

THE SALTSHAKER

A PUBLICATION OF COVENANT REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, ASHEVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA

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Table Manners at the Lord's Supper: What and When to Eat

By Rev. Sean McCann

Do you remember the last time you received a fancy invitation? Maybe it was to a destination wedding or an extravagant Gala. The invitation listed the time and location, and even included the menu and a little card to RSVP with your choice of plates. You put the date on the calendar and waited for the evening of celebration and feasting with growing anticipation. Sounds wonderful, doesn't it? Now what if I told you that God extends a similar invitation to us on a regular basis, wouldn't you at least want to get the date and the menu right? This invitation of course is not to a swanky party, but rather to his banqueting Table, so we better get the date and menu right! In this latest in a series of articles on the Sacraments, I want to consider these two topics: what do we eat and drink at the Lord's Table, and when are we invited to do it?

What to Eat and Drink

There are a few items we could cover here, but I want to focus in on the main question of wine or grape juice at the Lord's Supper. We serve wine at communion for two simple reasons. First, Jesus used the Passover wine when he instituted the Lord's Supper, and he then instructed his disciples to use wine whenever they celebrated the sacrament. Second, we see in Scripture that wine is an intentional gift from God to us for our good. Psalm 104:15 tells us that God gives wine to "gladden the heart of man," and in Amos the restoration of God's people includes days when "the mountains shall drip sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it" (Amos 9:13). It is no surprise then that John selects the water-into-wine miracle as the first sign in his gospel to signify the arrival of the Messiah, and his new age of fulfillment and impending consummation. It is for these reasons (and others) that only wine was used for the first 1,800 years of the church, and every theologian and confession during that time affirms the use of wine, including our own *Westminster Confession of Faith* and *Book of Church Order*.

Why then is grape juice so prominent in today's Protestant American churches? In the middle of the

nineteenth century a coalition of societal reformers (that included many Christians) responded to the widespread drunkenness of their day with a movement to ban alcohol. This political movement entered the church in 1864 when the Methodist Episcopal Church recommended pure grape juice. However, fresh grape juice was hard to come by back then, so an enterprising young minister invented a method of pasteurizing grape juice so that the fermentation process was stopped before the mixture turned alcoholic. This minister's name was Thomas Welch, and his product was soon marketed to American Protestant churches as "Dr. Welch's Unfermented Wine." Though the Prohibition movement didn't survive much longer, it remains alive and well today in the little cups of Welch's grape juice that fill the communion trays of Protestant American churches.

With all this in mind, how are we to honor the clear instruction of Scripture, while also acknowledging the challenges some people face with alcohol? Our Session has deemed it wise to offer a divided tray so that each individual may partake of wine or grape juice, according to his or her own conscience. The intent of the divided tray however is not for you to choose a cup based on taste preference, but rather to accommodate those who – for whatever reason – do not at this time feel comfortable taking wine. Generally speaking we recommend that our communicant members take the wine if possible (including children), but we do not hold this principle as law, so we provide grape juice as an alternative.

When to Eat and Drink

A second, and equally – if not more – divisive question revolves around how often we should celebrate the Lord's Supper. Christians have celebrated the Lord's Supper as infrequently as once per year, and as frequently as weekly, and everywhere in between. In our denomination (the Presbyterian Church in America) we are not bound to any specific schedule, but are given

March–April

Upcoming Events

For more information about any of these events, refer to our website (www.covenantreformed.net), or the church office (828-253-6578; crpchq@gmail.com).

The Lord's Supper

Please prepare your hearts in advance to take of the sacrament together.

During Morning Worship: March 1 and 15 April 5 and 19	During Evening Worship: March 29
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Fellowship Meals:

March 1 and April 5, following morning worship.

Good Friday Service:

April 10, 6:00 p.m.

Veterans' Restoration Quarters Meals:

Lunch: March 4 and April 1, 10:00 a.m.

Dinner: March 19, 4:30 p.m.

Outreach Ministry Team:

The first meeting will be on March 11 at 4:00 p.m.

Weekly Events

Sunday:

Sunday School	9:30 am	
Morning Worship	10:45 am	
Evening Worship	6:00 pm	Except for 1st Sundays

Wednesday Evenings: (except April 8)

Supper	6:00 pm
Bible Study/Prayer	6:45 pm

Bible Study

For Men:

Men's Prayer Breakfast	8:00 am	2nd & 4th Saturdays
ROMEOS	8:00 am	Every Thursday
<i>(Retired Old Men Eating Out)</i> at J&S Cafeteria, River Ridge		
Norm Bomer's Home	7:00 pm	1st & 3rd Thursdays

For Women:

Carol Belz's Home	9:30 am	Every Tuesday
Fellowship Hall	10:30 am	Every Wednesday
Debbie Cate's Home	7:00 pm	1st & 3rd Thursdays

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the wise instruction that the “Supper of the Lord, is to be observed *frequently*; the stated times to be determined by the Session of each congregation, as it may judge most for edification” (Book of Church Order, 18-1). But this guideline begs the obvious question: how frequently is frequently?

For the last 20 years, our Session has deemed it wise to celebrate the Supper twice per month (currently on the first and third Sundays), which is about as frequent as you can get without going to weekly communion. The reasons for this practice are both biblical and theological. First, though the Bible never explicitly commands weekly communion, it seems to imply something close to it in a few places. Jesus’ words, “As often as you do this,” seem to suggest frequent celebration, and Luke records that the early church “devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the *breaking of bread* and the prayers” (Acts 2:42), which many take as referring to the inclusion of the Lord’s Supper in their regular gatherings. Similarly, when Paul uses the phrase “when you come together” to introduce his instructions about the Supper, he seems to imply that the Lord’s Supper is a fixture in their regular gatherings.

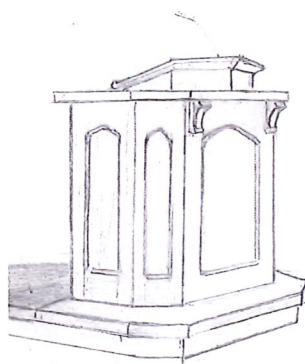
The second reason for frequent observance is the nature of the meal itself. If the Supper were simply a special memorial for the sole purpose of remembrance, then rare observances on special occasions might be advised so as not to rob the experience

of its uniqueness through overuse. However, since the meal is a means of God’s grace whereby he communicates Christ and all his benefits to us, the weary Christians should hope to be nurtured by God regularly and powerfully at the Lord’s Table. The common objection at this point is that overuse will lead to a dead ritual that will soon lose its significance. While this may be a danger to guard against in one’s personal experience, it does not accurately reflect the nature of the Supper itself. In fact, if we were to apply this objection across the board it would prohibit us from making use of the other elements of the worship on a similarly frequent basis, and thus exclude weekly preaching, praying, and singing. The theological rationale for frequent observance is that we are weak and weary pilgrims in desperate need of God’s grace, and since the Lord’s Table is an avenue of God’s grace to us, we should avail ourselves of it as much as possible.

Let’s end where we began: dear Christian, God has extended to you a most gracious invitation to his Table, where he has laid a banquet for your soul. On the menu is bread to show forth the body of Christ, and rich wine to show forth his blood and the full restoration he has accomplished for us. God invites you to come by faith as often as you are able, and to drink deeply from his streams of living water, and restore your soul. And that is an invitation we can all get excited about!

The Sacred Desk

By Rev. Sean McCann



This month we will begin a new morning sermon series entitled “Arise.” This four week series will look at the four people who were brought back to life in Gospel narratives: a widow’s son, a centurion’s daughter, Lazarus, and Jesus himself. While these passages are powerful enough to study in their own right, I have put them together in a series of intentionally evangelistic sermons to highlight the resurrection power of God.

Evangelistic sermons are exegetical messages with a heightened focus on the clear presentation of the gospel and call to believe. In a real sense every sermon is evangelistic, and every Christian needs the gospel clearly proclaimed to them weekly, so this won’t be much of a departure from our normal ministry. However, with this specific focus I hope this series will provide a unique opportunity to invite those who do not believe to come and hear the words of life, maybe for the

first time. I plan to preach this series specifically with unbelievers and doubters in mind, and I would like to encourage each of you to begin to pray that the Lord would lay certain people on your heart to invite to hear these sermons. It could be a friend you’ve already invited a dozen times, or maybe a neighbor you’ve barely met. Pray that the Lord would lead you to people in whom his Spirit is already working – you may be surprised, even the most resistant person may be softened by a personal invitation.

And don’t be dismayed or intimidated by inviting others, for as Pastor Stephen Liggins has written, “a successful invitation is not when we invite someone to something and they come; rather, a successful invitation is when we simply invite someone to something; a successful invitation is an *issued* invitation.” Just like in evangelism, the results of our invitations are not up to us but are entirely in the hands of God. I wonder if we sometimes put so much pressure on ourselves to be “successful” that instead of faithful obedience we simply become “paralyzed.”

Please join us in praying for this series. Pray that God’s Spirit would go before us to prepare hearts and that he would break down barriers to the church and to the gospel. Pray that we all would be winsome and bold with the gospel, and that in obedience to the Lord we would “Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled” (Luke 14:23).

Preaching Schedule

Date	Morning	Evening
March 1	Amos 8	
March 8	Amos 9:1-10	1 John 5:1-5
March 15	Amos 9:11-14	1 John 5:6-12
March 22	Luke 7:11-17	1 John 5:13-17
March 29	Mark 5:21-43	1 John 5:18-21
April 5	John 11:38-44	
April 12	Matthew 28:10	
April 16	Ephesians 1:1-2	2 John
April 26	Ephesians 1:3-6	3 John

The Lord’s Supper and Evangelism

By Rev. Chris Brown

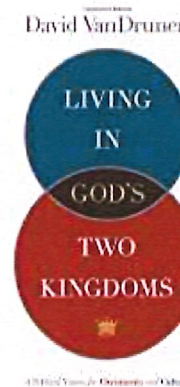
People don’t often consider the relation of the Lord’s Supper to evangelism. And why should they? After all, the Lord’s Supper is not something you do out on the street. There aren’t street Lord’s Supper-ists, handing out the Lord’s Supper in attempts to persuade people to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the case for good reason: the Lord’s Supper is not a “converting ordinance”. That is, partaking of the Lord’s Supper is not something that God intends to use to convert the lost to salvation. Consider the full scope of Scripture. When you see the gospel being explained and preached to others, to convince the lost of our only hope, do you see the Lord’s Supper being similarly employed? (No.)

While this is certainly true, yet there were, early in American history, several people who believed that the Lord’s Supper did indeed serve the purpose of converting sinners to salvation. Take, for example, Solomon Stoddard, the Puritan grandfather of Jonathan Edwards. He specifically arranged his church membership, and Lord’s Supper restrictions, to permit known unbelievers to partake of that holy meal. He was convinced that such an action would allow the Church to grow, and serve the purpose of covertly converting some to Christ Jesus. Meanwhile, in more contemporary circles, the practice of paedo-(child) communion has become vogue. This developed because of what I consider to be odd and unfounded views of the Covenant of Grace. In this conception, the Lord’s Supper exists as a nourishing spiritual meal to every member of the covenant of grace (Visible Church), whether or not they are members of the Invisible Church who can profess their faith in Jesus Christ. If children are perceived, in this view, as being unregenerate, it could be construed that perhaps children receiving the Lord’s Supper might become converted by it. So, in both of these examples (Stoddard and paedocommunion), people who have not professed their faith in Jesus Christ are permitted to take the Lord’s Supper, a meal that is supposed to benefit them in some way.

But the Lord’s Supper is most profoundly related to evangelism not in what it does when the unconverted take of it (which is not a good thing), but in what it says to the unconverted who do not partake of it. Troublingly, those who do not believe, and yet take the Lord’s Supper, are angering the Lord Jesus rather than engendering His happiness. They have not “discerned the Lord’s body” by faith (1 Cor. 11:29), and have eaten and drunk judgment on themselves. Meanwhile, those who let the Lord’s Supper pass by—listening to the words of institution and warning, watching believers eat and drink, considering the sin that keeps them from intimate knowledge of God—those people benefit. The Lord’s Supper becomes a symbol of what it could be for those who have not yet known Christ Jesus. It is a simple but sustaining Spiritual meal of joy and happiness, spread out before people who are truly Spiritually starving. When it is attached to the preaching of the gospel, it proclaims to the eyes and to the ears: you could taste and see that the Lord is good if you turned from sin, and rested on Jesus’ righteous works alone!

Living in God’s Two Kingdoms

by Rev. Sean McCann



How should Christians relate to the culture around us? Should we run from it as if it were a poisonous influence to avoid at all costs, or should we infiltrate it and transform it from within? Thoughtful Christians often ask these types of questions, but we don’t often receive thoughtful and biblical answers. For that reason I am grateful for David VanDrunen’s contribution to the conversation in his book, *Living in God’s Two Kingdoms: A Biblical Vision for Christianity and Culture*.

Dr. VanDrunen explains that many of us were brought up thinking that God and Christianity have little, if anything, to do with the mundane cultural activities that tend to fill our days. From this perspective, our regular activities of working and playing, voting and studying, are merely distractions to the deeper lives of our disembodied souls. In recent generations there has been a swing away from this almost monk-ish approach to culture, to the other extreme of elevating cultural activities and institutions above their proper place in our lives. Dr. VanDrunen argues when this approach speaks of “redeeming” and “transforming” culture, it is problematic because it shifts the object of God’s redeeming work from his people (where it rightly belongs), to culture.

As an alternative to these two views, Dr. VanDrunen offers a third approach, which has often been termed the “Two-Kingdom” doctrine of culture. In this view, God rules over two kingdoms simultaneously, but in different ways. On the one hand, God established the “common kingdom” whereby he pledges to oversee and preserve – but not redeem – our cultural activities and institutions. In this common kingdom Christians cooperate with non-Christians in civil governments, families, economic associations, and many other cultural institutions. On the other hand, God established the “redemptive kingdom” whereby “God entered into covenant relationship with a chosen people, upon whom he bestows eternal salvation by faith, thereby distinguishing them from the rest of the human race.” Only the people of God belong to this redemptive kingdom, and it finds expression not in the culture but in the church. “God’s people are thus called to live under both covenants – that is, in two kingdoms.”

My favorite part of the book is in Chapter Five when he argues that the appropriate Old Testament image for the experience of the people of God today is not life in the Promised Land, but life in exile. Like the exiles in Babylon, “Christians are not called to be separated from unbelievers in an earthly homeland, but to live in lands that are not their own, where they live adjacent to unbelievers and work alongside them...while also remaining radically distinguished from the world by their faith and worship of the one true God.”

I was richly blessed by this book and challenged to better understand and live faithfully in God’s two kingdoms, and I know you will be as well!

Church Prayer List

Prayer is a vital ministry in the life of our church and a key way that we love and support the fellow members of our community. The primary way that we do this is through our Prayer Chain Ministry, facilitated by Carol Esther Belz. Every week she collects requests and organizes them into a prayer list that is put out on Sunday. To submit prayer requests, or to receive the weekly list, please contact Carol at ceb392@mac.com or 828-231-1816.

The prayer chain usually reflects the most pressing needs of that week, so to complement that ministry we have published here in *The Saltshaker* more long-term requests amongst our membership. The items on this list are less detailed and less urgent, but still need prayer. Please set aside this single sheet to put on your fridge or in your Bible as a reminder to pray for our family. If you have an item to add to this list in the future, contact Lannae Graham at the church office: crpchq@gmail.com or 828-253-6578.

ILLNESS

Joel Belz
Norm and Carol Bomer
Wes Clapp
Bonnie Cook
Paul & Elizabeth Councilman
Anna Dillingham
Terry Elniff
Linda Eubanks
Ellie Gentilini
Phyllis Lemley
Mike Littlejohn
Nancy Markhoff
Pat Martin
Dave Murray
Jack Padgett
Eb Preuninger
Mike Quinn
Alida VanWeelden
T. J. Wallace

HOMEBOUND

Linda Cheek
Ken and Tanya Jackson
Bill Porter

MILITARY

Ben Voigt

LIVING QUARTERS

Elnathan Barnett

COVENANT REFORMED MINISTRIES

We depend on the Spirit's power to gather and grow disciples by embracing the Ordinary Means of Grace in our worship, nurture, and witness.

Pray for our WORSHIP - specifically for our services to glorify the triune God with reverence and awe through heart-felt repentance and rejoicing in our great salvation.

Pray for our NURTURE - specifically for the spiritual care and oversight of every member of the church, that they would find comfort in Christ.

Pray for our WITNESS - specifically for humble boldness to step through the doors of evangelism that God has opened for us, that we would be a loving witness to our neighbors, as well as our North Asheville community and the University of North Carolina-Asheville.

LOCAL MINISTRIES/AGENCIES

Asheville Christian Academy
Asheville Buncombe Community Christian Ministry
Black Mountain Home for Children
Canterbury Classical School
InterVarsity Christian Fellowship—Andrea Kaiser, UNC Asheville
Life Advocates
Mountain Area Pregnancy Center
New City Christian School
Reformed University Ministry:

- Appalachian State University
- Andrew Shank—Western Carolina University
- Kate Anderson—Intern Western Carolina University

Reynolds Mountain Christian Academy
Western Carolina Rescue Mission

GLOBAL MISSIONARIES

Ellen Barnett—Mexico
Scott Brinkerhoff—South Sudan
Michael & Billie Coleman—Puritan Project, Brazil
Ron Elkin—AMMI (Ministry to Jews)
Marc Hoyle—Bible Centered Ministries
Jake & Melissa Hunt—Czech Republic
Heidi Meiners—Hungary
John & Elizabeth Sexton—Medical Missions
Roger & Dianne Smalling—Latin America
David & Robin White—Mission to the World Administration

Session Minute

Session Retreat – This past month we had our annual Session retreat. Instead of going away for the weekend, we spent a few days gathering at the Wallace home for meals, discussions, and prayer. In our devotional time we considered Paul’s model for ministry found in 1 Thessalonians 2 in which he compares himself and the work of the elder to both a nursing mother who gives herself sacrificially for her children (v7-8), and a father who exhorts, encourages, and charges his children to walk in a manner worthy of God (v11-12). During our sessions together we reviewed, discussed and prayed over our various ministries of worship, shepherding, and outreach. These extended times of discussion and prayer are so valuable in maintaining and promoting unity, and centering our focus on the long-term health and flourishing of our church body.

Budget Review - As our former treasurer, Eb Preuninger, who served our church so well for so long, rotated off the diaconate at the end of the year, we were glad to welcome Mark Baker back onto the diaconate and into the role of treasurer. Mark has worked hard to get up to speed in this important role in our church, and we give thanks not only for healthy finances, but for both of these men who have guided our financial well-being in the past, and now into the future.

Summer Internship Program – As we’ve announced on previous Sunday mornings, we have been working to develop a summer pastoral internship position in the hopes of training and developing young men for long-term pastoral service in the global church. We believe that we are ideally situated as a healthy, ordinary “means-of-grace” church with a loving community who would be eager to welcome and love an intern, and help him grow in the use of his gifts. We have intentionally designed the internship as an introduction to the full scope of pastoral duties, and it will include hands-on training, one-on-one discipleship, and individual evaluation. The main purpose of the internship is not for CRPC to accomplish ministry through interns. This will certainly happen and will be a blessing to our congregation, but the main purpose is to invest in young men so that they are better equipped to serve the church in the future. The position is part-time, fits well into the academic schedule of an undergraduate or seminary student, and is ideally suited for a single or young married man. If you have any contacts in other churches or seminaries, we need your help to get the word out. More information can be found at: www.covenantreformed.net/internship.

Parking Lot Update – The rain and winter temperatures continue to slow down the progress on our parking lot, so there isn’t much to update from the last newsletter. The lot still remains to be paved, and then hopefully completed in March with lights, phones, stairs, and the dumpster pad to follow. We are so grateful for your patience and willingness to park-and-ride for the time being, though we certainly hope it won’t be for too much longer!

Ministry Highlight

Covenant Reformed Presbyterian Church has a number of ministries that may be unfamiliar to you, or perhaps have fallen off of your regular prayer list. Each of our ministries is related to our philosophy of ministry commitment to worship, nurture, and witness. For that reason, in each edition of *The Saltshaker*, we will focus on a ministry of CRPC, explain how it is related to our philosophy of ministry, and how you can get involved.

In this edition of *The Saltshaker*, we are focusing on Asheville Buncombe Community Christian Ministry, or ABCCM. ABCCM is a large, parachurch organization that relies upon the work and gifts of numerous Christian congregations to carry out its mission. Its overarching philosophy of ministry is based in Jesus’ words, “what you have done to the least of these, you have done to Me.” In addition, ABCCM realizes that individual congregations often need to band together to carry out service-minded tasks that they cannot accomplish on their own. For these reasons, ABCCM has at least five main ministries, including: Crisis Ministry, Jail Ministry, Veterans Services of the Carolinas, Steadfast House, and Medical Ministry. ABCCM regularly requests the gifts and time of church members who are capable of teaching, counseling, or providing medical services. Their crisis ministry relies upon the abilities of gifted counselors. Their jail ministry requires Bible teachers. Steadfast House needs women who can provide counseling to mothers and women in need. Their Veterans services uses gifted teachers in vocational fields (especially cooking!), who can train Veterans, and help them find employment.

Meanwhile, our congregation mainly participates in the Veterans Restoration Quarters arm of ABCCM, a small but significant aspect of assisting veterans by serving them meals. This requires a heart of compassion as well as a willingness to use your time in service. Many members of CRPC participate in this ministry simply out of their desire to fulfill Jesus’ instruction to show compassion to “the least of these.” Another reason to participate is out of gratitude for what these veterans have done for us, realizing that while many veterans return home safe-and-sound, others do not, and need assistance in multiple of areas of their lives. Since ABCCM aims to deal with the well-being of the whole person, consider if you would like to participate by assisting with job training, life skill training, addiction recovery services, leading a Bible study, or simply showing up to serve. If you would like to participate in serving lunch or dinner, our next services dates are March 4th (lunch) and March 19th (dinner). We arrive at 10am for lunch, and 4pm for dinner. Please contact the Carters at sca375@gmail.com for more information, or visit http://bit.ly/abccm_ministry.