

“Holy Communion in Extraordinary Times” during Livestream Worship

Our livestream worship experience at Prince of Peace will now include Holy Communion, but in a different way than we’re used to experiencing communion. These are extraordinary times, in which we cannot gather in person to share the Lord’s Supper. However, our Lutheran tradition has always stressed the importance of regularly receiving Word and Sacrament, and has always allowed that, in extraordinary circumstances, we may depart from “the way we’ve always done it.”

Central to our understanding of Holy Communion is that it is the Word of God which makes the bread and the wine the actual bearers of Christ’s presence for us. It is not the touch or the breath of the pastor. So, just as we hear the Word of God over livestream, and receive the promise of forgiveness, we will invite everyone, as we gather online, to have prepared bread and wine for their own household and to hear the Word of Christ’s promise for those elements during our livestream worship services.

We realize that not everyone will want to partake of Holy Communion in this way in their homes, which is perfectly fine. We will invite you to use the moment in the service as a time to reflect on God’s presence with you in the Word and through the Holy Spirit.

Getting Ready

Here are a few things to think about and/or prepare before the service:

- **What table will you use?** You can simply pull up a coffee table or gather at your kitchen/dining room table. You may want to prepare your table by placing a white cloth on it or finding a cross in your

house to place on it. If you have children, you could invite them to color placemats on large paper to put on the table.

- **What bread will you use?** Any bread (regular or gluten free) - homemade or store bought - or cracker will work for communion. Place the bread/crackers on a plate on the table.
- **What juice/wine will you use?** Any wine or grape juice will be fine. You can pour a little in a glass for as many people are worshipping in your house.

During the Service

At the time of Holy Communion, one of the pastors will stand behind the altar to preside over Holy Communion. They will preside just like they do when we worship together face-to-face. When they lift the bread and cup, it is appropriate for you to lift the elements you have on your table at home. We believe that God who has the power to raise Jesus from the dead has the power - through the Holy Spirit - to join us together in that moment of Holy Communion. Just as when we gather together physically in the sanctuary, the Holy Spirit will come, bringing Christ's presence to be in, with and under the bread and wine/juice. The bread and wine/juice will be the real presence of Jesus Christ, his body and blood. How this happens is always a mystery, even when we gather physically, but together we trust in the power and promise of God's Word, which is greater than all that limits us during this time.

After the Lord's Prayer, you will commune one another in your household, saying, "The body of Christ, given for you" and "The blood of Christ, shed for you." If you are alone, say those words to yourself and know that you are not alone. All of us are joined to the body of Christ - the church - which is worshipping together online, and to Christ who is always with us, but is with us in a special and tangible way through this holy meal.

After the Service

Traditionally, leftover communion elements - the bread and the wine/juice - are either eaten or returned to the earth. If you do not consume them, take them outside and place them in your garden/lawn. It isn't appropriate to throw them in the trash or down the drain.

FAQs

Who is able to receive Holy Communion in this way? Just as when we gather physically, all baptized people who believe in and desire Jesus' presence are welcome to commune, whether a member of our church or not. If you have someone in your household who doesn't receive, it would be appropriate to offer them a blessing if they would like. An example of a blessing would be, "Remember God loves you."

What if I watch the service recorded and not on livestream? With God all things are possible! That said, we are encouraging those who would like to receive communion to be part of the livestream worship experience. An important part of our understanding of Holy Communion is that it happens in community. The livestream service offers the community piece of Holy Communion as we are joined together by the Holy Spirit in the same moment, even though we are in different physical locations.

Is this the "new normal" for how we can receive Holy Communion? No. This is "Holy Communion in Extraordinary Times" because we cannot be together physically and because this is a safe way for us to receive Holy Communion. When it is safe for us to be physically present together and the times are no longer "extraordinary," then Holy Communion will be something that we will share again when we can be physically together.

What if I am not comfortable receiving Holy Communion in this way? We anticipate that not everyone will want to receive Holy Communion in this way and that is perfectly fine. We encourage you to

use the time during the service to reflect, pray and trust the Holy Spirit's presence with you.