

LIFE 2.0: Holy Communion St. Peter's Church

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Take Home Sheet



Children and Holy Communion in the Episcopal Church

Many people wonder at what age children may begin receiving communion at St. Peter's. There is no given age! The Episcopal Church holds that "all baptized Christians are invited and encouraged to partake" in Holy Communion, and that is certainly true at St. Peter's! Father Dirk has explained that just as we eat table food from a young age without knowing about proper nutrition yet, so we may eat at God's holy table without yet understanding the full significance of the Eucharist.

Our goal with today's program and subsequent programs on this subject is to introduce and expand each child's knowledge of the special gift Jesus gave us in the Eucharist (aka Holy Communion). You can also do this at home and at each service you attend as a family by following some of these suggestions. Like many faith-at-home discussions, it is largely a willingness to answer a child's questions, even if the answer is "I don't know—let's find out!"

WHAT IS COMMUNION?

Holy Communion is remembering. Jesus said, "Do this in remembrance of me." We remember Jesus' life, death, and resurrection—all that he has done for us. Holy Communion is the body and blood of Jesus.

Holy Communion is giving thanks. When we remember what Jesus has done for us, we can hardly help but thank him. We have nothing to give him in return but our thanks. One of the names for Communion is Eucharist, which means "thanksgiving."

Holy Communion is confessing. We confess or admit that we are sinful and that our sins made it necessary for Jesus to die.

Holy Communion is receiving forgiveness. Jesus said, "Drink of it, all of you. This cup is my blood which is shed for you for the remission of sins." By inviting us to eat the sacrament Jesus assures us that his suffering and death were for us personally and for our forgiveness.

Holy Communion is growing. We eat food to grow. As we eat at the communion table Jesus comes to us to help us grow stronger, wiser, and more loving.

Holy Communion is joyful celebrating. In Communion we celebrate the joy Jesus has brought and will continue to bring to our lives.

Holy Communion is being together. That's really what "communion" means. We're together with Jesus in a mysterious but very real way. And we're together with the other followers of Jesus who receive the same gifts from him—like one big family.

Holy Communion is telling. By taking part, we are telling each other and the world—and God too—that we believe in Jesus, and are willing to serve him forever.

Holy Communion is being strengthened to serve God. God doesn't give us gifts simply for our own personal enjoyment. He wants us to use them in helping others. When we go to Communion, he strengthens us so that we may better serve other people for him.

Tips for Parents

- **Allow your child to receive communion**—children often come to understand the meaning of something they are participating in, even though this might be different from our own faith experiences as children.
- **Read “feeding stories” from the Bible** (like God feeding the Israelites with manna, Jesus feeding the 5,000, the wedding at Cana, or even the Last Supper). Jesus ate with his disciples, friends and strangers just like we do.
- **Talk with your children during Communion**, just like you would in any new(er) experience. Point out what is happening, who is saying what, and why.
- **Remember: take it, break it, share it, love it!** Those are the four elements of communion. We have to accept the gift, Jesus made the sacrifice, but we need to share it and rejoice in it!



From “Making Communion Meaningful for Children” by Rebecca Kirkpatrick at www.buildingfaith.org, 2012.

Some Themes of Holy Communion

Favorite Foods & Special Meals: Christians believe that Holy Communion is a celebration that brings us closer to God and to each other.

Staple Foods: Christians believe that Communion is important. It reminds us that God is close to us. It is food for our spiritual journey. It also reminds us that others are hungry, for food, for love, for encouragement, and for hope.

Belonging: Coming together to celebrate and share communion helps Christians feel close to each other and to God. We can’t celebrate communion on our own.

Thanksgiving: Holy Communion is also called the Eucharist, from the Greek word meaning “thanksgiving.” In it Christians give thanks for everything God has done for them and given them, including Jesus.

Sharing & Abundance: At Communion, we share bread and wine together—everyone gets the same, whether they are poor or rich. They don’t have to pay for it—it is a gift. This reminds us that everything God has given us is meant to be shared.

From “Holy Communion” by Anne Le Bas at www.angelfire.com/trek/annegordon