



# **The Lord's Supper**

## **Workbook: Coming to the Table**

**Writers:** Ronald P. Byars and Eva Stimson

Published especially for use in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), by CMP, a ministry of the Presbyterian Mission Agency, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Louisville, Kentucky.

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations in this publication are from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) of the Bible, copyright © 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. Used by permission. Every effort has been made to trace copyrights on the materials included in this book. If any copyrighted material has nevertheless been included without permission and due acknowledgment, proper credit will be inserted in future printings after notice has been received.

Excerpts from Book of Order and Book of Confessions have been used throughout this resource. Both are reprints with permission of the Office of the General Assembly.

© 2017 CMP, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation, Louisville, KY. All rights reserved. Except where permission to photocopy is expressly granted on the material, no part of these materials may be reproduced without permission from the publisher.

Printed in the U.S.A.

[pcusa.org/beingreformed](http://pcusa.org/beingreformed)

---

**Ronald P. Byars** served as pastor of Presbyterian congregations for over three decades, until he joined the faculty of Union Presbyterian Seminary in Richmond, Virginia, as professor of preaching and worship. He has written extensively about worship and contributed the section on the Service for the Lord's Day to *The Companion to the Book of Common Worship*. Among his books are *Christian Worship*, *Lift Your Hearts on High: Eucharistic Prayer in The Reformed Tradition*, and *The Sacraments in Biblical Perspective*. He is retired and lives in Lexington, Kentucky.

**Eva Stimson**, a graduate of the Presbyterian School of Christian Education (now Union Presbyterian Seminary), is a freelance writer and editor, an oil painter, and the former editor of *Presbyterians Today*. She is a ruling elder, Sunday school teacher, and member of Crescent Hill Presbyterian Church in Louisville, Kentucky. Eva wrote the sessions for group study.

**Donald K. McKim** is the editor for *Being Reformed: Faith Seeking Understanding*, an adult curriculum of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Dr. McKim is an honorably retired Presbyterian minister who has been an editor for Westminster John Knox Press, a seminary theology professor, an academic dean, and a pastor. He is the author and editor of books on Reformed theology, including *Introducing the Reformed Faith*; *Presbyterian Beliefs: A Brief Introduction*; *Presbyterian Questions, Presbyterian Answers*; *More Presbyterian Questions, More Presbyterian Answers*; *the Westminster Handbook to Reformed Theology*, and *The Church: Presbyterian Perspectives*. He lives with his wife, LindaJo McKim, in Germantown, Tennessee. They have two married children and three grandchildren.



# The Lord's Supper

## Workbook: Coming to the Table

Introduction.....	3
Ways of Using This Workbook.....	5
Section 1: By Invitation .....	7
Visitors Need Help If They Are Going to “Get It”	
Can’t We Do Without Ritual?	
Just a Symbol?	
Unless You Change and Become Like Children	
Section 2: Why Do We Do This at All? .....	17
Does It Have to Be About Jesus?	
Christian Faith Is Narrative-Based	
The Church Is a Story-Telling and Meal-Keeping Movement	
Getting to the Heart of It	
Why Do We Need Both?	
Section 3: Joyful Feast or Funeral for Jesus?.....	29
Last Supper or Lord’s Supper?	
How Often Can We Bear This?	
Flash Forward to Emmaus	
The First “Lord’s Supper”	
Joyful Feast!	
Section 4: Do This.....	39
Does It Matter What We Call It?	
In Remembrance of Me	
Remembering Forward	
The Sacrament of the Kingdom	
The Christian Hope: on a Big Screen	
Section 5: Blessing/Giving Thanks .....	51
A Testimonial Act	
The Form of the Great Thanksgiving Is Shaped by Bible, History, and Theology	
A Great Thanksgiving for Children	
A Trinitarian Form: In the Name of the Father . . . . . . and of the Son; and of the Holy Spirit	
Section 6: Where Are We Now, and How Did We Get Here? .....	65
Back to the Sources: The Bible	
Back to the Sources: The Reformation	
Reform Is an Ongoing Blend of Old and New	
Crisis Is the Normal Context for Reform	
Section 7: For Parents and Children .....	89
Sessions for Group Study .....	99
Suggestions for Further Study.....	125





# Introduction

The table of the Lord—the Communion Table—stands in the front of our sanctuaries, reminding us of the importance of the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper.

As one theologian put it, when we see the Lord’s Table before us, the words of the gospel should ring in our ears. God’s Word and Sacrament go together in the Reformed theological tradition. The sacraments of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper are sometimes called “the visible words of God.” They show us and convey to us the love of God in Jesus Christ our Lord, enabling our lives to be nourished in faith and our faith to be strengthened by participation in the sacraments.

This workbook will be of great help in enlarging our understandings of the Lord’s Supper. It shows us the importance of the Supper in the church’s life and our own lives. It answers questions while also helping us more deeply and gratefully realize ways that Christ’s presence with us in the sacrament unites us with Christ by faith. Reflecting on the materials here will enlarge our vision of ways the Lord’s Supper relates to our lives in the world and our ministries in service to the kingdom of Jesus Christ.

John Calvin wrote that God “nourishes faith spiritually through the sacraments, whose one function is to set his promises before our eyes to be looked upon, indeed, to be guarantees of them to us.”<sup>1</sup> The Lord’s Supper represents God’s promises of love to us in Jesus Christ and presents those promises, sealed in our hearts by faith through the power of God’s Holy Spirit. The Supper gives us the deepest assurance that we are God’s children. We are drawn together with sisters and brothers in Christ into one body with Christ in the church. Calvin said we can “gather great assurance and delight from this Sacrament” so that whatever that is Christ’s “may be called ours.”<sup>2</sup> Great assurance and delight!

May this workbook bless you and help you to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18).

Donald K. McKim  
Editor

1. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, Library of Christian Classics (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), 4.14.12  
2. Ibid. 4.17.2







## Ways of Using This Workbook

Both sacraments—Baptism and the Lord’s Supper—came into being from the ground up, one might say. They were not just dropped directly from heaven with a specific and precisely limited set of meanings already attached to them. Both are practices constructed over time from other practices, taking on a specific identity directly related to the person of Jesus Christ in his ministry in Galilee and Judea, as well as to his living presence in the church after his crucifixion and resurrection. To understand the sacraments, to the extent such a thing is possible, it is necessary and helpful to consider them in the light of Israel’s story as well as stories from those gathered around Jesus, and to ponder the ways they dovetail with ordinary things in everyday life: for example, baths and meals.

The meaning (better, “meanings”) of the Lord’s Supper/Eucharist/Holy Communion, for example, are layered, nuanced, and rich. In other words, they can never be exhaustively explained in a few or even many words. The purpose of this workbook is either to introduce or to review some of the ways the church makes use of human language, with all its limits, to witness to some of the many things we believe the sacrament means. The language and images we will use draw from both Scripture and the experience and reflection of the historic church. There are several ways this resource might be used profitably:

- by worship committees and sessions whose responsibility includes spiritual oversight of the congregation, including its worship and sacramental life
- by committees on preparation for ministry as they work with those taken under care and preparing for ordained ministry and for examination by the presbytery and its committee
- by pastor(s) and musician(s) who work together in the same congregation, or different congregations
- as preparation to help equip those leading confirmation classes
- with classes for new members or inquirers and those preparing to lead them
- for ministers and serious inquirers to use one-on-one
- with those expecting to share in interfaith dialogue
- with groups, small or large, who wish to understand the church’s teaching better
- for all-church retreats or programs for Presbyterian Women, Presbyterian Men, youth groups, or UKirk
- with those who have recently been baptized and are beginning to take part in the sacred meal
- as part of the preparation of those seeking to be commissioned by the presbytery to serve as commissioned ruling elders

This resource may be used in different ways: as a self-guided study, as a group study, and as a ready reference for personal reflection. For a self-guided study, simply start at the beginning, reading the articles and completing the activities at your own pace, perhaps meeting regularly with a friend or two. For a group study, we offer suggested lesson plans under Sessions for Group Study (see p. 99).

May God bless you in your life of faith and in the ministries of Jesus Christ.

## By Invitation

Whether considering taking part in the Lord’s Supper, communion, or Eucharist for your child or yourself, or examining the meaning of communion for renewed Christian discipleship, one thing is true for Presbyterians—we believe that “the Lord’s Supper is the sign and seal of eating and drinking in communion with the crucified and risen Lord.”<sup>1</sup>

Furthermore, we come to the table by invitation only. Christ Jesus is our host. The table is set for a joyful feast—a feast of gratitude for God’s grace. The pastor recalls how the risen Lord broke bread with his disciples. She invites those who trust in Christ to share the meal that he has prepared. Then she extends her hands, saying, “The Lord be with you.” We respond, “And also with you.”

“Lift up your hearts,” the pastor continues, raising her hands in an ancient, prayerful gesture. With one voice, we respond, saying, “We lift them to the Lord.” “Let us give thanks to the Lord our God,” the pastor then says, and we affirm, “It is right to give our thanks and praise.”

Something important is happening here—something mysterious and ancient, yet familiar and always new. Around a common table, we praise God our Maker, proclaim the mystery of faith in Jesus Christ, and pray for the gifts of the Holy Spirit. What better way to celebrate the good news of our redemption than to break bread together as Christ taught?

What does *being invited* to the table by God in Christ through the words of the pastor signify to you?

---



---



---

Notice the verbs in Christ’s invitation (*the Lord be with you, lift up your hearts, and Let us give thanks*). What do the verbs tell you about the character of Christian discipleship as expressed through Christ’s invitation to the table?

---



---



---

1. *Book of Order*, Part II of The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), (Louisville: Office of the General Assembly, 2016), W-2.4001.





## Visitors Need Help If They Are Going to “Get It”

Your pastor has arranged for a group of which you are a member to visit an Islamic Center next weekend, and the weekend after that an Orthodox synagogue. You will observe the worship services in both places. Either before or after the assembly for worship, a knowledgeable spokesperson will meet with the group to explain to you, as best as possible, why the service is what it is, and what various words, actions, symbols, and gestures mean. You may ask questions. No doubt, this will bring some enlightenment, but it is unlikely that in only one exposure to these services, viewing as arm’s-length observers, you will enter very deeply into the experience of the regular worshipers.

Imagine that on some later Sunday, a group from the mosque or the synagogue comes to observe your Sunday service. Someone speaking for your congregation will return the kind of hospitality that had been offered to your group, explaining your service either before or afterwards, and responding to questions. If they are visiting when the Lord’s Supper (Holy Communion, Eucharist) is being celebrated, they will probably find this to be a strange, even puzzling ritual. What is this, sharing small pieces of bread and drinking something from a cup? What is this “body” language? Body of Christ, blood of Christ?

Organized visits by groups from the local mosque, synagogue, or temple to Presbyterian congregations may be rare, but of course, it is not unusual for individual visitors to appear at our services. They may be persons who have never been in a church before; or

who have visited services here and there only a few times; or who were baptized in the church but after that attended services only rarely or never. Today they have come because a neighbor’s child is playing trombone in a brass quartet, or because they are spending the weekend with relatives whose custom it is to go to church. The service—and particularly the Lord’s Supper—might be quite as strange and bewildering to them as it would be to the visiting Muslim, Buddhist, or observant Jew. In any case, they will be observing at arm’s length, not personally involved, so they will comprehend it only in a limited sense. There will be no organized way of explaining the ritual or responding to questions. It may not occur to anyone that any sort of preparation or explanation is necessary for these visitors to gather even a little sympathetic understanding for what is happening.

Most Presbyterian (and other) churches tend to presume that since our services are not conducted in a foreign language, and since there are churches on every other corner, and since, surely, everybody has heard about “communion,” what some stranger encounters upon a single visit will be at once comprehensible. And, since Christianity has for so long been the norm in American society, no one should need to have an explanation for what we do in the Sunday assembly. We have also, for generations, presumed that the members and officers of our church will learn whatever they need to learn just by being present in worship over time, or by attending an occasional class at confirmation

or when transferring to a new congregation, or in training for church officers, or by explanations at home from parent to child. If only!

American churches have been overtaken by a surprising change in status, and haven't quite figured out what to do about it, or whether we should do anything. But the fact is that in our present environment even the things we do regularly as a group,

including especially assembling for worship on the Lord's Day, cannot be presumed to be self-explanatory. While the meaning of a ritual is more "caught" than "taught," teaching about it will not be wasted time. Teaching about it not only unveils layers of meaning that may not be self-evident, but also helps us find words with which to focus its meaning for ourselves and others.

**My thoughts and feelings about the Lord's Supper:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Have you ever had to explain the meaning of the Lord's Supper to a child or adult who is puzzled by it? List at least three things you might say in response to the question, "What does this mean?"

---

---

---

Can you sympathize with the visitor at worship for whom this experience is new (new, at least, as an adult)? Without distorting the service by explaining it while it is in progress, are there non-intrusive ways of helping individual visitors to process what they either will see, or have seen?

---

---

---

Name one or two things (not church-related) not likely to be understood when viewed “at arm’s length.”

---

---

---

---

Read Ephesians 1:17–18. The apostle uses the phrase “the eyes of your heart.” Biologically, this makes no sense. How might it be understood?

---

---

---

---

What is the difference between understanding with the head and understanding with the heart?

---

---

---

---



## Can't We Do Without Ritual?

The Swiss Reformed theologian, J. J. von Allmen, has remarked that churches like his and ours are “challenged more strongly by the sacraments than by anything else.”<sup>2</sup> If he was right in 1965, when he was writing, his observation is even more pertinent in the twenty-first century. The twenty-first century American church is challenged by the sacraments for several reasons. One is that we Reformed Protestants have a longstanding problem sympathetically understanding anything that might be labeled “ritual.” What comes naturally in many cultures, and once came naturally even in our own, does no longer. Our culture has evolved in a certain way—not an inevitable, unavoidable, way, but one that is peculiar to our own history. We are heirs of a baked-in bias that finds suspicious anything labeled as “ritual.”

In 1832, when Ralph Waldo Emerson asked the officers of the Unitarian Church he served as pastor to stop its use of the Lord's Supper, he wrote,

The use of the elements, however suitable to the people and the modes of thought in the East, where it originated, is foreign and unsuited to affect us. . . . We are not accustomed to express our thoughts or emotions by symbolical actions.<sup>3</sup>

(In other words, we are too sophisticated for that!) Ah, but of course we are not Unitarians, are we! Nevertheless, Emerson's sentiments are not unknown in our own church. In 1964, a former General Assembly Moderator opined with disapproval that “forms and rituals offer those who are groping some support,” and concluded, “for many reasons we might shrink from worship which threatens a direct experience of literal Christian reality.”<sup>4</sup>

And yet, there exists no church that does not consist of ritual from the moment one drives into the parking lot to the moment one leaves it. The protocols may be unwritten, but protocols there are. You enter by this door. You interact with an usher in prescribed ways. There are rituals of standing and sitting, singing and being quiet, hearing ancient words read from an ancient book, praying aloud and in silence, receiving blessings, taking up an offering, not to mention eating and drinking. None of these are a direct experience of literal Christian reality. All are rituals—an experience of “Christian reality” accessed *indirectly*—within a broader ritual of churchgoing. The same can be said of a Quaker meeting, Pentecostal revival, or the new service designed explicitly for millennials. In every case, certain things happen in a predictable sequence. Familiar words are likely to be used, often in a tone of voice reserved for just

2. J. J. von Allmen, *Worship: Its Theology and Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), 148.

3. Emerson in “Miscellanies,” in *A Documentary History of Religion in America to the Civil War*, ed. Edwin S. Gaustad, 2nd edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), 291.

4. Byars, “Challenging the Ethos: A History of Presbyterian Worship Resources in the 20th Century,” in Coalter, Mulder, and Weeks, *The Confessional Mosaic: Presbyterians and Twentieth-Century Theology* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1990), 150.



those words or that specific moment in the service. Ritual.

When it comes to the Lord's Supper, we are, of course, in ritual mode, even though we are a people who might deny that we make use of any rituals in our church. Those who are long accustomed to the holy meal may welcome it; others may be impatient with it; and still others either curious or quietly submissive. Twenty-first century Europeans and Americans are heirs of a cultural turn that values words, especially explanatory words, but tends to hold at a distance anything readily discernible as ritual.

We Protestants do know, however, that Roman Catholics believe in something called "transubstantiation"; i.e., that the bread and wine, without

changing in chemical substance or appearance, nevertheless become the literal body and blood of Christ. (The Catholic view can be more nuanced than that, but this is what we have overheard.) Since it has seemed for us that from time immemorial one of our biggest duties is to distinguish ourselves from the Catholics, we may take care to assure our visitors (or members or confirmation class) that these words and actions with bread and wine, the eating and drinking, are "just a symbol." The words "just a," so often used to describe a symbol or symbolic act, are meant to diminish the symbol. Since it's "just a" symbol, it's not so very important. No need to be offended by it.

If someone should remark that your wedding or your mother's funeral was "just a ritual," what would you understand them to be trying to say? How would you feel about it?

---

---

List some familiar civic (not religious) rituals. List two or three home-based rituals with which almost everyone is familiar.

---

---

Did you teach your children to say prayers at bedtime? Is that a ritual?

---

---

What is the difference between "ritual" and "ritualism"?

---

---



## Just a Symbol?

Certainly, a ritual is a symbolic act, but not “just a symbol.” Symbols (and rituals that embody symbols) evoke a response that engages the whole person— heart, mind, and soul. Take, for example, a symbol much spoken about and argued over in recent history: the Confederate battle flag, flying in some cases over public buildings as well as shown on license plates and T-shirts. For some, this flag evokes positive associations: home, pride of place and people, respect for forebears, indignation at losses and sleights past and present. For others, the same flag evokes negative associations: inability to accept the results of a legitimate presidential election; chattel slavery masquerading as a non-issue, the real issues being states’ rights or property rights; economic interests trumping moral and ethical obligations. From either point of view, it is possible to mount an argument that seems reasonable to those who make it. On both sides, there is heavy emotional investment. And there are issues of the spirit at stake for everyone.

A symbol is not well served by preceding the word with “just a.” If the Roman Catholics have overstated their argument about how Christ is present in the Lord’s Supper, Presbyterians have often understated the case. Worried about the possibility of superstition and “magical thinking,” we have over-corrected—understated the powerful reality of the sacrament. This was not true of John Calvin, the sixteenth-century Reformer who led the shaping of our Reformed Christianity. Calvin agreed that Christ is, in fact, present in the sacrament—though not locked up in the loaf and cup. He argued, as the eastern Orthodox do, that Christ is given to us in the sacrament by the power of the Holy Spirit. Beyond that affirmation, it is not helpful to try to form a metaphysical argument about “what happens.” The risen Christ’s presence is made manifest in the whole “doing” of the sacrament, what the Scots call the “action”: the breaking of bread, sharing of the cup, the words and prayers, and the actual eating and drinking.

Do you think that your congregation expects to discern the risen Christ’s “real presence” in the Lord’s Supper?

---

---

In your service, does the presiding minister (or commissioned ruling elder) call upon the Holy Spirit in the prayer that goes with the meal?

---

---



## Unless You Change and Become Like Children

Emerson may have a head start in thinking that the only purpose of the Lord's Supper was to draw us a picture as though we were intellectually challenged, otherwise unable to grasp reasonable explanations of divine things. If he was the first, he was not the last. The result has been that we have administered a self-inflicted wound, nearly incapacitating ourselves from enjoying the richness of losing (and thus finding) ourselves in ritual action—at least in church. If a ritual's only purpose is to make us think, then the non-intellectual dimensions—heart and soul—will be eclipsed. And so, even if the ritual is not explained to us while we are trying to engage in it, we are likely to approach it as a head-trip. When we do that, we not only are likely to lose that part of the experience that is manifest intuitively and emotionally, but we become self-conscious about taking part in

something that, to us as to Emerson seems, well, primitive, or at least seems unsophisticated for modern people. We are not accustomed to express our thoughts or emotions by symbolical actions.

The sacraments—and specifically the Lord's Supper—pose a challenge for a culture that has led us to pride ourselves on living in a demystified universe, as though it were possible to know everything visible or invisible by the scientific method only. The ritual of the sacramental meal takes us by the hand as though we might for the moment become child-like, and leads us to a meeting with that One who is host at this table, and unites us with him and one another. For the truth is that sometimes it is the child-like who see most clearly. “Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:3).

Is it true that we twenty-first century Americans, in contrast with ancient people in the Middle East, “are not accustomed to express our thoughts or emotions by symbolical actions”?

---

---

What is the difference between being “intellectually challenged” and being “child-like”?

---

---

Why do you think Jesus said what he did about becoming “like children”?

---

---

## For Your Reflection and Action

1. What things said or done in your congregation's service of worship do you know so well that you have no need to follow the printed bulletin to take part fully?
2. What physical actions or gestures is one likely to see in your congregation's service?
3. Are there physical actions or gestures used only by those leading worship, but not by members in the congregation?
4. What physical or graphic symbols are present in the worship space?
5. The following prayer, by Alcuin of Tours (c. 735–804) may be prayed before worship. Will you undertake to offer it every Sunday for a month?

O gracious and holy God,  
give us diligence to seek you,  
wisdom to perceive you,  
and patience to wait for you.

Grant us, O God,  
a mind to meditate on you;  
eyes to behold you;  
ears to listen for your word;  
a heart to love you;  
and a life to proclaim you;  
through the power of the Spirit  
of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.<sup>5</sup>

5. *Book of Common Worship* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1993), 24. All excerpts are hereafter, *BCW*. Used with permission.



# **Sessions for Group Study**



# By Invitation

## Scripture

Ephesians 1:17–18; Matthew 18:1–5

## Main Idea

By engaging the whole person—body, mind, and soul—the sacraments open the way to a powerful encounter with the risen Christ.

## Teaching Points

The session invites participants to consider:

1. The tendency of Reformed Protestants to value words more than rituals;
2. Why the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is more than “just a symbol”;
3. What Jesus meant when he said we must “become like children” to enter the kingdom of heaven.

## Resources Needed

Bibles  
Christ candle and lighter  
Loaf of bread and cup  
Newsprint and markers  
Pens or pencils  
Church bulletins having a typical order of worship

## Leader Prep

Be aware that participants may bring a variety of experiences and understandings of the Lord's Supper, especially if some have been part of non-Presbyterian churches or have little church background.

For Gather, set the Christ candle (a white pillar candle), a loaf of bread, and a small cup or chalice on a table in the center of your meeting space. The bread and cup will serve as visual symbols of the Lord's Supper throughout this study. Enlist participants to take turns lighting the candle and reading the opening Scripture.

For Head, familiarize yourself with “Visitors Need Help If They Are Going to ‘Get It’” and “Can't We Do Without Ritual?” (pp. 9–13). Think about parts of your congregation's worship service that may seem strange to newcomers. Participants will take a “field trip” to the sanctuary to discuss For Your Reflection and Action #1, 2, 3, and 4 (p. 16) and make a list of symbols and gestures used in worship. Have available church bulletins with a typical order of worship, Bibles, newsprint, and markers. Plan how to have participants move to various parts of

the room to show their attitudes toward rituals. Be prepared to share your own thoughts about rituals.

For Heart, familiarize yourself with “Just a Symbol?” (p. 14). Reflect on Ephesians 1:17–18, especially the phrase “with the eyes of your heart enlightened,” so you can help participants understand how sacraments and symbolic acts engage more than just the intellect. Participants will need pens and markers to use throughout this study as they write/draw “Stories and Symbols” (pp. 77–87) related to the Lord’s Supper.

For Hands, familiarize yourself with “Unless You Change and Become Like Children” (p. 15) and Matthew 18:1–5. Be prepared to help participants think about how to explain the Lord’s Supper to a child and begin recording their ideas in “Stories and Symbols” (pp. 77–87).

For Depart, allow time for participants to share meaningful rituals or symbols. Plan to use the prayer suggested in For Your Reflection and Action (p. 16).

## Leading the Session

### Gather

- Invite participants to introduce themselves and share what they hope to gain from this study.
- Draw attention to the bread and cup on the table, reminders of the Lord’s Supper.
- Light the Christ candle.
- Read Ephesians 1:15–23.
- Pray together the prayer by Alcuin of Tours in For Your Reflection and Action (p. 16).

### Head

- Consider together “Visitors Need Help If They Are Going to ‘Get It.’” Ask: *Have any of you attended a worship service of a different tradition? What parts seemed strange or confusing? What parts of our congregation’s worship might seem strange to visitors? How would you explain the Lord’s Supper to a newcomer?*
- Distribute bulletins containing a typical order of worship. Take the bulletins, newsprint, and markers, and For Your Reflection and Action (p. 16) on a field trip to your church’s sanctuary. Discuss questions #1, 2, 3, and 4, making a list of symbols, actions, and gestures that participants see or recall as they read the order of worship. Return to your meeting space and post the list in a visible location.
- On a sheet of newsprint, write “rituals.” Ask: *What is your attitude toward using rituals in religious life—positive, negative, or somewhere in between?* Designate one side of the room “positive” and the opposite side “negative” and have participants choose a place to stand on the “rituals continuum.”
- Gather participants into groups, making sure each group includes a variety of opinions on rituals. Give each group newsprint and markers. Have them discuss “Can’t We Do Without Ritual?” (pp. 12–13), especially the quotes from J.J. von Allmen and Ralph Waldo Emerson (p. 12). Ask: *Why do you think Protestants are “challenged by the sacraments”? What are some of the*



*ways we use rituals in worship? In other parts of life? Why does “ritual” sometimes have negative connotations? Have someone from each group record and report on the discussion.*

## **Heart**

- Look together at the symbols listed during your visit to the sanctuary. Ask: *What symbols are used in the sacraments? Are the bread and the cup “just symbols,” or something more?* Read aloud the first two sentences of “Just a Symbol?” (p. 14). Review the description of how the Confederate flag functions as a symbol and Calvin’s thoughts about the Lord’s Supper. Ask: *How do we experience Christ’s presence in the Lord’s Supper?*
- Distribute Bibles and have participants reflect silently on Ephesians 1:17–18, especially the phrase “with the eyes of your heart enlightened.” Ask: *What does this mean? How might symbols help us get out of our heads and experience God on a deeper level?*
- Tell participants that they will be using the “Stories and Symbols” pages (pp. 77–87) to record insights throughout this study. Invite them to draw or write about a symbol or ritual that has been important in their life of faith. They will have an opportunity to share these symbols in your closing.

## **Hands**

- In small groups, discuss Matthew 18:1–5 and “Unless You Change and Become Like Children” (p. 15). Ask: *Why did Jesus say we should become “like children”?* *What qualities do children have that are useful in a life of faith? What barriers sometimes keep adults from experiencing the presence of Christ?* Have someone from each group record and report on the discussion.
- Ask: *How would you explain the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper to a child?* Suggest that participants think about a child (from their family or congregation, or a child without a faith background) and use “Stories and Symbols” (pp. 77–87) to begin describing when and how they would introduce the sacrament, considering the child’s age and previous church experience. This is something they may want to develop throughout this study as their own understanding deepens.

## **Depart**

- Light the Christ candle.
- Read again Ephesians 1:15–23.
- Invite willing participants to share symbols or rituals they find meaningful. Give thanks for powerful symbols.
- Pray together the prayer by Alcuin of Tours in For Your Reflection and Action (p. 16).

