

Theological Opinions **of the Consistory of the COELC**

XII

On Closed Communion

Adopted in October 2019

Historically the Church has practiced Closed Communion, in which the Church withheld Holy Communion from certain individuals. This practice is not merely a historic ecclesiastical custom but is a Biblical Apostolic tradition.

The Scriptures teach us that God gave pastors for the work of the Ministry of Word and Sacrament (Ps. 68:11, Isa. 41:27, Jer. 3:15, 23:4, John 20:21-23, Acts 20:28, 1 Cor. 1:17, 12:28-29, 2 Cor. 2:18-19, Eph. 4:11-12, Col. 1:25, 1 Pet. 5:2). The pastors are the ones who have been instituted by God for the work of the Ministry. Those in the Office of the Ministry stand in the place and stead of Christ as His representatives, ambassadors, servants and co-workers (Luke 10:16, 1 Cor. 3:9, 4:1, 2 Cor. 5:20, 13:3). Those who belong to the Office of the Ministry are the Stewards of the Mysteries of God (1 Cor. 4:1, Tit. 1:7), that is, they are the ones responsible for the administration of Word and Sacrament.

As Stewards of the Sacraments, the pastors are ultimately responsible for who does and who doesn't receive Holy Communion. Since it is possible to receive Holy Communion in both a worthy and unworthy manner, and since the Scriptures give us a grave warning for those who would drink of the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner (1 Cor. 11:27-30), pastors have been entrusted with the lofty task of admitting to Holy Communion those who would receive it in a worthy manner and withholding Holy Communion from those who would receive it in an unworthy manner.

Those who are to be Admitted to Holy Communion

Jesus Instituted the Sacrament of Holy Communion for His Body the Church, for the forgiveness of their sins and for their unity with Him and with each other. Therefore, those who should be admitted to the Sacrament of Holy Communion are those who:

1. Are baptized:

Holy Baptism is the Sacrament of Initiation while Holy Communion is the Sacrament of Confirmation. Baptism grants a person new birth as a Christian (John 3:3-5), while Holy Communion is the food that grants the Christian strengthening of faith (1 Cor. 11:26).

Holy Communion is for those who belong to the Church (Acts 2:46, 20:7, 1 Cor. 11:20,33). Only those who are united to the Body of Christ (Church) are to partake of the Body and Blood of Christ (Holy Communion) (1 Cor. 10:16-17).

For this reason a person must have been baptized before he may partake of Holy Communion. Just as we observe in the Book of Acts. On the Day of Pentecost the converts were not called to commune at the altar but to be baptized (Acts 2:38). Only after they had been baptized into the Christian faith did they partake in Holy Communion (Acts 2:42,46).

Those who have been baptized have been born again (John 3:3-5), made a disciple of Christ (Matt. 28:19), united to Christ (Rom. 6:3, Gal. 3:27) and joined to the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:12-13, Eph. 4:4-6).

Those who believe and are baptized will be saved, but those who do not believe will be condemned (Mark 16:16). Through Baptism one is welcomed into the Christian faith, but if one rejects his Baptism and does not believe, then he has rejected the Christian faith and remains under the wrath of God (John 3:18,36).

Those who have been baptized and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour belong to the Body of Christ (Church) and may be admitted to the Lord's Supper.

2. Believe the Real Presence of Christ's Body and Blood in the Sacrament:

On the night when Christ was betrayed He took bread and gave it to them saying, "this is My Body", in the same way He took the cup and gave it to them saying "this is My Blood." (Matt. 26:26-28, Mark 14:22-24, Luke 22:19-20, 1 Cor. 11:24-25)

Jesus told us that this bread is His true Body and that this cup is His true Blood.

In John chapter 6:51-58 Jesus tells us that we must eat His Flesh and drink His Blood, for His Flesh is true food and His Blood is true drink (John 6:55). This text shows us that we are truly able to eat and drink the Body and Blood of Christ which is truly given to us for food and drink.

In 1 Corinthians 10:16 Paul says that the cup we bless is a communion with the Blood of Christ and the Bread that is broken is a communion with the Body of Christ. This text shows us that the bread and wine which has been consecrated (blessed) is truly the Body and Blood of Christ.

In 1 Corinthians 11:27-29 Paul says that whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup in an unworthy manner is guilty of sinning against the Body and Blood of Christ, therefore a person should examine himself, and so eat the bread and drink the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the Body and Blood eats and drinks judgement

on himself. This text shows us that present in the bread and wine is both true physical bread and wine and at the same time the Real Presence of Christ's Body and Blood. Holy Communion is meant for those who believe the Words of Christ "this is My Body... this is My Blood." For, those who discern the Real Presence of the Body and Blood of Christ in the bread and wine receive it to their blessing and for the forgiveness of their sins.

3. Are able to discern the Real Presence of Christ's Body and Blood in the Sacrament:

In order to partake of the Lord's Supper worthily and receive it to one's blessing, one must believe the words "this is My Body... this is My Blood" (Matt. 26:26-28, Mark 14:22-24, Luke 22:19-20, 1 Cor. 11:24-25). Therefore one must be able to discern the Real Presence of the Body and Blood of Christ (1 Cor. 11:29).

In 1 Corinthians 11:28 Paul says that a person must first examine themselves and then they may eat the bread and drink the wine of Holy Communion.

A person must be able to examine themselves to see if they believe the Words of Christ. Those who are unable to examine themselves and are unable to believe the Words of Christ "this is My Body... this is My Blood," are unable to discern the Lord's Body and Blood.

A person must know what they seek in the Sacrament and why they come to the Altar before they are admitted to the Lord's Table. Therefore, only those who are able to discern the Real Presence of Christ's Body and Blood in, with and under the bread and wine should be admitted to the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

4. Believes that the Sacrament of Holy Communion grants the forgiveness of sins:

Holy Communion is given for the forgiveness of sins (Matt. 26:28).

Jesus died on the Cross for the forgiveness of our sins (Rom. 4:25, 5:8, Isa. 53:4-5, 2 Cor. 5:21), and not only ours but for the sins of the whole world (Isa. 53:6, John 1:29, Rom. 8:32, 2 Cor. 5:15, 1 John 2:2). In His death upon the Cross Christ shed His Body and Blood for the forgiveness of our sins. Through Holy Communion this forgiveness of sins is granted to all those who repent and believe. For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes again (1 Cor. 11:26). Only those who believe that Holy Communion grants the forgiveness of sins can be admitted to Holy Communion.

5. Are repentant and seeking the forgiveness of their sins:

Holy Communion is given for the forgiveness of sins (Matt. 26:28), and is given to those who are repentant and desire the forgiveness of their sins.

God sent His Son, Jesus, into the world not to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him (John 3:16).

1 Corinthians 6:9-10, St. Paul says that the unrighteous will not inherit the Kingdom of God, among the list are the sexually immoral, idolaters, adulterers, homosexuals (both the active and receptive partner), thieves, the greedy, drunkards, revilers, and swindlers. Verse 11 goes on to say that "such were some of you," but you were washed, sanctified and justified in the name of Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of God, thus, stating that there were some who had lived a life of sin but had repented and

been redeemed. Therefore, only those who are unrepentant and continue to live a life of sin will not inherit the Kingdom of God. But to those who are repentant, forgiveness and salvation are given to them (Isa. 30:15, Acts 11:18, 2 Cor. 7:10). Scripture warns us that the unrepentant store up wrath against themselves (Rom. 2:5) and that they shall perish (Luke 13:3,5). But to the repentant Scripture says that their sins have been blotted out and they have been refreshed by the presence of the Lord (Acts 3:19-20).

Now some will say, “but I am a sinner and I am unworthy to come to the Lord’s Table.” However, the Lord’s Supper is give and shed for you for the forgiveness of you sins. This Table is not prepared for the sinless but for sinners. As Christ said, “It is not the healthy that need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but to call sinners to repentance.” (Luke 5:31-32, Matt. 9:12-13 Mark 2:17).

One should not abstain from the Holy Supper because they are a sinner. Rather on the contrary, those who have sinned should be compelled to come to the Holy Supper so that they may receive the forgiveness for their sins. For, this medicine has been prepared and provided for the sick who acknowledge their infirmity and seek counsel and help.

6. Who forgive the sins of those who sin against them:

Holy Communion is given for the forgiveness of sins (Matt. 26:28).

In the Lord’s Prayer we ask God to forgive us our sins, as we forgive the sins of those who sin against us (Matt. 6:12, Luke 11:4). Just as we have been forgiven by God, through Christ, so too ought we forgive the sins of those who sin against us (Eph. 4:32, Col. 3:13).

If someone sins against us, we are to rebuke them, and if they repent we are to forgive them, even if they sin seven times a day, and seven times come back to us saying “I repent,” you must forgive them.(Luke 17:3-4). (See also: Matt. 18:21-22).

In Matthew 6:15 Jesus warns us that if we do not forgive the sins of others, neither will our Father in Heaven forgive us our sins. (See: the narrative of the unmerciful Servant, Matt. 18:21-35). Therefore, only those who forgive the sins of those who sin against them may be admitted to Holy Communion.

7. Are able to examine themselves:

In 1 Corinthians 11:28 Paul tells us that a person should first examine themselves and then they should eat and drink the Lord’s Supper.

Self-examination is not done to achieve some higher level of piety or morality, but to maintain a right attitude to and reception of Holy Communion.

In 2 Corinthians 13:5 Paul tells us to examine ourselves to see whether we are in the faith. Before partaking of Holy Communion a person should prepare themselves by a self-examination to see whether they are in the faith. Therefore, they should examine themselves to see whether they believe the Words of Christ “This is My body, which is given for you...This is My Blood of the New Covenant which is shed for you, for the forgiveness of sins.”

Holy Communion is to be given to those who believe the Word of Institution and hence believe both that they receive the true Body and Blood of Christ in the Lord’s Supper and that Christ gives them this priceless gift for the forgiveness of their sins.

Therefore, a person should examine themselves to see whether:

- He believes that Christ's physical Body and Blood are present together in, with and under the bread and wine that he eats and drinks. (1 Cor. 11:29)
- He is truly repentant of his sins and desires the forgiveness of his sins. (Matt. 4:17, Mark 1:15, Luke 13:3,5)
- He believes in Jesus Christ as his Saviour and that the Sacrament of Holy Communion grants the forgiveness of his sins. (Matt. 26:28)
- He sincerely and earnestly desires to, with the help of the Holy Spirit, amend his sinful life. (John 5:14, 8:11, Rom. 6:1-2)
- He believes that the Sacrament is given for him. (Luke 22:19-20, 1 Cor. 11:24)
- He seeks true unity with the Body of Christ (Church). (1 Cor. 10:17)

Before a person partakes of the Holy Communion he should first examine himself.

However, a person should not think that through self-examination they become worthy of partaking of the Holy Communion, nor should they think that their self-examination raises their own level of holiness before God. On the contrary, for the one who is worthy of the Holy Communion is one who recognises their own unworthiness, and seeks the Sacrament in faith and humility to receive the grace of God and the forgiveness of their sins. For, Christ came not to save the righteous but to save sinners (Matt. 9:13, Mark 2:17, Luke 5:31-32).

Therefore, a person is to examine himself, not to find his worthiness for the Sacrament, but to find his unworthiness. Let him examine himself and find his unworthiness, that he may see his need for a Saviour, and in doing so may have a desire to receive the forgiveness of his sins.

8. Publicly hold to an orthodox confession of faith:

Altar Fellowship is Church Fellowship (1 Cor. 10:16-17), therefore, those who commune together should be of one confession of faith (Acts 4:32, 1 Cor. 1:10, 12:25, Phil. 2:2).

Those who partake of Holy Communion proclaim the Lord's death until he returns (1 Cor. 11:26). By partaking of the Lord's Supper in a Lutheran Church, one publicly confesses that they believe that in the Lord's Supper one receives the Lord's real Body and Blood for the forgiveness of sins. Therefore, one should only commune if this is their public confession.

If a person privately or inwardly holds to a heterodox faith but publicly holds to an orthodox faith then they may be permitted to come to Holy Communion. For, God alone knows the true heart of man (1 Sam. 16:7, 1 Kings 8:39, 1 Chron. 28:9, Psalm 44:21, 139:23, Jer. 17:10, Matt. 6:4, Acts 1:24, Rom. 8:27, 1 Cor. 2:11, Rev 2:23), and the pastor, as the Steward of the Ministries of God (1 Cor. 4:1), can only make judgements based on the outward confession of the communicant (1 Sam. 16:7).

However, if a person outwardly holds to an orthodox confession of faith but inwardly holds to a heterodox confession of faith, then he is a liar and he eats and drinks the Body and Blood of Christ to his judgement (1 Cor. 11:27-29). He is guilty of sinning against the body and blood of Christ, for a person must not only confess with their mouth but believe with their heart (Rom. 10:9-10).

On the other hand, if a person privately or inwardly holds to an orthodox faith but publicly holds to a heterodox faith, then he is not to be admitted to Holy

Communion. For the pastor can only make judgements based on the outward confession of the communicant (1 Sam. 16:7).

In addition, if a person is unable to make a public confession of faith – either verbally or by signs – then the pastor should not admit them to the Lord's Supper, lest he give the Sacrament to an unworthy recipient who would eat and drink judgement on himself. It is for this reason that a pastor is not to commune infants. For even if an infant could possess a faith that would make them worthy to receive the Lord's Supper (Matt. 18:3,6, 19:14, Mark 9:42, 10:15, Luke 1:41-45, 18:17), the pastor is unable to see this faith (1 Sam. 16:7), and it is not right for him to give Holy Communion to those who cannot make a public confession of faith.

In regards to the mute and the mental handicapped, if they are able to make a confession through unquestionable signs, that they truly believe the Sacrament to be the Lord's Body and Blood given for the forgiveness of their sins, then they may be admitted to Holy Communion.

9. Belong to an orthodox church body:

The Scriptures teach us the Christians are to gather together for Holy Communion (Acts 2:46, 20:7, 1 Cor. 11:20,33). In Holy Communion we are united to the Body of Christ (the Church) (1 Cor. 10:17). This unity is not limited to one church body, but to all Orthodox Christians throughout time and space. Therefore, we should be eager to maintain unity within the Church (Eph. 4:3). We should welcome to our altar Christians from other orthodox church bodies (Rom. 15:7, Rom. 16:3-16, 1 Cor. 16:18, Phil. 4:21, 2 Tim. 4:19, Tit. 3:15,).

Yet it is to be remembered that Altar Fellowship is Church Fellowship (Acts 2:42, 1 Cor. 10:16-17, 11:18). Those you eat with makes a public confession as to who you agree with (Matt. 9:10-11, Mark 2:16, Luke 5:29-30). The Scriptures consider it a bad thing when there is divisions among those who commune together (1 Cor. 11:18), therefore, those who commune together should be of one confession of faith (Acts 4:32, 1 Cor. 1:10, 12:25, Phil. 2:2).

10. Belong to the Christian faith:

The Lord's Supper is for those who belong to the Body of Christ, for the bread we break is a communion with the Body of Christ, and there is one bread, and we who partake of the one bread belong to the one Body (1 Cor. 10:16-17).

Holy Communion is only for those who belong to the Church of God (Acts 2:42,46, 1 Cor. 11:18).

It is not possible to belong to another faith and to also receive Holy Communion, for, one cannot partake of the Table of Demons and the Table of the Lord (1 Cor. 10:21). For there is one Lord and one faith (Eph. 4:5) and only one Name by which men can be saved (Acts 4:12). For, Christ alone is the Way, the Truth and the Life, and no one can be saved except through Him (John 14:6).

Those who are not to be Admitted to Holy Communion

Jesus commands us, “*Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs*” (Matt. 7:6). Therefore, the Sacrament of Holy Communion should be withheld from those who:

1. Are unbaptized:

Holy Baptism is the Sacrament of Initiation while Holy Communion is the Sacrament of Confirmation. Baptism grants a person new birth as a Christian (John 3:3-5), while Holy Communion is the food that grants the Christian strengthening of faith (1 Cor. 11:26).

Holy Communion is for those who belong to the Church (Acts 2:46, 20:7, 1 Cor. 11:20,33). Only those who are united to the Body of Christ (Church) are to partake of the Body and Blood of Christ (Holy Communion) (1 Cor. 10:16-17). And it is through Baptism that a person is born again (John 3:3-5), made a disciple of Christ (Matt. 28:19), united to Christ (Rom. 6:3, Gal. 3:27) and joined to the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:12-13, Eph. 4:4-6).

For this reason a person must have been baptized before he may partake of Holy Communion. Just as we observe in the Book of Acts. On the Day of Pentecost the converts were not called to commune at the altar but to be baptized (Acts 2:38). Only after they had been baptized into the Christian faith did they partake in Holy Communion (Acts 2:42,46).

2. Deny the Real Presence of Christ’s Body and Blood in the Sacrament:

On the night when Christ was betrayed He took bread and gave it to them saying, “this is My Body”, in the same way He took the cup and gave it to them saying “this is My Body.” (Matt. 26:26-28, Mark 14:22-24, Luke 22:19-20, 1 Cor. 11:24-25)

Jesus told us that this bread is His true Body and that this cup is His true Blood.

In John chapter 6:51-58 Jesus tells us that we must eat His Flesh and drink His Blood, for His Flesh is true food and His Blood is true drink (John 6:55). This text shows us that we are truly able to eat and drink the Body and Blood of Christ which is truly given to us for food and drink.

In 1 Corinthians 10:16 Paul says that the cup we bless is a communion with the Blood of Christ and the Bread that is broken is a communion with the Body of Christ. This text shows us that the bread and wine which has been consecrated (blessed) is truly the Body and Blood of Christ.

In 1 Corinthians 11:27-29 Paul says that whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup in an unworthy manner is guilty of sinning against the Body and Blood of Christ, therefore a person should examine himself, and so eat the bread and drink the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the Body and Blood eats and drinks judgement on himself. This text shows us that present in the bread and wine is both true physical bread and wine and at the same time the Real Presence of Christ’s Body and Blood.

This text also makes it clear that he who does not discern the Real Presence of Christ’s Body and Blood in the bread and the wine, eats and drinks judgement upon himself.

For he who does not discern the Body and the Blood eats and drink in an unworthy manner and is guilty of sinning against the Lord’s Body and Blood.

Hebrews 10:29 tells us that those who profane the Blood of the Covenant which by they were sanctified will suffer a horrible punishment. This Blood of the Covenant, is the Blood of Christ (Matt. 26:28, Mark 14:24, Luke 22:20, 1 Cor. 11:25).

Holy Communion is meant for those who believe the Words of Christ “this is My Body... this is My Blood.” Those who do not believe in the Real Presence of Christ’s Body and Blood in the bread and the wine are guilty of sinning against the Lord’s Body and Blood and will suffer a horrible punishment. For, those who do not discern the Body and Blood of Christ in the bread and wine are guilty of sinning against the Body and Blood of the Lord, and they eat and drink the Holy Communion to their judgement.

Therefore, in order that they do not eat and drink judgement upon themselves the Sacrament of Holy Communion should not be given to those who do not believe in the Real Presence.

3. Are unable to discern the Real Presence of Christ’s Body and Blood in the Sacrament:

Since one must believe the words “this is My Body... this is My Blood” (Matt. 26:26-28, Mark 14:22-24, Luke 22:19-20, 1 Cor. 11:24-25) and since one must be able to discern the Body and Blood of Christ (1 Cor. 11:29), then all those who are unable to comprehend or discern the Real Presence are not to be admitted to the altar.

In 1 Corinthians 11:28 Paul says that a person must first examine themselves and then they may eat the bread and drink the wine of Holy Communion.

A person must be able to examine themselves to see if they believe the Words of Christ. Those who are unable to examine themselves and are unable to believe the Words of Christ “this is My Body... this is My Blood,” are unable to discern the Lord’s Body and Blood.

The Scriptures warn us that those who do not discern the Body of Christ eat and drink judgement upon themselves (1 Cor. 11:29). The Scriptures tell us that they eat and drink the Holy Communion in an unworthy manner and are guilty of sinning against the Body and Blood of the Lord (1 Cor. 11:27). The Scriptures warn us that those who profane the Blood of the Covenant will receive a horrible punishment (Heb. 10:29).

Therefore, to knowingly give Holy Communion to those who are unable to discern the Real Presence of the Body and Blood of Christ in the bread and the wine is to knowingly allow the communicant to eat and drink judgement upon themselves.

Pastors, as the Stewards of the Mysteries of God (Word and Sacrament)(1 Cor. 4:1, Titus 1:7), are responsible for withholding Holy Communion from those who are unable to discern the Body and Blood, lest they eat and drink to their damnation.

4. Deny that the Sacrament of Holy Communion grants the forgiveness of sins:

Holy Communion is given for the forgiveness of sins (Matt. 26:28). Those who deny that the Sacrament of Holy Communion is able to grant the forgiveness of sins deny the Words of Christ, and eat and drink the Sacrament in an unworthy manner.

Those who eat and drink Holy Communion in an unworthy manner are guilty of sinning against the Lord's Body and Blood and they eat and drink judgement upon themselves (1 Cor. 11:27-29).

Those who do not believe that Holy Communion can grant the forgiveness of sins should not be admitted to Holy Communion.

5. Are unrepentant:

Holy Communion is given for the forgiveness of sins (Matt. 26:28), and should only be given to those who are repentant and desire the forgiveness of their sins.

In 1 Corinthians 5:11-13 Paul tells us to not associate with Christian brothers (and sisters) who lives in open unrepented sins (e.g. sexual immorality, greed, idolatry, abusive behaviour, drunkenness, extortion). We are not eat with such a one but to expel the wicked person from our midst.

In Matthew 18:15-17 Jesus advises us how the Church is to deal with unrepentant sinners. First we are to approach the sinner one on one in order to bring them to repentance. If this fails, we are to take with us a witness. If this fails, then we are to bring them before the whole congregation. If the sinner continues to refuse repentance, then we are to expel them from our midst.

In Matthew 5:23-24 Jesus tells us that when you come to the altar, if you remember that your brother has something against you, leave at once and first be reconciled with your brother, and then return to the altar.

In Matthew 7:6 Jesus commands us to not give dogs what is holy, and not to throw our pearls before pigs, and in Revelation 22:15 "the dogs" are defined as those who are outside of the fellowship of believers due to unrepentant sin, among the list are sorcerers, the sexually immoral, murderers, idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.

1 Corinthians 6:9-10, St. Paul says that the unrighteous will not inherit the Kingdom of God, among the list are the sexually immoral, idolaters, adulterers, homosexuals (both the active and receptive partner), thieves, the greedy, drunkards, revilers, and swindlers. Verse 11 goes on to say that "such were some of you," but you were washed, sanctified and justified in the name of Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of God, thus, stating that there were some who had lived a life of sin but had repented and been redeemed. Therefore, only those who are unrepentant and continue to live a life of sin will not inherit the Kingdom of God.

Jesus urged people to repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand (Matt. 4:17, Mark 1:15) and He warned us to repent or perish (Luke 13:3,5).

Those who live in open unrepentant sin are not to be admitted to Holy Communion, instead they are to be expelled from the Church, we are not associate with them or to eat with them.

6. Are unforgiving:

Holy Communion is given for the forgiveness of sins (Matt. 26:28).

The Scriptures urge us to forgive the sins of others as God has forgiven us (Eph. 4:32, Col.3:13). And in the Lord's Prayer we ask God to forgive us our sins, as we forgive the sins of those who sin against us (Matt. 6:12, Luke 11:4).

In Matthew 6:15 Jesus warns us that if we do not forgive the sins of others, neither will our Father in Heaven forgive us our sins. (See: the narrative of the unmerciful Servant, Matt. 18:21-35)

If one does not forgive the sins of others they cannot expect to receive the forgiveness of sins at Holy Communion. Those who are not willing to forgive their neighbour are guilty of drinking unworthily of the Lord's Supper and should not be admitted to Holy Communion.

7. Are unable to examine themselves:

In 1 Corinthians 11:28 Paul tells us that a person should first examine themselves and then they should eat and drink the Lord's Supper.

Self-examination is not done to achieve some higher level of piety or morality, but to maintain a right attitude to and reception of Holy Communion.

In 2 Corinthians 13:5 Paul tells us to examine ourselves to see whether we are in the faith. Before partaking of Holy Communion a person should prepare themselves by a self-examination to see whether they are in the faith. Therefore, they should examine themselves to see whether they believe the Words of Christ "This is My body, which is given for you...This is My Blood of the New Covenant which is shed for you, for the forgiveness of sins."

Holy Communion is only to be given to those who believe the Word of Institution and hence believe both that they receive the true Body and Blood of Christ in the Lord's Supper and that Christ gives them this priceless gift for the forgiveness of their sins.

Therefore, a person should examine themselves to see whether:

- He believes that Christ's physical Body and Blood are present together in, with and under the bread and wine that he eats and drinks. (1 Cor. 11:29)
- He is truly repentant of his sins and desires the forgiveness of his sins. (Matt. 4:17, Mark 1:15, Luke 13:3,5)
- He believes in Jesus Christ as his Saviour and that the Sacrament of Holy Communion grants the forgiveness of his sins. (Matt. 26:28)
- He sincerely and earnestly desires to, with the help of the Holy Spirit, amend his sinful life. (John 5:14, 8:11, Rom. 6:1-2)
- He believes that the Sacrament is given for him. (Luke 22:19-20, 1 Cor. 11:24)
- He seeks true unity with the Body of Christ (Church). (1 Cor. 10:17)

Before a person can partake of the Holy Communion he should first examine himself.

However, a person should not think that through self-examination they become worthy of partaking of the Holy Communion, nor should they think that their self-examination raises their own level of holiness before God. On the contrary, for the one who is worthy of the Holy Communion is one who recognises their own unworthiness, and seeks the Sacrament in faith and humility to receive the grace of God and the forgiveness of their sins. For, Christ came not to save the righteous but to save sinners (Matt. 9:13, Mark 2:17, Luke 5:31-32).

Therefore, a person is to examine himself, not to find his worthiness for the Sacrament, but to find his unworthiness. Let him examine himself and find his unworthiness, that he may see his need for a Saviour, and in doing so may have a desire to receive the forgiveness of his sins.

In the same way that a person who is unable to discern the Real Presence of Christ's Body and Blood in the bread and the wine should not be admitted to Holy Communion, so too those who are unable to examine themselves should also not be admitted to Holy Communion.

For a person should examine themselves first and then they should be allowed to eat and drink of the Holy Communion. Therefore, infants, the sleeping, the unconscious and the comatose, the dying who are deprived of the use of their senses, and the insane or possessed while they are not in their right mind, should not be admitted to Holy Communion.

8. Publically hold to a heterodox confession of faith:

The Scriptures warn us not to listen to those who teach falsely (Deut. 13:1-3, Matt. 24:23-24, Acts 20:30-31). We are told to mark and avoid those who confess false teachings (Matt. 7:15, Rom. 16:17-18, Gal. 1:8-9, 1 Tim. 6:20, 2 Tim. 3:1-5, Tit. 3:10-11). We are told to have nothing to do with them, not to associate with them, and not even to eat with them (1 Cor. 5:11-13, 2 Thess. 3:14, 2 John 1:10, cf. Num. 16:26-27). Those who hold to different confessions of faith are not to commune together, as Paul says "do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with dark? What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? What agreement has the Temple of God with idols?" (2 Cor. 6:14-16a)

Instead those who commune together should be of one confession of faith (Acts 4:32, 1 Cor. 1:10, 12:25, Phil. 2:2).

The Scriptures warn us not to eat with those who teaching falsely or live in error (1 Cor. 5:11). This is speaking of Table Fellowship, which refers to Table of the Lord (1 Cor. 10:21). Those who publically hold to a heterodox confession of faith are not to be admitted to Holy Communion. For, in Matthew 7:6 Jesus commands us to not give dogs what is holy, and not to throw our pearls before pigs, and in Revelation 22:15 "the dogs" are defined as those who are outside of the fellowship of believers due to unrepentant sin, including those who practice falsehood.

If a person privately or inwardly holds to a heterodox faith but publically holds to an orthodox faith then they may be permitted to come to Holy Communion. For, God alone knows the true heart of man (1 Sam. 16:7, 1 Kings 8:39, 1 Chron. 28:9, Psalm 44:21, 139:23, Jer. 17:10, Matt. 6:4, Acts 1:24, Rom. 8:27, 1 Cor. 2:11, Rev 2:23), and the pastor, as the Steward of the Ministries of God (1 Cor. 4:1), can only make judgements based on the outward confession of the communicant (1 Sam. 16:7).

If a person outwardly holds to an orthodox confession of faith but inwardly holds to a heterodox confession of faith, then he is a liar and he eats and drinks the Body and Blood of Christ to his judgement (1 Cor. 11:27-29). And he is guilty of sinning against the body and blood of Christ, for a person must not only confess with their mouth but believe in heart (Rom. 10:9-10).

If a person privately or inwardly holds to an orthodox faith but publically holds to a heterodox faith, then he is not to be admitted to Holy Communion. For the pastor can only make judgements based on the outward confession of the communicant (1 Sam. 16:7). And a pastor is not to knowingly give Holy Communion to those of a heterodox confession of faith. For, if the pastor were to admit them to the altar then he would be approving of their false teachings. John warns us not to welcome those who hold to a heterodox confession of faith, for whoever welcomes a false teacher partakes in his sin (2 John 1:10-11). And as Paul warns us, we are not to partake in the sins of others (1 Tim. 5:22).

9. Belong to an heterodox church body:

Those who belong to a heterodox church body and commune at the altar of said body, even if their private confession is orthodox, publically hold to a heterodox confession of faith. For, when you commune at that altar you partake of that altar (1 Cor. 10:18). And those who associate without false teachers, partake in their error (2 John 1:11, cf. Num. 16:26-27).

Those who partake of the same altar are yoked together in their public confession. Paul urges Christians “do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with dark? What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? What agreement has the Temple of God with idols?” (2 Cor. 6:14-16a) We are not to yoke ourselves in fellowship to those who teach contrary to the Word of God, instead we are told to mark and avoid them (Deut. 13:1-3, Matt. 7:15, 24:23-24, Acts 20:30-31, Rom. 16:17-18, 1 Cor. 5:11-13, Gal. 1:8-9, 2 Thess. 3:14, 1 Tim. 6:20, 2 Tim. 3:1-5, Tit. 3:10-11, 2 John 1:10-11).

If heterodox teaching continues in a church body, then the church may become the synagogue of Satan (Rev. 2:9), and the Lord’s Supper will become a sacrifice to idols (Rev. 2:20). Those who partake of this church body’s Communion, are partaking in that church body’s false teaching. For, those who eat at that altar partake of that altar (1 Cor. 10:18) and as Paul says you cannot partake in the Table of the Lord and the Table of Demons (1 Cor. 10:21).

You cannot partake of Communion at both an orthodox altar and a heterodox altar (1 Cor. 10:21), for the altar is a public confession of faith (1 Cor. 11:26), and a person cannot hold to two conflicting confessions of faith (Heb. 10:23). Instead those who commune together should be of one confession of faith (Acts 4:32, 1 Cor. 1:10, 12:25, Phil. 2:2).

The Scriptures consider it a bad thing when there is divisions among those who commune together (1 Cor. 11:18).

If your private confession is orthodox but you commune at a heterodox altar than your public confession is a heterodox confession of faith. For, the altar you partake from is the confession that you make (1 Cor. 10:18, 11:26).

Those you eat with makes a public confession as to who you agree with (Matt. 9:10-11, Mark 2:16, Luke 5:29-30). Altar Fellowship is Church Fellowship (Acts 2:42, 1 Cor. 10:16-18, 11:18).

Scriptures warn us not to eat with those who teach falsely or live in error (1 Cor. 5:11). This is speaking of Table Fellowship, which refers to Table of the Lord (1 Cor.

10:21). Those who you eat with, declares to the world who you associate with (Matt. 9:10-11, Mark 2:16, Luke 5:29-30, Gal. 2:12-13). This principle applies not only to the meal table but to the Lord's Table. Those whom you commune with makes a public declaration as to whom you associate with. As John says, those who associate with false teachers partake in their sin (2 John 1:11), and as Paul warns us, we are not to partake in the sins of others (1 Tim. 5:22).

In Numbers during the Rebellion of Korah, God warns the people to depart from Korah and his men, and not to associate with them lest they also be swept away with all their sins (Num. 16:26). Here God warns that those who associated with Korah partook of his sins and would thus partake in his punishment. So the people moved away from Korah and his men and separated themselves from his wickedness (Num. 16:27).

The Book of Revelation says concerning heterodox church bodies, "come out of her, my people, lest you partake in her sins, lest you share in her plagues." (Rev. 18:4) (See also: 2 Cor. 6:17, Isa. 52:11)

Fellowship in the Lord's Supper is certainly fellowship in faith. It is self-evident that members of heterodox churches must sever their connection with the heterodox body before they may commune with our congregations.

10. Belong to another faith:

Those who commune together should be of one mind and confession (Acts 4:32, 1 Cor. 1:10, 12:25, Phil. 2:2).

The Lord's Supper is for those who belong to the Body of Christ, for the bread we break is a communion with the body of Christ, and there is one bread, and we who partake of the one bread belong to the one Body (1 Cor. 10:16-17).

Holy Communion is only for those who belong to the Church of God (Acts 2:42,46, 1 Cor. 11:18).

We are not to be "yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with dark? What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? What agreement has the Temple of God with idols?" (2 Cor. 6:14-16a)

It is not possible to belong to another faith and to also receive Holy Communion, for, one cannot partake of the Table of Demons and the Table of the Lord (1 Cor. 10:21). For there is one Lord and one faith (Eph. 4:5) and only one Name by which men can be saved (Acts 4:12). For, Christ alone is the Way, the Truth and the Life, and no one can be saved except through Him (John 14:6).

Appendix: Preparation for Holy Communion

In 1 Corinthians 11:28 St. Paul says, “*Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup.*” And in 1 Corinthians 13:5a St. Paul says, “*Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves...*”

In order to assist a communicant with a proper self-examination and preparation for Holy Communion we suggest the following:

Martin Luther’s Christian Questions with Their Answers

1. Do you believe that you are a sinner?

Answer: Yes, I believe it. I am a sinner.

2. How do you know this?

Answer: From the Ten Commandments, which I have not kept.

3. Are you sorry for your sins?

Answer: Yes, I am sorry that I have sinned against God.

4. What have you deserved from God because of your sins?

Answer: His wrath and displeasure, temporal death, and eternal damnation. (**Romans 6:21,23**)

5. Do you hope to be saved?

Answer: Yes, that is my hope.

6. In whom then do you trust?

Answer: In my dear Lord Jesus Christ.

7. Who is Christ?

Answer: The Son of God, true God and man.

8. How many Gods are there?

Answer: Only one, but there are three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

9. What has Christ done for you that you trust in Him?

Answer: He died for me and shed His blood for me on the cross for the forgiveness of sins.

10. Did the Father also die for you?

Answer: He did not. The Father is God only, as is the Holy Spirit; but the Son is both true God and true man. He died for me and shed his blood for me.

11. How do you know this?

Answer: From the Holy Gospel, from the words instituting the Sacrament, and by His body and blood given me as a pledge in the Sacrament.

12. What are the Words of Institution?

Answer: “Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night when He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it, and gave it to His disciples and said, ‘Take, eat, this is My body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of Me.’ In the same way after the supper He took the cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them and said, “Take, drink of it all of you. This cup is the New Covenant in My blood, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.”

13. Do you believe, then, that the true body and blood of Christ are in the Sacrament?

Answer: Yes, I believe it.

14. What convinces you to believe this?

Answer: The Word of Christ: Take, eat, this is My body; drink of it, all of you, this is My blood.

15. What should we do when we eat His body and drink His blood, and in this way receive His pledge?

Answer: We should remember and proclaim His death and the shedding of His blood, as He taught us: Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.

16. Why should we remember and proclaim His death?

Answer: First, so that we may learn to believe that no creature could make satisfaction for our sins. Only Christ, true God and man, could do that. Second, so we may learn to be horrified by our sins, and to regard them as very serious. Third, so we may find joy and comfort in Christ alone, and through faith in Him be saved.

17. What motivated Christ to die and make full payment for your sins?

Answer: His great love for His Father and for me and other sinners, as it is written in John 14; Romans 5; Galatians 2 and Ephesians 5.

18. Finally, why do you wish to go to the Sacrament?

Answer: That I may learn to believe that Christ, out of great love, died for my sin, and also learn from Him to love God and my neighbour.

19. What should admonish and encourage a Christian to receive the Sacrament frequently?

Answer: First, in respect to God, both the command and the promise of Christ the Lord. Second, in respect to himself, the trouble that lies heavily upon him, on account of which the command, encouragement, and promise are given.

20. But what should you do if you are not aware of this need and have no hunger and thirst for the Sacrament?

Answer: To such a person no better advice can be given than this: first, he should touch his body to see if he still has flesh and blood. Then he should believe what the Scriptures say of it in Galatians 5 and Romans 7. Second, he should look around to see whether he is still in the world, and remember that there will be no lack of sin and trouble, as the Scriptures say in John 15-16 and in 1 John 2 and 5. Third, he will certainly have the devil also around him, who with his lying and murdering day and night will let him have no peace, within or without, as the Scriptures picture him in John 8 and 16; 1 Peter 5; Ephesians 6; and 2 Timothy 2.