

Receiving the Lord's Supper at Home During Livestream Worship (please read pages 1 -3 and checkboxes before partaking)

We're so glad you want to have communion with us. We miss participating in this meaningful sacrament with you and would very much like to continue this practice. After much discussion, the elders have come up a way to accomplish this, given the pandemic we're currently facing. This letter explains how you can participate in the Lord's Supper at home during a live stream worship service.

The Lord's Supper is a sacrament of the church through which Christ meets us in a mysterious way (see page 4 for a more detailed explanation). Normally, we celebrate this sacrament only when we can physically gather as a church body or through an individual home visit by an authorized agent of the church. During this time of Covid 19, however, the Elders have temporarily authorized congregants to celebrate the Lord's Supper at home using their own elements concurrent with the celebration of the Lord's Supper in the sanctuary during regular Sunday morning worship.

If you wish to participate in the Lord's Supper at home during our live streamed service, we ask that you follow the guidelines below in order that we can honor this precious gift from our Lord during this unusual time. We also want everyone to know that this is a temporary solution that is in response to very unusual circumstances. When the covid crisis is over and things return to normal, we will no longer encourage congregants to celebrate the Lord's supper at home during live streamed services. Under normal circumstances, the Lord's Supper should be celebrated in person in fellowship with other Christians in public worship or through a personal visit from an authorized agent of the church.

Celebrating the Lord's Supper at Home During a Live Streamed Service (please read and check off each of the four items below)

Qualifications for Partaking

We practice an open communion at First Pres. In our worship service we normally say that all who have confessed their sins and have accepted the free gift of forgiveness that has been made available through Christ's death on the cross are welcomed and encouraged to celebrate the Lord's Supper. If you have not accepted forgiveness from your sins from Christ, we ask that you do not participate in the Lord's Supper. Please call Pastor Eric or Michelle Martinez to find out more about how to become a Christian so that we can include you next time (253-272-3286). We leave it up to you to determine if your children understand the gospel and have accepted Jesus' offer of forgiveness before allowing them to participate. If your children have not fully understood and accepted the gospel please do not allow them to denigrate this important sacrament by treating it as a 'snack time'. Saying no when they are not ready, will help make this sacrament more meaningful when they are ready.

▣ Preparing the Elements

The power of the sacrament comes from the Lord and not from the elements we use. So we encourage you to use ordinary items that are part of your everyday life. The Lord's supper is not a magical right requiring special 'potions', but is a gift from our Lord.

For bread, you can use a piece of sandwich bread, a roll, a cracker, or a small loaf. Place your bread on a small plate before the service so that you are ready when the time comes.

For the 'wine' you can use anything that is grape based such as grape juice or wine. Please do not use orange juice, milk, water, or other drinks. Before the service, pour your 'wine' into a cup or multiple cups depending on your situation.

▣ Preparing Your Heart

So then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup. (1 Corinthians 11:27-28)

This verse from the Bible reminds us how we must take the Lord's Supper seriously and make sure that we are prepared to receive this important gift from our Lord. However, it is very easy to misunderstand these instructions written by the Apostle Paul. So we will attempt to offer a useful explanation here.

In claiming that you must eat and drink in a worthy manner, Paul is not suggesting that your life must be perfect, that you must be in a happy mood, or even that you haven't sinned recently. What Paul means is that you must be willing to admit where you have fallen short and be humble enough to seek God's forgiveness. We encourage you to ask God to search your heart and show you any sins or issues that you need to bring before Him. You can do this act of confession before the service begins, during the prayer of confession in the worship service, or spontaneously as we are taking communion together.

▣ Receiving the Elements

Even though we are celebrating the Lord's Supper in different locations, we are still participating in one act together. Please only serve the Lord's Supper in this way at the same time as we are doing it live at First Pres. Please don't celebrate the Lord's Supper at a different time with a pre-recorded service.

The Pastor will continue to play a unique role in officiating the service. He will pray over the elements, say the 'words of institution', break the bread, and pour juice from a pitcher to a chalice. Please don't attempt to replicate these actions at home.

When the pastor says ‘the body of Christ broken for you, let us eat together’ that is your cue to eat the bread you have prepared. You can eat just a bite or the whole thing if you’d like. When the pastor says, ‘the blood of Christ, shed for you, let us drink together’, that is your cue to drink the cup you have prepared. If there is more than one person celebrating, you can each have your own cup or you can share a common cup.

After receiving the elements, we encourage you to take a moment to offer a prayer of thanksgiving to God for his many gifts to us.

▣ Disposing the Elements

As we mention above, we use ordinary elements for the Lord’s Supper. There is nothing special about the bread or the juice. However, in celebrating the Lord’s Supper together, we believe that the Lord uses them in an extraordinary way. It is a mystery to us, but we believe that the Lord meets us in a special way when we celebrate communion together. One of the implications of this is that after we are finished with the sacrament, Any leftover elements [from the table] should be eaten or drunk or disposed of in a respectful manner

Thank you for taking the time to read this document to prepare for receiving the Lord’s Supper. We sincerely hope that celebrating this important sacrament of the church will be a blessing for you. Please remember, we ask that you celebrate the Lord’s Supper at home in this manner during the covid crisis. Once things return to normal, we would welcome you to enjoy the Lord’s Supper either in person in fellowship at a worship service or through a personal visit by an authorized agent of the church

Understanding the Lord's Supper

(You don't need to read further in order to participate, but we include it in case you are interested)

The Meaning of the Lord's Supper

Wayne Grudem articulates 7 specific meanings attached to the Lord's Supper¹

1. Christ's death – we symbolize Christ's saving death and can 'hear' it with our eyes and mouths.
2. Our participation in the benefits of Christ's death – we say 'yes' to Christ's offer of forgiveness with our bodies
3. Spiritual nourishment – we are reminded of Jesus' promise to provide what we need for our journey with Him
4. The unity of believers – we give a clear sign of our unity with our brothers and sisters in Christ (this is why it is important that we don't celebrate communion in isolation)
5. Christ affirms His love for me – the gift of this sacrament is part of Christ's love language to us
6. Christ affirms that all the blessings of salvation are reserved for me – it is a foretaste of a great banquet that Christ is preparing for us with others who with us are part of God's covenant family
7. I affirm my faith in Christ – we acknowledge that we are sinners who share responsibility for Christ's substitutionary death on our behalf

Interpretations of the Lord's Supper

The question of where is Christ when we celebrate the Lord's Supper in His name has led to four basic interpretations. They are listed in the chart below which indicates which tradition each interpretation is associated with. The official position of First Presbyterian Church is called 'Real Spiritual Presence', but we do not require anyone to adopt this interpretation to celebrate with us.

Name	Basic Understanding	Which Tradition ?
Transubstantiation	Trans = change. The bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ when the blessing is given. The molecules remain the same, but we trust that the elements are changed.	Roman Catholic
Consubstantiation	Con = with. Christ joins Himself with the elements. The analogy of water joining	Lutheran

¹ Wayne Grudem Systematic Theology (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996) p.889-991.

	itself to a sponge is often used	
Real Spiritual Presence	Christ meets us in a special way when we celebrate the Lord's Supper together. It is a mystery how He does this, but it is more than a 'naked' symbol.	Presbyterian (primary understanding)
Memorialist	Christ is not specially present in the Lord's Supper. The elements symbolize what Christ has done for us.	Other protestant traditions and some Presbyterians.