

Evangelical Lutheran COMMUNION THESES

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

In DETAIL ...

THESIS IV

Who Is Worthy and Well Prepared to Receive the Lord's Supper

¹⁹ Go therefore and **make disciples** of all nations, **baptizing them** in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ **teaching them** to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19 ESV)

²⁶ Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to **the disciples**, and said, “Take, eat; this is my body.” ²⁷ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it **to them**, saying, “Drink of it, all of you, ²⁸ for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many **for the forgiveness of sins**. (Matthew 26:26–28 ESV)

²⁷ 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. ²⁸ **Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup.** (1 Corinthians 11:27–28 ESV)

⁵ **Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith.** Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test! . . . ⁷ But we pray to God that you may not do wrong . . . , but that you may do what is right, . . . ⁸ **For we cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the truth.** (2 Corinthians 13:5–8 ESV)

⁶ Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? ⁷ Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. ⁸ **Let us therefore celebrate the festival,** not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but **with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.** (1 Corinthians 5:6–8 ESV)

We confess that “Fasting and bodily preparation are certainly fine outward training. But that person is truly worthy and well prepared who has **faith** in these words: ‘Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.’”¹

And that concerning this Sacrament one is to know “**What is it? What are its benefits? and Who is to receive it?** And all these points are established through the words by which Christ has instituted this Sacrament. **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.**”²

We reject all beliefs, teachings, and practices that diminish or deny Baptism and instruction in the Christian faith as confessed by the Evangelical Lutheran Church, in particular the doctrine of the Lord's Supper, as essential to a “worthy and well prepared” reception of the Lord's Supper, including faith in these words “Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.”³ This instruction

¹ *Luther's Small Catechism*, CPH: St. Louis, 1986, p. 31.

² *Concordia*, LC V 1–2, 431.

³ *Concordia*, SD VII, 69–70, 573–74. ⁶⁹ Some Christians have a weak faith and are shy, troubled, and heartily terrified because of the great number of their sins. They think that in their great impurity they are not

39 includes both the examination of the Communicant by the Pastor, and the self-examination of the
40 Communicant in keeping with faith and repentance of all sins.⁴

41 *What does this mean?* As Evangelical Lutherans we hold that only those are truly worthy and well
42 prepared who are baptized, instructed, examined, and publicly confess the Christian faith as taught by
43 the Evangelical Lutheran Church, and so believe and confess that the very body and blood of Christ
44 are truly present and received with the bread and wine in the Sacrament, and this for the forgiveness
45 of all sins of doctrine and life.

46 Because denial of these truths incurs sin against faith, sin against the body and blood of Christ, and
47 sin against the unity of faith intrinsic to the Sacrament, self-examination by the Communicant is also
48 necessary for a worthy reception of the Lord's Supper. Such examination is to first ask if one believes
49 the Word of Christ, that His very body and blood are truly present in the Sacrament, thus "discerning
50 the body." It is secondly to ask whether one believes in these words "Given and shed for you for the
51 forgiveness of sins." This presupposes a recognized need for such forgiveness and examination of
52 one's life according to the Ten Commandments. And thirdly it is to examine one's faith in keeping
53 with the confession of the orthodox (Lutheran) Church.

54 Thus only those are to be communed who are baptized and confirmed in the orthodox (Lutheran)
55 faith, who have been examined by the Pastor and instructed in their own self-examination,⁵ who know
56 and can state why they come and what they expect to receive,⁶ who are repentant of all sins as

worthy of this precious treasure and Christ's benefits. They feel their weakness of faith and lament it, and from their hearts desire that they may serve God with stronger, more joyful faith and pure obedience. **These are the truly worthy guests for whom this highly venerable Sacrament has been especially instituted and appointed.**⁷⁰ For Christ says Come to Me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. (Matthew 11:28) Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. (Matthew 9:12)

⁴ Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, vol. 35 (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1960), "Treatise on New Testament," 1520, edited by E. Theodore Bachmann, 88–89. "So if you would receive this sacrament and testament worthily, **see to it that you give emphasis to these living words of Christ, rely on them with a strong faith, and desire what Christ has promised you in them; then it will be yours, then you will be worthy and well prepared.** This faith and confidence must and will make you joyful and awaken a bold love for Christ, by means of which you will gladly begin to lead a really good life **and with all your heart to flee from sin.**"

⁵ Chemnitz, *Examination*, II:315. "There is no doubt that it is incumbent on all ministers of the church that they diligently and earnestly admonish their parishioners, and indeed set before them the very grave threats of guilt and divine judgment, **lest they approach the Lord's Supper without making the prior examination or preparation of which Paul speaks.** And if those sin who from ignorance or thoughtlessness eat unworthily, the sin of those will be much more grievous who, although they owe it from the nature of their office, yet do not instruct them by reproving, admonishing, exhorting, **and teaching that and in what way they should examine themselves, or what preparation they should make, lest they eat and drink unworthily to their judgment,** but may worthily receive the Eucharist together with its fruits and effects. These things are diligently and earnestly taught and transmitted among us."

⁶ *Concordia*, SD VII 62, 573. "⁶² This spiritual eating is nothing other than faith. It means to hear God's Word (in which Christ, true God and man, is presented to us, together with all benefits that He has purchased for us by His flesh given into death for us, and by His blood shed for us, namely, God's grace, the forgiveness of sins, righteousness, and eternal life). It means to receive it with faith and keep it for ourselves. It means that in all troubles and temptations we firmly rely—with sure confidence and trust—and abide in this consolation: we have a gracious God and eternal salvation because of the Lord Jesus Christ."

Concordia, AC XXIV 7–8, 47–48. "⁶⁷ **The people are also advised about the dignity and use of the Sacrament, about how it brings great consolation to anxious consciences, so that they too may learn to believe God and to expect and ask from Him all that is good.**⁸ This worship pleases God [Colossians 1:9–10]. Such use of the Sacrament nourishes true devotion toward God."

Concordia, AC XXIV 30–31, 49. "³⁰ But Christ commands us, "Do this in remembrance of Me" (Luke 22:19). **Therefore, the Mass was instituted so that those who use the Sacrament should remember, in faith, the benefits they receive through Christ and how their anxious consciences are cheered and**

57 testified to in their public confession and life in reconciliation with the orthodox Church.

58 ***We therefore hold that Communicant Members are those who are baptized, instructed concerning***
59 ***the Lord's Supper, prepared to examine themselves for a worthy reception of the Supper, publicly***
60 ***confess the orthodox faith in fellowship with the orthodox (Lutheran) Church, and who live that***
61 ***confession and faith in repentance of all known sins of doctrine and life.***

62 Such Communicant Members are those of particular orthodox (Lutheran) congregations. In accord
63 with God's Word, and on account of common belief, teaching, and confession, such congregations
64 are to seek and form fellowships as the one body of Christ, and so exercise altar and pulpit
65 fellowship. In such fellowship of orthodox Christians exists the *privilege* of communing at one
66 another's altars as a *welcomed guest* and Communicant Member under the same declared confession.

67 In addition, since the Pastor is called only to his local parish and thus is the Pastor only to those to
68 whom he is called to serve, and yet may by *privilege* of declared altar and pulpit fellowship commune
69 those of another parish, it remains incumbent upon him as a steward of the mysteries (1 Corinthians
70 4:1–2) to determine the Communicant Membership of the guest. Because he is not the guest's Pastor,
71 it is of good pastoral care and "Communion Etiquette" to seek the permission of the guest's Pastor
72 before communing the guest.

73 Communicant Members ought also exercise such Communion Etiquette in assisting the host Pastor in
74 his call to proper pastoral care by announcing ahead of time their coming visit and desire to receive
75 the Lord's Supper so as to allow for sufficient contact between the host Pastor and the guest's Pastor.
76 In cases of repeated visits it may suffice that only one initial permission is needed after the host
77 Pastor has by such permission obtained knowledge of the guest's Communicant Membership and
78 good standing.

79 In accord with this, the Lord's Supper may be properly administered by the Pastor(s) to Communicant
80 Members of their own congregation, of other congregations in their declared fellowship (synod), and
81 of other orthodox (Lutheran) church bodies in declared altar and pulpit fellowship with their
82 fellowship (synod).

83 **THEESIS IV ... Therefore we hold that those who are worthy and well prepared to receive the**
84 **Lord's Supper are those baptized, instructed, examined, and publicly confess the Christian**
85 **faith as taught by and in fellowship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church. These are**
86 **Communicant Members.**

comforted.³¹ **To remember Christ is to remember His benefits. It means to realize that they are truly offered to us."**

Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, vol. 53 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965), "An Order of Mass and Communion," 1523, edited by Ulrich S. Leupold, 34. "For the best preparation is—as I have said—a soul troubled by sins, death, and temptation and hungering and thirsting for healing and strength. Teaching these matters to the people is up to the bishop."