

8th January 2023

Communion

"A bond transcending time and space ... a vital, living communion."

John Wesley, *Letter to Mary Bishop* (1773)

My reflection on "tickets" for the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper yesterday reminded me of a special moment when I was celebration Communion.

When Covid restrictions were beginning to be lifted, some congregations were seeking new ways of sharing Communion, while still following "rules" that mitigated against the transmission of the virus. Part of the guidance was not to use a "Common Cup". Bread and trays with glasses of Communion wine shouldn't be passed from person to person. Only one person should "prepare" the elements, and the bread and wine should be "individualized" with no person-to-person contact.

I was to conduct worship in a small, country church. Because of Covid, they hadn't had Communion for eighteen months. They were *very* keen to have the Sacrament, given that they hadn't had an ordained minister leading worship for ages and wouldn't have one for several months ahead. "We know who'll be there, so we can get it all organised," they told me. When I arrived, the Communion Table had sixteen China teacups and saucers on it, rose-patterned China like granny's wedding tea-service. In each cup was a little Communion wine; in each saucer, a small cube of bread. "I see we're having tea and shortbread," I said. We laughed together, but they knew that meant I definitely approved.

For the Communion, I took the cups and saucers from the table, two-by-two, into the congregation – slightly rattly, like the wonderful "Mrs Overall" from *Acorn Antiques*. Everyone had their "tea and shortbread", the blessed bread and wine. It was a deeply meaningful act of worship.

As people left, there were expressions of thanks, not to me or about me, but for the fact that Communion had been celebrated. One man shook my hand and said, "I've never taken Communion before, but how could I not today, in such a welcoming fashion?" Our "tea and shortbread" Communion had changed a life. Maybe the folk in that church will decide this is to be their style permanently. If that's the case, I'd be delighted to celebrate Communion with them again, any time they care to ask.

A prayer for today

Is your love confined to a cube of bread and an eyebath of wine? No! Amen