

HOME OF LIBERAL RELIGION IN CAMBRIDGE SINCE 1904



A SHORT ORDER OF COMMUNION

Sunday Services: 10.30 & 6.30

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People: *O God, you who know our weakness so much more than we do ourselves, fill our hearts with the will to forgive and the grace to be forgiven. It is so hard for us to transcend our hurt, our anger and our pain, and sometimes we despair. But somewhere deep inside ourselves a loving and forgiving spirit is at work – help us, O help us to know it and receive it.*

Service leader: As all share in the bread of life and are children of God, we break this bread as a sign and symbol of Jesus, of all who have faithfully served God, and as a reminder of our desire to serve one another in perfect love.

People: *In the same spirit of loving service we, too, offer up our own lives.*

Service leader: As we are all made of one blood and together share this world, we take this cup as a sign and symbol of Jesus, of all who have witnessed to the unity of our world, and a reminder of our desire that, freely as we have received, freely we will give.

People: *And let us offer ourselves not to be ministered unto, but to minister.*

Service leader: By consciously repenting of our wrongdoings and committing ourselves to the service of God and neighbour we begin to create

the space necessary for a gracious *Other-power* to well-up within us. Regularly taking time quietly to rest in its presence we slowly begin to see that it continuously weaves itself through our daily lives and the whole of creation; it brings us intimations of a greater reality and, by degrees, we are changed and our capacity for compassion and wisdom is enlarged. So now, in silence and then in the sharing of bread and wine, we yield to this graceful *Other-power* so we may begin to find that which we have always sought, and which Jesus promised could be ours, a life of meaning, abundant and fulfilled. [*Silence . . .*]

Service leader: As Jesus ate with his disciples in an upper room, after he had given thanks, he took a loaf of bread and broke it, likening it to his body, saying, “This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me” (Luke 11:24). In the same way, he took the cup when he had eaten and likened it to his blood shed for all, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me” (Luke 11:25).

People: *In this time of remembering and sharing may our desire to serve God and neighbour be renewed within us.*



In silence the bread and wine is shared, each person serving their neighbour.

NOTES ON THE SERVICE

In the USA during the late 1940s a number of young Universalist ministers briefly formed a group called The Humiliati. In 1949 they put together a booklet of Ceremonies for Special Services which included a short communion service. This service is a major revision of that.

The revision attempts to do two things. The first is to keep in view the primary aim of the original authors, namely, to provide a “form of the communion service with a strong emphasis upon the commitment of the individual to religious living.” In recognition of the fact that Jesus committed his whole life to the fulfilling of his religious ideals, the service sought “to lead the worshipper to face the demands and challenges of their own lives with a similar commitment to live religiously.”

The second is consciously to put into practical, liturgical form a key insight of the Japanese philosopher Tanabe Hajime (1885-1962) – a leading philosopher of the Kyoto School.¹ He felt that all philosophy needed to begin in repentance because only in the moment of letting go, as one admits one’s powerlessness and radical limitations, is the necessary space created for some Other-power (tariki), something new and saving, to come over the horizons of our limited thoughts and enter into our frame of reference. This experience sets our mind in motion in ways that help us radically to change our ways of thinking and acting in the world. As the philosopher Michael McGhee puts it, what is aimed at is simply a continuous movement from ‘egocentric self-enclosure to joy in the welfare of another human being – nothing less than the conversion of Scrooge’.

This continuous natural process or movement in which self-power (jiriki) is wholly given up and, in the giving up, returned to us wholly transformed by Other-power (tariki) Tanabe Hajime called a “way of repentance” (Zangedō).

¹ The Kyoto School is a group of 20th century Japanese philosophers who developed original systems of thought by creatively drawing on the intellectual and spiritual traditions of East Asia, those of Mahâyana Buddhism in particular, as well as on the methods and content of Western philosophy.