

WINE IN COMMUNION - FAQ's

1. We have always used grape juice. Why change that?

While God has given us greater freedom in the New Testament church regarding how we worship, there are still certain commands that were given, and it's good to periodically rethink why we do what we do. Are we doing it merely for tradition? Are we doing it because it's one of the freedoms offered to us in the New Covenant? Or are we doing it because it's what was commanded? In the case of offering wine in communion, it's in the spirit of getting it "more right", to more closely align with the example and command of Christ. The use of unfermented grape juice is a fairly recent occurrence, born out of the temperance movement of the 19th and early 20th centuries. We must note that alcoholism was an epidemic in the United States at that time, so the movement was understandable, and moving from wine to grape juice was well-intentioned. However, by an extraordinarily large margin, the church in the rest of the world, even in the 19th and 20th centuries, continued to use wine.

2. Will grape juice continue to be offered along with the wine?

Yes, grape juice will absolutely be offered alongside wine!

3. How will I be able to distinguish the wine cups from the grape juice cups on the communion tray?

The wine will be in colored cups. Grape juice will continue to be served in clear cups. For the sake of clarity, an announcement will be made each week during the sacrament.

4. I don't drink alcohol. What should I do during the Lord's Supper?

You must choose wine or grape juice as is consistent with the integrity of your heart. If you have made a vow to abstain from all alcohol, feel that the consumption of alcohol is a sin, or have other health or conscientious reasons for not consuming then you must do what you feel most honors the Lord. The Session is not looking to bind your conscience, or to "guilt" you into choosing one or the other.

5. Is this not a temptation for those who struggle with alcohol?

God has explicitly and implicitly labeled drunkenness as a sin, in both the Old and New Testaments. As with all the good gifts that God has given us, He has given us guideposts and boundaries on how to use them. The same is true for alcoholic beverages, and we certainly do not want to be a stumbling block. However, alcoholism existed when these commands were given, and God gave them full well knowing that. If we are to rely on this as a reason to not use wine in communion, then we must also hold Jesus accountable for possibly contributing to alcoholism at the wedding feast in Cana, and in His institution of communion.

6. What about communing members who are under the legal age to consume alcohol?

This is an issue to be discussed between parents and their underage, communing children. The state of North Carolina allows a religious exemption for underage consumption of alcoholic beverages, per

<https://files.nc.gov/ncdps/div/ALE/chp18b.pdf>, section 18B-103.8.

7. **Will we also change to using unleavened bread?**

Unleavened bread was used as part of the Passover. However, the Greek word *artos* (bread) is used in connection with communion, rather than *azymos* (unleavened bread). Jesus almost assuredly used unleavened bread when instituting the Lord's Supper, however what's important is that it was bread; the type of bread seemed to be unimportant (for Passover, the type of bread was very important, as the bread was to be made with haste, and thus skipped the leavening). The terms used in the Gospels and in Acts for bread are very general, and are certainly not as explicit as "wine" or "the fruit of the vine."