

Palm Sunday  
April 5, 2020

Dear Family in Christ,

As Holy Week begins, we yearn to experience the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus in full communion with our church family.

We believe that Christ is present with us -- in, with, and under the elements of bread and wine in holy communion, as we celebrate the sacrament in Word and worship as a gathered body of believers.

In normal circumstances, we gather as one body with the whole church of Christ throughout time and space and share the gift of resurrected life as we taste bread and wine and hear the words that this bread and wine we share are Christ's body given for us.

In normal circumstances, we only commune when physically gathered together around a single table, and in the presence of an ordained pastor who presides over that table. (Church members who bring communion to people outside the gathered body do so as representatives of the church, bringing the consecrated elements with them and acting as an extension of that table, on behalf of the church, for those who cannot be present on Sunday.)

In normal circumstances, we do not practice holy communion at home by ourselves for any reason. Instead, we "fast" from communion until someone can visit us bringing communion from the congregation, or we wait until we are once again present at the table ourselves.

These are not normal circumstances.

We are experiencing an absence from the physically gathered body of Christ that may last for many weeks and we are experiencing a global challenge that is driving us to seek Christ for strength for both the present and the future. We are also experiencing the workings of the Holy Spirit through the advances of technology.

We are gathering in virtual community on Sunday mornings and every day for morning prayer, worshiping, singing and praying together in new and real ways. We are experiencing the power of God unrestricted by our physical isolation, yet active through distance and technology.

While it is historically unprecedented, technology is making it possible for us to be together. On All Saints' Sunday, I usually remind us all that the church of God is "gathered across time and space" in the "circle" of communion railing around Christ's table, meaning we are united with all the saints living and dead in the sacrament that makes us both whole and one. This theology also applies to our time. The table itself is extended across space as Christ makes us one in the worship gathering.

We would do well to remember that God is our "waymaker when it seems that there is no way," recalling that God has parted seas, caused water to spring forth from a rock and bread to fall from the sky, protected people from a fiery furnace, and passed through closed and locked doors, among other unprecedented and miraculous things. God likewise is not constrained by our isolation. When

we say we are gathered with the whole church across time and space, we also mean we are gathered with one another now, even in the various physical locations of our current confines.

These unprecedented times are calling for unprecedented worship.

These are all theologically sound reasons for our Maundy Thursday and Easter Sunday worship services to include Holy Communion. Pre-recorded worship services (without communion) will be available for those who wish to worship on their own timetable, but live worship for both Maundy Thursday (7pm) and Easter Sunday (10 am) will be provided via the church's Zoom channel. These live worship services will include communion so we who are gathered in worship at the same time may share the sacrament together.

In order to participate, you will need to set your own communion table. We believe that Jesus is both guest and host at our table, and he is present in every circumstance. He comes to you right where you are, just as you are, so you do not need to go to extraordinary lengths to set the table. You simply need a plate with bread and a glass with wine or juice. If you would like to add a candle, that is fine too. Keep it simple. I have included two simple bread recipes below, in case you are interested.

Please note that online communion will not become a regular practice of the church, but will be discontinued once the COVID-19 crisis has abated.

At Albert Holck's online funeral service this week, the presiding pastor offered this prayer. I hope it will bless all of us as it has been blessing me in these days:

*May we look backward with gratitude,  
forward with courage  
and upward with confidence. Amen.*

May God's grace and peace continue to bless you right where you are.

Pastor Laura

## **Gluten-free bread, microwaved in a mug**

1 tablespoon butter  
1/3 cup blanched almond or coconut flour  
1 egg  
1/2 teaspoon baking powder  
1 pinch salt

Place butter in a microwave-safe mug. Microwave until melted, about 15 seconds. Swirl mug until fully coated. Combine almond flour, egg, baking powder, and salt in the mug; whisk until smooth. Microwave at maximum power until set, about 90 seconds. Let cool for 2 minutes before slicing.

## **Bread, microwaved in a mug**

40g self raising flour  
1 egg  
25g melted butter or margarine  
Squeeze of lemon juice  
1/3 tsp sugar  
1/3 tsp baking powder

In a large mug, whisk the egg until foamy. Add baking powder and lemon juice then mix. Add all of the other ingredients to the mug and mix until smooth and sticky. Microwave for 90 seconds. Let cool 2 minutes before slicing.