

Communion at Grace During a Pandemic

The Bible commands that when Christians gather we should remember Jesus' sacrifice by taking the Lord's Supper (1 Cor 11). While it seems that the expectation is that this will be a regular observance, there are not a lot of details prescribed for exactly how, when, and how often this is to be done.

This Sunday we will be celebrating the Lord's Supper together during our morning service. We are also inviting those watching the live-streamed service to join us. For anyone who would like it, an elder would be happy to visit those at home to serve communion there. Of course, the ideal would be for us to all be together in person for corporate sung worship, fellowship, the preaching of the word, and prayer. This is true of taking the Lord's Supper as well, and because of this we would like to strongly encourage you to consider that, unless health concerns or matters of conscience require you to remain at home watching our livestream, we would urge you to join us outdoors at 9:00am to worship and celebrate the Lord's Supper together with us physically.

However, we are living in a time where making the most of less than ideal circumstances has become our daily reality. Wisdom and discernment are greatly needed to navigate this difficult time. We want to respect the different opinions among our people and the latest government regulations in response to COVID. Most Christians recognize that although it is a shadow of meeting in person, there is some value in sermons, prayer, and worship, mediated through technology. So wouldn't this be true of the Lord's Supper as well?

As it has become clear that the temporary delay in normal ministry activities is not as temporary as we initially thought we are burdened to make sure that we are offering the spiritual sustenance we all so deeply need—even if it is in a less than ideal way. We do not believe that the Bible forbids taking the Lord's Supper while some in our congregation are at home and we do not want those who are physically vulnerable to be unable to partake with the rest of us. When we all partake together in our parking lot and in our homes via live stream, it will still be administered by a minister at Grace and taken at the same time during the same service.

Taking the bread and cup together, physically present, as a whole congregation is a powerful and enriching experience, but if you think about once we went to 3 services many years ago we stopped doing that. Typically, we offer the Lord's supper 5 times a month (3 Sunday morning services, at *La Gracia's* service and our Sunday evening Lord's Supper service) and it's not possible for the entire church to be gathered in any of

them due to the space limitations of our building. For centuries, ministers have brought the Lord's Supper to those who are unable to leave their homes due to illness. Military Chaplains serve the elements to Christians on battlefields, and pastors have done so at the side of countless hospital beds. Most Christians see great value in these practices. Local church ministry never stops, even when normal activities are limited by circumstances we would never choose.

We realize that some of our members will not agree with this judgment call we are making here, so we hope you will be able to bear with us as we are working to be faithful in these unprecedented times. There is much that is not clear to all of us in these days, but one thing we are certain of is that all we do "should be done in love" (1 Cor 16:14). We need a lot of forbearances, grace, and patience in these days of confusion, distance, and disappointment. May God grant us these so that Jesus will be exalted among us.

Here is an article that gives a fuller explanation and good reasons to consider the rightness of communion via livestream.

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/practicing-ordinances-pandemic/>