

LUNAR COMMUNION

“I AM THE VINE, YOU ARE THE BRANCHES. WHOEVER REMAINS IN ME, AND I IN HIM, WILL BEAR MUCH FRUIT; FOR YOU CAN DO NOTHING WITHOUT ME.”

With these words from scripture, astronaut Buzz Aldrin celebrated the first, and so far only, communion service on the moon. Aldrin, an elder at Webster Presbyterian Church outside of Houston, worked with his pastor Dean Woodruff to come up with the right symbol to mark the first lunar landing.

With permission from the Webster Presbyterian Church session and the stated clerk of the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., Aldrin packed communion elements as part of his personal preference kit. The bread and wine had been blessed at Webster, and the church provided the tiny chalice, which was small and light enough to take into space.

As the world watched, the Apollo 11 lunar capsule successfully landed on the surface of the moon on July 20, 1969. During the

scheduled rest period before Neil Armstrong and Buzz

Aldrin became the first humans to walk on the moon, Aldrin took out the elements and the piece of paper with the words from John 15:5 and celebrated communion. As he later reported, there was just enough gravity on the moon's surface to pour the wine into a cup.

While NASA staff knew about the lunar communion, the event was not reported in the press until August, with *Presbyterian Life* noting the special communion in its September 15, 1969 issue.

Webster Presbyterian Church, the home of many astronauts and others in the space industry, has marked the unique occasion every July with Lunar Communion Sunday.

The Presbyterian Historical Society provides resources for Heritage Sunday, a day of celebration set aside by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to celebrate and learn more about the history of Presbyterianism in America. For additional information and resources visit:

www.history.pcusa.org/hs

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