

Communion
Oakwood Christian Church Position Paper
July 2009



A fundamental goal of Oakwood Christian Church is to bring unity to all Christians while standing firm on the truth of God's Word. It is our conviction that the two goals work in tandem, that returning to the fundamentals of God's Word will bring unity to the churches. Therefore, we are attempting to restore the doctrine and practices of the New Testament church not only because we believe the Bible to be our source of truth, but also in hopes that such restoration will bring unity to all Christians.

It is our goal, therefore, to imitate the New Testament church in our observance of the Lord's Supper. Because the New Testament and other historical documents indicate that the early church observed the Lord's Supper every week (Acts 20:7), we also participate in communion every week during our regular worship services. Because the New Testament does not dictate how often a Christian should take communion (Jesus simply said, "As often as you do this, do it in memory of me"), we do not consider the rate of observance to be a test of fellowship. If an individual Christian or another congregation decides to take communion more or less often than once a week, or on a different day of the week, this should not be cause for division. However, we do believe that the Lord's Supper has real spiritual significance for the Christian, and therefore to observe communion only periodically seems unwise. Theologians have never argued that worshipping or taking up offering once a week is too often, and in the same way we believe that weekly is not too often to remember the sacrifice of our Lord for us.

Oakwood does not accept the Roman Catholic teaching of transubstantiation - the belief that the bread and wine literally turn into the body and blood of Jesus in the Lord's Supper. The Bible refers to communion as a memorial (Lk. 22:19) and a participation in the body and blood of Christ (1 Cor. 10:16). Jesus said "This is my body" while he was yet among them, so it seems obvious he was speaking symbolically, and the Bible never refers to communion as a re-sacrifice of Christ. In fact, the New Testament says Christ died "once for all" (Heb. 7:27) and refers negatively to "crucifying Christ again," reserving this term for apostates who attempt to return to Christianity (Heb. 6:6). Jesus did say, "My body is real food and my blood is real drink" (John 6:55), but later he indicated to his disciples that he was speaking spiritually (John 6:63). Therefore we do accept that communion has real spiritual significance, providing real spiritual nourishment to the Christian, but this is done without a literal transformation of the elements into the body and blood of Christ.

According to the New Testament, participation in communion serves several purposes. Each participant is challenged to "examine himself," remembering the sacrifice Christ made for him or her on the cross (1 Cor. 11:28-29). Beyond personal experience, however, the Lord's Supper is also a "communing together" with other believers, an intimate time of fellowship when we declare our unity through Jesus Christ. "Because there is one loaf," Paul wrote, "we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf" (1 Cor. 10:17). In addition, the proclamation of the Lord's Supper reminds believers of Christ's imminent return. "Whenever

you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (1 Cor. 11:26).

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