

## **Guidance notes for communion**

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## **Guidance notes for communion**

These notes are here to help any group leader who wants to lead a communion moment with their group, but would like a bit of guidance before they do.

### **What is communion, how do we take it, and how?**

There are many other names for the Communion service, and different churches may use different names - including the Eucharist, The Lord's Supper, The Lord's Table and The Breaking of Bread or The Last Supper. No matter what name is given, they all refer to a service of thanksgiving and celebration, remembering the sacrifice that Christ made upon the cross. Communion also looks forward to Jesus' return.

There is no set way in which communion is organised in the New Testament. The most famous text is found in 1 Corinthians 11. This is believed to have been written before the Gospels were written and has become the standard text to be used in services, because it goes into most detail in its description.

Some churches limit who can take communion, but Renewal encourages individuals to make their own choice. The Early Church's first instructions were that it was a service for baptised believers who were living a godly life.<sup>1</sup> Obviously, a group leader should use wisdom when leading communion and make sure that everyone understands its significance (for example when there are non-Christians as part of the group) as Paul is very clear about the importance of communion.<sup>2</sup>

### **What are we actually doing when taking Communion?**

Different people have slightly different interpretations of communion, and Renewal does not prescribe one particular approach – the group leader is free to decide for themselves the approach that sits most comfortably with them – we would just ask that he or she is mindful that those partaking of communion may have a slightly different interpretation.

To some, the symbol of the bread literally represents the body of Jesus while the wine or juice represents his blood, whereas others say they are only symbols with no other purpose than to remind ourselves of what Jesus did on the cross.

When receiving Communion in a Church of England Church, the Priest will say when offering the bread, 'The body of Christ' and 'The blood of Christ' when the wine is offered. This can cause concern to some Christians. However, he or she is only repeating the words of Jesus found in the communion texts, so again a group leader is welcome to say this, or not say it, depending on their preference.

### **Who should lead a Communion moment?**

In the Church of England and many other denominations, it is only ordained ministers that can preside over Holy Communion. In the Free Methodist Church, the minister's ordination certificate gives authorisation to preside over this service. However, within Renewal, any group leader can lead a communion moment.

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<sup>1</sup> See *Didache*, or *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, 2<sup>nd</sup> century

<sup>2</sup> 1 Corinthians 11:27-30.

## **Ways in which Communion can be given**

The practice at Renewal is a method called 'intinction'. The wafer is dipped into the wine and the wafer eaten. Care must be taken however, so that the fingers do not touch the wine surface. You can also share a loaf of bread together and drink out of individual glasses – it really is up to the group to decide together what they are comfortable with.

## **Giving a word**

For small gatherings, some spiritual activity will have already taken place, therefore a preached word or a thought is not essential.

## **Types of service**

For some churches, there is a whole service dedicated to Holy Communion. For others, Communion is included in the programme. The same is for groups. The group may decide that occasionally that the whole time together be given to communion, or it may be one part of a meeting.

## **When a group wishes to focus entirely on communion**

This is not an exhaustive list, but a useful guide should you wish to spend some time entirely dedicated to communion. There are specific guides starting on the next page – but you can personalise them, or simply use this guide to help you.

1. Read a passage from the Bible. A Bible reading helps our minds to concentrate on God. The Psalms are a rich source of praise and worship – they are quoted 127 times in the New Testament, so they are a good place to start!
2. Say the Lord's Prayer or Apostles' Creed together (collectively)

The Lord's Prayer and/or the Apostles Creed are often repeated in a communion service. Rather than one person speaking over the communion, as happens in a large gathering, with a smaller number of people it is sometimes helpful, and very powerful, to read it out loud together. We use the Lord's Prayer because Jesus taught his disciples to pray it. The Apostles' Creed can also read together because it reminds us of the basic faith of all believers.

3. Make a simple statement over the bread and wine before offering it to the group.
4. Share communion.
5. Declare a blessing over the group.

You can also search the Church of England and other websites for other blessing scripts – or even write one for your group.

## **Communion scripts**

On the next pages, you will find six different communion programmes. You can alter, reduce, substitute or change them to suit your group – they are just a starting point. If the text is in bold, the whole group can take part by reading the text together – so you may wish to print the programme, or send it to people electronically so they can read along.

## **Bible readings**

You can use your own bible readings, or be free to use one of them suggested here.

Psalms 24:1-10, 32:1-7, 37:1-8, 40:1-11, 42:1-11. 45:1-8. 46:1-11. 51:1-12. 63:1-8. 84:1-12. 89:1-8. 91:1-16. 96:1-13. 98:1-9. 99:1-9. 100:1-5. 103:1-17. 108:1-5. 113:1-9. 118:1-10. 121:1-8. 122:1-9. 126:1-6. 130:1-8. 133:1-3. 139:1-16. 139:17-24. 148:1-14. 150:1-6.

Other readings can include:

Isaiah 53:3-7, John 1:1-14, John 6:53-58. Rom 5:1-11. 8:1-11. 1 Cor 10:14-22, 1 Cor 11:28-32, , 1 Eph 2:1-10. 1 Thess 4:13-18. Heb 1:1-9. 8:1-16. John 1:5-10. Rev 4:1-11. 5:1-14.

Please note: The word, 'catholic' within the Apostles' creed is without a capital letter. It means 'world-wide' or 'universal.'

## **Service Style 1 (Simple).**

1. **Leader:** Let us have a moment of silence to gather our thoughts and still our minds and prepare our hearts to receive the bread and wine.
2. **Member of the group.** A Bible reading (please choose your own – suggestions on page 4)
3. **Leader:** Prayer of consecration over the elements:

On the night before he died, he took bread;  
when he had given you thanks,  
he broke it, gave it to his disciples, and said:  
Take, eat, this is my body  
which is given for you;  
do this to remember me.  
After supper he took the cup;  
when he had given you thanks,  
he gave it to them and said:  
Drink this, all of you,  
for this is my blood of the new covenant  
which is shed for you and for many  
for the forgiveness of sins;  
do this as often as you drink it,  
to remember me.

(1 Cor 11:23-27)

4. Bread and wine are given.
5. A blessing is proclaimed.

## Service Style 2.

1. **Leader:** "We come to church hungry, Lord!  
We are hungry for comfort, hungry for love, hungry for a new way of living, hungry for your word. Thank you for giving us this place and this time to worship, and we are eager to taste your goodness in community, with our brothers and sisters. Bless us as we feast on the Bread of Life today. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen."
2. **Leader:** Let us say together  
**ALL: Almighty God,**  
**unto whom all hearts be open,**  
**all desires known**  
**and from whom no secrets are hid;**  
**cleanse the thoughts of our hearts**  
**by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit,**  
**that we may perfectly love thee**  
**and worthily magnify Thy Holy Name,**  
**through Christ Jesus our Lord.**
3. **Member of group:** Bible reading (please choose your own – suggestions on page 4)

### 4. **ALL: The Apostles' Creed**

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,**  
**creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,**  
**who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,**  
**born of the Virgin Mary,**  
**suffered under Pontius Pilate,**  
**was crucified, died, and was buried;**  
**he descended to the dead.**  
**On the third day he rose again;**  
**he ascended into heaven,**  
**he is seated at the right hand of the Father,**  
**and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,**  
**the holy catholic Church\*,**  
**the communion of saints,**  
**the forgiveness of sins,**  
**the resurrection of the body,**  
**and the life everlasting.**  
**Amen.**

### 5. **Leader:** Prayer of consecration over the elements:

On the night before he died, he took bread;  
when he had given you thanks,  
he broke it, gave it to his disciples, and said:  
Take, eat, this is my body  
which is given for you;

do this to remember me.  
After supper he took the cup;  
when he had given you thanks,  
he gave it to them and said:  
Drink this, all of you,  
for this is my blood of the new covenant  
which is shed for you and for many  
for the forgiveness of sins;  
do this as often as you drink it,  
to remember me.

(1 Cor 11:23-27)

6. Bread and wine are given.
7. Blessing (Leader or a chosen member of the group).

God be your comfort, your strength;  
God be your hope and support;  
God be your light and your way;  
And the blessing of God,  
Creator, Redeemer, and Giver of life,  
Remain with you now and for ever.

## Service Style 3

1. **Leader:** The Bible declares, 'Be still and know that I am God'. Let us come before the Lord now and allow the Holy Spirit to bring to our mind anything that would prevent us from taking communion and if necessary repent of that situation and if necessary go and put that matter right with others.
2. **Member of group:** Bible reading (please choose your own – suggestions on page 4)
3. **ALL: The Lord's Prayer**

**Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Lead us not into temptation  
but deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours  
now and for ever.  
Amen.**

4. Collective prayer.

**ALL: Lord Jesus, I bow before you in humility and ask you to examine my heart today. Show me anything that is not pleasing to you. Reveal any secret pride, any unconfessed sin, any rebellion or unforgiveness that may be hindering my relationship with you. I know that I am your beloved child, having received you into my heart and life and having accepted your death as penalty for my sinfulness. The price you paid covered me for all time, and my desire is to live for You.**

**Christ has died:  
Christ is risen:  
Christ will come again.**

5. **Leader:** Prayer of consecration over the elements:  
On the night before he died, he took bread;  
when he had given you thanks,  
he broke it, gave it to his disciples, and said:  
Take, eat, this is my body  
which is given for you;  
do this to remember me.  
After supper he took the cup;  
when he had given you thanks,  
he gave it to them and said:  
Drink this, all of you,  
for this is my blood of the new covenant

which is shed for you and for many  
for the forgiveness of sins;  
do this as often as you drink it,  
to remember me.

(1 Cor 11:23-27)

6. Bread and wine are given

7. Blessing

**Leader:** Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling,  
And to present you before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to God our  
Saviour, who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and  
forever. Amen.

## Service Style 4

1. **Leader:** "In you O Lord, we put our trust; let us never be ashamed; deliver us in your righteousness, bow down your ear to us, deliver us speedily; our rock of refuge, a fortress to save us."

2. Opening prayer

**ALL: We come to you in confidence today, knowing that if we have disregarded you in any way, we know there is forgiveness with you. Keep our hearts fixed on you O Lord as we seek to have communion with you and our friends gathered here together today that we may truly honour your name.**

3. **Bible reading:** Member of group (please choose your own – suggestions on page 4)

4. **ALL: The Apostles' Creed**

I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended to the dead.  
On the third day he rose again;  
he ascended into heaven,  
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic Church\*,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting.  
Amen.

5. **All: Dying you destroyed our death,  
rising you restored our life:  
Lord Jesus, come in glory.**

6. **Leader:** Prayer of consecration over the elements:  
On the night before he died, he took bread;  
when he had given you thanks,  
he broke it, gave it to his disciples, and said:  
Take, eat, this is my body  
which is given for you;

do this to remember me.  
After supper he took the cup;  
when he had given you thanks,  
he gave it to them and said:  
Drink this, all of you,  
for this is my blood of the new covenant  
which is shed for you and for many  
for the forgiveness of sins;  
do this as often as you drink it,  
to remember me.

(1 Cor 11:23-27)

7. Bread and wine are given

8. **Leader:** Blessing

Our Lord Jesus Christ be with you to defend you,  
Within you to keep you,  
Beside you to guard you.  
And above to bless you. **Amen.**

## Service Style 5

5. **Leader:** We come to the Communion together as children of our one God. Jesus makes the guest list, not us. Our family, chosen by God, is gathered from west and east, and includes everyone, even the lowest and the least. Jesus, when he was resurrected from the dead, revealed himself to his disciples in the breaking of bread around a table. May we see the face of God today as we come to the Lord's Supper.
6. **Bible reading:** Member of group (please choose your own – suggestions on page 4)
7. The Lord's Prayer or the Apostles Creed

### The Lord's Prayer (Contemporary version)

Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Lead us not into temptation  
but deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours  
now and for ever.  
Amen.

Or

I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended to the dead.  
On the third day he rose again;  
he ascended into heaven,  
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic Church\*,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting.  
Amen.

**4. ALL: Eternal God, in whom we live and move and have our being, whose face is hidden from us by our sins, and whose mercy we forget in the blindness of our hearts: cleanse us from all our offences, and deliver us from proud thoughts and vain desires, that with reverent and humble hearts we may draw near to you, confessing our faults, confiding in your grace, and finding in you our refuge and strength; through Jesus Christ your Son.**

**When we eat this bread and drink this cup,  
we proclaim your death, Lord Jesus,  
until you come in glory.**

5 On the night before he died, he took bread;  
when he had given you thanks,  
he broke it, gave it to his disciples, and said:  
Take, eat, this is my body  
which is given for you;  
do this to remember me.  
After supper he took the cup;  
when he had given you thanks,  
he gave it to them and said:  
Drink this, all of you,  
for this is my blood of the new covenant  
which is shed for you and for many  
for the forgiveness of sins;  
do this as often as you drink it,  
to remember me.  
(1 Cor 11:23-27)

6 Bread and wine are given

7 Blessing

The peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. And the blessing of God almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you now and for evermore, Amen.

## Service Style 6

1. **Leader:** For Jesus is the living Word; through him you O God have created all things from the beginning, and formed us in your own image.  
Through him you have freed us from the slavery of sin,  
giving him to be born of a woman and to die upon the cross; you raised him from the dead and exalted him to your right hand on high. Through him you have sent upon us your holy and life-giving Spirit, and made us a people for your own possession.  
Therefore, we thank and praise you almighty God for your great love towards us
2. Bible Reading (please choose your own – suggestions on page 4)
3. The Lord's prayer or the Apostles Creed
4. **The Lord's Prayer** (Contemporary version)
5. Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Lead us not into temptation  
but deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours  
now and for ever.  
Amen.

Or

5. I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended to the dead.  
On the third day he rose again;  
he ascended into heaven,  
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic Church\*,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,

the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting.  
Amen.

6. **ALL: Lord, by your cross and resurrection, you have set us free. You are the Saviour of the world.**

7 Leader: Prayer of consecration over the elements:  
On the night before he died, he took bread;  
when he had given you thanks,  
he broke it, gave it to his disciples, and said:  
Take, eat, this is my body  
which is given for you;  
do this to remember me.  
After supper he took the cup;  
when he had given you thanks,  
he gave it to them and said:  
Drink this, all of you,  
for this is my blood of the new covenant  
which is shed for you and for many  
for the forgiveness of sins;  
do this as often as you drink it,  
to remember me.

(1 Cor 11:23-27)

8

Bread and wine are given

9. Blessing

May Christ who by death has destroyed death, give you all courage and joy in believing. And the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be with you now and forever more. Amen