

Norbert Capek Flower Communion

Objects needed:

Yellow underlay

Small individual flowers (enough for each child in class)

Basket with handle

Vase

Presentation:

Have children pick out a flower from the doorkeeper on the way to the circle.

This is a story about a Unitarian man who had a wonderful idea about how to celebrate the beauty inside each of us and the beauty of the earth.

In the UU church, we call this celebration our Flower Communion.

"Communion" means sharing. This celebration is about sharing and about differences, differences in likes and dislikes, differences in giving and receiving, and the unique differences in all of us.

Most UU churches have a Flower communion service each spring. Our church's Flower Communion is on Sunday May 22, three Sundays from today.

Begin to roll out underlay.

Norbert Capek (pronounced CHAH-pek) was born in more than 100 years ago in a country that was called Czechoslovakia. His family was poor, but they knew that school gave Norbert a chance to learn how to do something good in the world.

Norbert grew up to be a man who asked a lot of questions. In Czechoslovakia, asking too many questions was against the law, so Norbert decided to move to the United States, where people are free to ask questions about all kinds of things.

In the United States, he joined a Unitarian church, just like our own church here. Meanwhile, back home in Czechoslovakia, a war happened. Norbert had learned at church that making peace is the most important work a person could do, so when the war was over, he went home to help his old friends and his family to be peacemakers.

Back in Czechoslovakia, Norbert started his own Unitarian church, like the one he had found in the United States. People came to church and sang and prayed, but there wasn't enough peace for Norbert. People were still angry and sad about the war and they didn't get along with each other, even if they weren't enemies any more. They didn't like people who were different from them. Norbert wondered how to help people understand what it meant to live in peace.

One day, on his way home from church, he came upon a brilliant flower by the side of the road.

Place flower on underlay.

And suddenly, he got an idea that began our Flower Communion.

Let's practice our own Flower Communion with pretend flowers from our classroom. In a few Sundays, you and your family can be part of the real Flower Communion here at Unity Church – Unitarian with real flowers from nature.

After Norbert saw the flower on the side of the road, he made a plan. The next Sunday, he asked each person to bring in a flower of any kind to church the next time they came for worship.

Each of you entered our Spirit Play room with a flower.

Ask children to pick up flower stem.

Look around our circle. Are the flowers you see the same or different?

Each flower is like each of you, different shapes, colors, sizes. Unique and special.

In a communion, we share what we have. In Flower Communion, we give our flower to our church. Watch what happens when all of the flowers go into the vase or basket.

Place your flower first, then each child places flower in vase in center of room. When all the flowers are placed in the vase, continue. Each child can describe their flower if they'd like.

It takes many flowers to make a bouquet, and it takes many kinds of people to make a church community. It takes ALL of you to make our class strong and special. Everyone at Unity Church gives a little something different to the church.

- Some people give their time. They might bake brownies for Wellspring Wednesday. They might be greeters who say “Good morning/afternoon!” to visitors on Sundays. They might visit church members who are in the hospital. They might be a kind friend to another child in Sunday School. What else might they do?
- Some people give their special talents. They might play the piano or sing in the choir. They might grow the beautiful gardens outside. They might paint beautiful pictures on the walls in our basement. What other talents might they share with their church?
- Some people give money to help take care of the church, to share with people who need our help and to make our church's dreams come true.

Everyone gives something unique. Together, all the different people and the different things they give make a church as beautiful as this bouquet.

The next part of Flower Communion is about taking what other people have shared. Let's practice that now. In Flower Communion, we will each take home a *different* flower than the one we brought. We'll take a flower that came as a gift from someone else in our church, even if we never know who brought that special flower.

Invite each child (in the reverse order of the putting in of the flowers) to take a different flower from the one they put in.

Sometimes, people in the church need to take something special away from church. They might need to hear someone else sing them a beautiful song. They might need someone else to give them a hug and a smile. Other people need more care, and we take them dinners or light a candle and say a prayer for them. Church friends in the hospital or nursing home get visits from the ministers and other people from Unity. When we need something from our church, we know that we can accept the love or friendship or help we need, like accepting the gift of someone else's flower.

Pause.

Norbert said to his friends at church: "See how we need many different flowers to make a bouquet? We need many different people to make a church! See how the flowers are sweet and beautiful together in the vase? See how they don't fight and argue about who's different or who's better? We must be sweet and beautiful with each other, like these flowers. Take your new flower home and remember that it came from someone else who is unique and special like you. Remember that the flower you brought is in someone else's home now, making them smile at its beauty and at your friendship. Let's live in peace."

Pause.

That was a beautiful way to practice Flower Communion. I hope that your family can come on Sunday, May 22 and be part of our real Flower Communion. You can bring a flower from your yard or garden. Some people buy a flower from the flower shop. Our church is so big that the flowers don't fit in a vase. You'll see that we put our flowers on a lovely archway that you can walk underneath.

Collect the flowers so that children who do this lesson again can practice with them.

Wondering Questions:

I wonder if you have seen something like this in our church?

I wonder what you might feel when you give a flower away?

I wonder what you might feel when you pick the new flower you'll take home?

I wonder what part of Flower Communion you like the best?

I wonder how you are like one of these flowers?

I wonder how the friends in our church practice peace?