

Communion as an Initiation Meal to Welcome New Members

Ginnie Carter

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“Let us break bread together on our knees,
Let us break bread together on our knees.
When I fall on my knees with my face to the
Rising Sun,
Oh Lord have mercy on me.”
-Let Us Break Bread

The Communion service at Cleveland Chapel Baptist Church occurs on the first Sunday of every month. It is performed with tiny wafers of bread and miniature glasses of grape juice. We were present at both the November and the December Communion ceremonies.

The Communion service begins much in the manner of all church services with the choir singing and the sermon being preached. The responsive reading comes #151 in the Baptist Hymnal and is entitled “The Lord’s Supper.” The responsive reading is also the time which is allotted for the entrance of latecomers.

Prior to the service itself, Pastor Brown asks all those who must leave early to excuse themselves. He does this in honor of the sacred nature of the communion ceremony. The communion bread and grape juice are placed for ceremony upon a table with a large gold cross in the center, covered with a white table cloth. It is contained in

oval gold containers and then each container is handed to a deacon and passed from aisle to aisle, beginning with the back.

During the December Communion service in the morning, there was a difference present from our previous evening visit. Pastor Brown gathered all those who assist in this sacred ceremony and then called for all members of “The Right Hand of Fellowship” to come forth along with all new church members. All these members proceeding in a line walked through the aisles to the front of the church where they hugged and welcomed their new members.

Followed by this ceremony within a ceremony, the deacons proceeded to pass the communion through the aisles. In white gloves and holding the trays, the deacons stood on either side of the aisle and passed the trays. When everyone was served in the congregation, the deacons and new members were all served. These individuals surrounded the table, and took communion in an oval at the same time as the rest of the congregation.

During the evening communion service that was attended in November, this did not occur. Also, there was only one deacon for each aisle as opposed to two because this was a smaller service. The morning service is dedicated to the new members so that a larger welcoming celebration can occur.

Communion is preceded with a spiritual revolving around the blood of Christ. This is repeated until the Communion is taken. Communion is followed by the joining of hands of all who are present and the singing of “Let Us Break Bread” which also includes the raising of arms towards God. This, along with a prayer, signals the conclusion of the service.

