

# Awaken to God's Presence | Communi-tea

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month, beloved, solidarity, inclusion, spiritual practice, God, unity, community

## SPEAKERS

Joelle Wight, Blake Smith

### **Joelle Wight** 00:04

A gift of peace in the midst of troubling times. Project Zion Podcast offers this series of guided practices to help you connect with the divine. No matter where you are, and what's going on around you. Take a deep breath and allow your Spirit to find calm in the storm of life.

### **Blake Smith** 00:28

Hi, this is Blake Smith, and I'm here to guide you through this episode of Awaken to God's presence.

In the United States, the month of May is Asian American and Pacific Islanders Heritage month, so I have chosen a poem by an Asian American writer as the basis for our spiritual practice. The writer is Prasanta Verma, and according to her bio on the Asian American Christian Collaborative website, [asianamericanchristiancollaborative.org](http://asianamericanchristiancollaborative.org), Prasanta is a writer and poet born under an Asian sun, raised in the Appalachian Foothills, and currently living in the American Midwest. Her work has appeared in print and online venues including Guideposts Pray a Word A Day volumes, The Indianapolis Review, Sojourners, The Curator Magazine, Propel Sophia, (in)courage, Relief Journal, and more.

We, in the Community of Christ hold certain principles in common. They are, in fact, our Enduring Principles. Among those principles are The Worth of All Persons, Unity in Diversity, and Blessings of Community. We recognize that many in our world do not feel, or have not in the past, been treated in ways that uphold these principles.

In preparation for listening to this poem entitled, "Communi-tea: Our Stories," I would invite you to find a comfortable quiet place where you can focus your attention on the words. Pay particular attention to the ways in which the author acknowledges painful moments of the past while celebrating, without hesitation or shame, the very characteristics that have been the source of that pain. Try to picture those represented in these words. Bring to mind those in your circles of influence who have been treated as "other" in response to something out of their control.

I will pause after each verse of the poem, in case you want to pause the audio long enough to consider each verse separately.

At the end of the poem, I will offer a couple of questions to ponder.

Here is “Communi-tea” written by Prasanta Verma...

Let us speak of the days  
Of life-giving rivers and always  
Remember the stories  
Our ancestors told  
They bend over now, growing old  
They hold our hands, hold our hearts  
Their eyes pleading that we listen  
Before they depart  
Sharing generational stories and songs  
From Korea, India, China, the Philippines  
Cambodia and Laos to Hong Kong

Our young folk are blossoming  
Growing with faith burgeoning  
And longing for belonging  
We hold their hands as they  
Enter new phases of life  
They herald a new dawning

We all sit under the same sky  
We live, breathe, laugh, and cry  
We all sit at the table, we all have a seat  
And no, for our future there will be no defeat  
Of our identity, for we are found  
Standing on this rock solid ground  
With joys and loves, of a faith  
That is sweet, solid, and sound

We are not a myth  
Of a minority nor a monolith  
Foreign, we are perpetually not  
Asians aren't a footnote,  
An afterthought  
Foreign, we are perpetually not,  
Perpetually loved—this is our lot

To be Asian in the US  
Is to be a minority  
But the truth is an irony  
In the world we are a majority  
But in America to create solidarity  
We made up Asian American

To encapsulate everyone

God delights in our face  
Designed it with grace  
Hate cannot erase  
The beauty with which  
We are made  
In truth, we are rooted  
Our dignity, from God, transmuted  
A kingdom where all are included

We are beloved  
beautifully made  
to love and be loved  
All debts are paid  
We are not ashamed  
To have our heritage displayed  
Don't want to live in a masquerade  
Running from hate, feeling afraid

With our pork buns, rice, and kimchi  
Noodles, curry, ramen, and sushi  
Dim sum, satay, biryani  
Yes, brothers and sisters  
We are fearfully and wonderfully made  
Very Asian, in every skin shade

Boba tea, Green, Black, and "Chai Tea"  
We are a communi-tea  
A blending of brown  
Born swirling from a womb of hope  
From the darkness to home

We belong to God  
We belong to each other  
We are beloved  
Sisters and brothers  
Known and loved  
Perpetually  
Not a foreign entity

The color of our skin  
Is a gift wrap  
And we are all within

this beloved community  
In solidarity,  
In beautiful, beloved  
Communi-tea

As you're thinking about your reflections on this poem, I would ask you also to consider these questions...

Who do you know who has been ostracized, mis-treated, or left out because of their ethnicity, skin color, size, religion, sexual orientation, or gender identity?

How might you join them in celebrating that part of them that makes them a unique child of God?

Take a moment to hold them in prayer, thanking God for them and their uniqueness.

Now offer a prayer that you will find ways to welcome them into sacred, beloved communi-tea.

May you be blessed as you continue on your spiritual journey, and may we all find ways to include those considered "other" into this beloved community. Amen.