

Sharing Holy Communion

session
handout



Why do we celebrate Holy Communion?

On the night before he died, Jesus shared a final meal, a Passover, with his disciples.

During the meal, Jesus gave to his disciples, for all time, this special way of remembering him: as bread is broken and shared and as wine is poured out.



We celebrate Holy Communion because Jesus commands us: 'Do this in remembrance of me.' This is the service Jesus gave us himself; it is the central act of worship of the Christian Church.

'Do this in remembrance of me ...'

The Passover is a special meal when Jews remember and re-enact the night when God set them free from slavery in Egypt. They believe that, in remembering this event in their history, the effects of it – God's salvation – will be made present today.

At the last supper, Jesus gives to his disciples a new special meal: one that remembers and makes present the greater and deeper salvation that took place when Jesus died on the cross for our sins.



Jesus gives his disciples a way of understanding and remembering his death at the centre of our worship as a sacrifice and an eternal covenant, as we share in Communion together.

The Eucharist is, therefore, an encounter with the risen Jesus. We meet Jesus in one another, because we are all members of his Body. We meet him in the words of Scripture, his living word to us. We meet him in the bread and wine, which become to us his body and blood.

As with baptism, the Eucharist is a sacrament: the outward and visible sign is the bread and wine; the inward reality is the living presence of Jesus.

One service with many names

The word **Communion** means sharing with God and with each other. The emphasis is on simplicity, community and fellowship. It is a family meal.

Eucharist means thanksgiving. In the Eucharist we give thanks for the whole of creation and for everything God has done for us in Christ. The emphasis is one of great celebration and festivity. It is a party.

The Lord's Supper refers to the service as a remembering of the last supper Jesus shared with his disciples. It reminds us of Christ's passion and death. The emphasis is one of solemnity and dignity. It is a sacrificial meal.

The Mass reminds us that Holy Communion is for a purpose. The word 'Mass' comes from the same Latin word as 'Mission'. It means 'Go!' The emphasis is on taking what we have received out into the world. It is rations for the journey.

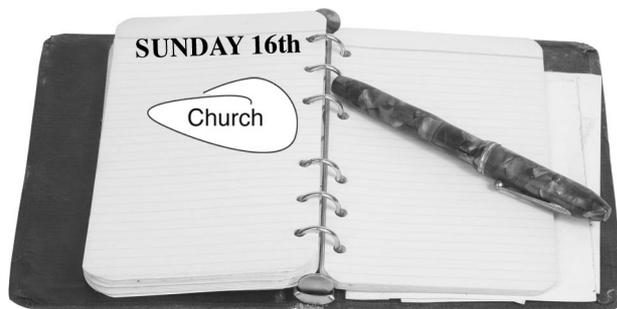
Taking part in worship

Before the service

Plan to be there each week. Don't fit God into your spare time. Be in church in good time, ready to take part.

Prepare your mind and heart for worship and especially for receiving Holy Communion. Examine yourself. Look back over the last week. What do you need to say sorry for? What do you need to give thanks for? Who are the people you need to pray for? What help and strength do you need?

Expect to meet with God in the service, as God has promised to encounter you there.



During the service

Concentrate on what is going on. Try not to be distracted. Anchor your thoughts upon God.

Participate – join in as much as you can, with your whole heart. You're not there as a spectator but a worshipper.

Celebrate – enjoy it! Worship is about enjoying God.

After the service

Go and live it. Don't let your worship be for Sundays only. Put into practice all you have learned during the week.

Worship each day. Give praise to God seven days a week, wherever you are, whatever you are doing. Thank him for every part of your life.

A service outline

The Eucharist falls into two main halves: word and sacrament. One is about encountering Jesus in the Scriptures; the other about encountering Jesus in bread and wine.

The Preparation and Gathering

The Liturgy of the Word

- *The Creed*
- *The Prayers*
- *The Peace*

The Liturgy of the Sacrament

The Dismissal

For reflection

Buy or borrow a copy of the Communion service used in your own church. Take time this week to read through the service carefully. Think about the words and what they mean. Make a note of anything you don't understand and ask next week. Thank God each day for his gift to us of this wonderful act of worship and all it means.

