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## A Letter from the Rector

*This is a special message. Please keep in mind that the situation is ever-changing; Christ Episcopal Church will keep you updated on our practices and procedures according to parish and diocesan guidelines.*

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### Does Communion matter and why I don't drink the wine on Sunday

When we gather for worship on Sundays, on the livestream, and I preside at a Eucharist, I do not drink the wine.

In part, it is because we are forbidden from sharing the wine, by our bishop. No use of the common cup. But it is not prohibited for the priest to drink the small amount consecrated.

I have a deep phobia of the "specialness" of priests. The priest has a specific role within the life of the congregation, to lead and teach, and it is a mutual one. I support people in their ministries as baptized people, and there are ministries specifically devoted to helping mine flourish. That is an expression of the reciprocity we read about when we read the description of various gifts being given to different members of the body. (If we all had the same gifts, we wouldn't need each other, which would mean no community and no relationship - terrible!) But there is a tendency among clergy to take the particular call of the priesthood and elevate it to semi-divine status. I can't abide that. It's not scriptural, and it gets particularly ugly in the hands of people with social and economic power.

So my first rejection of drinking the wine alone is a gut one: I refuse to have any portion of Jesus exclusively available to a priest. It contributes, visually and physically, to the idea that the priest is an elevated, precious kind of person.

It is also important for me to long and yearn for the wine. I know that you, out there, are hungry and thirsty for Communion, and it is important that I, as your priest, who says the holy words not on my own behalf but on behalf of the whole congregation, am in solidarity with your yearning, that I too am fasting from something I desperately desire.

Also, if we truly believe that Jesus's body and blood are present in the bread and the wine, it is an act of violence to save Communion only for the holiest. **There is no instance in any Gospel where Jesus refused access to his body to anyone.** There was even an instance, with the woman with a hemorrhage, where she stole something from his body, and he *did not object*. This is why we practice an open table at Christ Church (anyone may receive). Jesus's example was that when he was around, everyone got fed, no matter what. Judas ate at Jesus's table. All of the five thousand got fed, the annoying ones and the good ones and the boring ones and the fancy ones. Everyone. God fed *all* the cranky Israelites with manna and quail - all of them.

It is not optional for me, therefore, to have Communion be a collective act (this is consistent with our theology: a priest cannot and may not consecrate Communion at home exclusively for our own use). I will only preside at a table if I can share the meal with others. When other people are in the space - musicians, tech - then we have a community, we have at least two orders of ministry, and it is a meal, where everyone eats. That's real. I will acknowledge and preside at that holy meal. But I won't engage something that only I, in the stiff little collar, get to enjoy.

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Zoom coffee hour for the first time immediately following the 10am service. This is possible now, as we are suspending Campus Ministry worship for a time, as it doesn't work for the students' schedules or needs. Before, we were all rushing off to do the second service and there wasn't an opportunity to make this happen. We are trying it this week. Please, if you would like an invitation, send your name and e-mail address to Cara at [office@christchurchseattle.org](mailto:office@christchurchseattle.org). We are NOT making this invitation open, due to the experience of Zoom takeovers at other churchs' coffee hours.

Second, I'd love to know what more casual stuff we could do together. Want to have a book club on Zoom? Dance party? Happy hour? Please let me know what sounds appealing, and we'll start building it in. It is Easter, after all. Let's have the fun that we can.

With love,  
Shelly

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