# Fiesta as a Celebration of the Kin(g)dom of God

**Thanksgiving Service**

—*by Alcris Limongi & Alydia Smith*

Prepare for a fiesta after the service! Invite people to bring light finger foods to share, things that can be eaten from hands or from a napkin. If your communion table is small or reserved only for the elements, you may wish to bring in additional tables around your communion table to have a feast after the service. You may also want to arrange for music, a piñata, and colorful party decorations!

## Acknowledgement of Traditional Territory

## Call to Worship

We are many,

*God’s great diversity*

**Yet we are one in Christ.**

We are from different places *[name various places/ regions where the gathered people are from]*

**Yet we are one in Christos.**

We are *[name different occupational identities present e.g., teachers, bakers, lawyers]*

**Yet we are one in Mashiach.**

We are *[name different personal identities e.g., parents, friends, siblings, aunts]*

**Yet we are one in Christi.**

We are *[name different personal tastes and styles e.g., hip hop, new age, trendy, artsy]*

**Yet we are one in Kristi.**

We are *[name different cultural identities e.g., Caribbean, Hispanic, Filipino]*

**Yet we are one in Jesus.**

We are *[name different emotional identities e.g., confused, happy, rejected]*

**Yet we are one in Yeshua.**

We are *[name other identities that are relevant to your community]*

**Yet we are one in Isa.**

We are many,

God’s great diversity,

And yet, by God’s grace, we sing in harmony, as one.

**For we are one in Jesu.**

*(Alydia Smith, inspired by* [*Engage Worship*](https://engageworship.org/)*)*

## Opening Hymn

***When Hands Reach Out and Fingers Trace*** (MV 136)

## Opening Prayer

We know that there is more than enough for all—enough food, enough shelter, enough love, enough resources—and yet there are too many people without.

**We know this.**

We know that we have fallen short on our promises to love, to share, to build your kin(g)dom on earth, as it is in heaven.

**We know this.**

We know that God’s reign will come when we are all loved and accepted; when we all have what we need to thrive; when we are all free to dance and party in community.

**We know this.**

We know that there is much work to do to bring about your reign;

And we know that we will not be left to do it alone,

We know that you, God, are always with us, your son is always beside us, and the Spirit is always guiding us.

We know that as long as we follow in the way that you are leading

**We know this your holy reign will surely come.**

*(Alydia Smith)*

Sung Response: ***As Long As We Follow*** (MV140)

## Passing of the Peace

***Put Peace into Each Other’s Hands*** (MV 173)

(Invite people to shape their hands like a cradle and move around pouring peace into each other’s hands.)

## Learning Together

Discuss as a community: what is a fiesta? (*fiesta* is the Spanish word for “party.”) What makes for the best type of party? Why is harvest a wonderful time for parties?

In a fiesta, everybody brings what they can and it is celebrated. Just like during the offering, and when we give to Mission and Service, when what we share is celebrated and put together to create something amazing.

Nobody knows for certain what God’s realm will be like—we can only imagine. But many people think that it will be a great fiesta, where all are welcome, all are loved, all are celebrated and cared for. A great party where greed and racism have no place because everyone cares for and respects each other. Each person at the party is important. The party would not be the same without them!

When we gather to worship, we attempt to create glimpses of God’ realm here on earth. We attempt to create spaces where everyone is loved and all of our differences are celebrated. We attempt to give everyone what they need to be successful, knowing that those needs might be different for each of us, so that everyone can participate fully and enjoy the fiesta!

-or-

Invite people to share what they brought for the fiesta and testify to what this gift has meant to them and how best to honour and respect it.

## Hymn

***Let Us Build a House*** (MV 1)

## First Reading:

Acts 2: 43–47

## Music Ministry

## Second Reading:

2 Corinthians 8–15

## Reflection

*Fiesta* means party in Spanish. Fiesta is a concept that transcends the geographical boundaries and cultural differences among Latin-American countries. Traditionally, a fiesta is a celebration in the community. It starts with the extensive preparations: some engaged in creating detailed and elaborated decorations, the big smoky pots cooking with many helping hands around, some on ladders hanging streamers, kids running around helping with small tasks, loud music already playing, those just sampling the food, and overall, loud and excited conversations in the background. Excitement and anticipation fill the air.

When the time comes, everyone shows up looking their best, whatever that might be for them, and show up with joy and lots of hugs for everyone. La fiesta is a space of welcoming one another, with room for all. Those who don’t agree with one another are there too. There are no hosts or guests; they host one another in mutuality and accept and cheer the gifts and offerings of food or decorations that everyone brings according to their means. The feeling is of a big family, of commonality and differences that make them who they are together.

The fiesta belongs to all: everyone helps, serves, eats, and dances—old and young, sharing power and ownership. The wealthy and the poor dance together, eat the same food, embrace and laugh the same, and people of all skin colors and shades celebrate and participate fully. There are no separations or hierarchies among people.

A fiesta may last many hours. There are no time limits. It is on until the last one leaves—after wrapping up and tidying up together. It is a time of deep community.

This is not the type of fiesta gathering in the young Corinthian church. The city of Corinth, according to historians, was cosmopolitan—polyglot, a commercial city by the sea, with a significant influx of immigrants. Social class was marked. The wealthy did their thing, and the poor, still at the margins, went hungry as usual. Social and cultural differences seemed to be tattooed on people in this very young Christian community. They were gathered for the agape meal, to celebrate the good news of the Kin-dom, and to embody the ethos of their new community in Christ. Still, they carried the same hierarchical and discriminatory systems that ruled outside society. There was no transformation; perhaps the only new addition was that they were all in one place.

As a church, [Mission and Service](https://united-church.ca/community-and-faith/get-involved/generosity-through-mission-and-service/what-mission-and-service) and the [Mission and Service Endowment Fund](https://www.unitedchurchfoundation.ca/giving/explore-funds/mission-service-endowment-fund) know that working through an anti-racism and anti-oppression lens are among the ways that can bring us closer to God’s dream. Which is why we invite you to reflect on this passage using anti-racism (A-R) lenses. What do you see in both scenarios with this set of lenses on? What is lacking? How is the kin-dom of God lived out or not?

But before we put A-R lenses on, we need to remember that when we try out a set of lenses that is new to us or belongs to another person, we initially feel uncomfortable. Our reality becomes distorted, and we perceive the world around us differently.

We may notice things that we did not before. We may notice who is present and who is not. We start to notice people that usually pass as just background. Be prepared, because when we put them on, we start to ask questions. For example, we want to know who is invited and who made the invitation. A-R lenses help us see who is not present (and why). Or who is here but invisible or voiceless (and why).

With A-R lenses on, we can also notice ourselves. It allows us to self-reflect on our personal—often unconscious—assumptions. We will begin to identify the social stereotypes and interrogate the connections between these and our own prejudices.

These lenses will also change our perceptions, allowing us to understand differences and uniqueness as gifts and not as threats or wrongs. We will notice the people around us as equal—with equal dignity and worth regardless of social identity markers (race, ethnicity, language, accent, economic status, education, orientation, gender identity, different abilities).

If we stop in silence for a few minutes and look around, what do we notice? Who is there? Who is only part of the background? Take off the A-R lenses, and it is “normal” to put them on again; you may notice the “invisible”. Anti-Racism lenses are made from love, love that enables us to notice and practice equity, restoring the dignity and value of each person in their own uniqueness. Thanks be to God!

## Hymn

***Miren qué Bueno (VU ps.856)***

## Invitation to Offering

As the church attempts to create the kin(g)dom or fiesta of God here on earth, Mission and Service and the Mission and Service Endowment Fund provide different but complementary ways of living out your faith through generosity, both immediately and in the long term. They recognize that this must be done through Anti-Racism lenses. Part of this looks like working in partnership as best we can with people and organizations, while never imposing our solutions, ways of doing things, or belief systems, actively working towards dismantling racism and other oppressions, and challenging assumptions and colonial practices as much as possible. Your generous donations to Mission and Service provide immediate support to the work of the church. Your gifts to the Mission and Service Endowment Fund is an investment in supporting the long-term work of building a just church and world.

Invite people to bring forward the food and party supplies for the fiesta as well as their financial offerings. People may bring up food that they have prepared (store it at the back of the church for folks to avoid spills in the pews) or prepare some party trays with traditional foods from people within your community, or foods that are harvested locally. Flowers, drinks, piñatas, and environmentally-friendly party decorations can also be brought forward. In addition, some participants may be giving gifts of time and commitment (for example, helping to organize, setting up tables, etc.). These participants may be acknowledged with a note or an announcement.

**Mission and Service and the Mission and Service Endowment Fund**

(Insert in the bulletin and read during the offering.)

Mission and Service provides us the opportunity of sharing in the fashion of the early church—what we may have secretly admired in the boldness and commitment we read in Acts 2: 43-47: “All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need”. Some among us may have sighed with resignation, accepting that this is not possible for us today. However, in this global village we don’t necessarily need to live together and sell our possessions—we have the opportunity to share now through Mission and Service and in the future through the Mission and Service Endowment Fund. This sharing is done in creative, contextual ways, enabling the church to continue to live out our discipleship boldly, deepening our spirituality, and together daring to justice practices that come out of love for one another as we have been loved.

## Offertory Music

Suggested Music: **Dance as David Danced (When the Spirit of the Lord)**

## Prayer of Dedication

Giver of our everything, our source of love and grace, to you belong all things, from you all things come. Today we present the fruits of our labour, the intentions of our hearts, our commitment to a justice that springs out of love. Bless this our offering. It represents us together, one in you. Make it dance and bring laughter and joy, and alleviate the needs of many. In your Name. Amen.

## Prayers of the People and The Lord’s Prayer

It is our Christian tradition to gather around a table, to give thanks, to eat, drink, and fiesta together.

And so as we gather, as we pause to offer our thanks and hearts in prayer, let us pray.

Thank you for the many different plants that come together to make a garden, different colours and shape, textures and smells. Thank you for the many different ingredients that make <<*name a dish in your feast*>> different aromas and flavours, spices and heats. And thank you for all of the different workers, with different skills and abilities, different callings and passions, different perspectives and experiences, that are together building your kin(g)dom.

We give thanks, and join with all the saints to praise our God who purposefully created and creates such diversity and who sends us Christ to bind this amazing diversity together, through the work of the church.

And so we pray for our church …

<<*name of your community of faith*>> and the people within,  
 and ask your blessing on <<*name particular people and situations*>>  
 and we remember all whom you would have us share this feast with, who are not yet present with us.

And we pray for our home, the earth,  
 Especially remembering <<*insert particular situations*>>

With deep respect for each other and our great diversity, help us to work together in all of our differences to create a beautiful world that we could never create on our own.

We join these prayers together with the prayer that Jesus taught us …  
<<*insert Lord’s prayer and invite people to use their heart language to pray it out loud*>>

*(Alydia Smith)*

## Hymn

***Sent Out in Jesus’ Name*** (MV 212)

## Blessing, Commissioning and Benediction

May the Spirit touch each of us and the feast laid out before us, so that when we share in them together, we might taste hope and foretaste the Kin-dom of God, the fiesta that is to come.

*—Alcris Limongi is program staff at the Centre for Christian Studies. Alydia Smith is General Council staff in the Church in Mission Unit.*