

COMMUNION ASSISTANTS @ Immanuel Lutheran Church

IN GENERAL

Holy Communion is the meal of all the baptized—the whole Body of Christ. As such we are all recipients of the gift before we become servers of the gift. There is no distinction among us. Usually, Communion Assistants will wear albs so as to diminish differences in attire and to permit the focus of worshippers to be on the meal itself. However, if a situation arises where you are unable to get into an alb before you begin to assist, do not panic. Simply serve as you always would.

APPROACHING THE TABLE

- 8:15 If you choose to put on an alb before worship begins, please sit in the front pews and wear it throughout worship. Others put it on during the Hymn of the Day in the sacristy. In either case, after vesting, the Communion Assistant(s) approaches the Table when the other ministers do—right after the Peace. The Presiding and Assisting Ministers stand at the Table; other ministers stand behind them to either side.
- 10:30 Most choose to enter the sacristy from the lower level, though it is fine to enter directly from the sanctuary at the conclusion of the Peace. Once the alb is on, wait in the sacristy for the Offertory. Everyone is encouraged to use hand sanitizer prior to serving. When the Offertory begins, step out and stand behind the Presiding and Assisting Ministers. The ushers will put the center railing in place, if needed, after the Presiding and Assisting Ministers receive the bread and wine and the offerings.

THE COMMUNION

At both services, the Presiding Minister communes the Assisting Minister and then together they commune other ministers, usually beginning on the organ side (south). Once this is complete, the Assisting Minister will distribute the vessels for serving.

The Distribution:

- 8:15 Communicants kneel or stand at the railing to receive Communion. Serving begins at the organ end and proceeds around to the pulpit end. The order is bread, individual cups, chalice, and empty tray.
- 10:30 Whether serving communion pilgrim style or at the railing, there are two serving teams. Once the ministers have communed, one bread server and one individual-cup server will commune those in the center aisle that are unable to come forward. A similar team will commune those in the designated section near the north aisle that are unable to come forward. If communion is at the railing, there is need of only one such team, and the other team (and related servers) will commune the choir while the first team is among the congregation. When all those that are unable to come forward have been communed, the following procedure is used to serve the congregation:
- *At the railing:* One team serves the choir from organ side to pulpit side, then when the second team arrives, the teams start distribution in the center and move to the sides. The order is: 1) bread, 2) chalice, 3) individual cups, and 4) empty tray.
 - *Pilgrim:* The two sets of ministers stand on either side of the aisle in front of the railing. The order is: 1) bread, 2) chalice, 3) individual cups, and 4) empty tray. Choir communes last. The ushers may encourage those coming from the balcony to receive only from the pulpit-side team in order to permit the other team to commune the choir. When serving the choir, the distribution team reverses its order.

Serving:

When serving the wine/grape juice, lift the chalice to the communicant (don't lift it higher than your collarbone), and let her/him grasp or tip it in order to drink; lift the individual cup from the tray and hand it to the communicant. Say simply: "The blood of Christ given (or shed) for you." If you wish to offer a longer statement (perhaps for a festival day) such as, "The blood of Christ, the Cup of Salvation," please be sure to inform the other ministers for consistency's sake.

At the 10:30 service, there will always be a Steward whose job is to replenish supplies. If you are running low, gesture to the Steward to get more (before you are completely out!). Don't bother transferring remaining full cups to another tray. We rarely need every single cup and it disrupts the flow of distribution. It is best to exchange trays after you have finished a complete cycle of serving rather than in the middle of a cycle.

COMPLETING THE MEAL

Once you have completed serving, return your vessel to the retable (or carry it to the Altar Guild Sacristy). You may remain behind the Table for the blessing (and the recession, if you like), or you may go to the sacristy to return your alb to the closet.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Remember that simplicity and grace in motion and speech allow the sacrament you are handling to convey all the power it contains without interference. Find time before the service and in your preparation in the sacristy to utter a brief prayer for patience, grace, confidence and the help of the Holy Spirit. Know that we serve a gracious God who desires our very best but can manage to forgive any mistakes we may make. And be certain that, though you may not hear it often enough, you are greatly appreciated. Thank you!