

Dear All Altar Guild Members,

I think I have caused more confusion than clarity in my last message to Joan about how to place bread and wine on the altar for Communion. Please forgive me for that!

Below is a practice that fits the Lutheran Doctrine of the Lord's Supper and how to treat the elements of bread and wine:

The general rule is that we do not mix (place into the same container) elements (bread and wine) that have been consecrated (blessed at a Communion Service) with unconsecrated elements ("new" bread and wine from the box or bottle).

Regular bread/wafers (not gluten free) – Place enough bread on the altar to last for all the services, as usual. If you think that we might run short of bread at a later service, place an unopened "sleeve" of wafers on the altar behind the pyx holding the bread that was consecrated at the previous services that weekend. Do not put unconsecrated ("new") wafers into the containers on the altar after the first service.

Gluten free bread – place four (4) individually wrapped wafers on the small plate (paten) beneath the larger, rounded plate on the altar before the first service. This should be more than enough each weekend.

Wine – Fill the flagon (pitcher) with wine only once on a weekend. Do not "top off" the flagon once it has been used at a service. If we run short of wine/blood of Christ for the "common cup" we can use the individual cups; if we run out of individual cups we can finish with the common cup. If we run out of wine altogether, the pastors can get more and consecrate it.

(A note on wine based on my experience at SPL: By the time we get to the 10:30 AM Service on Sunday, which is often lowest attended service of the three, we usually need less than one full chalice of wine; there is enough wine in one chalice for all who drink from it at the late service. I have also noticed that when we get to the end of the weekend, sometimes the amount of wine "left over" in the "consecrated wine" storage bottle is more than enough to fill all the individual cups as well as the flagon for the common cup the next week. This indicates that we have added wine to the flagon sometime during the weekend, and it was not necessary, and/or that too many individual cups had been filled.)

Why all the fuss about bread and wine? Lutherans believe that the bread and wine of Holy Communion give to us the very body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, given and shed for us on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins. Small Catechism: "It is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ under the bread and the wine..." Martin Luther, to make this doctrinal point, often used in statements about the bread and wine of Holy Communion: "The bread is the body of Christ; the wine is the blood of Christ." How we treat the elements used at the Lord's Supper confesses what we believe God is doing for us and giving to us.

Hopefully, this is helpful.

In Christ,

Pastor Bertram

Cc: Pastor Fast