

An unexpected Holy Communion

Before I could say the customary words, she reached for the pottery chalice and took drink after drink.

By [Melissa Earley](#)

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“What’s your name?” she asked again.

“Melissa,” I answered again. “I’m the pastor at First United Methodist Church of Arlington Heights.”

"Oh, that's wonderful. Where do you live?"

"Arlington Heights."

"That's such a nice town. What church did you say you were from?"

"First United Methodist of Arlington Heights."

"That's my church."

"Yes, I know. We have friends in common. I know the Robertsons."

"How do you know the Robertsons?"

"We go to the same church."

"What's your name?"

"Melissa."

I was visiting an elderly member of my church. Though her memory faltered, her hospitality never did. She was genuinely interested in me and glad to be making a new friend, again.

I asked if she would like to join me in taking communion. "Oh, I would," she said, so I set the chalice and paten on her bedside table, poured a bit of grape juice into the chalice, and put a piece of pita bread on the plate. Before I could say the customary words, and lead the familiar ritual, she reached out for the pottery chalice with both hands.

"That's heavy," she said, and drew the cup to her lips, her face disappearing as she took drink after drink. "Mmmm, that's good," she said.

"Can I have a sip of juice?" I asked. She handed me the chalice and I drank.

"Would you like a piece of bread?" I asked and tore off a piece of pita bread and handed it to her.

"That's good," she said. "Would you like some?"

"Thank you." I took piece for myself and ate. "It is good."

We chatted a bit longer. I ended our time in prayer for her, giving thanks for my new friend. Our sharing of the cup and bread didn't follow the Book of Worship, but it was Holy Communion all the same. I think maybe that's what Jesus intended when he said, "Do this as often as you gather in remembrance of me." Nothing fancy. No long prayers or drawn out rituals. Just good food, new and old friends, and a chance to get to know each other a bit better. For me, the best communion prayer I'll hear for a long time was said by a woman who couldn't remember my name, "Mmmm. That's good."

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