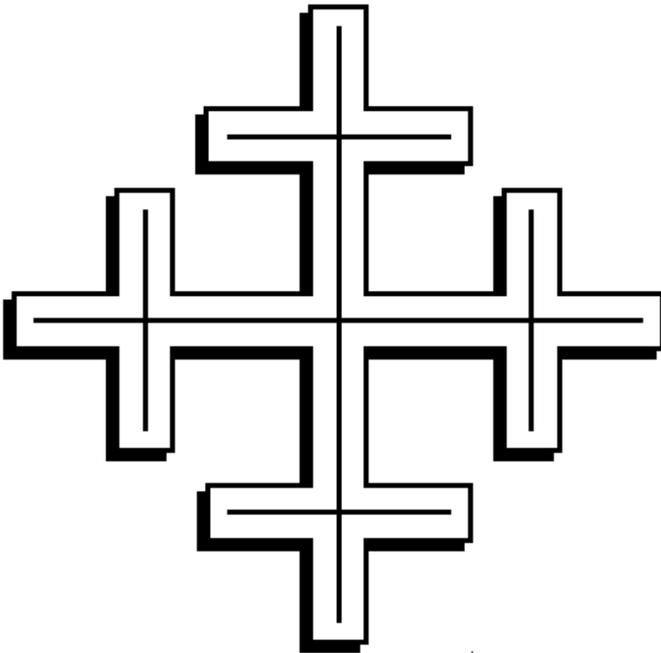


**THE  
COMMUNION ASSISTANT  
HANDBOOK**



**Peace Lutheran Church  
10625 Ranch Road 620 North  
Austin, TX 78726  
[www.peaceaustin.org](http://www.peaceaustin.org)**

# **Table of Contents**

<b>The Ministry of the Communion Assistant</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Communion Assistant Procedures</b>	
<b>Before the Service</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>During the Service</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Communion Distribution</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Communion Station (Diagram)</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Communion Distribution Procedures</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Distribution with the Tray</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Distribution with the Chalice</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Communing the Ministers</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Scheduling</b>	<b>7</b>

# THE MINISTRY OF THE COMMUNION ASSISTANT

The person who assists the presiding minister and assisting minister at the sharing of Holy Communion is called the **Communion Assistant**. The Communion Assistant is charged with one of the most important assignments of the liturgy - the distribution of Holy Communion to the congregation.

## COMMUNION ASSISTANT RESPONSIBILITIES

### Before the service

1. Arrive 15 minutes prior to the worship services. For festival services, arrive 30 minutes early.
2. Sit in a chair on the outside aisle so that you can easily get out when it comes time for the offertory procession and to approach the altar for the distribution.

### During the service

#### Offertory Procession

3. During the collection of the offering, you should go to the kitchen serving window to get the bread and wine. Once the offering is collected, the offertory procession (ushers and communion assistants) will form at the inside of the glass Sanctuary door until the offertory hymn has begun.
  - A. The Offertory (Offering Hymn/Offering Song/Offering Verse) is a processional hymn to signal and accompany the presentation of the assembly's offerings of bread, wine, monetary tithes and other gifts. Three people are needed for the procession - 1 or 2 ushers and 1 communion assistants and 1 Acolyte (depending on service).
  - B. After all the gifts have been gathered, the ushers and communion assistants form a procession at rear glass door of the sanctuary. The first usher, carrying the offering plates leads the procession. The second usher (or communion assistant) who is carrying the bread follows about 5 feet behind, and the communion assistant with the wine (both the chalice and flagon) follows another 5 feet behind. These distances are necessary to provide an orderly presentation

method at the altar. Additional chalices are needed for continuous distribution of communion. In this case, one usher and three Communion assistants will participate in the procession.

### **Order for the Offertory Procession**

- Usher with the offering plates
- Usher/Communion assistant with the bread
- Communion assistant with the chalice and server

### **Order for the Procession with Continuous Distribution of Communion**

- Usher with the offering plates
  - Communion assistant with the bread
  - First communion assistant with the chalices and flagon.
  - Second communion assistant with the chalices and flagon.
- The Offertory Procession begins with the singing of the Offertory. The usher and communion assistants wait by the glass sanctuary door until the Offertory has begun. They can then proceed to the rear aisle by the baptismal font and begin their procession to the altar.
  - At the altar, the offering plates are handed to the acolyte. Then the usher steps aside, allowing the bread and wine to be presented to the assisting minister. Following the presentation of the gifts, the ushers and communion assistants return to the rear of the church.

## **Communion Distribution**

4. Immediately following the Lamb of God (Agnus Dei) the communion assistant(s) should come forward and stand behind the altar. The presiding minister will hand you either the chalice and a purificator (cloth napkin) or a tray of individual cups.

### **Forms of Communion Distribution**

Peace Lutheran uses two forms of communion distribution. When table communion is used, the people gather around the Lord's Table in a circle. Continuous distribution is used when we expect to commune a large group of people such as on Easter Day or Christmas Eve. In

continuous distribution, persons participating continuously approach the communion station at the front of the altar.

### **Table Communion**

5. Persons receiving communion will first receive the bread and then the wine from either the individual cup or the chalice. The communion assistants walk clock-wise around the altar following the assisting minister. Adequate space between the ministers needs to be maintained. Normally, three communicants should separate each minister to avoid the feeling of being rushed.

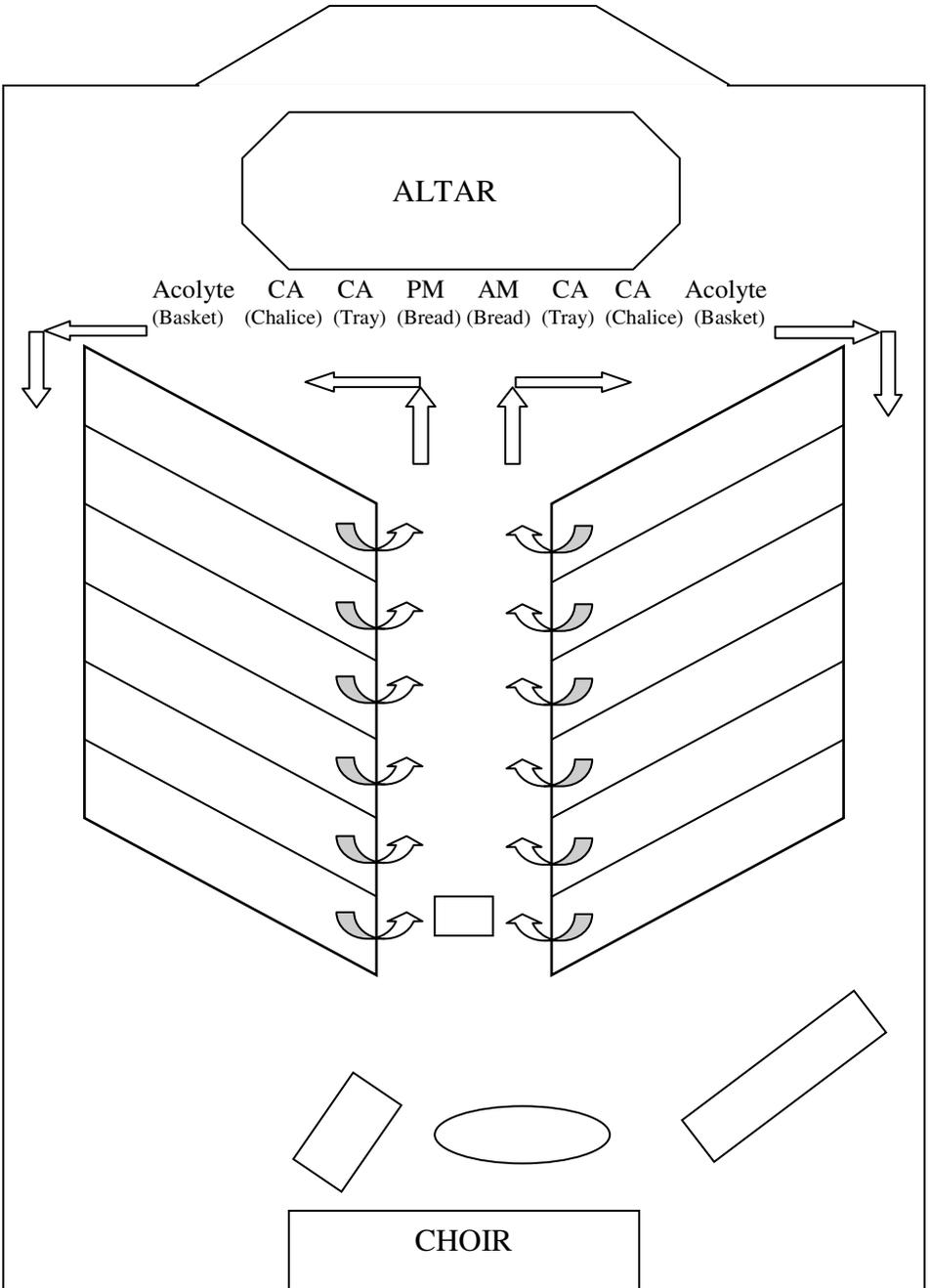
### **Continuous Communion**

6. The presiding minister, assisting minister, communion assistants, and acolytes will form a line (Communion station, diagram on page 4) on the floor in front of the altar platform. The communicants will come in two lines down the center aisle, walk in front of you and then return to their seats by the side aisle.

The presiding and assisting ministers will stand in the center to distribute the bread. Two communion assistants will stand on each side of them to distribute the wine. **Leave plenty of room between yourself and the other ministers** so that people receive take the bread and then go to either communion assistant for the wine. At the ends of the line will be acolytes with a basket to collect the empty glasses.

Another acolyte will be the *server*. The server's job is to bring you more wine from the flagon to refill the chalice or to bring you another full tray and take away the empty tray. This way the communion assistant can continuously serve the wine without having to walk back and forth to the altar. The altar guild will provide two chalices, purificators, and extra trays when continuous communion is needed.

# COMMUNION STATION



7. The church expects the communion assistants to deal personally with each individual communicant. For this reason, the rubrics direct that as the wine is given, these words are said to each person receiving Communion: "The blood of Christ shed for you." Eye contact should be established with the communicant as these words are spoken. These words make it clear that a wondrous gift is being given to those who come to receive.

### **Distribution with the tray**

8. When distributing the wine from the tray, lower the tray to within easy reach of the communicant. Keep the tray level and turn it so that the full side is toward the communicant. When your tray is empty, give the empty tray to the acolyte and get another full tray from the altar. Generally, a new tray can be used for each table without completely emptying the tray. However, if there is a large crowd at the service, you will most likely have to completely empty the tray before getting a new one.

The age of communing varies from family to family. If in doubt if the child receives bread, discreetly inquire of the parent if the child is communing.

Toward the end of the distribution, you may have to make up a new tray from unused glasses scattered about the other trays. The center ring of the tray contains grape juice. Do not mix the wine and the grape juice. We are currently using a non-artificially colored grape juice that is lighter in color than the wine. Keep the grape juice in the center ring.

### **Distribution with the chalice**

9. A purificator is always used when distributing the wine from the chalice. After each communicant receives the wine, wipe the rim and turn the chalice a quarter turn.
10. Most chalices are made with a node stem. This enables the Communion assistant to lock the index and middle fingers around the chalice stem to maintain necessary stability and leverage during ministrations. Try not to let go of the chalice. When the chalice is offered, the communicant should grasp the base of the chalice to assist the minister in lifting the cup to their mouth. You may let the communicant control the chalice without removing your hand from the stem. This is mainly a safety procedure to ensure that the chalice is not dropped accidentally.

## Communing the ministers

11. Once the congregation has communed, the presiding and assisting ministers and Communion assistants will commune together. This is common table manners. The hosts do not eat before their guests. To receive the bread, extend the palm of your right hand to the minister with your left hand directly under the right. After receiving the bread you may say "Amen". To receive the wine from the chalice, grasp the base of the chalice to assist the minister in lifting the cup to your mouth. After receiving the wine you may say "Amen".

## Scheduling

You can choose to be assigned to the 8:00, 9:30 or 11:00 am worship service. All communion assistants will alternate at evening services (i.e. Ash Wednesday, Holy Week, and Christmas Eve). The church office will email out a schedule four times a year and a monthly schedule is included in the Monthly Messenger mailed out each month. The current and following weeks worship leaders are currently listed in the Weekly Messenger. **If you are unable to attend your assigned service, you are responsible for arranging your own replacement.** For your convenience, home phone numbers and emails are included separately with the schedule. Once you have found someone to switch times with you, call the church office (258-2293) to inform the Office Administrator or email the office at [peaceaustin@sbcglobal.net](mailto:peaceaustin@sbcglobal.net) of the change no later than the Wednesday prior to your scheduled time. You may call after office hours and leave a message on the voicemail.

## Acknowledgments

The Communion Assistant Handbook was prepared by Kevin Anderson and the Board of Spiritual Life, revised Sept. 2005, August 07, and Bryan Rust, August 09. Additional material was taken from the following resources: Manual on the Liturgy - Lutheran Book of Worship, by Philip H. Pfatteicher & Carlos R. Messerli, copyright 1979, Augsburg Publishing House. Assisting Ministers Handbook, by Ralph R. Van Loon, copyright 1986, Parish Life Press, Philadelphia. Parish Worship Handbook, by Ralph R. Van Loon, copyright 1979, Parish Life Press, Philadelphia.