

## Understanding Episcopal Liturgy

*#17. Why do we use unleavened bread for communion? Why do we use leavened bread for communion?*

At St. Paul's we have often used unleavened bread for communion from the day after Pentecost until the beginning of Advent. Our use of unleavened bread has historical roots in the use of unleavened bread by our Jewish forebearers in the celebration of the Passover meal. According to Matthew, Mark, and Luke, the Last Supper was a celebration of Passover.

We have often used leavened bread for communion for the seasons of Advent, Christmas, the season following Epiphany, Lent, Easter, and for Pentecost (which happens to be a day and not a season). Our use of leavened bread has theological roots in the idea that Christ brings the sacred into our daily lives, such as into the action of eating a shared meal. Eastern Orthodox churches insist on the use of leavened bread; the 'risen bread' is symbolic of the risen Christ.

As is often the case, as Episcopalians, we try to embrace both of these practices and sets of ideas. We refuse to say that one of these practices is wrong, and one is right. In the language of Richard Hooker, the question of leavened or unleavened bread for communion is in the realm of *adiaphora*, that is, things that are not necessary for salvation. God's creation is good and sufficient for us, whether that takes the form of leavened bread, or unleavened bread, or gluten-free rice crackers.

*If you have a question about something in our liturgy, I will be happy to answer it. Please ask in person, or send an email to me at [revmajor@stpaulsyr.org](mailto:revmajor@stpaulsyr.org).*

*Fr. Philip +*