

Room at the Table: *(adapted from resource produced by Canadian Foodgrains Bank)*

L: Do you see it ... right here ... a table set for guests?

It's a round table, a generously large table, a table that represents not only physical nourishment but a table that invites an exchange of stories and concerns. It's a place where friendship and support are offered – a place of welcome.

Embracing the table top is a yellow cloth – representing warmth and caring.

Plates in a variety of colours and patterns circle the perimeter, waiting to be claimed.

The chairs, some well worn, some wooden, some padded, all offer stable seating.

This table is not my personal table. It is God's table. And God, graciously and in good faith, has entrusted the hosting of this table to me. Or, actually, to YOU and to ME. To US.

We decide who will sit here. We determine who is welcome.

Our actions establish the guest list.

So ... whom will we invite? Our relatives? Our friends? People who can repay us? People who look like us? Believe like us? Think like us? Live like us?

Or can we make room at this table, God's table, for those see with other eyes? Who have experiences unlike our own? Who challenge our perspectives? Who are just plain different?

Let's meet some of them.

Voice 1:

I am Yvette and I live in the low rentals on Warren Avenue. I am a single Mom with two children, one in grade two and the other in kindergarten. I struggle to make ends meet, and often use the Food Bank to feed my children. I can't afford to put my children in organized sports, but I wish there was somewhere they could go to socialize with other kids. They can be pretty unruly at times and they need some structure and guidance in their lives. I remember I went to Sunday School as a child, but I haven't been to church in years. We don't have a lot of dress-up clothes and I really don't have any extra for the offering plate. I wonder if learning about Jesus would be a good thing for my children?

L: Is there room at the table for Yvette?

All: We welcome you to the table, Yvette.

Sing: MV #157 vs. 1, adapted:

You are a child of God, you are a glimpse of God's new creation.

You are a child of God, you are a child of God.

Voice 2:

I am Fred – my wife, Ethel, died six months ago and I am so very lonely without her. Our only daughter lives in Ontario and she doesn't get to visit very often. Ethel and I did everything together ... we especially loved music and playing cards. I don't drive any more ... my eyesight isn't what it used to be. It seems most of my friends are gone and the couples we used to do things with don't keep in touch much, now that Ethel is gone. I wish I had something to fill my lonely hours.

L: Is there room at the table for Fred?

All: We welcome you to the table, Fred.

Sing: MV #157 vs. 1, adapted:

You are a child of God, you are a glimpse of God's new creation.

You are a child of God, you are a child of God.

Voice 3:

My name is Brianna. I am ten years old and I love coming to church. I especially like it when I am asked to take part in the worship service or to help at a fundraiser. My teacher in school says I'm one of the best readers in my class. I would love to read from the Bible in church.

But I don't get asked very often. It's mostly the adults who get to do things like that. Once I was serving plates at a church dinner and I spilled some gravy ... I heard someone say, "Children shouldn't be allowed to serve; look at the mess they make!" It was only a small bit of gravy and it didn't go on anyone's clothes!

L: Is there room at the table for Brianna?

All: We welcome you to the table, Brianna.

Sing: MV #157 vs. 1, adapted:

You are a child of God, you are a glimpse of God's new creation.

You are a child of God, you are a child of God.

Voice 4:

I'm Ben and growing up I knew I was different from other guys. I struggled with my sexuality and finally, while at university, I was able to come out to my best friend. She was very supportive. When I told my parents, they were upset, but eventually they realized that my sexual preference didn't change who I am as their son. We have a good relationship and even my grandparents are accepting of me for who I am.

I was always involved in church as a boy, and I still go to worship most weeks and always when I am home visiting my parents. My work has taken me away, but you know what they say, “There’s no place like home”, and I wish I could live closer.

I am in a committed relationship with a loving partner named Jason. We’ve been together five years and we love each other deeply. I wonder, should we decide to marry, could we do so at my home church, where my parents were married and I was baptized?

L: Is there room at the table for Ben?

All: We welcome you to the table, Ben.

Sing: MV #157 vs. 1, adapted:

You are a child of God, you are a glimpse of God’s new creation.

You are a child of God, you are a child of God.

Voice 5:

I am Audrey. The church has always been a big part of my life. For years I taught Sunday School, served as an elder, and was leader of my UCW unit. I married late in life (I was 42). Little did I know it, but my husband was a closet gambler. He’d lose most of his pay cheque every month and I’d be forced to cover all the expenses of rent, heat, lights, and groceries. It left me with nothing for my own personal spending. He wouldn’t admit to having a problem ... and I just got more and more stressed. Things really exploded the day my credit card bill came, with a balance of more than \$5,000.00. My husband admitted that he had taken my card and gone on a gambling spree at the Casino – first in Moncton and then Halifax. We had a huge fight. I told him I was leaving. I feel guilty but I just can’t cope anymore. I’m so embarrassed – I can hardly go out in public and I’ve not been to church in weeks. But I sure could use some spiritual support.

L: Is there room at the table for Audrey?

All: We welcome you to the table, Audrey.

Sing: MV #157 vs. 1, adapted:

You are a child of God, you are a glimpse of God’s new creation.

You are a child of God, you are a child of God.

L: *(Looking at the table and reflecting)*

There is still a vacant chair at this table. You and I are invited to commune at this table as well. Each one in this circle has a voice and each one is God's guest ... and host. We eat together and we are invited to join each other's conversations, and share each other's concerns and struggles.

But if we think our seat at the table will fill the table, I suspect we would be wrong. For God always leaves space for one more at the table. There is always room at God's table.

(addressing the guests at the table) To those of you already seated at the table, is there room for us to join the table as well?

Table People: Yes, we welcome you to the table. For this is God's table. *(someone from the table moves the chair so it angles open towards the congregation)*

Sing: MV#1, Let Us Build a House (vs.5)

**Let us build a house where all are named,
their songs and visions heard and loved and treasured,
taught and claimed as words within the Word.
Built of tears and cries and laughter,
prayers of faith and songs of grace;
let this house proclaim from floor to rafter:
All are welcome, all are welcome,
all are welcome in this place.**