

Questions to explore

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I hope that the Faith, Worship, and Ministry committee (FWM) looks at early practice in the church. As I recall, there is evidence of members of the early church bringing food to the gathering, and also sharing food with the poor. This is a model that can be adapted in meaningful, authentic ways in our current situation.

I also hope that FWM looks at recent examples of a different practice when contingencies shifted how the Eucharist was celebrated and communion administered. For example, I recall a General Synod where table groups each had bread and wine on their table during the Eucharistic prayer and administered these elements to the table group. In our present situation communicants could bring a small piece of bread with them from home for communion in one kind and hold it in their hand during the Eucharistic prayer. Communicants would remain in their seat and consume the bread after ‘the breaking of the bread’. This has similarities to United Church reception of communion, that might be explored.

Fraction responsory #3 is an ancient reflection of the many grains gathered and made into one bread. To my mind this symbolizes the eschatological reality of the body of Christ gathered in communion more than it symbolizes a single loaf on the table. I think it is this eschatological reality of the gathered Church being together at the Eucharist that is the primary reason why communion of individuals at home watching a livestreamed priest celebrate eucharist seems inappropriate to many.

Technology is advancing that allows the church worldwide to gather together in real time to listen to one another and address shared imperatives. Climate change issues come to mind. Livestreaming and Zoom-type gatherings are a great gift to the national and local church as well.

But in local communities, in regard to communion, I think we should strive to find safe ways for two or three or more to be physically gathered in one place and share safely in communion. It may be that an earlier

pattern of 'house churches' will provide a way forward. Groups under 50 persons can meet outdoors while weather permits. Small groups of a large congregation can gather in the church building on different days or at different times for communion. The online gathering of the whole parish can be a non Eucharistic service that gathers everyone together.

I think it is important that we not encourage a priestly caste. The presider gathers the assembly and at moments is the voice of the assembly. The presider is not a replacement for the assembly. The Dublin guidelines for Eucharist produced by the International Anglican Liturgical Consultation emphasize that the assembly is the celebrant of the Eucharist - the assembly is the actor, the subject of the action, not a passive observer. I commend the Dublin guidelines to the committee to review.