



Art: [GRUNEWALD, Matthias](#) *Isenheim Altarpiece* 1515

† **What does it mean to be a member of the one body in Christ?**

“For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body— whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For in fact the body is not one member but many. If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body,” is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body,” is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. And if they were all one member, where would the body be? But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you”; nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unpresentable parts have greater modesty, but our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually. And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way.”

(1 Corinthians 12:12-31) NKJV

† **What is membership?**

† **Is there more than one way of being a member or having membership?**

- ❖ **Birth (born of the flesh) – Ancestors of Adam**
- ❖ **Old Testament covenant of circumcision**
- ❖ **New Testament Rebirth (born from above) – The Sacrament of Holy Baptism**
- ❖ **Marriage**
- ❖ **Confirmation**
- ❖ **Worship**
- ❖ **The Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper**
- ❖ **Death**

What is membership? Whenever one asks a question, it is always good to first look at the definition. Membership, as defined in Merriam Websters Collegiate Dictionary, states, (1) the state or status of being a **member** (2) the body of **members** <an organization with a large *membership*>.

Alright, so what then is a member? Merriam Websters states, a member is (2) one of the individuals composing a group (3) a person baptized or enrolled in a church. Membership is something a member holds either by birth, through the paying of dues, or by rite of passage.

† **Birth (born of the flesh) – Ancestors of Adam**

The first group you became a member of was sinners. When you were conceived in the flesh, that is of your mother's womb, you were a sinner. You inherited sin as a result of Adam's disobedience against God and His Word. This type of sin is known as original sin. You cannot escape it. Moses writes:

“Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, ‘Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’” And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.’ ” Then the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.”

(Genesis 3:1-7)

Original sin is that which is inherited by each man (person) at the point of conception. Original sin is passed to every generation through the father's seed. Every person is born in sin. Dr. Pieper writes:

“Original sin, which is the sin which is not committed but which is inborn in man since Adam's Fall, embraces two things: a) hereditary guilt, the guilt of the one sin of Adam which God imputes to all men; and b) hereditary corruption, which by imputation of Adam's guilt is transmitted to all his descendants through the natural descent from the first fallen pair. The Scripture proof for the original guilt is Rom. 5:18: “By the offense of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation,” and v. 19: “By one man's disobedience many were made sinners.” The Scripture proof for the hereditary corruption, which is transmitted by natural birth, is Ps. 51:5: “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me,” and John 3:6: “That which is born of the flesh is flesh.” The word “flesh” (σάρξ - sarx) here denotes, as the context shows, not merely the body, but the entire sinful man, particularly also the soul, with all its powers and activities. It describes the man who is outside the Kingdom of God and can enter into the Kingdom only by means of regeneration (vv. 3, 5). A parallel passage using the term “flesh” in this sense is Rom. 8:7: “The carnal mind is enmity against God.”

(Pieper, vol. 1: Christian Dogmatics, 538)

When one is born in the flesh, one is a member of humanity and also a member of the sinners.

In the Old Testament, God gave to Abraham the covenant of circumcision to mark the Israelites as members of His holy people.

And God said to Abraham: “As for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. This is My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised; and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you. He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised, every male child in your generations, he who is born in your house or bought with money from any foreigner who is not your descendant. He who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money must be circumcised, and My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. And the uncircumcised male child, who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant.”
(Genesis 17:9-14)

The fulfillment of the old covenant happened when Jesus, God’s only-begotten Son, was circumcised.

And when eight days were completed for the circumcision of the Child, His name was called JESUS, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb. Now when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, “Every male who opens the womb shall be called holy to the LORD”), and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, “A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.”
(Luke 2:21-24)

As part of the rite of circumcision, a name was given to the boy. The name is unique as it gives identity to the child; son of (father’s name). Your name carries with it membership in a family.

I will discuss the eighth day theology of circumcision later when worship is addressed regarding membership.

When one is circumcised, one becomes a member of Israel, God’s chosen nation. He is also given a name, which is identity, within the nation of members. The member is still a sinner.

† **The Rebirth of the sinner in the New Testament – The Sacrament of Holy Baptism**

In the New Testament, Jesus taught Nicodemus about the gift of rebirth. Yes, Baptism is a gift from God who works to save the lost. Let’s review:

There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, “Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.” Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” Jesus answered, “Most

assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit." Nicodemus answered and said to Him, "How can these things be?" Jesus answered and said to him, "Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things? Most assuredly, I say to you, We speak what We know and testify what We have seen, and you do not receive Our witness. If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things? No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God."

(John 3:1-21)

Baptism saves (1 Peter 3:21). Baptism saves the person from sin, death, and the power of the devil. Baptism gives gifts such as forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. Baptism is God's gift which grafts the person into Christ. Baptism creates a "membership" or relationship which is only believed through faith. No fallen man can describe the grafting which God does with the sinner and His Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus explains this relationship through His teaching. Let us hear the Word of the Lord.

"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples. "As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.

(John 15:1-11)

† Marriage as membership

“And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. And the LORD God said, “It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.” Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature, that was its name. So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him. And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. And Adam said: “This is now bone of my bones And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man.” Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”

(Genesis 2:7, 18-24)

Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

(Genesis 1:26-28)

Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma. Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body.

(Ephesians 5:1-2, 22-23)

And He answered and said to them, “Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning ‘made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’ ? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.”

(Matthew 19:4-6)

Marriage is God’s gift to man and woman. He unites. He binds together. He enriches. He sustains. In marriage, man and woman participate in a very unique membership which is only given in marriage; the unity of one flesh through sexual union. The sexual union is God’s gift to the man and the woman when He joins them together in holy matrimony.

† Confirmation as membership

Confirmation is the rite used in the Christian Church after the catechumens have been taught and examined by the pastor. Confirmation is the outward confession of the catechumen of God's gift He gave to them in Holy Baptism. When a catechumen is confirmed in the Christian faith, he/she is then received into membership in the local congregation; membership which admits the newly confirmed to the Sacrament of the Altar or the Lord's Supper. The Rite of Confirmation doesn't usually extend all rights and privileges to the person because of their age. Some rights, such as voting, are withheld until the member reaches adulthood.

† Worship as membership

Worship is the expression of reverence and adoration of God. In the Old Testament, after the Flood, Noah and his family worshiped the Lord. "Then Noah built an altar to the LORD, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar." (*Genesis 8:20*)

Father Abraham built an altar to the Lord and worshiped Him after receiving His blessing and arriving in the land which the Lord promised him and his descendents. "Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your descendants I will give this land." And there he built an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him. And he moved from there to the mountain east of Bethel, and he pitched his tent with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; there he built an altar to the LORD and called on the name of the LORD." (*Genesis 12:7-8*)

The Nation of Israel gathered together in the presence of the Lord and worshiped Him. They gave thanks to Him. They offered their sacrifices to Him. They prayed to Him.

"And it came to pass, when Moses entered the tabernacle, that the pillar of cloud descended and stood at the door of the tabernacle, and the LORD talked with Moses. All the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the tabernacle door, and all the people rose and worshiped, each man in his tent door."
(*Exodus 33:9-10*)

And the LORD said to Moses, "Cut two tablets of stone like the first ones, and I will write on these tablets the words that were on the first tablets which you broke. So be ready in the morning, and come up in the morning to Mount Sinai, and present yourself to Me there on the top of the mountain. And no man shall come up with you, and let no man be seen throughout all the mountain; let neither flocks nor herds feed before that mountain." So he cut two tablets of stone like the first ones. Then Moses rose early in the morning and went up Mount Sinai, as the LORD had commanded him; and he took in his hand the two tablets of stone. Now the LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation." So Moses made haste and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshiped.

(*Exodus 34:1-8*)

On the eighth day, the Lord commanded that the boys be circumcised according to the covenant He made with Abraham. The circumcision was done as part of worship to the Lord. Worship was not only familial but also as community gathered together in the Name of the Lord.

Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak to the children of Israel, saying: ‘If a woman has conceived, and borne a male child, then she shall be unclean seven days; as in the days of her customary impurity she shall be unclean. And on the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised. She shall then continue in the blood of her purification thirty-three days. She shall not touch any hallowed thing, nor come into the sanctuary until the days of her purification are fulfilled. ‘But if she bears a female child, then she shall be unclean two weeks, as in her customary impurity, and she shall continue in the blood of her purification sixty-six days. ‘When the days of her purification are fulfilled, whether for a son or a daughter, she shall bring to the priest a lamb of the first year as a burnt offering, and a young pigeon or a turtledove as a sin offering, to the door of the tabernacle of meeting. Then he shall offer it before the LORD, and make atonement for her. And she shall be clean from the flow of her blood. This is the law for her who has borne a male or a female. ‘And if she is not able to bring a lamb, then she may bring two turtledoves or two young pigeons—one as a burnt offering and the other as a sin offering. So the priest shall make atonement for her, and she will be clean.’ ” *(Leviticus 12)*

In the New Testament, Jesus fulfills all the old covenants and prophecies of the Old Testament. Concerning the covenant of circumcision, Joseph and Mary fulfilled the Law and brought Jesus to the Temple to be circumcised.

From time to time every family visited the temple in Jerusalem. Eight days after a baby boy was born he was circumcised to mark his membership in Israel. Then a month or two later the baby’s mother went to the temple to offer sacrifice (Lv 12; cf. Lk 2:22–24).

In the New Testament, people still worship the Lord God except now, they worship God incarnate in the flesh. They now worship the Son of God and they do it face-to-face.

The men that came from the East, Gentiles they were, members of the unbelievers until now, came to Bethlehem to worship the King of kings. “Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, ‘Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him.’” *(Matthew 2:1-2)*

“And behold, a leper came and worshiped Him, saying, ‘Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.’” *(Matthew 8:2)*

While He spoke these things to them, behold, a ruler came and worshiped Him, saying, “My daughter has just died, but come and lay Your hand on her and she will live.” *(Matthew 9:18)*

After Jesus tested Peter on the sea and rebuked the other disciples for their unbelief, Jesus and Peter got into the boat. “Then those who were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying, “Truly You are the Son of God.” *(Matthew 14:33)*

In John chapter 9, Jesus heals the blind man. This is a beautiful discourse between Jesus and His disciples while Jesus performs a miracle to restore the man's sight. Later, the people brought the man who once was blind to the Pharisees. The man makes confession and bears witness to Jesus when questioned by the Pharisees that Jesus did this healing on the Sabbath. In verse 35, Jesus finds the man after the Pharisees put him out of the synagogue. Jesus asks Him if he believes in the Son of God. After Jesus revealed Himself to the man, he replied, "Then he said, "Lord, I believe!" And he worshiped Him."
(John 9:38)

At His crucifixion, Jesus received the worship of one of the criminals crucified with Him.

"Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, 'If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us.' But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, 'Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong.' Then he said to Jesus, 'Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.' And Jesus said to him, 'Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.'"
(Luke 23:39-43)

The writer to the Hebrews encourages the Christians to gather together to worship the Lord.

"Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching."
(Hebrews 10:19-25)

† **The Sacrament of the Altar as membership**

I will commend you to read the following from the Rev. Dr. A.L. Barry, former President of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.

Fellowship in the Lord's Supper is the basis for the practice of "close" or "closed communion." (The phrases "close communion" and "closed communion" refer to one and the same practice). This pamphlet will help you appreciate, understand and explain to others the practice of close communion.

What does God teach in His Word?

"Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, 'Take and eat; this is my body.' Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.' "(cf. Matt. 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:14-20; 1 Cor. 11:17-29).

"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer" (Acts 2:42).

“Whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes. Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself”(1 Cor.11:26–29).

What does the Lutheran church believe about the Lord’s Supper?

The Lutheran church believes, teaches and confesses that the Lord’s Supper is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, under the bread and wine, given to us Christians to eat and to drink. We hold that the bread and the wine in the Supper are the true body and blood of Christ and that these are given and received into the mouths of all who commune. Those who believe the promise: “Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins,” receive forgiveness of sins, life and salvation. This promise, along with the bodily eating and drinking, is the main thing in the Sacrament.

The Lutheran church rejects and condemns incorrect understandings of the Lord’s Supper, such as the view that the sacrifice of the Mass delivers man from his sins, or that the substance of the consecrated bread and wine is actually changed into the body and blood of Christ. We also reject and condemn the view that in the Lord’s Supper the true body and blood of Christ is not received by the mouth of the communicants, under the bread and wine, but is received only spiritually in the heart by faith, or that the bread and wine are only symbols of the far-distant body and blood of our Lord.

How is the Lord’s Supper an expression of church fellowship?

While the Lord’s Supper is always a personal matter, it is never a private matter. That is an important truth that is often overlooked. Those who commune at the same altar are thereby declaring publically that they are united in the doctrine of the Apostles (Acts 2:42). Therefore, fellowship in the Supper is church fellowship. This is what is taught by Holy Scripture in 1 Cor. 10 and 11. Here is how one of our church’s teachers explained this truth.

“As there is but one bread, one loaf, from which we eat, so we who are eating of this loaf are one body. The eating of one and the same loaf of bread unifies us to one body. Our participation in the Lord’s Supper is a public profession on our part that we are not only in fellowship with Christ, but that we also are in fellowship with those with whom we commune at the Lord’s Table. We all eat the same bread, the body of Christ.

Through that act we indicate that we belong together. All of us Christians who in the Lord’s Supper eat the body of Christ and drink His blood present ourselves as one spiritual family. What we eat and drink together, Christ’s body and blood, ties us together more closely than the bonds of blood. We declare ourselves to be brothers and sisters in Christ. Upon this Bible passage do we base the saying, ‘Altar Fellowship is Church Fellowship.’

“This passage in Corinthians strikes a crushing blow at unionism. To admit those who believe differently to our Communion, and so to our church fellowship, is a contradiction in itself. For those who approach the same altar together profess to be one—one in all points of Christian doctrine and practice—while in reality they disagree. It would be shameful hypocrisy on our part if we would have

those who actually profess a different faith than we do join us at the Lord's Altar"(Stoeckhardt, *I Corinthians*, p.60–61).

Another teacher of our church had this to say about why the Lord's Supper is an expression of church fellowship:

"The Holy Supper is one of the marks, one of the banners of the church, one of the seals of the church's doctrine and faith (Rom.4:11; see 1 Cor.10:21; Ex.12:48). In whichever church one receives the Holy Supper, one is confessing that church and its doctrine. There cannot be a more inward, brotherly fellowship than that into which one enters with those in whose fellowship he receives the holy Supper. . . . Even one who confesses the Real Presence cannot ordinarily, except in the case of death, be admitted if he is and wants to remain, not a member of our orthodox church, but rather a Roman Catholic, Reformed, so-called Evangelical or Unionist, Methodist, Baptist, in short, a member of an erring fellowship. For the Sacrament, as it is a seal of faith, is also the banner of the fellowship in which it is administered" (Walther, *Pastoral Theology*, p.110–111,149).

What is the Lutheran church's motive for practicing close communion?

Our Synod's Commission on Theology and Church Relations offers the following helpful explanation of why we practice close communion:

"Close communion seeks to prevent a profession of confessional unity in faith where there is, in fact, disunity and disagreement. It would be neither faithful to the Scriptural requirements for admission to Holy Communion (1 Cor. 11:27ff; cf. 10:16–17) nor helpful to fallen humanity if the Christian Church welcomes to its altars those who deny or question clear Scriptural teachings.

"The reasons for the practice of close Communion are often misunderstood by Christians who have been accustomed to an 'open Communion' policy. In a tract titled, *Why Close Communion?* the rationale for the practice of close communion is explained in this way:

'So it is not that a Lutheran congregation wants to bar fellow-saints from the blessings of the Eucharist when they practice Close Communion. It is not that they want to be separatistic, or set themselves up as judges of other men. The practice of Close Communion is prompted by love and is born of the heartfelt conviction, on the basis of Scripture alone, that we must follow Christ's command. This means refusing the Lord's Supper to those whose belief is not known to us. It is not showing love to allow a person to do something harmful, even though he may think it is for his own good. It also means if they are members of a Christian body which departs from the full truth of the Scripture in some of its doctrines, that we must not minimize the evil of this false teaching by opening our fellowship to any and all Christians who err in the faith' [Deffner, *Why Close Communion?*,p.14].

"In keeping with the principle that the celebration and reception of the Lord's Supper is a confession of the unity of faith, while at the same time recognizing that there will be instances when sensitive pastoral care needs to be exercised, the Synod has established an official practice requiring, 'that pastors and congregations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, except in situations of emergency and in special cases of pastoral care, commune individuals of only those synods that are now in fellowship with us. By following this practice whereby only those individuals who are members of the Synod or of a church body with which the Synod is in altar and pulpit fellowship are ordinarily communed, pastors

and congregations preserve the integrity of their witness to the Gospel of Christ as it is revealed in the Scriptures and confessed in the Lutheran confessional writings.”

“The Office of the Keys is less than faithfully exercised when admission to the Sacrament is granted to all who come to the altar regardless of their faith and congregational and/or denominational affiliation. The practice of open Communion renders it difficult, if not impossible, for church discipline to be exercised in a way that honors the ministrations being carried out by those to whom the responsibility of spiritual care for a member of God’s flock has been entrusted”(Heb. 13:17; cf. John 20:22–23; Acts 20:27–28; 1 Cor. 4:1–2. *Theology and Practice of the Lord’s Supper*, pp.21–23).

Conclusion

On the basis of God’s Holy Word, our Lutheran church continues to practice the ancient, Biblical and confessional practice of close communion as an opportunity to give joyful witness to our unity in the true faith. We practice close communion with the belief that this is what the Lord would have us do as we faithfully administer His body and blood in His holy Sacrament. Close communion is not a practice unique to The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. It is also practiced by the majority of Christians in the world who are members of the Roman Catholic and Orthodox communions.

Hopefully, this brief explanation will help you, or someone else, understand that our love for our Lord and His Sacrament, and our love for the individual, is the reason why we practice close communion.

— Dr.A.L.Barry
President
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
What About Fellowship in the Lord’s Supper?

† Death as membership

What shall separate you from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus your Lord and Savior?

St. Paul writes:

“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: “For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.” Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

(Romans 8:31-39)

When the body ceases to function, it dies the temporal death but it does not die; it only sleeps. St. Paul writes these words to the Church in Thessalonica: “For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.”
(1 Thessalonians 4:14)

“After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!” All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying: “Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, Thanksgiving and honor and power and might, Be to our God forever and ever. Amen.” Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, “Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?” And I said to him, “Sir, you know.” So he said to me, “These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them. They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat; for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”
(Revelation 7:9-17)

Death itself is membership of those who sleep awaiting the Second Advent of the King, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will come to judge the world on the Last Day.

Membership is not simple; it does not belong to everyone. Membership requires faith in Jesus Christ, God’s eternal and only-begotten Son.

My encouragement for you is to remain steadfast in the Word. Fight against the flesh, the world, and the devil and against all opposition to stray from or to forsake the Word. St. Luke wrote the following concerning the Church after Peter finished preaching: “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.” *(Acts of the Apostles 2:42)*

Peace be with you as you live under the cross of Christ receiving His mercy and extending His mercy through your Baptism.

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23 August ✕ A.D. 2011