

## THE LORD'S SUPPER

### **What is the Lord's Supper?<sup>1</sup>**

In his last meal before his death, Jesus took and shared bread and wine with his disciples, calling them his body and blood, signs of a new covenant or promise from God. He commended breaking bread and sharing a cup to his followers as a way to remember and proclaim his life and death.

Communion, also called the Lord's Supper, the Eucharist, the Blessed Sacrament, and Holy Communion, is grounded in this "last supper" and is a symbolic meal that commemorates both the covenant Jesus enacted and his redemptive sacrifice. The consecration of bread and juice (or wine) within this sacrament recalls Jesus giving his disciples bread and wine, saying, "This is my body broken for you" and "This is my blood poured out for you," and also, "Do this in remembrance of me."

### **Why do we celebrate the Lord's Supper?**

In this meal the Church celebrates the joyful feast of the people of God, and anticipates the day when Christ shall come again in glory. Nourished by this hope for the future, the Church rises from the Table and is sent by the power of the Holy Spirit to participate in God's mission to the world, to proclaim the gospel, to exercise compassion, to work for justice and peace in anticipation of the coming of Christ's Kingdom.

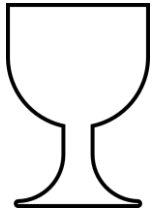
### **What do the elements of bread and wine mean?**

During his last supper, Jesus chose elements present at the Passover meal he was sharing with his disciples. The elements, then, connect to God's covenant with Abraham, Jacob, and Moses. In enacting the first communion, Jesus makes a "new covenant," that is, a fresh promise to assure all people of God's love and grace in Christ Jesus. Jesus seals this new covenant with his body, in the form of bread "broken for you," and his blood, in the form of juice (or wine) "poured out for you." The elements recall both God's promise through Jesus and Jesus's sacrifice for our sins. The magnitude and significance of Jesus's sacrifice is revealed on the day of his resurrection. Fittingly, the risen Jesus made himself known to his followers in the breaking of bread. He continued to show himself to believers, by blessing and breaking bread, by preparing, serving, and sharing common meals.

**How do we celebrate communion?** First Presbyterian celebrates communion as part of worship. Sometimes the congregation remains seated and is served using small cups and morsels of bread. By passing the trays holding the elements down the pews to one another, we in turn serve those seated around us. At other times, we celebrate the

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<sup>1</sup> The following information about the Lord's Supper and what the PC (USA) believes is adapted from *The Book of Order, 2019/2023*, W-3.0409-10 and "Communion from a Presbyterian Perspective" by Shannon Pappas.



Lord's Supper using intinction. Loaves of bread and cups of juice are held by the pastors, elders, and deacons

at the front of the sanctuary. Rows come forward one after the other. Each person tears a piece of bread, dips it into the juice, and eats. Servers will say words such as "This is Christ's body broken for you." and "This is Christ's blood shed for you."

**Who can take communion?** Ideas about this have evolved in the Presbyterian Church (USA) over many years. *The Book of Order, 2019-2023* says:

The opportunity to eat and drink with Christ is not a right bestowed upon the worthy, but a privilege given to the undeserving who come in faith, repentance, and love. All who

come to the table are offered the bread and cup, regardless of their age or understanding. If some of those who come have not yet been baptized, an invitation to baptismal preparation and Baptism should be graciously extended.

Children and those of other faith traditions—or no faith tradition—are welcome at the table. Anyone seeking to know more about communion or baptism or ways to join the church is encouraged to ask. Each year at First Presbyterian, third-graders are offered a special class focused on the Lord's Supper, its origin, traditions, and practices. After meeting for several weeks, class members are invited to a special communion service in recognition of their study and maturity. This is not a "first communion" but a process of deepening awareness—most participants have been coming to the table since they were toddlers.