

## ON THE LORD'S SUPPER

Adopted by the Session – January 2022

**THE SACRAMENTS:** By Christ's institution, there are two sacraments in the Church, Baptism and the Lord's Supper. We subscribe fully to the summary of the Bible's teachings on the sacraments of the Lord's Supper and Baptism in the Westminster Confession of Faith Ch. XXVII - XXIX.

*Sacraments are holy signs and seals of the covenant of grace, immediately instituted by God, to represent Christ and his benefits; and to confirm our interest in Him: as also, to put a visible difference between those that belong unto the Church and the rest of the world; and solemnly to engage them to the service of God in Christ, according to his Word. There is, in every sacrament, a spiritual relation, or sacramental union, between the sign and the thing signified: whence it comes to pass, that the names and effects of the one are attributed to the other.*

- Westminster Confession of Faith Ch. XXVII-I-II

*The Lord's Supper is a sacrament, wherein, by giving and receiving bread and wine, according to Christ's appointment, his death is showed forth; and the worthy receivers are, not after a corporal and carnal manner, but by faith, made partakers of his body and blood, with all his benefits, to their spiritual nourishment, and growth in grace.*

- Westminster Shorter Catechism, Answer to Question 96 - What is the Lord's Supper?

**PREPARATION:** The Lord's Supper is a means of grace, whereby "worthy receivers" are spiritually nourished. We are commanded to examine ourselves (I Cor 11:28) before coming to the table. This is not a call to perfection, but rather a call to repent, mourn our sin, and trust in the Holy Spirit to strengthen us as we grow in Christ.

*For those who are truly sorrowful for their sins, and yet trust that these are forgiven them for the sake of Christ; and that their remaining infirmities are covered by his passion and death; and who also earnestly desire to have their faith more and more strengthened, and their lives more holy; but hypocrites, and such as turn not to God with sincere hearts, eat and drink judgment to themselves.*

- Heidelberg Catechism, Answer to Question 81 – For whom is the Lord's Supper instituted?

We are given clear warning against receiving the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner (I Cor 11). For this reason, we take care to communicate this biblical warning every time we administer the sacrament while also recognizing that the only requirement to receive is to be a baptized believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, repenting of sin, and trusting in Him alone for salvation.

*No; for by this, the covenant of God would be profaned, and his wrath kindled against the whole congregation; therefore it is the duty of the christian church, according to the appointment of Christ and his apostles, to exclude such persons, by the keys of the kingdom of heaven, till they show amendment of life.*

- Heidelberg Catechism, Answer to Question 82 – Are they also to be admitted to this Supper, who, by confession and life, declare themselves unbelieving and ungodly?

**COMMUNICANT MEMBERS:** We encourage the congregation to take special care with their covenant children, encouraging them to watch and consider what Christ has done for them, but to refrain from taking the elements until they can discern the body and blood of Christ broken and shed for their sin. When a family believes their child is at an appropriate level of spiritual maturity, the Session will meet with the child and upon hearing a profession of faith and good understanding of the sacrament, will admit the child into the communicant membership of the church. The child will take the communicant membership vows in an upcoming service and then be admitted to the table, growing in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit through this means of grace.

**ELEMENTS:** The elements used in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper are normal ordinary elements set aside for holy use – as we partake, our focus is on that which is signified rather than on the sign itself. The bread remains bread and is a sign of Christ's body broken for sinners. The wine remains wine and is a sign of Christ's blood shed for sinners. We consider the specific details of the elements to be a circumstance of the administration of the sacrament and not directly specified or commanded in Scripture, however, in selecting elements, we believe that authenticity and symbolism are two guiding principles. Although unleavened bread was used for the Passover meal (Exodus 12) and in Christ's observance of it throughout his earthly life, Christ's institution of the Lord's Supper marks Christ as the fulfillment of all foreshadowed by the Passover lamb. Therefore, a continuation of Passover with ceremonial adherence to Mosaic law is no longer required. In establishing the Lord's Supper as the new picture of this meal, the Greek word *artos* (ordinary bread) is used in the New Testament to describe the bread in relation to the Lord's Supper, rather than the unleavened bread (*azymos*) specifically prescribed as part of the Passover meal. We believe that either option could be used in the Lord's Supper today, but ordinary leavened bread was the bread used by the early church, by most historical accounts. The wine, which would have been fermented grape juice, was a potent symbol of Christ's cleansing blood; both sweet and bitter, and rich with aroma, a powerful picture of the blood-red cost of our redemption.

With all these things considered, at Christ Covenant Church we serve ordinary leavened bread and wine in the administration of the Lord's Supper, as we believe these best represent the intent in the original institution and most appropriately symbolize the body and blood of our Lord. To prevent the sign itself from being a distraction and to respect the decision of those who choose to abstain from alcohol for any reason, including out of deference to a brother who may stumble (I Cor 8:13), we also serve unfermented grape juice as an option. In addition, based on the dietary restrictions of those in our congregation we also offer a gluten-free bread alternative.

**FREQUENCY:** We acknowledge the decision of some churches to administer the sacrament of the Lord's Supper at every worship service. We believe the Lord's Supper is an important part of Christian growth and spiritual nourishment, and to faithfully administer requires significant time in a worship service. While a more frequent administration would be acceptable and even preferred by some, at Christ Covenant we administer the Lord's Supper on the First Sunday of every month during our morning worship service.