

Frequently Asked Questions About In-Home Communion and Baptism

How is it possible to celebrate the Sacraments without an Ordained Pastor or Synodically Authorized Minister?

- Many of the churches of the Lutheran Reformation have provided for administration of the sacraments in the home during extraordinary times. This is such a time. Christ is truly present in this home celebration of the meal granting life, salvation and the forgiveness of sins. Luther, in his Small and Large Catechisms, teaches that the home is the first church where we are formed for the Christian life through instruction in God's word and holy living.

Why is this not possible all the time?

- Pastors are set apart by the church at their ordination in order to preach and provide for good order at the celebration of the sacraments so that the church may preserve its unique witness to the Gospel down through the generations. The church has existed for 2000 years; we take the long view of things! The use of the means of grace in extraordinary emergencies, such as we are living through now, is just that: extra-ordinary. Once this crisis has passed we will resume the practice that best ensures the faithful transmission of our witness to the gospel which is that only those who are duly called and ordained may preside.

What about celebrating the sacrament remotely through Zoom or some other technology?

- St. Paul addressed the problem of abuses in the Lord's supper in I Corinthians 11:17ff. He does not argue then (nor do I now) that the sacrament was not a real sacrament. Paul's concern, and mine in this case, is that the way they were doing it was creating divisions in the body: including the privileged while excluding others, creating "haves" and "have nots," turning a "communion" into a "division." I see at least five ways in which the body is divided using live-streaming as a way of celebrating communion:
 - o Some people do not have access to high speed internet in their area.
 - o Some could get it, but can't afford it.
 - o some have access to the internet, but do not have, can not afford or do not know how to use any one of the many live-streaming platforms.
 - o What about people who suffer an internet outage at the time that the live or recorded stream is being offered? Etc.
 - o From an experiential point of view – having participated in some "virtual" family meals while on military deployments, the experience can leave one feeling that it was nice, but not the real thing, thus, creating a division among those who can fully embrace the practice and those who cannot.

What about using the practice of providing communion to those in special circumstances using elements reserved from a previous celebration of the sacrament at their congregation?

- I can imagine creative ways that congregations could have done this (and several have) during the previous order by the Governor, but the shelter-in-place order seems to exclude this possibility. I'm open to ideas, however.