

Holy Communion Invitation and Liturgy

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In the United States of America in the early 1800s

there emerged a Christian movement of free thinkers and faithful believers.

The union of Barton Stone and the Christians

with Alexander Campbell and the Disciples of Christ

evolved into a frontier church
that broke new ground in ecclesiological
history.

This frontier church movement,

which eventually claimed the name

Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in 1968,
embodied in its form and function

the theology that
there is no difference between clergy and
laity.

We are a whole people of God.

Every member of the Disciples of Christ
is ordained by the holy waters of baptism
to serve Christ and His Church,
and, by the grace of God,
is blessed with a vocation and gifts
for Christian ministry
(servanthood).

For us “priesthood of all believers”
became more than a line of scripture;
it came alive in the Disciples as the way of being
church.

Questions arose in the fledgling church
about who could preside at the communion table in the
American heartland,
and some wondered who was empowered
to immerse a new believer under cold river
waters.
Answers were found in a systematic theology
that emerged from heart of the New Testament.

Ministry belongs to the baptized.

“The first people to be ordained in churches
shaped by Campbell’s movement were the elders.”[\[1\]](#)

While some Christians were called and appointed
within their congregation to equip and encourage the
church,

to perform certain functions and provide oversight,

by and large ministry is done and celebrated by all in the church.

The ultimate example of this is at the Lord's Table

where ordained ministers and lay members may preside,

alone or together as one.

Ronald Osborne pointed out in The Faith We Affirm that,

“In presiding together, or together with the pastor, at the Lord's Table,

elders perform a function which in nearly every other church

is the responsibility of an ordained minister.

The ministry of elders among the Disciples of Christ is virtually a unique development.”[\[2\]](#)

Interestingly enough,

this particular congregation has had a long tradition

of an ordained clergyman presiding at the Lord's Table.

While our stated theology is that elders may preside,

this has not been practiced as often,

and usually at special services or when the pastor is away.

In the weeks and years to come,

we plan to be more intentional

about uniting our theology with our traditions,
about yoking our proclamation with our
practices.

One vivid and visual reminder of the shared ministry of the
whole people of God

will be the placing of three chalices on the Lord's Table,
here where we have most often had one Chalice.

Jesus took a cup and after he had blessed it, shared it with each
follower.

A chalice for each elder and the pastor, who's been called an
"Elder with a Difference",

serves to remind us that each of us is a follower of the
Risen Christ,

each of us is a servant and equal in the eyes of
God,

and each blessed soul is called and
commissioned
to be a Disciple of Christ.

Even more significant

when it comes to proclaiming the priesthood of all
believers

happens when we share together in
the Words of Institution from First
Corinthians 11.

Who is the narrator?

Whomever is presiding.

Who speaks aloud the words of Jesus at his Last Supper?

The congregation; the whole people of God, for we are a royal priesthood.

May our worship life together reflect and proclaim in form and function

the power of the grace of God to bless and deliver, to reconcile and transform.

Holy Communion Liturgy

Invitation to the Lord's Table

Pastor/Elder

Prayers for the Bread and Cup

Elders

(Christ invites you to partake of Holy Communion. As part of the one body of Christ, we welcome all to the Lord's Table as God has welcomed us. You may partake of the Bread as it is passed and hold the Cup, or you may hold both elements so that we may partake of Holy Communion together.)

Words of Institution

1 Corinthians 11: 23-26

One: For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when He was betrayed took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it, and said,

Many: “This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”

One: In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying,

Many: “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.”

One: For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes.

Unison Prayer of Commission

God our help: We thank you for this supper, shared in the spirit with your son Jesus, who makes us new and strong, who brings us life eternal. We praise you for giving us all good gifts in Him and pledge ourselves to serve you, even as in Christ you have served us. Amen.

[1] Sharon Warner, “The Meaning of Ordination in the Church”, Lexington Theological Quarterly, Volume 37, Numbers 1 & 2, “Spring/Summer 2002. 68.

[2] Ronald Osborne, The Faith We Affirm, (St. Louis: CBP Press), 1979. 76.