

Engaging Holy Communion

“While at table with them, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized Jesus. . . .”

(Luke 24:30–31a)

“In accordance with the teaching of our Lord and the practice prevailing among evangelical Christians, [the United Church of Christ] recognizes two sacraments: Baptism and the Lord’s Supper or Holy Communion.”

(Preamble, the *Constitution of the United Church of Christ*)

RECOGNITION IS AT THE HEART of the story of Jesus breaking bread with his followers at Emmaus. It is also at the heart of the United Church of Christ understanding of sacraments. At the table of Holy Communion, in bread blessed and broken, we recognize Christ and rejoice.

That recognition is, first and foremost, a gift of pure grace, God’s presence to God’s people. That recognition is also given form by God’s people as they gather for worship. Each congregation recognizes Holy Communion in particular ways: discerning words to be used, how often to celebrate the sacrament, what elements and actions are used, and who is welcome to the table. Recognition involves God’s presence and requires God to form us as we shape the rite.

Through the following questions, liturgies, music, and images, we hope you will come to recognize the meanings of Holy Communion for your congregation. The resources include a range of ideas: free in form to traditional and ecumenical.

Gather a group together to do one or more of the following activities, or do them with an established group, such as a worship committee or the deacons, at a regularly scheduled meeting:

- ◆ Ask God to reveal what God desires for your congregation as they celebrate Holy Communion.
- ◆ Describe especially meaningful services of Holy Communion. Or examine a recent bulletin that included Holy Communion. What is said and what happens?
- ◆ Reflect on questions such as these:
 1. What is said or occurs when Holy Communion seems most powerful? What disturbs you? What do you wonder about?
 2. In your own church, what might the frequency of Holy Communion suggest about its meaning?
 3. Who is involved and how do they participate?
 4. When does God seem present?
 5. In what ways does Holy Communion make a difference in your life and congregation?
- ◆ Look over the other following Holy Communion liturgies. Select at least one of them and describe it to another person. Or stage one of the Holy Communion liturgies as it might

occur in your congregation. Finally, consider using one of the liturgies in a special service or as the basis for one of your regular Holy Communion services.

- ◆ Reflect on such questions as these:
 1. What might you find meaningful in your experience of this liturgy? What do you wonder about?
 2. When or how did God seem present in this Holy Communion liturgy?
 3. What do you discover about Holy Communion by looking at both your local church experience of Holy Communion and that experienced in the other liturgy?
- ◆ Please pray a prayer such as “O God, what are you saying and revealing to us about Holy Communion” Share together any responses evoked by the time of prayer.
- ◆ Please complete the response form online at www.ucc.org/worship/ or in the packet.