

STRANGER AT THE TABLE

Music by Michael Marion
Script & Lyrics by
Cynthia and Michael Marion



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Stranger at the Table

A musical for a
Communion service

playbook and music lyrics by
Cynthia and Michael Marion

music by Michael Marion

CAST OF CHARACTERS

STRANGER — *A transient*

MINISTER — *Worship leader of Congregation*

Congregation:

WORSHIPERS 1–5 (*Speaking roles*)

CHILD (*Speaking role with solo singing*)

SOLOISTS

(*With a small cast, these may be the same as Worshiper roles*)

**Optional extras include choir members,
ushers, and acolytes**

PRODUCTION NOTES

Stranger at the Table is a play about a church that is in need of new life and resurrection. For members of the Congregation, worship has lost its meaning and become routine. They have become complacent about their mission and ministry. They have lost their sense of community. This changes, however, when a transient (Stranger) interrupts their worship service, looking for a meal. The Minister and Congregation are, at first, put off by the Stranger's intrusion, but a gradual awakening takes place as they experience his joyful presence and infectious passion for the Christian faith and life. As the Stranger breathes new life into their service of Communion, the Congregation captures a new vision of the service to which they are called as the communion of the saints. At the end of the play, in a scene reminiscent of the Emmaus Road story in Luke 24, the Stranger vanishes, leaving the Congregation awestruck and thanking God that they have been blessed by a holy Visitor.

The musical is adaptable to a variety of settings. All of the action takes place in a church sanctuary. The Communion table is center. The Congregation may be seated in rows to the right, left, and upstage of the table, depending on the performance space. A chalice and loaf of bread are placed on the table. A cross is in view.

Stranger at the Table may be performed with as few as eight (if all of the performers are strong singers and actors), or it may be expanded to include a large cast. When “Congregation” is used in the play’s stage directions, it is referring to the group of actors in the play and not the actual congregation of your church.

The Minister may be robed, if that fits with your church’s tradition. Members of the Congregation may be costumed in street clothes, Sunday best, acolyte and choir robes, etc.

In the original production, the musical was presented in place of the sermon. The rest of the liturgy and service was conducted as usual. We had the actual congregation (in addition to the musical’s Congregation) sing “The Four Words” as they came forward for Communion in the middle of the musical. We printed the lyrics in our bulletin. Or the song could be sung with the congregation remaining in their seats and the Communion elements passed row by row. Please adapt the Communion portion of the service to the style to which your congregation is accustomed.

Duration: About 35 minutes.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Verse one of “Where Two or Three Are Gathered” is adapted from Charles Wesley’s “O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing.”

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MUSICAL NUMBERS

1. Prologue	1
2. Thank You God	3
3. Don't Forget to Remember	5
4. One Together in Christ	6
5. Two on a Road	8
6. Where Two or Three Are Gathered	11
7. The Four Words	14
8. It Will Never Be the Same	16
9. Finale	17

1 **AT RISE:** As the musical prologue begins, members of the
2 CONGREGATION enter the sanctuary for worship. It is a
3 typical Communion service. The MINISTER and ACOLYTE(S)
4 (Or whomever assists with your Communion) enter and make
5 final preparations at the Communion table.

6

7 **SONG #1: "Prologue"**

8

9 **MINISTER:** *(Singing)* The Lord be with you.

10 **CONGREGATION:** And also with you.

11 **MINISTER:** Lift up your hearts.

12 **CONGREGATION:** We lift them to the Lord.

13 **MINISTER:** Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

14 **CONGREGATION:** It is right to give God thanks and praise.

15 **MINISTER:** *(Speaking over music)* It is very meet, right, and
16 our bounden duty that we should at all times and all
17 places give you thanks and praise, almighty and
18 everlasting God ... *(Continues to pantomime prayer as the*
19 *CONGREGATION sings.)*

20 **SOLOIST 1:** *(Singing)* It's Communion again!

21 **SOLOIST 2:** I wish I'd have known.

22 **SOLOIST 3:** I'd have worn something nicer.

23 **SOLOIST 4:** I'd have probably stayed home.

24 **SOLOISTS 1-4:** *(Singing together)* It's Communion again!

25 **SOLOIST 5:** What does it mean?

26 **SOLOIST 6:** I feel so unworthy.

27 **SOLOIST 7:** It's always so routine.

28 **SOLOISTS 1-7:** *(Singing together)* It's Communion again!

29 **SOLOIST 8:** It will be a long wait.

30 **SOLOIST 9:** I don't like going forward.

31 **CONGREGATION:** We will all be home late!

32 **It's Communion again!**

33 **It's Communion again!**

34 **It's Communion again!**

35

1 **Holy, holy, holy Lord,**
2 **God of power and might.**
3 **Heaven and earth are full of your glory.**
4 **Hosanna in the highest!**
5 **Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!**
6 **Hosanna in the highest!**
7 *(End of song)*
8
9 *(During the prayer, the STRANGER, who appears to be a*
10 *transient, enters the sanctuary and takes a seat.)*
11 **MINISTER: (Continuing prayer) Almighty God, our heavenly**
12 **Father, who of thy tender mercy ...**
13 **STRANGER: (Interrupts.) Excuse me.**
14 **MINISTER: (Continues as if not noticing.) ... didst give thine**
15 **only Son, Jesus Christ ...**
16 **STRANGER: (Louder) Excuse me!**
17 **MINISTER: (Continues again. The CONGREGATION is obviously**
18 *uncomfortable) ... to suffer death upon the cross for our*
19 **redemption ...**
20 **STRANGER: (Standing) Didn't you hear me? I said, "Excuse**
21 **me!"**
22 **MINISTER: Would you please sit down? We're in the middle**
23 **of our worship here.**
24 **STRANGER: I'm sorry, but someone told me that I could get**
25 **a meal in here.**
26 **MINISTER: I'll talk to you about it after worship. Please sit**
27 **down. (Smiles nervously at the CONGREGATION.) Let us**
28 **continue ... Who made thereby an offering of himself, a**
29 **full and perfect sacrifice ...**
30 **STRANGER: (Walking up to the Communion table) But it looks**
31 **like you have some food up here!**
32 **MINISTER: This isn't food. This is Communion! Please sit**
33 **down and be quiet. We're trying to have a "Prayer of**
34 **Thanksgiving."**
35 **STRANGER: Thanksgiving? You all don't sound too thankful**

1 to me. Thanksgiving is felt in the heart and expressed
2 with joy! And excuse me for saying this, but I'm not
3 seeing a lot of joy on those faces. (*CONGREGATION*
4 *scowls and grumbles.*) Think about it. There's so much for
5 which to be thankful. I may not have a lot, but I'm
6 thankful for what I've got.

7

8 **SONG #2: "Thank You, God"**

9

10 **STRANGER:** (*Singing*) Thank you, God, for everything,
11 For air to breathe, and birds that sing.
12 Even when the chips are down,
13 I feel his presence all around,
14 And I thank the Lord for everything.

15

16 (*Speaking, to a CHILD*) I bet you're thankful for
17 something! (*The CHILD shrugs.*) Here, I'll help you.

18

19 (*Singing*) Thank you, God,

20 **CHILD:** Thank you, God,

21 **STRANGER:** For everything.

22 **CHILD:** For everything.

23 **STRANGER:** For morning, noon,

24 **CHILD:** For morning, noon,

25 **STRANGER:** And evening.

26 **CHILD:** And evening.

27

28 **STRANGER and CHILD:** Even when life's going wrong,

29 We offer up our grateful song,

30 And we thank the Lord for everything.

31 Thank you, God, for everything.

32

33 **STRANGER:** (*Speaking, stirring up the CONGREGATION with*
34 *enthusiasm*) Come on, everybody! We can all be thankful
35 for God's love!

1 *(Singing)* Thank you, God,
2 **CONGREGATION:** Thank you, God,
3 **STRANGER:** For loving me.
4 **CONGREGATION:** For loving me.
5 **STRANGER:** You gave your Son
6 **CONGREGATION:** You gave your Son
7 **STRANGER:** To make us free.
8 **CONGREGATION:** To make us free.
9 **STRANGER and CONGREGATION:** Even when we don't
10 succeed,
11 You care about our every need,
12 And we thank you, Lord, for everything.
13
14 **STRANGER:** Thank you, God.
15 **CONGREGATION:** Thank you, God.
16 **STRANGER and CONGREGATION:** Thank you, God, for
17 everything,
18 For everything.
19 *(End of song)*
20
21 **MINISTER:** *(Patronizing)* That was very enlightening. Now, if
22 you will please sit down, I will continue to lead the
23 service — that is, if I haven't forgotten my place.
24 **STRANGER:** That's the whole problem — forgetting!
25 **MINISTER:** What?
26 **STRANGER:** Forgetting! We forget to be thankful. And we
27 can be so forgetful that we even forget to remember.
28 **WORSHIPER 1:** I agree that we can forget to be thankful. We
29 do take our blessings for granted sometimes. But what
30 do you mean when you say that we forget to remember?
31 **STRANGER:** Well, we can forget to remember some very
32 important things — like who we are.
33 **WORSHIPER 2:** You make it sound like we're suffering from
34 amnesia.
35 **STRANGER:** Perhaps we are — from a spiritual amnesia. We

1 forget our true identity, and when we do that, we don't
2 remember where we're supposed to be going or what
3 we're supposed to be doing. (*Walking over to the*
4 *Communion table*) Jesus saw this simple meal as a
5 remedy for this ailment. He said that whenever you
6 break bread and share the cup — to remember.
7 Remember who God is and what God has done for you,
8 and in doing so, you will remember who you are.

9

10 **SONG #3: "Don't Forget to Remember"**

11

12 **STRANGER:** (*Singing*) Jesus ate with his disciples in an
13 upper room,

14 After giving thanks, he broke the bread,

15 As he gave it to them, this is what he said:

16 Don't forget to remember who I am.

17 Don't forget to remember that my body is this bread.

18 It is given freely so you might be fed.

19

20 **SOLOIST:** After supper Jesus took the cup and offered thanks,

21 Passed it 'round the table to his friends,

22 After all had shared, he spoke to them again:

23

24 **STRANGER and SOLOIST:** Don't forget to remember who I am.

25 **CONGREGATION:** Don't forget to remember who I am.

26 **STRANGER and SOLOIST:** Don't forget to remember that
27 for you my blood is shed.

28 It is given freely.

29 Do not be misled.

30

31 **CONGREGATION:** So we gather 'round his table to
32 remember him,

33 How he gave his life for you and me,

34 To make us part of his own family.

35

1 **GROUP ONE: Don't forget to remember who you are.**
2 **GROUP TWO: Don't forget to remember who you are.**
3 **GROUP ONE: Don't forget to remember that you**
4 **BOTH GROUPS: Are a child of God,**
5 **Given life eternal by the Son of God.**
6 **Given life eternal by the Son of God.**
7 **Don't forget to remember.**
8 **Don't forget to remember.**
9 *(End of song)*
10
11 **WORSHIPER 3: If we're all children of God, that makes us**
12 **family.**
13 **WORSHIPER 2: You mean you're related to me?!**
14 **WORSHIPER 4: You mean I'm related to you?!**
15 **WORSHIPERS 2 and 4: *(Speaking together, while looking around***
16 *at the CONGREGATION)* **And we're related to them?!**
17 **STRANGER: Yes. We're all sisters and brothers. We're family.**
18 **And when a family is at its best, you feel accepted and**
19 **supported and encouraged. You feel like you belong.**
20 **WORSHIPER 3: And we don't belong to just any family.**
21 **Christ is the head of our family.**
22 **WORSHIPER 1: And God is the Father of us all.**
23
24 **SONG #4: "One Together in Christ"**
25
26 **CONGREGATION: *(Singing)* We all are bound together.**
27 **We're always found together.**
28 **We all are one together in Christ.**
29 **We all are now connected.**
30 **Our lives have intersected.**
31 **We all are one together in Christ.**
32
33 **He is the vine.**
34 **We are the branches.**
35 **We're connected, you see.**

1 **So let us all start taking chances**
2 **Bearing good fruit, you and me.**
3
4 **We bear our load together,**
5 **And walk the road together.**
6 **We all are one together in Christ.**
7 **A fellowship united,**
8 **And you are all invited**
9 **To now be one together in Christ.**
10
11 **He is the vine.**
12 **We are the branches.**
13 **We're connected, you see.**
14 **So let us all start taking chances**
15 **Bearing good fruit, you and me.**
16
17 *(The following two stanzas are sung simultaneously.)*
18 **GROUP ONE: We are bound together.**
19 **we are found together.**
20 **We are one together in Christ.**
21 **We are now connected.**
22 **Lives have intersected.**
23 **We are one together in Christ.**
24 **We are one together in Christ.**
25 **We now are one together in Christ.**
26
27 **GROUP TWO: We all are bound together.**
28 **We're always found together.**
29 **We are all one together in Christ.**
30 **We all are now connected.**
31 **Our lives have intersected.**
32 **We all are one together in Christ.**
33 **We all are one together in Christ.**
34 **We now are one together in Christ.**
35 *(End of song)*

1 **WORSHIPER 1:** This is great to feel so close to each other ...
2 **WORSHIPER 2:** Speak for yourself.
3 **WORSHIPER 1:** ... And to Christ. I can't even imagine how
4 close the first disciples must have felt. They lived
5 together, worked together, ate together.
6 **WORSHIPER 3:** *(Seeing a cross in the sanctuary and walking to it)*
7 After being part of that kind of family, just think what
8 it must have been like for the disciples when Jesus was
9 arrested and crucified.
10 **WORSHIPER 4:** It had to have been horrible.
11 **WORSHIPER 1:** Their family was destroyed. Their friends
12 had scattered. They were confused and afraid, and
13 worst of all, their Jesus was dead and gone, and they
14 were never going to see him again.
15 **WORSHIPER 3:** They *thought* they were never going to see
16 him again.
17 **WORSHIPER 4:** What?
18 **WORSHIPER 3:** I said, they *thought* they were never going
19 to see him again. But he sure proved them wrong, didn't
20 he?
21 **WORSHIPER 1:** Just when they thought they had no hope,
22 Hope appeared out of nowhere.
23 **WORSHIPER 2:** What are you talking about?
24 **WORSHIPER 3:** Oh, come on, you know the story. Remember
25 the two on the road, and the mysterious traveler who
26 walked with them?
27 **WORSHIPER 2:** What traveler? What road? *Whaaaat?*
28 **WORSHIPER 3:** Shall we tell him?
29 **WORSHIPER 5:** That would be in Luke 24.
30
31 **SONG #5: "Two on a Road"**
32
33 **SOLOIST 1:** *(Singing)* Two on a road,
34 Leaving Jerusalem,
35 "To Emmaus," the sign had read.

1 **For their hope, their Messiah,**
2 **The Savior of Israel was dead.**
3
4 **So they walked, walked, walked down the road,**
5 **A heavy load upon their hearts.**
6 **So they walked, walked, walked down the road,**
7 **And the two on the road were lost.**
8 **The two on the road were lost.**
9
10 **SOLOIST 2: Then on the road,**
11 **Joining the two of them,**
12 **Came a Stranger who had not heard**
13 **So they shared their sad story,**
14 **The death of God's holy Word.**
15
16 **CONGREGATION: So they walked, walked, walked down**
17 **the road,**
18 **Talked down the road but did not see,**
19 **As they walked, walked, walked down the road,**
20 **That the Stranger among them was he.**
21 **The Stranger among them was he.**
22
23 **MINISTER: (*Over music, reading Luke 24:25-27 from the Bible*)**
24 **"Then Jesus said to them, 'How foolish you are, how**
25 **slow you are to believe. Was it not necessary for the**
26 **Messiah to suffer these things and then enter his glory?"**
27 **And then Jesus explained to them what was said about**
28 **himself in the Scriptures."**
29
30 **CONGREGATION: (*Singing*) When they arrived,**
31 **They bid the Stranger:**
32 **"Stay and eat, it's almost night."**
33 **As they sat, he broke the bread and then**
34 **Vanished from their sight.**
35

1 And they danced, danced, back down the road,
2 Spirits afire, no longer dead,
3 And they danced, danced, danced down the road.
4 He was known in the breaking of bread.
5 He's alive in the breaking of bread.
6 *(End of song)*
7
8 **WORSHIPER 1:** Wouldn't it be awesome if we could see the
9 risen Jesus the way they did?
10 **STRANGER:** We can.
11 **CONGREGATION:** *(Ad libs)* What?! How?
12 **STRANGER:** His disciples recognized him when he broke the
13 bread — in a simple act of worship. So can we — when we
14 look through the eyes of faith. Christ makes his presence
15 known in all kinds of acts and in all kinds of places. That
16 presence empowers us to do great things in his name.
17 **WORSHIPER 5:** As a matter of fact, in John, Jesus said we
18 would do “even greater things” than he did. .
19 **WORSHIPER 4:** Greater things? You've got to be kidding. I
20 wish we could do great things, but I don't think we have
21 that much faith.
22 **WORSHIPER 3:** But doesn't the Bible say that all you need is
23 faith the size of a mustard seed?
24 **WORSHIPER 5:** Yes, that would be in Matthew 17:20. If we
25 just have faith as small as a mustard seed, we can move
26 mountains.
27 **WORSHIPER 2:** I'll agree there are some mountains that
28 need to be moved. This world is a mess! But I don't think
29 that just you and I are going to be able to clean it up.
30 **WORSHIPER 1:** I read in the Bible once that “wherever two or
31 three are gathered” in the name of Christ, he is present.
32 **WORSHIPER 5:** That would be in Matthew 18:20.
33 **STRANGER:** With Christ's presence and a little faith,
34 miracles can happen.
35

1 **SONG #6: "Where Two or Three Are Gathered"**
2
3 **SOLOIST 1: *(Singing)* O for a thousand tongues to sing**
4 **Our great Redeemer's praise.**
5 **Yes, it would be so wonderful**
6 **To praise God in that way.**
7
8 **STRANGER: But thousands we don't have just now.**
9 **We simply have a few.**
10 **Let's praise our God with all we have**
11 **If it's just me and you.**
12
13 **For where two or three are gathered**
14 **In the name of Christ,**
15 **Miracles can happen that will change your life.**
16 **Where two or three are gathered,**
17 **Miracles can happen**
18 **When you and I are gathered**
19 **In the name of Christ.**
20
21 **SOLOIST 2: O for a thousand hands to share**
22 **With all who are in need,**
23 **To shelter all the homeless**
24 **And with bread the hungry feed.**
25
26 **STRANGER, SOLOISTS 1 and 2: : But thousands we don't**
27 **have just now.**
28 **We simply have a few.**
29 **Let's share with neighbors everywhere.**
30 **It's up to me and you.**
31
32 **For where two or three are gathered**
33 **In the name of Christ,**
34 **Miracles can happen that will change your life.**
35 **Where two or three are gathered,**

1 **Miracles can happen**
2 **When you and I are gathered**
3 **In the name of Christ.**
4
5 **SOLOIST 3: O for a thousand ears to hear**
6 **The troubled and oppressed,**
7 **Who daily seek the justice**
8 **Of which many have been blessed.**
9
10 **CONGREGATION: But thousands we don't have just now,**
11 **We simply have a few.**
12 **Let's help bring justice everywhere,**
13 **And peace and freedom, too.**
14
15 **For where two or three are gathered in the name of Christ,**
16 **Miracles can happen that will change your life.**
17 **Where two or three are gathered,**
18 **Miracles can happen**
19 **When you and I are gathered**
20 **In the name of Christ.**
21
22 **SOLOIST 4: O for a thousand heads to solve**
23 **The problems that we face,**
24 **The many ills that threaten the**
25 **Entire human race.**
26
27 **CONGREGATION: But thousands we don't have just now,**
28 **We simply have a few.**
29 **Let's work out problems while we can,**
30 **Before our time is through.**
31
32 **For where two or three are gathered**
33 **In the name of Christ,**
34 **Miracles can happen that will change your life.**
35 **Where two or three are gathered,**

1 **Miracles can happen**
 2 **When you and I are gathered**
 3 **In the name of Christ.**
 4
 5 **O for a thousand feet to take**
 6 **The Good News everywhere,**
 7 **To tell about the love of God,**
 8 **So all will know God's care.**
 9
 10 **But thousands we don't have just now.**
 11 **We simply have a few.**
 12 **Let's share the Gospel everywhere.**
 13 **It's what we're called to do.**
 14
 15 **For where two or three are gathered**
 16 **In the name of Christ,**
 17 **Miracles can happen that will change your life.**
 18 **Where two or three are gathered,**
 19 **Miracles can happen,**
 20 **When you and I are gathered**
 21 **In the name of Christ.**
 22 **When you and I are gathered**
 23 **In the name of Christ.**
 24 *(End of song)*
 25
 26 **MINISTER:** This has been very interesting — very
 27 instructional. But now let us finish our Communion
 28 service.
 29 **STRANGER:** I'm not sure we can do that.
 30 **WORSHIPER 4:** Yes we can, we do it all the time.
 31 **STRANGER:** What I mean is that this service of Communion is
 32 only the beginning of our Communion service. What we do
 33 here in worship is important, but that's only half of it.
 34 You've got to *live* Communion when you leave this place.
 35 **WORSHIPER 2:** *Live* Communion?

1 **STRANGER:** That's right, *live* Communion. Just as Jesus
2 took bread, gave thanks for it, broke it, and gave it to
3 his friends, we too need to take what God has given us
4 and break it so we can share it with the whole world.
5 That's *living* Communion.

6

7 **SONG #7: "The Four Words"**

8

9 **STRANGER:** (*Spoken over music*) Take, bless, break, give —
10 these four words illustrate the life that Jesus lived. He
11 took what God had given him, blessed it, broke it, and
12 gave it away to others.

13

14 (*Singing*) Take, bless, break, give,
15 Four words that are definitive
16 Of the new life we are meant to live.
17 Take, bless, and break, and give.

18

19 **SOLOIST 1:** (*Spoken over music*) It's like in the story when
20 Jesus saw the crowd of five thousand hungry people.

21

22 (*Singing*) Jesus took what God had provided,
23 Blessed the bread, then broke and divided.
24 With compassion, he gave it all away.
25 Five thousand were fed on that day.

26

27 **ALL:** Take, bless, break, give,
28 Four words that are definitive
29 Of the new life we are meant to live.
30 Take, bless, and break, and give.

31

32 **SOLOIST 2:** Jesus at the table presided,
33 Blessed the bread, then broke and divided.
34 In Communion he gave it all away
35 To his friends who had followed the Way.



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STRANGER AT THE TABLE.

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