

*And so we know and trust in the love God has for us. God is love,
and those who live in love live in God, and God in them. (1 John 4:16)*

Suggested Constitutional Bylaw Revision re. Holy Communion

August 23, 2015

Stages of Conversation & Reflection

(1) Fun with Faith Class (Fall 2014):

Study of the ELCA study "*Table and Font*" led by Pr. Gabi and LaVinnia Pierson.
Class participants suggested that we do the following:

- **Craft a welcome statement for bulletins and worship screens** that states who is welcome to Holy Communion (HC)
- **Move to celebrate HC as part of every Sunday service**, just as most other ELCA Congregations do,
- **Change outdated language in Bethel's constitutional bylaws** toward language that is consistent with ELCA practice and current Bethel ministry strategies.

(2) Executive Committee & Church Council (Spring 2015):

- Discussed and supported the 3 suggestions that came out of the FwF class.
- Proposed a congregational forum in June 2015 to introduce the proposed change.
- Crafted a suggested revision of the Bethel Bylaws

(3) Deacon Meeting (Spring 2015):

- Discussed and supported the 3 suggestions that came out of the FwF class.

(4) Congregational Forum (June 2015)

- Discussed the proposed changes to the Bethel constitution.

(5) Church Council Meeting (August 2015)

- Voted to propose revision of constitutional bylaw C.4.03.01 at the August 23 congregational meeting.

Rationale for the Proposed Revision

This revision is based on "*The Use of the Means of Grace: A Statement on the Practice of Word and Sacrament*"; ELCA, 1997; Principles 37, 38 and 49. This revision reflects a greater emphasis on sacrament as a means of grace, and not on our worthiness, as well as greater hospitality to all who wish to receive Christ's presence in bread and wine. There is no defined age for children to receive Holy Communion; rather it is defined by the parents and local practice. It is suggested that the pastor and children's ministry coordinator work out a regular schedule for Holy Communion instruction for all children in the congregation.

(over)

CURRENT BETHEL CONSTITUTION: CURRENT BYLAWS

C 4.03.01. Participation in Holy Communion shall be open to confirmed members of this and other Lutheran Congregations, and to those adults who accept the Scriptural teaching regarding the Real Presence of Christ and to children who have received pre-communion instruction. Worthy participation requires faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and His promises in this holy sacrament. That person is well prepared and worthy who believes these words: “given and shed for you for the remission of sins”.

SUGGESTED REVISION

C 4.03.01 Christ’s table is an open table. Therefore, participation in Holy Communion shall be open to all who believe in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior and who believe that he is truly present in the sacrament.

All children are welcome to the table, and Holy Communion instruction is recommended for all children. To equip families in the faith formation of their children, a Holy Communion class is offered regularly to families who wish to participate.

Resource for Conversation: 1 Corinthians 11

¹⁷ Now in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. ¹⁸ For, to begin with, when you come together as a church, **I hear that there are divisions among you**; and to some extent I believe it. ¹⁹ Indeed, there have to be factions among you, for only so will it become clear who among you are genuine. ²⁰ When you come together, it is not really to eat the Lord’s supper. ²¹ **For when the time comes to eat, each of you goes ahead with your own supper, and one goes hungry and another becomes drunk.** ²² What! Do you not have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you show contempt for the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What should I say to you? Should I commend you? In this matter I do not commend you!

²³ For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, ²⁴ and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” ²⁵ In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” ²⁶ For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

²⁷ **Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be answerable for the body and blood of the Lord.** ²⁸ Examine yourselves, and only then eat of the bread and drink of the cup. ²⁹ For all who eat and drink without discerning the body, eat and drink judgment against themselves. ³⁰ For this reason many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. ³¹ But if we judged ourselves, we would not be judged. ³² But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.

³³ **So then, my brothers and sisters, when you come together to eat, wait for one another.** ³⁴ **If you are hungry, eat at home, so that when you come together, it will not be for your condemnation. About the other things I will give instructions when I come.**