

COMMUNION WHEN WE CANNOT GATHER IN OUR CHURCHES
NOVEMBER 29, 2020

Described below are two plans that congregations may use only on the First Sunday in Advent, November 29, 2020. Plan A applies when there is inadequate space at the church to gather safely outdoors for the Great Thanksgiving and Plan B when adequate outdoor space is available. In both plans, to the largest extent possible, it is expected that communicants will attend the entire service, i.e. The Liturgy of the Word and the Great Thanksgiving before coming for and receiving communion.

PLAN A:

The following describes a simple protocol for Holy Eucharist when we cannot gather in our churches. The service is celebrated online in real time with only the celebrant and any other necessary participants at the church and the remainder of the parish participating from their online locations such as at home.

The Liturgy of the Word along with a short homily or sermon and the Great Thanksgiving are all celebrated live through the Fraction and up to but not including the actual offering of the sacrament to individuals. After the invitation to Communion the celebrant stops online in church worship. People are then invited to drive to church to receive the Communion kit from the priest or other volunteers and drive home. The Great Thanksgiving concludes with individuals taking Communion and the individual reading of the postcommunion prayer (distributed with the Communion kits at the church). Folks can take Communion after driving home or at the point of distribution at the church. Taking Communion at the church should only be done in the safety of individual vehicles when it is safe to remove face masks.

In this service communion kits are used that are pre-bought or which have been assembled at the church (for example wafers wrapped many days in advance with sanitized hands). For parishes without priests that are close enough to another parish Communion will be made available. Since not all are capable of driving to the church volunteers will bring adequate communion to the homes of those unable to get to the church. A network of volunteers will be coordinated to deliver consecrated communion kits to those desiring communion. The intent is that no one drives greater than 30 minutes each way to deliver communion. This process will be all coordinated ahead of time for the Sundays when we share Holy Eucharist.

PLAN B:

This plan is only feasible for churches with adequate grounds/parking areas. Plan A is offered alternatively for congregations wishing to participate in Communion but without adequate outdoor space or not wishing to use it. Congregational leaders should make their own decisions about Plan B with respect to their own communities and the spaces available to them.

According to Plan B, the Liturgy of the Word takes place as usual online or outdoors. At the Offertory those who wish to receive Communion are invited to come to the church grounds, outdoors (if they are not already there); an adequate amount of time is allowed for this. There is

no mandatory outdoor cutoff-temperature for this activity; congregational leaders can make their own decision about whether or not to do this. If they wish to participate using Plan B, but weather becomes a concern, they can opt for Plan A; or they can simply decide not to participate at all. Bring the parishioners inside is not an acceptable option, however.

When those who wish Communion are then assembled outdoors at the church – either in their vehicles or masked and socially distanced – the priest continues outdoors with a form of the Great Thanksgiving.

Pre-packaged Communion kits are used. Kits can be ordered here:

https://www.concordiasupply.com/TrueVine-Prefilled-Communion-Chalice-Cups-Bread-Wine-Sets-100?quantity=1&custcol_autoship=1 Kits cost \$49.49 for 100 kits with wine (grape juice is also an available option and is slightly less costly). Congregations might also make their own kits, but TruVine Kits are self-contained and guaranteed to be sanitary. Congregations are expected to purchase kits for their own people, if they wish to do this.

At the time of the Ministration of Communion those who wish to receive are invited to come, one or one family “pod” at a time, to a table on which the consecrated Communion kits have been placed; each takes a kit and returns to their place or vehicle where they consume the elements. Health Officers will direct all who are present (whether outdoors socially-distanced on the grounds or in cars) to come to take their Kits, one person or one pod at a time. When all have received and consumed, the priest leads the postcommunion prayer. The priest may offer a blessing, and the priest (or deacon if present) dismisses the people.

Provision is made for taking Communion to the residences of those desiring to receive who were unable to be at the church. Delivery of consecrated Communion Kits is not the same as traditional Eucharistic visiting. It is simply delivering the pre-packaged, self-contained, sanitary Kit to a residence, with the delivery person staying outdoors for the delivery. This may be done by any volunteer wearing a face mask and keeping social distance. Delivery may not be possible in all cases, e.g. care facilities that do not permit it or where congregational leaders deem it unsafe to go. The intent is only to offer a way to include as many as possible in the reception of Communion.

Specifics:

- The phase 2 protocol will be observed with respect to masks, distances, washing of hands, clean surfaces, open windows for good ventilation if possible, etc.
- No more than **four** persons may be in the church – priest, an assistant as required, musician (optional) and camera operator
- Internet will be required in the sanctuary, either using cellular or WiFi.
- Cameras such as a webcam or smart phone as well as a tablet or laptop will be required for indoor service recording or broadcasting.
- The sacraments will be handled as little as possible; and only by individuals who have washed their hands, remained masked throughout, and not touched their faces. The sacraments will be blessed by the priest and handed out to people in cars or at a table where each person can approach the table and pick up their sacraments.

As this experience comes with unique circumstances, we ask that you consider the following issues and report back to the committee what your plan was, and what actually happened. We will provide an online survey for feedback after November 29

- What did you learn in participating in this unique Communion?
- How did you instruct people in how to receive the sacraments?
- How did you plan to (and how did you actually) distribute the Communion kit to those who arrived for them?
- How did you plan to (and how did you actually) distribute kits to those who could not be present?
- What was your plan for concluding the service? And would you change that format in retrospect?
- How did your parishioners react to this experience?
- How many participated?
- You might consider asking them:
 - What surprised you about this Communion?
 - What did you learn about yourself or your community of faith by participating?
 - Did this increase your sense of connection to your faith community?