

# Evangelical Lutheran COMMUNION THESES

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

*In DETAIL ...*

## THESIS V

### Who Is Not Worthy and Well Prepared to Receive the Lord's Supper

<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. (1 Corinthians 11:27–30 ESV)

<sup>17</sup> I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for **those who cause divisions** and create obstacles **contrary to the doctrine** that you have been taught; **avoid them.** <sup>18</sup> For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive. (Romans 16:17–18 ESV)

<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.** (1 Corinthians 5:11 ESV)

**We confess** that “anyone who does not believe these words [Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins] or doubts them is unworthy and unprepared, for the words ‘for you’ require all hearts to believe.”<sup>1</sup> 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.**”<sup>2</sup>

For “Christ’s true, essential body and blood are orally received and partaken of in the Holy Supper by all who eat and drink the consecrated bread and wine in the Supper. This is done by the believing as a certain pledge and assurance that their sins are surely forgiven them and that Christ dwells in them and is at work in them. **This supper is received by the unbelieving for their judgment and condemnation.**”<sup>3</sup>

**We reject** all beliefs, teachings, and practices that diminish or deny that among the unworthy and unprepared are those not baptized, or not instructed and do not publicly confess the Christian faith as taught by the Evangelical Lutheran Church, or not able to examine themselves, or not repentant of all sins (including doctrinal errors), and thus not reconciled with and under the banner of the orthodox (Lutheran) Church.<sup>4</sup>

*What does this mean?* As Evangelical Lutherans we hold that those who are not reconciled with and

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<sup>1</sup> *Luther’s Small Catechism*, CPH: St. Louis, 1986, p. 31.

<sup>2</sup> *Concordia*, LC V 2, 431.

<sup>3</sup> *Concordia*, SD VII 63–64, 573.

<sup>4</sup> *Concordia*, SD VII 68, 573. “<sup>68</sup> 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., with temporal and eternal punishments) and become guilty of profaning Christ’s body and blood.” [1 Corinthians 11:29]

33 under the banner of the orthodox (Lutheran) Church are truly unworthy and unprepared to receive the  
34 Sacrament. Just as faith in “these words” is necessary for a beneficial reception of the Lord’s Super,  
35 and this as a matter of salvation, so too is there a corresponding consequence that goes with an  
36 unworthy and unprepared reception.<sup>5</sup>

37 It is clear in the words of the Apostle Paul that the consequences of an unworthy reception also have  
38 salvation implications. An unworthy reception incurs *judgment* that harms both body and soul (1  
39 Corinthians 11:27–30).<sup>6</sup> Therefore one is to examine himself before receiving the Lord’s Supper that  
40 he might do so in a worthy and beneficial manner, and not to his judgment and detriment.

41 It is also clear that an unworthy reception incurs a *guilt* concerning the body and blood of the Lord.  
42 This *guilt* is an indication of *sin*. And such guilt incurs judgment on account of not “discerning the  
43 body,” meaning, not discerning the *Real Presence* of Christ’s body and blood in the Supper for the  
44 “forgiveness of sins.”<sup>7</sup> The *sin* is not believing the words of Jesus (*unbelief*), and thus denying in the  
45 reception the very benefit for which the truly present body and blood of Christ were given and shed—  
46 “the forgiveness of sins.”<sup>8</sup>

47 This means that an unworthy reception is a clear matter of *sin* and *judgment*. The sin is three-fold: *sin*  
48 *against faith*—not believing “the word of Christ,” *sin against the body and blood of Christ*—“without  
49 discerning the body,” and *sin against the unity of faith* intrinsic to the Sacrament in impenitent moral

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<sup>5</sup> *Concordia*, SD VII 16, 565. “Since St. Paul says even the unworthy partake of the Sacrament, they hold that the body and blood of Christ are also truly offered to the unworthy, and the unworthy truly receive them. This happens if the institution and command of the Lord Christ are observed. But such persons receive them to condemnation, as St. Paul says. For they misuse the holy Sacrament, because they receive it **without true repentance and without faith**. For it was instituted for this purpose, that it might testify that the grace and benefits of Christ are here applied to those who **truly repent** and comfort themselves **by faith in Christ**.”

<sup>6</sup> *Concordia*, SD VII 68, 573. “<sup>68</sup> 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., with temporal and eternal punishments) and become guilty of profaning Christ’s body and blood.” [1 Corinthians 11:29]

<sup>7</sup> *Concordia*, SD VII 60, 572. “**St. Paul teaches clearly that by their unworthy eating and drinking they grievously sin against Christ’s body and blood.** For he says: “Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner [sins not merely against the bread and wine, not merely against the signs or symbols and emblems of the body and blood, but] will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord” (1 Corinthians 11:27). **Such a person dishonors, abuses, and disgraces the body and blood**, like the Jewish people, who by their actions violated Christ’s body and killed Him. The Ancient Christian Fathers and Church teachers have unanimously understood and explained this passage in this way.”

“<sup>29</sup> **How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace?** <sup>30</sup> For we know him who said, ‘Vengeance is mine; I will repay.’ And again, ‘The Lord will judge his people.’ <sup>31</sup> It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” [Hebrews 10:29-31 ESV]

<sup>8</sup> Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works*, vol. 35 (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1960), “Treatise on New Testament,” 1520, edited by E. Theodore Bachmann, 88. “So in this matter, you must above all else take heed to your heart, that you believe the words of Christ, and admit their truth, when he says to you and to all, “This is my blood, a new testament, by which I bequeath you forgiveness of all sins and eternal life.” **How could you do him greater dishonor and show greater disrespect to the holy mass than by not believing, or by doubting? For he desired this to be so certain that he himself even died for it.** Surely such doubt would be nothing else than denying and blaspheming Christ’s sufferings and death, and every blessing which he has thereby obtained.”

50 sin or persistent heterodox error contrary to the orthodox (Lutheran) faith.<sup>9</sup>

51 **THESIS V ... Therefore we hold that those *not* worthy and well prepared to receive the Lord's**  
52 **Supper incur both *sin* and *judgment*. Communing heterodox Christians without renunciation of**  
53 **their errors and reconciliation with the orthodox (Lutheran) Church *sins* against the unity of**  
54 **faith intrinsic to the Sacrament.**

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<sup>9</sup> Chemnitz, *Examination*, II:238. "Is it then our opinion that in the true sense of the Eucharist also those receive forgiveness of sins who are conscious of having committed the weightiest crimes, even if they do not desist from them but continue in their purpose to do evil, if they do not bring the fear of God or repentance and faith but knowingly persevere in sins against their conscience? This we by no means teach. **For with us those people who do not repent but persevere in sins against their conscience are earnestly warned that they are eating and drinking judgment to themselves in that they sin against the body and blood of the Lord. For the offense against God is increased through the fact that they take the Eucharist in impenitence and treat the body and blood of the Lord with contempt.** Therefore it is necessary that in those who are to be helped by this eating there be penitence and fear of God, which is terrified by the contemplation of sin and the wrath of God against sins and puts off the purpose to do evil. Faith also is necessary, that seeks and accepts the remission of sins in the promise."