

Holy Communion for those who are Gluten Intolerant

Celiac disease and other forms of gluten intolerance occur in about 1 in 100 people – but many will not be diagnosed. For those who are gluten intolerant, any small trace of gluten attacks the lining of the gut and causes damage that then affects the general ability of the body to perform properly. There is no “cure” for gluten intolerance—the total abstinence from gluten is the only solution to stay healthy. So staying totally gluten free is essential – not an optional choice. The sensitivity to gluten will vary between people - for some even the slightest trace of gluten can cause a severe reaction – like a shock reaction to nuts that some people have. Gluten free food items can be contaminated in quite subtle ways. This can happen through hand contact with gluten bearing foods, surfaces where gluten containing foods have been, through physical contact with other foods and through gluten bearing dust in the air. Gluten occurs typically in wheat, barley, oats and rye so flours or products from these can cause gluten contamination.

At St. Luke’s we have chosen to adopt a practice so that those who are gluten intolerant who wish to take communion can:

- 1) We will have gluten free wafers available – these can be purchased or made (several recipes on the web) or we can use the likes of gluten free rice crackers broken into suitable sized pieces. These will be stored separately from normal wafers (and should be well labeled).
- 2) When we put out the gluten free wafers, they will be on a separate dish to the other wafers and will be put out on a cleaned dish (to remove any possible flour dust contamination from ordinary wafers that might have been previously on the dish) and will be handled immediately after washing hands in water (chemical hand cleaners will generally not remove gluten particles). They will be taken straight from the packet to the dish – if put on another surface they could pick up contamination.
- 3) People administering communion will not handle the gluten free wafer portions as they will also be handling wafers containing gluten to other members of the congregation. They will therefore have possible contamination of gluten dust on their hands. The platen of gluten free wafers will be offered to the communicant so that they take their wafer from it themselves (cleanliness of their hands is their responsibility).
- 4) Contamination can take place with the communion cup – if wafers are dipped (as an optional practice) then gluten dust from ordinary wafers will contaminate the wine or grape juice used there. With a “sipped” cup, there will be contamination on the cup rim so we also provide a cup to be used only by those needing a gluten free cup.
- 5) We make an announcement before communion takes place about its availability and how to request gluten free wafers. For some who are gluten intolerant with an extreme reaction, it may be helpful for them to provide a wafer and wine cup for their own use before the service – which is handed to them at communion time for them to partake. They then know the history of the elements and can be assured of its “safeness” for their condition.

Adapted for use from a document written by the Wellington Celiac Support Group
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