

Talking About Communion with Children of All Ages



Dear Parents, Grandparents, and Friends,

This information is meant to help you prepare children to participate in Communion in a more meaningful way. Even though we are offering special “Communion classes” to our 3rd through 7th graders this year, no one is too young (or too old!) to deepen our understanding of this sacrament in which we share.

We hope this is just one small part of many ongoing conversations among all of our church family about our worship and spiritual lives together.

The First Congregational Church of Darien

Key Ideas about Communion

- ❖ All people – children, youth, and adults – are welcome at Christ's table.
- ❖ Jesus gave his disciples (his followers) a way to remember him, even when he was no longer present. Today, Communion is the sacrament in which we remember that Jesus lived and is with us still.
- ❖ When Jesus and his disciples ate this meal together, they were celebrating the Jewish festival of the Passover. Jesus took familiar symbols from this traditional meal and explained them in a new way.
- ❖ Communion is not just about remembering. We believe that God's Spirit is with us today, and we hope that Spirit will speak to us in a real way as we celebrate this sacrament together.
- ❖ Jesus also promised the disciples who stood by him that they would eat and drink from this table in the heavenly kingdom; we live in hope that we will do so, too.
- ❖ Sharing a meal was a sign of intimate friendship. When we share in Communion, we do it with joy. We celebrate that we are one family in Christ with Christians around the world.

Scripture: Luke 22:19-22 (New Revised Standard Version)

Then Jesus took a loaf of bread and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, 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."

Other scripture passages that deal with the Lord's Supper (another name for Communion) are:

- ❖ Mark 14:22-25
- ❖ Matthew 26:26-29
- ❖ Luke 22:14-23
- ❖ 1 Corinthians 11:24

Helpful Terms:

"Communion" and "The Lord's Supper": These are different names for the same thing – when we share the bread and cup together in worship. In some churches, this sacrament is called "The Eucharist," but we tend to use "Communion" or "The Lord's Supper" when we refer to it.

"Sacrament": A sacrament is an outward and visible sign of an inward, invisible grace. In other words, it is something we do and can see that symbolizes God's great gift to us – the gift of grace and forgiveness.

Children and Communion at Our Church

Our church believes that we should help children know that they are included in the church and the family of God. As a part of that family, they are welcome to participate in Communion.

Communion is a gift of God and a symbol of God's grace that is available to all who belong to God's family through Christ. This gift is not dependent on a complete appreciation of the history, symbolism, or mystery of this sacred meal. In the United Church of Christ, we do not celebrate a "first Communion," but aim for each of us to grow in our understanding and experience of this sacrament throughout our lives.

Symbols in Communion

Many adults have difficulty understanding the symbols of bread and cup at the Communion table. Children, who are primarily concrete thinkers, can be even more confused. Use simple words to explain it, and show them with actions, too.

Traditionally, the wine (or grape juice, which we use) is a symbol of the blood of Christ and the bread represents Christ's body. In remembering the way that Jesus died, we remember that God still loved (and loves) us, even after the worst that people could do. In Jesus, God made a new covenant, (or promise), with us that God would be with us no matter what, and we celebrate that covenant in Communion.

We emphasize the joy of coming together in Communion and our thankfulness for God's gifts, rather than dwelling on our own guilt and unworthiness. As we eat the bread and drink from the cup, we are brought closer to God, to one another, and to Christians around the world.

Talking About Communion

with Different Age Groups

0-3 years: At this age, children can begin to understand that the Lord's Supper is a special meal that we share at church. They know that their family eats meals together, and they can begin to see that Communion is a meal shared by our church family.

4-5 years: At this age, children see adults as models; they watch what we do. Communion can be explained as a meal we share so that we remember Jesus. People who love Jesus join in this special occasion.

6-7 years: Again, emphasize the meal that Jesus began in order for us to remember him. Tell the story of the last supper. The church family celebrates Communion as one way to worship God together. In Communion:

- ❖ We remember Jesus
- ❖ We celebrate together
- ❖ We hope to experience God's Spirit
- ❖ We give thanks to God

8-9 years: Children at this age begin to have an awareness of the world beyond their immediate experience. Talk about Communion as something that is shared by Christians all over the world. Communion is one of the things we do together that unites us as Christians.

A good emphasis at this age is that, since we cannot see God directly, sharing the bread and cup helps make God real to us. The story of the first Lord's Supper can be read, and you can also talk about how, through Jesus, we know that we are forgiven.

10 and older: Older children can understand the association between the Lord's Supper and the last week of Jesus' life. They can understand that serving God may involve difficult choices, and even sacrifices. They can see Communion as a way of keeping our promises and being rededicated to God – being reminded of God's love in order to go out and do God's work in the world.

In Communion:

- ❖ We remember Jesus
- ❖ We celebrate together
- ❖ We hope to experience God's Spirit
- ❖ We give thanks to God
- ❖ We know that we are forgiven
- ❖ We look toward the future
- ❖ We are equipped to go out and do God's work in the world.

If you have questions or would like to talk more about Communion or any other aspect of our worship or church life, our hearts, minds, and doors are open to people of all ages.

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