

ALASKA UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

COMMUNION GUIDELINES

BACKGROUND: Communion continues the practice established by Jesus during the last supper, as described in Matthew 26:17-30, Mark 14:12-26, and Luke 22:7-39. The Apostle Paul also describes the early Christian practice of communion in 1 Corinthians 11:23ff.

There are many different understandings of what happens in communion. Some denominations believe the bread and the wine/juice are the real presence of Christ – body and blood. Other denominations believe communion is a simply a memorial feast. Official United Methodist theology is expressed in the booklet *This Holy Mystery*, which allows room for both interpretations. The booklet may be read online...

<http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/communion-this-holy-mystery>

The United Methodist Church believes that communion is a means of experiencing God's grace, and therefore we practice an open table. All are welcome to participate. However, some parents may choose not to have their young children receive communion, and other people may not wish to participate for personal reasons. No one should be pressured to participate. Our denomination's preference for grape juice instead of wine is a legacy of our involvement in the temperance movement, and a modern act of hospitality to those with addiction issues.

These instructions are for serving communion at the front of the sanctuary by "intinction," where the congregation shares a common cup and common loaf. Pieces of the bread are dipped into the common cup. This practice approximates how Jesus and his disciples may have shared the last supper.

PREPARATION:

1. Fill a chalice or cup with grape juice. This is for intinction (dipping the bread in the juice).
2. Fill small plastic cups with grape juice and place them in trays. This is for those who prefer not to share the common cup. The number of small cups needed varies by service.
3. Take a large loaf of fresh bread (preferably soft and chewy, not crumbly), score partway through the bottom with a knife, and place on a plate. The cut will help the pastor tear the bread in two during the service. A chewy bread will not leave crumbs floating in the cup. King's Hawaiian (available in the deli section) makes a large, round loaf that works well, but other breads can be used.
4. Fill a dish with gluten-free bread cubes and place it on a pedestal in the center aisle at the base of the steps.
5. A basket with sanitary wet wipes for all servers should be placed next to the pastor's seat in front.
6. A small stand with a bowl for collecting the empty plastic cups should be placed on the each side of the sanctuary, approximately even with the ends of the first row of chairs on each side.

See the attached diagrams for set-up and serving.

SERVING:

1. Six servers are needed when offering choice of intinction or small cups on both sides; four are needed if one side is intinction and the other is small cups.
2. When the pastor invites the servers forward, come to the front and wash your hands using the sanitary wipes in the front pew. The congregation should be able to see we have clean hands.
3. Line up four feet away from the bottom step facing the altar. The pastor and an assistant will step down and serve you communion by intinction (common cup), so that the congregation and guests can see the how the practice works. You will be served starting on the right (east, piano) side and moving to the left (west, pulpit) side so that the last two to receive can simply take the loaf and the cup and then serve the pastor and assistant.
4. Serving communion with intinction and gluten-free options on both sides:
 - a. The server nearest the center will tear off thumb-sized pieces of bread and offer them to people. The server usually says "This is the body of Christ given (*or broken*) for you." If someone instead takes a gluten-free bread cube from the bowl in the center, use the same words.
 - b. The next server over will hold the cup so that people can dip their piece of bread in the juice. The server usually says "This is the blood of Christ given (*or shed*) for you."
 - c. The third server will hold the tray with the small cups. If people choose this instead of dipping in the common cup, please say "This is the blood of Christ given (*or shed*) for you."

5. Serving communion with intinction on the left (west) side and small cups on the right (east) side:
 - a. On the left side, only two servers are needed – the bread (4a) and the common cup (4b).
 - b. On the right side, only two servers are needed – the bread (4a) and the small cups (4c).
6. When you finish serving the line on your side, look to see if there are elderly, disabled, or other people on your side of the sanctuary signaling for communion. Quietly go and offer it to them.
7. When finished, return the unused bread and juice to the altar.

CLEAN-UP:

1. Once they have been blessed, the bread and juice should be treated with reverence as the presence of Christ.
2. Leftover bread may be eaten, or spread outside for birds and animals to consume. It should never be thrown in the trash! Crumbs should be picked up off the floor and disposed of in a similar manner, instead of vacuumed up.
3. Leftover juice may be drunk, or spread outside. It should never be poured down the drain!

HYGIENE: Wine with alcohol has antiseptic properties; grape juice does not. Hygiene is accomplished by the washing of hands before handling the elements. The bread is only touched by the server, who tears off pieces and hands them to communicants. The juice is only touched by the bread which is dipped in it, again preventing potentially contaminating contact with parishioners' hands. The small cups are offered as an alternative for people uncomfortable with the common cup, and for those who need gluten-free juice uncontaminated with bread. Multiple scientific studies have not shown any link between intinction and the spreading of disease, as summarized by this article in the *International Journal of Infectious Disease...* [http://www.ijidonline.com/article/S1201-9712\(13\)00187-2/fulltext#sec0020](http://www.ijidonline.com/article/S1201-9712(13)00187-2/fulltext#sec0020)

ANOINTING GUIDELINES

BACKGROUND: Anointing and prayer were a common Jewish practice which continued in the early Christian church (for example, James 5:14). Sometimes anointing is an act of blessing, and sometimes a prayer for healing. In no sense is anointing a “magic” act guaranteeing a certain result. For a full description of the United Methodist understanding and theology of healing, see the *The United Methodist Book of Worship*, pages 613-614.

Anointing joins the act of prayer with human touch. The anointing oil is a tangible symbol of the Holy Spirit and of the presence of Christ. Traditionally, olive oil is used as a sign of fruitfulness with many biblical antecedents. This oil may be perfumed with frankincense or myrrh to involve the sense of smell in this rich act of blessing.

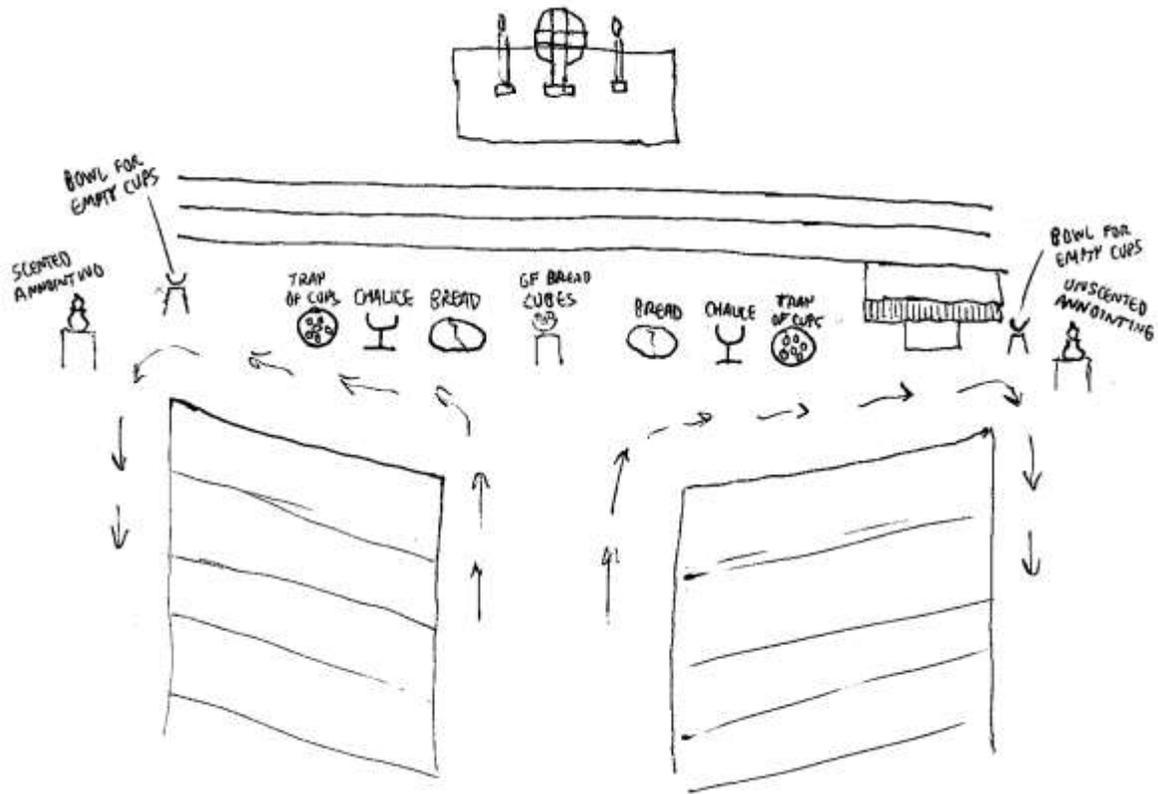
PREPARATION: Two olive-wood containers of anointing oil are kept on the altar in the prayer chapel. These should be brought into the sanctuary for communion and healing services. They can be placed on pedestals or tables at either side of the sanctuary, or simply held by those who will be anointing. Usually one vial is scented and should be placed on the left (west) side; the unscented vial should be placed on the right (east) side. A small white cloth or napkin should be placed with each vial for wiping the thumb or cleaning small spills. If the vials need refilled, ask the pastor.

ANOINTING:

1. Take the vial out of the wooden base and unscrew the top.
2. If someone approaches you, ask them quietly for their name and how you can pray for them. Confirm that they desire to be anointed.
3. Some people just want prayer – this is okay. Pray with them quietly and address their need to God.
4. To anoint someone, place your thumb over the end of the oil vial and tip it to coat your thumb with oil. Mark the sign of the cross on the person's forehead with the oil on your thumb while praying, “Lord, I anoint [NAME] in the name of Jesus Christ...”
5. Then place your hand on their shoulder on arm in an appropriate way while you continue to pray for their specific expressed need. Some people just want a blessing, and that's okay too!
6. Sample prayers...
 - a. “Lord, I anoint [NAME] in the name of Jesus Christ, and ask that you bless and watch over him. Amen.”
 - b. “God, I anoint [NAME] in the name of Jesus Christ, and lift up her prayer for healing. We know that you care for the sick, and ask you to heal [NAME] in body, heart, soul, and mind. Amen.”
 - c. “Father, I anoint [NAME] in the name of Jesus Christ. He needs a job so that he can provide for his family. Guide him to a place of satisfying employment. Help him to know your peace. Amen.”
 - d. “Holy Spirit, I anoint [NAME] in the name of Jesus Christ. In her mother's heart, she is praying for her son. We ask that you wrap him in your protecting Spirit and lead him in your ways. Amen.”

SETUP AND SERVING DIAGRAMS

INTINCTION AND SMALL CUPS ON BOTH SIDES:



INTINCTION LEFT (WEST) AND SMALL CUPS RIGHT (EAST) SIDES:

