

Preparing Your Child for Holy Communion

Family

We are all members of a family. No matter how big or small the family, we are part of something bigger than ourselves. Families may do a lot of things together, but they also spend time apart doing different things than each other. Parents go to work; kids go to school. Brothers and sisters do different activities. Coming home at the end of the day and being together with our family is a special time. It is a time when we can sit and talk about our day, doing fun things together, and share a meal. Home is where we are most comfortable. It is where we belong and feel loved. (Families: Take turns sharing what you enjoy doing most with each other.)

When we are baptized we become a part of an even bigger family. We become part of God's family, the Church. Just like with our own families, the people in God's family also need a time to come together. Although we can spend time with God by ourselves (in prayer and by reading the Bible) or in small groups, it is important to come together to worship God as a whole church family.

- We listen to what God is telling us in His Word.
- We sing praise to God in worship.
- We share our prayers.
- We take part in the Lord's Supper.
- And we go out to love others and serve the Lord.

Church

At Village Church, there are two "parts" to our service during the Sunday Celebration: the services of the Word and of the Sacrament (the Table).

The service of the Word is when we listen to what God is telling us through the Bible and a sermon explaining and applying the Biblical text. We confess our sins and ask God for forgiveness so that we may be restored to a relationship of love and peace of God with our church family during "The Peace." We also pray for ourselves and for others.

The service of the Table begins with an offering. We offer our money, for His Church to do His work. We offer bread and wine. Most importantly we offer ourselves. (Families: Take turns sharing what you think it means to offer yourself to God.) God has given us everything we have, and we want to say, "thank you". That is what "Eucharist" means. It means "giving thanks."

The Bread and Wine

When the bread and wine are on the Table, the pastor leads us in a special prayer. In this prayer, we thank God for making the world and making us. We thank Him for loving us even after we disobeyed Him. We thank Him for sending us Jesus, His Son. We thank Him for what Jesus did to bring us back to God, especially that Jesus died for us and rose again. We remember what Jesus did the night before He died.

On the night before He died, Jesus gathered His disciples to eat the Passover meal. (Families: Choose one person to read Exodus 12.) The Passover Feast was celebrated every year as a reminder of Israel's deliverance from slavery in Egypt. It was also a reminder of God's love and provision. Celebrating the Passover Feast also strengthened people in their present journey and provided hope for the future. (Families: Choose one person to read Matthew 26:17-20.) It was at the Passover

meal on the night before Jesus died that Jesus decided to institute His meal to speak of deliverance from something much bigger than from slavery in Egypt. Jesus spoke of rescue from sin and spiritual death through a New Covenant. This New Covenant or relationship with God would only be possible through Jesus' death on the cross. Jesus said, "Take, eat; this is my body. And He took a cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood which is poured out for the forgiveness of sins." Matthew 26:26-28

Jesus was preparing His disciples for His death that would come the next day, and explaining that His death was to be the final perfect sacrifice that would allow sin to be forgiven. He also told them they would join Him one day in His Father's kingdom.

The blessings of the New Covenant brought through Jesus' sacrificial death meant our sins would be forgiven, but also that we would know the Lord personally and that the Holy Spirit would live within us. In the past, people did not have a personal relationship with the Lord. They went to a priest or holy person if they wanted to talk to God. They sacrificed animals, but that did not set them free from sin, only remind them of their sin. They tried to obey a set of rules (something outside of themselves) instead of wanting to obey God because of a change inside them. Jesus came so that we would know His Father. Jesus' death, the final sacrifice, set us free from sin.

Holy Communion is a way to remember Jesus' death on the cross. It also reminds us that Jesus rose from the dead and will come again. When Jesus comes again, His people will join Him in heaven and have a really big feast! (Families: Choose someone to read Luke 22:14-20 and Revelation 19:6-10)

During Holy Communion

After the pastor leads the Prayer of Consecration, he invites us forward to share in God's gift to us. During Holy Communion our church family relives the Last Supper that Jesus shared with His disciples before He died. Holy Communion is a special way in which Jesus assures us of His love for us. We come expecting Jesus to meet us at the Table. While you are waiting to receive Communion you can pray asking God to forgive you for your sins, you can also offer yourself to God through prayer, or you can pray for people as they stand in line to receive Communion.

How Do We Receive Communion?

It is important to remember that we do not "take" Communion. It is something we receive. That is why we put our hands out for the bread to be placed in them. When you go to Table, extend your hands (crossing one over the other) and wait to receive the bread or wafer. Next, you will be served the wine. Help the person serving the wine to direct the cup to your mouth and take a small drink of wine. If you prefer, you may wait to eat the bread and dip it in the wine before putting it in your mouth. (Families: Practice receiving Communion.)

What Do We Do After Communion?

After receiving Communion, return to your seat. Kneel or sit quietly. Pray silently, thanking God for all He has done for you. Soon the church service will be over, but it doesn't end there. Before we leave, we sing songs of worship, the pastor asks God to bless us, and we are commanded to go out and love and serve the Lord as He has loved and served us.

(Families: Choose one person to read John 13: 34-35. What does it mean to go out and love and serve the Lord based on what you read in John? Discuss ways your family can live out loving others as God loves us.)

Parent FAQ'S

What is a sacrament?

It is an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace. The two sacraments are Baptism and Holy Communion.

What is Holy Communion?

The Eucharist (also called "Holy Communion" or the "Lord's Supper") is the central act of gathered worship. For Anglicans, this event constitutes the renewal of the Body of Christ as the Church through the reception of the Sacrament, His spiritual body and blood. In this sacrament, Christ is both encountered and incorporated. As such, the Eucharistic action looks backward as a memorial of Christ's sacrifice, forward as a foretaste of the heavenly banquet and to the present as a sign of Christ's presence in the lives of the community and of individual believers.

Do you need to be baptized to receive Holy Communion?

Yes. If you have not been baptized, speak to a pastor for information on baptism.

When can my child take Holy Communion?

Holy Communion is the "meal of the baptized." Our on-going life with Christ is affirmed and sustained in Holy Communion. It is your job as parents to decide when your child is ready. Some parents feel that a child must be "old enough" to have a full understanding of the Eucharist, others feel that it is okay for their child to participate when they express an interest and have a basic understanding of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. How you think about this and your child's readiness will help guide your decision. There is not a set age to receive communion, and the clergy will give Communion to anyone, regardless of age, who extend their hands.

If I do not want my child to receive communion, what should he/she do?

Invite your child to communion for a blessing. Simply have your child stand beside you, cross his/her arms over his/her chest, and the communion server will ask a blessing over him/her.

What do Anglicans believe about Holy Communion?

Unlike the view held by other denominations that the bread and wine change substance and are the corporeal body and blood of Jesus (transubstantiation) or that communion is simply a memorial service, we believe Holy Communion is a sacrament of our redemption and that Jesus Christ is present in the bread and wine through the Holy Spirit. Jesus comes to the hearts of Christians who through faith look to Him when they receive the sacrament. Thus, we are loved and nourished by Christ Himself.