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## Food Policy

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ELM is committed to working against oppression and discrimination and for inclusion. As part of that commitment, we recognize that failure to meet the food needs of participants in ELM events can be a barrier to participation. This policy outlines the expectations for meeting the food needs of expected participants in ELM events which should be followed by the event organizers.

### **Communion Access**

Theologically and politically, Holy Communion as a symbol for our unity in Christ is strongest when we find ways for all people to participate as fully as possible. One relatively easy way to accommodate the elements to people with specific food needs are to always offer a low-allergen/gluten-free alternative host alone or in addition to other bread (see Wafer Instructions for allergen-control procedures so that the low-allergen hosts remain safely uncontaminated). Another easy way to increase communion access is to offer grape juice in addition to or instead of wine. Use 100% grape juice without additives. Some people (sometimes the same people who react to wine) are reactive to grapes or yeast may not be able to tolerate grape juice either, so it could be helpful to have another 100% juice on hand.

### **Events with a defined constituency and which include meals (Covenant Circle meetings, Roster retreat, etc.)**

Appropriate meals must be provided for all participants; no participants may be required to provide their own food.

The event organizer should require a response about food needs from every participant. This will ensure that no needs are overlooked and will increase awareness of all participants. Please see below for more information specifically for organizers.

For meetings in retreat centers where food service is part of the retreat package, flexibility to provide for food needs should be part of the decision in choosing a center and part of the agreement with the center. In addition to flexibility in accommodating specific food needs, it is necessary that food preparation staff have specific knowledge/training about food allergen control and gluten-free



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preparation, as well as the capacity to work with individuals around specific needs.

If a participant prefers or needs to provide one's own food, that must be communicated to the event organizer in response to the food needs inquiry. The event organizer will need to determine that the site has facilities for storage and preparation which the participant will need.

For events where all participants are expected to provide their own food or to eat together at a restaurant, before selecting the location, the organizer must determine that there are restaurants and/or grocery stores within walking distance capable of meeting the required food needs either of the individuals registered or the general list below. Any limitations of sites will be communicated to all participants before the event so that individuals can plan for access.

**Events with an open invitation where food is provided. (Biennial gathering, galas, etc.)**

A variety of food should be available to meet the needs of the more common dietary restrictions:

- Vegetarian/Vegan/Dairy Free
- Gluten free
- Low-sugar/carbohydrate
- Peanut and Nut allergies (and preferably other common food allergens)
- Natural/Organic/Low-preservative
- MSG Free
- Drinks available should include water

For buffet service, full information about ingredients should be provided. Guests with specific food needs will be invited to use the buffet first, to reduce cross-contamination and ensure that other guests do not deplete the supply of specific food before those needing it reach the buffet. The following language is



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suggested: "We invite people with specific food needs use the buffet first." Place specific foods away from problematic foods, and have enough serving utensils so that they do not need to move between containers.

### **Information for event organizers**

The event organizer is responsible for:

- Seeking vendors that are knowledgeable and competent in food allergy/ceciac contamination issues
- If the event organizer does not have the training or knowledge to assess the safety of the food preparation, the organizer will seek support from the Diversity and Inclusion Ellipse prior to the selection of sites/vendors
- Posting on the invitation what access will be provided, and asking that people with additional needs contact the organizer
- All individual requests must be honored. If it is not possible to meet a general access need, or if there a request for specific access cannot be met, the organizer must communicate the access barriers to all participants before the event to allow for arrangements for alternative food access.
- While the planner may be in contact with individuals to clarify requests or get more information, it is not appropriate for the planner to ask the person if the accommodation is "really needed" or to suggest compromise. It is also expected that the organizer will maintain confidentiality of all requests unless permission is given to share with specific individuals. Due to the nature of seeking access, permission is assumed for contacting vendors/sites as well as the Diversity and Inclusion Ellipse if assistance is needed.

This policy was adopted by the ELM Covenant Circle, June, 2010.



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