

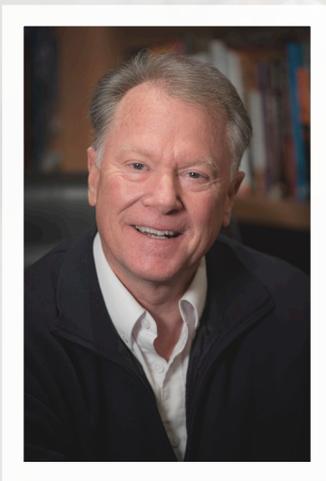
HOLY COMMUNION  **ASBURY**
Guide

As Methodists, we have two sacraments: Initiation (Baptism) + Nurture (Communion).

These ARE the **two** things **JESUS** COMMANDED all Christians to DO.

INTRODUCTION

By Dr. Tom Harrison, Senior Pastor



In one sense, the sacraments are symbolic. We do not believe in transubstantiation (the substance of the elements changing to become the physical and literal body and blood of Jesus). On the other hand, the sacraments are far more than symbolic—they are a means of grace. God’s grace is truly present in these elements. We believe they are means where people are converted and healed in a variety of ways.

The sacraments are also a public witness. When we receive Communion, we proclaim to others that we are Christians. The word “Communion” means “common unity.” Typically, we never do it alone. I’ve heard laity say some of the most meaningful acts of service they have ever had is when they serve the bread and juice to others.

I have grown to love our Communion liturgy. I’m amazed at how it ties into our Sunday service in one way or another. I also like that it’s a time for self-examination and repentance. My favorite part may be when you (the congregation) say to me as I lead the liturgy, “*In the name of Jesus Christ you are forgiven.*” I always want to add, “*Thank you!*” I am grateful for God’s forgiveness—and His sustaining grace, now more than ever.

At this unique time, our Oklahoma Annual Conference Bishop Nunn has given permission to extend the Lord’s Table into our individual homes. We will continue doing it this way until we can be together again.

WESLEYAN QUADRILATERAL

The Wesleyan Quadrilateral is a way to help us understand and live out our faith. We always begin with Scripture, and “What does the Bible say?”

SCRIPTURE is primary.

The second filter is 2,000 years of Church tradition so the follow up question is, “*What does the Church teach about it?*” These are our external authorities.

Reason and experience are also important to understanding and living out our faith because that is what makes our faith come alive. Reason and faith are internal authorities which are always viewed through the lenses of Scripture and tradition.

Yet, the sacraments are unique.

Since it was instituted by Jesus Himself, Holy Communion is an ancient Church tradition which predates the writing of the New Testament. It is corroborated by Scripture. It is understood, as much as possible, through reason and because it is a sacrament—it must be experienced. All of this is made possible by the power of the Holy Spirit.



A CATECHISM

From where did Communion originate?

- a. It comes from an ancient Jewish ritual
- b. It comes from a Communist country
- c. It comes from Welch's grape juice factory

a. When Jesus, a Jew, shared the Last Supper in the upper room with His disciples as recorded in all four Gospels, they were celebrating a Jewish Passover Seder. The Passover Seder is the memorial commemoration of the Israelite's miraculous deliverance from slavery in Egypt as recounted in the book of Exodus. Passover has been observed by Jews, in continuous practice, for over 3,500 years. Communion has been observed by Christians, in continuous practice, for over 2,000 years.

What is another name for Communion?

- a. The Lord's Supper
- b. The Lord's Table
- c. The Eucharist

d. All of the above. Communion is called the Lord's Supper because it was instituted by Jesus during the last meal with His disciples before the crucifixion. Eucharist, from the Greek word for "thanksgiving," is another traditional name. It is a celebration and remembrance of God's grace and mercy through Jesus and His continuing presence with us through His Spirit. The Lord's Table is generally how we refer to the table where the sacramental meal is consecrated but it can refer to the meal itself. When we receive the elements, the bread and the juice, we remember Christ; we repent of our sin; we experience Jesus and are nurtured by His grace.

What is a sacrament?

- a. A minty-flavored candy
- b. A sacred mystery
- c. An artificial sweetener

b. A sacrament is a sacred mystery. It is vital to our faith even though it is not completely understood. Baptism and Communion are the two things Jesus instructed all His followers to do. Baptism is the sacrament of “initiation.” Communion is the sacrament of “nurture.” With both sacraments, it is not the amount or type of food that is served, nor is it the volume of water used—a sacrament is an outward sign of an inward and invisible grace. It demonstrates what we believe and what we have received (and are receiving) from Jesus.

Why is Communion considered a sacrament?

- a. Because it is a tradition of the church
- b. Because we don't really understand it
- c. Because it is an outward sign of an inward grace

d. These all fit. Mainly, Communion is an outward sign of an inward and invisible grace. Jesus gave us a way to remember Him—it is through Communion that we recount the story of His incarnation, life, death, resurrection, ascension, and future return. The Lord's Table is a sacred place where God and humanity meet because Jesus, who is both human and divine, took the bread and the wine and declared: *This is my body. This is my blood.*

Through Communion we are united with Jesus in His story, we are nourished by His grace and we experience His presence. We do not bring meaning to the Lord's Table—we are transformed by the meaning and the hope His Table brings to us.

What did John Wesley think about Communion?

- a. He thought it was important
- b. He thought it was really important
- c. He thought it was really, really important

c. The founder of Methodism, John Wesley, taught Communion was one of the means by which we receive God's grace and that every Christian should take Communion frequently. Along with preaching (an estimated 40,000 sermons), he organized Methodist societies and classes throughout the land, and commissioned lay people to minister and preach in his absence. Yet, as an Anglican priest, he insisted that Holy Communion be administered only by those the Church had ordained. In all things, Wesley upheld the authority of the Bible; he preached a message of salvation by faith in Christ alone; and maintained the belief that God's grace is available to all people. Communion is a means of grace.

In our tradition, who may administer the sacraments?

- a. Any follower of Jesus
- b. An ordained Elder of the United Methodist Church
- c. Manager of St. Louis Cardinals

b. For United Methodists, the sacraments may only be administered by an ordained Elder of the United Methodist Church. (In the absence of an Elder, an appointed local licensed pastor is given authority to do so.) Elders are pastors who have been called by God and anointed to a lifetime of service under the authority of the Bishop.

During the liturgy, the elements of bread and juice are consecrated—which means they are dedicated for sacred purpose. We believe Jesus is present in the consecrated elements—which is more than symbolic but less than literal and physical substance (this is why it is a mystery). Once the elements have been consecrated by an Elder, lay people are permitted to serve the bread and juice to one another. Please note the consecrated elements should be completely consumed or returned to nature (the bread given for birds and the juice poured out on earth), not discarded in the trash or down the drain.

Who may take Communion in a United Methodist Church?

- a. The twelve disciples
- b. The twelve disciples, minus Judas
- c. Any who are seeking to follow Jesus

c. We have an “open table,” meaning a person doesn’t have to be a member of Asbury or The United Methodist Church to receive Communion. You are invited to the Lord’s Table even if you are not a member of Asbury or a United Methodist. Communion is a sacred meal intended for those who love Jesus and repent of their sin. If you are seeking to follow Christ, then you are encouraged to participate.

Why is grape juice used in Communion?

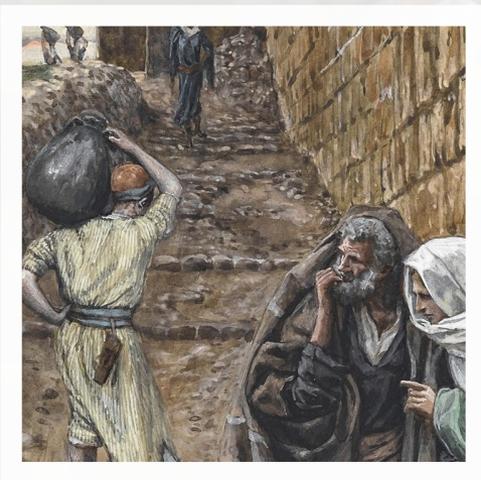
- a. Because Jesus is a Methodist
- b. Because grape juice is less expensive than wine
- c. Because wine can be controversial

c. In the 1800s using wine for Communion became controversial because of the temperance movement. When Dr. Thomas Welch, a dentist, became a communion steward at a Methodist church in New Jersey, he was determined to develop an unfermented sacramental wine. Juice could be freshly squeezed but grapes were not always available. Before the days of refrigeration, juice stored at room temperature would ferment. After Louis Pasteur’s breakthrough discovery, Welch found a way to pasteurize grape juice - which kept it from fermenting. Welch’s grape juice was later marketed as a remedy for many types of ailments. In Communion at Asbury we use grape juice instead of wine so that any who profess faith in Jesus Christ will not be hindered from participating in the Lord’s Supper.



HOW COMMUNION FITS IN THE LARGER BIBLICAL NARRATIVE

By Pastor Daniel Dennison



The Man Bearing a Pitcher
James Tissot - Brooklyn Museum

Turn in your Bible to Mark 14.

The chronology of these events occurred during what we call “Holy Week.”

Start by looking at Mark 14:1-2: **“It was two days before the Passover and the festival of Unleavened Bread. The Chief priests and the scribes were looking for a way to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him; for they said, ‘Not during the festival, or there may be a riot among the people.’”** Over the past few days and months Jesus had challenged the strictest religious authorities in such a way that they wanted Him dead. The only question for them was how to do it? During Passover as many as 1,000,000 Jews would have made their way to Jerusalem. Jesus was regularly teaching at the Temple and had established a large following of people. In an effort to protect their country, the Jewish leaders were highly concerned about keeping peace with Rome. They knew they could not publicly arrest Jesus for fear of rioting. That is why verse 2 tells us they were trying to arrest Jesus by stealth.

The next six verses describe a woman anointing Jesus’ feet with oil. Jesus is called the “Messiah” in Hebrew and the “Christ” in Greek. These words mean, “anointed one.” According to Old Testament prophecy, the redeemer of Israel (and the world) would be called “the anointed one.” In a classic upside-down-paradoxical-kingdom-of-God-kind-of-way the King of kings was anointed by a woman who is not named—but will become known to the whole world.

In verses 10 and 11, the Jews get their answer as to how they might arrest Jesus in secrecy: **“Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went to the chief priests in order to betray him to them. When they heard it, they were greatly pleased, and promised to give him money. So he began to look for an opportunity to betray him.”** Jesus was the Messiah Judas needed but not the Messiah Judas wanted. He was tired of hearing about this suffering servant, dying Messiah business—so he took matters into his own hands. That takes us to verse 12 which chronologically would be Thursday or “Maundy Thursday” as it is traditionally called.

Verses 12-13, ***“On the first day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover Lamb is sacrificed, his disciples said to him, ‘where do you want us to go and make the preparation for you to eat the Passover?’ So he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, ‘Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you; follow him.’”*** Passover was and is the high holy day when the Jewish people annually remember God’s sovereignty over their miraculous deliverance. As recounted in the book of Exodus, God sent plague after plague to loosen Pharaoh’s grip on the Israelites, but he would not relent. God (via Moses) sent one final crushing blow—all the firstborn sons of each household would be killed except for those with the blood of a lamb smeared on the outside of their house. When the angel of death saw the blood, he would “pass over” that house. The blood of that sacrifice marked the household as one that served and feared God. Every Passover celebration since is a commemoration of these events.

Passover also marks the beginning of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. In the story found in Exodus, God told the Israelites not to put leaven in their bread dough because it would not have time to rise. Their exit from Egypt would be swift!

At the Last Supper Jesus and His disciples had gathered to celebrate the ritual Passover Seder. At this meal Jesus drops a few bombshells on them that will forever change the meaning of the meal for His followers. In verse 17 it says, ***“When it was evening, he came with the twelve. And when they had taken their places and were eating, Jesus said, ‘truly I tell you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me.’”*** If you look at verse 19 you see their response was not, “Darn you Judas, you back-stabbing traitor.” NO, their response was, “It’s not me is it?” They did not know what is going on, but Jesus did. And in verse 20, Jesus told them prophecy was going to be fulfilled. Verse 20 says, ***“It is one of the 12, one who is dipping bread into the bowl with me.”*** ***Psalm 41:9 says, “Even my friend in whom I trusted, who ate of my bread, has lifted the heel against me.”***

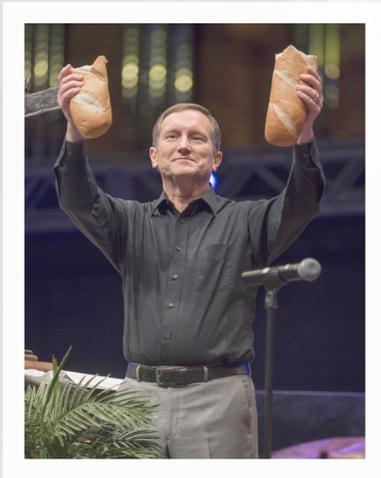
The foreshadowing of His death, which had been building for months, suddenly ramped up even more at this Passover Seder. The meal had multiple courses and each one typically had a cup of wine with it. Each course was meant to be symbolic of one part of the original Passover event. They would take the bread and say, *“This is the bread of affliction which our ancestors ate,”* remembering the unleavened bread during the Exodus. But Jesus did something different in verse 22, rather than say the prescribed script He said, *“This bread is my body, broken for you.”* He took a meal they had been celebrating over 1,000 years and transformed it: *This is no longer the bread of your affliction, this is the bread of my affliction.* There was another cup that was lifted up and the head of the meal would say *“May the all merciful One make us worthy of the days of the Messiah.”* This was meant to be a precursor asking God to make them worthy for the day the Messiah might come. But instead, Jesus in verse 24 said, *“This is my blood of the covenant poured out for many.”*

A covenant is a binding relationship. Jesus was saying, *My blood is going to bind you into a new relationship with God. My blood is poured out for many, so my death is on behalf of other people. When I die on your behalf, it will inaugurate a new covenant with you and God.* In Exodus when God made a covenant it was ratified by the sprinkling of the blood of a lamb, but Jeremiah 31 says, ***“The days are coming when God will make a new covenant with his people and he will forgive them of their iniquity and remember their sin no more.”***

Jesus was saying the new covenant was coming and it would not be inaugurated by the blood of a lamb, but by His blood. He was telling them: *This meal is no longer about that Passover lamb, because I am the new Passover lamb which will save you from your sin once and for all.* Verse 26 tells us they sang a hymn together which would have been one of the Hallel hymns which are found from Psalm 113-118.

Jesus instructed His followers to celebrate this supper in remembrance of Him until He comes again and the church has not ceased to do so.

CELEBRATING COMMUNION



You are invited to the Lord's Table even if you are not a member of Asbury or a United Methodist. To receive Communion, follow the prompts for the prayers, confession and congregational responses as provided by the pastors who will use the prepared liturgy displayed on your screen; and then partake of the elements when you are prompted.

Are children allowed to participate in Communion?

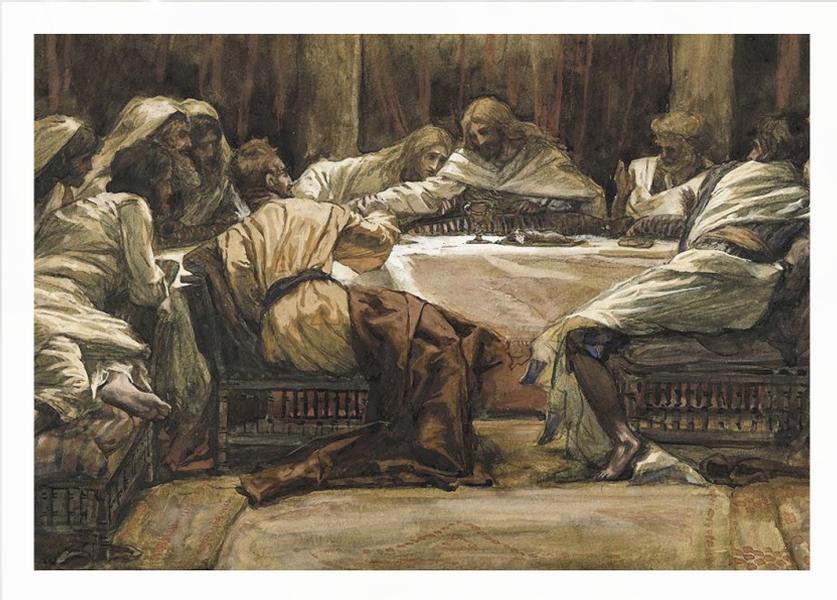
Yes, children are permitted to receive Communion, though we urge parents to talk with the children about this to make certain they understand the significance. Taking Communion together as a family, during the stay-at-home order is a perfect opportunity to discuss the meaning of Communion.

Holy Communion explained for kids (and grown-ups!)

Holy Communion is one of the oldest and most special traditions of the church. When we eat the bread and drink the juice, we are doing what Jesus and His disciples did 2,000 years ago! Everyone who follows Jesus has been sharing in the Lord's Supper since that day.

This is what happens during Communion:

- 1) **Prepare the Meal** – First, we set the table and announce that Jesus wants everybody to come have dinner at His house.
- 2) **A Big Thank You** – Just as Jesus gave thanks for the meal during the Last Supper, our pastors lead us in saying thanks to God. We ask God to put the Spirit of Jesus on the bread and juice, so that when we take them, we are united with Him.
- 3) **Breaking the Bread** – Jesus said Communion should remind us of Him and His great love. When we break the bread and lift up the cup, we remember that Jesus gave up everything to show us a better way.
- 4) **Dinner Time** – If you love Jesus and want to follow Him, you are invited to this meal. When we receive Holy Communion, we are getting a sneak peek at God's great heavenly feast which we will all enjoy when Jesus returns.



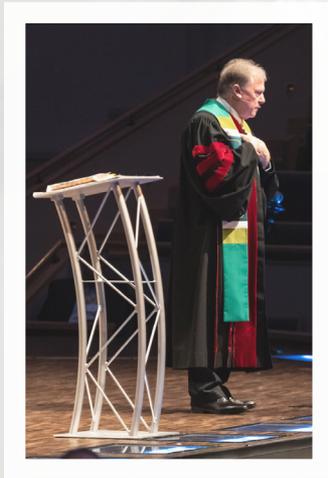
The Last Supper: Judas Dipping his Hand in the Dish
James Tissot - Brooklyn Museum

***How to prepare for Communion during the stay-at-home order:**

- This week gather some form of bread and either grape juice or wine. (If you only have bread or crackers, that is enough.)
- Before the service, clear your dinner table or a side table, make a sacred space in some way; get out your Bible, maybe some candles, and set out the elements of bread and juice.
- Tune in as we worship together online at 9:15 am or 11 am at asburytulsa.org.
- You may serve yourself or serve one another. Typically, the server would say, “*This is the body of Christ, given for you.*” Taking the cup, the server would say, “*This is the blood of Christ, shed for you.*” Here, you dip the bread into the juice before consuming. An appropriate response is, “Amen” or “Thanks be to God.”
- The bread and juice combined remind us of our Savior’s broken body and shed blood during His crucifixion and how He overcame death on Easter Sunday, so we partake in Communion with gratitude and reverence. It is appropriate to spend a few minutes in prayer after receiving Communion.

* *In a letter from Bishop Nunn, he stated United Methodist licensed local pastors and ordained elders in the Oklahoma Annual Conference may celebrate the sacrament of holy communion through a recorded or online worship service to which people are invited to gather as a congregation from a distance. This unusual way of consecrating and receiving this sacrament is being allowed during the COVID-19 pandemic because congregations are being gathered electronically by necessity.*

COMMUNION LITURGY



(INVITATION)

Christ our Lord invites to his table all who love him,
who earnestly repent of their sin
and seek to live in peace with one another.
Therefore, let us confess our sin before God and one another.

(CONFESSION AND PARDON)

**Most merciful God,
We confess that we have not loved you with our whole heart.
We confess that we have failed to be an obedient church.
We have not done your will,
We have broken your law,
We have rebelled against your love,
We have not loved our neighbors,
And we have not heard the cry of the needy.
Forgive us, we pray.
Free us for joyful obedience,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

All pray in silence.

Leader:

Hear the good news:
Christ died for us while we were yet sinners;
That proves God's love toward us.
In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven!

People to Leader:

In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven.
Leader and people:
Glory to God. Amen.

(THE GREAT THANKSGIVING)

Leader:

The Lord be with you.

People:

And also with you.

Leader:

Lift up your hearts.

People:

We lift them up to the Lord.

Leader:

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People:

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

Leader:

It is right, and a good and joyful thing,
always and everywhere to give thanks to you,
Father Almighty (almighty God), creator of heaven and earth.
And so, with your people on earth and all the company of heaven
we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

People:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in
the highest.**

Leader:

Holy are you, and blessed is your Son Jesus Christ.
By the baptism of his suffering, death, and resurrection
you gave birth to your church,
delivered us from slavery to sin and death,
and made with us a new covenant by water and the Spirit.

On the night in which he gave himself up for us, he took bread,
gave thanks to you, broke the bread, gave it to his disciples, and
said: "Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you. Do this in
remembrance of me."

When the supper was over he took the cup, gave thanks to you, gave
it to his disciples, and said: "Drink from this, all of you; this is my
blood of the new covenant, poured out for you and for many for the
forgiveness of sins." Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance
of me."

And so, in remembrance of these your mighty acts in Jesus Christ,
we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving
as a holy and living sacrifice, in union with Christ's offering for us,
as we proclaim the mystery of faith.

People:

Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.

Leader:

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here,
and on these gifts of bread and wine.
Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ,
that we may be for the world the body of Christ, redeemed
by his blood.

By your Spirit make us one with Christ,
one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world,
until Christ comes in final victory, and we feast at his
heavenly banquet.
Through your Son Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in
your holy Church,
all honor and glory is yours, almighty Father, now and for ever.

Leader and People: Amen.