

Sacraments in a Time of Emergency

To Ministry Professionals: What follows is a pastoral statement regarding the Lutheran understanding of the administration of the sacraments in a time of emergency. My hope is that this will serve as a guide for pastors and congregations regarding how to deliver the sacraments in this time. Know that you remain in my prayers as you work to deliver pastoral care and soothe the consciences of those entrusted to your care.

For Congregations: In this time of national emergency related to the COVID-19 virus we as the people of God are finding ourselves in situations we never imagined. One such situation is the question of how we can receive the sacraments when we are not holding or attending regular worship services. As Lutherans, we understand that in a time of emergency all baptized Christians are authorized to administer the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. When we do that, we follow the Words of Institution as Christ gave them to us and the same Words of promise we hear in a regular service of Baptism. You will find these words at the bottom of this email. This means that during this time of emergency, you may in good conscience deliver these Words of promise in your home and know that it is a valid delivering of Christ's promise of forgiveness, life, and salvation - just as you would hear in a regular church service.

I want to reinforce that these measures are only in place for as long as we are in this state of emergency. Once we are holding regular worship services we will follow good church order and understand that while you are all called as baptized Christians to deliver Christ's promise in emergency situations, this is not a role you can assume in your congregation outside of such times. Regular congregational duties are rightly administered by those called to a public ministry office.

I am including links to Luther's Small Catechism as well as several short videos that are helpful for using this moment to engage again our Lutheran understanding of the sacraments. This is not a time for fear, but rather for proclaiming and delivering Christ's promise of forgiveness and freedom into the ears of all who need to hear it; trusting in the power of that promise to deliver us all from doubt and death itself.

Instruction for administering the sacraments: In times such as these, when you cannot gather as a congregation, you may in good conscience administer the sacrament in your home with your family. As Christ promised, where two or three are gathered in his name Christ is among us. (Matt. 18:20) What follows is a brief order for Baptism and for the Lord's Supper.

Brief Order for Baptism:

(Pour water over the baptized's head 3 times while saying)

Name of Baptized I baptize you in the name of the Father;

And of the Son;

And of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Recite the Lord's Prayer together.

Pray the following prayer: We thank you Almighty God that by the water and the Holy Spirit you have bestowed on this your child the forgiveness of sin and have raised him/her to the new life in Christ Jesus. Bless him/her, O Lord, with your presence, enfold him/her in the arms of your mercy, and keep him/her in your love forever. Amen.

Brief Order for the Lord's Supper:

The Lord be with you.

And Also with you

In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread and gave thanks; broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take and eat, this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: This cup is the new testament in my blood shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Recite the Lord's Prayer together

Distribute the bread and wine to one another with the words: The Body of Christ given for you. The Blood of Christ Shed for you.

Bless one another with these words: May the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in faith. Amen.

Links for instruction on the Sacraments:

Baptism:

[Luther's Small Catechism: Baptism](#)

[Baptism: What Is It?](#)

[Baptism: What Is It Good For?](#)

Lord's Supper:

[Luther's Small Catechism: Holy Communion](#)

[Lord's Supper: What Is It?](#)

[Lord's Supper: Who Is Worthy?](#)