

THE LORD'S SUPPER



The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is one of two sacraments celebrated in the United Church of Christ. The other is Baptism. **The Lord's** Supper was instituted by Jesus as He celebrated the Passover with His disciples on the night before He was crucified.

When Jesus faced His impending death on the cross, He ate the Passover with His disciples in an upper room. It was here that He took bread, and blessed and broke it as He said: "This is my body." It was here, also, that he took a cup, gave thanks, and said: "This is my blood." In the giving of His body and blood all believers have received the promise of forgiveness of sins and resurrection from the dead.

The celebration of the Lord's Supper is often referred to as "the innermost sanctuary of the whole Christian worship." In the early church, non-believers and those who were being instructed in the Christian faith would leave the service prior to this communion of the Christian community with its living Lord. The Holy Communion takes place as the believers respond to their Savior by confessing their unworthiness and offering themselves in grateful obedience to His service. It is in this event in the life of the church that we find grace and faith in their fullness. It is here that believers are met by the presence of Christ and nourished in a wholly personal relationship.

The Lord's Supper is a memorial meal and more. Each time it is celebrated it becomes a living memory of our communion with the risen Christ. Here we commune not only with one another, but with God. It is the sign and seal of a new covenant which is both a visible gift and a spiritual nourishment in which we can participate again and again.

The Lord's Supper is a gift which we receive with thanks. It is because of this occasion for gratitude that this meal is also called the Eucharist, which means thanksgiving for all the gifts of God of which the life, atoning death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the greatest.

The bread and wine which are used in this meal were gifts of God to us before Jesus and His disciples gathered in an upper room. These elements of physical nourishment were available to all people. Jesus, however, chose these common ingredients to mean

much more. So it is that when we appropriate these simple gifts of bread and wine that they are for us the symbols of the broken body and shed blood of Christ.

All can now gather to remember this event. But the recreation of this meal is not an end in itself. It is at this meal where there is no seat of honor that the faithful gather in unity and equality. It is at this meal that we remember Him and are reminded that we become the body of Christ in the world. Just as Jesus walked along the road to Emmaus, He was not recognized until he took the bread and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to them. Just as Jesus came to serve us, now we are sent into the world to serve in His name. Let us recognize Him and serve Him.

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Scripture References:

Matthew 26:26-29

Mark 14:22-24

Luke 22:17-19

24:13-35

I Corinthians 11:23-26

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