

Statement and Guidelines for Communion

Communion Overview.....2

Guidance for Opening Communion4

Guidance for Selecting Who Should Lead Communion.....7

Key Scripture Passages (NIV).....7

Communion Overview

Our Sunday morning worship service has 3 primary components:

- Corporate worship and edification through singing and prayer;
- Remembrance of Jesus Christ in the celebration of Communion (also called Breaking of Bread, a time of Remembrance, the Lord's Supper, or the Eucharist); and
- The teaching/preaching of Scripture and its application to our lives.

While the other portions of our corporate worship are similar to other evangelical traditions, our weekly emphasis on Communion is less common in and is a distinctive of our Plymouth Brethren heritage. The frequency of this celebration as well as its prominent place in the service (typically the middle of the service, before kids are dismissed to any children's ministry and the sermon) highlight its centrality to our worship and the importance of the Atonement (Jesus' substitutionary death in our place).

Why celebrate communion?

Communion was established by Jesus Christ shortly before His death (Matthew 26:26-29, Mark 14:22-26 and Luke 22:19-20). He told His disciples, "Do this in remembrance of me." It was taught by the apostle Paul (I Corinthians 10:16-17 and 11:23-26) and practiced by the early church (Acts 2:42). The bread and the cup remind us of Christ's body given for us and His blood poured out for us at the cross under God's new covenant of grace.

Why do we do this every week?

In Acts 20:7, the Christians at Troas gathered on the first day of the week to break bread. We choose to do the same, remembering the Lord Jesus on the day of His resurrection.

We also recognize that we are prone to forgetfulness (Deuteronomy 8:11-20) and need to be reminded often of God's love and power as demonstrated in the death and resurrection of our Lord.

Our weekly, corporate worship is the overflow of our daily walk with Christ. This remembrance of the Lord prepares us for the week ahead as we gaze on His beauty and better understand the riches of His grace (see Psalms 27 and 42).

Who may participate in Communion?

Scripture states that those who participate by taking communion should do so in a "worthy manner" (1 Corinthians 11:27-32). We know that none of us is righteous (Romans 3:10) and we are made right with God by faith rather than by following the law (Romans 3:28). Once we are "made right with God" (Saved), living in a "worthy manner" means giving ourselves completely to God and not allowing sin to control the way we live (cf. Romans 6:12-34, 8:1-17). Anyone who is willfully engaging in sin or persists in spreading false doctrine or creating divisions in the church should confess their sin and be restored to God and their neighbor before participating in Communion (1 Corinthians 11:27-32, Matthew 5:23-24).

Typically, it is up to each family/individual to determine whether they should participate each week. However, in situations of church discipline, the Elders may instruct an individual to abstain from communion for a time.

How is communion structured during the service?

- Opening comments
 - One of the Elders, or another man assigned by the Elders, introduces our time of Communion. The purpose of these comments is to remind us of what God has done through Jesus' death, burial and resurrection. Often, these comments are also intentionally related to the theme of the sermon, but the focus is on remembering Jesus, as He instructed.
- Taking the Bread
 - A public prayer is offered prior to taking the bread. This prayer is given by the same person opening communion.
 - At the completion of the prayer, pause for 15 seconds to allow each individual to pray and thank God for allowing Jesus' body to be broken in his/her place and then to take the bread.
 - On selected Sundays where we pass communion, this pause will be longer while the ushers pass the elements.
- Taking the Cup
 - A public prayer is offered prior to taking the cup. This prayer is often given by the same person opening communion, but another godly man may be called upon to pray.
 - Here again, at the completion of the prayer, pause for 15 seconds to allow each individual to pray and thank God for allowing Jesus' blood to be shed for the forgiveness of his/her sins and then to take the cup.
 - On selected Sundays where we pass communion, this pause will be longer while the ushers pass the elements.
 - The transition to any children's programming and the message occurs after this prayer.

A note regarding offering...

- Prayer for Offering & the sermon (typically after announcements)
 - This prayer dedicates our gifts to God's use for his kingdom. This prayer flows from our belonging to the body of Christ and emphasizes our giving back to God.
 - Also included in this time of prayer is asking God's blessing on both the speaker and the congregation, as hearers of His word.
 - No plates are passed. Rather there are several options for giving (i.e. in boxes near entrances, online, mobile app) which are noted on the screen.

Guidance for Opening Communion

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to give guidelines and reminders for those who are asked to lead our Chapel Family in the sacred celebration of remembering our Lord in Communion each Sunday.

General Comments

“But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.” (1 Cor. 14:40 NIV)

The following is not a script, or a liturgy for Communion that must be followed in order to “get it right.” However, as stated in the Communion Overview, there is a purpose to how and why we practice this ordinance of the church that needs to be taught (both explicitly and implicitly) taught to the next generation.

Self Reflection

“Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.” (James 3:1)

“Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup.” (1 Cor. 11:28)

Opening communion and leading our Chapel Family to remember our Lord’s death, burial, and resurrection is a solemn privilege and responsibility. Please prayerfully examine your own heart and motives as you prepare.

Theme and Focus

“For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.” (1 Cor. 11:26)

Paul’s correction of the Corinthians, in chapter 11, points their improper focus on self during their remembrance times. His redirection instructs them to center their focus on Christ by “announcing the Lord’s death” (v.26 NLT).

Consequently, the theme and focus when leading the Breaking of Bread should be upward (God focused) rather than inward (self) or outward (relating to others). Our understanding of ourselves and our relating to others may certainly be part of what is shared, but the take away for the hearer, and the thrust of the intent of the speaker should lead us to God – who he is and what he has done.

The Atonement of Christ, his broken body and his blood shed for the remission of sin should be central to what is shared and in how you lead in prayer.

Topic and Text

The specific topic and text used to open communion is not specified or limited. However, you are encouraged to be familiar with the passage and theme selected for the sermon as you prepare. You may choose to use part of the passage planned for the message, but the topic covered should help us relate the passage scheduled for preaching to Christ's atonement and should be complementary, if possible, rather than a repetition of the message.

Communication during planning between the Communion leader and the speaker for the day can sometimes be helpful, but the Holy Spirit will also lead and guide you both. On many occasions the communion sharing and sermon have dovetailed beautifully with zero prior communication between the Communion leader and speaker. Ask God what he would have you share, and then plan as God guides your heart and thoughts.

Consider including a brief summary of the "what, why, and who" of communion as outlined in the FHBC Communion Overview above.

Structure

Transitions and Timing

Please refer to the order of service emailed out ahead of each Sunday to those participating in the service. Although we don't need to be slaves to a schedule, we do live in a cultural context that values timeliness. Please be ready to be up front at the appropriate time and plan your comments targeting a 5-7 minute timeframe including prayer.

Again, this isn't intended to be rigid, but the expectation extends from respect for the musicians, speaker, and those involved with children's ministry. Each of these individuals has also spent time preparing what God has laid on their hearts to share that day and adjustments on the fly due to unexpected timing changes can be difficult.

Opening Comments

Whether you start with an illustration or a scripture, lead our hearts and minds back to the cross and to remembering what Christ has done on our behalf. Comments should be brief and succinct. This is not an appropriate time for expository teaching or extended discourse. The key is the remembering and preparing each heart to participate.

Praying for the Bread and Cup

You, as the person leading communion prays prior to the partaking of the bread. When praying for the cup you may pray yourself or ask another man of godly character to pray prior to partaking of the cup. This can be an excellent opportunity to involve one of the younger men in the congregation to start participating in teaching and shepherding.

Allow 10-30 seconds of silent pause after each prayer before proceeding. The silent time during these moments are for each individual to reflect and pray.

Transition

The sermon typically follows communion, but there may be one more song. Verify with the emailed schedule and, if necessary, check with Director of Ministries (Chester) regarding specific transitions such as introducing a visiting speaker.

Thank you for being willing to participate by leading us in remembering our Lord.

If you have questions, comments, or suggestions regarding our practices and expectations regarding communion, please discuss with one of the Elders.

Sincerely,

FHBC Elders

Guidance for Selecting Who Should Lead Communion

Being an elder or deacon is not a requirement for leading communion, praying for the elements, nor praying for offering. However, the role does have both a teaching and shepherding function in our service and church family life. Consequently, those asked by the elder(s) to lead communion should be considered in light of the leadership qualifications directed at elders and deacons. No one is perfect with regards to these qualifications. We are all sinners saved by grace whom God is working on, sanctifying and purifying our hearts. However, those identified by FHBC leadership for this responsibility should be growing towards the below qualifications.

Involving our young men

As mentioned in the guidance for those opening communion, we would like to use the communion time as a steppingstone for our young men to explore and grow their giftings through their participation. The offering prayer is a good first step. Then as growth and maturity are observed, praying for the bread/cup, and then finally leading communion.

As we involve our young men, care should be taken to provide the training and resources (this document and others as appropriate) to scaffold their participation until they become more comfortable and independent. This will look different for each young man, and for each elder or more mature man leading the young man in their participation.

Key Scripture Passages: (NIV)

1 Timothy 3:1-13

1 Here is a trustworthy saying: Whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task. 2 Now the overseer is to be above reproach, faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, 3 not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. 4 He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect. 5 (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) 6 He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. 7 He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap.

8 In the same way, deacons are to be worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. 9 They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. 10 They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons.

11 In the same way, the women are to be worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything.

12 A deacon must be faithful to his wife and must manage his children and his household well. 13 Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus.

Titus 1:6-9 (NIV)

6 An elder must be blameless, the husband of one wife, with faithful[c] children who are not accused of wildness or rebellion. 7 As an overseer of God's household, he must be blameless, not arrogant, not hot-tempered, not an excessive drinker, not a bully, not greedy for money, 8 but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, righteous, holy, self-controlled, 9 holding to the faithful message as taught, so that he will be able both to encourage with sound teaching and to refute those who contradict it.

Acts 2:42-47

42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43 Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. 44 All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45 They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. 46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, 47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Matthew 26:26-28

26 While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body."
27 Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. 28 This is my blood of the[a] covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

Mark 14:22-24

22 While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take it; this is my body."
23 Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and they all drank from it.
24 "This is my blood of the[a] covenant, which is poured out for many," he said to them

Luke 22:17-20

17 After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, "Take this and divide it among you. 18 For I tell you I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes."
19 And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me."

20 In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.

1 Corinthians 11:17-34

17 In the following directives I have no praise for you, for your meetings do more harm than good. 18 In the first place, I hear that when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you, and to some extent I believe it. 19 No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God's approval. 20 So then, when you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat, 21 for when you are eating, some of you go ahead with your own private suppers. As a result, one person remains hungry and another gets drunk. 22 Don't you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God by humiliating those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? Certainly not in this matter!

23 For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." 25 In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." 26 For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

27 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. 28 Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup. 29 For those who eat and drink without discerning the body of Christ eat and drink judgment on themselves. 30 That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. 31 But if we were more discerning with regard to ourselves, we would not come under such judgment. 32 Nevertheless, when we are judged in this way by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be finally condemned with the world.

33 So then, my brothers and sisters, when you gather to eat, you should all eat together. 34 Anyone who is hungry should eat something at home, so that when you meet together it may not result in judgment.

And when I come I will give further directions.

2 Timothy 4:1-5

In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: 2 Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. 3 For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. 4 They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. 5 But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.

Hebrews 10:19-25

19 Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, 20 by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, 21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. 23 Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, 25 not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.