Everyone’s Invited!

An Exploration of Children and Communion
Thoughts, ideas and resources for pastors, elders, parents, teachers, and children’s ministry leaders

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Everyone’s Invited!

A resource for pastors, elders, parents, teachers, and children’s ministry leaders.

Inspirational Thought

Who is the greatest in the kingdom of God?

Mark 9:33-37 (NIV)

33 They came to Capernaum. When he was in the house, he asked them, “What were you arguing about on the road?” 34 But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest.

35 Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, “Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all.”

36 He took a little child whom he placed among them. Taking the child in his arms, he said to them, 37 “Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me.”

Are we in danger of thinking we are more important than the children in the church because we are adults?

How welcoming are we to the children in our church...

• when they enter the building?
• during the worship service?
• during Sabbath at church?
• during Communion?

What do we need to confess to God about our attitude towards the children in our church?

How would Jesus conduct Communion in your church?

Learning Objectives

• To rethink our understanding of Holy Communion through exploring the scriptures.
* To reconsider our response to children and Holy Communion within our church communities.
* To explore fresh ways to help children understand the spiritual significance of Holy Communion and the plan of salvation.
Reflecting on Your Own Experiences

* What are your first memories of Holy Communion?

* How old were you when you first understood that Jesus died for your sins?

* What sense did you make of the symbols of Communion when you were first aware of them?

• When did someone explain the meaning of the bread and wine to you?

* What did you think of being left out of Holy Communion when you were a child? Or how would you feel if you were part of a congregation celebrating Holy Communion and you were not allowed to participate?

• Why do we need to think differently about children and Communion?

Form a small group of 3-4 people and discuss your responses.

After your group discussion answer the following questions for yourself

* What messages are we giving children about their place in our churches, and God’s kingdom, by our traditional approach to Holy Communion?

* What new thoughts have you had about children and Communion?
Communion – Communing Together

What does Communion mean? – We often think it means the service where we eat communion bread and drink a small glass of grape juice, but Communion is about belonging together, sharing things together, helping each other, believing in God together and especially believing that Jesus came to save us by dying for our sins.

So before we help children understand what Communion is about, we need to understand what communing together as families and churches really means.

The Last Supper was not just about sharing the loaf of unleavened bread and a cup of grape juice. As Adventists we understand this and so we have also included the Service of Humility, or Foot Washing, because Jesus set us an example of caring for each other, being humble, and put other people’s needs above our own. But part of the bigger picture of what was happening in the Upper Room was being together as a group and worshipping God. All the disciples were there, including Judas, and all shared in the experience from their own unique perspective. They ‘communed’, with each other and with God.

So Holy Communion is about being together as a community in a spiritual way, rather than just socially. It is Comm – union. It is about being together, in unity, before God (John 17).

Communion – Rooted in Passover

There are many experiences through the Old Testament where the Jewish people came together as a community to celebrate different feasts, victories, repentance, building a new temple, etc. Many of these times we know that the children were specifically included. (Deuteronomy 12:16-18; 16:9-15). God gave specific instructions regarding the involvement of children in the original Passover feast, which were to be continued down through time. (Exodus 12:1-28)

Failure to follow all the instructions for the original Passover feast would have meant that the eldest children would have died, as the Egyptians’ children did.

We often forget when we celebrate Holy Communion as Christians that we are celebrating a Christian Passover. There is no doubt that if there had been children in the room at the Last Supper that they would have been included in the meal. In Jewish homes the youngest child opens the Passover experience by asking their father ‘Why do we do this?’ No Jewish home would ever have excluded children from Passover. To exclude a child from Passover would have been inconceivable.
Can Children Understand the Spiritual Significance of Holy Communion?
As Adventists we have a long tradition of excluding children from Holy Communion until they have been baptized. But, paradoxically, we also hold open Communion – inviting anyone to join us as long as they believe that Jesus is the Son of God who has died for their sins.

Adventist children are taught in Sabbath School that God loves them and sent Jesus to die for them from a very young age. Many of them believe this in their own simple way from the age of two or three. God has made the plan of salvation simple enough for any mind to accept, so that no one need be excluded, even though the wonderful details of the full process of redemption are way beyond even our adult minds. All of us are on different journeys of understanding this process and each time we participate in Holy Communion, and as we grow in Christ, we can receive fresh insights into the wonder of what God has done for us. But that does not make our first simple understanding any less valuable or important.

Are the children unworthy?

1 Corinthians 11:27
The verse that we usually use to support our position on excluding children is the verse that warns us not to eat or drink at the Lord’s Table unworthily. This verse is about relationships and unity in the local church. When there is disunity between people, it is much harder for them to commune together. This verse does not make any reference to the spirituality of the child. When the disciples thought that the children were not worthy of Jesus’ attention, he rebuked them and welcomed the children. It is a radical thought, but we may be eating and drinking unworthily by not allowing the children to be involved, because, by doing so, we create a division in the church community between adults and children.

The role of the parent’s faith

Another verse that we need to hold in our minds as we reflect on these issues is that God saves the young child through the faith of their parents before they are able to comprehend it for themselves (1 Corinthians 7:12-14). So we do not need to worry that children may be drinking and eating it unworthily. They are as worthy as we are to partake in the wonder of salvation. Perhaps we need to reflect more on our own worthiness as adults?

Jesus’ teachings about the faith of a child
• Adults need to look to children for an example of how to have faith in God.
Matthew 18:3.
• Adults need to be born again and have a child-like and fresh faith in Him. John 3:3
• Children have a special place in God’s kingdom. Childlike-ness is of the highest value in the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 18:4.
• Children’s angels are angels always in the presence of the Father. Matthew 18:10.
• Children are worthy of blessing. Mark 10:13-16; Matthew 19:13-15; Luke 18:15-17
• When we welcome children we are welcoming Jesus himself. Matthew 18:5
• We must not do anything that interferes with a child’s relationship with God. Matthew 18:6.

Jesus made these statements about small children who would be too young to have made any formal commitment to God and been baptized. They are also too young to have the fuller understanding of spiritual things that an adult might have.

Don’t let anyone go hungry

Paul also cautioned the Corinthian church about some people not getting food to eat at The Lord’s Supper, and others drinking and eating too much. 1 Corinthians 11:21. His message could be summarised as – ‘don’t be greedy during the Lord’s Supper and don’t leave anyone out, either.’

How could Paul’s message be applied to the children in our churches who experience spiritual and physical exclusion from our spiritual community during Holy Communion when they are not allowed to share the meal with us? What creative ideas do you have about involving children in the Communion service so that they don’t feel excluded?

What can we do to ensure that children’s spiritual needs are also met during Holy Communion? (eg. to experience God’s ongoing forgiveness; to be part of a spiritual and nurturing community; to understand Jesus’ role in the plan of salvation; to have their spiritual experience validated, etc.)

Think about it
• By choosing to exclude children from Holy Communion are we judging their spiritual experience through our own human perspectives rather than the perspective Jesus had?
• How have we inadvertently absorbed ideas from other churches about when children can be included in Holy Communion (such as the Roman Catholic Church), rather than looking to the Bible and God’s clear instructions to the Jewish people regarding Passover?
• How prejudiced are we about children’s spirituality? Do we believe that our more mature and informed spirituality is more valuable than their simple and innocent spirituality?
• Are our ideas about involving children in Holy Communion more informed by our cultural attitudes to children in our church and historical practices rather than Biblical teaching?
• What spiritual messages are we giving the children by excluding them from The Lord’s Table?

Children’s comments about being excluded from Holy Communion:
• I don’t understand why the adults are doing something and they won’t let us join in. I believe Jesus has died for me too. I understand that His death was a serious and important thing that He did to save me from my sins.
• It’s as if the grown-ups are having a party with Jesus all by themselves and they don’t want us to join in.
• Doesn’t God love us too?
• Communion is boring and long and sad and there’s nothing for children there.

Holy Communion – Rooted in Passover

Our Communion service today started life as the Feast of the Passover. No child would ever have been excluded from Passover because of the life and death importance of the origins of the Passover.

When a Jewish family celebrates Passover the youngest child always asks the father to explain the meaning of the ceremony, and the father always gives an explanation that the youngest child can understand.

There is much we can learn from this as we celebrate Holy Communion today, our Christian form of Passover. Jewish children would help to prepare for the feast, make the food and set the table.

One of the main purposes of the Feast of Passover is to tell the next generation about the goodness of God and how He saved them, and brought them up out of Egypt. It is also provides a multisensory experience that helps children to understand God’s plan of salvation and the sacrifice of the Lamb, Jesus, so they could be saved.

Families and Communion

An increasing number of families are staying away from church when it’s Communion Sabbath, or they visit a church that isn’t having Communion. This is a problem because both parents and children are missing out on the blessing of Holy Communion.
Some of the reasons parents give for not bringing their family to Holy Communion are:

• the services are usually too long for children when Communion is included.
• Holy Communion is often done in a boring service that is too solemn and not at all child-friendly.
• the children’s story is often missed out when it is Communion because there isn’t time for it.
• the children are excluded from the ceremonies.
• the children are upset and distressed when they see others eat and drink something they aren’t allowed to share.
• the parents can’t care for their children and both be involved in Foot Washing in separate rooms where children aren’t usually welcome.
• the parents are afraid that they will take Communion ‘unworthily’ and so aren’t comfortable with the service themselves.

Importance of Holy Communion in Faith Transmission

We have a responsibility to find creative ways to involve families in Communion so they will want to come and bring their children to these important services. It is essential that we find a way to share a central concept of our faith with them.

Conclusion

Communion is a special celebration that needs to be conducted with reverence and in accordance with our beliefs. But we also need to revisit the Feast of the Passover to understand more about the spiritual and historical roots of Holy Communion. From this biblical perspective we can take a different view of this important service, so that we can pass the wonders of God’s grace onto our children and this current generation.
NAD Children’s Ministries’ Guidelines on Children and Communion

The Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual contradicts itself on the subject of communion. On the one hand the manual states that Adventists hold open communion, meaning that one need not be a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in order to take communion with us. On the other hand, the manual states that children must be baptized before taking communion demonstrating that, in fact, we do not hold open communion. Some North American pastors point out that either we hold open communion or we do not. We cannot discriminate against any group and continue to make the claim for openness.

NAD Children’s Ministries suggests that since the manual contradicts itself, parents and pastors should pay more attention to children on Communion day. They should consider what is happening and the messages children take from communion.

In many churches, unbaptized children and youth stand around outside the church during Communion. They enjoy being outside and talking with their friends. When they are older it is hard to coax them back inside to take part. Churches should consider the message they are giving when they exclude children from Communion.

What About Taking Part Unworthily?
If we do not worry about all the adults who may be taking part unworthily, why are we assuming that children are unworthy, that they don’t understand, that they cannot set their hearts to rights during the sermon just as many adults do?

And who is responsible if they do take part unworthily? Their parents. So we need to leave that responsibility with the parents and educate parents to prepare children for Communion.

One leading theologian in the church, a particularly good friend of children, points out that within the context of the statement about taking part unworthily, the Bible writer was talking about a lack of unity as being the cause of unworthiness. Lack of unity is a problem of adults.

Suggestions for Children Taking Part in Communion
1. At least once a year, have a program for families so children can experience and understand communion in its original context (see ‘The Visit to the Upper Room’ resource included in this pack).

2. Hold a family seminar on Communion. Discuss the issues and
encourage parents to take responsibility for preparing their children for Communion.

3. When very small children ask to take part, parents might break off a little of their bread to share with the child.

4. When older children ask to take part, parents might talk to them about the responsibilities of membership in the community of believers. Talk about stewardship/tithing, listening to the sermon in church, regular attendance, helping at church, etc. If the children feel ready to take responsibility for these things, grant them the right to take part in Communion. Make Communion a family event.

5. Do not rush children into baptism just so they can take part in Communion.
Activities to Explore Aspects of Communion Together

Build a Church
- Take a large bucket of toy bricks such as Lego, Duplo or wooden blocks.
- Give the adults the longer bricks and the children the shorter bricks.
- Ask the group to build a church building, including doors and windows.
- It is best if there is an overall architect to help people know where to place their bricks.
- First, try to build a church using only the adults’ big bricks. It will not look very good, or be very secure, because the smaller bricks are needed to give the building stability and neatness.
- Then ask the group to build a church using everyone’s bricks.
- Invite the adults and children to think about what they have learned from this experience.

The Chain
- Ask everyone to stand or sit in a circle and give each person a strip of paper. Use paper-chain papers if you can find them in art, party and toy shops – Early Learning Centre often sells them. Otherwise use colourful paper cut into 2-3cm wide strips about 20 cm long.
- Then ask everyone to make a chain together, by looping their strip through the next person’s loop and sticking or stapling the ends together to make a circle.
- The first time you do this the children can only connect their chain link to another child’s link, but not to an adult’s. Also, any adult sitting next to a child must not bypass the child to connect to another adult. What happens to the overall chain? It has lots of short parts that aren’t joined together.
- Then hand out some more strips of paper and let the children join their loops to the adults’ loops to make one long chain.
- Invite the group to reflect on this activity:
  - What happened when the children weren’t included?
  - How do we connect with each other as people, not just as strips of paper?
  - What helps us to feel like we belong together as a church community?

We are the Church!
You will need:
- Small pieces of paper the same size – pages of a small, unlined notebook might be ideal (the larger your group, the smaller pieces of paper you will need so that you can fit everyone’s piece of paper into the outline of your church)
- Pencils or felt-tipped pens
- Scissors (optional)
• Glue stick
• Large sheet of paper with the outline of a church drawn on it – use a ruler to make this as neat as possible

Instructions:
• Give each person in your church a small piece of paper and a pencil or felt-tipped pen.
• Ask them to draw a small picture of themselves, and to write their name underneath.
• Then ask them to cut out their portrait.
• Draw a very large church on a very large piece of paper. You may have to stick several sheets of flip chart paper together, depending on the size of your congregation.
• Ask each person to stick their picture within the outline of the church to illustrate how the church is made up of a community of people, young and old, male and female, from different places.

**Being a Church Together**

You will need:
• Sheets of A4 paper cut into three equal sized pieces to make brick shapes
• Felt-tipped pens
• Glue sticks
• Large sheet of paper

Instructions:
• Give each person a brick-shaped piece of paper.
• Then ask them to write on their brick a few words that describe what it means to be a part of your church. Or they can draw a picture if they prefer.
• Stick all the bricks onto a large sheet of paper to make the shape of a church.
• Encourage everyone to read what other people have written.

**Foot Washing**

You will need:
• A non-slip, water-proof floor covering
• A large washing up bowl of wet sand
• Large washing up bowls of warm water
• Communion towels
• Bibles

Instructions:
• Cover the floor with a non-slip and waterproof covering.
• Place a large washing up bowl of wet sand on the floor, together with some bowls of warm water for Foot Washing.
• Let the children step in the bowl of wet sand and make their feet all dirty. Then wash their feet well, and dry them with fresh towels.
• Talk about why we wash each other’s feet, reading the story of Jesus washing His disciples’ feet.
• Ask the children what Foot Washing means to them.
• Discuss how Foot Washing is an illustration of the way Jesus takes away our sins, and also how it encourages us to be humble with each other and take care of each other.
• Let them also wash each other’s feet and discuss the difference between how they feel when they’re washing someone else’s feet and how they feel when their own feet are being washed.

Following Jesus
You will need:
• Strong paper in different colours
• Pencils or pens
• Scissors
• Glue-sticks
• Large sheet of background paper

Instructions:
• We wash each other’s feet because we want to follow Jesus’ example.
• Ask the children to draw around each of their feet on strong paper and to cut out their footprints.
• Then ask them to write or draw on each footprint some ways in which they can follow Jesus, and some of the different things Jesus did for his friends that we can do for each other.
• Stick the footprints on a large background as if they are walking along a path. Make a heading that says ‘We’re following Jesus!’

Understanding the Bread
You will need:
• Whole wheat grains
• Pestle and mortar
• Electric grinder/nut or coffee grinder
• Help the children make unleavened bread from whole-wheat grains.
• Let them try to grind the grains in a pestle and mortar to see how hard it is to crush and grind the grains into flour.
• Then use an electric grinder to grind wheat into flour, or use stone ground whole wheat flour. Sieve the flour to make it finer, and then make the unleavened bread with the children following your usual recipe. (See recipe on page…)
• Talk about why Jesus used the symbol of broken bread to remind us that His body would be broken.
• You could also make the unleavened bread into gingerbread man shapes, which can be broken, as a symbol of how Jesus’ body was broken for us.
Ways to Involve Children in Holy Communion in your Church
(Adapted from ‘Creative Celebrations’ Ministry Magazine, by Karen Holford 2009)

Each church may have a slightly different culture about Holy Communion and the involvement of children, and each church may be on a different part of the journey towards making Holy Communion a more inclusive service. Here are some ideas that you can adapt to the needs of your church.

1. Serve the bread and juice from the front of the church instead of serving people where they sit. Ask them to come forward in lines to receive the emblems. Children, babies and other people who do not want to take the bread and juice can come forward and receive a short prayer or blessing from someone who gently places a hand on their head.

2. Your Junior or Teen Sabbath School class or Pathfinder group can research the meaning of the bread and juice used in Communion services. Why did Jesus use these two items to teach us about his love and sacrifice? Invite them to share their ideas and create a special presentation of their discoveries during your Communion Service. Maybe they could act out the Last Supper and prepare monologues about Jesus’ life from the perspective of some of the disciples.

3. The children can help to make the Communion bread and wine for the service. They can mix and bake the unleavened bread and process red grape juice in a juice extractor. They can do this in Pathfinders, at home with their parents, or in the home of a deaconess. Their adult helpers can create an atmosphere of awe and worship as they create the emblems.

4. Set aside a room for family Foot Washing so that the children can wash their parents’ feet, and the parents can wash their children’s feet. Foot Washing isn’t just for grown-ups, and there is no reason why children cannot be part of this service. One pastor washed all the children’s feet during the Service of Humility to show them how much Jesus loved them.

5. Cut some hearts out of stiff white card and give one to each child. Then give them some black crayons or charcoal and ask them to make their heart grey and smudgy. During the Communion Service ask the children to show the congregation their dirty hearts, which illustrate the sins in their lives. Then offer to swap the dirty hearts for pieces of heart-shaped unleavened bread, made especially for the children, or fresh white card-hearts. This shows how Jesus takes away our sins and makes us clean through his forgiveness.
6. Find a short, child-friendly DVD about the Last Supper, or Jesus’ death and resurrection, and show it to the children during the foot-washing. Select clips from ‘The Miracle Maker’, or ‘Friends and Heroes’ (series 1, episode 11) which helps the children to understand the meaning of the Passover.

7. Buy some water-dissolving pens from sewing shops (as soon as water touches the ink the colour disappears). Let the children make marks on their feet with the pens to illustrate some of their sins. When their feet are washed the marks will completely disappear. Let their parents or caretakers massage fragrant body butter into their feet after they are dried, reminding them of the story where Mary pours perfume over the feet of Jesus.

8. Give each child a small piece of play dough or Crayola Model Magic (available from www.bakerross.co.uk - this is a clean, white, easy to use play-dough-type material that doesn’t drop ‘crumbs’ and mess up your church!) As you go through the service ask the children to shape their piece of dough into a foot, a piece of unleavened bread, a glass of grape juice, a cross and a heart.

9. Give each child a four page booklet (fold a piece of paper in half) to help them explore the different parts of the Communion service:

    Page 1 – Title
    Page 2 – Foot Washing
    Page 3 – Bread
    Page 4 – Grape juice

    Provide pre-cut shapes of feet, bread and glasses of juice that can be stuck onto the pages. Or find Bible puzzles that can help them to understand the service.

10. Buy every child in your church the book ‘Daniel Asks about Baptism and Communion’ 1 from the ABC. This was written by Heather Hanna, an Adventist mother living in the UK. This can be read out loud while the adults are involved in foot washing. Or you could make a PowerPoint presentation by scanning the images from the book into your computer.

11. Give the children large, brown paper cut-outs of ‘bread’ shapes and large purple ‘wine-glass’ shapes. Invite the children to write their ideas about Jesus and his gift of forgiveness on the shapes. Make a display of the shapes and use it as part of the Communion service, or place it in the foyer on Communion Sabbath.

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A Visit to the Upper Room
(Resource from Advent Source http://plusline.org/article.php?id=199)

Children of all ages often feel left out on "Communion Sabbath." Not only is the symbolism above their heads, but the ritual seems strange—even rigid. And adults are often at a loss to know what to do with the children: will they be welcome at the foot washing? Are they allowed to take part?

Seventh-day Adventists practice open communion—adults don’t have to be a member to take part. So why should children be required to wait until baptism? But they should understand what is happening and sincerely desire to follow Jesus.

You can help children experience, understand, and value Communion through "A Visit to the Upper Room." This program can easily be staged at your church. All it takes is someone willing to organize the program and send out the invitations.

Who Attends?

Children of school-age, especially those who have participated in Communion before, and children preparing for baptism are the primary audience for The Upper Room. You may also want to invite their families. This could also be an opportunity to strengthen the commitment of adults, although the program is geared to the kids.

You will need enough adult helpers/presenters for one to every five or six kids. Also invite the pastor or head elder to offer the blessing over the emblems. This could be an opportunity for the pastor to get closer to the kids of the church. And, yes, it’s OK to celebrate Communion with an elder leading out.

Where do you Meet?

In an upstairs room at the church—if you have one—or any inviting classroom at the church. Prepare the room in a friendly arrangement, providing a place to sit—maybe on the carpet, and a corner for the table that dispenses water, towels, and bowls for the foot washing.

When to Celebrate the "Upper Room?"

Sabbath vespers, prayer meeting, or during the 11 o’clock hour are possible times. Winter or fall seasons, when the sun sets early on Fridays, will possibly be most convenient for a Friday evening service. In summer, the service may be a great way to end the Sabbath.
Planning Strategies

Form a support group to plan the program, preferably two or more couples.

Invite a pastor and/or elder to meet at least once with your support group.

Explain the objectives of the upper room, and invite their suggestions and cooperation.

Decide on the target audience.

Option 1: Baptized elementary school age children.

Option 2: All fourth through eighth graders with their families or sponsoring adults.

Preparation

Ahead of time - Decide on the order of program and assign the presentations to various speakers. See the program outline. List the equipment needed and assign to helpers. Mail invitations; write bulletin announcements.

The day before - Prepare the room, bake the bread.
An hour before - Arrive early, put out the water, bread, wine.

Create Ambiance.

Set up the room with reminders of things from Jesus’ time. Provide a place at the door where people remove their shoes. Leave a pair of leather sandals there to set the A.D. 34 scene.

*Have adult helpers dress in costume of Bible times.
*Display a basket each of bread and grapes.
*Play soft background music as people enter.

Initiating this service was one of the last acts of ministry that Jesus performed before He died, so make the service meaningful for everyone. He planned the service to symbolize His life and death and instructed us to do this “to remember Me.”

Program objectives

As the result of this service, children will . . .
Know the meaning of the various symbols and the reason for taking part in the foot washing and the communion service.

Feel the joy of following Jesus’ instruction “this do in remembrance of Me.”

Respond by determining to always prepare for Communion service.

Plan Ahead. Here are some things to do ahead of time:

1. An area near the door where people may leave their shoes.
2. A table with bowls, towels, and water for foot washing.
3. A table set with the bread and wine.
4. Chairs in informal groupings or cushions on the floor.

Arrange for presenters to explain the Passover, foot washing, bread, wine, and disposal of the remaining emblems.

The Shopping List

Decoration: candles, matches, small table with white cloth, flowers, picture of Jesus, cross, baskets of bread and grapes, pitcher, cups.

Food: grape juice, unleavened bread (see recipe below)

Foot washing: basins, towels, buckets of water, ladles or pitchers.

Mood: stereo music, costumes, materials for building a fire outside.

Program Presentation

Welcome. A team of greeters welcomes people as they arrive, explain the custom of removing shoes, invite the people to do so, and help them find a place to sit. Enough greeters will be needed so that nobody stands at the door, wondering what to do.


The Passover Explained. Presenter A invites people to imagine
themselves in the year 34 A.D. The Passover reminded people of the night that Israel left Egypt—blood was sprinkled on the door posts so that the angel of death would pass over. People ate a lamb with bitter herbs and unleavened bread. They were not to break any of the bones nor leave any until morning.

Scripture Reading. Mark 14:12-16. This reading may be done responsively or read while two disciples and a man carrying a water jar, all dressed in period costume, reenact the scene.

At the conclusion of the scripture reading, Presenter A explains that the disciples were expecting a traditional Passover supper when they entered that upper room. But Jesus had planned something even more meaningful.

The Foot Washing

A. The custom explained. Talk about the custom of walking the dusty roads of Palestine in open sandals so that feet quickly become dirty. Before reclining on the couch to eat, people washed both their hands and their feet. A servant often performed this task. The washing of feet still holds great significance in Asia and Africa where people wear open sandals and walk dusty paths. Touching another person’s feet is a sign of humility. To wash somebody’s feet says that you do not consider yourself better than they.

B. Scripture Reading. John 13:3-10 (Read from the New International Version, or half-read, half-tell the story.)

C. Foot Washing. One of the presenters explains the procedure: everyone will follow for the foot washing. As far as possible, pair a child with an adult. Invite everyone to hum or sing along with the background music. Let the children take their own towels and bowls back. Request each group to finish with prayer.

D. Song. Sing "Seek Ye First" (Sing for Joy, 67).

E. Scripture. John 13:12-17, NIV. The reader may give a paraphrase instead of reading.

The Bread

A. The Symbol. Presenter B explains that the bread symbolizes the lamb that was slain for the Passover and for the temple service. After Jesus’ death it would become a symbol of His body which was broken for our salvation. The bread was to be unleavened. That means that no yeast was used to make the dough rise, forming little air bubbles. In the Old
Testament, yeast represented sin, this special unleavened bread was to be without “sin.” In Jesus' day people broke off a piece of bread. In churches today the bread is usually broken by the minister. After people take a piece they hold it until the pastor indicates that it is time to eat it.

**B. Breaking the Bread.** The minister and/or elder breaks the bread and blesses it before the helpers serve each participant. Or have the participants come forward and break off a piece for themselves while the minister holds the basket.

**C. Eating the Bread.** Read 1Cor. 11:23-24. Pastor begins to eat bread and participants also.

### The Wine

**A. The Symbols:** Presenter C explains the grape juice as a symbol of the blood that was sprinkled on the door posts at the first Passover and later in the temple services. When Jesus died, grape juice became the symbol of His blood that paid the penalty for sin.

**B. Taking the Grape Juice:** Presenter C explains the procedure for receiving the juice, meditating on it until the signal is given to drink it. The pastor blesses the wine and stands at the front ready to serve it. He invites participants to come forward and take a cup that he pours for them (If the group is too large, have the wine already poured).

**C. Scripture and Warning:** Read 1 Cor. 11:25-26. The pastor (or Presenter C) explains Paul’s warning about taking the bread and the wine without being properly prepared (1 Cor. 11:27-29). Allow time to meditate on the meaning of the wine and Jesus’ death and our need to ask His forgiveness for sins.

**D. Drinking the Wine.** The pastor says, “Drink ye all of it” and begins to drink from his cup.

**Disposing of the Leftover Emblems.** Explain that in church we don’t usually see what happens to the leftover wine and bread. In accordance with the Passover custom, the remaining wine is poured out on the ground, and the bread is burned before they become stale, because Christ’s body did not decay in the tomb. In a safe place (take the group to the parking lot) pour out the wine and burn the bread. While the bread is burning, sing “Redeemed” (any version).

**Close with a Conversational Prayer.**
Optional Sharing Service. Presenter D explains that in the early Advent church it was common for people to share their joy in serving Jesus with one another. Invite participants to tell how much Jesus means to them. This is not a time for tearful confessions; those should be done in private. This time is for sharing the joy of loving and serving Jesus. The presenter sets the tone by telling something personal Jesus has done for him/her during the past week.
What Parents Can Do to Help their Children Prepare For This Sabbath

Sunday: Altar
Items: stones, glue, card paper

First help your child/ren collect some stones. Read or tell your child/ren the story of the Israelites crossing the Jordan River as found in Joshua 3:1 - 4:9. Help them build an altar on a piece of card. Explain that every time the Israelites saw the pile of rocks from the River Jordan, they would remember what God had done. Ask what other things God gives people in the Bible to help them remember what He has done (for instance, the Passover meal). Also use the opportunity to explain about Communion and why we celebrate it. Ask the children if they can think of any things we see every day that can remind us of something God has done for us.

Monday: Foot Washing
Items: bowl, warm water, towel

Before picking your child/ren up from school put the kettle on to boil. Place the bowl and towel at the front door. When you arrive back have your child/ren take their shoes off. Take the water in the kettle, pour it into the bowl, add some cold water if necessary, and wash their feet. Use this opportunity to explain to them that in the Bible times, when people walked the dusty roads of Palestine in open sandals, their feet quickly became dirty. Before reclining on the couch to eat, people washed both their hands and their feet. A servant often performed this task. The washing of feet still holds great significance in Asia and Africa where people wear open sandals and walk dusty paths. Touching another person’s feet is a sign of humility. To wash somebody’s feet says that you do not consider yourself better than they. Before Jesus and the disciples had communion He washed their feet.

Alternatively you can prepare the same items for when mum or dad is going to arrive after work. Then help your children wash mum or dad’s feet and then wash theirs.

Alternatively pick another time in the day to wash your child/ren’s feet. Perhaps you could let them walk barefoot in some earth or sand so that their feet are really dirty, or even brush a little brown paint on their feet first.

Tuesday: Upper Room
Items: paper, colouring pencils
Read to your child/ren the story of the upper room as found in Matthew 26:17-30. Help your child/ren draw a picture of the upper
room with Jesus in the middle and the twelve disciples around the table. Help them decide where each disciple sat. Take the opportunity to help them draw the lamb and bitter sauce and use this opportunity to share with them the meaning of these Passover symbols.

**Wednesday: The Communion Scene**  
**Items:** raisins, big round or star stickers, coloured card paper, matzos / peanuts, glue

Help your child to cut out a rectangular piece of coloured card and stick it onto a white piece of paper. This will form the table. Help them stick twelve stickers around the table for the disciples and a different colour for Jesus in the middle of the table. Help them stick the raisins on the table to pretend they are the juice and pieces of matzos/peanuts which they can pretend are the unleavened bread.

Use this opportunity to speak to them about the order in which Christ introduced the first Communion service.

**Thursday: The Wine**  
**Items:** bowl, bag of red grapes, glass

Make sure your child/ren’s hands are clean. Help them squash the grapes so that it will form juice. Drain the juice into a glass and let them drink it. Or help them to make grape juice in a juice extractor if you have one. Use this opportunity to explain to them why we use grape juice and not wine during Communion. Also use this opportunity to explain to them the meaning of this symbol.

**Friday: Unleavened Bread**  
**Items:** Unleavened Bread Recipe, Grape Juice

Take time to help your child make unleavened bread. Here is a recipe:

- 2 cups whole wheat flour
- ½ tsp salt
- 7 tbsp oil (1/2 cup oil less 1 tbsp)
- ½ cup water

Whip oil and water in blender until mixture turns white. Immediately add mixture to flour and salt and knead for several minutes until dough is elastic and ready for rolling. Roll out a thin (3/16”) even layer directly onto cookie sheet. Score into 3/4” squares and prick each square with fork or toothpick. Bake at 350F or 180C for 12-15 minutes. Do not over-bake as when it becomes too brown it tastes bitter.
While you make the bread talk to them about Communion and what the bread means. Eat it with them while drinking some grape juice. By now you would have explained the meaning of the grape juice. Ask them if they remember what the grape juice symbolises in the Communion service.
Appendix

Recipe for Unleavened Bread

2 cups whole wheat flour
½ tsp salt
7 tbsp oil (1/2 cup oil less 1 tbsp)
½ cup water

Whip oil and water in blender until mixture turns white. Immediately add mixture to flour and salt and knead for several minutes until dough is elastic and ready for rolling. Roll out a thin (3/16”) even layer directly onto cookie sheet. Score into 3/4” squares and prick each square with fork or toothpick. Bake at 350 degrees for 12-15 minutes. Do not overbake as when it becomes too brown it tastes bitter. (Yield: two cookie sheets full—approximately 400-500 pieces.) If Communion bread is frozen, reheat for a few minutes at low temperature before using.

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