

Steps to Completing First Communion Instruction

1. Attend a Parent/Child instruction class. You may get information on this class from the Director of Youth, Emily Powers. A combined class for all campuses is held one time per year. Individual parent/child meetings may be scheduled with the appropriate person from your site:
 - a. Fitchburg site: Emily Powers
 - b. Verona site: Pastor Mike Peters
 - c. East Madison site: Vicar Matt Wipperman
2. Set a timeline for completing instruction. As a family, decide if you will spend a whole weekend working through the curriculum, or take a few minutes every day for a week, or some other timeline. Use the following **"First Communion Family Contract"** to help plan your timeline. This contract is for the family's benefit as a helpful tool, but does not need to be turned in to the Church.
3. Families are given a book, called "Welcome to the Lord's Table" and a Small Catechism to use together. There are many different ways to work through this book. Sometimes parents and children read it together. Other times, parents and children read it separately and come together to discuss it. There are discussion questions at the end of each short chapter that can be discussed orally or written out.
4. Use the catechism to supplement the chapters. For example, read about the 10 Commandments when learning about living a Godly life or how to examine yourself. There is a document titled, **"First Communion Chapters and References"** that may assist you in supplementing the chapters in the book.
5. Search Scripture for references to what you read about in the book. For example, when learning about the connection to the Passover, read about the First Passover in Exodus 12.
6. E-mail Emily any questions you get stuck on! She's eager to help! Her e-mail is: epowers@livelifetogether.com.
7. After reading through and discussing the book, children are asked to write a faith statement. Generally, this is a paper in which children explain what Communion is, why they want to take it, and what they receive through it. If writing is a struggle for your child, we are eager to see this information presented in a fun new way, such as a poster, a movie, or some other creative way. Please see the document titled, **"First Communion Faith Statement"** for a more thorough explanation of this paper. This faith statement should be turned in to the person conducting the child's interview at least a week before the interview.

8. Schedule an interview. Interviews are held with parents and the child. In the interview, we ask your child to state again what they believe about their faith and Holy Communion. These are short, but do allow us time to answer any remaining questions. Interview should be set up with the appropriate person from the site where the child most regularly attends church. The person for each site is as follows (Contact information is on the last page of this packet):
 - a. Fitchburg site: Emily Powers
 - b. Verona site: Pastor Mike Peters
 - c. East Madison site: Vicar Matt Wipperman

9. Schedule your child's First Communion with the main office for the Church. Contact Jess Bohrer at 271-2811 x.10 or jbohrer@livelifetogether.com. Families and sponsors are invited to the altar before Communion is distributed to the rest of the congregation. As a family, you take Communion with your child and a special blessing is given to your child. First Communions can be scheduled for any service when Communion is offered.

10. Please also refer to the **"First Communion Hints and Tips"** document for more suggestions.

NOTES:

First Communion Family Contract

This is just one tool that your family may choose to use when developing a plan for First Communion Instruction. It is not necessary to turn it into the office. It is just a guideline for making sure you complete all the necessary steps.

† Our Family is committing to helping _____ complete his/her First Communion. These are our target dates for completing instruction:

- We will attempt to complete the book instruction by this date: _____.
- We will strive to have the paper e-mailed to Emily by this date: _____.
- We will strive to have the interview completed by this date: _____.

† This is our plan for completing the book instruction:

Our time and place for discussing the book is: _____

† _____ will complete his/her Faith Statement by (choose one):
writing a paper, making a poster, a video, making a slide show, other _____

† We will celebrate reaching each of our target dates by: _____.

† Check off each step as you and your family complete them:

- Read and discuss the book "Welcome to the Lord's Table".
- Create/Write your Faith Statement
- E-mail the Faith Statement to either Emily Bremer, Mike Peters, or Matt Wiperman.
- Make any necessary changes to the Faith Statement/re-send
- Schedule your First Communion Interview. Date: _____
- Schedule to have your First Communion through the Church Office

First Communion Chapters and References

Introduction – Preparing your child to think about Holy Communion:

Before beginning to read pages 7-9, talk with your child about what he/she thinks Holy Communion is, as well as what questions he/she hopes to have answered while studying this topic. It might be fun to make a list of all the questions your child has and the things that confuse him/her. Come back to the questions at the end of each chapter and see if any of them have been answered. Refrain from trying to answer all of the questions your child has immediately. Learning is much more permanent when one is able to discover answers on their own in a steady process.

Discussion starters include:

- “What do you think you are going to learn about while we study this?”
- “What do you already know about Communion?”
- “What do you believe about Jesus right now?”
- “What things confuse you about Communion?”
- “What questions do you hope to have answered while we read this book?”

Chapter 1 – The Origin of Holy Communion

After reading this chapter, pages 11-18, there are discussion questions to go over with your child on page 18. You may choose to discuss them orally or have your child write out the answers. Encourage your child to look up all Scripture references in the book – whether they are written out in the book or not.

Supplemental information:

- ✠ Read about the Passover in Exodus 11 and 12.
- ✠ Read about the Last Supper in Matthew 26:17-30 or Luke 22:7-30
- ✠ Watch the Passover section in the movie “10 Commandments” and the Last Supper section in the video “The Visual Bible, Matthew”. Discuss the similarities between these two movies. Both can be obtained through the church library.

Discussion starters include:

- Thought Time on page 18.
- “Tell me about the Passover in the Old Testament.”
- “Why is Jesus called the Lamb of God?”
- “Why were bread and wine important in Jewish culture?”
- “What does it mean to say that Jesus ‘blew the Old Covenant apart (p.15)’? What does it mean that we have a New Covenant?”

Chapter 2 – The Sacraments: A Lutheran Perspective

Read this chapter on pages 19-22. Encourage your child to look up all Scripture references in the book – whether they are written out in the book or not.

Supplemental information:

- † Look up the word “Sacrament” in a dictionary.
- † Share about your child’s baptism with him/her. Look at pictures and light the candle. Perhaps your child’s sponsors could write a letter or send an e-mail with their memories of the day.
- † Have your child write his/her own definition of the words “real presence” and “grace”.
- † Read the beginning part of The Sacrament of the Altar in the small catechism: What is the Sacrament of the Altar? and Where is this Written? Then, complete the directions at the top of page 22.
- † Read Numbers 286, 287, 289, 290, 291 and 294 following Article I of “The Sacrament of the Altar” in the small catechism.

Discussion starters include:

Thought Time, question 2, on page 23.

“Why do you think Martin Luther wrote the Small Catechism?”

“What things confuse you from this chapter?”

“What gifts do we receive in both baptism and Holy Communion?”

“Why do you think we are only baptized once, but take Communion on a regular basis?”

Chapter 3 – The Richness of the Gift

After reading this chapter, pages 24-30, there are discussion questions to go over with your child on page 30. You may choose to discuss them orally or have your child write out the answers. Encourage your child to look up all Scripture references in the book – whether they are written out in the book or not.

Supplemental information:

- † Read number 285 following Article I of “The Sacrament of the Altar” in the small catechism.
- † Explain to your child how Communion is distributed at Christ Memorial. Explain how to take the bread and wine from the person distributing it. You might also explain how to take Communion while kneeling at the altar versus taking it in a continuous flow style.

Discussion starters include:

Thought Time on page 30.

“Why is it special to see Communion as a Fellowship Meal? How should we see and act towards others who take it with us?”

“What do you think you should do before taking Communion, if you have had a fight with someone in your family, or a friend at church?”

“What are other ways we can thank God, in addition to taking Communion?”

“What about Communion is a mystery to you?”

“If it’s not important what kind of bread or wine is used, what IS important about Communion?”

“Which way of describing this meal (top of p.26) helps you understand Communion the best or speaks to you the most? Why?”

Chapter 4 – Forgiveness of Sins, Life and Salvation

After reading this chapter, pages 31-37, there are discussion questions to go over with your child on page 37. You may choose to discuss them orally or have your child write out the answers. Encourage your child to look up all Scripture references in the book – whether they are written out in the book or not.

Supplemental information:

- ✠ Explore the section in the Catechism on the Ten Commandments. Discuss how these can be used to examine yourself and repent.
- ✠ Have your child write the 10 Commandments in their own words or make a poster about them.
- ✠ Read the Question and Answer and number 296 of Article II of The Sacrament of the Altar in the Small Catechism.
- ✠ Read the Question and Answer and numbers 297 and 298 of Article III of The Sacrament of the Altar in the Small Catechism.
- ✠ Read the Question and Answer and number 303 of Article IV of The Sacrament of the Altar in the Small Catechism.

Discussion starters include:

Thought Time on page 37.

“Tell me about why forgiveness is important.”

“What is repentance all about? Is it just saying ‘I’m sorry’?”

“What does Salvation mean?”

“How can you prepare your heart to receive Communion?”

“Is it ever hard for you to admit to other people or God that you have done something wrong? Why?”

“Is there anything you need to confess to God today?”

“What do you think happens to our sin when we are forgiven?”

“How can taking Communion help you have a stronger faith?”

“If God forgives us, how should we act towards other people?”

“What is the best news that you heard while reading this chapter?”

Chapter 5 – Some Questions

Read this chapter on pages 38-42. Encourage your child to look up all Scripture references in the book – whether they are written out in the book or not.

Supplemental information:

- ✠ Explain our particular church's practices on Communion. For example, we offer it at every service; we have set apart the lay preachers to do the job of the pastor, so they can administer communion, etc.
- ✠ Read number 295 of Article I of The Sacrament of the Altar in the Small Catechism.
- ✠ Read numbers 299, 301, 302, 304 and 305 of Article IV of The Sacrament of the Altar in the Small Catechism.
- ✠ Have your child write an apology letter to someone he/she has hurt or is having a fight with. Pray with your child to confess that sin. Assure him/her of forgiveness.

Discussion starters include:

"Who is considered worthy to take Communion?"

"Tell me about what you should do before taking Communion if you are angry with someone, jealous, or having a fight."

"How often do you think it is important to take Communion?"

"Are there any times that people shouldn't take Communion?"

"If we take Communion because we are sinful and hurt God, then why do you think people are so joyful and excited when they take it?"

Closing – A Final Thought

Read pages 43-45. Talk about the information with your child. Discuss the questions at the end together. Perhaps you could have your child put those questions on an index card or some other paper to carry in his/her Bible. Encourage your child to take his/her Bible to church and look at the questions before taking Communion.

First Communion Faith Statement

This faith statement is a way for the child wishing to take First Communion to express his/her faith, their understanding of Holy Communion, and why he/she desires to take Holy Communion. It is our expectation that this faith statement be solely the words of the child. However, we also expect and encourage, parents to take an integral role in assisting their child with organizing thoughts, understanding the main ideas, and creating a finished product.

This faith statement does not need to be long in length. There is no length requirement; just what it takes to completely express the child's thoughts. We have found that it generally takes $\frac{3}{4}$ of a page or more for this paper to be thorough, if your child is writing a paper. We do expect older students to have a more in depth understanding of their faith and Holy Communion than younger students and set our expectations for the paper and interview according to the child's age and maturity.

While this faith statement most often comes in the form of a written paper, it is completely acceptable for the child to create a product in an alternative manner. If the child can more effectively communicate his/her beliefs through using a gift/talent or if the child has difficulty writing, then please consider an alternative method. These may include: a poster, a video, a skit, a slide show, a children's book, or some other method.

As a general guideline, we expect the following topics to be covered in the faith statement. These do not need to be covered in any specific order. They can be covered in the manner that the child deems is best. The child may choose to add additional information, but please be sure to at least include information on the following:

- † What is Holy Communion?
- † What are the roots of Holy Communion? (including information on the Passover and the Last Supper)
- † What do we receive through Holy Communion?
- † Why should a person take Holy Communion?
- † Summarize your faith – what do you believe?
- † Why do you desire to take Holy Communion?
- † Is there a specific Bible Verse that speaks to you about this topic?

Children also sometimes include information about how to examine themselves before taking Communion, or what it means to desire to live a godly life, or what grace and forgiveness mean to them.

If you need assistance with completing this project, please don't hesitate to ask. When your child has finished the faith statement, please e-mail it to the appropriate person from your worship site (Emily Powers, Mike Peters, or Matt Wipperman). They may have a few suggestions for it before accepting a final copy. Once this faith statement is finished, you may schedule a First Communion Interview.

Contact Information

Emily Powers – Director of Youth, contact person for Fitchburg site
271-2811 x.25
608-957-1052 (cell)
epowers@livelifetogether.com

Mike Peters – Pastor, contact person for Verona site
608-212-7142
streetchaplain@gmail.com

Matt Wipperman – Vicar, contact person for East Madison
608-444-5660
mwipperman@livelifetogether.com

Jess Bohrer – Church Office
271-2811 x.10
jbohrer@livelifetogether.com

First Communion Hints and Tips

- ✝ Have a consistent time or timeline for working on the material. Make it a priority! We suggest dedicating a weekend to working on it together.
- ✝ Come up with a written plan/family contract. SET AN END DATE!
- ✝ Make this a special time: go to a park, order pizza, etc. Have it be a time you and your family look forward to. Have an incentive for when you are finished.
- ✝ Ask other parents how they went through the process.
- ✝ Don't be afraid to say, "I don't know. Let's find the answer together."
- ✝ If you get stuck, ask for help right away! Please be specific with your questions when you call/e-mail the church staff.
- ✝ Be creative in your instruction. Allow your child to be creative. Use suggestions from the Chapters and References document.
- ✝ Writing Tips:
 - Have a SHORT timeline for this!
 - Have your child make a plan before actually starting to write the paper. Have your child web, list, or outline his/her ideas.
 - Encourage a sloppy copy first!....Just get the ideas down without worrying about punctuation, spelling, or grammar!
 - Have your child edit/revise it himself before you help.
 - Don't be surprised if Emily makes suggestions or recommendations for the paper before accepting a final copy.
 - Please send us papers via e-mail when at all possible.

Notes Page