

Suggested bulletin announcements for Holy Communion

The East District, at the 2009 convention, adopted: **Resolution 09-4-4 To Reaffirm a Uniform Practice of Closed Communion throughout the Congregations of the East District.**

One of the resolves stated “that the office of the District President provide resources such as sample bulletin announcements,...”. This was discussed at various Circuit Counsellors meetings and the following announcements are provided for the benefit of the Church. These originally appeared in a booklet by Rev. Dr. Kenneth Wieting entitled, Lord May Your Body & Your Blood Be For My Soul The Highest Good! copyright, September 1990. They have been reworked for use in a Canadian context by Rev. Timothy Teuscher.

The Circuit Counsellors wish to thank Dr. Wieting for his permission to publish them here. Thanks are also extended to Rev. Teuscher for providing them to us.

Please feel free to use these in your Sunday bulletins.

Bulletin Communion Announcements

You Are Proclaiming

In Holy Communion, not only does Jesus give us forgiveness, He also gives us the promise that as we receive His gift, we are proclaiming His death. That is our lifelong duty and delight! As doctrinal oneness is central to this common proclamation, the churches of the Lutheran Church-Canada have promised to practice closed communion. For this reason, we ask guests who desire commune to kindly speak with the pastor before the service.

Luther said of the **Lord's Supper**, "The Sacrament is the Gospel." As we partake of our Lord's very body and blood in the Sacrament, not only is the Gospel received (the forgiveness of sins), but the Gospel is also proclaimed (the Lord's death). As we make this common proclamation to one another and to the world, we also acknowledge that oneness in the Gospel and all its articles is confessed by those receiving the Sacrament together. Guests desiring to commune are thus asked to speak with the pastor before the service.

According to God's Word, the entire congregation declares a mighty sermon when it receives the **Lord's Supper**. It declares the central truth of our faith, that Christ gave His body and blood for our forgiveness. As doctrinal unity is central to this common proclamation, the congregations of Lutheran Church-Canada have promised to practice closed communion. Guests are, therefore, asked to speak with the pastor before communing.

Keep On Doing This

When Jesus said, "Do this", in giving the **Lord's Supper**, He used a verb form which means, "Keep on doing this!", or, "Do it again and again!". As we keep on doing what He has here commanded us to do, we also want to keep on witnessing to the truth of His Word.. For this reason, the churches of Lutheran Church-Canada promise to follow the Biblical practice of closed communion. Guests who desire to commune are kindly asked to speak

with the Pastor before the service.

In obedience to God's Word, we celebrate the **Lord's Supper** frequently. Unlike Baptism, this Sacrament is to be received again and again for the strengthening of our faith. Also in obedience to God's Word, we practice closed communion. Our faith is not exclusive, but God says that we should have unity in faith which communion expresses. For this reason, guests are asked to speak with the pastor before communing.

In the church of the New Testament, there was no Lord's Day without the **Lord's Supper**. Also, our Lutheran Confessions state that the Lord's Supper was celebrated every Sunday and on other festivals (Apology, Art. XXIV). As we joyfully receive His gift on this Lord's Day, we also joyfully submit to the Bible's teaching that oneness in doctrine is witnessed to in this celebration. For this reason, we practice closed communion, and our guests are kindly asked to speak to the pastor before the service.

Oneness In Doctrine

As the first Christians devoted themselves to the **Lord's Supper**, they also devoted themselves to the Apostle's Doctrine (Acts 2:42). The two went hand in hand. As we devote ourselves to the Lord's Supper today, we also want to be faithful to the Apostle's Doctrine. For this reason the congregations of Lutheran Church-Canada promise to practice closed communion, and guests desiring to commune are therefore kindly asked to speak with the pastor before doing so.

Holy Communion: Oneness at communion presupposes oneness in doctrine. For this reason, Lutheran Church-Canada congregations practice closed communion. For this reason also, guests desiring to receive the Sacrament are asked to kindly speak with the pastor before the service. Please respect our position of love in this matter of pastoral care.

Holy Communion: In joyful obedience to the teaching of Scripture, it is our practice to determine doctrinal unity for those partaking of the Sacrament. Our practice in no way denies that there are Christians in other denominations. Rather, we practice closed communion because oneness in doctrine is also witnessed to in this celebration. We ask that guests desiring to commune would thus speak with the pastor before the service. Let us pray that the divisions that separate Christians may one day be healed on the basis of Holy Scripture. "For the well-being of the church of God, and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord. Lord have mercy."

For The Remission Of Sins

Both the Gospel and the **Sacrament of the Altar** contain one and the same gift – the forgiveness of sins. This gift no one can give except the Lamb of God who was slain for the sins of the world. In joyful obedience to His Word, it is our practice to determine doctrinal oneness by those receiving the Sacrament. We therefore ask guests desiring to commune to speak with the pastor before the service.

Holy Communion: "To say that one takes and receives the forgiveness of sins in this

sacrament is not speaking incorrectly; for where Christ is, the forgiveness of sins is. Here are His body and blood according to His Word" (Luther). As we receive His gift of forgiveness today, we ask guests desiring to commune to kindly speak with the pastor before the service. For scriptural reasons, the congregations of Lutheran Church-Canada have promised to practice closed communion.

"In this **Sacrament**, the forgiveness of sins is not only preached, proclaimed, and promised, but here at the same time Christ gives His Christians His very body and blood as a pledge of it" (Walther). As we receive His gift, we ask guests desiring to commune to speak with the pastor before the service. Because of the Bible's witness to doctrinal oneness by those receiving the Sacrament together, the congregations of Lutheran Church-Canada promise to practice closed communion.

This Is My Body And Blood

1 Corinthians 10:16 calls our eating and drinking of the sacramental bread and wine an actual sharing in the body and blood of Christ. His very body and very blood are really present in the **Lord's Supper**. According to the Word of God, there is also a doctrinal oneness testified to by the common reception of this Sacrament. With love for His Word and for all people, we therefore ask guests desiring to commune to kindly speak with the pastor before the service.

The Lord's Supper is a miracle in bread and wine! By the Word of Christ, His very body and blood are really present in this gift. By the Word of God, there is also a doctrinal oneness testified to by the common reception of communion. With love for His Word and for all people, we therefore ask guests desiring to commune to kindly speak with the pastor before the service.

Those who partake of the **Lord's Supper** actually consume bread and wine (1 Corinthians 10:17). But more than that, they also receive a miracle in the bread and wine; for therein Christ places His true body and blood (1 Corinthians 10:16) as a sure pledge of forgiveness and eternal life. As His body and blood can be taken to one's judgment (1 Corinthians 11:29), the congregations of Lutheran Church-Canada have promised to practice closed communion. This practice also bears loving witness to the Bible's concern for doctrinal oneness in receiving Holy Communion. If you are a guest, we therefore kindly ask that you speak with the pastor before the Divine Service.

All That You Are

Many people often say or think, "I wish I could get closer to God." A wondrous Scriptural truth, however, is that God cannot come closer to us than He does in the **Lord's Supper**; for here the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, comes to us in and with the bread and wine, giving us His true body and blood for the forgiveness of our sins and the strengthening of our faith. As we receive this gift, we also thereby testify to the unity of our faith in Christ. For this reason, we practice closed communion; and guests who desire to commune are asked to speak with the pastor before the service.

Christ has not left us to run back and forth throughout creation, searching here and there to find Him. By His own promise, the Word made flesh still comes to us personally with His body and His blood in the **Lord's Supper**. Because oneness in doctrine is also witnessed to in this celebration, guests who desire to commune are kindly asked to speak with the pastor before the service.

The Lord's Supper is God's intrusion into our lives! As Lutherans, we humbly acknowledge the mystery of Jesus' body and Jesus' blood for our forgiveness. Here Jesus comes to us in a way He has not promised to do elsewhere! As we celebrate this Sacrament, we also humbly acknowledge the Bible's concern for doctrinal oneness by those who receive it together. For that reason, we ask guests who desire to commune to speak with the pastor before the service.

The New Testament In My Blood

"**Not every vow is called a testament**, but only a last irrevocable will of one who is about to die, whereby he bequeaths his goods, allotted and assigned to be distributed to whom he will" (Luther). In the **Lord's Supper**, Christ bequeaths to us His body and His blood for the forgiveness of our sins. As we receive His gift, we would ask guests desiring to commune, to kindly speak with the pastor before the service. The congregations of Lutheran Church-Canada have promised to practice closed communion because of the Bible's clear witness to doctrinal oneness by those receiving communion together.

On the night before He tasted death by crucifixion, Jesus did not say, "This is myself", but "This is My body" and "This is the new testament in My blood". By His promise His true body and blood are really present in His **Holy Supper** and which He bids us to eat and drink for the forgiveness of our sins. Because oneness in doctrine is also confessed by those who commune together, guests who desire to commune are asked to speak with the pastor before doing so.

Jesus knew He would soon be crucified! He chose His words concerning the **Lord's Supper** with great care. As we receive His gift today, give ear to His words, for they are sure and certain! As we receive His gift, we also give ear to the concern for confessional oneness which the Bible sets forth for those communing together. For this reason, the churches of Lutheran Church-Canada have promised to practice closed communion.

Instituted By Christ

"**The Sacrament of the Altar** is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus under the bread and wine for us Christians to eat and drink instituted by Christ Himself" (Small Catechism). As we receive the Lord's Supper together, witness is also given that we are united in the faith we confess (one in doctrine). For this reason, the congregations of Lutheran Church-Canada have promised to practice closed communion; and guests are asked to speak with the pastor before the Divine Service.

"**It is not our work** or speaking but the command and ordinance of Christ that, from the

beginning of the first communion until the end of world, make the bread the body and the wine the blood that are daily distributed through our ministry and office" (Luther). As we receive in the **Lord's Supper** what He has commanded, we also teach His church to observe all things that He has commanded (Matt. 28:20). With love for His Word and for all people, we therefore practice closed communion and ask guests to kindly speak with the pastor before the service.

"**No human being**, but only Christ Himself who was crucified for us can make of the bread and wine set before us His true body and blood" (St. John Chrysostom). This is what Christ does when we follow His command and institution in the **Lord's Supper**. It is also our desire to follow Christ's command to hold fast to everything that He taught. For this reason, the congregations of Lutheran Church-Canada have promised to practice closed communion, and guests who desire to commune are thus asked to speak with the pastor before doing so.

Until He Comes

We live in the last days (the days from Christ's first coming until His second coming)! All around us are the signs of the times (famines, earthquakes, wars and rumours of war, false prophets)! Our greatest treasure as we await His second coming is His present and continual coming to us in Word and Sacrament. As we receive the unmistakable sign of His love for us today in the **Lord's Supper**, we are thus strengthened in our faith. For scriptural reasons we practice closed communion, and guests are asked to speak with the pastor before the service.

In the Nicene Creed we confess "and He will come again with glory to judge the living and the dead." The exalted Christ will come again! This time He will not be spit upon and crowned with thorns, but He will be crowned with glory as Lord and Judge of all. Is it not a wonder that He who fills and rules all things comes to us even now in **Holy Communion** with His very body and blood under the bread and wine? In joyful obedience to the teaching of Scripture, the congregations of Lutheran Church-Canada practice closed communion. Guests who desire to commune are asked, as such, to speak with the pastor before the service.

When Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, He said, "I tell you that I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in My Father's kingdom" (Matt. 26:29). St. Paul also sets forth the connection between Christ's second coming and the Lord's Supper, saying that in receiving it we "proclaim the Lord's death until He comes" (1 Cor. 11:26). As we commune today, we thus confidently confess our faith in the Lord's return! Our reception of Holy Communion is also a confession that we share the same faith (doctrine), and for this reason guests are asked to speak with the pastor before communing.

Given For You

"**I certainly love it** with all my heart, the precious, blessed supper of my Lord Jesus Christ, in which He gives me His body and blood to eat and to drink orally, with the mouth of my body, accompanied by the exceedingly sweet and gracious words: Given for you, Shed for

you" (Luther). While the **Lord's Supper** is individually received, testimony is also given that those communing together share doctrinal unity. For this reason, we practice closed communion; and guests desiring to commune are asked to speak with the pastor before the service.

"During its administration, the body of Christ is given to you in particular with the bread, and the blood with the wine; while you in particular are told that His body was given for you and His blood was shed for you. This is done so that you do not doubt, but appreciate this sacrifice as your very own, because it is placed into your mouth and made your own, to eat and drink for yourself only" (Martin Luther). At the same time that we individually receive the **Lord's Supper**, we testify together that we are united in doctrine. For this reason, we practice closed communion; and guests desiring to commune are thus asked to speak with the pastor before the service. If you are partaking of the blessed Sacrament today, please sign the communion registration sheet on the ushers' table or at the front entrance to the nave.

In Holy Communion Christ deals with you personally. He comes to you with the very body and blood with which He purchased your forgiveness. As this gift is personally received, those communing together also give public witness that they are one in doctrine. In joyful obedience to the teaching of Scripture, we therefore practice closed communion; and guests desiring to commune are asked to speak with the pastor before the service. If you are partaking of the blessed Sacrament today, please sign the communion registration sheet on the ushers' table or at the front entrance to the nave.

Come Unto Me!

When life seems oppressive and burdens weigh us down, it is easy to feel alone, unloved and defeated. As the Lord of Life gives us His body and blood in the **Lord's Supper**, however; we are reminded that we are not alone, that we are deeply loved, and that in Christ we have the victory! Because the Bible bears witness to doctrinal unity in the common reception of this sacrament, the congregations of Lutheran Church-Canada have promised to practice closed communion. Guests who desire to commune are asked to speak with the pastor before the service.

Luther once said, "The Sacrament is of little or no benefit to those who have no misfortune or anxiety or who do not sense their adversity". Knowing our sin and the clever and consistent assaults of our adversary, the devil, we are thankful for the great blessings offered to us in the **Lord's Supper** – forgiveness of our sins and the strengthening of our faith and life. While this gift is individually received, testimony is also given that those communing together share doctrinal unity. For this reason we practice closed communion, and guests desiring to commune are asked to speak with the pastor before the service.

Luther encouraged each person in his parish to frequently receive the **Lord's Supper** because of "the trouble that lies heavy upon him". By this he meant the daily troubles brought upon us by the world and by Satan and by our own sinful nature. In this gift of the very body and blood of Him who has overcome sin, death, and the devil, we do find rest and refreshment for our souls and the strengthening of our faith. In obedience to Jesus' directive

that we abide by all that He has commanded, the congregations of our synod have promised to practice closed communion. Guests are thus asked to speak with the pastor before communing.

Closed Communion

Right from the beginning, the early church practiced closed communion. The **Lord's Supper** was only received in the context of common devotion to the apostles' doctrine (Acts 2:42). Closed communion remains a loving and God-pleasing practice today. It is for this reason that the churches of Lutheran Church-Canada have committed themselves to observe this practice. Our guests are therefore asked to speak with the pastor before the service, should they desire to commune.

Our practice of closed communion is the historic practice of the church. It is prompted by love, both for God's Word and God's people. It does not deny that members of other denominations are Christians. Rather, it bows the knee to the Bible's deep concern for doctrinal truth (Rom. 16:17) and the Bible's witness that doctrinal unity is central to the common reception of this sacrament. For this reason, guests who desire to commune are asked to speak with the pastor before the service.

In Matthew 28:18-20, the Risen Christ gave His church the great commission. Included in that commission were these words, "teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you...". The church's historic practice of closed communion had its basis in the desire to honour these words of the Saviour. In love, it is also our desire not to omit this portion of the great commission; and guests desiring to commune today are kindly asked to speak with the pastor before the service.

O Give Thanks!

The Eucharist, a Greek word that means "Thanksgiving," is one of the names for the **Lord's Supper**. As we come to the Lord's Table there is every reason to lift up our hearts in thanksgiving as the exalted Lord comes to us in the bread and the wine with His body and blood for our forgiveness! Because the Bible bears witness to the unity in the faith by those who commune together, we ask guests to speak with the pastor before doing so. If you are partaking of the blessed Sacrament today, please sign the communion registration sheet on the ushers' table or at the front entrance to the nave.

Thank the Lord and sing His praise! With deep thanksgiving for the gift of forgiveness received with our Saviour's body and blood, we also express our deep desire to celebrate the sacrament according to God's Will. As this includes oneness in doctrine, we ask our guests who desire to commune to speak with the pastor before the service. Please respect our position of love in this matter of pastoral care.

From the beginning ("Let us give thanks to the Lord") **to the end** ("We give thanks to You, almighty God"), the liturgy of **Holy Communion** is one of deep thanksgiving! Christ's very body and blood are in and with the bread and wine of the Sacrament in order that we might receive the greatest gift and highest treasure of all – the forgiveness of sins. That is indeed reason for thanksgiving! With thankfulness also for the presence of our guests, we ask them to speak with the pastor before the service if they desire to commune, as in obedience to the

teaching of Scripture we practice closed communion.

Holy Communion

Guests, welcome in the name of the Lord, who has done great things for us! One of those great things is the giving of His own body and blood in **Holy Communion**. We ask guests who desire to commune to kindly speak with the pastor before the service. We practice closed communion because of the Bible's witness that doctrinal unity is central to its common reception.

Holy Communion is celebrated today. Our faith is not exclusive, but God says that we should have both unity in the faith we confess (which communion expresses) and the belief that Jesus gives us His body and blood for the forgiveness of sins. We therefore kindly ask that guests would speak with the pastor before the service if they desire to commune. Please respect our position of love in this matter of pastoral care.

Our Lord's first miracle was water made into wine at Cana, thereby revealing His glory as the very Son of God. One of His last miracles before He was crucified was wine made into His blood that yet remained wine in the upper room. By His own Word, we do, in reality, receive His very body and blood in **Holy Communion**. Because oneness in doctrine is also confessed in this celebration, guests desiring to commune are asked to speak with the pastor before the service.

Seasonal I

Advent means "coming". Christ came in the flesh at Bethlehem, He comes now in Word and Sacrament, and He will come again in judgement. As we look forward to His final coming, we find our deepest joy and comfort in His present coming with His very body and blood in the **Lord's Supper** for our forgiveness. For Scriptural reasons, we practice closed communion and guests desiring to commune are asked to speak with the pastor before doing so.

Epiphany means "manifestation" or "appearance". It is a season which highlights many of the epiphanies of God in human flesh (to the wise men, at His baptism, His miracles, His transfiguration). It is also a season which sets forth Christ as the light of the world and mission outreach to all peoples. As Christ manifests Himself today in the **Lord's Supper**, His forgiveness empowers us to walk in His light and witness of Him to a world sitting in darkness. Since God's Word teaches us that doctrinal oneness is central to the common reception of the Lord's Supper, guests desiring to commune are asked to speak with the pastor before the service.

At His Baptism in the Jordan River, Jesus identified completely with us sinful human beings and took His first public step towards the cross. As He did so, the Holy Spirit anointed Him and the Father was well pleased! **The Baptism Of Our Lord** thus tells us that God is for us and determined to work out our redemption. The **Lord's Supper** tells us that God is still for us and has, in fact, worked out our redemption. Here the very body and blood with which Christ earned our forgiveness is given to us to eat and to drink. In joyful obedience to

Scripture, we practice closed communion, and guests desiring to commune are kindly asked to speak with the pastor before the service.

Seasonal II

The Transfiguration Of Our Lord reminds us that there is so much more to life than meets our eyes. The glory of the Lord on the holy mountain gives testimony to the fullness of our inheritance in heaven. The **Lord's Supper** is also a reality that goes far beyond our human reason and physical sight. Herein our glorious King comes to us with the very body and blood with which He purchased our redemption. For scriptural reasons we practice closed communion, and guests desiring to commune are asked to thus speak with the pastor before the service.

Ash Wednesday begins the special season of penitential reflection that we call Lent. Ashes are a sign of repentance and sorrow and also a reminder of our human mortality. As this day and this season remind us of our sin and its wages, it is with repentant joy that we are also reminded of our forgiveness through Christ's sacrifice on the cross. Intending to amend our sinful lives, we receive with thankfulness the forgiveness He has promised to give in the **Lord's Supper**. Out of love for God's Word and God's people, the congregations of Lutheran Church-Canada have promised to practice closed communion; and guests who desire to commune are asked to speak with the pastor before the service.

On the Sunday before His death (Palm Sunday), Jesus is hailed as King and Lord; and palm branches carpet the path of His humble entrance into Jerusalem. In the **Lord's Supper**, Jesus still enters our lives with humble means; and He is still Lord and King. It is not too great a thing for Him to be present with His flesh and blood for our forgiveness! We do practice closed communion, and guests who desire to commune are asked to speak with the pastor before the service.

Seasonal III

On Maundy Thursday we remember our Saviour's institution of the new covenant of His body and blood. On the eve of His suffering and death, the Lamb of God thought of us and cared for us, even to the giving of this extraordinary gift by such ordinary means. As this gift of the **Lord's Supper** is received this evening, we also remember His care and concern for the truths of God's Word. Believing that the Bible clearly sets forth doctrinal unity for those receiving the sacrament together, we practice closed communion and ask guests desiring to commune to kindly speak with the pastor before the service.

In great love our Lord Jesus Christ was slain for us, and by His blood He ransomed us for God. As our substitute, carrying our sin, the holy Lamb of God received the punishment that we deserved, crying out, "It is finished" (John 19:30). As we marvel at the forgiveness He won for us at Calvary, we also give thanks for the means by which He brings it to us still today. As we receive **Holy Communion** this Good Friday, guests who desire to commune are asked to speak with the pastor before the service. For Scriptural reasons we practice closed communion.

The right hand of God is not a confining physical spot! It is, rather, the almighty power and presence of God which fills heaven and earth. The Ascension Of Our Lord to the right hand of His heavenly Father means, therefore, that He now fills and rules all things with His power and presence, not only as God, but also as man. It is, as such, not too great a thing for Him to be present with His very body and blood in the **Lord's Supper** as He promised. For biblical reasons we practice closed communion, and we thus ask guests desiring to commune to speak with the pastor before the service.

Seasonal IV

Jesus promised that it was to our advantage that He go away and send the Holy Spirit for His church (John 16:7). That advantage became evident on **Pentecost** as the Holy Spirit empowered the preaching of repentance and forgiveness and employed the use of Baptism and the **Lord's Supper** to build the church of Christ (Acts 2). The Holy Spirit is still acting for our advantage as Christ comes to us with His true body and blood in Holy Communion today. Because doctrinal oneness is central to the common reception of the Lord's Supper, we practice closed communion; and guests desiring to commune are asked to speak with the pastor before the service.

On Trinity Sunday we are reminded of the mystery and the glory of God. His thoughts are far above our thoughts as far as the heavens are above the earth (Is.55:8-9). We cannot know His mind or be His counsellor (Rom. 11:34). Accordingly, we receive in faith His counsel that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is the one true God. We also receive in faith His counsel that the very body and blood of Christ are present under the bread and wine for our forgiveness. As we receive **Holy Communion** today, the whole counsel of God moves us to determine confessional oneness for those who receive the sacrament together. For this reason, the congregations of Lutheran Church-Canada have promised to practice closed communion; and guests who desire to commune are asked to kindly speak with the pastor before the service.

Seasonal V

In Luther's upbringing, the term "righteousness" was understood as the truth by which God deservedly condemns those who have merited evil. In his study of the Bible, however, the Holy Spirit led him to see that Christ's righteousness is something we are freely given by God's grace through faith (Romans 3:22)! This wondrous truth was the basis for the **Reformation**. This wondrous truth is also the basis for the **Lord's Supper**, for herein Christ is present with His body and blood to give us His forgiveness. In joyful obedience to the teaching of Scripture, we practice closed communion, and ask guests desiring to commune to speak with the pastor before the service.

On All Saint's Day we remember those who have been called to heaven and especially how richly God blessed them with faith and with its fulfillment. Death does not separate us from them, and our praise is joined with theirs as we worship the Lamb who was slain. As we receive the **Lord's Supper** today, we also recall that He who is here with His body and blood is at the same time hosting the feast of victory in heaven. Until we join in that feast, the most loving thing we can do for all people is to set forth the truth of God's Word. For this reason

we practice closed communion, and guests are asked to speak with the pastor before the service.

The Christmas Season

In the fullness of time the Word became flesh and dwelt among us full of grace and truth. Until the end of time His grace is still given to us as He promised in the **Lord's Supper**. As we receive His gift today, we would ask guests who desire to commune to speak with the pastor before the service. In joyful obedience to the teaching of Scripture, we practice closed communion.

The coming of Christ in the flesh at Bethlehem was a concrete outward act of God in humble means that was despised by the world. The flesh and blood coming of Christ in the **Sacrament of the Altar** is also a concrete outward act of God in humble means that can be despised. Rather than despise it, however, God would have us delight in it! With deep thankfulness for God's gift to us here we also express our deep desire to celebrate it according to His will. As this includes oneness in the faith we confess (doctrine), guests who desire to commune are asked to speak with the pastor before the service.

Luther once said, "Word and Sacrament are the manger and swaddling clothes into which it has pleased Christ to lay Himself." Just as the shepherds were told where to find Jesus, so also we are told where to find Him today. He is no longer in the humble manger; but by His own promise He is in the humble means of bread and wine of the **Lord's Supper** with His true body and blood. As we receive His gift, the greatest gift we can give to others is a loving witness to the truth of His Word. For this reason we practice closed communion; and guests are asked to speak with the pastor before communing.

The Easter Season

In the early church, the celebration of the **Lord's Supper** was viewed as a continuation of the resurrection appearances of Jesus. It was viewed much the same as when the risen Lord said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see My hands. Stop doubting and believe" (John 20:27). As Jesus promised, we believe that He is really present in this Sacrament with His very body and blood for our forgiveness. As the Sacrament was received by the early Christians only by those who were united in "the apostles' teaching" (Acts 2:42), we also follow this ancient practice of closed communion and thus ask visitors desiring to commune to speak with the pastor before the service.

In the Lord's Supper, the Risen Christ is at once the Giver and the Gift! By His promise, His very body and blood are really present; and thereby we come into immediate contact with the exalted Christ! As we do so, witness is also given to oneness in doctrine by those who receive the Sacrament together. For this reason, we practice closed communion and kindly ask guests to speak with the pastor before the service.

In the Lord's Supper the risen Lord Jesus Christ is at once the Giver and the Gift! By His own Word and promise, His very body and blood are really present in and with the bread and the wine; and thereby we come into immediate contact with the exalted Christ, receiving in

this Sacrament “the medicine of immortality! As we partake of this eternal food, we also testify thereby to oneness in doctrine by those who receive the Sacrament together. For this reason, we practice closed communion and guests are thus asked to speak with the pastor before communing.

In the Sacrament of the Altar the risen Lord appears to us, giving us His very body and blood in and with the bread and wine for the forgiveness of our sins, the strengthening of our faith, the renewal of our joy in Him, and, to use the words of the church father Ignatius, as “the medicine of immortality, the antidote that we shall not die but live with Him forever.” Since those who partake of the Sacrament are also, thereby, confessing one and the same faith; guests desiring to commune are asked to speak with the pastor before doing so.

End Of The Church Year

As the **Church Year** draws to a close, the Scripture Readings remind us of the end of this sinful earth and of the end of our lives. Our lasting treasure is not here, but with Christ in His eternal kingdom! The **Lord's Supper**, which Christ has given to His church here on earth, is a foretaste of that heavenly banquet. While this gift is individually received, testimony is also given that those communing together share a common faith. For this reason, we practice closed communion; and guests desiring to commune are asked to speak with the pastor before doing so.

Our communion liturgy recognizes the eternal community of heaven (angels and archangels and all the company of heaven). We believe that our praise is joined with those who have gone before us in the faith. As Jesus gives us His body and blood today, we look forward to that day when, with all the saints, we will receive pleasures at God's right hand, forevermore. At that time it will not be necessary to witness to the truth of God's Word. But as that time is not yet, such witness must still be given today. Out of love for God's Word and for God's people, we therefore practice closed communion. Guests who desire to commune are kindly asked to speak with the pastor before the service.

When the Bible sets forth signs of the end times, their purpose is not lead us to predict the time of the Lord's coming, but to lead us to "keep watch" at all times. In **Holy Communion** Christ helps us to "keep watch" by coming to us personally. Out of love for God's Word and for God's people, we practice closed communion. Guests who desire to commune are kindly asked to speak with the pastor before the service.

Additional Announcements

The forgiveness of sins in the **Lord's Supper** is a forgiveness which says, "Go and sin no more", not, "Go and live as you please". God's forgiveness in Christ is always the complete remission of every sin, but never the permission to continue on unrepentant in any sin. With deep thanksgiving for the gift of forgiveness received in this sacrament, we also express our deep desire to celebrate it according to God's will. As this includes oneness in doctrine, we ask our guests to speak with the pastor before the service should they desire to commune.

The Lord's Supper "is appropriately called the food of the soul since it nourishes and strengthens the new man" (Luther). As this food can be taken to one's judgment, and as the common reception of this food is a confession of doctrinal oneness, our church practices closed communion. Guests who desire to commune are asked to speak with the pastor before the service.

"**While it is true** that through Baptism we are first born anew, our human flesh and blood have not lost their old skin. There are so many hindrances and temptations of the devil and the world that we often grow weary and faint, and at times even stumble. **The Lord's Supper** is given as a daily food and sustenance, so that our faith may refresh and strengthen itself and not weaken in the struggle but grow continually stronger" (Luther). While this gift is individually received, testimony is also thereby given that those communing together share one and the same faith. For this reason we practice closed communion, and guests desiring to commune are asked to thus speak with the pastor before the service.

Additional Announcements

The Nunc Dimittis is called the "Song of Simeon". As he saw the baby Jesus in the temple, he spoke words that he was now ready to die--"Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace". In the **Lord's Supper** this same Jesus has given His body and blood to us. We, too, have seen the Lord's salvation and are prepared to depart this life at peace with God! With deep thankfulness for His gift to us here, we also express our deep desire to celebrate the Sacrament according to His will. As this includes oneness in doctrine, guests who desire to commune are kindly asked to speak with the pastor before doing so.

The historic liturgy of the church after which our Divine Service is patterned is a step into reality (unseen, but eternal). It is designed not so much to get in touch with daily life as it is to lift our vision to the life to come. **The Lord's Supper** is central to this step into reality. In it the One who has prepared heaven for us by His death and resurrection feeds us with His own body and blood. The spiritual realities of this life necessitate our ongoing witness to the truth of God's Word. For this reason, the church has practiced closed communion down through the ages; and such is still our practice today. Guests who desire to commune are thus asked to speak with the pastor before doing so.

Luther found his deepest treasure in the forgiveness of sins and called it "the sun around which all other doctrines revolve like planets." In the **Lord's Supper** Jesus promises to bestow on us this forgiveness as we partake of the very price of that forgiveness – His very body and blood. Deeply thankful for the heavenly gift of this Sacrament, we thus desire to celebrate it according to His will and Word. As this includes doctrinal oneness, we practice closed communion and ask guests to speak with the pastor before communing.

Additional Announcements

Holy Communion is celebrated today. In obedience to God's Word, the congregations of Lutheran Church-Canada have promised to practice closed communion. Guests are therefore asked to speak with the pastor before the service, should they desire to commune. Our faith is not exclusive, but God says we should have unity in faith (which communion expresses).

This great gift gives us this great responsibility. Please respect our position of love in this matter of pastoral care.

1 John 3:16 tells us that the way we know love is that Christ laid down His love for us. **1 Corinthians 11:26** tells us that when whenever we receive the Lord's Supper, we are proclaiming His death. Therefore, by God's definition, our reception of **Holy Communion** is a proclamation of love. That is a beautiful truth. Out of love for God's Word and for God's people, it is also our practice to determine confessional oneness for those partaking of the Lord's Supper. Guests are kindly asked to speak with the pastor before the service.

An old custom in many Lutheran churches in Sweden was to have a curved altar rail. As one pictured it continuing on in a circle out of sight behind the altar, it signified that those participating in **Holy Communion** were in touch with the saints who had departed this life. The One who gives us His very body and blood in this Supper is also the One hosting the feast for those who have been called to heaven. Looking forward to our Saviour's presence for all time, we desire to be faithful to His Word in this time. For this reason, we practice closed communion and ask guests to speak with the pastor before communing.

John the Baptist prepared people for the coming of the Lord by preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. In like manner, we are to be prepared for the coming of the Lord in the Sacrament of His very body and blood. To assist you in this preparation, you may use the "Christian Questions With Their Answers" on page 329 of the Lutheran Service Book. Since reception of the **Lord's Supper** is also a public confession of the unity of our faith, guests are asked to speak with the pastor before communing.

St. Peter & St. Paul were uniquely called by Jesus to be His apostles and so confess before Jew and Gentile alike that He alone is Lord and Saviour of all. We, too, have been uniquely called by Jesus at our baptism to also confess before one another and before the world that He is the Lord and Saviour of all. This we do in a most unique way in the **Lord's Supper**; for as St. Paul says of those who partake together of the body and blood of Jesus, "You proclaim the Lord's death until He comes" (1 Cor. 11:26). For this reason the congregations of Lutheran Church-Canada practice closed communion – making thereby a common confession of faith. Visitors who desire to commune are thus asked to speak with the pastor before the service.

St. Bartholomew was one of the twelve apostles present when Jesus instituted the **Holy Supper** of His very body and blood, and he is also present with us today as we celebrate this foretaste of the feast to come. We are, as such, joined together with him and with "angels and archangels and the whole company of heaven" in ascribing all praise and glory to "the Son of God and King of Israel" who opens heaven to us in this Sacrament. As partaking of the Lord's Supper together presupposes and reflects our common faith in the apostles' doctrine, we practice closed communion and ask that guests speak with the pastor before communing.

St. Matthew, after Jesus called him to "Follow Me," invited tax collectors and sinners into his home to sit at the table with Jesus. In the **Lord's Supper** we sinners not only sit at the table with Jesus, but partake of His very body and blood in and under the bread and the wine for the

forgiveness of our sins. Since communing together at the table with Jesus is a confession of our common faith in the apostles' doctrine, we practice closed communion and ask that guests speak with the pastor before doing so.

St. Peter's great confession of faith in Jesus, "You are the Christ" (Mark 8:29), is heard every Sunday in the communion liturgy: "O Christ, Thou Lamb of God, that takest away the sin of the world, have mercy upon us." As we partake of His very body and blood in and under the bread and the wine in the **Lord's Supper**, we, too, are also confessing that same faith; as St. Paul writes: "For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes" (1 Cor. 11:26). Since partaking of the Lord's Supper is a confession of our common faith in the apostles' doctrine, we thus practice closed communion and ask that guests speak with the pastor before communing.

St. Paul was called by Jesus at the time of his conversion to be an apostle, receiving the Gospel that he would proclaim and write from Jesus Himself. Included in what Paul received from the Lord are these words concerning the **Lord's Supper**: "The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread." (1 Corinthians 10:16-17). Since partaking of the Lord's Supper is a confession of our common faith in the apostles' doctrine, we thus practice closed communion and ask that guests speak with the pastor before communing.

Our Good Shepherd, the risen Lord Jesus Christ, feeds us at His Table with the green pastures and still waters of His very body and blood to restore our souls. As we, the sheep of His flock, partake of this heavenly food in the **Lord's Supper**, we are also testifying thereby to the oneness in doctrine by all who receive the Sacrament together. For this reason, we practice closed communion and guests are thus asked to speak with the pastor before communing.

As Jesus miraculously fed the 5,000 with five loaves of bread and two fish and satisfied the physical hunger of those who had gathered to hear Him teach, so He miraculously feeds us today with His very body and blood in and under the bread and the wine to satisfy our spiritual hunger. At the same time that we individually receive the **Lord's Supper**, we also testify together that we are united in His teaching. For this reason we practice closed communion, and guests desiring to commune are thus asked to speak with the pastor before the service.

St. Luke was a Gentile by birth, a physician by trade, an early convert to the Christian faith, and a companion of the apostle Paul on his missionary journeys. The symbol for St. Luke is a winged ox, suggested by the reference in Revelation 4:6-8 as representing the Gospel he wrote which emphasizes the healing of souls through the sacrifice of Jesus and the spread of the message of Christ crucified in all the world. As we receive the healing of our souls today by partaking of Jesus' very body and blood in the **Lord's Supper**, we are also proclaiming His death to all the world. Since this proclamation is an expression of our common faith in the Gospel, we practice closed communion. Guests are thus asked to speak with the pastor before communing.

Mary, The Mother Of Our Lord, exclaims in her song of praise, “My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for He has done great things for me!” One of those great things that Mary’s Son and Mary’s Lord has done for us is the giving of His very body and blood to us in **Holy Communion** whereby He fills us with heavenly gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation. As this Sacrament is personally received, those communing together also give public witness that they are one in the faith. We therefore practice closed communion and ask guests who desire to commune to speak with the pastor before the Divine Service.