

Dear Calvary Church Family,

On Sunday, May 5, Calvary's elders announced that starting in early June 2024 we plan to offer wine, along with grape juice, as an element of the Lord's Supper. Over the past several years the elders have discussed the Biblical witness regarding the use of wine in Communion. In addition, we've considered church history and our confession, and have become convinced that wine should be included in our Lord's Supper service.

However, as with any change, we recognize this decision may be met with various responses, and our desire is two-fold and complementary:

- #1 - To **love God** through obedience to the **Biblical witness** (1 John 5:3), and
- #2 - Out of **love for His church** to eagerly seek to maintain the **unity of the Spirit** in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3).

Biblical Witness:

#1 - Worship as God has commanded - In Deuteronomy 12:32 in the context of instructions about worship, the Lord says, "Everything that I command you, you shall be careful to do. You shall not add to it or take from it." This means we must worship as the Lord has commanded. Likewise, Jesus indicts religious leaders of His day for adding to Biblical witness regarding worship in a misguided attempt to keep the people from breaking God's law, saying, "You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, when he said: '...in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men'" (Matt. 15:7, 9). Finally, in giving the Great Commission, Jesus instructs his disciples to teach His followers to obey everything He has commanded (Mt. 28:20). This includes worship and the Lord's Supper.

#2 - Christ's example and command regarding the Lord's Supper - Not only was Jesus' first miracle turning water to wine (John 2), but in continuity with the Passover meal, He drank and served wine to His disciples at the institution of the Lord's Supper, as a sign of His blood poured out for the forgiveness of sins (Matt. 26:27-28). Furthermore, in His instructions to the Corinthian church, Paul quotes Jesus' command, stating, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me (1Cor. 11:25)." We should rightly ask, what is "it" we are to drink from the cup? The Biblical witness is clear the cup is filled with wine, even as Paul corrected its abuses in the church (1 Cor. 11:21-22).

#3 - Wine as a picture in the Lord's Supper - Christ Jesus did not simply serve wine in the Lord's Supper because it was available to Him. Instead, wine in the Scriptures communicates at least three important pictures. First, wine symbolizes joy and the abundant blessing and provision of God, as it is used in feasts, celebrations, and sacrificial offerings (Is. 25:6, Ex. 29:40, Num. 15:5). Secondly, the bitterness of wine proclaims the bitterness of Christ's suffering (Matt. 26:39, 1Cor. 11:26). Thirdly, wine anticipates the hope of Christ's promise that He would not drink of the fruit of the vine until He does so with His church in the Kingdom of God (Matt. 26:29), fulfilled at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:9).

#4 - Biblical witness applied in history - For the first 1800 years of the New Testament church, the use of wine was the unbroken practice of orthodox Christians of all traditions and denominations. In the middle of the 19th century, in an understandable, but misguided, attempt to rein in the abuse of alcohol, the temperance movement was born. Soon grape juice replaced wine in many U.S. churches, which continues to this day.

#5 - Biblical witness applied by our Confession - In applying the Scriptures in practice, the Presbyterian Church in America's (PCA) constitutional documents - the [Westminster Confession of Faith \(WCF\)](#) the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, along with the [Book of Church Order \(BCO\)](#) - specify that wine is to be used in the observance of the Lord's Supper. For example WCF 29.3 states, "The Lord Jesus hath...appointed his ministers to declare His word of institution to the people; to pray, and bless the elements of bread and wine..."

Unity of the Spirit through Love for the Church:

As we seek to be obedient to the Scriptures in all we do, we are committed to making this change in the Spirit of unity and love for everyone who calls Calvary their church home, regardless of background or questions this might raise. To that end, here are some of the ways we are seeking to implement this change:

#1 - Biblical Instruction - Last Sunday, we started a three-week Equipping Class on the Lord's Supper. On May 12 and 19, at 9:15 AM in the sanctuary, we will explore the Scriptures to examine the elements of the Lord's Supper, and how the Lord applies it to His people in His church. In addition, we will provide opportunities to ask questions and discuss other aspects of the Supper.

#2 - Loving Accommodation - Paul makes clear in the Scriptures that the Lord's Supper is given not for division, but unity as those who belong to Jesus and one another through faith in Him (1Cor. 11:17-20). To that end, we will continue to serve grape juice along with wine for those who should or do abstain from alcohol for any of a number of personal reasons, including but not limited to commitments of conscience, family history, or struggles with alcohol. In keeping with Paul's instructions, we must not pass judgment on one another, nor place a stumbling block in front of one another, nor bind the conscience of anyone as we follow Jesus together by faith (Rom. 14:13, 22-23).

#3 - Ongoing Communication - We recognize there are likely many additional questions that are, as yet, unanswered. To that end, we have published an FAQ page, which should provide some answers to common questions about this change. As we continue discussions the FAQ will be updated with entries for common questions we receive.

#4 - Session Availability - We love you, and desire to walk alongside you during this change. Please reach out to your shepherd-elder or any member of the Session, and we will make time to discuss with you any questions or concerns you may have. You can reach our pastor at nwilks@calvarypca.org or clerk of Session, Jeff Wiggs at Jeff.e.wiggs@gmail.com.

Each Sunday between now and early June there will be reminders of the coming change during the morning worship service.

Please pray with us that the Lord will use this change to help us worship and glorify Him in all we do, as we seek to be obedient to His will.