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### **A Communion Meditation Given at First Christian Church on the Sunday Following Don Shelton's Death**

In some of our sister denominations, the Lord's Supper is almost always celebrated with a liturgy – what we here call a responsive reading. And one of those liturgies begins this way *"This is the joyful feast of the people of God."* It's a lovely and true way to begin this meal, but it also leaves me with a question: what do you do when you come to this table and you are not, in fact, filled with joy? The death this week of our former Associate Pastor, Don Shelton, has found me saddened beyond words. Some of you knew Don, some of you didn't, but his time here was marked – as were his relations with Barbara and me, with his family, with countless church folks and pastors over the years – by a deep spirituality and a palpable presence of God in his words and his actions. His legacy yet lives here in so many ways.

Now, you need to know that Don's sense of God's bountiful presence and Christ's constant companionship in all of life could break forth in all kinds of ways. In one of the last meals I ever ate with him, we went to a hole-in-the-wall Mexican restaurant in San Diego. The food was incredibly good. And as Don looked down at his empty plate, he then looked up at me and with that ever-present twinkle in his eye and fetching Bakersfield twang in his voice and impishly said *"You know, I believe that God wants me to have another enchilada."* And so he did.

Remembering his remark always makes me smile, but, what's more, it reminds me of the truth of this table this morning, whether we come with leaping or saddened hearts: God indeed wants us to have and know and be filled with God's bounty. Christ meets us here not with another enchilada, but with yet another example of more mercy, more grace, more love, more abundance, more hope. That liturgy that I spoke of at the beginning continues with this line: *"Our Savior invites those who trust him to share the*

*feast.*” Every one of you has had a “Don” in your life who has taught you that indeed you can trust the wondrous bounty, the feast of grace, that God through Christ offers you. In thanksgiving for those ones, come, indeed to *“this joyful feast of the people of God.”* Come!