



ONLINE COMMUNION

A Guide to Celebrating the Sacrament at Home

Churches across North Georgia are finding creative and meaningful ways to worship, remain connected, and serve our communities even as we keep physically distant. One topic specifically addressed by Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson of the North Georgia Conference of the United Methodist Church: Holy Communion.

Holy Communion is designed to be celebrated at an open table in the presence of a local congregation. And yet, we are not able to physically come to the table this Sunday.

Following is a guide that has been developed on setting up space in your home, having your elements consecrated by the pastor, administering and receiving the elements at home, and disposing of them properly afterward.

As United Methodists, we believe that all are welcome at God's Table. Our communion liturgy begins with words spoken on Jesus' behalf inviting "all who love him, who earnestly repent of their sin, and seek to live in peace with one another."

What type of elements are acceptable?

Bread and grape juice are ideal, if at all possible. The type of bread doesn't matter (i.e. sandwich bread, buns, pita, flatbread, etc.). In place of bread, a cracker is an acceptable substitute. If no grape juice is available, use your best judgment on choosing an appropriate replacement. The desire is to allow the Communion elements to have a sacred feel. This is a holy meal and a holy moment; allow it to be just that.

How should we set up Holy Communion?

Consider the following ideas:

1. Find a plate and cup/glass in your home that is NOT used on a frequent basis. Perhaps it's a piece of fine china, a crystal goblet, or a dish used only during the holidays, or items that are family heirloom pieces and are typically for display. Following this simple guideline will allow the bread and cup to be "set apart" for this sacred purpose and not seen as regular or ordinary.
2. Before the service starts on Sunday, take the bread out of the container, place on the plate and cover it with a napkin. Then, pour the grape juice into your cup. Cover that cup with a napkin.
3. Once you have prepared your Communion elements, place them in a special location. Try to create a holy space for them so that your family sees them. Perhaps a mantle or the center of your dining or kitchen table. Allow them to be the centerpiece rather than another item on an already crowded surface.

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How do we administer and receive the elements?

Once the pastor has led you through the liturgy, prayed the prayer of consecration saying, “Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here, and on these gifts of bread and wine. Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ, that we may be for the world the body of Christ, redeemed by his blood,” you will be invited to receive the elements yourself or serve the elements to those in your household. During these moments, take time to pray for one another, for friends and family, and concerns and situations around the world. Think about those with whom you ordinarily worship and lift them up in prayer. In short, transform this time as you receive Holy Communion and the brief moments afterward into an opportunity for intercession on behalf of others.

What do we say as we share the elements?

Break the bread into pieces and say to one another, “The body of Christ, given for you.” Once everyone in your family has a piece of bread, you can then share the cup and say to one another, “The blood of Christ, given for you.” Each member of your family should take turns dipping the bread into the cup. Afterward, the pastor for the online service will pray a prayer of thanksgiving and then transition into the next portion of the service.

What if I don't have those elements available or don't want to participate?

If you do not have the necessary items available or were unable to secure them prior to the service, or if you do not want to participate, use this time for prayer. We will pray a blessing over those not taking part in Communion.

What do we do with leftovers?

Please remember that these are consecrated elements. Dispose of them in a sacred fashion. Since the elements came from the ground (wheat, grapes, etc.) they should go back into the ground. Thus, break the bread into small pieces and scatter them outside and pour the juice onto the ground.

Keep in mind Holy Communion is a sacred moment and God has invited you and your family to His table. It might be less important whether the table of the Lord is in the church building or in your own home. Remember that this is not a license to continue this practice when life returns to normal. Within our Wesleyan heritage, it is the position of the Bishop and the Cabinet that this privilege is for a season only, and that there will be a return to practices in accordance with our liturgy.

If you'd like to read further about our United Methodist understanding on Holy Communion, visit www.umc.org/en/content/ask-the-umc-what-do-i-need-to-knowabout-holy-communion-in-the-united-methodist-church.

This guide is adapted from Sugar Hill UMC in Sugar Hill, GA.