THE IMPORTANCE OF THE LORD’S SUPPER OR COMMUNION

During the celebration of the Passover, the night before His death, Jesus instituted a new community meal that our church and many others observe to this day. In it, we remember Jesus’ death and resurrection and to look forward to His return. During the Last Supper, Jesus took a loaf of bread and gave thanks to God. As He broke it and gave it to His disciples, He said, “‘This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.’ In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you’” (Luke 22:19-21).

The Apostle Paul teaches us more about the Lord’s Supper in 1 Corinthians 11:23-29. Paul includes a statement: “Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself” (1 Corinthians 11:27-29).

This is a crucial teaching—we are to avoid participating in the Lord’s Supper “in an unworthy manner.” Unworthy means disregarding the true meaning of the bread and cup by forgetting the incredible price Jesus paid for our salvation—this shows up specifically in how a believer responds to broken relationships. Taking communion unworthily means allowing the ceremony to become just a ritual. It means coming to the Lord’s Supper with unrepentant sin. We would do well to listen to these instructions: we should examine ourselves before eating the bread and drinking the cup.

It also means communion is only for followers of Jesus Christ. If you have not believed Jesus Christ alone for your salvation, you should not participate. If you are living in unrepentant sin or under church discipline, you should not participate. Today is the day of salvation: Repent and believe the Gospel.

INSTRUCTIONS TO PREPARE FOR THE LORD’S SUPPER

Before the service, take time to pursue the following...

2. Gather the communion elements: bread / cracker (representing Christ’s body) and wine / juice (representing Christ’s blood).
3. We will receive the elements TOGETHER. Please wait to eat the bread and drink the cup until instructed during the Good Friday Worship at Home.
4. Reflect on all Jesus did to pay the penalty for your sin (1 Corinthians 11:23-30).
5. Ask God to reveal unconfessed sin and confess it to God (1 John 1:9).
6. If there is unresolved conflict, seek reconciliation with that individual today (Matthew 5:23).
THOUGHTS ON PRACTICING THE LORD’S SUPPER DURING A PANDEMIC

This is a summary of an article by Bill Riedel, *Practicing the Ordinances in Pandemic*.

1. This isn’t the norm.
As we are well aware, these are not normal times and so this will not be our normative practice. Currently, the church is scattered and cannot gather in the same way we desire to gather. We believe temporary changes can be made to accommodate abnormal circumstances. Nothing can match the church gathered physically together in worship.

2. This isn’t ideal.
Our Worship at Home gatherings are shadows of our in-person worship gatherings. Technology, like internet and video conferencing, offers us ways to be present with each other, even while physically distanced. Our community groups continue to open the Bible together and pray with another. While it’s just a shadow of being in the same room, it’s still encouraging to “gather” to the extent we’re able. We believe it’s better to practice a shadow of our gathering while we await the true physical gathering.

3. This isn’t sacerdotal.
That’s a big theological word that means this: we don’t believe the bread or juice gain special power from the pastor’s hands. This is why there is no importance placed on getting the “right” kind of bread or juice. These elements represent the body and blood of Christ as a spiritual presence, but not a real presence.

4. We are spiritually present together.
One concern we have considered carefully is the 1 Corinthians 11 emphasis on receiving the Lord’s Supper “when you are gathered together.” We believe we are “gathered together” through technology as a shadow of our true gathering. We also see Paul considers himself to be spiritually present with the Church in Corinth as they practice church discipline even though he is not physically present (1 Corinthians 5:3). In Colossians 2:6, Paul articulates this: *For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ.* It’s powerful and moving to know that our local church is gathered (even if virtually) to worship together in an uncertain time.

As we’ve said before, it’s better to be together physically. Lord willing, we will be soon. For now, we seek to provide for people what only Jesus’s church can provide—spiritual hope. Right now, it’s a shadow of our normal gatherings, but it’s a shadow that points us to the ultimate reality and hope we cling to in times of suffering and uncertainty—Jesus Christ.

If you have further questions, please feel free to contact us at info@harvestbiblechurch.com