

CONNECTIONAL LAY COUNCIL

DEPARTMENT OF LAY MINISTRY
OF THE
CHRISTIAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH



AUGUST 2007

PROGRAM OF STUDY

APPROACHING THE LORD'S TABLE:
THE PREPARATION FOR AND RECEIVING OF
THE HOLY COMMUNION - *WHAT WORSHIPERS SHOULD*
RESPONSIBLY KNOW, UNDERSTAND, AND EMBRACE

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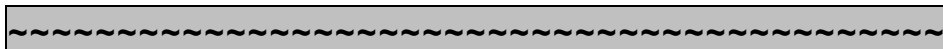
INTRODUCTION

What worshipers know, understand, and embrace relative to the mental and physical preparation for receiving the Holy Communion, is vital to the life of the communion service and to the continued life and integrity of the C.M.E. Church.

We have, thus, called on *Mrs. Maxine McClury, President of the Connectional Stewardess Ministry and a member of Phillips Temple CME Church, in Indianapolis, Indiana, to provide the content for the August Program of Study. As the first elected President of the Connectional Stewardesses Ministry, Mrs. McClury has served, energetically and dutifully since her election at the 1997 Lay Institute, held in Louisville, Kentucky.* One will not find a harder working Connectional Officer than Maxine McClury. Over the past ten years she has written a stewardess manual and published the stewardess newsletter, which she named *"THE SPIRIT"*, on a regular basis. In addition, her consistency and guidance during Holy Communion Services, at connectional and national meetings of our Zion, have been a tremendous help and blessing to the Church.

As you look for opportunities to teach and are inspired, encouraged, and educated by this lesson, please forward your thoughts of appreciation to our Stewardess President. Her contact information is:

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APPROACHING THE LORD'S TABLE:
THE PREPARATION FOR AND RECEIVING OF THE HOLY COMMUNION
~WHAT WORSHIPERS SHOULD RESPONSIBLY KNOW, UNDERSTAND, AND EMBRACE~

The worshiper must be aware and appreciative of the process and procedure for serving and receiving the Holy Communion. Being a Methodist means we have a set of systematic beliefs, a way of life, and directions for every day living. The Book of Discipline is the spiritual and legal guide for the expression of our faith as the people of God and the practice of our polity as members of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church.

What we believe is found in our Book of Discipline under the title Articles of Religion. The C.M.E. Church has 25 Articles of Religion, which make up our theological beliefs and attitudes. Article #16 speaks on the Sacraments of the C.M.E. Church. Sacraments, ordained of Christ, are certain signs of grace, and God's good will toward us. There are *two sacraments ordained of Christ in the Gospel; they are Baptism and the Lord's Supper*. The justification for classifying Baptism and Holy Communion as Sacraments is because they are associated together in the New Testament. Christ instituted both; He commanded that they be observed by His followers and they are visible symbols of divine acts.

Every first Sunday, in the majority of C.M.E. Churches, the Lord's Supper is observed. Preparing the elements and assisting with the Holy Communion is a sacred task for the Board of Stewardesses. *It is a special service of faithfulness, based on the words of Jesus Christ who said, "This Do In Remembrance of Me".* It is also because the faithful women were the lasts to leave the crowd and the first at the tomb of Jesus on the morning of the Resurrection.

The primary duty of Stewardesses is to prepare the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and assist serving during its administration. The Lord's Supper is so sacred that every effort must be made to avoid embarrassing acts by not knowing what to do during the celebration. *When Stewardesses meet (generally on Saturday morning) to prepare the elements, they should always begin their work with prayer.* While working they must maintain an attitude of reverence and remember the sacredness of the occasion.

We as Christian Methodist believe that everything done at the Lord's Supper is to be done in decency and in order. Every aspect of the observance of the Lord's Supper has a distinct purpose.

There is a Methodist tradition in going to the Communion Table and partaking of the elements. Officers are to answer the invitation and be the first to kneel at the altar. Following the church officers, the members are invited to commune. Following the members uniform workers are next. First the choir and then the ushers. Stewardesses commune together at the last Table.

The center of the service should always be on the Holy Communion. It should be the only focal point of the service, not the preacher, the choir, soloist, or other persons. From the beginning of the service until the end, Holy Communion should be the object of everyone's attention. Emphasis should be on hymns and songs that reflect the sacrifice on the Cross. Communion is not to be carried to musicians sitting at the piano or organ. They should come to the Communion Table and offer their confession on bended knees like everybody else.

Announcements or other introductions *should never be made after the Lord's Supper is completed.* Worshipers should leave the celebration spiritually renewed.

Because the Lord's Supper was prescribed by Jesus Christ himself, the church should be careful that it is properly administered; only an Elder properly ordained by the Church is to administer this Sacrament. The elements used at the Lord's Supper are Bread and Wine. Together they represent the flesh and blood of Jesus. Together they symbolize the sacrifice of the very life of Christ.

- Bread considered the symbol of the body of Christ is also viewed as the staff of life.
- The bread broke in pieces represents the broken body of Jesus Christ.
- Wine is symbolic of Christ's shed blood.

In 1 Corinthians 11: 23-26, when Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, He took bread and when He had given thanks He broke it and said, "TAKE EAT, THIS IS MY BODY WHICH IS BROKEN FOR YOU, DO THIS IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME". He also took the cup saying, "THIS CUP IS THE NEW COVENANT IN MY BLOOD, THIS DO AS OFTEN AS YOU DRINK IT IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME. FOR AS OFTEN AS YOU EAT THIS BREAD AND DRINK THIS CUP, YOU PROCLAIM THE LORD'S DEATH TILL HE COMES".

Because Jesus has promised to be present in the breaking of the bread and the drinking of the cup, we must insure that the elements are properly consecrated. The prayer of consecration is the prescribed prayer and must be prayed by properly ordained Elders.

The Holy Communion is not to be accepted as a Sacrament of sorrow and mourning. Neither as a ritual for remembering a dead Jesus. Instead, it is accepted as a joyful celebration of Jesus who lives in us and goes with us out into the world. We rejoice at God’s grace in reconciliation. We celebrate a new beginning and a new covenant. The Lord’s Supper is the eternal reminder of God’s act of love for humankind. In this act, Jesus who was crucified on the shameful cross and raised from the dead, became the foundation of the Church. For no other foundation can any man lay greater than that of Jesus Christ.

Source: “The Lord’s Table: The Parishioners Responsibility in Receiving the Holy Communion” - Maxine McClury, President, Connectional Stewardess Ministry