

Kentucky Annual Conference Guidelines for Holy Communion

Dear Clergy,

We are a people of Word and Table. Christ in union with the Church offers the Word to people through the proclamation of the Gospel through the reading of Scripture and through sermons. Likewise, Christ offers himself to people through the celebration and sharing of Holy Communion. Word and Table are connected together in one of the great mysteries of our faith in ways that allow us to know and experience Jesus Christ's presence in our midst. As Christians, we offer the fruit of our labor – the grain from the earth and the juice from the vine – to God for blessing. Christ blesses that offering and gives it back to us as a means of grace to nurture our Christian walk.

As you begin opening your doors for worship for the proclamation of the Word, you will also need to be prepared to celebrate and offer Holy Communion in a way that is safe for your parishioners. If you cannot safely provide an opportunity to offer both the proclamation of the Word and Holy Communion, it will be best that you delay opening your building for worship until a later date when you can offer both of these means of grace in a safe manner. Finally, as United Methodists, we believe that Holy Communion is a blessing from God for us. In no way is it ever meant to be harmful to us physically or spiritually. Please be mindful that attendance in worship and participation in Holy Communion is not a test of our faithfulness but instead is an expression of our love for God.

As you prepare to open the doors of your sanctuary for in-person worship, the Kentucky Annual Conference COVID Re-Entry Team has these recommendations for your congregation:

- We strongly recommend that your church refrains from virtual sacraments.
- Please use individual wrapped cups and wafers for the celebration of Holy Communion. Here is a link to purchase these types of cups at Cokesbury. <https://www.cokesbury.com/081407011585-fellowship-cup-communion-wafer-juice-100-pack>
- If your church is not able to purchase these types of individual cups, please contact your local health department for their guidelines for safe food handling practices so that your church will provide elements for Holy Communion in a safe manner.
- Alternatively, you can invite families to bring bread and grape juice from home for their family for in-person worship. These elements will remain with the families and will be offered to the Lord for blessing during the Communion liturgy. After the prayer of consecration, families can partake of their own loaf and juice.
- Whether your congregation uses individual cups or families bring their own elements, it is important for pastors to use a whole loaf and chalice at the altar table as a symbol of the unity of the Body of Christ and our sharing in his body and blood. Because the loaf and cup at the altar will be touched by the pastor during the liturgy, these particular elements should not be served to parishioners.
- It is also important for the church to have elements prepared and ready using local health department guidelines so that your church can offer elements to those who do not bring bread and juice with them to the service.
- As you make preparations, consider what is being touched and by whom. Try to eliminate as much cross-contact as possible of the elements that are to be served to parishioners.

It is the prayer of Bishop Fairley and the Kentucky Annual Conference that the celebration of Holy Communion will be a deeply meaningful moment of worship in the weeks ahead for your congregation. May Christ's Spirit give you sustaining grace as we gather around his table as the Body of Christ.

