

NPC ONLINE COMMUNION GUIDELINES

Spring 2020

Each Sunday, when we profess our faith together, we affirm our belief in “the communion of the saints.” This sense of belonging to each other has become a very real component of our faith during this time of COVID-19 separation. As is often said: extraordinary times call for extraordinary measures. Even though we are not *visibly* together, we are *truly* together because of our union with Christ. If each of us is joined to Christ by virtue of our faith and baptism, then we are also joined to one another as the one true Body of Christ. *This is our true communion.*

In normal times, when members of our congregation are homebound, ordained deacons, elders, or pastors take communion to them. This is called *extended communion*. **Our denomination has advised that this time of pandemic is an emergency in which the session can authorize the celebration of communion in homes while it is being celebrated by our pastors online. The session of NPC has so authorized.**

Preparing and Participating in Online Communion

We invite and encourage you to participate with your household.

1. Spiritual Preparation Ahead of the Online Service:

- a. Humble yourself before God. Examine your heart and relationships and make what steps you can for forgiveness and reconciliation. Especially seek forgiveness from the Lord, perhaps by praying the words of David in Psalm 51:7-12...

Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.

Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice.

Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity.

Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me.

Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

- b. Give thanks to God. Since communion is also called “Eucharist” (= thanksgiving) and the “joyful feast of the Lord,” spend some time reflecting on things for which you are thankful, for things that have given you joy. Prayerfully express your gratitude to the Lord.
- c. If you have children, talk to them about the meaning of communion. Communion is a way that our community celebrates Jesus’ presence with us, and his desire to strengthen us to serve him. When we celebrate communion in worship at the church, parents are invited to decide with their children whether the time is right for their children to participate (for example, if this is the first time, if children are growing in their understanding, or if children have not yet been baptized). This special “communion at home” is a wonderful opportunity for parents to have these significant conversations with each other and with their children.

2. Physical Preparation of the Cup and Bread ahead of the online service.

Be prayerful and dignified in preparation. Invite children to help, carefully.

- a. Obtain grape juice (and when no children are present, wine is acceptable in a Presbyterian Church) and pour into individual cups before worship or as part of worship. If you have no grape juice or wine, use water.
- b. Obtain bread or crackers.
- Bread: buy or make a loaf that you can cut ahead of time, or break off pieces during the service.
 - Crackers: crackers are symbolic of the unleavened bread of Passover.

3. During the online service, as the pastor directs, partake of the bread and the cup.

Give thanks especially for God’s desire to be in communion with us, and for all your brothers and sisters sharing in this common table. Remember these words: ‘There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.’ (Eph. 4:4-6)

Remembering we are part of the greater church, serve yourself or, if others are present, serve each other. Take or share the bread saying, “The body of Christ, given for me and for us/for you and for us.”

Take or share the cup saying, “The blood of Christ, shed for me and for us/for you and for us.”

4. At the conclusion of the online service

Dispose of the unused elements in a graceful manner. Remember that in the Presbyterian tradition, the bread is still bread, and the juice still juice – but make sure that the method of disposal does not undermine the sanctity of the moment. Our Book of Order suggests “consuming what remains, or returning the elements to the earth.”