



**“Do This To Remember Me!” A Book For Families on the Sacrament
of Holy Communion**

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This booklet was originally printed as apart of the “Let the Children Come Series” by Round Table Resources, through the Connecticut Conference, United Church of Christ, in 1992. The three titles have been popular through the years, and nearly all the print copies have been sold. But we still receive requests for the booklets, sometimes from places far away. So we are now making the booklets available through the Connecticut Conference website in the hopes that more people can have access to these useful resources.

The three titles in the series are:

For children and parents: *Communion With Your Child*

For families and church school: *Do This to Remember Me*

For Pastors and Church Educators: *Jesus Loves Me: The Young Child and Communion*

“Do This To Remember Me!”

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The Family, Children and Communion

This booklet has been prepared as a resource for families on Communion. It may be used in preparing children for coming to the Lord's Table at home or for family education programs at the church. One of the tasks of the church is to prepare children for a meaningful life-long participation in the sacraments. The church calls on the family to be involved in this process because it believes that the family is the most important avenue for Christian growth for children.

Parents become the major communicators of life and faith. The meaning of love, the experience of giving, sharing, and forgiving are all learned within the family. By attitudes, words and actions parents have great influence on the Christian development of their children. Children of the church need to know and see what our faith means to us as adults. They need to see what the church means, what worship means, and what the sacraments mean. This witness sharing is very important to the growth of faith.

Role of the Family

There is a process by which faith grows in which families play an important role. Children tend to do things before they understand them. Children imitate the behavior of others, especially that of their parents. For example, if parents pray before meals their children will attempt to do so as well. In the same way young children will participate in religious celebrations. Understanding gradually follows behavior. As the children grow, they will begin to ask the question, "why"?

Why do we pray before meals?

Why do we worship on Sunday?

Why do we share bread in memory of Jesus?

This intellectual search for meaning and understanding grows out of these experiences. This is the key to the children's presence at the Jewish Passover Meal where the child's questions prompt the family's retelling of the story of their freedom from slavery in Egypt. Jewish children are included in all ceremonial feasts.

Experience and understanding both are important. Children and adults find fulfillment not in knowing art, but in experiencing music and paintings; not in knowing about food, but in experiencing a meal; not in knowing about religion, but in experiencing it. The experience of worship is of primary importance to children's faith.

How Children Learn

Children can experience the richness of Communion long before they can intellectualize its meaning. The learning process moves quite naturally from doing to reflection, from devotion to doctrine, from practice to understanding. Children have faith. Children are an important part of the body of Christ, the Church. Children, by participating in Communion can feel that they belong, that they are a part of a church family that is celebrating Jesus's life with them, that by sharing bread with one another they are doing what their Lord asked.

At this table the whole people of God, including the young among the church, receive God's gift of love in Jesus, are nourished in the faith, and are challenged to be disciples. As parents we ask: How can we help our children understand Communion? Perhaps you are thinking, "I'm not even sure I understand everything about Communion myself."

Rich in meaning, Communion communicates many themes of our faith. This booklet will highlight some of the themes that can be shared with children. No matter how young or old, there is always room for growth in understanding. This learning process continues all through our lives.

Sacraments of Baptism and Communion:

Identity and Calling

Like most Protestant denominations, the United Church of Christ recognizes two sacraments: Baptism and Communion.

BAPTISM

Baptism celebrates one's belonging to the family of God. In the baptismal service the child's identity is proclaimed:

This is a child of God.

Parents and the congregation give thanks to God for the gift of new life in the community of faith. We give witness to the fact that we are related to the new person and have a responsibility for the growth of faith of this little one. We recognize the child's need of a community of faith. We make promises that we will help this child grow in the knowledge and love of Jesus and to help this child understand his or her identity as a child of God.

The most important meaning of Baptism is, however, not about the child and the congregation, but it is about God. It is about God's act that before the child can make anything of her or his life, before the child can say yes or no, God has already claimed and accepted this child. Baptism is a visible reminder that our salvation comes as a gift of a loving God who chose us before we chose God, who has loved us unconditionally with a love that will not let us go.

God initiates this covenant or special relationship. In response to this gift we give ourselves to God. There must be a continuing recognition of this covenant relationship. The responsibility of parents and a congregation is to help the child live that gift, to live that identity, to live that Baptism. Baptism is just a beginning. The calling is to a life-long pilgrimage. One doesn't become a daughter or son by growing in an ever deepening relationship through one's entire life. We are continually being baptized, born again and again into a deeper life with Christ. The God who claims us in Baptism comes and claims us over and over. Although we stumble and fall, we are picked up, forgiven and called into life again. The child will gradually grow in understanding of God's gifts of forgiveness, love and strength.

COMMUNION

Communion is also a sacrament that celebrates our identity and calling. Communion enriches our identity. For in this sacrament we are reminded of our identity as a member of the body of Christ, the Church. We receive our Lord's gift of himself, his life, his love and forgiveness in order that we may live this gift and be his body in the world. Communion is a sacrament of love. We honor it more by caring for each other than by just taking part in a ceremony. It is not just something we remember. It is not just something we receive.

It is an offer from Christ:

to share life with us, to share ministry with us.

Today Christ lives in his people. In this way we are the living signs of his love. We are called to be "personal Sacraments" or signs of his presence. The mission of sharing God's love also belongs to children. Through participation in this sacrament they are initiated in the church's

mission and come to know more full their identity in the Lord, that is to be the **Body of Christ in the world.**

Themes of Communion

“Christ is like a single body, which has many parts; it is still one body, even though it is made up of different parts. In the same way, all of us, whether Jews or Gentiles, whether slaves or free, (whether boys or girls, young or old, white or Hispanic, black or Asian, blind or handicapped, rich or poor) have been baptized into the one body by the same Spirit, and we have all been given the one Spirit to drink.”

I CORINTHIANS 12:12-13

Communion is Worship

The early church celebrated Communion on each Sunday, the Lord’s Day. It was an indispensable part of Christian worship. Whereas the sermon and scripture were the words spoken and heard, the sacrament was the word in visible form, graphically representing God’s promises. Together sermon, scripture, prayer and sacrament were the vehicles of Christ’s presence in the community of faith.

Following the outline of a worship service we can see how the different activities during worship and the symbolic acts of Communion express the themes of our faith and Communion:

~WORSHIP OUTLINE~

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| Celebrating | Gather in the Name of the Lord Call to Worship |
| Listening | Hear the Word of God Scripture Sermon |
| Caring | Respond to the Word Prayers for the world and others in Need Prayers of Confession and Assurance of Forgiveness Lord’s Prayer Sign of Peace |
| Sharing | Communion: “Do This To Remember Me” Bringing Gifts – Offering Welcome to the Table – Invitation Remembering – Words of Institution Sharing A Meal – Bread and Cup Giving Thanks – Prayer of Thanksgiving |

Being Transformed – Transformation

Going Forth Sent into the World Renewed and Nurtured
Benediction

Meaning of Worship Outline

Celebrating The people of God gather to worship. They hear words of welcome which set the tone for celebrating. Through songs and prayers the community praises God.

Listening We come to worship to listen to God's word. The scripture readings are more than words—they're our living link with our God who enters into human history again and again to extend love and concern.

Caring We respond to Our Lord's care for us with a promise to care for one another. In our **prayers** we express our concerns for our family, our community and our world. In the service the people **ask God for forgiveness** for not living God's ways. We hear God's call to forgive one another. We hear God's words of healing. Together we pray the **Lord's Prayer** acknowledging God as our Creator and each other as sisters and brothers. We share with one another the **sign of peace** with a handshake or hug.

Communion

Sharing While they were eating, Jesus took the bread, gave a prayer of thanksgiving, broke it, and gave it to his friends saying, "Take it. This is my body." And he said, "Do this in remembrance of me."

Bringing Gifts Our response to God's word comes in the **offering**. We give bread and wine-grape juice as gifts of ourselves. Bread is something we make. It doesn't grow in fields. It requires our work to become a loaf to share. It is our bread that Christ wants to multiply. It is our bread, our life, our work which Christ wants to fill with his love and give as food to others.

Welcome to the Table The **invitation** of Communion is a call to grow in love. The Risen Christ is present with his friends just as he was present with his disciples. He is the host at this celebration. We are invited by Christ to share at his table. Jesus wants to nourish us with his life, his love, his forgiveness and his strength.

Sharing A Meal We gather to share in the meal. Then, **taking the bread into our hands and drinking from the cup**, we invite

the Lord into our lives. We experience “Communion,” a togetherness, a real, personal encounter with Jesus and with one another.

Giving Thanks Another word for Communion is Eucharist. It is a Greek word which means **thanksgiving**. In the Communion service the people gather to say thanks. They remember God’s goodness. By offering bread and wine-grape juice to God, we thank our Creator for this world, the people in it, and all the other signs of God’s love that surround us. We also especially thank God for Jesus, for his life, his teachings, and the new life Jesus has brought us.

Transformation From wheat into bread, from grapes into wine-juice, from ordinary lives into grace-filled lives. This is the meaning of Communion. We are to **be changed by love into lovers**.

Going Forth To Make a Better World On the night before he died, Jesus surprised his friends. Tying a towel around his waist, Jesus took a basin of water and knelt before each of his disciples gathered at the dinner and washed their feet. Jesus asked his friends a searching question:

*“Do you understand what I have done to you?”
“As I have done for you, so now you do for others, As my
God has sent me, so now I send you.”*

Jesus shows us a way of living, a way of caring for one another. The call of Communion is to be the body of Christ in the world today.

Activities for the Family

There is more to meals than eating food. Meals are perhaps the most commonly shared experience of fellowship and shared life. The family meal experience is a way our children can learn what it is to gather together around a table in the presence of God and learn to grow in love. There are times when:

- families have really enjoyed one another at the table.
- by just sharing a meal together we are able to forgive a hurt or ask for forgiveness
- we really listen to each member of the family, really caring about their day, their ups and downs.

- our meal is a real celebration of the fact that we are a family, a special family, and each of us is important.

As a family...

Talk about some special meals you have shared.

What makes that meal special?

What makes your family meal a celebration?

Table fellowship was a very important part of the ministry of Jesus. One of the most controversial aspects of Jesus' public ministry is all the meals he shared with people others thought unworthy—like tax collectors, sinners, poor people and foreigners. The meals were not just sharing food, it was the sharing of company, the sharing of ideas, and of teachings. Jesus did a lot of forgiving and healing during meals. At these meals Jesus was giving himself.

As a family...

take a look at some of the meals Jesus shared:

Feeding the 5,000.....John 6:1-15

A meal with LeviMark 2:13-17

A meal with Simon.....Luke 7:36-50

The Last Supper.....Luke 22:14-20

Breaking Bread in Emmaus.....Luke 24:13-35

Fish and Bread by the LakeJohn 21:1-14

Questions to explore together while discussing these stories of Jesus:

What was the circumstance of the meal?

Who were the participants in the meal?

What did sharing the meal with Jesus mean?

What do you think Jesus was trying to communicate through his words and actions?

The early church continued to eat fellowship meals together and remember the Lord Jesus. As they ate together, (like our pot-luck suppers today) recalling the many occasions when the Lord had broken bread with them before his death, they found that he was with them still.

As a family...

talk about the church's celebration of communion.

What happens at Communion?

What are your feelings about Communion?

In what ways do you sense the presence of Jesus?

As a family...

talk about the invitation to Communion. Tell the children that Jesus wants very much to share his life with us. He wants to be very close to us. He chose bread and wine-grape juice to be a sign to us of his presence and love. He welcomes us to his table.

Kingdom of God Stories

Our Communion celebration, like the Passover meal, links past, present and future. We not only look back and remember all our God has done for us, but we celebrate God's life with and for us now and look together in hope for the coming of God's Kingdom in its fullness. This is the time when there will be peace and justice and all people will see one another as sisters and brothers.

As a family...

talk about what we look back and remember. With younger children you may want to use the story on the next page, "A Time to Remember."

Paul calls the Church the Body of Christ. We are all many parts of one Body. Just as in Communion, the bread and wine-grape juice are one loaf and one cup made up of many grains of wheat and grapes, we are many making up one people. If any part is injured, the whole body is affected. If any person is hungry, or lonely, or ill, or treated unfairly, the whole is affected. We are all called to be co-workers with God in bringing God's kingdom of love, justice, kindness and gentleness.

As a family...

look at some of Jesus' parables about the Kingdom of God:

- The Parable of the Mustard Seed.....Luke 13:18-19
- The Parable of the YeastMatthew 13:33
- The Parable of the Great FeastLuke 14:15-24

Jesus taught us to pray like this:

Thy Kingdom Come,
Thy will be done,
on earth
As it is in heaven.

As a family...

talk about God's Kingdom. Why do we want it? What does it look like? Try to describe it.

A Story: A Time to Remember

Can you remember a happy time you spent with persons you loved? Think. It may have been a picnic? Or, a birthday party? It is fun to be together, to work, to play, or eat together. Eating together is fun, and very important. Did you know that there is a time in our church when we remember some special meals that happened long ago?

Jesus had a group of friends, and they worked together and laughed together and shared many meals. Jesus taught his friends about God and how God loves every person. He showed his friends that God loves all people.

When Jesus was gone, his friends remembered things he had said and done. They especially remembered the times they ate together round campfires, and in the homes of friends. One meal was remembered more than any other, because it turned out to be the last time that Jesus and his closest friends were together before he died.

The friends—Peter and John, James, Matthew and Thomas, Mary Magdalene—recalled that Jesus asked them to remember him at meal times. Bread and wine were an important part of each meal in the days when Jesus lived. And so, Jesus used bread and wine to help his friends remember the times they had spent together. When Jesus' friends ate the common foods of their day—bread and wine—they did remember. But do you know what? It almost seemed like Jesus had never left them. To the people who shared the meal, it was as if Jesus were there with them in some special way.

The people were very happy, and in their joy, they told others about Jesus and the meals they had with him. And the story was passed down through the years. So the people of the church, like a big family, gathers to continue the meals that Jesus had with his friends.

This is a time of joy and thanksgiving, because Jesus lived and taught us about God. It is also a time of joy because Jesus is still with us.

Soon our church will have a special time for remembering. This is called Communion. A little bit of bread and wine-grape juice will be served to everyone sitting in the church. And, as we eat, we will know that Jesus is still with us in a special way and will continue to be with us tomorrow and the days and months and years ahead.

Do you know what? Everyone in the church is like a big family. When we have Communion, we know that the same things are happening all over the world, wherever there are followers of Jesus.

Jesus' friends pause to remember how Jesus came to teach about God's love.

When you see the table in front of your church set up with bread and wine-grape juice, you'll know the time of remembering has come again.

Family Projects

Many themes emerge from our experience of Communion. Communion is about belonging, remembering, giving thanks, sharing a meal and going forth to make a better world. Each of these themes can become topics for discussion and projects.

1. **Banner** A banner can be made from various materials such as burlap or felt as background; felt, yarn or other materials for color, contrast, and illustration.
2. **Poster** A poster can be made easily from materials found in your home or classroom. Tag board, heavy paper, or cardboard can be used for the background. Magazines and newspaper pictures, as well as family drawings can be used to illustrate the poster.
3. **Mobile** A mobile can be made that shows the meaning of Communion through symbols:

Bread and Cup

Communion helps us grow in our relationship with God and one another.

Cross

Communion is time to remember Jesus' love, his life, death and resurrection.

Wheat and Grapes

They are harvested and become one loaf and one cup. We are gathered to become one people.

People

Communion is our unity with God and one another and our call to show God's love in the world.

Joy

Communion is a joyful celebration when we thank God for all the gifts given to us, especially the gift of Jesus.

4. Mural Depict scenes from Jesus' life and our lives illustrating the things Jesus taught us to do to live fully in the New Covenant. The center of your mural could be a picture of the Last Supper or a picture of people today celebrating the Lord's Supper at your church.

5. Bake bread together Plan a family bread-making day, with everyone participating in the various steps of the process. After the bread is made, you may gather informally at the kitchen table to enjoy together the freshly-made aromatic food and to thank God for the gifts from the earth, saying the following prayer:

Loving God, we give you thanks for all your many gifts. We ask your blessing of this bread we are about to share as a family. Let this bread remind us of the supper of our Lord Jesus. Let it remind us of his way of sharing love. Help us as a family grow in loving and sharing. Amen.

“In Remembrance of Me”

(Music and lyrics by Chuck Ericson © 1991)

I have come to sit beside you, at the table now prepared:
I've come to tell you once again how deeply I do care.
You're my sisters and my brothers gathered here so faithfully,
To drink the cup, and break the Bread
In Remembrance of Me.

Chorus

Ev'ry holy child, ev'ry servant true
Each disciple who believes
Was with me then and sits here now
In Remembrance of Me.

It was not so very long ago, the Passover was set;
Your presence felt inside My heart at Table where we met.
You had different names and faces, but your spirits I could see
And one day you'd be born to live
In Remembrance of Me.

Chorus

In this quiet new communion I will call you all by name:
Invite you to the Table where forgiveness cancels blame;
And hope-filled words are spoken, and love's poured out for free...
And you go out with joy to serve
In Remembrance of Me.

Chorus

[For a copy of the song with the music, please call the CT Conference Office
860.233.5564]

Communion Songs

Recommended from: The New Century Hymnal, Pilgrim Press, 1995

- #394, 395 In Christ There is No East or West
- #522 I Love to Tell the Story
- #330 Let Us Break Bread Together
- #454 Lord, I Want to be a Christian
- #547, 548 Amazing Grace
- #295 I Sing a Song of the Saints of God

*Recommended from: Everflowing Streams: Songs for Worship, Ruth C. Duck and
Michael G. Bausch, ed. Pilgrim Press, 1986.*

- #33 I Am The Light of the World
- #36 We Are Called To Follow Jesus
- #51 Child Of Blessing, Child of Promise – Baptism
- #80 As We Go – Benediction, Go Forth...

Dramatic Readings

*Recommended from: Canticles and Gathering Prayers, John P. Mossi and
Suzanne Toolan. Saint Mary's Press, 1989.*

- #14 Bread of Life
- #17 Many Grains
- #18 Community

Very appropriate for family use after baking bread or at the dinner table.

- #19 Passover – based on John 6:2-13, Feeding the 5,000
- #20 The Multiplication – based on Matthew 15:32-38, Feed the Crowd

