



## INFORMATION ABOUT HOLY COMMUNION

---

We believe that Holy Communion (the Eucharist) is a special gift of God to His church. This Sacrament is celebrated at this congregation in the confession and glad confidence that, as God says, He gives into our mouths not only bread and wine but the actual Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus to eat and drink for the forgiveness of sins and to strengthen our union with Him and with one another.

Our Communion practice, although different from many Protestant churches is consistent with the historic practice of the Christian Church, which has regarded unity in doctrine as a prerequisite for admission to the Sacrament (“oneness at Communion demonstrates oneness in doctrine”). In addition, the Sacrament of the Altar can be taken to one’s spiritual harm if not properly understood and received (*cf.*, *1 Corinthians 11:17-30*). There-fore, love compels us to practice Closed Communion. We have provided this tract so that we may explain our practice to our guests.

### **WHAT IS CLOSED COMMUNION?**

Closed Communion is the Scriptural and historic practice of limiting participation in the Lord’s Supper to those who have been formally admitted to the Altar after having been catechized (instructed) and examined in the truths of the Christian faith wherein they have then promised to believe, teach and confess all that the church in which they will commune believes, teaches and confesses. (*cf.*, *1 Corinthians 10:17; Acts 2:42*)

Therefore, we not only believe it necessary for all communicants to have a correct understanding of the Sacrament but also be in complete agreement in all matters of doctrine. We are eager for guests to participate fully in every aspect of this ministry after proper instruction and formal acceptance at the Altar. We do not wish to compromise any portion of God’s Word among us, nor would we invite anyone to do so.

### **PREPARING FOR COMMUNION**

In order to be properly inclined to receive Communion, communicants must 1) be baptized, 2) trust His words, 3) repent of all sins, 4) set aside any refusal to forgive and love as He forgives and loves us, and 5) resolve to amend sinful behavior and live a godly life that they may show forth His death until He comes. We receive the Sacrament worthily with an attitude of sincere, humble, Holy Spirit prompted, contrition. The Prayer before Communion on the inside front cover of our Lutheran Service Book (hymnal) may assist each Communicant’s preparation.

### MORE INFORMATION

#### **FOR MISSOURI SYNOD LUTHERANS**

Normally, guests of this worship service who are Active Communicant Members (in good standing) of a Missouri Synod Lutheran Congregation are invited to commune. Please introduce yourself to the Pastor before approaching the Altar. (Inactive or former LC-MS members should also speak with the Pastor prior to communing with us).

#### **FOR OTHER LUTHERANS**

We welcome to this Worship service Lutherans from other synods. Our common name, however may not describe our common confession or agreement in matters of doctrine. (e.g., the ELCA teaches false doctrine and has joined in confession with other denominations which also teach false doctrine). Therefore, we cannot extend to them a general invitation to receive Communion. Please speak to the Pastor before approaching the Altar.

#### **FOR OTHER CHRISTIANS**

We welcome to this Worship Service those Christians who are not fully united with us. It is a consequence of the sad divisions in Christianity, however, that we cannot extend to them a general invitation to receive Communion. We believe that the Eucharist is an action of this Celebrating Community signifying a oneness of the faith, worship, and doctrine of this community. Reception of this Sacrament by Christians not fully united with us would imply a oneness which does not yet exist, and for which we must all pray.

#### **FOR THOSE NOT RECEIVING COMMUNION**

Those not receiving the Sacrament are encouraged to express in their hearts a prayerful desire for unity with the Lord Jesus and with one another.

Formal admission to this Altar is preceded by a period of Instruction. We do not wish to compromise any portion of God’s Word among us, nor would we invite you to do so without careful examination of such. If you are interested in regularly communing with us, the Pastor would be pleased to speak with you about our Adult Catechism classes so that you may participate fully in every aspect of this ministry.

#### **FOR NON-CHRISTIANS**

We also welcome to this Service those who do not share our faith in Jesus. While we cannot extend to them an invitation to receive communion, we do invite them to consider the claims of the Bible concerning Christ Jesus. We also extend an invitation to an examination of the teachings of Christ Jesus as our guests in our obligation-free Adult Catechism classes.

---

## **BETHLEHEM EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH**

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH-MISSOURI SYNOD

1515 South Loop 256 • Palestine, TX 75801

Office: (903) 729-6362 • Fax: (903) 723-7725