



STUDENT CENTER

The Shield of Faith

October 2022

From Your Pastor

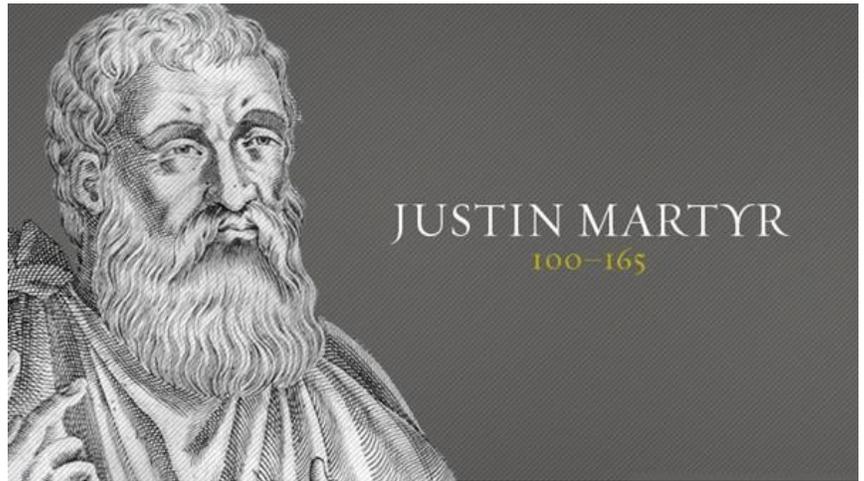
Communion and Church History: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

We're continuing our Church study of the Lord's Supper and its practices with an eye toward frequency of communion. Is every Sunday communion something that the Lord has in store for Faith Lutheran Church & Student Center? G. K. Chesterton wrote, "Tradition means giving votes to the most obscure of all classes, our ancestors. It is the democracy of the dead. Tradition refuses to submit to the small and arrogant oligarchy of those who merely happen to be walking about."¹ Looking at Church History or the traditions of the church can be helpful in giving a voice to the practices of previous generations while also understanding that throughout history the Church has erred and not always engaged in the best practices.

¹ G. K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1908), 53.

The Early Church

Passages such as Acts 2, 20:7; 1 Corinthians 10–11 show us that the gathering for the Lord’s Supper was a regular occurrence of the Church in its earliest years. Many scholars believe one of the earliest church documents, the *Didache*, was written before 100 A.D. In it we read in chapter 14, “But every Lord’s day gather yourselves together, and break bread, and give thanksgiving after having confessed your transgressions, that your sacrifice may be pure.”² Likewise, chapter 9 discusses limiting



admission to the Lord’s Supper only those who are baptized. Likewise, Justin Martyr in his *First Apology* written around 150 A.D. describes communion as a regular part of Sunday worship.³ By the third century, the Christians viewed the Sacrament as a key strengthening amidst persecution. When Christianity became legally recognized in Rome in 325, many people became Christians, and communion remained a central part of worship. However, the problem became decreased lay participation in communion.⁴ Communion was offered, but not everyone in congregation came forward to receive it.

The Middle Ages

Although it is an oversimplification to say the Middle Ages were *only* a period of decline, it is fair to say there were many abuses that appeared from false teaching on the Lord’s Supper and the Mass. Luther using his typical colorful language writes, “The Mass, has produced many noxious maggots and the excrement of various idolatries” (Smalcald Articles II II 11). The six “maggots” he then goes on to highlight are purgatory, evil spirits masquerading as saints, pilgrimages to holy sites, monasticism, relics, and indulgences. Much mischief came when the Church divorced the Lord’s Supper from Christ’s command to eat and to drink. The Lord’s Supper became something that pastors and priests did to appease God’s wrath, and wealthy benefactors would pay the Church to have priests lead Masses when no congregation was assembled thinking that it would help loved ones get out of purgatory. Many of these practices and abuses remain today in the Roman Catholic Church even despite the Reformation.

The Reformation and Early Modern Era

Much of the Lutheran Reformation was a struggle not to throw the baby out with the bath water. On the one hand Luther hated the Papal abuses of the Medieval Period such as Private Masses (communion services where nobody but the priest was present), the adoration of the sacrament (praying to consecrated bread and wine instead of consuming them), and the view of the Lord’s Supper as something mankind did to appease God. On the other hand, he desired to keep the Lord’s Supper as a precious central part of the worship life of the Church. In a letter to a Lazarus Spengler, he recommended weekly communion.⁵ The key caveat was that there had to be laity who were interested in receiving this gift. It is fair to say that Luther’s battle was not the lack of communion services, but the lack of communicants.

² The *Didache*, accessed online 9/20/2022 <<https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/didache-roberts.html>>

³ Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, see chapters 65–67, especially chapter 67 <<https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0126.htm>>

⁴ Kenneth W. Wieting, *The Blessings of Weekly Communion* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), 71.

⁵ “Should anyone request my counsel in this way, then I would give this advice:... Secondly, that you should celebrate one or two Masses in the two parish churches on Sundays or holy days, depending on whether there are few or many communicants. Should it be regarded as needful or good, you might do the same in the hospital too. Thirdly, you might celebrate Mass during the week on whichever days it would be needful, that is, if any communicants would be present and would ask for and request the Sacrament. This way we should compel no one to receive the Sacrament, and yet everyone would be adequately served in an orderly manner. If

Luther writes in the Large Catechism, “We must never regard the sacrament as a harmful thing from which we should flee, but as a pure, wholesome, soothing medicine that aids you and gives life in both soul and body. For where the soul is healed, the body is helped as well. Why, then, do we act as if the sacrament were a poison that would kill us if we ate of it? Of course, it is true that those who despise the sacrament and lead unchristian lives receive it to their harm and damnation. To such people nothing can be good or wholesome, just as when a sick person willfully eats and drinks what is forbidden by the physician. But those who feel their weakness, who are anxious to be rid of it and desire help, should regard and use the sacrament as a precious antidote against the poison in their systems” (Luther’s Large Catechism V 68–70).

The Sacrament in the New World

The 1700s saw a precipitous drop in communion attendance in Europe. Two main forces that Pastor Wieting ties this to are Pietism and Rationalism. Wieting writes, “[t]he intention of each of these movements was entirely different. Pietism sought to rescue religion and restore true worship. Rationalism sought to elevate human reason over religion and relegated worship to its own purposes. Yet each in its own way had negative effects upon God-given Word and Sacrament worship. Each in its own way had negative effects upon the opportunity to receive the Lord’s Supper in weekly worship and the desire to receive it.

Pietism rightly stressed Luther’s arguments for the inner spiritual life of faith in a period when worship could sometimes be legalistically rigid. But its popular expression often neglected the sacramental basis of worship. Despite retaining the “external forms,” Pietism emptied them from the inside and thus theologically destroyed the forms of worship. Rationalism, on the other hand, was an assault on the supernatural. Miracles were considered beyond proof and superstitious. God’s gifts in water and word, bread and wine—things Lutherans confessed as great New Testament miracles—were considered irrational and therefore irrelevant. Thus, Rationalism attacked from the outside the sacramental presence of Christ in the flesh.”⁶

Many of these attitudes in Europe were carried across the Atlantic to the Americas. Pietism and Rationalism, as well as the influence of non-Catholic Protestant Christians became the air the early Lutherans in America breathed. Pietism made the celebration of the Lord’s Supper less frequent while also increasing the level of examination required to participate. Rationalism bred an indifference to what would be considered superstition. Protestant theology informed by Zwingli and Calvin downplayed the importance of the Lord’s Supper and that rubbed off on Lutherans in America. Frontier conditions made it hard for a remote American Lutheran congregation to see an ordained minister on a regular basis, further limiting the opportunity for frequent communion. In the early days of American history, it was not unusual for communion to be offered only two to four times a year.⁷ Even in the era of 1930–1950, the LCMS recorded that an average communicant would commune two to three times a year with communion being offered at congregations four to six times a year.⁸ Anti-Catholic sentiment had its effect in American Lutheran circles. Pastor Wieting took a sample of twelve random years of the *Lutheran Witness* articles throughout the 1800s and 1900s. Of those twelve years, there

the Ministers of the Church would fall to griping at this point, maintaining that they were being placed under duress or complaining that they are unfitted to face such demands, then I would demonstrate to them that no merely human compulsion is at work here, but on the contrary they are being compelled by God Himself through His Call. For because they have the Office, they are already, in virtue of their Call and Office, obliged and compelled to administer the Sacrament whenever people request it of them, so that their excuses amount to nothing; just as they are under obligation to preach, comfort, absolve, help the poor, and visit the sick as often as people need or ask for these services” Luther in WA Br 4 534, 14-533, 34; Aug 15th 1528 translated by John R. Stephenson, “The Holy Eucharist: At the Center or Periphery of the Church’s Life in Luther’s Thinking?,” in *A Lively Legacy: Essays in Honor of Robert Preus* (Fort Wayne, IN: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, 1985), 161–62.

⁶ Wieting, *The Blessings of Weekly Communion*, 129.

⁷ Wieting, 136–37.

⁸ Wieting, 147.

were 230 articles discussing negative concerns about Roman Catholics, only fifteen discussed Holy Communion.⁹ The protestant-catholic divide in America is something that many of us have experienced especially in the 20th century.

Conclusion

It's hard to give a fair shake to two millennia of church history in two thousand words or less. There are many good data points that demonstrate weekly communion is a practice dating back to the earliest records of church history. There are also ample warnings to avoid abusing this good gift of God by either making it a talisman to be used apart from faithful eating and drinking like the Roman Catholics did, or by lowering it to a mere symbol like our protestant friends do.

Hopefully this article helps you understand the reason and the rationale behind communion practices throughout your life and piques your interest to study further on how Christians have historically received the gift that is the Lord's Supper.

Announcements

You may submit announcements or articles to be included in the newsletter. They are due at 8:00 a.m. on the Monday preceding the last Sunday of the month. Please contact office@faithonmain.com with your submissions.

Prayer Chain

Do you or a loved one have a specific prayer request? Visit faithonmain.com/prayer to submit a prayer request to our team. If you are interested in being part of the prayer chain prayer team, please click this link and submit a "prayer request" that includes your cell phone number so you can be added to the prayer team.

Keep in Touch

Office: 608-782-3696

Pastor's Cell: 414-659-8379

Email: pastor@faithonmain.com

Sign up for an electronic newsletter only by contacting office@faithonmain.com

Visit us at [FaithOnMain.com!](http://FaithOnMain.com)

October Events

Life Chain, Sunday October 2 at 2:00 p.m.

Even with Roe v. Wade overturned, there is still the need for prayer that the desire and demand for abortion would be ended in our country. Join us at Faith Lutheran Church at 1:45 to carpool over to Losey Boulevard to hold a prayer vigil as we hold up pro-life signs. You may also join us at Losey itself.

Voters Meeting, October 16 at 10:15

Immediately following worship we will have a voters' meeting. The main agenda item will be elections. Please consider contacting Wayne Oliver with any questions. We currently have openings to serve as the Director of Education and the Director of Campus Ministry.

Pastors' Conference October 17-19 in Madison

Pastor Eichers will be gone Monday through Wednesday afternoon in Madison at the bi-annual pastors' conference. Wednesday evening events such as Confirmation and College Bible Study will be held as normal.

⁹ Wieting, 171.

Saturday, October 22: Church Cleanup Day

Join us at 9:00 a.m. at Faith Lutheran Church & Student Center to help beautify our space through small but important clean up jobs. Many hands make light work! A to do list includes, but is not limited to:

- Dust the tops of everything in the Student Center
- Dust the tops of everything in the Narthex
- Clean the artificial plant above the sink in the Student Center
- Dust the windowsills... Sanctuary, Narthex, Student Center
- Pull the weeds from the rocks
- Cut back the hostas
- Remove & clean the air vents in the downstairs & upstairs bathrooms
- Rake leaves
- Wash windows
- Organize the furnace room

Building Up the Christian Home Laying the Foundation from Generation to Generation

Celebrating the Natural
Christian Family
Part II

Saturday
November 5, 2022

Faith Lutheran Church
1407 Main St.
La Crosse, WI
608 782 3696

9:30 a.m. Registration / Coffee

10:00 a.m. Opening Devotion—Pastor Jacob Eichers

10:30–11:45 a.m. God's Design for Marriage—Dr. Ryan MacPherson

Look not to the culture, for it is confusing. Look not to yourself, for who among us has all the answers? Look to the Creator, who made us male and female and instituted marriage. Look to Scripture to find God's design for marriage. Look ahead, to a future of God's blessings!

12 p.m. Lunch

1:00-2:15 p.m. Holding Your Family Together in Christ—Dr. Ryan MacPherson

Recognize a consistent encouragement to have home devotions, in both the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 6:4–9) and the New Testament (Ephesians 6:4). Review the blessings that God attaches to His Word. Rediscover the calling that parents have for serving their children's spiritual needs. Learn practical tips for conducting home devotions. (Don't be shy to attend. No previous experience is necessary.)

2:30-3:00 p.m. God's Gift of Generations—Panel Discussion

Discover God's design for linking the congregation to the home in Titus 2:1–8. Consider your distinct calling as a pastor, an older man, an older woman, a younger man, a younger woman, or a child. Learn how each of these members of the Body of Christ serve the good of one another to the glory of God. Discuss real-life applications for your family, for your congregation, and for the broader society.

3:00 p.m. Closing Devotion—Pastor Jacob Eichers

Registration

- \$15/person (includes lunch) Children Free



Campus Ministry Reformation Day Pumpkin Carving Sunday, Oct 30 @ 1 p.m.

The college students will be carving pumpkins Sunday afternoon. If you would like to join us, please contact Pastor Eichers so he can get the right number of pumpkins. Please consider a small donation to offset the cost of the pumpkins.

Building up the Christian Home, November 5th 9:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Join us for a conference that focuses on how to raise up a Christian household. There is a \$15 cost per adult to defray food and the honorarium. We are looking for some volunteers to help with childcare for the morning or afternoon. Childcare volunteers get free admission for the other half of the conference. We are also looking for the Women's group to help serve the catered meal.

2022 October

■ Faith (External)

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
25 9:00 AM - 10:00 AM Non-Communion Service 10:15 AM - 11:15 AM Sunday School	26	27 1:00 PM - 4:30 PM Pastoral Visits	28 5:45 PM - 6:45 PM Confirmation 7:30 PM - 8:30 PM Chosen Campus Ministry Watch	29 Oktoberfest Weekend	Sep 30 9:00 AM Men's Study 12:00 PM - 1:00 PM Women's Study	1 8:30 AM - 12:30 PM AED Training
2 Oktoberfest Weekend 9:00 AM - 10:00 AM Communion Service 10:15 AM - 11:15 AM Sunday School 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM Life Chain	3	4 11:00 AM - 11:30 AM Pastor Leads Havenwood service 1:00 PM - 4:30 PM Pastoral Visits	5 5:45 PM - 6:45 PM Confirmation 7:30 PM - 8:30 PM Chosen Campus Ministry Watch	6 9:00 AM Men's Study 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM Women of Faith Meeting 12:00 PM - 1:00 PM Women's Study	7	8 8:30 AM - 9:30 AM Board of Elders 9:30 AM - 10:30 AM Board of Directors
9 9:00 AM - 10:00 AM Non-Communion Service 10:15 AM - 11:15 AM Sunday School	10	11 1:00 PM - 4:30 PM Pastoral Visits	12 5:45 PM - 6:45 PM Confirmation 7:30 PM - 8:30 PM Chosen Campus Ministry Watch	13 9:00 AM Men's Study 12:00 PM - 1:00 PM Women's Study	14	15
16 9:00 AM - 10:00 AM Communion Service 10:15 AM - 11:15 AM Sunday School	17 (1:00 PM) - (12:00 PM) Pastors' Conference Madison	18 1:00 PM - 4:30 PM Pastoral Visits	19 5:45 PM - 6:45 PM Confirmation 7:30 PM - 8:30 PM Chosen Campus Ministry Watch	20 9:00 AM Men's Study 12:00 PM - 1:00 PM Women's Study	21	22 8:00 AM - 12:00 PM Fall Cleanup Day
23 9:00 AM - 10:00 AM Non-Communion Service 10:15 AM - 11:15 AM Sunday School	24 8:00 AM - 9:00 AM Send newsletter articles	25 10:00 AM - 11:30 AM SWD Mission Executive Visits Faith 1:00 PM - 4:30 PM Pastoral Visits	26 5:45 PM - 6:45 PM Confirmation 7:30 PM - 8:30 PM Chosen Campus Ministry Watch	27 9:00 AM Men's Study 12:00 PM - 1:00 PM Women's Study	28	29
30 9:00 AM - 10:00 AM Communion Service 10:15 AM - 11:15 AM Sunday School 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM Pumpkin carving	31 Notes					