

## Holy Communion during our separation

I have had several members ask me about having communion while we are not able to gather together. As you can imagine this is new territory for the church, its leaders and members. Maybe it helps to ask ourselves some questions:

### *What is Holy Communion?*

It is God's gift to us of God's presence through Jesus' presence in the bread and wine. We get to taste and smell and see that God is good!

It is God's family meal. Our First Communion classes learn that the meal is for all God's people and that there is a place for you.

### *Do we have to have Communion?*

No! Remember it is a gift and we are not required to come to the table. However, as a gift from God it is for our benefit; to nurture and strengthen faith.

### *Can it wait until we can gather again?*

Yes. We can take this time to "fast" from Holy Communion. In its absence, we can celebrate God's presence in The Word (the Bible) and in other things around us.

So then, the last question is,

*"Is it appropriate or is there a way to have communion when we are not in the building or gathering as a congregation?"*

I am saying, "Yes." But know that not everyone agrees. Our ELCA leaders are saying that we should not offer communion if we are not a gathered community. Bishops and theologians are sharing differing opinions. Here are the points I have settled on for a reason to offer a form of communion in the home. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list.

- The intent of Holy Communion is to nurture the followers of Jesus.
- It is a celebration of Jesus' presence with us. (Yes, Jesus is present in many other ways also.)
- It began being shared in the homes of Jesus' followers as they gathered with other followers.
- It began as a potluck meal– not the minimalization to a scrap of bread and sip or drip of wine.
- These are unusual and unprecedented times.
- We can gather via technology and see and hear one another even when not physically present.
- Communion should be a part of the conversation about what it means to be the Body of Christ when we cannot gather.
- Jesus unites us as the Body of Christ by his presence, not by our following particular ritual.
- This may not be the "correct" answer, nor the correct answer for all time, but it feels like the "right" answer in this moment and in these circumstances as the pastoral thing to do.

With all that in mind, and ***with no compulsion upon anyone to use it***, I offer these liturgies for celebrating communion as the Body of Christ at home. Whether you are alone or in a family setting, I suggest you use this at the appropriate time during online worship or in the printed version. Or, you may celebrate at the conclusion of worship. Again, **if you are not comfortable or you do not think we should** celebrate communion at home, you will not be judged or compelled to do so.

## A Liturgy for Celebrating Communion at Home During a Time of Crisis

*Be sure to have bread and wine or juice ready before you begin, enough for everyone.*

*Gather everyone together around the table.*

*You can read responsively or together in unison, or take turns.*

*We begin by joining together in affirming the ways Jesus showed God's love:*

Jesus showed God's love in many ways:

**welcoming children,**

forgiving sinners,

**healing sick people,**

teaching God's love,

**helping poor and hungry people.**

Jesus was friends with people who were hated, made fun of and treated badly.

One of the ways Jesus showed love was

**by sharing food.**

We remember Bible stories about Jesus sharing meals:

Jesus invited himself to eat with Zacchaeus at his house. Zacchaeus was surprised at Jesus' loving acceptance. (Luke 19:1-10; p. 400, Spark Story Bible)

Jesus fed thousands of people on the hillside with only a little bread and fish. There was plenty to go around after he blessed and broke the bread. Everyone was surprised at Jesus' generosity. (John 6:1-14; p. 426, Spark Story Bible)

Jesus gathered his best friends for a meal we call the Last Supper. He picked up bread, gave thanks to God, broke it and shared it with them saying, "Whenever you share this bread and cup, I will be with you, feeding you, loving you, forgiving you." Jesus' friends were surprised at his open-hearted love. (Mark 14:12-25; p. 462, Spark Story Bible)

Paul, as he started many churches, shares words that were shared when people gathered to share a meal remembering Jesus' gift of love. He said, "I passed on to you what I received from the Lord. On the night the Lord Jesus was handed over to his enemies, he took bread. When he had given thanks, he broke it. He said, "This is my body. It is given for you. Every time you eat it, do it in memory of me." In the same way, after supper he took the cup. He said, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Every time you drink it, do it in memory of me."

When you eat the bread and drink the cup, you are announcing the Lord's death until he comes again." (1 Corinthians 11:23-26)

Let us pray.

God of soil, sunshine, and rain. You bring forth gifts of grain and grapes from the fields. You gather your people from all over the world. Hear our prayers for those in need this day... (*lift up petitions for others in need.*) Today we thank you for your gifts of food and drink for your people. Even when we cannot gather in the same space, we thank you that we are gathered into your presence and loving, embracing arms. Remembering your love for us given in our baptism, we now give you thanks for your love and forgiveness. We are grateful that you call us to live lives of helping, healing, and doing justice. As we receive the fruit of the field and vine today, may we taste your love and be united with you and all your people in great purpose. In the name of Jesus who loves us. Amen.

*Share the bread and cup. As you do proclaim God's promise to you, "Given and shed for you."*

*Share a blessing at the conclusion of the meal. If you are with others, take turns blessing one another. You may use one of the following blessings:*

Jesus is with you, feeding you, loving you and forgiving you.

*or*

Jesus calls you his friend, and God loves you.

*or*

Remember your baptism. You belong to God.

## ***Household Communion in an Exceptional Time***

(adapted by the Nebraska Synod from a rite prepared by  
Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod - ELCA)

*This service is intended to be incorporated into the Sunday worship, whether viewed online or read. You may either pause at the time of communion in worship, or use this service immediately after watching or reading the entire service. Prepare the bread and wine or grape juice prior to worship.*

### **Confession**

Most merciful God, we confess that we are captive to sin and cannot free ourselves. 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. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name. Amen.

### **The assurance of forgiveness:**

In the mercy of almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for us, and for his sake, God forgives us all our sins. To all who believe he gives the power to become the children of God and bestows upon them the Holy Spirit. Amen

### **Holy Communion**

*Lift the bread and cup, or place your hand upon the elements.*

When our congregation last gathered, the pastor proclaimed the words of Jesus, saying, "In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me. Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me."

**Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name,  
thy kingdom come,  
thy will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread;  
and forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those  
who trespass against us;  
and lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom,  
and the power, and the glory,  
forever and ever. Amen.**

*Communion is shared. After, bless one another with these or similar words.  
May the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen and keep you. Amen.*

*End with a blessing:*

The blessing of almighty God be upon you and remain with you always.