

# Sacristy Handbook

Zion Lutheran Church  
Warroad, Minnesota

October 2007

# Eucharist

*As they came near [Emmaus], he walked ahead as if he were going on. But they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over." So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him.*

-(Luke 24:28-31)

This account of Jesus on the road to Emmaus is an awesome witness to the power of God to reveal Jesus to us in the Eucharist; the sacrament of bread blessed and broken, wine shed and poured – and all shared. Even when we do not perceive the presence of Christ in teachings or readings, we can experience his presence in his body and blood.

The word *Eucharist* comes from a Greek word which means “giving thanks”. Giving thanks is at the core of the church’s main liturgy – the Eucharist – the chief service of the church. It is known by many other names as well, including the Holy Communion, the sacrament of the altar, and the Lord’s Supper. By whatever name, this sacrament is the liturgy of word and table, the feast of the baptized family of God, gathered around the table of the Lord. In Holy Baptism we are initiated into God’s family; in Holy Communion we are sustained in that family. In Holy Baptism we are made part of the priesthood of all believers; in Holy Communion we are strengthened to carry out our priesthood of witness and service in the world. In Holy Baptism we are joined to our Lord’s death and resurrection; in Holy Communion we both proclaim his death and celebrate the feast of his victory. The Eucharist is the birthright of the baptized.

This sacramental liturgy includes both proclaimed and visible Word – in it we hear the scriptures proclaimed in readings and sermon, and we see the Word made visible in the body and blood of Christ. Thus, the Eucharist has two visual centers; the altar as the place of the meal, and the pulpit as the place of the word of God.

We have a special and privileged responsibility to prepare for this celebration that is so central to Christian worship. It is important that we grow continually in the meaning of the Eucharist and to be thoroughly familiar with the names and use of Eucharistic vessels and linens.

## ***Altar***

The term altar is derived from the Latin word *alta* which means high. The altar is on a raised platform known as a predella. Its height both enhances the dignity and the significance of the Eucharistic table and enables the assembled congregation to see the actions at the altar.

The altar is the table for the Holy Communion meal – the place where the Eucharistic feast is celebrated and around which God’s baptized family gathers to share this feast.

The top of the altar is known as the Mensa which means table. The Mensa is used only as the table for the Eucharistic feast. Nothing is placed on it except altar linens, the missal stand, Eucharistic vessels and candles.

### ***Eucharistic Vessels***

Eucharistic vessels used at Zion for the celebration of the Holy Communion are the chalice and the ciborium. The chalice is the large cup used for the consecration and sometimes the distribution of the sacramental wine. The ciborium is similar to the chalice, but has a fitted lid, in which the bread (wafers) is kept.

### ***Sacramental Elements***

At the Last Supper, our Lord took bread and wine, gave thanks to God, and declared that they were his body and blood. He shared the bread and wine with his disciples, and told them to “Do this for the remembrance” of Him. After his crucifixion and resurrection, he revealed himself to two of his disciples on the Emmaus road in the breaking of bread. Christ’s followers of all times have had an insatiable appetite for this bread and wine, because they know that in them the Lord himself is present. When the prayer and actions of the upper room are repeated by the presiding minister, we share we share the very life of the crucified and risen Christ. The Lord is truly present “in, with, and under” the bread and wine in the Holy Communion.

Bread signifies several things biblically and in our own time. The ancient Israelites believed that bread came from the hands of God – and indeed, it does. Bread also carried the image of death and resurrection: the wheat seed is buried in the earth, where it comes to life and sprouts; and then the grain is crushed to be harvested so that flour can be made and bread can rise. Bread also, of course, satisfies basic human hunger. At Zion, sacramental wafers are used.

Wine is used for the Holy Communion because that is what Christ used in the upper room and directed us to use when we celebrate his holy meal. In addition, wine is used because of its unique meaning. While Psalm 104 speaks of bread for strength, it speaks of wine for gladdening our hearts. Bread was a staple in ancient Jewish meals, but wine was used only for festive occasions. The purpose of wine was not to quench thirst, but to give joy and life. Thus, wine is not only the blood of Christ through its use by him; it is also a sign of the festive and joyful nature of the Eucharistic meal.

### ***Setting the Table of the Lord***

Preparation of the altar for the Eucharistic feast should be completed well ahead of the worship service. Before the first actual tasks come prayer and the attitude of reverence. Most

important in all of the preparation work is that it be done with the reverence and good order that befit Christ's presence. Awareness of Christ's presence in the sacrament will ensure that the work is done with genuine joy and gratitude for God's grace. To prepare the Lord's Table is an immense privilege. The following prayers from *Lutheran Book of Worship*, or similar prayers, may be helpful in the sacristy before beginning your work.

*Bless us, O God, with a reverent sense of your presence, that we may be at peace and may worship you with all our mind and spirit; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen*

*Jesus, our great high priest, is present with us as you were present with your disciples and make yourself known to us in the breaking of bread. Amen*

Zion's sacristy is located behind the altar, adjacent to the pastor's office. In the cabinets above the counter are stored the communion wafers, the chalice, and the ciborium. In the cabinets under the counter are stored the communion wine, grape juice, the sacramental linens and the wine trays. Grape juice bottles which have been opened should be placed in the refrigerator in the kitchen. Once a bottle of grape juice has been opened and used for one Wednesday night service and two Sunday services, it should be discarded.

Several wafers should be placed in the ciborium and the lid put on top.

Wine should be poured into the chalice(s) and covered with the paten.

Enough wafers to serve the number of communicants expected should be placed neatly on the plate(s) used for the sacramental bread and covered with a purificator.

For serving by means other than intinction, enough individual glasses (either plastic or glass) to serve the number of communicants expected should be placed in the trays and filled about half full of wine. A few glasses in each tray should be filled with grape juice and placed in the holders marked with a red "x". A white plastic container with a plunger is provided to fill the glasses. The trays should be stacked and the lid put on the top. If a large number of communicants will be served, it may be necessary to have two stacks of trays.

When communion is served by intinction, the pastor will distribute the bread and assistants will distribute the wine and juice. One plate of bread should be prepared. Two chalices of wine and two chalices of juice should be prepared. Bread should be covered with an unfolded purificator and the chalices should be covered with patens.

For Sunday worship services, the elements should be placed on the altar as shown on the accompanying diagrams.

For Wednesday night worship services when the praise band is set up in front of the altar, communion vessels and elements should be placed on a small table as directed by the pastor.

When trays of glasses are used, the stacked trays should be covered with the communion veil which has a cross embroidered on it. The cross on the linen should face the congregation.

The corporal should be placed on the altar next to the communion trays with the embroidered cross facing the congregation.

The ciborium, chalice and bread plates are placed on top of the corporal as shown on the diagrams.

The plates of bread should be covered with purificators which have been unfolded so that they cover the entire plates.

During distribution, one of the people preparing communion should stay near the altar to assist the pastor and others who are serving communion – handing them full trays of wine, taking empty trays, and being certain there is enough wine and bread to serve all the communicants.

The number of communicants at previous worship services is marked on the calendar near the sink in the sacristy. It may be used as a guide for the number of wafers and glasses to prepare.

### ***Following the Service***

After the liturgy is concluded, all of the Eucharistic vessels and linens are removed from the chancel and taken to the sacristy for cleaning. Unused wafers are stored in the original boxes for future use, keeping separate those which have been consecrated. Wine remaining in the chalice and the unused glasses should be poured into the bottle provided for consecrated wine. Those who prepare communion should drink the remaining consecrated grape juice. Before removing glasses from the trays, count the used glasses and write the number on the appropriate date on the calendar.

The recommended cleaning procedure for the chalice and ciborium is:

DO use a very mild soap solution.

DO rinse with clean water.

DO use a very soft cloth for drying and wiping.

DON'T use an abrasive material.

DON'T submerge entire vessel in solution.

SILVER OX finishes require no cleaning. If necessary, use a damp cloth.

After thorough cleaning, vessels are stored in the bags provided. Wine trays should be wiped clean, and glasses should be washed and put back in the trays. Plastic glasses should be placed in a plastic bag and discarded. Linens should be folded and put back into the plastic tubs provided. Any sacramental linens which have been soiled should be left on the counter. Dish towels should be taken home and laundered after the Wednesday evening and 10:30 a.m. Sunday services. Please return the towels to the church promptly.

Thank you for the work you do at Zion.

Thank you for the work you do to prepare the Eucharist.

Much of the information for this booklet is from *Altar Guild and Sacristy Handbook* by S. Anita Stauffer published by Augsburg Fortress, Minneapolis. Other information provided follows the practices customarily used at Zion Lutheran Church, Warroad.