



How To Serve Holy Communion

A Bit Of Theology First!

We believe that the word of God is a powerful creative thing. When God created everything, He spoke, "Let there be..." When Jesus spoke and said "This is my body..." he spoke the powerful word of God. The Church has been given the authority and power to bring Jesus' forgiveness to the world by speaking God's creative Word. When we call something a 'sacrament' we mean that it is three things: Holy, A Mystery, and God's grace! See: Exodus 12:1-17, Matt 26:26-28, Mark 14:22-24, Luke 22:19-20, 1 Corinthians 11:23-25.

What Happens In Holy Communion?

Throughout Christian history there have been many diverse views on what Holy Communion actually does! We simply accept that it's a mystery!

Before Jesus (in Old Testament Times) drinking a "common cup" was a "covenant" linking people and making them one. It was a common way to seal an agreement or promise or even marriage ceremony.

Saint Augustine (~440AD) said, "When the Word joins the outward thing, it becomes a holy thing (sacrament)."

Medieval Roman Catholic doctrine was called 'transubstantiation'. That it has the "accidents" of bread, but the "substance" of Christ's body."

One early protestant Zwingli said: "When Jesus said, "this is my body" he meant "this represents/symbolizes my body". But something can be symbolic and much more too!

Considering the words "this is my body" Martin Luther said (~1530AD), "I know that the majestic God has more brains in his little finger than all the spirits and scholars together... What Christ says goes!"

Given that Holy Communion is a 'holy mystery' we can't define exactly how it works. We simply trust the words 'this is my body, this is my blood... given for the forgiveness of sins.' We don't get too caught up in trying to cook up human explanations! So how do you see what happens to the bread and wine in communion?

The Benefits Of Holy Communion

We receive Jesus' forgiveness (Eph 1:7 & 2:13, Rom 3:25).

Our faith is strengthened, we need it to fight the devil (John 6:56).

We are united with all Christians (1 Cor 10:17, Rev 19:17).

We are reminded of Jesus death and his promises (1 Cor 11:26, John 6:40).

Preparing To Serve Holy Communion

Prayer & Attitude:

- Pray beforehand to dedicate your service to God!
- Remember an attitude of humility is required to deal with holy things.
- Remember that this role is a place of service – not authority or power.

Practical Preparation:

- If you can't be there arrange someone else to replace you!
- Please "check in" with Pastor or other leaders before worship.
- We have sterilizing hand-wash in the vestry.
- Please arrive 30 minutes early to help set up communion.

Prayer Before Worship

- If you're serving please do check in with us to pray before worship.

Giving Out The Bread And Wine

You May Serve Either Bread Or Wine

There is no good scriptural reason why a person serves either the bread or the wine. In former times only pastors served bread because it was felt that their role was to refuse if someone 'unworthy' should come forward. Today the decision is made by those coming and we have clear guidelines on our newsletter and powerpoint screen.

Who Has Communion First?

There's no rule about who goes first, but we decided to go last as a symbol that we are servants and that none are above others. When you have finished serving people, please take a place standing or kneeling on the step in the middle. Just wait quietly until Pastor comes to give you communion. After you have had communion he will invite a couple servers to then give it to him!

Serving Pattern

Every Sunday there is a diagram drawn up of who is serving what and where. We work this out depending on the numbers - we need to be flexible with this in changing times.

Bread

We know that at first you may be nervous or unsure, but please say the words in a quiet but clear voice as if it means something to you. As you do remember how holy and special this moment is because in it we are remembering the death of Christ. As you offer the bread to people say:

"Take and eat, the body of Christ."

Some people at Immanuel take gluten free wafers. If they want gluten free bread they will indicate by either pointing to it on your platter or they will shake their hands when offered the normal bread.

Wine

Make sure you have a clean cloth to wipe the cup. We usually turn the cup and wipe after serving each person. For those who have an 'individual cup' you may still say the words as they drink. As you offer the cup say:

"Take and drink, the blood of Christ."

Some people may have come from a background where they do not help guide the cup. If so please politely invite them to take the cup by saying, 'You are welcome to help hold the cup' and indicating to them!

A small number of people at Immanuel will have the wine by 'intinction'. They will dip their bread in the wine. If they want to do this they will hold up their bread when you offer them the cup. Simply hold the cup out for them and they will dip the bread. Just say the words as normal for people who have communion this way.

Packing Up

Please help pack away the Holy Communion gear. As servers this is part of your commitment for the day too. As we do this we treat it with reverence and care.

Wine in cups is usually poured out to the earth in a reverent way. We don't just walk into the kitchen and unceremoniously dump it down the sink!