

UNDERSTANDING COMMUNION

Today we are celebrating Communion (also known as the Lord's Supper). Communion is a sacrament given to the church by her Lord, Jesus Christ. By partaking of the bread and wine, believers are spiritually nourished. Jesus celebrated a meal with the disciples and asked them to continue to do this in remembrance of Him. The story of the Last Supper is found in Luke 22: 7-19.

In the Presbyterian Church USA we believe in an "open table". We invite every believer who has publicly professed faith in Christ to join us in this celebration. We believe, by the power of the Holy Spirit, that the bread and the cup become for us the living presence of the broken body and shed blood of Jesus. We do not believe it becomes the physical reality, but the spiritually living presence of His body and blood.



UNDERSTANDING THE SYMBOLS

The Bread

The bread represents the body of Christ. In John 6, Jesus says that He is the true bread of heaven, the true bread of life. Real bread only sustains you for a while, but Jesus, the true Bread of Life, is the source of life eternal. Bread is the staple of life. By eating the bread, we are feasting on Christ and saying, “You are my life. Without you, I could not live.”

For the celebration of Communion, we use unleavened bread (bread without yeast), just as the Jews did in celebrating the Passover. The Passover was a sacrament in the Old Testament that was a precursor to the present day observance of Communion. In the Bible, yeast was often a symbol for sin. So, as you receive the unleavened bread, remember that you are receiving Christ, who is completely without sin.

The Cup

The cup represents the fruit of the vine. It also represents the blood of Christ, which is the symbol of the new covenant. In the Old Testament a sacrifice, and the spilling of blood, had to be made for the atonement (forgiveness) of sins. Christ became the sacrifice once and for all. (Luke 22:20). When we drink the wine, its dark red color reminds us that we share in the blood of Christ that was shed for our sins. We taste the bitterness of the cross and the sweetness of forgiveness.

Also, wine is a drink for celebrating. When we drink the wine, we remember that our Lord will return again and bring the fullness of His kingdom. When He does, we will celebrate the great Wedding Feast with Him. In Isaiah 25 and 55, God describes the day of the kingdom as being a time when we will feast on aged wine in abundance. In Jeremiah 31, Joel 3, Amos 9, and Zechariah 9, the prophetic vision of the fullness of the Kingdom is a time filled with abundance of wine.

As you receive the wine, remember the forgiveness that you have in Christ and look forward to the blessings He has for you.

Because alcohol is a problem for some, we have chosen to serve **non-alcoholic wine** in communion.

SUGGESTIONS FOR CELEBRATING THE LORDS SUPPER

Time of Confession

Before serving the bread and the wine, the pastor will lead the congregation in a time of prayer. During this time, confess your sins to God. The following are some sins you may want to confess.

- Any ways that you have violated His commandments that you have not yet confessed to Him.
- Areas of your life where you are not living by faith.
- The good things that you do in an attempt to earn His favor.

Serving of the Bread

While the bread is being served, meditate on what the death of Christ means for you. Think of how the sins that you confessed were laid upon Him and how He paid for them in His own body. Rejoice that you do not have to suffer God's judgment because Christ suffered His judgment in His own body. Meditate on the truth that you no longer are guilty of any sin because Jesus has taken your guilt away by bearing it in His body.

Serving of the Wine

While the wine is being served, let it be a reminder to you of the banquet that is to come. One day, you will feast with God and all that your heart desires will be fully satisfied. As you meditate on this, ask God to enable you to live by faith so that instead of settling for what this life has to offer, you can live a life of love and sacrifice knowing that God will fully satisfy you. You may want to think of specific things that capture your heart more than God (approval of others, success, your family, etc.) and ask God to show you that what He offers you is far greater than anything this world offers you.