



Holy Ground in the Living Room - Judy Koester Reflects on More Than 20 Years of Home Communion Ministry

By: Janis Heier

Sometimes God calls people in quiet ways—a bulletin announcement, a gentle nudge, or a stirring in the heart. That is exactly how Judy Koester's journey as a Home Communion minister at Bethlehem Lutheran Church began more than 20 years ago.

"A message in the bulletin caught my eye and stirred something inside," Judy recalls. "I felt I needed to offer more of myself in service to the church."

That simple "yes" led Judy to the home of Earl and Harriet Stave after Earl became home bound. During each visit, Judy shared Scripture, prayer, and Holy Communion with the couple. While she expected to encourage them, she soon discovered the ministry would bless her just as deeply.

"I learned that the willingness to share my time with them would be a greater blessing to me," she says. "A friendship connection."

Like many beginning a new ministry, Judy admits she was nervous during her first visit. "Maybe they were nervous too," she says, "but I felt this was where I needed to be."

Using the simple communion service included in Bethlehem's Home Communion kit, the visits quickly became familiar and deeply meaningful. Over time, Judy realized those gatherings transformed an ordinary living room into sacred space.

"The greatest joy has been seeing that God can be found anywhere two or more are gathered in His name," Judy says. "It became holy ground in the living room."



Judy Koester & Harriet Stave last year as they celebrated Harriet's 99th Birthday. On August 7th, Harriet will be 100!

For Judy, those moments were never about the setting but about Christ faithfully keeping His promises—bringing comfort, hope, and His presence through Word and Sacrament.

One of the greatest surprises was the lasting relationship that developed.

"What I never anticipated was a friendship—sharing the highs and lows in our lives—that has spanned over 20 years."



When Earl passed away, Harriet was eventually able to return to worship at Bethlehem and receive Holy Communion with her church family again. Judy and Harriet remained close, continuing to visit and stay in touch. As Harriet's health later declined and she could no longer attend worship regularly, Judy once again brought Holy Communion to her. Today, although Harriet lives at Mother Joseph Manor and receives communion in the chapel there, Judy continues to visit and call, nurturing a friendship rooted in faith.

As Harriet prepares to celebrate her 100th birthday this August, Judy reflects on the remarkable woman she has come to know.

"I have watched her life journey and been encouraged by her faith," Judy says. "We've experienced many similar life events, and my life is richer just knowing her. She's an amazing woman."

Harriet has also quietly shared her faith through service, crocheting more than 200 prayer shawls for Bethlehem's ministry. Each shawl offers comfort, warmth, and a tangible reminder of God's love to someone facing difficult circumstances.

For Judy, Home Communion is about much more than receiving the sacrament. It assures those who can no longer attend worship that they remain a cherished and valued part of their church family.

"It is so important to have a connection with other believers and be part of something so much bigger than yourself—and to know you are not alone."

She believes Home Communion ministers often receive as much as they give.

"Anytime you can have a connection and be encouraged to grow in your faith, it's a win."

For anyone considering serving in this ministry, Judy offers simple encouragement. **"Just imagine the difference you can make in someone's life by sharing your faith. Have a little talk with God and ask Him what His plans are for you. Be ready to take on a blessed adventure."**

Looking back over more than two decades of ministry, Judy returns to words that have guided her own journey: "God doesn't call the equipped; He equips the called."

Through one faithful "yes," Judy discovered that bringing Christ into another person's home transformed her own heart as well. Judy's story is a beautiful reminder that while **Home Communion begins with sharing the bread and the cup, it often grows into something far greater—a lasting ministry of presence, friendship, and Christ's love.**



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