

Observing Communion online:

These exceptional times have challenged us to reexamine and recreate how we do just about everything. Our changing lives sometimes leave us feeling dizzy and dazed. God's love for us, however, has not changed! Thus, we continue to seek ways to celebrate that love, to lean upon it for comfort, and to share it with a world that is hurting in deep and profound ways. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has encouraged us to use technology to make that happen. We, at First Presbyterian Pittsford, have done so through streaming, Zoom, email, phone, etc. The national church has given us permission to observe Communion online. Our Session voted in favor of doing this as the online gathered Body of Christ in the context of our common worship.

"In emergency circumstances there may be situations in which the pastoral needs of that moment require that the church take actions that run contrary to normal practice. During an emergency or a pandemic in which the church is unable to gather or advised not to gather in person for reasons of public health, a congregation's session may determine that this includes observing communion online."

Advisory Opinion Communion in an Emergency/Pandemic, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Below are a few suggestions as you prepare yourself and your family for observing the sacrament of Communion, The Lord's Supper, in these days of COVID 19:

- Rejoice that we are entering into sacred space together, even if it is in your den in front of a screen with others in front of their screens. Help your children to understand the meaning of this sacrament. Encourage your family to respect the holiness of it. If you are alone, embrace the quiet peace around you.
- When we celebrate The Lord's Supper, we use bread and juice remembering the last meal, the Passover Feast, that Jesus shared with his disciples. At that meal, Jesus held the bread and lifted his cup saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me. And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.'" (John 22:19-20) In these days of infrequent runs to the grocery store, you may not have grape juice and bread. Do not despair (or go to the grocery store). Use what you have: a cracker, a muffin, apple juice, wine, etc. – anything that retains for you the sacredness of this sacrament. Prepare the elements before the worship service begins. Use a common loaf and cup or individual serving portions, depending upon your comfort level. It doesn't matter what you use to serve the elements: basket, plate, napkin, cup, glass, etc.
- The minister presiding over the worship service will lead you in the Communion liturgy of our reformed faith. As when we are in the same physical space, the minister will tell you when to partake of the bread and cup. Serve each other, reflecting the way Jesus taught us to serve God's people.
- We believe that the elements we use in this sacrament are sacred. Thus, we encourage you to feed one of God's creations (maybe the birds) with any leftovers that you may have.

Let us thank God for the uniting sacrament of Communion, the Lord's Supper, remembering:

"Through the Lord's Supper, Jesus Christ nourishes us in righteousness, faithfulness, and discipleship. Through the Lord's Supper, the Holy Spirit renews the Church in its identity and sends the Church to mission in the world."

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