

LCMS

Frequently Asked Questions

Worship/Congregational Life

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Worship/Congregational Life

What is the LCMS stand on clergy promoting political candidates in the pulpit?

Q: *What is the LCMS stand regarding clergy promoting political candidates in the pulpit?*

A: Pastors are strongly advised not to use the pulpit or any resources of a congregation to advocate for a particular political candidate. They may make their congregations aware of issues and encourage the members to become informed regarding the candidates' stand on these issues. They may also as individual citizens speak favorably of a particular candidate away from the pulpit and public church functions. It should also be kept in mind that the IRS has strict rules about separation of church and state and there are organizations in our society that are very vigilant in looking for churches that are breaking these rules, that is, advocating for a particular political party or candidate.

Usage: We urge you to contact an LCMS pastor in your area for more in-depth discussion.

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Please explain CRM status for a pastor. (2 pages)

Q: For a pastor, what does the abbreviation CRM mean? What causes a pastor to be in CRM status? Is this a self-determined status, or is this imposed by Synod, Districts, etc? Or mutual agreement? Is the reason for CRM status available to congregations? Individuals? How is a pastor removed from CRM status? Are there specific steps for the pastor, or for a calling congregation? Are there any cautions that a congregation should exercise when considering a call to a pastor now on CRM? Generally speaking, I have always associated CRM status with a 'troubled' pastor. Is this a correct association?

A: As the LCMS uses and applies the term "CRM status," the following can be said:

1. "For a pastor, what does the abbreviation CRM mean?"

CRM is the abbreviation for "candidatus reverendi ministerii," that is, "candidate for the reverend ministry." It is generally referred to as "candidate status" and basically means that this pastor is a member of the Synod and is a candidate, that is, is available and open to receive a call. Under this general classification, the Synod also provides a category called "non-candidate" for those pastors who wish to remain on the roster to do pulpit supply, etc., but are not open to receiving a call to full-time ministry.

2. "What causes a pastor to be in CRM status?"

A pastor may be placed on CRM status by his district president for any number of reasons. He may have decided to continue his education for a while, or the congregation he has been serving may have gone out of existence, or he may have had a health or family problem which has caused him to take some time off, etc. In a limited number of cases, a pastor is on CRM status because he has resigned his previous call due to difficulties in his ministry or in the congregation he has been serving. District presidents place pastors on CRM status to keep them on the roster of the Synod while they are without a call. The pastors themselves decide whether they are available for a call ("candidate") or whether they wish to take some time away from the pastoral ministry ("non-candidate").

3. "Is this a self-determined status, or is this imposed by Synod, Districts, etc.? Or mutual agreement?"

Pastors on CRM status have in the past served under a call of a congregation or other entity eligible to extend a call. They have resigned their calls for any of the above reasons and have requested and received from their district president CRM status. It is generally a matter of mutual agreement.

4. "Is the reason for CRM status available to congregations? Individuals?"

The reason for CRM status is available to District Presidents who generally are free and willing to provide this information to congregations during the call process. The exception would be if there are requirements of confidentiality. Personal information regarding church workers is not ordinarily provided to individuals.

5. "How is a pastor removed from CRM status? Are there specific steps for the pastor, or for a calling congregation?"

A pastor is removed from CRM status, generally speaking, when he receives and accepts a call. He is then no longer a candidate for the ministry. He is a called pastor. A candidate can remain on the candidate list for two years in order to provide opportunity to receive a call. Congregations do well to consider these pastors since they are obviously available. Such pastors will also want to be very open to consideration of any calls they receive. Non-candidate CRM pastors, who only wish to remain on the roster of the Synod but are not interested in a call at the present time, may remain on the roster as non-candidate CRM for eight years, renewable once.

The Bylaws of the Synod do provide for a status called "restricted status." Sometimes CRM pastors are also on restricted status. This is imposed upon them by their district president to provide time to work through some things, such as personal problems. During the time a CRM pastor is on restricted status, he is not available for a call. The pastor may request removal of restricted status, for which the Synod has provided an appeal process in its Bylaws.

6. "Are there any cautions that a congregation should exercise when considering a call to a pastor now on CRM?"

When a congregation considers a call list that includes the names of pastors that are currently CRM, it should consider the names of CRM pastors with the same care and prayer with which it considers the other names on the list. Of course there will be interest in knowing why a pastor is currently without a call (CRM). It may even be that he has resigned his call from his most recent parish. It is of course quite possible that the cause behind his resignation lays with circumstances in the congregation rather than any concerns or shortcomings on his part. In any case, his district president by granting to him CRM status is saying that this pastor is fit for the ministry and may be considered a candidate to receive consideration and a call.

Unfortunately, CRM status is at times associated with trouble. This is not a correct general association for reasons already given. As a matter of fact, a congregation that passes quickly over pastors on a call list that are on CRM status are doing an injustice to those pastors and to themselves. Many such pastors come from very positive past call situations.

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What is “pastor emeritus” and how does a pastor receive this title?

Q: *What is "pastor emeritus" and how does a pastor receive this title?*

A: A pastor emeritus is a pastor member of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod who is at least 55 years old and no longer serves under a call. They are inactive and therefore advisory members with all the rights, privileges, and responsibilities of advisory membership in the Synod. They must be communicant members in good standing of a congregation of the Synod. An exception to the age limit is made for pastors who are totally and permanently disabled. Most often, pastors emeritus are merely retired pastors who have requested and have been granted emeritus status.

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Please explain what is meant by “divine call.”

Q: Please explain "divine call" to me. Is there a biblical reference, or is it a manmade concept?

A: Article 14 of the Augsburg Confession (one of the formal Lutheran confessional writings) says, "It is taught among us that no one should publicly teach or preach or administer the sacraments in the church without a regular call." Traditionally in the Lutheran church this has been described as a "divine call" because:

1. It is God who has instituted the pastoral office in order that the Word might be preached and the sacraments instituted in an orderly way (Luke 10:16; Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-2; Timothy 3; Titus 1; Eph: 4:11, 14; Col. 4:17; 1 Cor. 4:1; 1 Cor. 14:40; 2 Cor. 2:17);
2. It is God who has given congregations the right to call a pastor to carry out this work in their midst and on their behalf (Matt. 28:18-20; Matt. 16:13-19; 18: 17-20, John 20:22, 23; 1 John 4:1; 1 Peter 2:5- 6; 4:11; Acts 6:6; 1 Tim. 3:10; 4:14; 5:17; Titus 1:5; Acts 1:23; Heb.13:17; 1 Thess. 5:12).

The specific process by which a congregation extends a call to a pastor is not set forth in the Scriptures, and so this process may vary from time to time and place to place. In the interest of doing things "decently and in order" (1 Cor. 14:40), however, the various districts of the Synod have established a set of procedures which is intended to help congregations: 1) identify potential candidates for a call, and 2) follow the steps by which the congregation may extend a call to the individual whom they believe would be best suited to ministry at that place.

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Why are women not allowed to become ministers in the LCMS?

Q: *Why are women not allowed to become ministers in the Missouri Synod?*

A: The LCMS believes that those Scripture passages which say that women should not "teach" or "have authority" in the church (see, for example, 1 Cor. 11 and 14; 1 Timothy 2) mean that women ought not hold the authoritative teaching office in the church--that is, the office of pastor. Women are allowed to hold other offices in the church, as long as these offices do not involve the one holding them in carrying out the distinctive functions of the pastoral office. In 1994, the Synod's Commission on Theology and Church Relations prepared a report on [The Service of Women in Congregational and Synodical Offices](#) which is helpful in this regard.

At its 2004 convention the Synod adopted Resolution 3-08A affirming the conclusions of this report. Nearly half—over 9,000—of the Synod's professional, full-time church workers are women (serving in such offices as teacher, deaconess, director of Christian education, etc.). For more information, see the Commission on Theology and Church Relations report [Women in the Church: Scriptural Principles and Ecclesial Practice](#) (1985) and [The Creator's Tapestry](#) (2009).

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Where should the American and Christian flags be placed? (3 pages)

Q: *What is the LCMS position on the American flag and the Christian flag being displayed in the sanctuary? And where should the flags be placed?*

A: The LCMS does not have an official stand on the inclusion of flags being displayed in the sanctuary. This is, ultimately, an adiaphoron—i.e., something neither commanded nor forbidden by Holy Scripture. We do have, however, a history and background to be considered in whether or not to display flags in the sanctuary, as well as the message that displaying such flags might convey.

Rev. Prof. William Schmelder, seasoned parish pastor, historian and professor emeritus of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, has responded to a query from the LCMS Worship regarding this matter:

"To the best of my knowledge, the U.S. flag began appearing in our churches in response to two things: the desire to express an unquestioned loyalty as U.S. citizens (a reaction to WWI sentiment) and the growing sacralization of the flag in U.S. culture. In the history of my home congregation (Immanuel, Bristol, CT), the story of the responses to both WWI and WWII is given in some detail. However, the picture of the church after the renovation in 1948 does not show a flag. There was a flag on the grounds between the church and the school, and it was raised and lowered with considerable ceremony when school was in session. I think that is one response evident in many congregations: we could show our loyalty in many ways without placing the flag in the church; other congregations seem to have brought it into the building itself, with great debate about the proper location (nave, chancel, narthex, etc.).

"Non-Americans are often astounded to see a national symbol in the church (perhaps they have memories of the Nazi flag being touched to the altars of German churches).

"The so-called Christian flag is another matter entirely. It has no tradition of the church behind it. In fact, it violates much of what anyone knows of ecclesiastical heraldry. It seems to be the design of one man, who both drew it and profits from it. He or his heirs still get a royalty on every one sold. People seem to think that you need something to balance the U.S. flag on the other side, so you have a Christian flag."

Obviously, the inclusion of the American and Christian flags is widespread in the LCMS. As Professor Schmelder mentioned, this probably developed out of the desire of congregations of prominently German-American heritage not to appear German during and after the world wars. Likewise, many veterans of those wars returned with great patriotic zeal, which probably manifested itself in the desire to display "Old Glory" in the sanctuary.

Today, however, it may be time to reconsider this short-lived tradition among us (Lutherans never did this prior to WWI, and then only in America). One may observe that many congregations today, when considering a sanctuary renovation or even building a new sanctuary, will opt to display the flag in a location other than the chancel or nave. Many will place a flag outside of the building proper, or perhaps in the narthex. In such ways, as Professor Schmelder noted, we can demonstrate our patriotism, but not blur the distinction between the kingdom of Christ with the kingdom of the world/government. Our Lord's words, of course, come to bear on this issue ultimately: "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and render unto God the things that are God's" (Luke 20:22). Both are good and right ... in their respective places and times.

Guidelines for displaying the U.S. flag are directed in U.S. Code, Title 4, Chapter 1, Section 7. Subsections (i) and (k) are the pertinent guidance for flag placement in churches, whether in the sanctuary proper, or in a narthex/entranceway or other room.

"(i) When displayed either horizontally or vertically against a wall, the union should be uppermost and to the flag's own right, that is, to the observer's left....

(k) ...When displayed from a staff in a church or public auditorium, the flag of the United States of America should hold the position of superior prominence, in advance of the audience, and in the position of honor at the clergyman's or speaker's right as he faces the audience. Any other flag so displayed should be placed on the left of the clergyman or speaker or to the right of the audience."

It should be noted that certain church architecture may require "applying" the guidance, since some worship spaces, for example, are not designed in a traditional sanctuary cruciform manner. Given that caveat, the following general guidance is offered.

1. In the sanctuary, if the national ensign (American flag) is placed on the floor level, it may be placed to the congregation's left (the clergyman's right as he faces the congregation) "or, the flag may be placed in a position of honor to the right of the audience as it faces the speaker, with any other flag to the left" (from the Department of Defense publication, *Our Flag*). This either/or placement is an indication of differing rationales in emphasis: the first is the place of honor from the clergyman/speaker's perspective facing the audience; the second emphasizes the place of honor from the audience's perspective.
2. If the U.S. flag is placed within the chancel, the flag is placed on the left side, i.e., to the clergyman's right as he faces the congregation. If the Christian flag or the LCMS logo flag is displayed with the American flag in the chancel, the correct placement (of the Christian flag or LCMS logo flag) is on the right side, i.e., the clergyman's left side as he faces the congregation.
3. If the U.S. flag is placed with another flag elsewhere in the sanctuary or in another building, it (the U.S. flag) is always on the left as one faces it.
4. If the U.S. flag is carried in a processional, it is the first flag. If others are included, the U.S. flag's position is first if single file or on the right if other flags are carried in a line with it. If a cross is in the processional, it (the cross) leads followed by the flags.
5. If the U.S. flag is on a flagpole, by regulation it must have the superior (top most) position. If another flag is also desired to be displayed, the easiest solution to avoid the appearance of "state over Church" is to have a second flag pole; the U.S. flag's position is always on the right.

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Does the LCMS have any genealogy resources?

Q: *I'm doing research into my family's genealogy. They were all members of LCMS churches and I'm looking for Baptism/confirmation/wedding/funeral records. What kind of resources does Synod offer to help me in my research?*

A: Thanks for your inquiry concerning genealogical research. [Concordia Historical Institute](#) (CHI) is the Department of Archives and History of the LCMS. They are glad to assist in researching LCMS parish records. Concerning Lutheran genealogy, please keep in mind that there is no database of names of American Lutherans. Generally, research is based on information connected to a parish and/or a pastor.

Lutheran churches only keep records of official acts, such as baptisms, confirmations, weddings and funerals. The records usually are located at the parish where the act took place, unless it is disbanded. CHI can help you with genealogy if you have very specific questions and reliable information about a baptism, wedding, etc. However, there are charges for non-members of the Institute.

Popular brochures include "[Researching at Concordia Historical Institute](#)," "[Researching the Lutheran Pastor at CHI](#)," "[Researching Your Lutheran Ancestor at CHI](#)," and "[Resources Outside of CHI](#)." You may write Concordia Historical Institute at 801 Seminary Place, St. Louis, MO 63105.

In addition, Thrivent for Lutherans provides [online exchange of genealogy information](#). Though not limited to the Missouri Synod, it is a place where individuals may start to make some contacts.

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How does the HIPAA Privacy Rule affect LCMS congregations? (3 pages)

Q: *Does the privacy act (HIPAA) affect congregations with regard to publishing information about their members in church bulletins?*

A: The following response was written by Synod's legal counsel:

Privacy Issues for Congregations

Recently, some congregations have expressed concern that, under the federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996, they will no longer be permitted to publish in church bulletins or prayer lists the names of congregation members who have been hospitalized. In addition, some congregations have asked whether other information, such as a member's name, address, and baptism and confirmation information, can be disclosed to other members of the congregation. The purpose of this document is to address these concerns.

Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA)

In 1996, to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the nation's health care system, Congress enacted the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (“**HIPAA**”) which, among other provisions related to health insurance portability and administrative simplification, mandated certain federal privacy protections for health information. In August of 2002, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services adopted a final rule (the “**HIPAA Privacy Rule**”) to implement those privacy protections.

The HIPAA Privacy Rule applies only to health plans, health care clearinghouses and certain health care providers. It prohibits, with certain exceptions, the disclosure of an individual's health information if the disclosure is not for the purpose of treatment, payment or health care operations, or is not made pursuant to a specific authorization provided by the individual. Because the HIPAA Privacy Rule only applies to health plans, health care clearinghouses and certain health care providers, it does not apply to congregations or individual congregation members, except for members who are themselves health care providers or are employed by health plans, health care clearinghouses and certain health care providers.

Example. Jim is a member of Trinity Lutheran Church. Jim is also a nurse in the local hospital's intensive care unit. Jill, who is another member of Trinity, is admitted to the emergency room with severe injuries and is later admitted to the intensive care unit at the hospital. Jim notifies Trinity's office that Jill is in the hospital's intensive care unit and describes her medical condition. Because Jim's disclosure to Trinity is not for the purpose of treatment, payment or health care operations, Jim will have violated HIPAA unless Jill had provided specific authorization for such disclosure. However, because Trinity is not subject to the HIPAA Privacy Rule, it is not prohibited by HIPAA from further disclosing, in church bulletins or prayer lists, the fact that Jill is in the hospital's intensive care unit and describing her medical condition.

Although the HIPAA Privacy Rule limits the disclosure of health information by certain health care providers generally, it specifically permits a health care provider to maintain a directory of individuals in the provider's facility containing the following types of information: (i) the individual's

name, (ii) the individual's location in the facility, (iii) the individual's condition described in very general terms, and (iv) the individual's religious affiliation. This directory information may be disclosed to members of the clergy and, except for an individual's religious affiliation, to members of the public who ask for the individual by name, provided that in either instance the individual has been given the opportunity, except in cases of emergency, to object to or limit the disclosure. Because the HIPAA Privacy Rule limits the ability of hospitals to provide, on their own initiative, information concerning the admission of a congregation member who is hospitalized, churches no longer receive this information as a courtesy from the hospitals. Therefore, a church may want to notify its members of the need to let the pastor know about a family member who is hospitalized. A notice similar to the following may be published in a church bulletin, church newsletter or on the congregation's website:

Hospital Stays

Under the federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996, hospitals are greatly restricted in their ability to disclose patient information. Consequently, the pastor or church office may not be notified that a congregation member has been admitted to the hospital. In the event you are hospitalized, and you would like the pastor to know, you or a family member should inform the church office directly.

In sum, HIPAA does limit the ability of congregations to obtain information from hospitals or other health care providers concerning a member's hospitalization and medical condition, but nothing in HIPAA prohibits a congregation from disclosing a member's hospitalization and medical condition in church bulletins or prayer lists. However, there are other privacy rights that should be considered before making any such disclosures.

Invasion of Privacy

HIPAA is not violated when a church publishes the names and medical conditions of church members who are either hospitalized or ill in church publications, such as a church bulletin, newsletter, prayer list or on the congregation's website. However, it is possible that a congregation's disclosure of a member's medical condition or even non-medical information, without the consent of the member, would constitute an "invasion of privacy" under state law. Such "invasion of privacy" laws often give an individual the right to sue when a person publicly discloses information that is private in nature.

The standards concerning "invasion of privacy" vary depending upon each state's laws. It is, therefore, difficult to set forth any universal rules concerning the types of information that should not be disclosed in order to avoid claims of "invasion of privacy." Ordinary care and common sense should be used in not disclosing information that is sensitive in nature, such as medical or psychological conditions, financial problems, or marital problems, without the consent of the affected individuals. On the other hand, disclosure of information such as birthdays, baptisms and confirmations, that would not be considered sensitive, poses little risk of liability. Information such as addresses and telephone numbers may or may not be sensitive, depending upon whether it is otherwise publicly available. In order to avoid liability, it is best to obtain consents from the affected individuals for any disclosure of private information. Obtaining consent prior to disclosure may be difficult, but it does provide protection against liability and should be obtained, especially if the disclosure involves *sensitive* information.

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Who may read Scripture during a church service?

Q: *Does the LCMS hold a particular opinion as to who (pastor, elder, layman-woman) should or may read in front of the congregation the Sunday morning Scripture verses (including the Gospel books)?*

A: In 1989 Res. 3-14, the Synod resolved "That the congregations of the Synod proceed with care and sensitivity in making decisions permitting the lay reading of the Scriptures, recognizing decisions in this regard lie in the area of Christian judgment." The Synod's official position, therefore, is that there is no Scriptural "thus says the Lord" regarding who may or may not read the lessons in worship, but that congregations themselves are responsible for making decisions in this regard which take into account various factors and sensitivities relevant to their own situation. In taking this position, the Synod has not distinguished between various "parts" of the Scriptures (Old Testament, Epistle, Gospel, etc.). For more information, you may wish to read the report of the Synod's Commission on Theology and Church Relations on [Women in the Church](#).

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What is the role of elders in a congregation?

Q: *What is the role of elders in a congregation?*

A: Strictly speaking, the word “elder” in the Bible (Acts 14:23; 1 Tim. 5:17-19, Titus 1:5-9 and 1 Peter 5:1-4) refers to those who hold the pastoral office. What we commonly call “elders” today are laymen appointed to serve the congregation in its temporal affairs and to assist the pastor in administrative tasks. An example of this is found in Acts 6:1-6:

In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Grecian Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word." This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.

Later such men came to be known as the “deacons” (meaning “servants”). As you can see, Scripture does not define the exact role of such deacons, only their qualifications (1 Timothy 3:8-13). Scripture gives them no special spiritual responsibilities in the congregation beyond those given to every Christian.

While the office of pastor is divinely instituted and indispensable for the Church, the deacon is an optional office based on Apostolic and church custom.

The deacon or elder is a position of lay-service, concerned with the temporal and administrative affair of the congregation. In many congregations deacons or elders are also charged with oversight of the pastor. But, rightly understood according to Scripture, they exercise only that oversight given to every Christian in the congregation.

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Corpus Christi Cross

Q: *Is there Scripture or something in the Book of Concord that supports the Lutheran's belief of the empty cross reflecting the risen Lord as opposed to the Corpus Christi cross? What is the background of that belief?*

A: What a great question. No, there is nothing in our confessional writings that would lead us to that conclusion. And, in fact, that is not the universal position among Lutherans. At the time of Luther, the corpus was commonly found on the cross. The same was also true in later times. When the Lutherans who formed The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod first came to this country, it was common to find a corpus on their crosses. One of our oldest churches, which is the original church dating from the mid-1800s, has a large cross in the front of the church with a corpus on it.

In the Lutheran Confessions one finds much more support, albeit indirect, for inclusion of a corpus. Especially in Article VIII of the Formula of Concord, which discusses in depth the person of Christ, there is a clear emphasis on the two natures in Christ and the implications that this brings to our teaching. After reading that article, one would more likely expect to find a corpus.

As to where the trend came for displaying the empty cross, we can't exactly say. No doubt we have been influenced by our Protestant brethren, many of whom would not display a corpus. In addition, some of it is probably the result of a strong anti-Roman Catholic bias that causes some to run away from any and everything that might possibly be "Catholic."

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Dispose of a Bible or American Flag

Q: *How do I properly dispose of a Bible or American flag that is unusable?*

A: A Bible that cannot be repaired may be reverently buried, since that is what the ancient Jews and Christians did with old biblical manuscripts. It may also be burned, turning the ashes into the ground.

In regard to the American flag, the U.S. Flag Code states:

“The flag, when it is in such a condition that it is no longer a fitting emblem for display, should be destroyed in a dignified way, preferable by burning.”

After your flag has been burned, the ashes should be buried.

If you do not have an easy way to burn a flag, there are several organizations that will retire your flag in a proper and respectful ceremony. Among them are:

Veterans of Foreign Wars: www.vfw.org/

American Legion: www.legion.org/

Boy Scouts of America: www.scouting.org/

Girl Scouts of America: www.girlscouts.org/

Marine Corps League: www.mcleague.com/

Flag Keepers: www.flagkeepers.org/

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Disposal of Communion Elements

Q: Following a Communion service, what are the prescribed means for the disposal of the consecrated wine and wafers?

A: To begin with, care should be taken that inordinate amounts of bread and wine are not consecrated at each service, but rather just what is needed for that service.

While Scripture does not tell us whether Christ's body and blood are still present in the bread and wine after Communion, we should still treat what remains with greatest reverence. The point here is to recognize the fact that these elements were used in the service to deliver our Lord's very body and blood to us. How we treat them after the service should never lose sight of that great mystery of faith.

There are two places to find helpful information on this topic. One is Section B.2.c. of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations' 1983 document titled, [*Theology and Practice of the Lord's Supper*](#).

B.2.c. Post Communion Reverence

The consecrated elements which remain after all have communed should be treated with reverence. This reverence has been expressed by Lutherans in various ways. Some have followed the ancient practice of burning the bread and pouring the wine upon the earth. Others have established a basin and drain-piscina-specifically for disposal for the wine. The elders or altar guild may also return the consecrated bread and wine to specific containers for future sacramental use, or the elders and pastor can consume the remaining elements. All of these practices should be understood properly. The church is not, thereby, conferring upon the elements some abiding status apart from their use in the Lord's Supper itself.

The other point of reference is page 89 of *The Altar Guild Manual: Lutheran Service book Edition*, by Dr. Lee Maxwell that says:

"If any of the Lord's body and blood remains, they can be disposed of in a number of ways. The best way is to consume the remaining elements, since the Lord said, "Take and eat ... Take and drink," and did not provide for anything that was left over. There is historic precedent for reserving the remaining elements against the next communion. The hosts can be stored in a pyx or ciborium (apart from unconsecrated hosts), the blood of the Lord in a suitable cruet or flagon (apart from unconsecrated wine). What remains in the chalice, however, should either be consumed or poured into the piscine or onto the ground, since there may be crumbs or other foreign matter in it. The reserved elements may then be kept in the sacristy or placed on the altar or credence and covered with a white veil. It is un-Lutheran and irreverent to place unused elements in the trash or to pour the remainder of what is in the chalice or flagon into the common drain. "

As noted in the manual, the general practice of the Lutheran Church has been NOT to mix consecrated and unconsecrated elements. If the elements are saved for future use, it is best they are kept separate. The practice of consuming the remaining elements also has a long history in the Lutheran Church.

Your congregation may want to consider purchasing *The Altar Guild Manual* as it covers a variety of altar guild functions that include displaying, cleaning and storing paraments and linens appropriately; caring for sacramental vessels and vestments; preparing for and cleaning up after worship services; ordering supplies and more. It is available from Concordia Publishing House by calling 800-325-3040 or by going to their [website](#) [search for altar guild manual].

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Use of Crucifixes

Q: *Is the use of crucifixes a Roman Catholic practice? Doesn't the empty cross provide a better symbol for Lutherans? How does the LCMS feel about using a crucifix in church? [Note: A crucifix is a cross with a statue of the crucified Christ on it].*

A: A common misunderstanding among some Lutherans is the opinion that a crucifix, or the use of a crucifix, is a “Roman Catholic” practice. The history of Lutheranism demonstrates that the crucifix was a regular and routine feature of Lutheran worship and devotional life during Luther’s lifetime and during the period of Lutheran Orthodoxy. It was also the case among the founding fathers of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. If you were to visit most of the original congregations of the LCMS here in the United States you would find lovely crucifixes adorning their altars, and in addition, beautiful statues on the altar of Christ and the four evangelists, or other such scenes. There is nothing uniquely Roman Catholic about this. Many Lutherans and Lutheran congregations use crucifixes. Crucifixes are used in the chapels of both of our seminaries and our International Center.

Lutheranism has always considered the crucifix to be a powerful reminder of the sacrifice our Lord Jesus made for us and our salvation, on the cross. A crucifix vividly brings to mind the Apostle Paul’s divinely inspired words, “We preach Christ and Him crucified” (1 Cor. 1:23).

Interestingly enough, while there is certainly nothing “wrong” with an “empty” cross, the practice of using an “empty cross” on a Lutheran congregation’s altar comes more from non-Lutheran sources. At the time of the Reformation there was conflict between Lutherans and Reformed Christians over the proper place of pictures, images, statues and the like in the church. Lutherans stood with historic Christendom in realizing that such art in the church was not wrong, and was a great aid for helping to focus devotional thoughts on the truths of the Word of God, no greater truth can be found than the death of Jesus Christ our Lord for the world’s salvation.

The “empty cross” is not a symbol of Christ’s resurrection, as some say, for the fact is that the cross would have been empty regardless of whether or not Christ had risen from the grave. The point to be kept clear here is that both an “empty cross” and a crucifix, symbolize the same thing: the death of Christ our Lord for the salvation of the world. Many feel that the crucifix symbolizes this truth more clearly and strikingly. That has been the traditional opinion of historic Lutheranism, until the last 50 years ago, due to the influence we will now mention.

Some Lutherans began to move away from crucifixes during the age of Lutheran Pietism, which rejected much of Lutheran doctrine and consequently many Lutheran worship practices. At the time, Lutheran Pietists, contrary to the clear position of Luther and the earlier Lutherans, held that symbols such as the crucifix were wrong. This was never the view of historic Lutheranism. Here in America, Lutherans have always felt a certain pressure to “fit in” with the Reformed Christianity that predominates much of the Protestant church here. Thus, for some Lutherans this meant doing away with things such as crucifixes and vestments, and other traditional forms of Lutheran worship and piety. It is sad when some Lutherans are made to feel embarrassed about their Lutheranism by members of churches that teach the Word of God in error and who do not share Lutheranism’s clear confession and practice of the full truth of the Word of God.

Lutheranism has always recognized that the use of any symbol (even the empty cross) can become an idolatrous practice, if in any way people are led to believe there is “power in the cross” or that a picture or representation of a cross has some sort of ability, in itself, to bring us into relationship with Christ and His Gospel. Any of God’s good gifts can be turned against Him in this life and become an end in themselves.

Lutherans have never believed that banning or limiting proper artwork in the church is the way to prevent its improper use. Rather, we believe that proper teaching and right use is the best way, and the way that is in keeping with the gift of freedom we have in Christ to use all things to the glory and honor of God. Thus, many Lutherans use and enjoy the crucifix as a meaningful reminder of our Lord's suffering and death. It might interest you to know that our Synod's president has a beautiful crucifix adorning the wall of his office, constantly reminding him and visitors to his office of the great love of God that is ours in Christ Jesus our Lord.

In short, and this is the most important point of all: there is nothing contrary to God's Holy Word, or our Lutheran Confessions, about the proper use of the crucifix, just as there is nothing wrong with the proper use of an empty cross, or any other church symbol by which we are reminded of the great things God has done for us. We need to guard against quickly dismissing out of hand practices that we believe are "too Roman Catholic" before we more adequately explore their use and history in our own church.

In Christian freedom, we use either the crucifix or an empty cross and should not judge or condemn one another for using either nor not using either symbol of our Lord's sacrifice for our sins.

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Tithing

Q. What is the LCMS position concerning tithing? Is it required? Is there anything wrong with teaching the concept of tithing?

A. Tithing (meaning giving 10 percent of one's income) is a term used in the Scriptures, especially throughout the Old Testament. In most of those cases the "tithe" was a "legislated" matter to support the levitical priesthood and provide other benefits. Freewill offerings were made in addition to the tithe.

In the New Testament, tithing is not mentioned nearly as much, but such expressions as cheerful, firstfruit, and proportionate are used repeatedly. This leads us to conclude that while tithing may be a good spiritual discipline and a good starting point for a mature Christian, it may not be the best way to present biblical giving since it can easily become a legalistic requirement of the law rather than a cheerful offering motivated by the love of God shown toward us in Christ.

Therefore, in the second of the eight Biblical Stewardship Principles, we maintain that God's stewards are managers, not owners. This means that God's stewards have been entrusted with life and life's resources and given the privilege of responsibly and joyfully managing them for Him. Thus, as children of God through faith in Jesus Christ, and with the Holy Spirit's help, we will encourage cheerful, firstfruit, proportionate (including but not limited to tithing) living and giving in all areas of life by Christian stewards.

Another way of thinking about this issue is to remember that all things, including money, belong to God and the real question is how much of what belongs to Him are we going to keep for ourselves and how much are we going to use to fulfill His purposes? King David said it very well in 1 Chronicles 29:14: "But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand."

A complete listing of the eight [Biblical Stewardship Principles](#) may be found on the LCMS website.

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