

Guidance Regarding the Lord's Supper

These are challenging times for pastoral care and for sharing God's gifts with His people. One issue that several pastors have inquired about is **offering the Lord's Supper in the midst of the pandemic**. We believe, teach and confess that the Lord's Supper should be received often. In addition to Jesus' own mandate, "Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me" in 1 Corinthians 11, The Lutheran Confessions strongly endorse receiving the sacrament regularly. AC XIV quotes Ambrose: "Because I always sin, I always need to take the medicine" (33). The Large Catechism is filled with exhortations toward the eager and regular reception of the Lord's Supper—especially in the face of calamity and crisis:

"We must never think of the Sacrament as something harmful from which we had better flee, but as a pure, wholesome, comforting remedy that grants salvation and comfort. For where the soul has recovered, the body also is relieved. Why, then, do we act as if the Sacrament were a poison, the eating of which would bring death?" (68)

"But those who are mindful of their weakness, desire to be rid of it and long for help. They should regard and use the Sacrament just like a precious antidote against the poison they have in them. Here in the Sacrament you are to receive from the lips of Christ forgiveness of sin. It contains and brings with it God's grace and the Spirit with all His gifts, protection, shelter, and power against death and the devil and all misfortune." (70)

The Scriptures and Confessions also provide sound teaching regarding the proper administration of the Lord's Supper. I recommend reading 1 Corinthians chapters 10 and 11; The Large Catechism, Fifth Part, the Sacrament of the Altar; The Formula of Concord, Epitome, Article VII, Article X; and the Solid Declaration, Article VII to review what we believe, teach and confess about the proper administration of the Sacrament.

While the Scriptures and Confessions mandate receiving the Sacrament often, proper administration is critical for the good of God's people. We would have never imagined a time like this when it would be such a struggle to steward the Word and Sacraments for God's people. I am confident that you are responding to your local needs in a faithful way. It is also important to remember that we walk together as a Synod. A local church or a district of the LCMS does not have the authority to initiate a new doctrinal practice. That is why I urge you to consider the following questions if you decide to offer the Lord's Supper during this extended period of isolation:

- Is any uncertainty being created regarding what is being received?
- Is the office of the ministry being honored, or is it being despised or usurped?
- Is the Sacrament being administered under the oversight of the local church and pastoral office?
- Are fellowship protocols being honored?
- Is preparation for the sacrament being accomplished in a biblical way?
- Is pastoral care present with the receiving group?

Also, please be reminded of the key principles I included in an earlier communication:

- Only the urgent nature of the situation moves us to implement exceptional practices.
- Pastoral care is essential wherever the Lord's Supper is administered—including proper preparation to receive the sacrament.
- Those who receive the Lord's Supper must do so with certainty about its administration and benefits. Practices to insure removing all doubts are essential.

The CTCR has issued an opinion regarding Holy Communion with online support. You can find it [here](#). President Harrison asked the seminary faculties to issue a statement, as well. That email was sent to all pastors. The Council of Presidents has not yet had the opportunity to discuss these opinions. There is much yet to work through.

However, I trust you and your congregations to serve the people under your care faithfully as stewards of the mysteries of God according to their needs. As our own Synodical President indicated, there will be a variety of approaches in the many different contexts of our congregations. During this unprecedented time, I am confident that your actions and innovations to meet the needs of God's people will be faithful. If you have any doubts or questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to your circuit visitor, your area vice-president, or me.

As President Harrison reminded us all, please exercise charity toward one another during this time when we walk by faith through the challenges we face. Above all, "Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

Thankful to serve with you,
President Newman