



Communion with Your Child

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This booklet was originally printed as apart of the “Let the Children Come Series” by Round Table Resources, through the Connecticut Conference, United Church of Christ, in 1992. The three titles have been popular through the years, and nearly all the print copies have been sold. But we still receive requests for the booklets, sometimes from places far away. So we are now making the booklets available through the Connecticut Conference website in the hopes that more people can have access to these useful resources.

The three titles in the series are:

For children and parents: *Communion With Your Child*

For families and church school: *Do This to Remember Me*

For Pastors and Church Educators: *Jesus Loves Me: The Young Child and Communion*

COMMUNION WITH YOUR CHILD

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Communion As A Part of Worship

Communion, a visible sign of an inward grace, a sign of God's love in Jesus Christ, is a central act of worship. By participating in Communion a child, as well as youth and adults, experiences being accepted in the community of believers. Gathering around the Table of the Lord which is a symbol of God's abundant and everlasting love, nurtures and strengthens our children.

Communion is known by many names:

Holy Communion

Table of the Lord

Eucharist

Lord's Supper

Breaking of Bread

Communion is a sacrament with a key place as the church gathers to worship. Understood as a gift from God in which we receive God's love and forgiveness, Communion is anticipated with joy and thanksgiving. It is an act of worship in which gathered Christians celebrate Christ's life, death, and resurrection. Through receiving the bread of life and the cup of the new covenant, by the grace of God, we experience the presence of the living Christ.

"Do This In Remembrance of Me"

Through scripture we are reminded of the role of meals shared with Jesus and of God's nearness to us in the sharing of bread and wine—grape juice. Paul, a follower of Jesus, retells the words and actions of Jesus at the last supper in I Corinthians, Chapter 11, verses 23-25:

*...the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed
took a loaf of bread, and when he had
given thanks, he*

*broke it and
gave it to his disciples, and said,*

***“This is my body that is for you.
Do this in remembrance of me.”***

*...In the same way he
took the cup also, after supper, and said,*

***“This is the new covenant in my blood.
Do this, as often as you drink it,
in remembrance of me.”***

Jesus took the most common items available to him at a meal—bread and juice—and gave these things a special meaning. He asks us to take the bread and the cup regularly as a way of remembering him and his teachings for our daily lives. A good discussion with your child is how she or he and you feel Jesus is important to your lives—a remembering.

There are three other places in the Bible where you can find a record of Jesus’ special meal with his disciples in Jerusalem. See if you and your child can find them:

Matthew 26:26-29

Mark 14:22-25

Luke 22:14-20

Communion Is A Meal of Many Meanings

Remembrance

Through the sharing of Old Testament stories of our freedom from bondage, our covenant relationship with God and the New Testament stories of Jesus’ life and teachings, we remember God’s acts of love toward us as God’s people.

Thanksgiving

We give thanks and praise to God for the many gifts we have received throughout history and in our daily lives.

Celebration

God’s continuing presence with us in all facets of our lives, in times of joy as well as in times when we are strengthened and comforted when we are hurting, is truly reason for joy and celebration.

Forgiveness

In Jesus' life, death, and resurrection our brokenness is forgiven and healed. As we come to the table we are forgiven again and again. We experience God's forgiveness for things we have done wrong in our own lives as well as for wrongs we see in the world around us.

Being Fed and Feeding Others

As we share in the bread and the wine or grape juice, we are reminded that as our needs for food, for God, for love, are cared for, we are called to offer to others the same care and love that is ours from God. As we are blessed, we are called to be a blessing to others.

Belonging

Through baptism we become members of the church, the body of Christ, in the world today. In communion as we include people of all ages we reaffirm the covenant made at baptism and deepen the sense that we all belong to the continuing people of God.

Communion and Spiritual Growth

Faith is a lifelong process. Faith grows within as:

- we worship God within a community of faith giving praise and thanksgiving for creation, experiences of kindness and love, and the gift of everlasting life through Jesus Christ,
- we hear and retell the stories of faith from the Bible, people in history, and our own lives,
- we test our relationships with one another and with God, and
- we ask questions about the meaning of our faith for our daily lives.

Just as we do certain things to care for our physical growth and well being, so too, there are steps we take to help one another grow spiritually.

Steps for Spiritual Growth

- 1. Tell the Stories...**of the meals Jesus shared with those whose lives he touched, such as

A meal with Levi	Mark 2:13-17
A meal with Simon	Luke 7:36-47
Road to Emmaus	Luke 24:25-32
By the Lakeside	John 21:5-13
Feeding the 5,000	John 6:5-14

Exploring Bible stories with your child can be fun as well as informative. You may find these questions helpful in the investigation of the stories:

Who was there?
What took place?
What did they have to eat?
What did Jesus do? What did he say?
Can you find the words, “take”, “blessed” or “give thanks”,
“broke” and “gave”?
What is your favorite verse?
Try drawing a picture of the story.

2. Invite and Welcome Children...to the Lord’s Table. The experience is enriching for all. We learn by participation in events and then by reflecting on what we have done just as surely as we learn in formal classroom settings. Through the repeated re-enactment of Communion we grow in our understanding of the miraculous power, awe, mystery, and joy of this sacrament and add new dimensions to our individual, family, and community of faith journeys.

3. Show by Example...the importance of this sacrament to you in your life by participating regularly in worship and Communion. Talk about its meaning for you with your child.

4. Express God’s Love For Others...by engaging in acts of caring and service to others at home, school, work, in the community in which you live, or in the global village, the world itself. For Communion is to be lived out in our daily lives throughout all ages and stages of our lives—and to be lived out together.

All Are Invited to the Table

When we meet at this table—not our table, but God’s table—we remember the special meal Jesus shared with those who followed him, his disciples. Come now and celebrate the life given for us that we might live a full and joyful life, our brokenness healed by our loving God in Jesus Christ.

Jesus lived, died, and lives again that we might live in loving relationships. As this gift was given to us, let us go from this table to

*pray with a friend,
heal a hurt,
comfort a fear,*

in the world in which we live.

Communion As a Gift

The gift of Communion provides spiritual food for the

*Heart
Mind
Body and
Soul*

which, in turn, fills the world with love, kindness and gentleness through our interactions with others.

Let us be joyful and give thanks to the Lord.

Bibliography

Big in God's Eyes: A Story About Children and Communion. John M. Barrett. United Church Press, 1985.

Celebrate Communion. Colleen Britton. Educational Ministries, 1984.

Including Children in Worship: A Planning Guide For Congregations. Elizabeth Sandell. Augsburg, 1991.

Worshipping with The Child. Richard S. Hanson. Abingdon, 1988.

You are Welcome. James and Sandra Boler. United Church Press, 1985.

Videos

Holy Communion. 40 minutes. United Methodist. Focus on the ritual, celebration and history, for children, parents and Confirmation class.

Grandma's Bread. 17 minutes. A story about Grandma's bread for communion, her death and a young boy's first communion.