESE THAT THE KINGDOM OF GOD BELONGS."**

MARK 10:14, NRSV



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Karl was only 9 years old when he watched his father die of cancer. He describes it as his family's lowest point, explaining that his mother's finances were limited as a United Methodist deaconess. But he explains, "I grew up with a lot of people loving me and my family."

And it was during that difficult time of his life when Karl decided he wanted to become a doctor.

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***"Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs."***

—MARK 10:14, NRSV

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In Jesus' context, children have no voice, no vote, no rights; children were considered to have very little worth. But here we see Jesus take the children in his arms and essentially say, "This is a person of sacred value. This is someone who perceives the kingdom of God. Perhaps instead of restricting children, you should be more like them."

I wonder what happened to those children whom Jesus blessed that day. *Whom did they grow up to be and how did this encounter shape their engagement with the world as adults?*

I can only imagine how it shaped a strong a sense of self-worth and purpose tied into their discipleship of Jesus.

Perhaps that experience helped cast an unlimited vision for who they could become and how they could be part of wholeness in a broken world.

Think about the people who shaped you into who you are. What role did the church have in affirming your personhood? Imagine what it would have been like to feel invisible, of little worth, lost in a sea of adults and then suddenly being lifted into the arms of Jesus' unconditional love.

We cannot underestimate how powerful it is it for children to hear that they are valued and supported by the adults whom they look up to in this place.

The community called The United Methodist Church is a source of hope and love that is grounded in faith for children, youth, and young adults. As they grow up, what they experience through this place shapes their values and life choices.



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Experiencing rejection, gossip, bickering or lies interferes with their ability to become disciples and Kingdom builders.

Jesus tells us with his actions that each one of these young people is of sacred worth. We have a responsibility to ensure their safety, their sense of purpose and their beloved-ness.

Looking at the totality of Jesus' ministry and the meaning behind him saying to "let the children come," we see how his ministry models radical hospitality. This spirit of welcome reaches across borders, socioeconomic situations and age to give us a sense of the fullness of our family in Christ.

Sometimes trusting in the next generation means being a little uncomfortable or inconvenienced to support them building up the Beautiful Community.

*Who are the people we are called to be in ministry with?*

*Who is missing from the table?*

*Who are the people whose voices are too often ignored?*

*What does it look like to move over, to pass the microphone, to mentor others into leadership and to create spaces of grace?*

When we lift up people whom we might have instead overlooked, we begin to perceive the Kingdom all around us. Through intergenerational ministry, God's realm begins to take shape and transform the world as hopes and dreams are realized.

Today is World Communion Sunday. We come around the Communion table remembering that this gift from Jesus extends to all who follow him. There are no borders, no age limits, no exceptions. As we gather in the Sacrament, God's grace is available to every single person.

As part of our celebration, United Methodist churches receive a special offering to support students around the world. We are investing in them as they work to achieve the dreams that God has placed on their hearts.



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For example, funds from the World Communion Sunday offering were shared with Karl Wesley E. Dillozon, whom I told you about at the beginning of this message.

Karl's heart for helping others spurred him to medical school at Centro Escolar University in Manila City, Philippines. If you ever wonder how your gifts make an impact, be encouraged by this message from Karl:

"I owe it all to The United Methodist Church. I have been to a lot of medical missions and the church exposed me to people who need doctors. Without this scholarship, I wouldn't be in medical

school. It gives me a mindset of doing my best because I don't want to waste the opportunity given to me," he says.

Jesus "took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them" (Mark 10:16, NRSV).

We are invited to partner with the global church family. And when we do, our gifts are transformed into the blessing hands of Jesus. They extend to bless students like Karl, who have worked hard and who are building up the kingdom of God, ready to serve in life-affirming, healing ministry. Thanks be to God.  
Amen.



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