

Worship + Communion At Home

As we continue to live into online worship, one aspect of our worship that we have been hesitant to share online has been communion. Theologians and clergy have been having pretty heated conversation around whether or not celebrating communion in online settings is theologically appropriate.

After a lot of reading, prayer and conversation, I believe that celebrating communion when we are gathered together virtually on Zoom is theologically sound. God is certainly present in all of our homes as we gather for worship and we are connected as community in our time of worship. An ordained minister is leading worship and consecrating the elements as we worship, even as the elements are spread throughout our various homes.

I would caution that as we record the Zoom worship experiences and post on the website, celebrating communion with the recorded service does not make sense. While God is still present, the community is not truly gathered in that time and space. So I would dissuade anyone from celebrating communion when watching the recorded Zoom worship services.

As we hope to increase our celebration of communion in our current virtual worship setting, it seems appropriate to give some guidance on how you can prepare for celebrating communion in your home.

While it may be difficult to see at times, I have created a small altar beside me when I am leading worship. It contains a standing cross, my Bible and the Trinity candle that we light at the beginning of worship. On a communion Sunday, the elements would also be placed there. The table is draped with a spring tablecloth with flowers embroidered on it, a visible reminder to me of the Easter season and the new life we have been given through the death and resurrection of Jesus. On Pentecost Sunday, May 31, I will change it to red, which is the liturgical color for the day. And then on June 7, I will move to green, which is the color for ordinary time.

How might you create a worship space/altar in your home for when we gather on Sunday mornings? Here are some things to consider adding:

- ✝ Add liturgical color to your space – Easter=white, Pentecost Sunday=red, Pentecost season=green
- ✝ Add a small bowl with water - this is a reminder of our baptism.
- ✝ Add a small candle to light as you worship - this is a reminder of the light of Christ.
- ✝ Add a small cross to the space

Communion Preparation

I invite you to prepare for communion as you would prepare for any special meal. Think about what dishes you will use to hold the elements. A small cup or glass will work fine for the wine or grape juice. A small plate or basket will be fine for the bread.

Also consider what elements you will use. Wine or grape juice is preferred, but if neither are available, water is fine. Bread is preferred, but if you don't have bread, a cracker can be used as well. On Sundays when we will celebrate communion, prepare the elements for you and those within your household. If others will be sharing in the meal with you, consider if you need

Worship + Communion At Home

smaller cups pre-filled with wine or grape juice, if you will pour from a central cup into smaller cups, or if you will drink from the same cup or dip the bread into a common cup.

It is also appropriate to cover the elements with a light cloth or napkin until it is time for communion.

- ✝ If you are a household of two or more, make sure to commune one another at the appropriate time in the communion liturgy. Share the bread with one another, using the words *The body of Christ broken for you*. Share the wine/grape juice with one another, using the words *The blood of Christ shed for you*.
- ✝ If you are a household of one, Christ promises to come to us through the word and sacrament, and you are connected to the whole body of Christ when you speak these words and share in this meal.

The church is anywhere people gather in Jesus' name. When we cannot meet in a church building, God continues to be present in the creative and intentional ways we gather for worship. Therefore, when you gather in Jesus' name, your home is church, too. Holy Communion is a special meal we celebrate when we worship. The bread and wine are mysteriously the real presence of Jesus Christ, and we trust that Jesus is really with us in this meal.

Two communion bread recipes have been included below. Neither recipe requires yeast and these are both easy to make communion breads that you could utilize in your home setting. It is certainly appropriate to prepare one batch of bread, and keep out what you will use for one communion gathering and then freeze the rest for later use.

After Worship Has Ended

After worship has concluded, care is needed in the disposal of any remaining elements from the celebration of communion. When I was in seminary, it was quite customary for students to gather around the altar and consume whatever was left, both wine and bread. Any elements that are leftover must either be consumed or returned to the earth.

When worship has ended, please either drink any remaining wine/grape juice or return it to the earth but pouring the liquid into your yard or flower bed. Any remaining bread/cracker should either be eaten or fed to the birds.

Communion in the home may not hold the same significance for some as communion received within the church, but know that Christ is present when we gather at the table, no matter where that table may be. If you have any questions regarding celebrating communion at home during this time of virtual worship, please reach out.

Blessings,

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Worship + Communion At Home

Communion Bread Recipe From Luther Seminary

Sift dry ingredients together three times (important!)

2 c whole wheat flour
1 c white flour
1 & ¼ tsp baking powder
1 & ¼ tsp salt

Stir in 4 tsp oil. Set aside.

Mix wet ingredients together until dissolved:

¾ c + 2 TBSP very hot water (minimum of 180 degrees F)
3 TBSP honey
3 TBSP molasses

Add wet ingredients to dry ingredients and mix well. Dough should be slightly sticky. **DO NOT KNEAD!**

Divide into four balls and flatten each into a ¼ inch thick disk.

With a knife, score the top of each loaf into eight pie-shaped sections, so the sections can be more easily broken off when serving. Alternatively, you could score a cross onto the loaf.

Lay the loaves on a baking sheet. Bake at 350 degrees for 10 minutes. Remove from the oven and brush the tops of the loaves with oil. Bake an additional 5-8 minutes. Let cool.

Yield: four 8 oz. rounds. Each round serves 60-70 people, depending on the size of the pieces broken off. The rounds can be wrapped in wax paper and frozen in a ziplock gallon bag.

Worship + Communion At Home

Communion Bread Recipe

From the Fed and Forgiven Communion Resources we use at St. John's

(this is the recipe our first communion students use to make the bread for Maundy Thursday worship each year.)

Mix dry ingredients

1 & ½ c white flour

½ c whole wheat flour

¾ tsp baking soda

½ tsp salt

Cut in 3 TBSP of shortening

Add 3 TBSP honey and then ¾ c water

Recipe says to mix by hand (in class we use the dough hook on the mixer).

When dough forms, turn onto a floured surface and knead for a bit.

Divide dough into four balls. Roll or press to ¼ inch thickness.

Cut a shallow cross through the top of each round.

Bake for 10 minutes at 350 degrees on greased cookie sheets. Cool on wire racks.

Rounds can be wrapped in wax paper and frozen in a ziplock gallon bag.