

SESSION POLICY FOR SERVING COMMUNION TO SHUT-INS

The Lord's Supper is ordinarily to be observed within the context of the gathered church. However, we recognize that those unable to participate in the regularly scheduled services of the congregation should also have opportunity to share in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. This policy is adopted by the Session for that purpose.

"In opposition to the manifold abuses of this ordinance which prevail among the Romanists, our Standards, in common with the general judgment of the Reformed Churches, teach that the Lord's Supper is essentially a communion, in which the fellowship of the believer with Christ and with his fellow-believers is set forth by their eating and drinking of the same bread and the same cup. It follows that it should not be sent to persons not present at the administration, nor administered by the officiating priest to himself alone. In particular cases, however, it may be administered in private houses, for the benefit of Christians long confined by sickness, provided that the officers and a sufficient number of the members of the Church be present to preserve the true character of the ordinance as a communion."

(from Commentary on the Confession of Faith, by A. A. Hodge)

The following guidelines are to be observed when serving the Lord's Supper to those unable to participate in the regularly scheduled services of the church:

- 1) The Lord's Supper is recognized to be a public rather than a private service. For this reason, it ordinarily takes place within the context of the gathered church (WCOF 27:1 and 29:4).
- 2) Even though serving the Lord's Supper in connection with the visitation of the sick may involve only a few members of the congregation, nevertheless the observance of the Lord's Supper is not to be understood as a private ceremony or devotional exercise, but as an act of the whole church and an act of extending the ministry of the church to those members unable to participate in the regularly scheduled services of worship.

3) The elements of the Lord's Supper associated with celebrating the Lord's Supper during a public worship service shall be observed when serving the sacrament in a private setting. This includes (see BCO 58-4):

- a) The reading of Scripture with a brief exhortation
- b) The reading of the words of institution of the Lord's Supper
- c) A statement as to the purpose and meaning of the Lord's Supper
- d) An invitation to participate in keeping with Scripture and the requirements of

the doctrinal standards of the PCA

4) The sacrament is to be administered only by an ordained minister of the Word (WCOF 27:4) and under the oversight of the Session (BCO 12-5.e.).

5) All observances of the Lord's Supper in a private setting should be approved by the Session with each instance recorded in the minutes of the Session meeting following the occasion in which Communion was observed in a home or other private setting.

6) One or more members of the Session should be present whenever the sacrament is served to those unable to attend the ordinary worship services of the congregation.

7) All who are present at this occasion should be given an invitation to participate in the sacrament, in so far as individuals meet the biblical requirements as stated in the doctrinal standards of the church.

8) Procedures to be followed:

a) The Session will seek to schedule requests from church members to have Communion served to them when they are unable to participate in the ordinary worship services of the congregation.

b) An opportunity will be given for members unable to attend the quarterly scheduled times for the Lord's Supper to request that the Session schedule a time for the observance of the Lord's Supper in their homes. This opportunity will normally be given through appropriate channels during the week prior to the scheduled Communion service.

c) Session members may also inquire with specific members about their need and desire to schedule a time for the observance of the Lord's Supper with them.

d) Upon receiving such request, the pastor and one or more Session members will schedule a time for the sacrament to be observed.

e) Elders who are no longer participating on the active Session but who remain active in the life of the church may also fulfill the requirement of having a Session member present on such occasions.