

Presbytery of Kiskiminetas
Ruling Elder Communion Certification Training

DRAFT

Opening Prayer-open training with prayer

Theology of the Table

Standing behind the communion table you represent our Lord Jesus Christ to the congregation. This place is holy ground. While the things we say are somewhat scripted-it is important to know there are reasons for the things we do and say. The following are theological beliefs which undergird the practice of Communion from *Introducing the Reformed Faith* by Donald K. McKim.

1. The three synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) record the Last Supper and Paul describes it in 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 and it is still celebrated because Jesus commanded it.

2. The past, present, and future are all united in this one place as God's creative and redemptive work is celebrated by God's holy community around this holy meal.

a. The past is recalled in eating the bread and drinking from the cup. Our remembering of Jesus brings the reality of Jesus' life, saving death, and liberating resurrection into our present.

b. The work of Jesus through the Holy spirit is happening in our present time as the words "This is my body that is for you" and This cup is the new covenant in my blood" are proclaimed.

c. The future promise of God, made real through Jesus, is celebrated in the words "until he comes" indicating the sure hope of Jesus' return and ultimate triumph in the ultimate reign of God.

d. Jesus revealed himself to the disciples after the resurrection in this meal. Luke 24:30-31 records the testimony of the disciples on the Road to Emmaus who had their eyes opened and recognized Jesus after the breaking of the bread. In John 21:12-13 Jesus invites fishermen to "come have breakfast" and they knew it was the Lord. The disciples now believed that Jesus was no longer dead. Jesus Christ is the living presence to his people with whom Jesus shares his own self—

the Bread of life as described by the disciple in John 6:35 and 48. Jesus is the host at the Table.

Dimensions of the Supper

1. Covenant: Luke 22:20 and 1 Corinthians 11:25 record Jesus saying that “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.” Jeremiah spoke of a new covenant that would be coming to the house of Israel and the house of Judah in Jeremiah 31:33. Jesus’ coming death is the seal of the new covenant now made eternal in the lives of believers.

2. Remembrance: In accordance with John 6:53-58, those who celebrate communion ‘remember’ Jesus Christ. The body and blood of Jesus nourish Jesus’ disciples as believers eat and drink and thus receive the benefits of what Jesus has done for them by his death.

3. Reign of God: In the words from 1 Corinthians 11:26, participants in the Supper ‘proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.’ Jesus is King is affirmed in his resurrection and victory over death. The celebration of the Lord’s Supper in the church is the prefiguring of the coming messianic banquet. Eating and drinking with Jesus is an eternal feasting-as eternal as the life we have in the resurrected body of Jesus. The Lord’s Supper is thus a ‘sign and proclamation’ of our unity with Jesus and with other believers as we ‘may and must eat and drink with Jesus in faith, love, and hope.’

Officiating The Lord’s Supper (Also called Communion, Eucharist, Great Thanksgiving). Note: We will discuss options or different ways of celebrating the Lord’s Supper but stick to the methods used by your congregation. Important changes to worship require approval of a pastor/moderator and session.

1. The Book of Common Worship and the Directory for Worship in the Book of Order are tools to use when planning to celebrate and officiate communion. Every church should have these references. You can download the free Book of Common Worship or purchase the book form. Also make sure you have the current edition of the Book of Order.

2. We review the Order of Worship Service to discuss how each element of the service teaches and enhances the understanding and spiritual efficacy of the meal. Review that there is flexibility in planning a worship service and the communion

itself. For instance, the Words of Institution may be said at different places in the Prayer of Great Thanksgiving or at the end. Again, do not change church practice.

a. Order of the Worship Service

1. Gathering of the People, the Family of God. This portion of the service includes the Prayer of Confession and forgiveness which is integral to the Lord's supper

2. The Word portion of the service includes the Prayer of Illumination, the reading and preaching of the Word which prepares the people for participation for the Communion meal. We all Affirm our Faith (often with the Nicene Creed with Communion), offer Prayers of Intercession, the Offering, and the Lord's Supper.

3. The final portion of the Worship Service is the Sending which encourages all participants to practice what we celebrate in this meal in their daily lives and includes Acts of Commitment like Commissioning ministries, saying good-bye to departing members, etc., the Charge and Blessing, and the reminder that our worship continues as we go forth into the world to love and serve our Lord.

b. The Lord's Supper always opens with an Invitation to the Lord's Table. It is typically a short passage of the words of Jesus. One example is Matthew 11:28-29: 'Jesus said: Come to me, all you that are weary and carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.' There are several other introductions in the Book of Common Worship, pp. 119 and 120.

Note: If the Words of Institution are said in the Invitation, they do not need to be said later.

c. The Great Thanksgiving consists of three parts. Each is separated by the Sanctus (Holy, holy, holy) and Memorial Acclamation (Christ has died). The three parts are:

1. Section one of the Thanksgiving: the introductory dialogue is :

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them up to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

Thanking God for creation and providence, for covenant history and for seasonal blessings, followed by the Sanctus. The Sanctus may be sung or spoken here. ‘Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.’ Other options available on pp. 141-2 of the Book of Common Worship.

2. Section 2: Remembering God’s acts of salvation in Jesus Christ: his birth, life, death, resurrection, and promise to come again and Institution of the Supper (if not spoken elsewhere), together with an acclamation of faith. Note: If the Words of Institution are said in the Invitation, they do not need to be said later. The Memorial Acclamation may be sung or spoken here: ‘Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.’ More options are available on p. 143 of the Book of Common Worship.

3. Section 3: Calling upon the Holy Spirit to draw the people into the presence of the risen Christ so that they 1) may be fed, 2) may be joined in the community of the saints, to all God’s people, and to the risen Christ, and 3) may be sent to serve as faithful disciples, followed by an ascription of praise to the triune God. the Great Thanksgiving is closed by everyone saying (or singing) together the Lord’s Prayer.

d. The Words of Institution follow the wording of Paul from 1 Corinthians 11:23-26. But there are variations based upon this passage. They can be found on pp. 142-3 of the Book of Common Worship.

e. The giving of the elements

1. I usually transition from the Great Thanksgiving to the consumption of the elements with the phrase, “Now let us share together the gifts of God for the people of God.”

2. As the bread is eaten, these words may be used: “The body of Christ, given for you,” Or “The bread of heaven.”

3. Introducing the juice, you may say something like, “the blood of Christ shed for you.”

f. The Lord’s supper is always closed with prayer. There are three examples on p. 174 of the Book of Common worship.

Seasonal Great Thanksgiving Prayers

Seasonal Great Thanksgiving prayers (Advent, Christmas, Easter, and others) are in the Book of Common Worship in the Christian Year section beginning on p. 157.

COVID Safety: How the Lord’s Supper is practiced is a decision made by each session, but we ask that these factors be considered. The COVID pandemic seems to have transitioned from a pandemic to an endemic which means COVID infection numbers will vary. Sessions will have to make decisions on following safe practices to limit the spread of infection within their Church family during the celebration of the Lord’s Supper. Take into account the presence and rate of infection rate of the COVID virus in your community when making these decisions.

1. Safest: Celebrate virtually/online during on-line worship services. You will need to communicate that you will be celebrating the Lord’s supper prior to the service so your viewers can prepare something to eat and drink at the appropriate time.

2. For in-person worship, follow all the recommended safety guidelines:

a. Prepacked elements can be purchased which contain both a wafer and juice or just juice. These can be set out on a table for people to pick up on their way to their seat. You may want to have ushers to remind people to pick them up on the way in or remind them to get them before starting the service.

b. Some use a snack size bag with a piece of bread and a grape. The grape serves as a substitute for the wine/juice.

c. Some churches have the Servers, masked, standing at the front and ask the people to maintain an appropriate distance between themselves as the

congregation comes forward and take each element. They may remove their mask to consume the elements, then replace the mask and return to their seats.

3. Methods regarded as not safe at this time:

a. Do not pass elements among the pews. It requires too much touching of the plates and for people to be too close.

b. Do not use a common loaf, offer individual servings of bread.

Questions?

Those present for refresher training can be excused. Those who have never served communion will stay for the practical exercise training.

Practice portion of the Training

The primary objective is to practice saying the words and handling the elements at the same time. Also review and discuss different ways communion is practiced including intinction. Special focus should be placed on practicing in accordance with the way the church of each elder celebrates communion.