



COVENANT
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Thoughts on Weekly Communion at CPC By Rev. Alec Flynt

Larger Catechism 168: What is the Lord's Supper:

"The Lord's supper is a sacrament of the New Testament, wherein, by giving and receiving bread and wine according to the appointment of Jesus Christ, his death is showed forth; and they that worthily communicate feed upon his body and blood, to their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace; have their union and communion with him confirmed; testify and renew their thankfulness, and engagement to God, and their mutual love and fellowship each with other, as members of the same mystical body."

Biblical Warrant:

A.) Acts 2:42: And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers." Four Elements of Worship in Acts: Apostles' Teaching (Biblical preaching), Fellowship, Breaking Bread (communion), and prayers.

C) Acts 20:7 "On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul talked with them, intending to depart on the next day, and he prolonged his speech until midnight." Worship and breaking bread are described together.

1) **Integral to My Basic Ministry Philosophy: Get people in front of Jesus.** Communion clearly related. Communion is a gospel-centered, gospel-soaked event. It leads people into deeper understanding of atonement, and forces the preacher to make sure every sermon is related to the atonement of Christ (link between Word and Sacrament).

A. Our theology holds a bold view of Lord's Supper: actually receiving and experiencing Jesus (spiritually), not just remembering him (Baptist). Something is truly going on in communion.

B. We give people a chance to be with the Lord, to reflect on the Sermon, and to think about the cross. God does work on people's heart if you give them the space to do that in worship.

2) **Word AND Sacrament Go Together:** Why do we detach one from the other? Communion is not some extra-spiritual, extra-magical religious practice that should only be practiced every once and awhile because of it's extra-special-ness. Communion is a regular means of grace, just as nourishment on the preached Word is.

3) Liturgy:

A. Our liturgy is very limited right now. We do not have the advantages of an established church building with architecture that lends much to worship. We do not have a music program that has either the big organ sanctuary music, nor do we have the heart-stirring closeness of contemporary music.

B. A more robust liturgy is our wheelhouse- We are traditional, evangelical, reformed, heart-felt. Right-practiced Communion would only add to a deeper, more significant worship experience.

4) Context:

A. Postmodern culture calls for experience and participation in worship. Most people are not as inclined to sit and watch as religious officials perform worship (isn't this what the Reformation was fighting?), but instead, want to join/participate/experience. What we see in much of modern worship is an attempt to *invent* deep, participatory liturgies while ignoring the participatory elements *given* to us by our Lord Jesus: Communion.

B. Live in a county that is 30% Catholic (What percentage of Anglos in our city are Catholic? Probably higher?). This is a great way to reach out to this group.

C. Multi-generational- We are multi-generational church and communion is a perfectly suited to this sort of context. Most worship service elements are not suited to the generations, WORD and Sacrament are. This proved true in BR- the younger generation and the older generation were the main proponents of weekly practice.

D. New church is the opportunity to reform some mistakes that have been made in the past. Church practice of once a quarter or once a month could be a deficiency in our tradition. Also, many of our conservative, reformed, evangelical, new church plants (PCA) have incorporated weekly practice of communion (Keller/Redeemer in NYC).

5) It has been widely recognized that John Calvin preferred the practice of weekly communion, although he was never able to institute it in Geneva. This was a regret of his.

6) Objection 1: Frequency creates apathy:

1) If frequency creates apathy, why then do we preach, sing, and give every week? Are we suggesting we will take your money every week but not give you Jesus in the sacrament every week?

2) Experientially, the exact opposite is true. Presbyterians that practice weekly communion regularly remark about the significance of this practice for their relationship with Jesus. Beat the Gospel into their heads continuously.

7) Objection 2: Excessive Preparationism:

A) A traditional objection to frequency of is the lack of "preparation" for the people of God to receive communion. We must ask:

1) What does it take to be good enough for God? Are we suggesting that our repentance is such a work of faith that it makes us righteous enough to receive?

2) Are our people actually taking the time to "prepare" themselves for communion? Why is there special preparation for communion and not for worship/sermon/teaching, etc? Do we not confess sins during worship?

3). For the warning against eating and drinking incorrectly, we can clearly see that frequency is not an issue. Once a month or once a quarter has this same problem of preparationism.

C) Only thing makes us right with Jesus is Jesus.

8) Objection 3: It's too Catholic/Episcopalian:

A) This is not a viable argument. Traditionally, presbyterians have thought of themselves as, "The ones who don't do communion every week like those Catholics." This is wrongheaded because it is about style and not theology or formation in Christ.

B) Our differences with Catholic/Episcopalian traditions lie not in frequency of practice. Our differences with RC are over the primacy of the preached Word and the doctrine of transubstantiation. Problems can occur when the Word is ignored and the Sacrament is over-emphasized. These are not our issues. Again, we have differences in theology issue, not frequency issue.

C) We may need to recognize that RC/Ep. brothers/sisters have the frequency of sacramental practice correct.

9) Objection 4: Practicality Within Worship:

A. "It takes too long every week." We can practice weekly communion with our allotted time in worship.

B. Logistics: We need to consider a change in how we partake of communion: Communion in the Reformed Tradition is not about the way we partake communion on the outside, but how we take it on the inside.

