Booklets for each family that can be used with your children to help them understand communion are available from the Worship Committee Chair.

THE JOY OF COMMUNION

**Why do we celebrate Communion?**

As a family we gather around the table to share a meal of bread and wine because Jesus told us to: “Do this in remembrance of me.” We are a diverse people, unified in Christ. Right now, this is as close as we can get to the Kingdom of God, but we have a glimpse of what God intends – each person totally welcome and loved. This is communion – gathering in fellowship, feeling the presence of Jesus in each one of us binding us together.

In the seemingly ordinary elements of the bread and the cup rests the power of Christ our Lord to be among us through the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit. After walking along the road to Emmaus with Cleopas and his companion, Jesus sat at table with them, and after he blessed the bread and broke it, they realized Christ’s living presence among them. It is here at this table that we, like Cleopas and his companion, have the opportunity to truly realize Christ’s spiritual presence, walking and working among us.

**Christ’s spiritual presence**

Different denominations vary in their understandings of communion. At one end is the Roman Catholic view that teaches that the bread and wine are physically transformed into the body and blood of Christ. At the other, Anabaptists believe the elements have no special power and are only a memorial to Jesus’ death. Presbyterians believe something in between: that Christ is spiritually present in communion. As James Ayers says, we take “the symbolic representation of the broken body and shed blood of Jesus into our inmost being, receiving Jesus who died for our forgiveness and transformation. We depend on these elements for our very life.”

**When should children start receiving communion?**

According to the Book of Order, all those who are baptized are welcome at the table, but it is for the parents to decide when their child understands enough about the meaning of communion that they can participate. We respect the judgment of parents, recognizing that there is no magic age and that all children mature in their understanding at different rates. Children should understand who Jesus is as Savior, be able to identify how the bread and juice are different from a snack, and come with self control. This is a spiritual meal, not one that is intended to fill their stomach. It is to be hoped that they can grasp the idea of Jesus not being seen but that they are able to feel as if he is with them as they share in communion.

**Communion in different churches, and by different names**

There is a range of differences in how congregations serve communion, even as ours varies month to month. Some congregations are much more structured in how they guide participation in communion and others observe an open table to which all are invited.

We use the term “The Lord’s Supper” because we see Jesus as the host. He asked his disciples to do this, and in the Bible he is recognized as the Lord when he breaks the bread. “Eucharist” bears the sense of thanksgiving, while “Communion” signifies fellowship with Jesus and with one another. While confusing, each may be used at different times or in different congregations.