

First Communion & Confirmation Practice at Advent Evangelical Lutheran Church

On the night in which He was betrayed, our Lord Jesus Christ instituted the Holy Supper of His body and blood for His Church to eat and drink. In the Lord's Supper Christ promises the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. Holy Communion is purest Gospel: there is nothing we can do to earn or merit this great and precious gift. However, St. Paul warns that the Supper can be taken to one's harm:

Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. (1 Corinthians 11:27-30)

Therefore, no one should be admitted to the Lord's table who is without faith or who has a wrong understanding of the Supper. But remembering that the Supper is Christ's gift, we do not desire to withhold from those who are repentant (able to know and be sorry for their sins) and know the basics of the Christian faith, as in the Small Catechism. Rather we should desire that all would be taught and encouraged toward receiving the Lord's Supper.

It was with this scriptural basis that the earliest Lutherans did not assign a specific age for reception of the body and blood of Christ, but rather left it to the parents (those responsible for the teaching the child the faith) and the pastors (those charged by Christ as stewards of the mysteries of God called to teach the flock) to decide when a child had an right understanding of the faith and a desire for the forgiveness of sins found in the Supper.

At Advent Evangelical Lutheran Church, our practice until now has been that no member can receive the Lord's Supper until they are confirmed at 8th grade, which sets an *age/grade* limit. This is a man-made ordinance and not from Scripture. Confirmation is a man-made rite (actually from the Roman Catholic church which made Confirmation an additional Sacrament) that in recent times has come to be a "rite of passage" or becoming an adult member that can serve, volunteer, and support the church.

In light of the Word of God, and with more LCMS congregations moving toward an earlier age for first communion, the Elders and Pastors have studied, researched, and discussed the history and practice of first communion and confirmation, and have reached the conclusion that children who are ready should be admitted to the Lord's Table to receive the forgiveness of their sins and strengthening of their faith as they enter the increasingly complex world of middle school, junior high, etc.

Our new practice is as follows:

First Communion, a public rite of the church that follows Scriptural requirements for the public reception of the Lord's Supper, will be given to members (regardless of age) who meet the following requirements:

1. Request it and desire it (presented by parents if under 18 years of age)
2. Are able to examine themselves (contrition), turn from their sins (repentance) and desire the Sacrament for forgiveness of sins (faith). They should also have a basic knowledge and understanding of the Small Catechism (see Rite of Examination document from Pastors).
3. Have been examined by the Pastors.

The children thus admitted shall be encouraged (with the rest of the body of Christ) to continue in the instruction of the faith. As all members should be encouraged to do, those communing before the 8th grade year should seek to speak with the pastor *when visiting another LCMS congregation sharing our confession* prior to assuming the privilege of approaching the Altar.

Confirmation, a public rite of the church that is man-made and designed to recognize a coming of age and status as a future adult member in the church, will take place after the successful completion of at least two consecutive years of Confirmation Instruction, which may begin as early as 5th Grade but should start no later than 7th Grade. Parents are encouraged to evaluate the faith and knowledge of their child(ren) and decide the appropriate path and timeliness for the proper reception of First Communion and Confirmation (with consultation from the Pastors).

Adult Instruction for First Communion & Confirmation will handled on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of the Pastors.

Summary of Requirements for First Communion at Advent Evangelical Lutheran Church

1. Request it and desire it (presented by parents if under 18 years of age)
2. Are able to examine themselves (contrition), turn from their sins (repentance) and desire the Sacrament for forgiveness of sins (faith). They should also have a basic knowledge and understanding of the Small Catechism (see Rite of Examination document from Pastors).

Learn by Heart (memorize)

- a. The Ten Commandments
 - b. Exodus 20:5-6
 - c. The Apostles' Creed
 - d. Words of Institution
 - e. The Lord's Prayer
 - f. Matthew 28:19
 - g. Mark 16:16
 - h. John 20:22-23
3. Must be examined by the Pastors.
 4. Promise to complete (2) years of Catechism Classes leading towards Confirmation.

Summary of Requirements for Youth Confirmation at Advent Evangelical Lutheran Church

1. Completion of (2) years of Catechism Classes taught by Pastor(s) during 5th-8th Grade years.
2. Must be 6th Grade or older to be confirmed.
3. If the Youth has not yet completed the Rite of First Communion Prior to Confirmation, must be able to examine themselves (contrition), turn from their sins (repentance) and desire the Sacrament for forgiveness of sins (faith).
4. Have an in-depth knowledge and understanding of the Small Catechism.

Learn by Heart (memorize)

- a. The Ten Commandments with meanings
 - b. The Creed with meanings
 - d. The Lord's Prayer with meanings
 - e. The Sacrament of Holy Baptism with meanings
 - f. Confession with meanings
 - g. The Sacrament of the Altar with meanings
 - h. Daily Prayers
5. Be prepared and mature enough to make a life-long pledge of fidelity to our confession of faith.
 6. Must be examined and approved by the Pastors.

First Communion Examination Questions and Answers

Do you know the Ten Commandments?

What are they?

You shall have no other gods.

You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God.

Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.

Honor your father and your mother.

You shall not murder.

You shall not commit adultery.

You shall not steal.

You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor. You shall not covet your neighbor's house.

You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

What does God say about all these commandments?

He says: "I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate Me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love Me and keep My commandments" Exodus 20:5-6

Do you believe that you are a sinner?

Yes, I believe it.

How do you know that you are a sinner?

From the Ten Commandments. God's Law shows me my sin.

What do you deserve from God because of your sins?

His wrath and punishment.

Do you also have the certain hope of salvation?

Yes.

Who do you trust in for your salvation?

Jesus Christ.

What has Jesus done for you that you trust in Him?

He died for me and shed His blood for me on the cross for the forgiveness of all my sins.

How do you know that Jesus died for you and shed His blood to save you from your sins?

From the Gospel, from the words of the Lord's Supper, and from the Creed.

Do you know the Apostles' Creed?

How does it go?

I believe in God, the Father Almighty . . .

How many Gods are there?

Only one.

Who is the only true God?

The triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Do you want to receive the Lord's Supper?

Why?

Yes, because...

What does Jesus give you in the Lord's Supper?

He gives me His true body and blood for the forgiveness of all my sins.

Do you believe that Jesus gives you His actual body and blood in the Lord's Supper, or are the bread and wine only symbols and not really Jesus' body and blood?

It is His true body and blood.

What are the words of Jesus that teach you that the Lord's Supper gives you the body and blood of Jesus to eat and to drink?

Take, eat; this is My body, which is given for you.

Drink of it, all of you; this cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.

Does the Lord's Supper strengthen your faith in Jesus?

Yes.

Does it strengthen you to love others as Christ loves you?

Yes.

We should always come to the Lord's Supper confessing our sins and desiring Jesus' body and blood for the forgiveness of our sins and the strengthening of our faith. By receiving the Lord's Supper we learn to trust in Jesus and to live in love for one another.

Do you know the Lord's Prayer?

How does it go?

Our Father who art in heaven...

It is good to pray before and after receiving the Sacrament. In prayer we ask God for faith in what Jesus gives us in the Lord's Supper, and we give thanks for His gifts.

Concerning Holy Baptism, can you finish these words of Jesus? "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations..."

"...baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Matthew 28:19

"Whoever believes ... "

... and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned." Mark 16:16

We live in our Baptism each day when we confess our sins and trust in God's Word of forgiveness for Jesus' sake.

Concerning Confession and the Office of the Keys, can you finish these words of Jesus? "The Lord Jesus breathed on his disciples and said, `Receive the Holy Spirit ... "

... If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven." John 20:22-23

Do you have any questions about receiving the Lord's Supper or confirmation that you would like to ask ?



Acknowledgments

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ADVENT

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN
CHURCH AND SCHOOL
11250 N. Michigan Rd.
Zionsville, IN 46077

317.873.6318

www.adventlutheran.org