



**Evangelical Lutheran  
Church in Canada**  
*In Mission for Others*

## **Statement on Communion practices during coronavirus (COVID-19)**

Dear clergy of the ELCIC,

First of all, thank you all for the incredible work you are doing in this time of pandemic. In many and various ways you are being so creative in using new and old technologies to continue to minister to God's people and provide spiritual nourishment. We know that you are working harder than ever. Well done, good and faithful servants.

We are seeing a wide variety of practices emerge as you respond quickly to the pastoral and spiritual needs of your communities. There is also increased comment on those practices and debate over what is considered correct. Most of this dialogue has remained constructive and respectful. We urge you to approach these discussions remembering that we are the body of Christ working together.

*As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. <sup>13</sup>Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. <sup>14</sup>Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. <sup>15</sup>And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. <sup>16</sup>Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. <sup>17</sup>And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. (Col 3:12-17)*

This is a time to celebrate the diversity and variety of gifts that God has given each of us in our call to serve God's people. This is a time for us to share our resources, to work in collaborative partnerships, and to support each other in our work for the gospel.

One of the most pressing conversations has to do with the practice of Holy Communion online. Some are already incorporating this while many of you are not. With the realization that Holy Week and Easter worship will be different than what we would hope for, questions about celebrating the Lord's Supper are more urgent.

We are all anxious already. This is not the time for a deep theological debate. When we are past this crisis we will have conversations and make decisions as a whole church about ways to move forward for other times when we cannot gather in person in worship.

Because of this, our recommendation is that you continue with the Holy Communion practices that your community already has in place. We trust you, Christ's ministers of Word and Sacrament and Word and Service, to steward the mysteries of God that have been entrusted to you with integrity and grace. We know that your decisions will be made in conversation with congregational leaders and in a way that provides the best pastoral leadership to your communities. We know that in our Lutheran theological tradition Holy Communion is not necessary for salvation, but is a means of grace and one of the ways by which and through which Christ is embodied and proclaimed as God's unconditional love for us.

Whatever decisions you make, we hope that you will respect the decisions that others have made, even if they are different from your own. In everything, we ask you to be supportive of each other and invite conversation to build understanding.

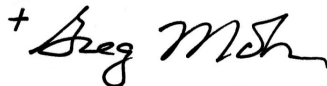
We also feel it is important to say that the Conference of Bishops is not of one mind about the appropriateness of various forms of Communion celebration and distribution. This should not be a surprise; the Conference of Bishops reflects, in many ways, the diversity of the church. However, we assure you that the National Bishop and Synodical Bishops of this church are of one mind in supporting one another, walking together with grace and hope, and working together to accompany and lead the people of God into God's unfolding future.

Blessings to you all as you prepare to enter Holy Week. You are constantly in our prayers.

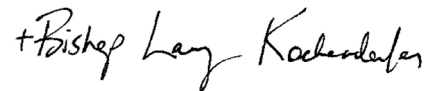
Your bishops,



The Rev. Susan Johnson  
National Bishop, ELCIC



The Rev. Dr. Greg Mohr  
British Columbia Synod



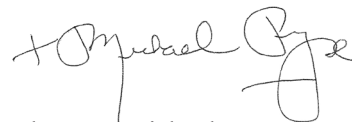
The Rev. Dr. Larry Kochendorfer  
Synod of Alberta and the Territories



The Rev. Dr. Sid Haugen  
Saskatchewan Synod



The Rev. Jason Zinko  
Manitoba/Northwestern  
Ontario Synod



The Rev. Michael Pryse  
Eastern Synod