

## 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 Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (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.

1. **Passages from Scripture** that testify that we can only commune those in agreement with all articles of doctrine so that the unity of the One true faith is preserved and confessed. [\* Page 4]

Acts 2:42

I Corinthians 10:16-22

I Corinthians 11:26-32

I Corinthians 1:10

I Corinthians 5:11-13

2. **Quotes from the Lutheran Confessions** that testify to the need for unity in doctrine for the Lord's Supper. [\* Page 4-5]

- a. Book of Concord, Preface
- b. Augsburg Confession, Article XXIV, 35-36
- c. The Apology to the Augsburg Confession, Article XXIV, 49
- d. The Large Catechism, Part 5, 1
- e. The Large Catechism, Part 5, 58-59
- f. The Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Article VII, 68

3. **Quotes from our Lutheran forefathers** regarding the Lord's Supper. [\* Pages 5-7]

**Werner Elert** (German Lutheran theologian and professor at the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg): "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."



**C.F.W. Walther** (First President of the LCMS): "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 ..."

**Francis Pieper** (Lutheran Pastor and Professor of Theology at Concordia Seminary, Saint Louis, MO): "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.)"



4. **Evidence for the Existence of this Error.** [\* Pages 7-10]

Today, it is common to find in LCMS congregations 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. Following are examples of the confusion in the LCMS.

- a. 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."
- b. 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."
- c. 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 you share these beliefs with us, you are welcome to the Communion rail. Common cup, individual cups and grape juice are available."
- d. 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."

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 LCMS. 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.

5. The ACELC concern is that 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. [\* Page 10]

\* Asterisks refer to page numbers in the ACELC *Evidence of Errors in the LCMS: II. Holy Communion* document. You are encouraged to download the entire document from <http://www.acelc.net/> → Key Documents → ACELC Admonition and Error Documents. The online version contains the full text of all Bible passages, Lutheran Confession citations, examples, quotations and sources for all the citations and quotes.

Additional resources on Holy Communion:

1. A brochure explaining closed communion; it can be tailored to your church. See <http://www.acelc.net/> → ACELC Teaching Materials.
2. The theme of the 2012 ACELC Conference was *Christ for Us: The Lord's Supper*. During that conference presentations were given on several aspects relating to the Lord's Supper. All the papers and presentations are at <http://www.acelc.net/> → Key Documents → 2012 Conference Papers.