

We believe that Jesus is always present with every Christian by his Spirit. Jesus is therefore also always present whenever his people meet together to hear his word taught, sing his praises, pray and encourage one another.

We believe that Jesus is really present at the Lord's Supper but no more than at any other gathering of God's people.

Who can take communion?

It follows from what we have already said that anybody who trusts in the Lord Jesus Christ for their salvation will be welcome to participate in the Lord's Supper at Christ Church – this is part of the symbolism of Christian unity that the Lord's Supper involves. You do not have to be baptised to take communion – though if you are a Christian and have never been baptised we would encourage you to consider this (see the Baptism leaflet similar to this one).

The Bible encourages us to examine ourselves before we take communion (1 Corinthians 11:27-29). In the church to which Paul wrote this letter they knew what the Lord's Supper was about but the way they treated other people in the church was selfish and inconsiderate – Paul says that this shows they did not truly believe in the equality of all Christians before God and were therefore abusing the fact that the Lord's Supper demonstrates our unity as Christians. If we are living in ways which do not reflect the gospel truths that the Lord's Supper teaches we should ask ourselves whether we ought to participate.

Who can administer communion?

Any Christian can lead the Lord's Supper and give thanks for the bread and cup. In practice at Christ Church this part of our meetings is usually led by an elder, a deacon or a church member.

If you would like to know more about Communion or any other aspect of church life please speak to one of the Elders.



Communion

What is communion?

Throughout the history of the church Christians have practised two "ordinances" that the Lord Jesus Christ commanded us to perform – baptism and **communion** (often called "The Lord's Supper" or "The breaking of bread").

Our beliefs about communion are set out in our Doctrinal Distinctives:

"We believe that the Lord's Supper is a remembrance meal at which Christian believers share bread and wine together to remind themselves of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, of the new covenant of salvation which he inaugurated, and to proclaim that he will return. Jesus Christ is no more present at a celebration of the Lord's Supper than at any other gathering of the members of a local church. The Lord's Supper should be celebrated on a regular basis by the members of the church demonstrating their unity in the body of Christ."

At Christ Church we hold communion frequently – both in our Sunday morning meetings and our Sunday evening times of prayer and praise. The Lord's Supper may also be celebrated in housegroups and at special events such as our church weekends away.

During his last meal with his disciples:

"Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, 'Take and eat; this is my body.' Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you. ²⁸This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. ²⁹I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom.'" (Matthew 26:26-29)

Paul tells us that in addition to this Jesus also said:

"This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." (1 Corinthians 11:25)

Eating special meals before God has always been part of Biblical faith and has a strong Old Testament background. The sacrificial meals of the Jews both reminded God's people of their relationship with God

and pointed to the fact that their sins were not yet fully paid for because the animal sacrifices had to be constantly repeated.

The Lord's Supper, however, reminds us of the fact that our salvation is now complete in Christ – and it encourages to anticipate his return...

Communion is a visual illustration of Christ's death for us. The broken bread is just ordinary bread – but it symbolises the breaking of Christ's body on the cross as he bore the wrath of God for our sin. The wine (we usually use juice at Christ Church) is just ordinary wine – but it symbolises the pouring out of Christ's blood. This is a powerful reminder that God loves us in Christ and calls us to be in relationship with him individually and personally.

Taking communion is also a statement of our personal decision to take the benefits of what Jesus has done to ourselves – it is a symbol of our trust in Jesus to bring about forgiveness of our sin and a right relationship with God.

Christians joining together to participate in the Lord's Supper is also a powerful symbol of Christian unity – that we are all guilty before God and all reconciled to him by faith in Christ. Paul put it like this: *"Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf."* (1 Corinthians 10:17)

What communion isn't

Participating in the Lord's Supper does not make anybody a Christian. And it is not necessary to take communion in order to be a Christian.

The Bible is clear that we are made right with God by faith alone – not faith plus "works" (anything we "do"). Those who say communion is required in order to be saved are like the false teachers Paul argued against who said you had to be circumcised in order to be saved (Gal 5:2-6). Paul said that their message was a different gospel (1:6) and that it would bring God's curse on them (1:10).

Communion is rather a God given and powerful illustration and reminder that we are completely rescued when we put our trust in Jesus.