

*This statement was adopted by the 1991 biennial convention of the **Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada**. It is intended as a guideline for congregations and is not binding on them. In accordance with convention action, this statement is commended for study and use. We pray that the Lord of the Church will use it as a means to enrich understanding and appreciation of the sacraments.*

## **Statement on Sacramental Practices Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada**

### **1.0 ~ Preface**

**1.1** ~ This Statement on Sacramental Practices identifies theological foundations and practical principles for Baptism and Holy Communion.

**1.2** ~ This Statement is intended for the enrichment of the life and ministry of the whole church. It is commended to this church - its synods, seminaries, congregations and individual members - to affirm the importance of the sacraments in our common life and to guide our sacramental practices.

**1.3** ~ This Statement is intended to encourage continuation of the process of study and dialogue which led to its formulation.

**1.4** ~ This Statement is both representative of Lutheran tradition and indicative of the ELCIC's commitment to and participation in ecumenical ministries.

**1.5** ~ Although confirmation is traditionally related to both Baptism and Holy Communion, in this Statement confirmation ministry is not addressed.

### **2.0 ~ Introduction**

**2.1** ~ The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, guided by Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions and acknowledging its roots, both theological and historical, in the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church, affirms its commitment to a faithful ministry of Word and Sacrament.

**2.2** ~ From the earliest period of the Christian era, the church has celebrated the incorporation of its people into the Christian community and has nourished them through a ministry of Word and Sacrament. It is in accord with apostolic tradition to baptize and to offer Holy Communion to God's people.

**2.3** ~ It is the practice in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada to use the name Baptism for the sacrament of incorporation, and a variety of names for the sacramental meal - Eucharist, Holy Communion and the Lord's Supper being the most common. In this Statement the names are used interchangeably.

**2.4** ~ The sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper are means of grace through which God's gracious, forgiving, and nurturing love is freely given to God's people. These sacraments are gifts of God's presence.

**2.5** ~ Baptism is the sacrament of initiation into life with Christ. Holy Communion is the sacrament that nurtures and strengthens us in this life. "It is taught among us that the sacraments were instituted not only to be signs by which people might be identified outwardly as Christians, but that they are signs and testimonies of God's will toward us for the purpose of awakening and strengthening our faith" (The Augsburg Confession, ARTICLE XIII).

### **3.0 ~ Theological Foundations: Baptism**

**3.1** ~ The Sacrament of Christian Baptism is grounded in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. The institution of Christian Baptism has its source in the Great Commission and in Jesus' own baptism. (Matt. 28:19-20; Matt. 3:13-17; Mk. 1:9-11; Lk. 3:21-22; John 1:29ff.)

**3.2** ~ In Baptism we die and rise with Christ. God acted in Christ to save us; God acts through Baptism to save us. The baptized are pardoned, cleansed and sanctified in Christ. (Rom. 6:3-5.)

**3.3** ~ In Baptism we are called into the Christian community and incorporated into the body of Christ, in which we are made a new creation, reconciled to God, and entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation. The community of the baptized is, therefore, the body of Christ, continuing God's mission in the world and sharing in the hope of the world to come. (1 Cor. 12:12ff; 2 Cor. 5:14-21.)

**3.4** ~ In Baptism God seals us with the Holy Spirit, who nurtures our life of faith until we enter into the full possession of our inheritance. We are born anew, and marked with the cross of Christ forever. (2 Cor. 1:21-22; Eph. 1:13-14; John 3:1-8; Rom. 6:1-11.)

**3.5** ~ In Baptism we renounce the powers of darkness and dedicate ourselves to participating in the inbreaking reign of God.

**3.6** ~ A person is baptized once; Baptism is not repeated. Christians live and affirm their Baptism through daily repentance, receiving forgiveness and renewal in the Holy Spirit. Baptism is a daily dying to sin and rising to newness of life.

#### **4.0 ~ Practical Principles: Baptism**

**4.1** ~ Baptism is administered with water in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

**4.2** ~ In the baptismal celebration water is used generously. A variety of modes is used; pouring and immersion are rich symbols of the nature of Baptism.

**4.3** ~ Candidates for Baptism are those children born to members of the congregation, children for whom other congregational members assume the responsibility of nurture in the faith, and older children or adults who, following preparation and instruction, declare their faith in Jesus Christ and desire Baptism.

**4.4** ~ Baptism is preceded by a period of instruction. Such instruction in faith and life constitutes training in discipleship. When young children are baptized, the parents and sponsors are instructed; otherwise the baptismal candidates themselves are instructed. This training in discipleship continues for the life of the baptized.

**4.5** ~ The celebration of the Sacrament of Baptism ordinarily includes the following: presentation, thanksgiving, renunciation of sin and evil, profession of faith, baptism with water, laying on of hands and invocation of the Holy Spirit, signing with the cross and welcome into the congregation.

**4.6** ~ Baptism normally takes place within the corporate worship of the congregation and is administered by an ordained minister called by the congregation or by an ordained minister granted permission by the former (Constitution for Synods, Article VII, Section 8).

**4.7** ~ In cases of emergency, a person may be baptized by any Christian in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Should sudden death preclude such a Baptism, we believe the grace of God will prevail.

**4.8** ~ When circumstances require Baptism outside of corporate worship, a public announcement of the Baptism is made at the service the Sunday following. Provision is also made for the use of the rite for Public Recognition of the Baptism at corporate worship (Occasional Services, pp. 17-22).

**4.9** ~ The congregation assumes a sponsoring role for all baptized persons within its local setting. Congregations are encouraged to select at least one sponsor from the congregation for each candidate for Baptism. The parents may select additional sponsors. It is assumed that all sponsors are involved in the faith and life of a Christian community. The primary role of sponsors is to provide spiritual nurture and encourage integration of the baptized into the community of believers.

**4.10** ~ Baptism is affirmed throughout the Christian's life in daily living and in worship. Regular services of the congregation provide opportunities for participation in confession and forgiveness, the celebration of Holy Communion, and the Baptism of others. The rite for Affirmation of Baptism may be used at any time; it is especially appropriate at confirmation, at times of membership reception and restoration, and during the seasons of Lent and Easter.

**4.11** ~ All Baptisms are entered into the permanent records of the congregation and certificates are issued at the time of the administration of the sacrament.

## **5.0 ~ Theological Foundations: Holy Communion**

**5.1** ~ The Lord's Supper was instituted by Jesus Christ himself (1 Cor. 11:23-25; Matt. 26:26-28).

**5.2** ~ In Holy Communion the crucified and risen Christ is present in word and action. This presence is a mystery.

**5.3** ~ Holy Communion is a means of grace through which the crucified and risen Christ awakens faith, saves, forgives, unites, gives life, comforts and strengthens God's people for the work to which they are called in the world.

**5.4** ~ Holy Communion is also a great and joyous thanksgiving (Eucharist) for everything accomplished by God in creation, redemption and sanctification. In the Eucharist, God's people give thanks for all of God's blessings.

**5.5** ~ Eucharistic celebrations incorporate the whole Christian church in every time and place. The whole church is involved in each local eucharistic celebration (1 Cor. 10:16-17).

**5.6** ~ In the Lord's Supper, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we remember and experience anew the creative and redemptive acts of God, receive the gift of the presence of Christ, and look forward in anticipation to our future with God.

**5.7** ~ Participation in the Lord's Supper empowers and compels us to imitate the example of our Lord who is both host and servant and to embody and reflect the unity which the Lord's Supper symbolizes. (Lk. 22:24-27; Jn. 13:1-20; 1 Cor. 10:17.)

**5.8** ~ In Baptism we are incorporated into the body of Christ, the church. In Holy Communion the church is nourished and strengthened. Therefore we speak of and practice communion of the baptized.

## **6.0 ~ Practical Principles: Holy Communion**

**6.1** ~ In the Eucharist, Christ gathers, teaches and nourishes the people of God. It is these gathered people of God who celebrate the Eucharist.

**6.2** ~ In accordance with traditional church practice and the Lutheran Confessions, an ordained minister, as one whose ministry originates within and is affirmed by the whole church, presides over the eucharistic celebration. Only one ordained minister presides.

**6.3** ~ Persons not ordained may be authorized by the synodical bishop to preside at the Lord's Supper in those situations where an ordained minister is not available for an extended period of time. Such exemptions are allowed for only a specific time, place, and person.

**6.4** ~ Our liturgical practice embodies the priesthood of all believers; therefore, properly trained lay persons serve in a variety of roles including the distribution of the elements.

**6.5** ~ As a participant in the worshipping community and as a symbol of the unity of the church, the presiding minister communes at each Eucharist. Such communion may be served by an assisting minister or be self-administered.

**6.6** ~ The Brief Order for Confession and Forgiveness may be used before the Eucharist. Opportunities for corporate and private confession and forgiveness preceding the Eucharist are especially appropriate during penitential seasons of the Church Year.

**6.7** ~ Holy Communion has two principal parts: the proclamation of the Word and the sharing of the sacramental meal. Surrounded by prayer, praise and thanksgiving, these two parts are so intimately connected as to form one unified act of worship.

**6.8** ~ According to the Lutheran Confessions, Holy Communion is offered every Sunday.

**6.9** ~ The Lord's Supper is God's meal for the baptized. Admission to the Supper is by Christ's invitation, offered through the church to the baptized.

**6.10** ~ As persons move to congregations where practices differ regarding age for first Communion, care needs to be taken that the difference in practice is resolved in a manner which promotes growth in faith and discipleship for all who are concerned.

**6.11** ~ Preparation for the sacrament does not make one worthy to receive the sacrament. However, personal preparation, which may include self-examination, private confession, prayer, fasting, reconciliation with others, and meditation, is encouraged.

**6.12** ~ Personal and corporate educational activities of a life-long nature are encouraged as a means of developing an awareness of and receptivity to the gifts of Word and Sacrament.

**6.13** ~ We are committed to eucharistic hospitality. Baptized persons of Lutheran and other Christian faith communities are welcomed to the Lord's Table.

**6.14** ~ Because of the universal nature of the church, Lutherans may participate in eucharistic services of other Christian churches. As a visitor, one should respect the practice of the host congregation.

**6.15** ~ Lutherans traditionally use bread and wine in the celebration of the Lord's Supper. In certain circumstances grape juice is used. (1 Cor. 11:23-26; Matt. 26:26-29; Mk. 14:22-25.)

**6.16** ~ Both elements are offered in Holy Communion. Communicants normally receive both bread and wine. Under certain circumstances the reception of only one element is acceptable.

**6.17** ~ Practices vary as to the use of one loaf of bread or wafers and as to the use of a chalice or individual glasses. A loaf of bread and the common cup are rich biblical symbols of the unity of the church.

**6.18** ~ Holy Communion, usually celebrated within a congregational setting, may also be celebrated in non-congregational settings where the baptized gather for worship. The presider is to be an ordained minister.

**6.19** ~ Congregations will provide Holy Communion for those persons who, for reasons of illness or confinement, are unable to attend public worship. As an extension of the congregation's celebration of the Eucharist, trained and designated lay members may distribute Holy Communion following the worship service. At other times, ordained

persons may celebrate the sacrament with those unable to participate in public worship. (Occasional Services, pp. 76-88.)

**6.20** ~ The biblical words of institution declare God's action and invitation. They are set within the context of the Great Thanksgiving. A variety of eucharistic prayers is available and their use is encouraged. These prayers of thanksgiving lift up the gracious work of God in creation, redemption, and sanctification.

**6.21** ~ A sufficient quantity of bread and wine to serve the congregation is brought to the altar. Should more of either element be needed during distribution, a further prayer for the sanctification of the elements may be said.

**6.22** ~ The elements offered for the celebration of the Lord's Supper have been set aside for a special purpose. Leftover elements are consumed by those present, or disposed of in an appropriate manner.

**6.23** ~ A variety of practices is followed in the distribution and reception of the elements. The practice chosen should provide the image and experience of unity in the body of Christ. One post-Communion blessing, after all have been served, best expresses this unity. Either kneeling or standing is an acceptable posture for reception. Care needs to be taken to ensure that hospitality is extended to disabled persons.

**6.24** ~ In the distribution and reception of the elements, the practice of placing the bread in the communicant's hand is encouraged. The chalice is to be guided or received by the communicant.

**6.25** ~ The practice of intinction - the dipping of the bread into the wine - is an acceptable mode of reception.



Prepared by the Sacramental Practices Task Force.

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