

IMMANUEL MONTHLY

November 1, 2011

“Advent will begin Immanuel’s practice of offering the Lord’s Supper every Sunday.”



From Pastor’s Desk Why Not Every Week? I’m Glad You Asked!

By Rev. Jason M. Braaten

The blessings of the Holy Communion are inexhaustible. We know from the Small Catechism that we receive the forgiveness of sins there. And where there is the forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation. This is no small matter. And even with just these three blessings, we have an abundant treasure for sinners who daily sin much and are in need of forgiveness, life, and salvation.

But there’s a whole lot more going on in the Holy Communion than that. Let’s take a look.

Heaven on Earth, Christ in the Flesh

In the Lord’s Supper, heaven descends to earth, and this makes us partakers of heaven even now while we’re on earth. In fact, we enter into heaven on earth itself by means of the Lord’s Supper (Heb.

10:19–22). We not only anticipate the blessed future in heaven, but we participate in the eternal worship of heaven in heaven, just as John envisioned it in his Revelation (Rev. 1:10; 4:1ff).

Union With Christ: Blessed Exchange and Transforming Power

God doesn’t give His gift of justification and life from a distance. He becomes man. In the Holy Communion, Christ nourishes us with His body and blood, continuing to unite Himself to us and with us. In this union, Jesus takes what is ours and gives us what is His. It is a blessed exchange. Luther puts it this way, “For Christ and I are being baked into each other in such a way that my sins and death become His and His righteousness and life become my own.” Thus, at the Lord’s Supper, your self-centeredness

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becomes Christ's. His self-sacrifice becomes yours. Your untamed tongue becomes His. His peace-bestowing tongue becomes yours. Your rebellion becomes His; His obedience becomes yours. Your worry becomes His; His perfect trust becomes yours. So, Luther continues, "when we eat Christ's flesh physically and spiritually, the food is so powerful that it transforms us into itself and out of fleshly, sinful, mortal men makes spiritual, holy, living men."

Holiness From the Holy of Holies

God communicates His holiness physically with His people through holy things. In the Old Testament, God made and kept His people holy by meeting with them in the daily service at the tabernacle (Ex. 29:43). Their holiness depended on Him and their association with Him at the tabernacle. His holiness was never their possession apart from Him. It was always received anew from Him like nourishment for the body from food through their involvement at the tabernacle. This is true now too. By receiving the Lord's Supper, we receive the most holy body and blood of the risen Christ. Contact with that most holy flesh makes and keeps us holy (Heb. 10:10). In this way, we come to share more and more in God's life-giving holiness.

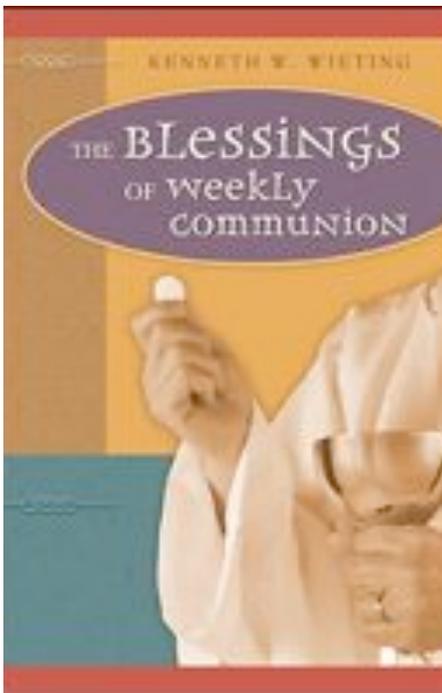
The Communion of Saints

It's not just individual. At the Lord's Supper, we're joined to the risen Jesus and everyone else He is joined to: past, present, and future (Heb. 12:22-24). The Church is the body of Christ. We make up one spiritual body. The Sacrament of the Altar is the closest meeting point between us and our Lord. You can't get closer than under the roof of our mouths with His holy body and blood. But this also means that the Lord's Supper is also the closest meeting point between us and the body of Christ, His Church, His saints. This includes our loved ones who have died in the faith. They are with Him who comes bodily to feed us. Thus the Holy Communion is also a heavenly family reunion, where we gather with all the company of heaven in the presence of the Holy Trinity.

With this in mind, this Advent will begin Immanuel's practice of offering the Lord's Supper every Sunday. It's not required that you take it, but for those who desire it and the blessings it gives more often than we currently receive it, we will not get in their way.

"It's not required that you take it, but for those who desire it and the blessings it gives more often than we currently receive it, we will not get in their way."

Pastor Braaten



The Book of the Month The Blessings of Weekly Communion

"Pastor, if the Lord's Supper is everything that the Bible and the catechism says it is, then why don't we have the opportunity to receive it when we come for worship each week?"

This one question helped kick off more than a decade of exploration of the "treasure of weekly Communion" by Kenneth Wieting. This book offers the culmination of his research. Here Wieting invites pastors and people to examine the scriptural, confessional, and historical information that supports the practice of weekly Communion. As he traces the practice of a weekly celebration of the Lord's Supper from the early church to its celebration in the

Lutheran Church today, Wieting reflects on how this historic and textual evidence confirms the value of weekly Communion.

The Blessings of Weekly Communion also offers helpful ways to recover the practice of weekly Communion. Wieting shows how preaching the Word prepares for and leads to the celebration of the Lord's Supper in the Divine Service. Each chapter includes discussion questions to help readers reflect and apply the material to their personal and corporate worship.

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From the President Back To Walther!

By Rev. Matthew C. Harrison

“It is always a sign of a deep spiritual sickness when a church forgets its fathers” (Hermann Sasse). Why? Because the life of the Church on this earth is always a forward trajectory informed by, pushed forward by, anchored by the past. Life, and especially the Christian’s life of repentance and faith, is a constant review of events occurred, sin committed, lived, suffered and confessed for forgiveness. What remains of yesterday’s life is not to be a burden. Forgiveness is all about freedom, relieving the burden for the sake of today’s confident trek into the future, all under God’s grace. The eye on the past is a lesson learned for tomorrow. To know where we are going, we’d better have some idea whence we’ve come.

The greatest eras in the Church, the great times of advancement, always begin with the cry, “Back to the Scriptures!” “Back to the fathers!” “Back to Luther!” Note how often God’s faithfulness to our “fathers” is mentioned in the Psalms as a comfort to give courage in the present. “In



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You our fathers trusted. They trusted and You delivered them” (Ps. 22:4). Hilkiah found the lost Book of the Law (Deuteronomy?), and good King Josiah commenced a time of repentance and restoration (2 Kings 22).

Jesus anchored His ministry in the ancient prophets: “Today this scripture [Isaiah] is fulfilled in your hearing” (Luke 4:21). The ancient words of the Fathers were on the lips

of Jesus at all the decisive moments of His life sacrificed for us: “My God, My God! Why . . .” (Ps. 22:1; Matt. 27:46). John the Baptizer was the “voice crying in the wilderness” spoken of by Isaiah (Matt. 3:3; Is. 40:3). Luther’s message was “Back to the Scriptures!” and an explosion of fidelity to and understanding of the pure Gospel commenced. The greatest forward advancement of the Gospel has always begun with the cry,

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“Back to the Scriptures! Back to the fathers!”

C. F. W. Walther was a reformer in this tradition. *“Gottes Wort und Luthers Lehr, vergehet nun und nimmermehr!”* (“God’s Word and Luther’s doctrine shall not pass away now or forever!”) That’s the statement Walther put on the masthead of his newspaper, *Der Lutheraner* (“The Lutheran”) already in 1844.

The ravages of the Enlightenment had reached a low point in the German church just as Walther left Germany with a strange and even fanatic expedition bound for failure. But out of the wreckage, Walther was thrown upon Scripture, the Lutheran Confessions and the writings of Luther. “Back to Luther!” And from the ruins of failure came new life, new beginnings. “When God makes alive He does it by killing” (Luther’s Works, v. 33, p. 62). The result was this Missouri Synod.

By God’s grace, and a lot of help from other faithful men and women, Walther founded a church in 1847 squarely and firmly upon the sacred and inerrant Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions with a conviction that Luther got the Gospel right. Sasse once pointed out that largely because of the tenacity of Walther and the Missouri Synod, all of American Lutheranism had formally accepted the entire Book of Concord by the 400th anniversary of the Reformation in 1917.

We’ve wavered now and then. But the foundation was built so well that today, 164 years later despite all our many weaknesses and faults the LCMS remains committed to the same confession of faith because it’s true.

As we push forward under the grace of God, let’s recheck our foundation this 200th anniversary of C. F. W. Walther’s birth. If we fail to understand Walther and our roots, what we build today may well squander what was given us by our fathers. And what we build today may look ever so marvelous and 21st-century-sleek, but soon may be frayed and flapping in the wind with no enduring basis.

“Forward” I say! And that means back to Walther! And Walther will tell us, “Back to Scripture! Back to the Lutheran Confessions! Back to Luther!”

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Education Corner

What Makes Faith Stick During College?

For many Christian church youth group graduates, the transition to college is rocky at best in terms of faith retention. Previous studies indicate that 40 percent to 50 percent of all youth group graduates fail to stick with their faith or connect with a faith community after high school.

To unearth why that is and what can be done to help students develop a faith that doesn't just survive but thrives over the long haul, FYI paired interviews of youth group graduates with a longitudinal study of approximately 500 youth group graduates during their first three years in college. Based on this research, FYI has unveiled three surprising and counterintuitive findings with enormous ramifications for the long-term faith development of teenagers and young adults in the United States:

1. While churches across the U.S. have tended to allocate financial and personnel resources toward building strong and dynamic youth groups, teenagers also need to rub shoulders

and build relationships with adults of all ages.

Churches and families commonly assume that involving teenagers in various youth group and peer activities is the key to vibrant spirituality. Testing this premise, FYI assessed the relationship between teenagers' faith maturity and their participation in a number of church and youth group activities, including small groups, short-term missions, and Sunday School. Contrary to what is widely assumed, more than any other participation variable measured in the Sticky Faith study, students' participation in all-church worship during high school was consistently linked with developing a mature faith in both high school and college.

Rather than only attending their own Sunday School classes, worship services, small groups, and service activities, young people appear to benefit from intergenerational activities and venues that remove the walls (whether literal or metaphorical) separating the generations. Churches and families wanting to instill deep faith in youth should help them

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“... three surprising and counterintuitive findings with enormous ramifications for the long-term faith development of teenagers and young adults in the United States”



build a web of relationships with committed and caring adults, some of whom may serve as intentional mentors.

2. Churches and families think youth group graduates are ready for the struggles ahead, despite the students themselves feeling unprepared and challenged by everything from loneliness to difficulty finding a new church.

Only one in seven high school seniors report feeling prepared to face the challenges of college life. Few students seem ready for the intensity of the college experience and the perfect storm of loneliness, the search for new friends, being completely on their own for the first time, and the sudden availability of a lot of partying. One pervasive struggle for college students is finding a new church, as evident by the 40 percent of college freshman who report difficulty doing so. Young believers' need for greater preparation is heightened by the powerful influence of their initial post-high school decisions. Young people retrospectively report that the first two weeks of their college freshman year set the trajectory for their remaining years in school.

Given both the importance of those first days at college, as well as the widespread lack of preparation, parents and leaders should consider talking earlier and more frequently about college while students are still in high school. Comprehensive preparation should include helping new college students develop a plan for the first two weeks complete with church attendance, as well as an investigation of ministries and churches near the college setting that can offer a transitional lifeline.

3. While teaching young people the “dos” and “don’ts” of Christian living is important, an overemphasis on behaviors can sabotage their faith long-term.

When asked what it means to be Christian, one-third of subjects as college juniors (all of whom were youth group graduates) failed to mention “Jesus” or “Christ” but rather emphasized behaviors. This and a few related findings suggest that students tend to view the gospel as a “do” and “don’t” list of behaviors instead of a faith that also transforms interior lives and beliefs. “Jesus Jacket” is the phrase the FYI team coined to describe how student respondents frequently view their faith. In other words, they hold the perception that faith hasn’t changed them internally but is more like a jacket they wear when they feel like practicing certain behaviors. One of the dangers of reducing Christianity to this sort of external behavior is that when college students fail to live up to the activities

they think define Christianity, their feelings of guilt can make them quick to toss the jacket aside and abandon their faith altogether.

Parents and leaders eager to build Sticky Faith in youth need to exemplify and explain that while particular behaviors and practices are part of the faith, the focus is on trusting (not just obeying) Christ along with explaining how he leads, guides, and changes us from the inside. In particular, young people better navigate their faith journey when adults share the challenges of their own spiritual paths—complete with past and present ups, downs, and turning points.

Commentary on the Findings

Dr. Kara Powell, executive director of the Fuller Youth Institute, expressed both concern over the faith trajectories of youth group graduates as well as optimism about the potential of the research findings to transform youth, families, and churches. “As many churches and denominations experience decline, and as anxious parents wonder about their children’s futures, this Sticky Faith research has the power to spark a movement that not only changes youth, but also families and churches. Throughout the research, we’ve been sharing preliminary results and are impressed with the powerful changes families and churches have already been able to make by incorporating the findings,” Dr. Powell says.

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Facts and Figures; Dates and Times

Greeters List

6 Nov Ruth Sims – West
Laverl Byers – East
13 Nov Becky Kappes – West
Tim & Teri Pollock – East
20 Nov Harold & Irene Wattjes – West
Donna & Gunnar Campbell – East
27 Nov Jim Dyer – West
Joan Vukelich – East
4 Dec Laverl Byers – West
Becky Kappes – East
11 Dec Tim & Teri Pollock – West
Harold & Irene Wattjes – East
18 Dec Donna & Gunnar Campbell – West
Jim Dyer – East
25 Dec Joan Vukelich – West
Laverl Byers – East

Coffee Committee

Nov Jerry & Joyce Alexander
Dec Pastor & Lauren Braaten

Altar Committee

Nov Ann Hilgendorf & Carol Munson
Dec Ann Carroll, Holly Wikoff,
Sherrie Hoel & Tonia Timlin

Bi-Monthly Missions

2 Oct LWML
4 Dec Christmas Bureau

Elder On Duty – Communion

3 Jul Dave Slaughter
17 Jul Greg Nau
31 Jul Greg Nau
7 Aug Greg Nau
21 Aug Geof Danielson
4 Sep Geof Danielson
18 Sep Geof Danielson
2 Oct Jack Appleby
16 Oct Jack Appleby
30 Oct Jack Appleby
6 Nov Dave Slaughter
20 Nov Dave Slaughter
23 Nov Dave Slaughter
4 Dec Greg Nau
11 Dec Greg Nau
18 Dec Greg Nau
24 Dec Geof Danielson
25 Dec Geof Danielson
31 Dec Geof Danielson

ATTENDANCE			OFFERINGS		
Date	Saturday	Sunday	General	Missions	Building
2 Oct	17	84	\$2,433.80	\$10.00	\$10.00
9 Oct	25	86	\$3,031.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
16 Oct	21	81	\$2,008.56	\$0.00	\$0.00
23 Oct	18	79	\$1,573.50	\$0.00	\$0.00
30 Oct	20	79	\$2,961.50	\$0.00	\$0.00
Subtotal	101	409	\$12,008.36	\$10.00	\$10.00
Total	510		\$12,008.36	\$10.00	\$10.00

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Immanuel's stained glass window in the Narthex.