

*Adopted by the Commission on Worship, February 1990, reformatted and revised 1998 and 2008. The Department of Liturgics prepared this statement in response to questions about the recent increased frequency of communion services and attendances. The Council of Presidents had expressed concern about the confusion in the church over this issue.*

- 1 Statistics show that Lutherans in Australia have communed much more frequently in the last 50 years than they did previously.
- 2 This is a welcome development. It gives witness to what the church is about, and is cause for thanksgiving. It is to be further encouraged and wisely used as an opportunity for spiritual and church growth in all dimensions.
- 3 Greater participation in the sacrament by the people of God in our time has been prepared by more openly sacramental preaching. Such participation directly affects all aspects of education in the faith, and promotes the fruits of faith in daily living.
- 4 The deepest reasons for regular and frequent communion lie in the Lord's invitation for sinners to come to his table, in his giving of himself, and in his gracious command: 'Do this in remembrance of me' (1 Corinthians 11:24). His generosity matches and overcomes our poverty, and daily meets our greatest need.
- 5 A church correctly centred on the word of the gospel will be at the same time focused on the sacraments of grace.
- 6 For various reasons, attendances at the Lord's supper have been low over long stretches of Christian history. But the following (perhaps somewhat idealistic) statement of Dr Hermann Sasse indicates our catholic and apostolic tradition as Lutherans in this respect:  
'No Christian of the [Lutheran] Reformation ... could conceive of a Sunday divine service without the Lord's Supper, just as already in the church of the New Testament there was no Lord's Day without the Lord's Supper.' (*We Confess the Sacraments*, Concordia, 1985, 99).  
The Augsburg Confession confirms this ideal of Lutheran practice: 'One common Mass is observed among us on every holy day, and on other days, if any desire the sacrament, it is also administered to those who ask for it' (Article XXIV, ).  
Calvin also urged that the sacrament be 'dispensed in the church very frequently, at least once a week' (*Institutes* 4.17).

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- 7 Pastors are bound by their ordination vows faithfully to administer the sacrament of the altar in accordance with the holy Scriptures and the confessions of the Lutheran church (*Church Rites*, p140 5a). This would suggest that pastors, if possible, offer holy communion every Sunday. On the other hand, the church lays down no laws regarding frequency of reception of the sacrament, since to do so could run the risk of obscuring the centrality of the gospel in the Lord's supper.
  - 8 Pastors have a special responsibility to ensure that those who receive holy communion do so with reverence and devotion (Augsburg Confession XXIV, 6). This pastoral responsibility is exercised through the custom of administering the sacrament only to those who have been 'examined and absolved' (Augsburg Confession XXV, 1). Pastors will not only offer corporate confession and absolution in public worship but also promote the use of private confession and absolution as it is described in the Small Catechism. Pastors who offer private confession and absolution do well to lead by example in making use of this precious gift themselves.
  - 9 The promises connected with God's means of grace are not empty or unsure. God makes them effective. Therefore, wherever these means or instruments are faithfully used, we can confidently expect spiritual growth and divine gifts, in both individuals and congregations. In this way God creates and sustains his holy church on its pilgrimage through time.
  - 10 For God's people on earth, the holy supper is, in all its regular simplicity, a climax beyond compare. Here frequent regularity need not reduce the unique to the ordinary because of the riches and goodness of the great Lord who gives himself. Rather, we should appreciate frequency as a further sign of God's bounty. As we are so regularly called to the heights of heavenly joy in the holy eucharist, we anticipate the riches to come and experience a foretaste of the everlasting banquet of God.