

1. Title:

Holy Communion Procedures

2. Purpose:

Reprinted from the May 1995 issue of the Presbyterian Survey (now Presbyterians Today)

We trust in God the Holy / Spirit . . . who . . . feeds us / with the bread of life and the cup of salvation . . . " These words from "A Brief Statement of Faith" reiterate the importance of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper for Presbyterians. They affirm that the initial action of this divine meal begins with God. God in Jesus the Christ offers the bread and the cup and bids us come.

It is the Lord's feast, hosted by the One who promises an ultimate continuous feast in the Kingdom of God. Under the enabling power of the Holy Spirit the divine host is made present so that a bond of unity can exist among those present and those unseen.

The host welcomes all who accept the invitation to the Table. We who come need not be concerned about our personal appearance or aptitude. What matters is that the love, the grace and the hospitality of the host create unanimity among us. This meal is provided, not because we have earned the right to eat and drink with Jesus, but simply as an act of divine love.

For Presbyterians this divinely initiated meal is one of two sacraments of the church, instituted by God and commended by Christ. We are following in the tradition of the early church when we affirm three primal material elements of life--water, bread and wine--as the primary symbols of offering life to God. Being washed with the water of baptism, we receive new life in Christ. In eating the bread and drinking the cup offered by God, our memory of the promises are made present by the Holy Spirit. [Appendix A: What do Presbyterians believe about Communion?]

The Book of Order (W-2.4012 a.) gives the Session the responsibility for authorizing all observances of the Lord's Supper in the life of a particular church and to ensure regular and frequent celebrations of the Sacrament. This OPS provides the church's policies and procedures for conducting the observances of the Lord's Supper or Holy Communion.

3. Policy:

1. The Worship Committee shall be responsible for the oversight, planning and provisions for Holy Communion, hereafter referred to as "Communion".
2. The Worship Committee is responsible for appointing the Communion Coordinator and members of the Communion Coordination Team.
3. The Communion Coordinator and Communion Coordination Team are responsible for securing the Elders to serve, for preparing the Communion Table and the elements that will be served each month, and for coordinating the preparation and cleanup before and after each Communion service.
4. Communion shall normally be offered on the first Sunday of each month and on special occasions such as Easter and Christmas services.

5. The **Traditional** procedure shall be used in the even months (February, April, June, August, October, and December) in both services.
6. The **Intinction** procedure shall be used in the odd months (January, March, May, July, September, and November) in both services.
7. The following describes the provisions and preparation for Traditional Communion and Intinction Communion services.
 - a. For the **Traditional** procedure, we use 100% grape juice and English toasting bread (to produce the diced bread pieces) and the large, uncut loaf of bread, such as King Hawaiian bread; 1 loaf for each service, for the Pastors to break in half during the services, and gluten and dairy free wafers. The elements are served in the brass service stored on the top shelf of the locked closet in the old kitchen. There is a decanter that is filled with the grape juice to use to pour into the brass goblet kept on the Communion Table.
 - b. For the **Intinction** procedure, we use 3 loaves (1½ loaves per service) of bread such as the King Hawaiian bread placed on the pottery plates, gluten and dairy free wafers, and the red grape juice poured into the pottery cups. (The whole loaf of bread will be broken into two pieces by the Pastor; the three half-loaves are given to the Communion servers). Two porcelain cups are filled approximately ½ full with grape juice. Additional juice is put in a pitcher that the Pastor will use to pour into the third cup. On occasion, we may use pieces of diced bread served in baskets.

4. Definitions:

The *Traditional* procedure uses the traditional small plastic cups and diced bread cubes that are passed out to the congregation where they are seated. The *Intinction* procedure requires that each participant come down to the front and break off a piece of a loaf of bread or take from the basket and then dip it in the grape juice before consuming the moistened piece.

The term *Communion* is derived from the practice of early Christians. Paul wrote to the church in Corinth: "The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a *koinonia* in the blood of Christ?" (1 Corinthians 10:16). The Greek word *koinonia* is translated "communion" in the King James Version and "sharing" in the New Revised Standard Version. It is also translated "fellowship" or "partnership," referring to a common sharing or a sense of communion with Christ and with one another. Communion is understood as a common

participation in a divine Christian life that a person lives in Christ, because it is initiated by Christ. Calvin contends that such a union is ultimately a mystery too great to explain. ⁱ

5. References:

Book of Order W-2.4000 4. The Lord's Supper

<http://www.presbyterian.org.nz/for-ministers/worship-resources/special-services/celebrating-communion/chapter-2-> Chapter 2: The history and theology of the Lord's Supper

6. Applicability:

These policies and procedures apply to Holy Communion conducted within the Sanctuary during regular worship service. Procedures will vary for example, when conducting Holy Communion in a home for a member who is "home bound".

7. Procedures:

7.1 Traditional Communion Procedures

1. Four to nine current or former Elders of the church are required to serve the elements at the 9:00 a.m. service. Four to eight Elders will serve the Congregation, and one Elder will serve the Choir. Four (4) Elders are required at the 11:00 service.
2. The Elders will line up at the rear of the Sanctuary prior to the start of the Communion service.
3. Elders serving the Congregation will line up 2 by 2, and the Elder from the Choir will be in the front for the 9:00 a.m. service.
4. The Pastor will nod his head to start the Elder procession down to the front. The Elder from the Choir will fan to the far left. The next two Elders will fan to the left of the Communion table and serve the left side congregation, the next two Elders will fan to the right and serve the right side congregation, and the last two Elders will fan to right and serve the two outside sections.
5. The Pastor(s) will pass out the trays of diced bread cubes which are then distributed to the Congregation and Choir. Elders should be ready to assist anyone in the Congregation needing help in passing the elements.

6. As the Elder hands off the tray to each row, they should state:
“the body of Christ broken for you”

The group finishing first should then serve the Nursery staff.

7. When the Elders have finished passing out the bread they should line up in back and wait for the Pastor’s nod to come back down and stand on both sides of the Communion table in the same order as before. The Pastors will then serve bread to the Elders and direct the Congregation to partake.

8. After consumption of the bread, the Pastor(s) will pass out the trays of grape juice. Again four to eight Elders will serve the Congregation and one Elder will serve the Choir. As the Elder hands off the tray containing the cups of grape juice to each row, they should state:

“the blood of Christ shed for you”

9. The group finishing first should then serve the Nursery staff.
10. When the Elders have finished passing out the cups, they should line up in back and wait for the Pastor’s nod to come back down and stand on both sides of the table.
11. The Pastor(s) will then serve juice to Elders and direct the congregation to drink.
12. The Pastor(s) will conclude the Communion service with prayer, and then the Elders may return to back of the Sanctuary or to their seats.

After the Worship Service

- After the Worship service, Elders who served Communion will pick up all of the used cups and discard them.
- After the 9:00 a.m. service, the Elders who served Communion will take the plates with cups and bread back to the kitchen and set up the trays for the 11:00 a.m. service.
- After the 11:00 a.m. service, the Elders who served Communion will wash, dry, and wipe all trays and plates and put them in their cloth covers and put them away in the closet in the old kitchen.

7.2 Intinction Communion Procedure

1. Four to six current or former Elders of the church form teams of two to serve these elements at the 9:00 a.m. service. Four (4) Elders are required at the 11:00 a.m. service.
2. Prior to the Communion portion of the service, the Elders line up 2 by 2 at the rear of the sanctuary and come down to the front when the Pastor nods. The first two Elders will fan to the far left and serve the choir and musicians; the next two Elders will fan to the left and serve the left side congregation, and the last two Elders will fan to the right and serve the right side congregation. One team member holds the bread and other holds the cup of grape juice. The two members of the team should maintain adequate space between themselves to facilitate a steady flow of the congregation receiving the elements.
3. The Pastor(s) instructs the congregation to come out of their row of seats to the left and come down to the front to be served and then to return to their rows by going to the right (in a circular pattern). As the congregation comes down, the first person in line takes a small piece of bread and then dips it into the cup and then promptly consumes it.

The Elder holding the bread states:
“the body of Christ broken for you”,

and the Elder holding the cup states”
“the blood of Christ shed for you”

4. The team serving the Choir and/or musicians then goes back to the rear of the Sanctuary to serve those who are unable to come to the front. This team should also serve the Nursery staff.
5. The team serving the Choir will return to the front with the other Elders who served and all Elders who served Communion will be served by the Pastor(s).
6. The Pastor(s) will conclude the Communion service with prayer, and then the Elders may return to back of the Sanctuary or to their seats.

After the Worship Service

- After the 9:00 a.m. service, the Elders who served Communion will take cups and bread back to the kitchen to be cleaned and set up for the 11:00 a.m. service.

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- After the 11:00 a.m. service, the Elders who served Communion will wash, dry, and wipe all cups and plates and put them in their cloth covers and put them away in the closet in the old kitchen.

8. Review Schedule: The Worship Committee shall review this OPS triennially for determining any need and making of revisions.

9. Approval: Session approved this OPS on April 19, 2015.

Appendix A

What do Presbyterians believe about Communion?

The Lord's Feast

By Melva Wilson Costen

Reprinted from the May 1995 issue of the Presbyterian Survey (now Presbyterians Today)

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The host welcomes all who accept the invitation to the Table. We who come need not be concerned about our personal appearance or aptitude. What matters is that the love, the grace and the hospitality of the host create unanimity among us. This meal is provided, not because we have earned the right to eat and drink with Jesus, but simply as an act of divine love.

For Presbyterians this divinely initiated meal is one of two sacraments of the church, instituted by God and commended by Christ. We are following in the tradition of the early church when we affirm three primal material elements of life--water, bread and wine--as the primary symbols of offering life to God. Being washed with the water of baptism, we receive new life in Christ. In eating the bread and drinking the cup offered by God, our memory of the promises are made present by the Holy Spirit.

In the words of John Calvin, sacraments are "a testimony of divine grace toward us, confirmed by an outward sign, with mutual attestation of our piety toward [God]." A sacrament is a testimony of God's favor toward the church, confirmed by an outward sign, with a mutual testifying of our godliness toward God. It is a primal, physical act that signifies a spiritual relationship between personal beings.

The Lord's Supper is a sacrament of continuous growth, nourishment and new life. In our Reformed tradition participation in this sacrament should follow the sacrament of baptism. Just as humans need food and drink for nurture and sustenance, Calvin wrote that the Holy Meal is God's way of providing for our maintenance during the whole course of our lives after we have been received into God's family. Both sacraments provide a visible, in fact a graphic, way of presenting God's promises.

Through the sacraments God seals believers in redemption, God renews our identity as God marks us for service. But participation is a corporate act rather than an act between an individual and God.

Infants and children are baptized by the church and nurtured in the faith so that they can participate with the church in the sacrament of Holy Communion. Out of this belief congregations continue Christ's extension of open arms to children and welcome those growing in the faith.

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We believe that the sacrament of the Lord's Table presupposes, deepens and assists personal faith. We cannot wait until we think we are appropriately worthy for such a divine encounter. In presenting ourselves and offering God our imperfections, our weaknesses, even our sinfulness, God may make us worthy. Our worthiness is found in putting our trust in God and, in faith, relying upon God's mercy.

The act of eating and drinking with Jesus has been called by a number of names: Holy Communion, the Lord's Supper, the Eucharist, the Breaking of Bread. Each of these points to a particular meaning.

The titles Breaking of Bread and the Lord's Supper emphasize the oldest New Testament accounts of the institution of the sacrament (Mark 14:17-25 and 1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

The Gospels report Jesus' common eating and drinking with people from various walks of life, making such events worthy of remembrance. As far as it can be determined, Jewish meals always included bread. It was also customary for the host or head of the house to bless the bread and then break and share it with those at the table.

On the day of his resurrection the risen Jesus made himself known to his followers in the breaking of bread. He continued to show himself to believers by preparing, serving and sharing meals. This act continued among the followers of Jesus and the breaking and sharing of bread became a sacred act of remembrance, making present God's gracious act in Jesus the Christ in the special moment of remembering.

The term Eucharist, derived from the Greek word *eucharista*, which means "thanksgiving," is used by Mark, Matthew and Luke in their accounts of the institution of the Holy Meal. A verb form of this Greek word is used by Paul, emphasizing that Jesus gave thanks before breaking the bread and offering the cup. The joyous acts of thanksgiving that permeated the observance of this rite undoubtedly caused the second-century Christian writers to use the term Eucharist as the standard name for this meal.

The service of thanksgiving and praise included thanks for God's creation; for deliverance from sin; for the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus the Christ; and for the privilege of participating in the promised fullness of the kingdom.

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Presbyterians believe that the Word of God should be read, proclaimed and enacted in the Lord's Supper as an integral part of worship. The relationship of Word and sacrament can be understood in the context of the Emmaus Road narrative (Luke 24:13ff). While there are various interpretations of this account, it has long been recognized that the "breaking of bread" is a reference to the Lord's Supper.

The Directory for Worship in the Presbyterian *Book of Order* encourages the "appropriateness" of frequent celebrations of the Lord's Supper. A few congregations have begun celebrations of the sacrament as often as each Lord's Day and on other occasions of special significance in the life of the Christian community. But frequency alone is not the basic issue. Some believe we need to restore the Biblical pattern of the Lord's Supper on each Lord's Day to provide a disciplined reminder of a divine act that will help centralize and "re-focus" the rhythm of our daily lives.

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Our Directory for Worship reminds us of the wider meaning of Holy Communion (*koinonia*): "The church rises from the Table and is sent by the power of the Holy Spirit to participate in God's mission to the world." To limit our love, relationship and concerns to those who assemble with us at the Table is "fencing the table" so that it includes only the gathered community. It blocks from our vision those who do not gather physically at "our" table, so that we do not see the people of God everywhere.

The One who invites us to the Table reminds us that we are to live as the divine host lived. We are empowered to remember to seek reconciliation with Christ, an act that compels reconciliation also with one another.

Accepting the invitation to come to the Lord's Feast demands that we actively seek reconciliation in every instance of conflict or division between ourselves and our neighbors.

To say we "trust in God . . . who feeds us . . ." means we have faith in the Word of God--faith in the Word who became flesh, lived among us, and provided the model for our actions. We are invited to the Table to be nurtured for Christlike living. We are called to commit ourselves anew to love and serve God and one another.

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ⁱ Reprinted from the May 1995 issue of the Presbyterian Survey (now Presbyterians Today)