

# The Kitchen Table

Ours is a perpetual clutter – with mugs at the ready, jars of breakfast stuff, medicines, reminder notes, trial recipes, pending bills, the day's post, the bread board, and random pens. When it is needed, space is made appropriately for lunch settings, baking materials, or arty activities. It is never clear of stuff – it even gets cleaned in sections! This is likely to be some people's worst domestic nightmare. Others may recognise the scene in their own kitchen. For us, it is simply a visual reminder of the clutter in our lives and the list of daily tasks and good intentions.



About 25 years ago, I was a participant in a regional deacons' day in Newcastle Cathedral Chapter House (now the café). We had worked hard on ideas, and the large central table was littered with papers, notes, symbols, ideas and promises. Geoff Miller, then Archdeacon of Northumberland, joined us at lunch time to celebrate communion with us. We rushed to clear the table but he stopped us. "No need" he said, "Here are signs of your works of service and commitment offered to God in faith and hope. All we need to do is to clear a space in the middle for a small cloth and the bread and wine." So we shared communion amidst the 'mess' of our lives and it felt very authentic.

The altar is the central 'kitchen' table in our churches. Though it may look clear and orderly, with a clean cloth and candles, it is in reality the table on which we pile up all our troubles, our anxieties, our shame, our hopes, our best intentions and every prayer we would utter. In the middle of the metaphorical 'mess' the celebrant lays a small cloth (corporal) on which is placed a cup and plate, bread and wine. The eucharistic prayer encompasses our history, our prayers and the story of salvation, and we come round the table to accept the grace of God in the midst of our often-messy lives. Thanks be to God for kitchen tables.