

Communion Service at Carmel Presbyterian Church

The Lord's Supper

This document has been prepared by the Traditional Worship Ministry Committee to describe how and why we celebrate the sacrament of the Lord's Supper at Carmel Presbyterian Church. Much of the general information has come from ECO Theology and Resources: The Lord's Supper, 2022 Edition.

Introduction: The Lord's Supper is one of two sacraments established by Jesus and handed down throughout the history of the church. As a symbol, it is vital that those who are participating in the symbolic act understand what it symbolizes. The right performance of the sacrament cannot occur if those who participate are unaware of what they are doing and why. Different church traditions have celebrated this sacrament in different ways, but the core elements, established by Jesus, elaborated upon by Paul, remain fairly standard.

The Week Before: CPC notifies the congregation in the CPC Weekly that Communion will be served on Sunday. This allows congregants to spend time in self-reflection before Sunday.

Communion Sunday: At CPC, we typically offer the Lord's Supper on the 1st Sunday of each Month. Session may authorize additional dates throughout the Church Year.

Liturgy:

Prayer of Confession: We offer a time of silent confession and a Prayer of Confession. God desires a broken and contrite heart, not outward signs of religiosity. We invite the congregants to repent from their sins before participating in the sacrament.

Congregants are asked to prepare before the service by searching our hearts through self-reflection. The Pastor will allow sufficient time in the service to offer our silent confession.

Declaration of Forgiveness: The Pastor will use words from Scripture to remind us of God's forgiveness for all who repent.

The Invitation: While the table is open to all believers, the decision to partake of Communion is a personal one. The Pastor will invite all who are weary and heavy laden to come to Christ for rest. This is an appropriate place to remind the congregation of the solemnity of the sacrament, which requires the exercise of discipleship and discipline. All who are contrite of heart are welcomed to come to the table to receive the grace and forgiveness that their efforts could never attain. The fellowship of union with Christ is offered through forgiveness.

The Words of Institution: These words are what establish the actions as a sacrament and are those that Jesus and Paul instruct the church to say. Although Presbyterians do not believe that

the bread and wine become the body and blood in themselves, we believe that the sacrament is more than just a mere sign or remembrance of a historical act. The full text of the Words of Institution is in 1 Corinthians 11:23-32 NIV. The words shown in bold are those typically used at CPC. However, CPC will regularly remind the congregation of the importance of verses 27-32.

²³ For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: **The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread,** ²⁴ **and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.”** ²⁵ **In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.”** ²⁶ **For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.**

²⁷ So then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸ Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup. ²⁹ For those who eat and drink without discerning the body of Christ eat and drink judgment on themselves. ³⁰ That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. ³¹ But if we were more discerning with regard to ourselves, we would not come under such judgment. ³² Nevertheless, when we are judged in this way by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be finally condemned with the world.

Breaking the Bread and Pouring the Wine: As the Pastor breaks the bread and pours out the wine while offering the Words of Institution, he demonstrates the visible elements of the symbol. Part of the meaning of the sacrament is to remind the church that Christ’s body is and remains flesh and blood, and that we are to be part of his body, his flesh and blood on earth as he is in heaven. The physical act of breaking bread and distributing it symbolizes the movement from the one body of Jesus of Nazareth to the bodies of each person partaking of the sacrament. The pouring of wine symbolizes the blood flowing out of Jesus’ body in his death.

To ensure reverent worship as we partake of the sacrament, it is important that any distractions are kept to a minimum.

Communion of the People: The actual act of the people is in receiving the bread and wine. At CPC, the Communion elements we use are gluten free bread and red grape juice.

Bread: We keep Paul’s encouragement to the strong to accommodate to the weak in mind when we choose to offer gluten-based bread. The Lord’s Supper must be as inclusive as possible for the people of God.

Wine: It is a modern practice to replace wine with juice, typically with red grape juice to symbolize Christ’s blood. Although it is not authentic, there are good reasons for using grape juice instead of wine. Juice allows those in recovery from alcohol addictions to participate fully in the sacrament without it becoming a temptation to relapse.

Servers are typically Elders or Deacons (current or past) and Staff, who have a full and rich understanding of the solemnity and significance of the sacrament, although Session may

approve others to serve from time to time. In the Reformed tradition, there was an intentional movement of raising up elders who would not preside over the sacrament or say the words of institution, but would aid in its distribution, much like Jesus' disciples aided in the division of the loaves of bread.

Covenant Partners who are mature in their faith may be asked to serve if too few Elders or Deacons are available. This document should be given to all servers to ensure that all have a mutual understanding of the Communion Service at Carmel Presbyterian Church.

We typically serve the Communion elements to the congregants, first the bread and then the juice. Once the congregation is served each element, all will partake together, to demonstrate our unity in the Church as one body.

Servers will serve the first person in each row, saying "this is Christ's body given for you" or "this is Christ's blood shed for you". Each person in the row will then serve the person next to them. This is a beautiful way to serve each other in love. Each person will hold the element until all is served. The Pastor will then instruct all to eat or drink at the same time. See detailed Instructions for Servers below.

The Creed: We say the Apostle's Creed together. Because the sacrament is about union with the body of Christ, we affirm that unity by historical creeds. This is both an act of corporate confession of faith, as well as training the young in the faith what it is they ought to believe.

The Lord's Prayer: We say the Lord's Prayer together. At the end of the Traditional service, we do this while holding hands together to symbolize our unity in Christ, ending by singing the last lines together and lifting our hands in praise. This prayer sums up the request of God's people: for his name to be honored, for his kingdom to come, for his will to be done, for him to meet our basic needs, to forgive us as we forgive others, to save us from temptation, and deliver us from all evil.