

# Communion at The Fountains

At The Fountains, our communion liturgy expresses both ancient and very modern principles. Shorter than most formal liturgies, this format is also “blood-free,” de-emphasizing the ideas of blood atonement and sacrifice in favor of the United Methodist principles that communion expresses our oneness in Christ and models Jesus' invitation to all to feast together as a sign of acceptance and grace.

United Methodists have an "open table" inviting everyone to share in what founder John Wesley called, a “means of Grace.” Even unbaptized persons and those practicing other faiths are welcomed to the table as a symbol of Jesus' inclusive welcome of all people.

Although it has fallen out of practice in most of our churches, early Methodists practiced communion every week. So convinced was John Wesley of the reality of the grace imparted through communion, it was not uncommon for him to have communion daily. However, from the beginning of American Methodism, church polity required an ordained elder to consecrate (bless) the communion elements. In the early days of the circuit riders, the frequency of communion depended solely upon when the elder was able to visit a church. Since circuit riders had large areas to cover, it was sometimes a month or more before a congregation could share in the sacrament. So today, most Methodist churches – including The Fountains -- celebrate communion once a month. Others celebrate it only four or five times a year – at the beginning of each Christian season (Advent, Lent, etc.). However, out of commitment to our denominational identity and at the recommendation of the General Church, an increasing number of United Methodist churches are returning to weekly communion.

Because Jesus showed his love for all people by sharing table fellowship with rich and poor, righteous and sinners, tax collectors, prostitutes and lepers, the symbolic act of communion has profound and far-reaching consequences (with which Christianity as a whole is still wrestling). At The Fountains, we affirm John Wesley's belief that communion is one of the means of “amazing” grace by which the Holy Spirit is made real in the lives of disciples for healing, renewal, conviction, and peace.

## FAQs

### ***Are children and youth allowed to participate in Communion?***

Absolutely. As this is a “family meal”, they are not only allowed but encouraged to participate. Even though children may not fully comprehend what is going on, they know when they are being excluded.

### ***Is anyone excluded from participating in Communion?***

Nope. Jesus made a point of eating with just the people the “religious” would have excluded. So, continuing Jesus' practice, The Fountains welcomes anyone who seeks a deeper relationship with God. Communion is open to all people, member or not, baptized or not, Christian or not, regardless of age, race, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or physical condition.





### ***What's with the Welch's?***

The Methodist church has a long history in the Temperance movement and to this day the use of grape juice is just one way the church removes any barriers that would keep children or those struggling with addiction to alcohol from the table.

***BONUS info for the next time you're on Jeopardy:*** In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, Dr. Thomas Bramwell Welch, a New Jersey Dentist and prohibitionist Methodist was unhappy with a fellow communion steward imbibing the communion wine to the point of inebriation. The good doctor set himself to developing the pasteurization process for grape juice as an "unfermented sacramental wine" for his fellow parishioners. The result was the Welch's grape juice empire.

## **The Liturgy for Communion:**

### ***The Invitation***

In the United Methodist tradition, there's no prerequisite to share in the meal: all you need is a hungry heart to be in relationship with the Spirit and this fellowship. We're reminded that this meal is a "means of grace" by which we can receive the healing, forgiveness, hope, challenge we seek. Whatever we come longing for this day is offered as we gather together at the table where Christ is the host and we are the honored guests.

### ***The Breaking of the Bread***

Let's remember that on his last night, Jesus shared a meal with his friends. He took the bread, broke it, and passed it to the disciples, saying, "This is the bread of new life."

### ***The Raising of the Cup***

Likewise, after the supper was over, Jesus took the cup. After blessing God, "*Baruch atah Adonai Eloheynu melech ha-olam...*", he passed it among the disciples and said, take, drink, this is the cup of God's mercy. Whenever you share this, remember me...

### ***The Consecration***

And so, Gracious God, we now ask that you pour out your spirit upon this bread and cup, and upon each one of us, that by sharing in this banquet together, we might become one with you and one with one another, strengthened to go into the world to [fill in whatever the general theme of the day is], as we follow the one called Jesus the Christ. Amen.

Here at The Fountains, you're invited to come forward down the center aisles to those serving, tear off a piece of bread and dip it into the cup, and return up the side aisles. You're encouraged to come forward as individuals, family groups or as groups from your row to all break off the bread together and dip in the cup to receive the elements.

Come to the table – all are welcome...