

Communion

February 2012

The meeting topic was faith communities and how having celiac disease or gluten intolerance affects our participation in our churches' activities and traditions.

Nancy Spears shared that her church has taken on gluten-free as a major ministry of their church. Her husband was diagnosed with celiac 15 years ago and shortly afterwards their pastor said that he felt that their church was excluding people from their faith community based on the gluten vs gluten free situation. So to include all people their entire church is gluten free at communion and at their potluck dinners, etc. Coming together in a faith community should not be about separating ourselves from the rest of the community but rather to find a way to be included. Churches are places that are supposed to be compassionate. She mentioned that they use homemade gluten free bread or Udi's bread for the communion bread for everyone. Their potluck dinners, get-togethers at church are totally gluten free also. Nancy Carlson shared that at her church they do have wheat-based communion, but they do have designated station for gluten-free communion, so all those with celiac or gluten intolerance can be included in the communion service. They also use Udi's bread for their communion bread.

The response we received from the Jewish community was that they also have the requirement that all food must be kosher. One of their main foods during Passover is matzo. Traditionally, matzo must be made of one of five ingredients: Wheat, barley, spelt, rye or oats. Therefore, the celiac/gluten intolerant use oats as their main ingredient in matzo.

In the Catholic community, the communion host must be made of wheat. So for many years, those with celiac/gluten intolerance could only participate in the receiving of the wine. In 2003 the Vatican in Rome approved the use of a low-gluten altar bread that is produced by the Benedictine Sisters in Kentucky. (www.benedictinesisters.org) They produce wheat altar breads for churches across the U.S. and saw the need for such a host. They use a wheat starch for the host, the gluten content is less than 0.01%. It is made in a designated gluten-free area. About two years ago the Diocese of Grand Rapids sent a letter to all parish priests authorizing the use of this host in our area and suggested a manner to receive this host in the mass so that the celiac person is totally included. The low-gluten host is placed in a small container and placed with all the other hosts at the altar and then at the time to distribute communion, the celiac person goes forward with the rest of the people and the priest hands the container to the person who then opens the container and consumes the host.

The main thing is that we all need to feel included – not separated – from the traditions and community life of our churches. You may need to speak with your priest, minister, pastor to work toward this in your church.

January 2010

Nancy Carlson mentioned that she has received inquiries again regarding gluten-free communion – is it available for churches. You really need to talk with your pastor, priest, or minister. There is a low-gluten communion available which tests at below 0.01 percent, which is one part per 100,000, which is safe for most of us to consume. It can be obtained from the Benedictine Sisters in Clyde, Missouri.

August 2009

There has been a question of the availability of a communion host for those in the Catholic Church. The Benedictine Sisters in Clyde, Missouri, can supply a low-gluten host that complies with Church guidelines and is safe for us to consume. They have had the host checked by using the ELISA scale and the result is listed as below 0.01 percent gluten. If you would like more information on this, please let us know.