

Guidelines for Serving Communion at University Presbyterian Church

Approved by the Session May 19, 2010

I. Gathering and Preparation

Serving at the Lord's Table is one of the privileges of ordination. On the Sundays you have been asked to serve, come to worship mindful of the meaning of the sacrament, prayerful and ready to serve.

1. Meet in the church library at 10:40 a.m. to receive your instructions.
2. Promptly at 10:45 a.m. one of the pastors will give any needed additional instructions, say a brief word about the Reformed understanding of the Lord's Supper and lead the servers in prayer.

II. Picking up the bread/wine/juice

1. Come to the Table when the officiating pastor says, "Will the serving elders and deacons please come forward."
2. At the Table ask the pastor(s) for the element you will be serving: bread/wine/juice. If you are serving juice on the aisle, be sure to ask for the tray containing the individual juice cups.
3. If you have any difficulty negotiating the steps up the bema (the platform where the Table sits), simply stand on the floor and a pastor will bring you your element.
4. After you receive your element, proceed to your assigned station. Bread is always on the inside, wine on the outside. Those on the inner stations should position themselves several feet from the front edge of the bema to give ample room for people to pass to the outer station.
5. Those serving wine and juice should be sure to have a napkin under the cup to catch spills. It's helpful to unfold the napkin to be more likely to catch any spills.

III. What to say to those you are serving

As those who are serving at Christ's Table, we want to offer the bread and wine in a way that communicates the gift we are receiving; i.e., the very life of Christ through the presence of the Holy Spirit. Thus, to the best of our ability, servers should offer the elements in a spirit of hospitality and thanksgiving.

1. If you know the person's name, say it.
2. Look each person in the eye.
3. When serving the bread say one of the following:
 - a. "This is the body of Christ broken for you."
 - b. "The Bread of Life given for you."
4. When serving the wine/juice say one of the following:
 - a. "This is the blood of Christ poured out for you."
 - b. "The life of Christ given for you."
 - c. "This is the cup of salvation."

IV. When everyone has been served

1. Return your elements to the table. Elements should be carefully placed back on the Table, napkins folded, trays stacked. There will be a pastor behind the table assisting. If you have any difficulty negotiating the steps, stand on the floor and a pastor will come get your element.
2. The inner station on the lectern/organ side of the sanctuary will stay and place and serve the servers. The pastors will come through the line last in order to serve the servers and return the elements to the Table.

V. Clearing the Table and disposing of the elements

1. The table should be cleared only after the postlude has concluded.
2. The remaining elements should be respectfully disposed in a manner in keeping with Reformed Theology (see DOW-3.3619).

VI. Issues and Questions

1. What about children?

Baptized children are eligible to receive the sacrament of communion. (See FOG-5.0202, W-2.4011, W-4.2002). However, the UPC Session encourages parents to carefully prepare their children for the sacrament. Ordinarily, children who are of an age to sit through worship—normally around first grade—should be prepared for the Lord’s Table by attending the annual “Children at the Lord’s Table” class offered each year in September. Children who have attended the class meet with the Session and are officially welcomed to the Lord’s Table on World Communion Sunday. However, if a parent with a young child obviously intends the child to receive communion, you may serve the child.

2. What if instead of taking a piece of bread, a person holds out his/her hands?

In that case, tear off a piece of bread, put it in their hand and say, “The body of Christ broken for you.”

3. What if a person wants to drink from the cup?

Allow the person to drink from the cup saying, “The blood of Christ shed for you,” or “the cup of salvation.” Wipe the cup with your napkin.

4. If you are serving bread and juice on the aisle, how do you know if a person desires to receive the sacrament?

Of course, you can’t be sure. Be as unobtrusive as possible. Try to catch the person’s eye, gesture with the elements, and the person will indicate their desire. If the person declines, a nod and a smile to them will communicate: “That’s fine. We’re glad you’re here.” If the person indicates a desire to receive communion, the server carrying bread enters first followed by the person serving the juice. The same words are spoken as indicated above.

5. Small children who remain in the pew during communion should not be offered communion by the aisle servers unless an accompanying adult (parent) specifically requests that the child(ren) be served.