

Evangelical Lutheran COMMUNION THESES

(Appendix to the Evangelical Lutheran Communion Theses SUMMARY adopted 8/31/2017)

In DETAIL ...

THESIS I

The Institution and Validity of the Lord's Supper

²³ For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took **bread**, ²⁴ and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is **my body** which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." ²⁵ In the same way also he took the **cup**, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in **my blood**. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." ²⁶ For as often as you **eat this bread and drink the cup**, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. (1 Corinthians 11:23–26 ESV)

¹⁶ 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? (1 Corinthians 10:16 ESV)

We confess that the Sacrament of the Altar "is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, under the bread and wine, for us Christians to eat and to drink, instituted by Christ Himself."¹

We reject all beliefs, teachings, and practices that diminish or deny that the very body and blood of Christ are truly present and received with the bread and wine in the Sacrament.² We also reject the use of any language in substitution of Christ's clear words of institution and consecration,³ or of any elements other than bread and wine in the Supper.⁴

What does this mean? As Evangelical Lutherans we hold that Christ's words of institution and consecration are essential to the validity of the Lord's Supper and will only use these words as written by the holy Evangelists Mathew, Mark, Luke, and St. Paul as follows:

¹ *Luther's Small Catechism*, CPH: St. Louis, 1986, p. 30.

² Paul McCain, *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions*, Second Edition (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2005, 2006), FC Ep. VII 6–7, 488. "6 1. **We believe, teach, and confess that in the Holy Supper Christ's body and blood are truly and essentially present, and that they are truly distributed and received with the bread and wine.** 7 2. We believe, teach, and confess that the words of Christ's testament are not to be understood in any other way than the way they read, according to the letter. So the bread does not signify Christ's absent body and the wine His absent blood. **But, because of the sacramental union, <the bread and wine> are truly Christ's body and blood.**"

³ *Concordia*, FC Ep. VII 9, 488. "9 4. At the same time we also believe, teach, and confess unanimately that in the use of the Holy Supper the words of Christ's institution should in no way be left out. Instead, they should be publicly recited, as it is written in 1 Corinthians 10:16, "The cup of blessing that we bless" and so forth. This blessing occurs through the reciting of Christ's words."

Concordia, SD VII 85, 575–76. "85 To preserve this true Christian doctrine about the Holy Supper, and to avoid and abolish many idolatrous abuses and perversions of this testament, the following useful rule and standard has been derived from the words of institution: **Nothing has the nature of a Sacrament apart from the use instituted by Christ or apart from the action divinely instituted. This means, if Christ's institution is not kept as He appointed it, then there is no Sacrament.**"

⁴ *Concordia*, SD VII 48–49, 570–71. "48 All the circumstances of the Holy Supper's institution testify that these words of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ (which in themselves are simple, plain, clear, firm, and beyond doubt), cannot and must not be understood other than in their usual, proper, and common meaning. For Christ gives this command at the table and at supper. **There is certainly no doubt that He speaks of real, natural bread and of natural wine.**"

23 **Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night when He was betrayed, took bread, and when**
24 **He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to the disciples and said: “take, eat; this is**
25 **My body, which is given for you. This do in remembrance of Me.”**

26 **In the same way also He took the cup after supper, and when He had given thanks,**
27 **He gave it to them, saying, “Drink of it, all of you; this cup is the new testament in My**
28 **blood, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. This do, as often as you drink it,**
29 **in remembrance of Me.”⁵**

30 Also, as Evangelical Lutherans we hold that only bread and “fruit of the vine” wine (Matthew 26:29;
31 Mark 14:25) are to be used for consecration as clearly instituted by the Lord and in keeping with the
32 Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. The use of grape wine precludes the use of
33 unfermented grape juice as an acceptable substitute. While bread and wine are the prescribed and
34 instituted elements and thus essential to the Supper, what kind of bread and wine is not.⁶

35 **THESIS I ... Therefore we hold that essential to the Lord’s Supper and its validity are the**
36 **exclusive use of bread and wine, and Christ’s words of institution and consecration as written**
37 **by the holy Evangelists Matthew, Mark, Luke, and St. Paul.**

⁵ *Luther’s Small Catechism*, CPH: St. Louis, 1986, p. 30–31.

⁶ Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, vol. 3 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1953), 353–54. Pieper also gives indication of this distinction of essential and non-essential concerning the bread and wine. He states: “As water and the application of water are a part of Baptism, so bread and wine and their reception are the earthly element of the Lord’s Supper.⁹⁴ If something else is substituted, doubts must necessarily arise whether our celebration is the Supper instituted by Christ.” This he further expounds in a footnote: “⁹⁴ At the institution of His Supper Christ used bread (ἄρτος), Matt. 26:26, etc. In the cup at the first celebration was wine, as we see from τὸ γέννημα τῆς ἀμπέλου, Matt. 26:29, etc. No detailed specifications as to the sort of bread and wine are given. This, therefore is a matter of free choice. Walther, (*Pastorale*, 168 f.), following the older theologians writes: ‘It is unessential whether the bread is leavened or unleavened, whether it be baked of rye, wheat, corn, barley, or oats, whether it have this or that shape, provided that it is real bread baked of flour and water. It is likewise unessential whether red or white wine be used, or whether the wine is undiluted (*merum*) or mixed with water (as was likely used by Christ, in accordance with the custom of His time), provided that what is used is a potion that is made from “the fruit of the vine (γέννημα τῆς ἀμπέλου),’ Matt. 26:29. The pastor must use every care that nothing but true wine is used in the Sacrament.”