

Share the Feast



Communion Preparation for Children and Their Caregivers



Family Leadership Network
NEXT GENERATION LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE

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The Last Supper Icon - Natalie Fares

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Note to Leaders:

"O taste and see that the Lord is good." Psalm 34:8

Until recently, children in many congregations preparing to receive their "First Communion" attended a special class to be taught about the meaning of the sacrament. Prior to children being admitted to Communion at all, Confirmation was the requirement for receiving Communion. While *Share the Feast* could very well have some content in common with a First Communion or a Confirmation class, the intention is different from one in which gaining a level of cognitive understanding prepares or qualifies a person to participate in the Family Meal.

Most Anglican congregations now welcome baptized children to receive Communion, regardless of age. Supporting their understanding as they grow and mature by teaching children about Communion is the responsibility of the church community in partnership with parents, however the purpose of this class is not simply to build cognitive understanding. For children already receiving the sacrament, it is to affirm and to give vocabulary to express what they already know deeply and intuitively (in the way children are especially adept) through presence and participation. For children looking forward to receiving at a time in the future, it is to offer the gift of anticipation and hunger to be close to Jesus through the sacrament. For those who have received from their earliest days or those looking forward with anticipation - immersion in the Story of the Friend whose presence is real, and the Family who loves and celebrates His Presence together.

Conversations with even very young children can reveal a connection to spiritual realities taking place in the Eucharist that is a gift to those privileged to have such conversations! And yet, that is not what qualifies a child to be present at the Meal that nourishes their Family. The Eucharist is a meal of grace: an undeserved and unearned gift. No one can receive it of their own merit. More than simply a remembrance, Anglicans affirm that Jesus is present spiritually through bread and the wine, making participation a supernatural encounter in which real grace is present- for healing, transformation and union with God and the saints! Those gifts are available and real for children too.

So, we go humbly in our teaching, with respect and awe for the mysteries of God that are sometimes hidden from the sophisticated and revealed to little children. As you share this time together, be prepared to be refreshed and maybe even amazed by what you receive from them!

Pastor Liz

Some Lesson Objectives

cognitive - to know:

- the definition of a sacrament
- Christ instituted Communion with his disciples at the Last Supper
- Christians through all ages since then have celebrated Communion

affective - to feel:

- I am in need of God's forgiveness
- I am grateful for Christ's sacrifice
- I belong to His Family and am welcome at his Table

behavioral- to do:

- I can offer my love to Jesus
- I can participate in the Eucharist with thankfulness
- I can appreciate and serve my church family

"The sacraments instituted by Christ are not only badges or tokens of the profession of Christians, but are also sure witnesses and effectual signs of God's grace and good will toward us. Through them he works invisibly within us, both bringing to life and also strengthening and confirming our faith in him. There are two sacraments instituted by Christ our Lord in the Gospel - Baptism and the Lord's Supper...It is only in those who receive them worthily that they have a beneficial effect or operation. As Paul the apostle says, those who receive them in an unworthy manner bring condemnation upon themselves." (From Article 25 from the 39 Articles)

Getting Ready

You will need:

- Leader/Guide for the class, a priest, song leader, children's leaders, a member of altar guild or someone to demonstrate communion set up, a Godly Play Storyteller
- 7 leaders or attending adults (dads!) to participate in the drama
- for the drama: cushions, table cloth, chalice and basket or patten, bread, acolyte robes if available for 4 gospel writers and Jesus, priest in white alb, scripts for gospel writers (assign roles, send scripts **ahead of time** and plan a run-through!), scrolls for Mark and Matthew
- white/chalk board or flip chart
- words to songs : Blessed be God, What is a Sacrament?, Sanctus, My Heart is Filled With Thankfulness (or other communion song)
- questions for review, books about communion or short activity for snack time
- snack for children (grapes, juice boxes and crackers) / coffee and tea for adults
- copies of the follow-up lesson "**Prepare for the Feast**" to send home - one per household



Lesson Overview

Complete set-up in time for leaders to gather for prayer at 30 minutes ahead

0:00 **CONNECT**

Song: Blessed Be God - Katy Wehr

Welcome: The Lord Be With You (with responses)

Prayer

"What We Know?" / "What We'd Like to Know"

Song : "What is a Sacrament?" with actions

0:20 **TELL US A STORY**

of remembering, of forgiveness, of getting along, of someone stronger

(move to where drama is set up)

0:30 **THE STORY of COMMUNION**

(move to sanctuary)

0:45 **ENTERING THE STORY**

Preparing: Communion Set-Up

Retelling: Rector

(move to gathering space - kids / a meeting room - adults)

1:15 Snack and review game for children led by children's team
Parent discussion led by Rector and/or Children's Pastor

(move to Godly Play room or gathering space)

1:30 **A STORY OLD AND NEW** - Good Shepherd and World Communion

1:45 **CONTINUE**

Song: Sanctus

What did you learn? What questions remain?

Next steps: How do I prepare myself for communion?

Prayers of Thanksgiving

Song: My Heart is Filled With Thankfulness

2:00 Closing prayers

-0:30 - Leader Prayer

0:00 CONNECT

Song: **Blessed Be God** - by Katy Wehr (with actions)

Blessed be God, Father Son and Holy Spirit
And blessed be his kingdom now and forevermore, now and forever more
Almighty God
To you all hearts are open
All desires known
and from whom no secrets are hid
Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
By the inspiration of your Holy Spirit
That we might perfectly love you
And worthily magnify your Holy Name

Leader says, "These words we have just sung, and which come from the beginning of the communion service, are called the "Collect for Purity". Christians have been saying them for more than 600 years."

Welcome and Prayer

Leader: The Lord be with you (extend arms, palms up)

Response: **And also with you** (copy the action)

Lift up your hearts (raise hands, elbows at sides)

We lift them to the Lord (copy)

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God (raise hands higher)

It is right to give him thanks and praise! (thumbs up)

Leader asks: "We say these words to each other every week. Where else do you hear them? *(At the beginning of the prayer that begins communion, called the Eucharistic Prayer.)* These words are even older than the Collect for Purity! Christians all over the world have been saying these words since the 3rd century."

What we know/What we'd like to know -

On a flip chart or white board, make two columns with the headings: All About Communion and I Wonder... Find out what children can say about what they already know about communion. Find out what children and adults are curious about. Learning will already be taking place by children sharing what they already know. Questions will simply be recorded, but not answered at this time.

Introduce the Sacrament Song - with actions

Divide group into three

Group 1: What is a sacrament? (palms up/shoulders)

Group 2: An outward (hands move outward from chest)
visible (forefingers to eyes)
sign (one hand points forward)

Group 3: of an inward (both hands on chest)
spiritual (motion like steam rising)
grace (both hands out palms up).

Add short words of explanation for three words the second time in this way:

visible - something we can see

sign - something that points to something else ("The robins in my yard point to ____)

grace - a gift (that's why we have our hands out as though we are receiving a present) from God that we haven't earned and we don't deserve

Leader Asks: What are the outward, visible signs in communion (This is the easy part.)?

Leader Says: The inward, spiritual grace part is the mysterious part and we'll find out more about that as we go.

Tell the children that any leader may start the Sacrament Song anytime during the morning!

0:15 TELL US A STORY

(Divide into smaller groups of 6-8 for the questions, have a leader in each group)

Ask for volunteers (children or adults) to tell about:

a time they were forgiven by someone

Ask: What would it have been like if you had not been forgiven?

someone they don't see very often but who they like to think about

Ask: How is remembering a way of bringing someone close to you?

a time when they were playing with friends and everything was working well

Ask: Can you describe your feelings?

a time when they got help to do something they couldn't do on their own

Ask: What would have happened if you had not had that help?

Use the children's own experiences to make connections to communion:

We remember Jesus and what he has done for us.

We are forgiven for our sins.

We are united with God and other Christians.

We receive help from God to follow him, and be like Jesus.

Leader Asks: How does all *that* happen by eating a small piece of bread and having a sip of wine or juice?! Let's keep thinking about it! (What is a Sacrament?)

Leader Says: "Follow me to a place where we can find out how Communion began!"

Move to the area where the Passover table is set up. A piece of fabric on the floor, or a folding table flat on the floor with a cup and plate of bread, and cushions around it is sufficient.

0:30 THE STORY OF COMMUNION

Based on: Matt 26:17-30, Mark 14:12-26, Luke 1:1-3; 22:7-39, John 17:1 John 2, Acts 2:42

Characters in the Drama

Jesus

Mark

Matthew

Luke

John

Priest

10 other disciples: participating children

Invite 10 children (or adults) to participate in the drama by entering at the cue to sit around the table with Jesus, Matthew and John. Mark and Luke take their places standing in front of, and off to the side of table.

Characters who are speaking (except for Jesus) are stepping forward in time to speak to us in the present and comment on the scene we are observing which takes place during the time of Jesus.

Mark: Hi. My name is John Mark, but you can just call me Mark. I wasn't there that night (*motions behind him to the Table*) but I was good friends with someone who was. His name was Peter. Maybe you've heard of him.

I met Peter after Jesus died and I traveled with him to tell people about the amazing things that Jesus taught, and all that had happened since Jesus died. I heard him tell other people how he remembered that last supper the disciples had with Jesus. I wrote that down as carefully as I could along with a lot of other things I learned from Peter about Jesus' life. (*holds up scroll*) It got to be rather a famous book. Have you read it?

Well, I'd like to tell you about how what you call -communion- began. That part of the story of Jesus is close to the end of my book. Jesus wanted us to remember.

Jesus, Matthew, John and 10 disciple-children take their places around the table. Mark reads the following section from his scroll. Jesus says the red lines in unison with Mark.

Here's the way I told it:

¹²It was the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, and the Passover lambs were being killed. Jesus' disciples asked him, "Where do you want us to prepare the Passover meal?"

¹³Jesus said to two of the disciples, "Go into the city, where you will meet a man carrying a jar of water. Follow him, ¹⁴and when he goes into a house, say to the owner, 'Our teacher wants to know if you have a room where he can eat the Passover meal with his disciples.' ¹⁵The owner will take you upstairs and show you a large room furnished and ready for you to use. Prepare the meal there."

¹⁶The two disciples went into the city and found everything just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover meal.

Pause : Jesus and his disciples enter and sit around the "table". When they are seated, Mark continues, giving time for Jesus to perform the appropriate actions....

¹⁷⁻¹⁸While Jesus and the twelve disciples were eating together that evening, he said, **"The one who will betray me is now eating with me."**

¹⁹This made the disciples sad, and one after another they said to Jesus, "You surely don't mean me!"

²⁰He answered, **"It is one of you twelve men who is eating from this dish with me. ²¹The Son of Man will die, just as the Scriptures say. But it is going to be terrible for the one who betrays me. That man would be better off if he had never been born."**

²²During the meal Jesus took some bread in his hands. He blessed the bread and broke it. Then he gave it to his disciples and said, **"Take this. It is my body."**

²³Jesus picked up a cup of wine and gave thanks to God. He gave it to his disciples, and they all drank some. ²⁴Then he said, **"This is my blood, which is poured out for many people, and with it God makes his agreement. ²⁵From now on I will not drink any wine, until I drink new wine in God's kingdom."** ²⁶Then they sang a hymn and went out to the Mount of Olives.

Mark remains standing in front. Matthew stands up from the table and walks out to stand beside Mark.

Matthew: My name is Matthew. After Jesus died, I wrote a book about the things Jesus did too. My book is called the Gospel of Matthew.

I am here to tell you that I agree with what Mark has told you. It's true! And I should know because I was one of Jesus' disciples and I was there that night. We didn't understand at the time what Jesus was talking about - someone betraying him...eating bread that was his body and drinking from a cup that was his blood?! Strange.

unrolls his scroll

Here's how I told it:

Jesus speaks in unison with Matthew **"One of you men who has eaten with me from this dish will betray me. ²⁴The Son of Man will die, as the Scriptures say. But it's going to be terrible for the one who betrays me! That man would be better off if he had never been born."**

²⁵Judas said, "Teacher, you surely don't mean me!"

"That's what you say!" Jesus said. But later, Judas did betray him.

²⁶During the meal Jesus took some bread in his hands. He blessed the bread and broke it. Then he gave it to his disciples and said, **"Take this and eat it. This is my body."**

²⁷Jesus picked up a cup of wine and gave thanks to God. He then gave it to his disciples and said, **"Take this and drink it. ²⁸This is my blood, and with it God makes his agreement with you."**

And I remember him saying something else:

It will be poured out, so that many people will have their sins forgiven.

Luke: *joins Mark and Matthew*

I'm Dr. Luke. It seemed good to me too to write up an account of all these things. I investigated everything very carefully and if you read my book (which I'm sure you do), you will find that I agree with Mark and Matthew about the things that took place on the night that our Lord Jesus was betrayed.

Now I was not there that night, but after Jesus died and rose and sent the Holy Spirit I did get to see how the disciples followed his command to remember him in this way. All who believed in Jesus shared everything they had. They devoted themselves to the apostle's teaching and to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

Do you know how we were able to do these things with glad and sincere hearts- even though we were often in danger because the Jewish leaders wanted to get rid of us? It was because we had the help of the Holy Spirit.

John: *joins the other three Gospel writers and as he leaves the scene around the Table, he gets older, becoming more stooped and picking up a staff once he has entered the space with the other Evangelists.*

Dear little children, my name is John. I too was a witness to these events and have also written about them so you might believe. I was one of Jesus closest friends- the disciple he loved. What a wonderful way to be remembered. "Love one another," he said to us. "Love one another just as I have loved you."

Dear little children, I heard Jesus pray on that night before he died that we would all be one- not just those of us who were there, but all people who would be his disciples after us. "I am coming to you, Father," he said. "I am not just praying for these friends here. I am praying for everyone who will believe in me because of their testimony. May they all be one, just as you and I are one. May they be perfectly one so that the rest of the world can see that you sent me."

See what kind of love the Father has given to us? We are called children of God! Children, if we say we love God but hate our brother, we lie. So little children, walk in the light and abide in him until he comes....

Priest: *Priest joins the line of Gospel Writers providing a visual of the continuity to the present day, introducing himself and telling about how Christians have followed Christ's command down through the ages until the present day:*

The witnesses from the past agree and have told us the story. The Early Church followed Jesus' command to remember him in this special way. It has been passed down to us through all the years and today Christians all over the world still celebrate The Lord's Supper, remembering his death until he comes again, receiving the forgiveness of our sins, and being strengthened to live the life of a follower of Jesus.

"Follow me to the sanctuary where we can see how what we celebrate each Sunday follows the pattern of what Christ began at the last supper."

Leave the drama place and go to the sanctuary

0:45 ENTERING THE STORY

Children gather around the Communion Table/ Altar with the Priest and Altar Guild member

Preparing - communion set up

This is a chance for a person in your church who sets up for communion to give children a behind-the-scenes look at how that is done. How are the set-apart things handled? Is there anything special about the bread or the wine before communion? What happens to any left over bread and wine? Why?

Retelling - Priest

This is a chance for a priest in your church to plan a conversation with the children and give them an up-close look at the Table. A few ideas: Find out what their questions are. What are the names for the things they see on the Table? Can you have communion by yourself in your living room? Has anyone been to a church where communion is done differently? Highlight a few places in the liturgy, for example: What does the word "Sanctus" mean and what is happening in the heavenlies when we sing the Sanctus together with "all the company of heaven"? Talk about ordinary to extraordinary! Why is there no kids table? Give children something to notice the next time. Tell something about how you knew God wanted you to be a priest.



Sing **Sacrament Song** before going to snack!

1:10 Children - Snack

Form a circle and invite 4 children to help pass out napkins, juice boxes crackers and grapes. Wait until everyone has been served, say a short prayer and enjoy the feast together.

Chat about what children or leaders are learning that might be new. Find out if children have attended a communion service in another church. Was it different? How? Which of the Gospel writers were present at the Last Supper?, What are other names for communion? What is a sacrament? What is grace? Who said we should celebrate the Lord's Supper? What are the outward, visible signs?

Have a short activity planned or some books for children to look at.
Sing that Sacrament Song!

1:10 Adults - Q & A with Children's Pastor and Rector

In another space, attending parents, godparents or other caregivers have a chance to ask questions of the priest or children's pastor.

"When should my child begin taking communion?" is a common question and one for which leaders of this time should be prepared. The ACNA officially welcomes baptized children at Communion in it's founding Canons: "The admission of baptized young children to the Holy Communion is permitted in the Province." (Canon 4, Section 3, Number 4). Some parents prefer to wait, in which case their role of responsibility before God for the spiritual nurture of their children should be honored.

Recommended reading:

"Children and Communion" February 28, 2008 by Philip Mounstephen

<https://www.fulcrum-anglican.org.uk/articles/children-and-communion/>

Take, Eat: This is For You in *Offering the Gospel to Children* by Gretchen Wolfe Pritchard

Adults and children regather for The Good Shepherd and World Communion

1:30 **A STORY OLD AND NEW:**
Good Shepherd and World Communion

Adults and children gather round for the Godly Play Presentation and wondering.



10:50 CONTINUE

Song: Sanctus - choose the version children are familiar with
Song Leader introduces the Sanctus by saying that it is also an ancient song which uses words from both the Old and New Testaments and it is sung every week near the beginning of the Communion liturgy. Sanctus means "holy". We join with all the whole company of heaven to sing:

Holy, holy, holy Lord God of Hosts
Holy, holy, holy Lord God of Hosts
Heaven and earth are full of the glory of your majesty
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord
Hosanna in the highest!

- Look over the list of questions you wrote down at the beginning of your time in the second column to see which of those questions/wonderings were addressed.
- What did we learn that was not on our list?
- Raise the question of preparing ourselves for communion
- Distribute take-home follow-up lesson (Prepare for the Feast) to help families prepare for communion at home.

Songs: Sacrament Song one more time!

My Heart is Filled With Thankfulness

Closing Prayers of thanksgiving led by children and adults



Evaluation Questions

for Leaders, Parents and Children (sent home with other materials):

1. What was the best thing about our Share the Feast Class?
2. Can you say the definition of a sacrament?
3. What was something you learned from the class that was new?
4. Could you retell the Story of Communion to someone else?
4. In what ways was your understanding of communion deepened?
5. How will being here today affect the way you participate in a communion service?
6. Do you have suggestions for ways we might improve this class for the future?

We'd love to hear from you!

Please contact Rev. Liz Stewart (lstewart@nextgenanglican.com) with questions, suggestions, or stories you have to share from your time together.

