

We Belong to the Body of Christ

MIDDLE SCHOOL



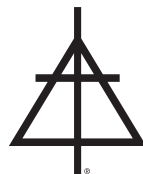
We are grateful to Jolanda Malburg Howe, middle school leader and member of Church of the Servant in Grand Rapids, Michigan, for her work in developing *We Belong to the Body of Christ*.

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Christian Reformed Church
**Faith Formation
Ministries**

MIDDLE SCHOOL

We Belong to the Body of Christ

SCRIPTURE

1 Corinthians 10:15-17, 11:23-26

FOCUS

When we participate in the Lord's Supper, Christ feeds us with himself and we become one with him and each other.

FAITH NURTURE GOALS

- Tell how the bread and wine or juice of communion represent the body and blood of Christ.
- Feel connected to Christ and his people through sharing the bread and wine or juice.
- Anticipate celebrating the Lord's Supper with God's people.

REFLECTION: GETTING INTO THE STORY

The Lord's Supper is an opportunity for the body of Christ to look back, look forward, and look around.

When taking the bread and the wine, Christ's followers look back to remember the sacrifice Christ made by bearing the punishment that our sins demand. While God created us to live in harmony with God and each other, we have chosen "selfish ambition and vain conceit," as Paul says in Philippians 2. God addresses that problem not by defeating us but by defeating the sin that enslaved us. That is why we can remember Christ's sacrifice with joy!

The Lord's Supper serves as a way to look forward with faith and hope in the resurrected Savior who will one day usher us into his kingdom. This hope gives us the strength we need to walk each day with God, to follow God through the difficult places where we often find ourselves, and to reflect God's love to others. Choosing hope is an act of courage, and participating in the Lord's Supper challenges us to choose courage over fear and place our trust in Christ.

Through the Lord's Supper we can also look around us and recognize the unity that we find in Christ alone—unity that celebrates the diverse people God has created and finds joy in the ways God has gathered us. Who but God could gather bankers from Manhattan's Wall Street, children who live on the streets of Mexico City, elderly worshipers in Chinese house churches, and First Nations artists from the far reaches of the Yukon Territory, all around one table?

All baptized followers of Christ are part of this body. At the Lord's Supper, we remember Christ's sacrifice, celebrate our deliverance from slavery to sin, and experience communion with God and each other. Christ is the one who delivered us and who unites us with God and with all of those who place their hope in Christ. This is the diverse body of Christ that we belong to. What a privilege we have to worship God together around the table!

WONDERING

- What are the gifts of looking back, looking forward, and looking around us as the body of Christ?
- How does choosing to find our hope in Jesus Christ take courage?
- How does knowing that we belong to the larger body of Christ around the globe change the way we experience the Lord's Supper?

TEACHING

- In this letter to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul stresses the idea that the people of God are the body of Christ. Sometimes contemporary readers misunderstand Paul’s talk about the body as referring to our personal bodies. But almost every time Paul refers to the body in this letter, he is talking about the collective body of Christ. This is what Paul expresses his frustration with the Corinthians about in 11:17-22. Paul believed that it was of critical importance that those who participate in the Lord’s Supper examine not only their individual lives, but, more important, their place in the larger body of Christ.
- In 1 Corinthians 11:23, Paul points out that Christ instituted this Supper “on the night he was betrayed.” Betrayal is a feeling with which many middle school students are familiar. Many of us know what it is like to feel alone, without a friend in the world. We are blessed to have a Savior who knows intimately the pain of betrayal and isolation. It can also comfort us to know that, in the midst of his pain, Christ chose to be with the very people who hurt him. He serves as a powerful example of grace for all of us.

--Rev. Shannon Jammal-Hollemans

SUPPLIES AND PREPARATION

Steps	Time	Supplies	Preparation
Step 1: Smell Me a Story	10-15	<input type="checkbox"/> 5-7 fragrant items, including a piece of bread dipped in grape juice <input type="checkbox"/> A plastic baggie or container for each item <input type="checkbox"/> 1 paper lunch bag to hold each baggie or container	Select items from around your house or yard and put them in plastic baggies or containers. Put each baggie or container in a paper lunch bag.
Step 2: The Cup and the Bread	15-20	<input type="checkbox"/> A loaf of bread on a plate; grape juice <input type="checkbox"/> A sturdy pitcher and cup (preferably the actual communion set) <input type="checkbox"/> 4 copies of reproducible page 11, a readers’ theater <input type="checkbox"/> Candles and lighter or battery-operated candles, optional	Bring these items to class to set out as the communion elements.
Step 3: Looking Back, Looking Around, and Looking Forward	15	<input type="checkbox"/> Reproducible pages 12-14, one of each <input type="checkbox"/> Prayer prompts, reproducible page 15, print one page per person <input type="checkbox"/> Dear Family letter, reproducible page 16, print or email, one per person <input type="checkbox"/> For remaining supplies please refer to the supply and preparation lists for Stations 1, 2 and 3, found in Step 3.	If possible, set up the prayer stations in your room (or an alternate space) before class begins.

Step 1 Smell Me a Story

Today, as you focus on the sacrament of the Lord's Supper—a meal that invites us to experience God's presence in a multisensory way—you'll start by playing with mystery smells and the memories they evoke.

Before the lesson, gather several (5-7 or more) scented items from around your home or yard. These may include things like buttered popcorn, grass clippings, a pine sprig, an orange or another fruit, a burnt marshmallow or small pieces of burnt logs from a campfire, a flower, sunscreen, dirt, a dab of perfume on paper, aftershave, playdough, a cookie, and so on. The final item you'll need to include is a piece of bread dipped in grape juice. You'll save this for last as an introduction to the lesson topic.

Place each item in a ziplock bag or a plastic storage container. Place the bag or container in a paper lunch bag so that the kids can smell the scent without easily seeing what is inside.

As everyone arrives, greet each person warmly and ask them about their week. When you're ready to begin, invite the kids to find seats and explain that you're going to start off the lesson with a game called "Smell Me a Story."

Explain the following rules: Inside each paper lunch bag is a container that holds something with a strong, distinct smell. You, the leader, will open the first container and pass it to the first person in the circle. That person will open the bag and smell what's inside and then pass it to the next person. It's important that each person smells what is in the bag *without looking into the bag and without shouting out what it is*.

Emphasize that the point of the game is not to guess what the object in the bag is (that should be obvious), but to share a story that the smell reminds them of. When everyone has had a chance to smell what's in the first bag, ask if anyone has a story to share that came to mind as they sniffed the bag's contents. Ask several volunteers to share.

As you can imagine, this game could take a while if you have a big group and everyone has a story to share! So call on a few people each round until you've heard from everyone.

When you're ready to wrap up, end with one final smell—the bread dipped in grape juice. Explain that today's lesson is about the Lord's Supper, a meal that invites us to use all our senses to remember Jesus's sacrifice on our behalf and to meet him at the table with all of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Open with this prayer, or use words of your own:

Dear God, at the Lord's Supper you invite us to taste and see that the Lord is good! Help us to learn about and anticipate celebrating this special meal together. Amen.

TIP

Be sure to include one or more items that you connect with a particular memory—like the smell of sunscreen and spending childhood days at your grandparents' cottage. Be ready to share these stories with the group as you invite them to share their stories.

TIP

If you have a smart phone you may want to bring some sounds along too—audio clips of things like rain or fireworks are easy to find online.

Step 2 The Cup and Bread

Choose four confident readers to share a readers' theater version of passages from 1 Corinthians 10 and 11, found on reproducible page 12. Pass out the scripts and give the readers a moment to practice their parts as you walk with your group to the place in your church where communion is served.

If it is not a communion Sunday, ask someone to help you carry the pitcher of juice and bread you've prepared to look like the communion elements. Place them where they would usually rest for the

Lord's Supper. Then direct your group to a comfortable place for everyone to sit while the readers stand near the communion elements and share the passages below.

TIP

If the sanctuary is not available during your lesson time, pass out the scripts and ask the readers to practice in the hall while you enlist others to help you set out and arrange the bread and juice. If possible, bring a few candles to set around the elements, and light them (battery-operated flameless candles also work well). Then dim the lights in the room to draw attention to the table. When everyone's ready, invite the readers to sit among the group and share the Bible passages.

The Lord's Supper Reading

Reader 1: 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 says,

Reader 2: The Lord Jesus,

Reader 3: on the night he was betrayed,

Reader 2: took bread,

All Readers: and when he had given thanks,

Reader 1: he broke it

Reader 3: he broke it

Reader 2: he broke it

Reader 1: and said,

Reader 4: "This is my body,

All Readers: which is for you;

Reader 4: do this

Readers 3 & 4: in remembrance of me."

Reader 1: In the same way,

Reader 2: after supper

Reader 1: he took the cup, saying,

Reader 4: "This cup is

All Readers: the new covenant

Reader 4: in my blood;

Reader 3: do this, whenever you drink it,

Reader 3 & 4: in remembrance of me.

Reader 2: in remembrance of me."

All Readers: For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the

Lord's death until he comes.

Reader 1: 1 Corinthians 10:16-17 declares,

Reader 2: Is not the cup of thanksgiving

Reader 3: for which we give thanks

Reader 1: a participation in the blood of Christ?

Reader 2: And is not the bread that we break

Readers 2 & 3: a participation in

Reader 3: the body of Christ?

Reader 4: Because there is one loaf,

All Readers: we, who are many,

Reader 1: are one body,

Reader 2: one body,

All Readers: for we all share the one loaf.

After the reading, use some or all of the questions below to talk together about the Lord's Supper.

- **What sounds, smells, sights, textures, and tastes did the disciples experience during the first Lord's Supper?**

Along with the smells of wine and bread and the sound of pouring and words spoken, encourage your group to think more deeply about the circle of friends they saw, the feel of the bread and the brush of hands as it passed from one person to the next, making eye contact with Jesus and others around the table, perhaps quiet words exchanged, the taste of the elements. Wonder together whether the wine and bread tasted different to the disciples now that they'd become such an important symbol.

- **Which of the sounds, smells, sights, textures, and tastes remain the same or similar in the way our church practices the Lord's Supper?**
- **What would you have been wondering if you were there at the Last Supper to experience the meal firsthand?**
- **Jesus said, "Do this in remembrance of me." What are some of the things that the Lord's Supper might remind us of?**

Share with your group that Christian traditions vary when it comes to how we understand the nature of the bread and wine at the table. Some believe that it mysteriously becomes the real body and blood of Jesus. Others believe that this meal is simply a time to pause and remember the amazing things that Jesus did for us. The Reformed tradition lands somewhere in the middle—while we don't believe we are actually eating Jesus's body and drinking his blood, neither do we believe that this meal is only about remembering him.

Instead, we believe that when we eat the bread and drink the wine or juice, we are sharing in the body and blood of Jesus—receiving and proclaiming the truth of his death on our behalf. And so we meet Jesus in a special way each time we celebrate the Lord's Supper. He is the host of the meal, gathering us in, just as he did with the disciples at the Last Supper. Through the bread and the wine he feeds our souls. He gives us a way to participate in his sacrifice, which freed us from our sins and won for us the promise of new life.

Like the disciples at the Last Supper, when we come around the table we are joining with others in the body of Christ, meeting our Savior, and receiving him as we receive the bread and the wine or juice. It is more than simply a ceremony. It is a meal that strengthens our faith the way food strengthens our bodies.

- **If you have already participated in the Lord's Supper, how have you met Jesus in this meal?**

Note: Be sure to take the time here to share what it means to you to participate in the Lord's Supper, and perhaps a memory of a time when Jesus met you through this sacrament in an especially meaningful way.

- **If you haven't yet joined in the Lord's Supper, what do you look forward to about it?**
- **Eating the bread and drinking the wine or juice is an act of faith. What are you claiming (or proclaiming) about Jesus and yourself when you participate?**

As your conversation wraps up, invite your group to walk back to the space that is set up with our prayer stations. If you brought the bread and juice along, be sure to bring it back with you to add to stations 1 and 2.

Step 3 Looking Back, Looking Around, Looking Forward

If you didn't set up the prayer stations before class began, enlist the help of your group in assembling these three stations now:

Station 1: Looking Back

- Arrange a blanket and/or pillows in a circle on the floor.
- Place a serving tray containing a pitcher of grape juice and a sturdy cup (from Step 2) in the center of the circle.
- Scatter the prayer prompt pages (reproducible page 15) around the circle.
- Place the "Station 1" sign near this prayer station.

Station 2: Looking Around

- Set up a table with a large square of butcher paper in the center.
- Place the loaf of communion bread (from Step 2) on a plate in the center of the butcher paper
- Place several bold-colored crayons around the table (blue, green, red, purple, brown, black).
- On one edge of the butcher paper write these words from today's Bible reading: "We who are many are one body, for we all share the same loaf."
- Place the "Station 2" instructions on or near the table.

Station 3: Looking Forward

- Place a stack of blank paper, several pairs of scissors, and pencils/pens in the area designated for this prayer station.
- Use masking tape or painter's tape to form a starting line and a finishing line with 12 or more feet (4 meters) between them. Use additional tape to make one or more arrows after the starting line, pointing toward the finish line. After the finish line make some additional lines fanning out like sunbeams. (See drawing below.)



- Hang the "Station 3" instructions on the wall near the starting line.

When everything is ready, explain that the Lord's Supper provides an opportunity for us to look back, look around, and look forward. We look back with gratitude at the sacrifice Christ made for us, look forward with hope to the time when Christ will return to welcome us into his kingdom, and look around in unity and wonder at the diverse body of Christ, gathered by God for a mission.

Explain that you'll be moving as a group through each prayer station in order. You will read the station sign (or invite a volunteer to read it) and then give everyone a few minutes to do the activities described. If someone is finished sooner than others he or she may wait quietly or proceed to the next station to read the station sign and then wait for the rest of the group to finish up. When a number of people begin moving to the next station it will be a good indicator that it's time to move on.

TIP

This station invites the each person to trace his or her hands to create a wreath of hands around the communion bread. To make the unity of the body more evident, invite several people in your congregation to trace one of their hands and write their name, age, and where they were born in it before today's lesson so that your group will be adding to a ring that already exists. At the end of the lesson, ask an artistic member of your group to draw a loaf of bread in the center of the circle. Then set the station up again in a place where others in your church will encounter it and add to it. Make an announcement or put a note in the bulletin to encourage others to participate. After a few weeks, move the art you've created to a wall in your classroom or elsewhere in the church.

It may be helpful for you to guide the group in these ways:

At Station 1: Invite someone to read the station sign. Then help everyone find a cozy space to sit around the circle. Begin by taking the pitcher and pouring it yourself, speaking the words of the prayer out loud or silently. Then pass the tray to the person next to you, pick up a prayer prompt page, and begin to silently pray using it.

At Station 2: Help your group trace their own or each other's hands so that the tracings link, pinky to thumb, forming a wreath of hands around the bread. When it's time, lead the group, or select someone to lead the group, in prayer for the people whose names appear in the wreath of hands.

At Station 3: As people finish writing on their foot tracings, invite them to walk the path at their own pace, doing a victory dance (consider demonstrating your best version of an NFL touchdown dance!) or a high-five as they get to the finish line. It's okay to let this station get a little noisy.

When you've finished the prayer stations, gather your group in a circle to share a closing blessing: **Jesus said, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty." Thank you, Lord Jesus. Amen.**

EASY EXTRAS:

1. Opening Activity: A Special Tradition

Traditions are precious reminders of who we are and who we belong to. Today, as your class talks about the Lord's Supper—a sacred tradition for the family of God, the body of Christ—consider some of the special traditions in your life. Prepare to share a story about a tradition that helps you feel connected to the people involved and reminds you of a common bond you share. Perhaps there is a particular way your family celebrates birthdays, a Christmas or New Year's ritual you hold dear, or an occasion that draws a group of your friends together every year. Keep your story brief but heartfelt. Focus on how the tradition began, what it means to you now, and why you look forward to it year after year. If possible, bring along some pictures or other mementos to help bring your story to life.

Before everyone arrives, arrange your photos or mementos in a place where everyone will notice them as they walk in. Greet everyone warmly and let them know you'll share the story behind the photos/items as soon as everyone arrives. When your whole group is there, open in prayer using these words, or words of your own:

Dear Lord, thank you for special traditions in our lives that remind us of who we are and how much we are loved. Thank you for making us a part of the family of God, the body of Christ, and for gathering us at this church. As we come together today to learn and worship, we pray for all other Christ-followers around the world who are gathered to do the same. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Next, tell the story about the special tradition in your life, and ask your group to share any family traditions or annual events that are important to them, and what makes them so special. Take the time to listen as one story leads to another and the group connects around the idea of traditions.

Then introduce the lesson by sharing that today you'll be talking about a special tradition shared by the body of Christ worldwide. Ask if they can guess what it is. Express that just as the traditions we share with friends and family help us feel connected to the ones we love, so too, the Lord's Supper is a tradition for the family of God that draws us near to Jesus and to each other as the body of Christ.

2. Prayer Station Option

If you have a group that would enjoy quietly exploring the stations on their own, simply explain that each station includes a paper that describes the activities they should do while there. Invite them to visit the stations in whatever order they like, and encourage them to spend between 2 and 5 minutes at each station. Remind them that these are prayer stations, intended to help them talk to God and reflect on the meaning of the Lord's Supper, so they should remain focused and respectful of others. Send them on their way, and then lead by example, exploring each station on your own, participating in the activities, and being available to help if someone is confused.

The Lord's Supper

A reading from selected passages in 1 Corinthians 10 and 11 (*note: repetition added for emphasis*)

- Reader 1:** 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 says,
- Reader 2:** The Lord Jesus,
- Reader 3:** on the night he was betrayed,
- Reader 2:** took bread,
- All Readers:** and when he had given thanks,
- Reader 1:** he broke it
- Reader 3:** he broke it
- Reader 2:** he broke it
- Reader 1:** and said,
- Reader 4:** “This is my body,
- All Readers:** which is for you;
- Reader 4:** do this
- Readers 3 & 4:** in remembrance of me.”
- Reader 1:** In the same way,
- Reader 2:** after supper
- Reader 1:** he took the cup, saying,
- Reader 4:** “This cup is
- All Readers:** the new covenant
- Reader 4:** in my blood;
- Reader 3:** do this, whenever you drink it,
- Reader 3 & 4:** in remembrance of me.
- Reader 2:** in remembrance of me.”
- All Readers:** For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.
- Reader 1:** 1 Corinthians 10:16-17 declares,
- Reader 2:** Is not the cup of thanksgiving
- Reader 3:** for which we give thanks
- Reader 1:** a participation in the blood of Christ?
- Reader 2:** And is not the bread that we break
- Readers 2 & 3:** a participation in
- Reader 3:** the body of Christ?
- Reader 4:** Because there is one loaf,
- All Readers:** we, who are many,
- Reader 1:** are one body,
- Reader 2:** one body,
- All Readers:** for we all share the one loaf.

STATION 1: LOOKING BACK

When we take the bread and the wine or juice, we look back to remember the sacrifice Christ made by bearing the punishment that our sins deserved.

Take the pitcher of juice and pour it into the cup. Listen to the sound of the juice swirling as you pour. Whisper this prayer silently or out loud: “Thank you Jesus, for pouring out your life for me.”

Sit quietly for a moment and use one of the prayer prompt pages to talk with God.

STATION 2: LOOKING AROUND

At the Lord's Supper we can look around us and recognize the unity that we find in Christ alone. The Lord's Supper reminds us that we belong to Jesus and that through him we are connected to all other believers worldwide. Together we are the body of Christ, called to be God's agents of change in the world!

Who but God could gather young teens from this church with bankers from Manhattan's Wall Street, children who live on the streets of Mexico City, elderly worshipers in Chinese house churches, and First Nations artists from the far reaches of the Yukon Territory, all around one family table?

1 Corinthians 10:17 declares: "We, who are many, are one body, for we all share the same loaf." Celebrate the unity we find in Christ by creating a wreath of hands around the communion loaf. Trace your hand so that your pinky connects to the thumb of another hand tracing. After you've traced your hand, write in the palm of your tracing your name, age, and the city, state or province, and country where you were born.

Then take a step back and pray silently (or together with your group) for two other people whose hands and names are included in the circle surrounding the loaf. Ask that God would fill them with the Holy Spirit and use them to share the love of Jesus with others.

STATION 3: LOOKING FORWARD

The Lord's Supper helps us to look forward with faith and hope in the resurrected Savior who will one day return to make all things new and bring us into his kingdom.

This hope we have in Jesus, and the grace we receive when we meet him at the Lord's Supper, gives us the strength we need to walk each day with God, to follow Jesus through the difficult times in our lives, and to reflect God's love to others.

Take a pencil or pen and trace both of your feet on a piece of paper. (Don't worry, you can keep your shoes on). Use the scissors to cut out your tracings. As you do, think about the strength you need to walk each day with God. Write a prayer to God on the soles of each of your traced feet, asking God to lead you forward and to give you whatever you need most right now to follow him.

When you're finished, walk from the starting line to the finish line, setting your footprints (word side down) somewhere on the path as you walk. When you get to the end of the path, imagine what life will be like in the new heavens and the new earth. Do a touchdown-style victory dance, or high-five a neighbor, to celebrate the hope we have in Jesus.

PRAYER PROMPTS

Use some or all of these prayer starters to spend some time talking with God.

Dear Lord Jesus, thank you for pouring out your life for me!

You are . . .

Help me to . . .

Forgive me for . . .

Remind me that . . .

Show me . . .

Use me to . . .

Thank you for . . .

Amen.

Dear Family,

Today we explored passages from 1 Corinthians 10 and 11 that helped us think about the sacrament of the Lord's Supper in deeper and richer ways.

That's important for all of us--children, teens, and adults! We're always learning and discovering new meaning and new depth in the Lord's Supper. We're always on a journey of drawing closer to the powerful Savior who loves us so much that he gave his body and blood for our sins.

Our group talked about the sacrament in three ways: as a time to look back, look around, and look forward.

We look back with gratitude for the sacrifice Christ made for us. Jesus died so we can have new life.

We also look around at the amazingly diverse body of Christ, gathered for a mission. We think not only of people in our congregation but of Christians around the globe. Who but God could gather bankers from Manhattan's Wall Street, children who live on the streets of Mexico City, elderly worshipers in Chinese house churches, and First Nations artists from the far reaches of the Yukon Territory, all around one table?

And finally we look forward with hope to the time when Christ will return to welcome us into his kingdom.

Next time you prepare to celebrate the Lord's Supper, spend a little time as a family talking about what it means to look back, look around, and look forward as you take part in this holy meal.

And ask your young teen to tell you about the happy dances we did as a group today!

Sincerely,