

Shut-in Communion Ministry 4/5/08

1. The list is a rotation of men or husband/wife couples going into the homes of individuals that have requested home communion on Sunday. It can be either in the morning in place of the Sunday school hour or Sunday afternoon.
2. Please consider taking someone with you in effort to support and train new individuals in this process.
3. The Communion List
 - a. The Communion List can be found in the communion room on the table.
 - b. Determine the availability of the other Communion server listed and determine which individuals each of you will cover.
 - c. You may want to call those on your list to confirm the time you intend to be at their home/room.
4. The Communion Kit
 - a. The Communion Kit can be found in the communion room on the table as well. You will need to put grape juice in the bottle and be sure there are enough crackers and cups in the kit. (Include enough for yourself if you intend to join those you are serving)
 - b. Be sure to return the kit and rinse out the grape juice bottle as soon as possible.
5. Take with you...
 - a. Some individuals/families may receive the Standard and Lookout magazines. They should be on the table in the Communion room if this is needed.
 - b. A bulletin or special insert should be taken to each one.
 - c. CARE sheets with Book of the Month questions may be found in the clear plastic information rack in the foyer.
 - d. Your Bible
6. The Process
 - a. Be sensitive of timing. You need not rush through this ministry, but don't stay so long that those you minister to are uncomfortable. Remember they aren't coming to church many times because they can't sit too long or stay out of the bathroom very long.
 - b. Greet the individual/family with empathy and respectful curiosity as to their well-being. Don't pry while being interested and concerned.
 - c. Be sensitive to the need for confidentiality. If you think someone should be added to the prayer list ask them specifically if the situation can be described on the email prayer list.
 - d. You can describe any special announcements or prayer requests you received from the church and hand them their bulletin.
 - e. An assistant can begin pouring the grape juice as you mention your intention to share the Lord's Supper with them.

- f. Some Scriptures you might read:
- i. **1 Cor 10:14-17** Therefore, my dear friends, flee from idolatry. 15 I speak to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say. 16 Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? 17 Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.
 - ii. **Matt 18:19-20** "Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. 20 For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them."
 - iii. **Matt 26:26-29** While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body." 27 Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. 28 This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. 29 I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom."
 - iv. **1 Cor 11:23-29** 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 Therefore, 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 A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. 29 For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself.
 - v. **Luke 22:14-21** When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. 15 And he said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. 16 For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God." 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 of 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.

- vi. **Acts 20:7** On the first day of the week we came together to break bread.
- vii. **Acts 2:42-43** They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

A Pattern for Prayers

A simple pattern for prayers can be used by all who pray at Christ's table. Because the pattern is compact and focused, it encourages the development of prayers that are a good length for use in the communion service. Using this pattern also helps to keep the focus sharp and well directed.

Call God by name: Prayers in public worship can be thought of as open letters, or perhaps open post cards, to God. They are sent to God but in a way that encourages the congregation to read and affirm the text. Prayers therefore begin by speaking to God by name: *Dear God... Eternal God... God of love... Holy One...*

Honor God by stating one of God's characteristics or actions: This part of the prayer bases everything in God and is the foundation for the rest of what we say and do at the table: *You have given us life and promise to support us as long as we live... you have given us this beautiful world as our home and entrusted us with its care... in Jesus Christ you came to live among us and reconcile us to yourself...*

Speak the main point of the prayer which is to remember Jesus Christ: *Thank you for the new life you give us through Jesus Christ who meets us at this table... With this loaf and cup we remember our Savior Jesus Christ... We praise you for bringing us into a new community of love through Jesus Christ who asks that we remember him with the loaf and cup...*

State the result that is hoped for: This part of the prayer may include a phrase like this: *By your Word and Holy Spirit bless these elements and congregation that we may receive Christ's own life given for us.* Then follows the result: *Forgive us and strengthen us... Help us be Christ's body in the world...*

Conclude in the name of Jesus: The classic form of Christian prayer begins by naming God and concludes "in the name of Jesus Christ." The final word is "Amen."

Prayers at Christ's Table

The Importance of the Communion Prayers

The Sunday celebration reaches its climax when we come together at Christ's table. Here we are closer to God than at any other time in our worship. This simple action with loaf and cup connects us to Jesus' death and resurrection long ago and gives us a preview of the life to come when we return to be with God. The communion service is primarily action:

we set the table with our gifts;
break the bread and hold the cup;
eat and drink with one another and God.

The prayers that are offered at the table tie these actions together:

they sum up the meaning of the actions at the table;
offer these actions to God;
and open the door for our personal communion with God.

Because these ideas are so close to the heart of why we worship God, these prayers are the most important words spoken in the service.

The Major Themes

Thankful Praise is the first theme. Everything we are and can ever hope to be comes from God who created the world and continues to create with every new moment of life. God loves the world, keeps it going, and renews it when everything seems to be running down. God inspires prophets and martyrs to witness to God and call humankind to a new life. A scriptural affirmation of this theme is in Colossians:

*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly;
teach and admonish one another in all wisdom;
and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms
and hymns, and spiritual songs to God.
And whatever you do, in word or deed,
do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus,
giving thanks to God the Father through him (Col. 3:16-17).*

Remembering Jesus Christ is the second theme for prayers at the communion table. In Jesus the fullness of God was pleased to dwell. Through his life, teachings, sacrificial death, and eternal life with God, Jesus becomes the way by which God reconciles the world to God's own self. This idea is expressed in a hymn that is preserved for us in Philippians. Paul encourages us to follow the example of Jesus Christ:

*who, though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God
as something to be exploited,*

*but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave,
being born in human likeness.
And being found in human form,
he humbled himself and became obedient
to the point of death--even death on a cross (Phil. 1:21).*

Often the remembrance includes a reference to the communion bread and fruit of the vine which are signs of all of the goodness that comes to us from God. At the same time, they represent Christ's own life given for us. On the night of his betrayal, Jesus gave the loaf and cup new meanings:

***My body given for you;
My blood of the covenant poured out for you.
Do this to remember me.***

Calling on the Holy Spirit is the third theme of communion prayers. We ask God, through the Spirit to do all that God intends: unite us with Christ and one another; offer forgiveness and a new life of peace and joy; redeem the world and complete God's intentions for creation. This theme is expressed in an eloquent passage in the Epistle to the Ephesians:

*In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance...
so that we, who were the first to set our hope
on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory.
In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your
salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the
promised Holy Spirit;
this is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption
as God's own people, to the praise of his glory (Eph. 1:11a, 12-14).*

This part of the prayer can vary widely in form and contents because the results of communion are so widespread.

In most churches around the world, these themes are combined into one prayer usually offered by a pastor of the church. The text is carefully prepared so that it includes the appropriate ideas, is worded in language suitable for public worship, and expresses the climax of worship. In congregations of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) the custom has been to use two or three shorter prayers with these themes divided among them. Each congregation develops its own pattern, but the following are the most common:

1. offering prayer by Pulpit Helper; prayer for bread by one Elder and prayer for the cup by a second Elder;
2. offering prayer by one elder and communion prayer by a second elder;
3. offering prayer by pastor or an elder and communion prayers by an elder and pastor.

How to Prepare

The communion prayers come at the high point of the celebration, and they sum up the primary reason for our coming together. Therefore, it is important that those who offer these prayers prepare themselves for the occasion. Most important is the personal preparation as we ask that God help us with our leadership. We can read again passages from the Bible that tell about the Lord's supper and the new life that Jesus gives us. Among the Bible references are the following:

Matthew 26:26-29

Mark 14:22-25

Luke 23:14-23

John 6:22-59

1 Corinthians 10:16-17

1 Corinthians 11:17-34

2 Corinthians 5:16-21

Colossians 3:12-17

Then begin to prepare the words for the prayer. Some people think about the ideas that they want to include in the prayer but wait until they are at the table for the words to come spontaneously, perhaps letting the scripture readings and sermon help them with language. Others write out their prayer and memorize it before coming to worship. Still others take their written prayer to the table and read it when the time comes.

God's Spirit works in each of these methods; and each one who prays must find a method of preparation that works. Come to the celebration in good time so that you are not hurried. Be sure that you know where you are to stand and when in the celebration the prayer

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