

COMMUNION

Like Baptism, the celebration of the Lord's Supper (also referred to as Holy Communion or the Eucharist) is properly celebrated within the worship assembly following the reading of Scripture and the preaching of the Word. The theological understanding of the Lord's Supper and its efficacy varies widely among us, nevertheless it is important to recall the saying of Richard Baxter, "Nowhere is God so near to man as in Jesus Christ: and nowhere is Christ so familiarly represented to us as in this holy sacrament." In the Lord's Supper we are reminded that we are part of the Lord's Body and "partakers of Divine Nature." Simple, everyday signs of bread broken and shared and cup poured and received signify a spiritual, and a concrete, participation in something far greater than what we see.

The administration of the sacrament may take different forms, depending upon local custom and circumstance. The most common manner of distribution among churches of our Way is by "passing." That is, the congregation remains seated and the elements are "passed" to them by the deacons. Another possible manner of distribution of the sacrament include the tradition of other bodies to come to the front of the sanctuary and receive the bread and then the cup (a common cup may be used, but it is only suggested if fermented wine is used - individual cups and spot for receiving them make this method very efficient). A variant on the preceding method is 'intinction,' where the recipients come forward take from a common loaf and then 'intinct' (dip) the bread in a common cup. The former method can be effectively used with non-fermented wine. Regardless of the manner of administration chosen, it is important that the reception of the sacrament be done thoughtfully and reverently. Also, it is important to note that the Words of Institution do not constitute a re-enactment of the Lord's Supper, so it is not appropriate to break the bread as the words are said. It is more appropriate, and more in line with Christian tradition, to break the bread during a 'fraction rite' immediately before it is to be distributed to the people.

Those who wish to follow the full 'four-fold' order of worship (the church gathers/the church hears the Word/the church offers the Great Thanksgiving/the church is sent forth to love and serve) will find abundant resources in The Book of Common Worship of the Presbyterian Church-USA and in The Book of Common Prayer. In those worship resources will be found full texts for prayers of confession and assurances of pardon, the Great Thanksgiving Prayers with their proper prefaces for various days and occasions, and appropriate prayers for after communion. What follows are some suggested Orders for the celebration of Holy Communion

OUTLINE OF SERVICE

(adapted from the *Book of Worship for Free Churches - 1948*)

Organ Prelude

Greeting and Announcement

Call to Worship

Hymn or Processional

Proclamation of God's Love in Christ

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Invitation of Christ

Hear the comfortable words of our Lord:

Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy burdened, and I will give you rest. Ask, and it shall be give you; seek and you shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you. For everyone who asks receives; and he that seeks finds; and to him that knocks, it shall be opened. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all you strength; and love your neighbor as yourself.

The Communion Collect

Almighty God, unto whom all are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid; cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

The General Confession (by minister and people)

Almighty and most merciful Father, we have erred and strayed from your ways like lost sheep. We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts. We have offended against your holy laws. We have left undone those things which we ought to have done; and have done those things which we ought not to have done. But you, O Lord, have mercy upon us. Spare those, O God, who confess their faults to you. Restore those who are penitent; according to your promises declared unto us in Christ Jesus our Lord. And grant, O most merciful Father, for his sake, that we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life, to the glory of your holy name. Amen.

Assurance of God's Forgiveness (by the minister)

The Lord's Prayer (by minister and congregation)

Call to Praise

Minister: O Lord, open our lips.

People: And our mouth shall show forth your praise.

Minister: Come, let us praise the Lord!

People: May the Lord's name be praised, both now and forevermore!

Gloria Patri

Scripture Lessons

Anthem or Hymn

Call to Prayer

Prayers (the pastoral prayer or other prayers of intercession)

Sermon

Offertory

Invitation or Scriptural Sentences

Collection of Offerings

Doxology

Invitation to the Lord's Table

The Preface and 'Holy Holy'

Minister: Lift up your hearts.

People: We lift them up to the Lord our God.

Minister: Let us give thanks unto the Lord our God.

People: It is right and proper to give God thanks and praise.

Minister: It is very right and holy duty that we should at all times and in all places give thanks unto you, O Lord, holy Father, almighty, everlasting God (*here may be inserted a seasonal or other appropriate preface for the Christian year*). Therefore with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we glorify and praise your glorious name; evermore praising you and saying:

(Minister and People together) Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts; Heaven and earth are full of your glory; Glory be to you, O Lord, most high. Amen.

Prayer of Consecration or Eucharistic Prayer

The Words of Institution

Giving of the Bread

(Minister) The Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, 'Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: do this in remembrance of me. Ministering to you in his name, I give you this bread.

Giving of the Cup

(Minister) After supper he took the cup and again gave God thanks and praise and said, 'This is the cup of the new testament in my blood: do this, as often as you drink it in remembrance of me. For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes again in glory.' Ministering to you in his name, I give you this cup.

Prayer of Thanksgiving (unison)

We give thanks to you, almighty God, that you have refreshed us with this memorial of your love, and have granted to us the presence of your Son, even Jesus Christ our Lord; and we ask you to strengthen our faith in you and to increase our love toward one another; through him who is our redeemer. Amen.

Hymn

Benediction

Postlude

BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER ORDER

There are two orders (Rites I and II - more contemporary) for celebration of the Lord's Supper. The BCP contains full texts of the collects, the proper prefaces, and, in Rite II, four different Eucharistic prayers.

Brief Order (adapted from the Worship Book for Free Churches -- 1948)

This brief order for the celebration of the Lord's Supper can be inserted into the worship service following the reading and preaching of the Word. A suggested order of worship:

Prelude

Call to Worship

Hymn

Prayer of Invocation and the Lord's Prayer

Gloria Patri

First Scriptural Lesson

Psalmody

Second Scriptural Lesson

Anthem

Call to Prayer

Pastoral Prayer

Choral Response

Sermon

Offertory (including Anthem/Doxology)

The Celebration of the Lord's Supper (as follows)

Benediction

Postlude

Invitation to Communion (by the Minister)

Beloved, as we draw near the Lord's table, we should consider our need to renew our comfort and strength as we make our earthly pilgrimage. We also remember that we should come to the Lord's table with knowledge, faith, repentance, and love; with hearts hungering and thirsting for God.

Therefore, you who are truly repentant of sin and are in love and charity with your neighbors, and intend to lead a new life, following the commandments of God, and walking from now on in his holy ways: draw near with faith and make your humble confession to Almighty God.

Prayer of confession(unison)

Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent. For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of your name. Amen.

Assurance of pardon (by the Minister)

Hear the Word of God to all who truly turn to him:

"If any one sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He is the perfect offering for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world." 1 John 2:1-2

May Almighty God have mercy upon us, forgive us all our sins, and deliver us from all evil; comfort and strengthen us in all goodness, and bring us all to everlasting life. Amen.

Prayer of Consecration

O Lord, who has consecrated for us a new and living Way, following Jesus Christ our Lord, grant to us who are gathered to receive from the one loaf and one cup that our hearts may be truly given over to the influence of the Spirit. And here we offer and present ourselves to you, O Lord, ourselves, our souls, and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and living sacrifice to you. Now, as we commemorate his last supper with his disciples, and his offering of himself in the sacrifice of the cross, we humbly ask you to grant your Holy Spirit, and to sanctify this bread and this wine, that they may become for us the body that was broken and the blood that was shed for us. May they foster within us penitent hearts and renewed faith, and may we receive this holy Sacrament to our comfort; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Words of Institution

Giving of the Bread

(Minister) The Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: do this in remembrance of me. Ministering to you in his name, I give you this bread.

Giving of the Cup

(Minister) After supper he took the cup and again gave God thanks and praise and said, This is the cup of the new testament in my blood: do this, as often as you drink it in remembrance of me. For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes again in glory. Ministering to you in his name, I give you this cup.

Prayer of Thanksgiving (unison)

We give thanks to you, almighty God, that you have refreshed us with this memorial of your love, and have granted to us the presence of your Son, even Jesus Christ our Lord; and we ask you to strengthen our faith in you and to increase our love toward one another; through him who is our redeemer. Amen.

THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER (adapted from Patterns of Worship of the British Congregational Federation)

The Approach

Prayer of Invocation and Confession

Words of Forgiveness

This is the promise of God and the assurance of his forgiveness:
(read any of the following texts: Psalm 103:8, 11-13; Psalm 130:7; 1 John 4:10; Romans 6:23; II Corinthians 5:17-18; II Corinthians 5:19; 1 John 1:9; 1 John 2:12)
We are loved and forgiven. We can begin again.

Hymn of Approach or Praise

The Word of God

Theme Introduction

Readings

Hymn or Prayer for Illumination

or

Hymn on the Theme of the Readings

The Sermon

Response to God's Word

Hymn of Praise

Prayers of Concern

The Communion

Invitation

Brothers and Sisters in Christ come to this holy table and hear the gracious words of our Lord: (read one or more of the following: Matthew 11:28-30; John 6:35; Matthew 5:6; 1 Corinthians 5: 7b-8; Revelation 3:20; Psalm 116, 12-13)

Alternative Invitation

This is the table, not of the church, but of the Lord. It is to be made ready for those who love him and want to love him more. So, come, you who have much faith and you who have little. You who have been here often and you who have not been for a long time. You who have tried to follow and you who have failed. Come, not

because I invite you; it is our Lord. It is his will that those who want him should meet him here.

Communion Hymn

Dedication of Ourselves and Our Gifts (Offertory)

Prayer of Dedication

The Peace

(use one of the following, with the appropriate text)

This is Christ's promise (read Matthew 5:9)

Jesus says to us (read John 14:27; John 20:19)

Paul urges us (read II Corinthians 13: 11-12; Ephesians 2:14)

And then: Let us offer one another a sign of peace.

The Story of the Last Supper

(first alternative)

Paul tells us (read 1 Corinthians 11:23-26)

(second alternative)

Matthew tells us (read Matthew 26:26-29)

Mark tells us (read Mark 14: 22-25)

Luke tells us (Luke 22: 14-16, 19-20)

The Prayer of Thanksgiving (by the minister)

So, in the name of Christ and following his own example, we take this bread and this wine and give thanks to God. It is both our duty and our joy to bring you our thanks, as creator, redeemer and sustainer.

At the beginning of time you brought existence out of nothing, and gave it shape. You spoke, and life began. With your own hands you formed us from the dust and molded us in your image.

When we ignored your voice and discovered evil you never abandoned us but sent prophets to call us back to you; and finally, when we had persisted in sin, you sent your Son, our redeemer. He was born as one us; he shared our pain; healed our wounds; and taught us the truth. He welcomed the sinner, and touched the unclean; yet he was rejected and killed.

Death could not hold him and after three days he broke from the tomb and appeared to the women; though others would not believe them, the good news spread.

By the presence of the Spirit, still he is with us. He renews our lives, and makes us into one body. The hearts of his people are filled with faith, hope, and love. Now we can praise you with the whole church throughout the world and in every time as we celebrate this feast at your own table.

By the Spirit's presence we know Jesus' words to us to be true as we share his gifts and hear him say: This is my body. This is my blood of the new covenant.

As we eat and drink together we look to the past, as remember his living, dying and rising; we look to the present, as we celebrate his presence and declare that he is Lord of all; and we look to the future as we prepare for the day when we shall drink the wine new with him in his Father's kingdom.

And to him who is able to keep us from falling and to make us stand without blemish in his presence of his glory with rejoicing, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, power and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen (Jude 24)

Gathering our prayers into one, we pray as Jesus taught us.

The Lord's Prayer

The Sharing of Bread and Wine

"The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of one bread."

(the bread is broken and distributed to the congregation. As all eat, these words may be used: The bread of heaven in Christ Jesus)

"The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ?"

(the wine is distributed to the congregation. As all drink these words may be used: The cup of salvation in Christ Jesus.)

Prayer after Communion

Thanks be to God for his gift beyond words. (II Corinthians 9:15)

Concluding Hymn

Blessing