

III. Divine Services & Liturgical Offices



Holy Scripture and our Lutheran Confessions: [* Page 4]

- give witness to the faithfulness of liturgical worship and its power to unify the Church, to faithfully teach God’s people, respect her traditions, and to reflect the unity of the one true God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – whom we worship. Additionally, liturgy serves chiefly for the proper administration of the pure Word and Sacraments.

Some in the LCMS have asserted that the requirement for Exclusive use of doctrinally pure agenda, hymnbooks, and catechism in church and school is “nebulous.”

- teach that all heterodox doctrine and practice (that is, false teaching) have no part in the worship and life of a Lutheran congregation.

Some LCMS congregations openly use teachings of Arminian and Reformed theology.

- declare that the primary action in worship is taken by our gracious God who serves His people with His gifts of Word and Sacrament.

Today, the liturgical practice of some LCMS pastors and congregations has been predicated on the false belief that worship is primarily the action of men who are present to serve God.

- inform us that worship is an expression of the unity of the God who gathers us and the unity of the faith we believe, teach and confess, and that therefore we should “strive for uniformity” in our worship.

Today many in the LCMS have asserted that striving for unity and uniformity is an unbiblical binding of the Christian’s freedom and conscience, and that much greater diversity of worship forms would serve the Church better.

We reject all of these errors.

1. **Passages from Scripture** that testify to the need for faithfulness in liturgical worship. [* Pages 4-7]

Genesis 13:18	Hebrews 8:2, 6
Exodus 25:9	Revelation 4
Exodus 28:1-2	Revelation 5
II Chronicles 29:27-30	Revelation 7:9-12
I Corinthians 14:26-33	Revelation 15:2-4
Hebrews 10:24-25	Revelation 19:1-8

2. **Quotes from the Lutheran Confessions** that testify for faithfulness in liturgical worship. [* Pages 7-9]

- Augsburg Confession, Article XXIV (The Mass) [34, 40]
- Augsburg Confession, Epilogue to Article XXI (Worship of the Saints) [4-5]
- Apology to the Augsburg Confession, Article IV (Justification) [310]
- Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Articles VII and VIII (The Church) [33]
- Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Article XXIV (The Mass)
- Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Article XV (Human Traditions) [5, 20, 21]
- Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Article XXIV (The Mass), [80, 83]
- Large Catechism, Part I (The Ten Commandments, Third Commandment) [94]



3. The **Witness of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod** [* Pages 9-10]

The First LCMS Constitution (Article V, 14., 15). Synod holds in accordance with the 7th article of the Augsburg Confession that uniformity in ceremonies is not essential; yet on the other hand Synod deems such uniformity wholesome and useful... Synod deems it necessary ... in America, that the emptiness and the poverty in externals of the served be opposed, which, having been introduced here by the false spirit of the Reformed is now rampant.



1998 Board for Congregational Services Report, 1998 Convention Workbook, pp. 30-33. In recent years a significant debate has emerged in our Synod concerning our way of worship. Partly out of a desire to communicate the Gospel more effectively both to members and to the unchurched, a number of congre-

gations have altered the orders of service provided in our hymnals...they have chosen to design services that clearly depart from the historic pattern of worship that has been handed down to succeeding generations of Christians for nearly 2,000 years...

4. **Evidence for the Existence of this Error.** [* Pages 10-14] Congregations are being encouraged and enabled by the Synod to adopt a variety of worship formats for the sake of out-reach and for the sake of improving numerical growth. Use of so-called “contemporary worship” is now widespread throughout our church body.
- a. The 2004 Convention approved the use of the new *Lutheran Service Book* to foster unity of practice in the Synod (2004 Res 2-03, To Accept LSB and Agenda as an Official Service Book and Hymnal of Synod). However, the same convention also approved, “That the Synod in convention affirm respect for diversity in worship practices as we build understanding of our theology of worship and foster further discussion of worship practices that are consistent with that theology.” (2004 Res 2-04, To Affirm Responsible Use of Freedom in Worship)
 - b. It is said by those who wish greater latitude in worship practices, all for the sake of reaching the lost, that worship style is independent of theology. Hence David Luecke’s Book, *Apostolic Style and Lutheran Substance*. Luecke advocates borrowing worship forms from Evangelicalism and inserting our Lutheran theology. Can this actually be done? If we borrow forms or styles of worship from sects within Christendom that deny baptismal regeneration, the physical presence of Jesus in the Lord’s Supper, and the efficaciousness of the Word, etc., can we retain the purity of the Gospel in the means of grace? [See Luecke’s answer on page 11 of the Evidence of Errors document.]
 - c. Most of the songs, “hymns” and worship forms brought over into Lutheran worship today originate in Evangelicalism which, for the most part, denies original sin, the doctrine of election, grace alone (although they say they teach it, their practice reveals clearly that they do not. i.e., “deciding for Jesus” etc.), the means of grace, absolution, etc.
 - d. The pervasiveness of contemporary worship services and/or “blended” traditional/contemporary services is evident with any cursory review of LCMS websites in most districts. It is increasingly difficult to find an LCMS congregation which exclusively uses the historic Lutheran liturgies of the Church.



5. **The ACELC concerns.** [* Page 14]



Many in the LCMS believe that contemporary worship forms are a more effective way to attract unbelievers to worship services...and often give voice to the contention that liturgy simply does not communicate to modern Americans – especially younger Americans. This view dismisses out-right the biblical role of worship, specifically, that Christ is present to feed His sheep with His gifts of Word and Sacrament. The Scriptural and Confessional witness is that worship is for believers.

Since contemporary worship in its various forms tends to make the worship of Lutheran congregations look very much like that of many Reformed churches, there remains very little that is distinctively Lutheran about such worship.

The ACELC recognizes that there can be a variety of worship forms and practices that are biblical and faithful to God's Word. What needs to be determined is what is in the scope of worship uniformity that holds to that principle, thus maintaining continuity with the Church catholic.

Finally, in a church body that once “strived for uniformity” in its worship forms, “diversity” in worship has come to be declared a virtue. What used to unite us, now divides us. Many now claim that their Christian freedom permits them to do whatever they wish to do without regard for the unity of our church body, the unity of our congregations, and the unity of our understanding of the very clear language of our Lutheran Confessions. Christian liberty and unity has devolved into personal license and diversity.

* Asterisks refer to page numbers in the ACELC *Evidence of Errors in the LCMS: III. The Divine Service and Liturgical Offices* document. You are encouraged to download the entire document from <http://www.ancelc.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.