

## Communion Assistants

Christ the King Lutheran Church  
February 2018

Luther's Small Catechism reminds that the Sacrament of Holy Communion is: "...the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ under the bread and wine..." Lutherans stand in the historical and orthodox Christian view that Jesus comes to us in and through the bread and the wine. For that reason, when the bread and wine are given, the meal is accompanied with important words: "This is the body of Christ given for you; This is the blood of Christ shed for you." We announce what we receive, allowing the feast to be a feast that is consumed in two ways: by mouth and by ear. We eat what we hear it to be: the real presence of Jesus.

The ministry entrusted to Communion Assistants is critical to proper celebration of the sacrament. When you serve as a communion assistant, you will be assisting the congregation<sup>1</sup> to receive great and wonderful gifts. Again, Luther teaches in the Small Catechism that "The words 'given for you' and 'shed for you for the forgiveness of sin' show us that the forgiveness of sin, life and salvation are given to us in the sacrament through these words, because where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation."

You help the entire congregation celebrate the real presence of Jesus for each other. You help others hear the good news that Jesus is given and shed for them. Your words and your actions, announce the good news. You give people something to believe. Your ministry is no small action. The presence of Jesus in the sacrament makes your service an important ministry in Christian Worship.

You are worthy to assist with Holy Communion solely because you have been baptized. When you were baptized into Christ's death and resurrection, you were joined with Jesus on the cross. You were given new life through the resurrection. At the same time, the Holy Spirit called you into what Lutherans call "The Priesthood of All Believers." Our shared priesthood reminds us that the church holds the sacraments in common.

Sacraments are not the property or privilege of any pastor. They are gifts given to the church. The pastor presides at Holy Communion as a member of the Priesthood of All Believers. S/he is called by the church to help all priestly members serve in the ministries of worship. As a called Pastor, the clergy person has been set aside by the "Church," trained to make sure that Word and Sacraments are rightly proclaimed and practiced in local communities, and called to lead the local congregation. God does not bestow pastors with special powers that go beyond those of any other member of the priesthood of all believers. Your pastor leads the priestly ministries of all "priestly-members" of the church. S/he presides at the table. S/he is raised up to be, among other things, a worship leader who ensures proper worship practices.

To be an effective Communion Assistant, a person needs to be able to do two things: 1. Offer bread and/or wine; and 2. Speak clearly that "This is the body/blood of Christ given/shed for you. This can be

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<sup>1</sup> Note the important distinction made in this sentence. While it is true that you are helping the Pastor and the Assisting Minister to distribute Holy Communion, your service is best thought of as a service to and for the congregation. Your ministry is not for the sake of the pastor, but for those gathered for worship. Central to this notion is that the sacrament is about the communion of the saints. While you take direction from the Pastor, your role is to help people receive the true presence of Jesus while hearing the good news that in the bread and wine, Jesus is present for them.

done by many who share in the priesthood of all believers. Communion assistants can be those of all ages. Baptized Children, Youth, and Adults who share in the priesthood of all believers can be proper Communion Assistants.

The “effectiveness” of the sacrament is not dependent upon the one who serves it. As long as an assistant can announce what s/he is giving, the server has properly done his/her ministry. The “effectiveness” of the sacrament is dependent upon the faith of the one who is receiving the sacrament. Luther, therefore, writing in the Small Catechism asserts:

“Eating and drinking certainly do not [make the sacraments effective], but rather the words that are recorded: ‘Given for you’ and ‘shed for you for the forgiveness of sin.’ These words, when accompanied by the physical eating and drinking, are the essential thing in the sacrament, and whoever believes these very words has what they declare and sate, namely, ‘forgiveness of sin.’”

Here’s the theology (the God-logic) at work here: Jesus presents himself to us in the bread and wine of Holy Communion. The person who eats/drinks of Jesus and believes it to be true that Jesus has come to him/her through the bread/wine for the forgiveness of sin, receives the forgiveness proclaimed. Therefore, the effectiveness of faith is dependent upon two actors, neither of which is dependent upon the one who is serving the sacrament.

The two actors important to the effectiveness of the sacrament are Jesus and the one receiving the sacrament. Certainly, if Jesus promises to be there, Jesus will be present in the meal. The one who receives the sacrament trusting (having faith) in the promise of the meal, receives what is promised. The communion assistant properly able to distribute the bread and wine while announcing that it is Jesus given/shed, is properly doing his/her ministry, no matter the age, gender, color of hair, political party affiliation, view of theodicy, or otherwise.

The above is the long way of saying this: You, who are baptized and can offer bread and wine while announcing what it is, are worthy to be communion assistants.

### **Here’s How to Be a Communion Assistant**

1. Move to the front, center pew during the offering to be ready for your ministry. Your presence in the front will let PJ know if we need additional help.
2. Use the Hand Sanitizer kept under the pew, near the center leg, to clean your hands.
3. After the Lord’s Prayer, move toward the rail, staying on the floor, facing the altar. This puts you into place so that PJ and the assisting minister can hand you the elements.
4. Receive the chalice (wine) or the paten (wafer/bread) from PJ and the Assisting minister.
5. Ask PJ which station he and the Assisting Minister will take. Then, decide where you and your partner will go.
  - a. Typical Sundays, there are three communion stations:
    - i. Station 1 is in front of the pulpit, serving those sitting in front of that station and the upper sanctuary.
    - ii. Station 2 is in front of the center section. It serves those sitting in front of that station.
    - iii. Station 3 is the section nearest the baptismal font. It serves those sitting in that section.
  - b. When there is communion at the rail and on the floor:

- i. Station 1 is in front of the Pulpit. It takes care of those seated in front of them and above.
    - ii. Station 2 is in front of the center section. It communes those in the center section. Then, it takes care of the section nearest the baptismal font.
    - iii. Station 3 is at the rail. This will be served by PJ and the Assisting Minister. People can use both sides of the rail. They simply make their way there and kneel. After receiving communion from PJ and the AM, communicants return to their seats.
  - c. Illustrations of the two methods of communion distribution are found later in this document.
- 6. The Assisting Minister serves wine at a station with PJ.
- 7. Acolytes hold elements for gluten free distribution. In addition to gluten free wafers, they will have wine/juice in a separate chalice that is not cross-contaminated with gluten from dipped wheat-based wafers. In this way, those who have gluten intolerance can still receive both bread and wine.
  - a. There are two ways in which this may happen:
    - i. It may be that two acolytes will hold both elements, one for each side of the sanctuary. When needed, they will step forward to provide gluten free communion. When this is the case, those serving communion speak the words as the acolytes offer the elements.
    - ii. It may that two acolytes stand on the steps in front of the altar. Those wishing gluten free would go to them. One would offer the bread. The other the wine. The acolytes, in this situation, make the appropriate communion announcements.
- 8. Distribute Communion while announcing to the people what they are receiving. Say, "Body of Christ given for you" or "Blood of Christ Shed for you."
- 9. Do Not Use Names of people when distributing Communion.
- 10. Those distributing bread shall bless those who do not receive communion. You can do so by making a cross on the person's head and saying a blessing chosen from the following, or something similar:
  - a. May God's grace be upon you through Jesus Christ
  - b. Jesus loves you. May God bless you with Christ's grace
  - c. The blessing of God be upon you through Jesus our Lord.
  - d. or similar words.
  - e. NOTE: do not rest your hand on the child's head, using your palm. Instead. Use the outer edge of your hand to bestow the blessing on the child's head. When doing so, make sure your thumb is at the top and trace the shape of cross on the person's head.
    - i. This will help the congregation know that you are not touching heads and then touching the bread or wine.
- 11. One team will be designated by the ushers to be the traveling team. The traveling team takes communion to those in the upper sanctuary who cannot make it down to the front, the AV team and any musicians unable to make it to a communion station.
  - a. The traveling team does not commune the choir, the bell choir or other large group in the narthex. The choir and bell choir are to make their way to a station during the "Lamb of God"
- 12. Teams commune each other and acolytes before returning elements to railing.
- 13. Teams return elements to railing, PJ and the Assisting minister will meet you there to take your elements. Place the paten on top of the chalice so that they may be taken as a unit.

14. PJ may continue the service before the traveling team returns. In such case, the traveling team is to return their elements to counter near the sink in the sacristy.

- a. The sacristy is in the hallway behind the sanctuary. Go around the choir loft (or through the loft if you communed musicians in the loft) and head to the small room next to the drinking fountain.