

Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church Guidelines for Communion Assistants

First, a tutorial on Holy Communion from the ELCA website:

(<http://www.elca.org/What-We-Believe/New-or-Returning-to-Church/Dig-Deeper/Communion.aspx>)

In the Sacrament of Holy Communion, after hearing and experiencing the good news of Jesus Christ in word, prayer and song, the community receives bread and wine. They experience the tangible presence of Christ by eating and drinking these elements.

The outward signs of the sacrament are simple earthly elements: bread and wine. Yet, together with the spoken promise of God these elements convey the presence of Jesus Christ to the assembly of believers. Martin Luther said that Jesus is present "in, with, and under" the bread and wine. We believe this because Jesus says it is so (Matthew 26:26-28, Mark 14:22-24, Luke 22:19-20) even when we cannot fully explain how it happens.

The presence of Jesus Christ in the sacrament of Holy Communion is a great treasure that is received in faith. In the eating and drinking of bread and wine, we experience love, forgiveness and life of Christ is ours. In the sacrament, Christ takes on our sin while we take on Christ's righteousness. The sacrament's emphasis is on God's action rather than the strength of our faith.

The variety of names Lutherans use for Holy Communion demonstrates the many facets of our understanding about God's action in the sacrament. Those names may include:

- *"The Lord's Supper," which emphasizes that this is a meal commanded and hosted by the risen Lord which also remembers Jesus' last supper with his disciples;*
- *"Holy Communion," which accentuates the community established by the Holy Spirit as we encounter Christ in the meal – community with God in Christ and community with others who share in this meal;*
- *"Eucharist," which encourages us to see the whole meal as thanksgiving for God's gifts of creation and redemption through Jesus Christ;*
- *"The Meal," which indicates that God is feeding us spiritually with promises of forgiveness, life, and eternal salvation;*
- *the "Divine Liturgy," which emphasizes the public action carried out by a community of people; and*
- *"Divine Service," which helps us to see God's service to us. We are called to respond in service to others.*

The sacrament of Holy Communion is celebrated within the assembled community at worship. In the meal, the worshiping assembly is bound together as the body of Christ taking on the joys and sufferings of that particular assembly as well as every Christian assembly of every time and place. Therefore, Holy Communion is a meal that leads directly to the ministry of the church to those in need in the community and the world.

With these shared understandings of the sacrament the practices surrounding Holy Communion throughout the Lutheran Church vary. Martin Luther urged churches to celebrate the sacrament often in the worshiping assembly because the meal "nourishes and strengthens the new creature -- developing and progressing in the life of faith," but actual practice varies (Martin Luther's Large Catechism) In different congregations, variations can also be seen in distribution patterns, types of breads, color of wine, age of communicants, means by which the sacrament is provided for those who are absent and more.

"Believing in the real presence of Christ, this church practices eucharistic hospitality. All baptized persons are welcomed to Communion when they are visiting in the congregations of this church.)

An ordained pastor presides at the service of Holy Communion in the name of Christ. The ordained pastor of the community is the one called to public responsibility for the ministry of the sacrament in that congregation. This includes overseeing the distribution of the sacrament to those members of the community who cannot be present in worship. Lay assisting ministers may serve a variety of roles within the worship service including as those who prepare for the meal and servers of Communion.

Thank you for volunteering to serve as a lay Communion Assistant. There normally will be two tables at the early service and one table at the second service. Pastor will receive help from the Assisting Minister and the Reader.

Because there are more people worshipping at the early service, an additional four Communion Assistants are needed. When you have been asked to serve as a Communion Assistant, proceed to the altar immediately after the Lord's Prayer. The Assisting Minister will supply you with a small amount of sanitizing lotion to rub on your hands. You will then receive Communion before the rest of the congregants. The Pastor and Assisting Minister will distribute the Host. Hence the distribution of wine, collection of cups, and the breaking of the bread will be the responsibility of the Reader and the four Communion Assistants. You may be responsible for the distribution of the wine, the collection of the cups, or the breaking of the bread. That will be decided by the Assisting Minister when you are at the altar.

Note that one of the assistants may be a Youth Communion Assistant, a program that was started in February 2009. Unless they have been confirmed, they will always be assigned the responsibility of collecting the cups.

At the second service only the Pastor, the Assisting Minister and the Reader (or Youth Communion Assistant) are needed to distribute communion. The Pastor will distribute the Host, the Assisting Minister will distribute the wine and the Reader will break the bread, and the Youth Communion Assistant will collect the cups.

Distribution of wine

- Follow the person distributing the Host, allowing a few seconds for the communicate to mediate
- Offer the tray to the communicate saying one of the following:
 - “The blood of Christ, shed for you”
 - “This is the blood of Christ, shed for you”
 - “The blood of Christ”
- If you are comfortable using the communicant's name, please do so
- Do not attempt to move the cups in the tray. This may lead to spillage or potentially be a health issue.
- Rotate the tray so the cups are easier to reach
- When the tray is nearly empty, place it back on the altar and retrieve another tray.

Collection of cups

- The Communion Assistant(s) who collects the cups will stand at the end of the altar railing and allow the communicants to pass by them.

Breaking of the Bread

- .One Communion Assistant will be required to stand behind the altar and break the bread into small pieces for the Pastor and Assisting Minister

After all have communed, place the tray and cup container back on the altar table and quietly return to your seat as a group.

Continuous Communion (started April 2010)

Please note that as of April 2010 we have started continuous communion. In this case, the Pastor will give the communion blessing only after all have communed. This means that the communicants will proceed to the communion rail, receive communion, and then get up and go back to their pew allowing for a continuous flow of communicants.