

January 3 we begin celebrating Holy Communion from our homes through online worship. Please prayerfully consider whether such a practice will strengthen your faith.

Since we cannot be together in-person, it may be more meaningful for you to fast from the sacrament at this time. Such fasting can evoke strong memories of receiving the sacrament in the sanctuary, memories that connect you in love with your brothers and sisters in Christ. Those memories and feelings of connection might make it feel more appropriate and best for you to wait and receive the sacrament with them in the sanctuary, rather than separately from your home.

For others, such hunger for the sacrament is a good and holy thing, a hunger which can be satisfied even in this extraordinary time. Eating and drinking in the Lord's name on Sundays across distance is possible and it, too, can be a powerful moment of connection with your brothers and sisters in Christ. I ask only one thing: that you eat and drink in the Lord's name on Sundays, the day we typically gather, and to hold one another in prayer.

Whether or not you eat and drink, I encourage you to engage with the full online service, and to use that time when some receive the sacrament separately to pray for the unity of our congregation. Though for different reasons, my son's godfather, a Roman Catholic, has never walked up to receive sacrament while worshipping with us. Yet he does a most beautiful thing: he bows his head and prays for the unity of Christ's church while others receive the sacrament. I commend this practice to all of you and especially those of you who decide not to eat and drink during communion.

Communion may be celebrated with any staple food and drink. In Jesus' time, such staple foods were bread and wine. Bread, which could be leavened (fresh) or unleavened (like a cracker), was a staple food formed from wheat and other grains that were cultivated in the fields. Wine, fermented from the abundant grapevines, was considered both a staple and festive drink. Without fresh running water or water from a spring, wine could be kept safe for long periods of time.

Christian tradition has long called for using bread and wine, still considered staples in much of the world today. But you could use another staple food and drink. Gluten-free bread and grape juice are also used in our celebrations. Some Chinese Christians use rice and tea. And certain northern European cultures have used sweet rolls and warm cider.

To prepare, you can set-up a home altar, perhaps at your kitchen table, or dining room or living room table. Devotional objects that accompany our own worship space can be laid out, such as candles, a cross, a Bible and worship book, a bowl of water to remember your baptism, tablecloth and fine, but modest dishes.

When it comes time to eat, if you are in a family group, please serve one another, rather than yourselves. Such receiving from another is a central action of communion. If you are alone, you will hear words of invitation especially for you, words that assure you that all you receive comes from the Lord's hands.

This is a hard journey we are taking, friends in Christ. But we are doing our best to walk together and affirm the Creator's presence with us through the Word made flesh and sustained by the Breath of life. Since we were marked with the name of God in our baptism- Father, Son, and Holy Spirit- we can trust that, whether we share in Holy Communion or not, we never are alone!

-Pastor Nathan