

**Evidence of Errors in  
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod**



**Association of Confessing Evangelical  
Lutheran Congregations**

## **II. Holy Communion**

**August 11, 2010**

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Note: This document is one of several ACELC documents on evidence of errors in the LCMS. As the documents are completed they will be posted to the ACELC web site at <http://www.acelc.net/>. Topics include:

- Pure Doctrine
- Holy Communion
- The Divine Service and Liturgical Offices
- Unionism and Syncretism
- Service of Women in the Church
- The Office of the Holy Ministry
- The Unbiblical Removal of Pastors from their Calls
- The Church’s Mission and Her Evangelistic Task
- Ecclesiastical Supervision
- Dispute Resolution

Additional topics may be added as needed. If you have a comment, question, or concern, please contact the ACELC (<http://www.acelc.net/>). Your input will be seriously considered.

All Scripture References are from the English Standard Version of the Bible. Quotations from the Lutheran Confessions are from *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions*, copyright © 2000, 2006, 2009 by Concordia Publishing House.

The references from the Lutheran Confessions include some words or passages from the German 1580 or Latin 1584 edition, these are set apart with < >.

### Record of Document Updates

Version	Changes/Additions	Date
August 11, 2010	Original Document	August 11, 2010

## A Fraternal Admonition to Correct the Errors of Our Beloved Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

### Preamble

"And they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship in the breaking of bread and in the prayers." Acts 2:42

C.F.W. Walther, (first President of the LCMS), wrote:

"A fellowship in which the Word of God is fundamentally falsified, or in which a fundamental falsification of it is tolerated, is not a true orthodox church, but a false, heterodox church or sect."

*(Essays For the Church Vol I, "Communion Fellowship," Concordia Publishing House, 1992, p.207)*

Presented in this document are concerns over variant teachings and practices by some pastors, congregations, and institutions of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod. These errors have largely been ignored and even tolerated by those elected for the supervision of doctrine and practice in our fellowship. Even the Synod itself in convention has adopted resolutions that violate our fidelity as a synod to Holy Scripture and our Lutheran Confessions.

Many attempts have been made to address and correct these errors. Numerous pastors, laity, congregations, respected doctors of the Church, circuits, district pastoral conferences, even sister synods and their pastoral conferences have taken public issue with these errors and the recent "positions" the LCMS has taken in its past conventions, but to no avail. Districts also have sought redress of these errors through resolutions and overtures to the Synod in Convention only to have them never come to the convention floor for consideration.

In addition, various publications and organizations have attempted to address the adoption of worship forms, texts, and ceremonies that come from alien and errant confessions - as to whether this may be done without also adopting their error. Church history and the inseparable correlation between doctrine and practice teach us that how we pray and worship is in fact our faith, our belief, and our confession (*Lex orandi, lex credendi*).

At stake is the very doctrine upon which the Church stands or falls - the genuine confession of justification by grace alone through faith alone for the sake of Christ's death and resurrection alone. As the Lutheran Confessions state, "this article of justification by faith is the chief article of the entire Christian doctrine." [SD III, 6] When this chief article is at stake so also is the evangelical mission of the Church in our midst, and likewise the ongoing presence of the marks of the Church, and thus the LCMS as a light of the true Gospel of Christ.

Therefore we are compelled out of faithfulness to Holy Scripture and our Lutheran Confessions (to which The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod claims fidelity) to seek Biblical reproof and correction of these errors. Our cause is to offer a fraternal critique of our teaching and practice, and to call our much loved Missouri Synod, her pastors, congregations, and institutions to repentance and back to what she has previously claimed as her source and norm of faith and life – Holy Scripture and its correct exposition, the Book of Concord of 1580.

In this process we seek not to contend over the trivial, nor matters merely of denominational custom or tradition, but over those matters that challenge our very fidelity to the changeless faith that was once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3). It is our intent to hold the LCMS to the Scripturally faithful teaching of the Book of Concord as catholic teaching and not simply something that we, as Lutherans, believe. Thus, when we speak of theological "positions" and the "position of synod," this should be understood as nothing less than what the Athanasian Creed calls "the catholic (or universally held) faith."

It is our sincere prayer that the LCMS would give serious and fraternal consideration to the words here given according to their benevolent intention. Our mission/purpose is to restore what has been compromised – that is a fellowship of unabashed confessional Lutheran congregations in North America and throughout the world for the sake of our children and grandchildren – and yes, for the life of the world. *May God the Holy Spirit, through the Word of Law and Gospel, call, gather, enlighten and sanctify the Church gathered within the Missouri Synod!*

***(Please note: All evidence for the existence of error is only illustrative, not exhaustive.)***

## II. Holy Communion

**Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions teach that full agreement in every article of doctrine must serve as the standard for admission to Holy Communion at the Lord's altar in evangelical practice of the Lord's Supper. Today significant disagreements and many contradictory practices exist in the LCMS regarding admission to the Lord's Supper where many congregations regularly welcome non-Lutherans and/or Lutherans from heterodox Church bodies with which the LCMS is not in altar and pulpit fellowship. We reject the toleration of these errors.**

**A. Original Position** - Closed Communion admits to the altar only those in agreement with all articles of doctrine so that the unity of the One true faith is preserved and confessed.

### 1. The Witness of Holy Scripture:

#### **Acts 2:42**

And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

#### **I Corinthians 10:16-22**

<sup>16</sup> The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? <sup>17</sup> Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. <sup>18</sup> Consider the people of Israel: are not those who eat the sacrifices participants in the altar? <sup>19</sup> What do I imply then? That food offered to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? <sup>20</sup> No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be participants with demons. <sup>21</sup> You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. <sup>22</sup> Shall we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?

#### **I Corinthians 11:26-32**

<sup>26</sup> For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. <sup>27</sup> Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. <sup>28</sup> Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. <sup>29</sup> For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. <sup>30</sup> That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. <sup>31</sup> But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. <sup>32</sup> But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.

#### **I Corinthians 1:10**

I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment.

#### **I Corinthians 5:11-13**

<sup>11</sup> But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler--not even to eat with such a one. <sup>12</sup> For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? <sup>13</sup> God judges those outside. "Purge the evil person from among you."

### 2. The Witness of the Lutheran Confessions:

**Book of Concord, Preface** – “But we have no doubt at all that one can find many pious, innocent people even in those churches which have up to now admittedly not come to agreement with us. These people go their way in the simplicity of their hearts, do not understand the issues, and take no pleasure in blasphemies against the Holy Supper as it is celebrated in our churches according to Christ's institution and as we concordantly teach about it on the basis of the words of his testament. It is furthermore to be hoped that when they are rightly instructed in this doctrine, they will, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, turn to the infallible truth of the divine Word and unite with us and our churches and schools. Consequently the responsibility devolves upon the theologians and

ministers duly to remind even those who err ingenuously and ignorantly of the danger to their souls and to warn them against it, lest one blind person let himself be misled by another." [ *Book of Concord*, Preface, Tappert, pp. 11-12]

**Augsburg Confession, Article XXIV, 35-36**

The Fathers before Gregory make no mention of any private Mass, but they speak a lot about the common Mass, or Communion. Chrysostom says 'that the priest stands daily at the altar inviting some to the Communion and keeping back others.'

**The Apology to the Augsburg Confession, Article XXIV, 49**

If the daily sacrifice was the proper use of the Sacrament, we would keep the sacrifice. The adversaries would not. For their priests use the Sacrament to make money. There is a more frequent and more conscientious use. The people use it after having first been instructed and examined. People are taught about the true use of the Sacrament.

**The Large Catechism, Part 5, 1**

Everyone who desires to be a Christian and go to this Sacrament should know them. For it is not our intention to let people come to the Sacrament and administer it to them if they do not know what they seek or why they come.

**The Large Catechism, Part 5, 58-59**

Therefore, we must make a distinction here between people. Those who are lewd and morally loose must be told to stay away. They are not prepared to receive forgiveness of sin, since they do not desire it and do not wish to be godly. But others, who are not such callous and wicked people, and who desire to be godly, must not absent themselves. This is true even though otherwise they are feeble and full of infirmities.

**The Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Article VII, 68**

It must also be carefully explained who the unworthy guests of this Supper are. They are those who go to this Sacrament without true repentance and sorrow for their sins, without true faith and the good intention of amending their lives. By their unworthy oral eating of Christ's body, they load themselves with damnation (i.e., temporal and eternal punishments) and become guilty of profaning Christ's body and blood.

**3. The Witness of the Early Christian Church, the Reformation Fathers and our Synodical Fathers:**

- a. "Now it must be said that (closed communion) is not taken all that seriously when for the Sacrament preachers give out only bread and wine. Who they are to whom these are given, no matter what they know and believe, is then no great concern . . . Since it is Christ's body and blood that are given out in the sacrament we neither will nor can give such sacrament to any unless he is first examined. What has he learned from the Catechism and does he intend to forsake his sins which he has again committed? We would not make Christ's Church into a pig pen (Matt. 7:6) letting anybody come, unexamined to the sacrament as a pig to its trough. Such a church we leave to the fanatics." [Admonition to Frankfurt am Main, Martin Luther]
- b. To the early church a man was orthodox or heterodox according to his confession...since a man cannot, at the same time, hold two differing confessions, he cannot communicate in two churches of differing confessions. If anyone does this nevertheless, he denies his own confession or has none at all. [Eucharist and Church Fellowship in the First Four Centuries, Werner Elert]
- c. "This food we call Eucharist, and no one may receive it unless he believes that our teaching is true, and has been washed with the washing for forgiveness of sins unto regeneration, and lives as Christ handed down to us. For we do not receive these things as though they were common bread or common drink...as we have been taught, they are the flesh and blood of the incarnate Jesus." [Apology I, Justin Martyr, 150 AD]

- d. *The main purpose of the Holy Sacrament is to be a tool and a means through which the promises of grace are offered, communicated, and appropriated, as with a seal, guarantee, and a pledge through which these promises are confirmed. However, within this major purpose, as a secondary goal, the Sacrament is to be a distinguishing sign of confession and a bond of fellowship in worship. Therefore Communion fellowship is church fellowship ... Holy Communion was not instituted to make people Christians. It was instituted to strengthen the faith of those who already are true Christians. Therefore Communion should be administered to no one who has been revealed as a false Christian ...* This indicates the continuing importance of personal announcement before Holy Communion in our churches. Those pastors who do not continue these announcements, practice shamefully, faithlessly, and unscrupulously and do not exercise the utmost care toward the salvation of the members of their congregations. The thought of the most holy body and blood of Christ being eaten by false Christians is even more dreadful than the thought of throwing them down in the mud! A false Christian is one who will not give up either false doctrine or a godless life. However, even one who still has love for Christ may not automatically receive Holy Communion in all circumstances. For example, Holy Communion should not be received in situations where offense has been given or taken and there has been no Christian reconciliation. In the same way those who believe differently should not receive Holy Communion as long as they have not renounced their error of their heterodox fellowship and in this way reconcile themselves with the orthodox church ... We would be sinning dreadfully if we held ourselves separate from all other fellowships only out of mere blind preference or taste. But this division and standing alone is the command of God and therefore necessary. We may not invite the heterodox as such into our fellowship as our opponents in the "Church Council" have done and want to justify. For thereby they have become guilty of a severe sin. ["Theses on Communion Fellowship with Those Who Believe Differently," Theses VII & VIII, C.F.W. Walther (trans. by Laurence White, 1990)]

*Holy Communion is a mark of confession of Faith and Doctrine among those who celebrate together. Therefore the admission of members of heterodox fellowships to the celebration of communion within the Lutheran Church is in conflict with: 1. Christ's institution; 2. The commanded unity of the church in faith and accordingly in confession; 3. Our love for those to whom the Sacrament is administered; 4. Our love for our own fellow believers, especially the weak who by this action would be given serious offense; and 5. The command not to become participants in the sins and errors of others ...* For the past two hundred years the enemies of a correct doctrine and practice on Communion have asserted that the use of the Sacrament should distinguish Christians from the heathen, not the orthodox from the heterodox. But that is false. All unbelief and all false doctrine is a part of heathenism. Communion fellowship with all those who believe differently is forbidden in the institution of Christ. We do not consider the Reformed orthodox and they do not consider us orthodox. Therefore it is a crass contradiction and vile mockery of the institution of Christ if both parts celebrate one Communion in fellowship with one another. ["Theses on Communion Fellowship with Those Who Believe Differently," Thesis X, C.F.W. Walther (trans. by Laurence White, 1990)]

*We do not place members of heterodox fellowships under excommunication or declare them to be heretics or damned by our refusal to allow them to participate in the celebration of communion within the fellowship of the Lutheran Church. Instead, they are merely suspended until such time as by their separation from the false fellowship they are reconciled with the orthodox church ...* Although he could very well be worthy to receive the Sacrament throughout. Just as little do we excommunicate, disown, declare as heretics, or condemn those Christians erring in faith if we say to them, "We would be glad to allow you to come to holy communion with us. But there is still a barrier in the way. That is the sin of your error in doctrine which you have not recognized up to now. This you must acknowledge and abandon first and become a member of the orthodox church. Then you will be a dear, welcome guest at communion to us." ["Theses on Communion Fellowship with Those Who Believe Differently," Thesis XI, C.F.W. Walther (trans. by Laurence White, 1990)]

**(Note: Walther’s “Theses on Communion Fellowship with Those Who Believe Differently” was delivered to the 1870 Convention of the Western District of the German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States. These theses were unanimously adopted by the Convention as the official teaching of the Synod. A copy of Walther’s “Theses on Communion Fellowship...” is available at [www.ancelc.net](http://www.ancelc.net) under “teaching materials.”)**

- e. In vain is love, or charity, appealed to in defense of “Open Communion.” The fact is that this practice is contrary both to love of God and love of the neighbor, for it ignores that the Sacrament of the Altar must be properly used, as prescribed in Scripture, and it leads the neighbor to sin by partaking unworthily of the Sacrament. And what has been said of “Open Communion” applies also to the admission of Reformed to Lutheran altars “as guests.”<sup>138</sup> (Footnote 138: This “admission as guests” involves a self-contradiction. When Lutheran synods in America indeed wanted to cling to the rule “Lutheran altars for Lutheran Communicants only,” but then wanted exceptions to the rule granted, they were again making admission to the Lord’s Supper a matter of human caprice and were thus in fact dropping the divine rule.) [Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, III, pp. 385-86]
- f. Anyone who does not confess the faith that the true body of Jesus Christ is truly and really present in the holy Supper and so is received by all communicants, worthy and unworthy, cannot discern the body of the Lord [1 Cor. 11:29] and so is not to be admitted to the holy Supper under any circumstances. But even one who confesses that cannot ordinarily be admitted if he is and wants to remain, not a member of our orthodox church, but rather a Separatist, Romanist, Reformed, so-called Evangelical or Unionist, Methodist, Baptist, in short, a member of an erring fellowship. For the Sacrament, as it is a seal of faith, is also the banner of the fellowship in which it is administered. [Pastoral Theology, C.F.W. Walther].
- g. “The practice of refusing Communion to certain Christians and the general population at Lutheran altars is called close(d) Communion. This practice serves the Gospel, and even those refused, but its reverence is for our Lord’s last will and testament. Since fellowship at the Lord’s Table is also confession of a common faith, it would not be truthful for those who affirm the real presence and those who deny it to join one another. Their common Communion would indicate to the non-Christian community that the last will and testament of Christ could be interpreted in contradictory ways. Indeed, the non-Christian might rightly ask whether it was Jesus’ word which determined the church’s position and practice or simply a human consensus. Close(d) communion seeks to prevent a profession of confessional unity in faith where there is, in fact, disunity and disagreement. It would be neither faithful to the Scriptural requirements for admission to Holy Communion (1 Cor. 11:27ff;) nor helpful to fallen humanity if the Christian church welcomes to its altars those who deny or question clear Scriptural teachings.” [“Theology and Practice of The Lord’s Supper,” Commission on Theology and Church Relations, 1983, p.20, p.21, p.22.]

**B. Position Advocated and/or Practiced Today:** It is common to find in LCMS congregations today either no statement (written or oral) regarding who ought to participate in the Lord’s Table, effectively leaving the matter entirely up to the individuals present, or specific language which explicitly welcomes non-Lutherans, Lutherans not in fellowship with the LCMS, as well as anyone else present. In some cases visitors are presented with a brief list of doctrines regarding the Christian faith, and if they agree with them, they are welcome to participate.

**Evidence of this Error:**

1. May 1997, Florida-Georgia District in Convention approves “A Declaration of Eucharistic Understanding and Practice (DEUP),” which states that there should be no “denominational requirement of baptized Christians who desire to receive the body and blood of Christ offered in the Lord’s Supper.”
2. In 1998, the Northwest District submitted an overture to the Synodical Convention in favor of the Florida-Georgia (DEUP), stating “A practice congruent with Scripture and the Confessions calls for the

Sacrament to be shared with baptized Christians who repent of their sins, believe the real presence, and sincerely intend to amend their sinful lives.”

3. In the April 1996 issue of *Lutheran Life*, the district newsletter for the Florida-Georgia District, then District President, Rev. Dr. Thomas R. Zehnder, presented an article entitled: “The Close Communion Created by the Resurrection.” The point of the article is that communion should be open to all who have “communion” in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Zehnder states: “There are some who draw very tight lines of demarcation over against those with whom they may not commune. And while St. Paul strictly admonishes those preparing themselves for a proper reception of the Sacrament to examine themselves (1 Cor. 11:28), there are some who would assume quickly for themselves the responsibility of examining all others. And that’s a strange theological jump.” “Our blessed Lord and His resurrection cause us to see that unity and commonality again. It is good to celebrate that gift! That unifying Factor is Jesus the Risen One, not absolute agreement on every word and interpretation of doctrine and practice.”

**(Note:** Not only Scripture but citations in the document “ACELC Evidence of Errors – Pure Doctrine,” i.e., I, A (Original Position) argue against Zehnder’s position. Zehnder’s view is to “agree to disagree.” If Luther had taken this view there would have been no Reformation. If the early Christians had taken this view there would be no true Christian church today. Though not the official position, this is the “de facto” position of our Synod today as it is being tolerated.)

4. The 1998 Synodical Convention voted that the DEUP (Declaration of Eucharistic Understanding and Practice) was null and void but never demanded repentance for the document (including those resolutions in favor of it) nor for it (and these same resolutions) to be rescinded by the respective districts.
5. “In my travels across the Synod, I have not encountered disagreement in the doctrine of what the Lord’s Supper is. With unanimity, we believe, teach, and confess the Real Presence of the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, received in, with, and under the bread and wine of Holy Communion, for the forgiveness of sin, the strengthening of faith, and the assurance of life eternal through faith in Christ. I do not believe that fundamental doctrinal disagreement concerning what the Lord’s Supper is exists in the LCMS. At the same time, significant disagreement exists in the Synod regarding the policies of admission to Holy Communion, namely, who should be allowed or even encouraged to receive the Sacrament at the altars of our LCMS congregations.” [Rev. Gerald Kieschnick, President, LCMS, 2004 Convention Proceedings, p.55]
6. This statement is from the President of the Texas District, Rev. Ken Hennings in response to those pastors who questioned the sacramental practice exercised at the Texas Youth Event –GLORYbound:

“The communion policy of the event has also been questioned . . . suggesting that GLORYbound will have open communion. This is also untrue. The communion policy which will appear in the Gathering Book has been used for the last nine years of GLORYbound events as suggested to us by the Secretary of the LCMS when it was requested in 1999: The celebration of the Lord’s Supper on Sunday of GLORYbound will be a significant part of our gathering. St. Paul Lutheran Church, Ft. Worth, TX, is serving as host congregation for the Worship Service and Holy Communion. Those who have been instructed in the teachings of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod and believe in the real presence of the body and blood of Christ, in, with and under the bread and wine for the forgiveness of sins, are invited to come with a penitent heart to receive the sacrament.”

**[Note:** This language is often today used as representing “closed communion,” but in reality only obfuscates the truth. The issue is that there is no requirement for continued altar and pulpit fellowship, but simply that a person know what the LCMS (not the Bible) teaches and that they profess a belief in the real presence. This is not in accord with the historic practice of the Lutheran Church, nor the church catholic. Proper admittance to the Lord’s Supper requires both right belief regarding the sacrament (1 Cor. 11:27-29), and that a person be in fellowship with those partaking at the altar (1 Cor. 10:17). Werner Elert makes this last point in the quotation cited above on page 5].

7. Living Water Lutheran Church, Buckeye, AZ:  
“Our Lord invites to his table those who trust his words, repent of all sin, and forgive and love as he forgives and loves us. If this is your belief, we welcome you to join us at the Lord’s Table.”  
[From [www.LivingWaterAZ.org](http://www.LivingWaterAZ.org), downloaded 3/11/2010]
8. St. John Lutheran Church, Orange, CA:  
“What is communion all about and do I participate? Holy Communion is for those who believe as we do in this Sacrament of the Altar. We believe it is the true body and blood of Jesus Christ, in, with, and under the bread and the wine for the forgiveness of sins.” [From <http://www.stjohnsorange.org/article117123.htm?body=1>] Downloaded 3/4/2010.]
9. St. John Lutheran Church, Ellisville, MO:  
“The LCMS Commission on Theology and Church Relations has made it clear that the imposition of denominational standing is neither Scriptural nor a part of our Lutheran Confessional belief. People should not be included or excluded from the Sacrament because they are a member of the right denomination. They should be included or excluded only on the basis of personal faith in the words of the Bible and the position I have explained here. For this reason we clearly explain our position in each worship folder when the Lord’s Supper is offered and ask everyone, members and nonmembers alike, to examine their hearts on the basis of God’s Word. We honor our Lutheran understanding of closed communion on the basis of personal faith. Only those who understand and accept the teaching of the Bible should take the Lord’s Supper.” [From <http://www.stjohns-network.org/about-us/our-story/position-papers/the-lords-supper-as-taught-in-scripture>. Downloaded from this website on 2/28/2010.]
10. Christ Lutheran Church, Brooksville, FL:  
“Holy Communion As I commune today as a child of God, I examine myself and understand that I am a sinner. I tell my God that I am sorry for the wrong that I have done and I believe that Jesus forgives me. As I approach the Lord’s Table I will receive, in this Holy Sacrament, the real presence of Christ’s Body in the bread and His Blood in the wine. Christ Lutheran celebrates Holy Communion on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of each month at our 10:00 AM service. Before receiving Communion at Christ Lutheran you are asked to examine your beliefs and discuss with Pastor if you have any concerns or questions about our practices.” [From <http://clcfla.org> ; 2/12/2010.]
11. Son of Life Lutheran Church, Boynton Beach, FL:  
“Holy Communion is celebrated at Son Life Lutheran Church in response to Jesus’ invitation, ‘Do this often...in remembrance of Me.’...Visitors: If your share these beliefs with us, you are welcome to the Communion rail. Common cup, individual cups and grape juice are available.” [From <http://www.sonlifelutheran.org/communion.html> (Printed 2/12/2010)]
12. Hope Lutheran Church, Bonita Springs, FL:  
“Holy Communion. As a Church of the Word and Sacrament, we cannot over-emphasize the importance of the Holy Communion for those who understand its true meaning and significance. Accordingly, we invite you to partake of the Lord’s Supper with us if:
  - You are baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit
  - You have completed a course in Christian doctrine
  - You believe that Jesus is truly (not merely symbolically) present in the bread and wine
  - You wish to change anything that offends God
  - You want to live a more holy life with God’s helpIf this describes you, please join us for Holy Communion on the first and third Sundays (and Saturdays when applicable) of each month.” [http://www.hope-lutheran-bonita.org/newsite/index.html, 07/29/10]
13. Village Lutheran Church, Bronxville, NY:  
“COMMUNION STATEMENT The congregation of Village Lutheran Church welcomes to Holy Communion those baptized Christians who: Know Jesus Christ as their Savior (John 20:31);

Recognize that the body and blood of Christ are truly present in the bread and wine (I Cor. 11:29); Are able to examine themselves and repent of their sins (I Cor. 11:28); and Look to God's Holy Spirit for help in living the Christian life (Col. 1:10). Persons not receiving Communion may come forward to receive a blessing. Non-Alcoholic Fruit of the Vine: Persons sensitive to alcohol are welcome to receive the blood of Christ in the sacrament using non-alcoholic grape juice. The juice is located in the center circle of the individual tray and is lighter in color. Wine is always available with the Common Cup or Individual Cups." [From printed bulletin for January 3, 2010]

**(Note:** Each preceding communion statement is in its practice a form of "open communion." Open communion includes communing those who are of heterodox fellowships and thus not in fellowship with The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. In each example only certain beliefs need to be held in common in order to participate in Holy Communion. Full agreement in faith and doctrine is not confessed in these statements as necessary for communion fellowship, and thus brings together into "communion" people of contradictory confessions which violates the very essence and purpose of "communion" as Christ instituted it. Thus, a falsehood before God is exercised in these practices, publicly confessing a unity of faith and doctrine that is truly not present among those communing together, and affirming people of heterodox fellowships in their false beliefs by not exercising proper pastoral care and Christian love in correcting their error and reconciling them with the orthodox church.

**C. ACELC Response:**

What has been a faithful and God-pleasing practice throughout the history of the Church (Closed Communion), has degenerated into a culturally conditioned practice of trying to keep everyone happy without any true, pastoral regard for the Word of God or the spiritual welfare of those coming to our altars. Pastoral discretion and the granting of "emergency" exceptions to otherwise unprepared communicants, has been given broad latitude in our day, and essentially disregards the practice of Closed Communion altogether. This is simply a capitulation to both the whims of culture and the ecumenical influences of liberal theology borne out by the fact that this practice is more congruent with the sentimentality of today than with Lutheran theology.