

GATHERED GUESTS

A GUIDE TO WORSHIP IN THE LUTHERAN CHURCH

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and under” the consecrated physical elements of bread and wine. The elements deserve respect because of their divinely mandated function. Again the Good News is proclaimed that our sins are forgiven by Christ Himself and we receive the benefits of His saving act on Calvary.

25.A. GREETING OF PEACE

Jesus’ Easter greeting (John 20:19) is recalled as the pastor clearly states the proclamation of peace—“The peace of the Lord be with you always”¹⁷—which is based on 1 Corinthians 16:23 and 2 Corinthians 13:13. Luther suggested that this was another point in the service at which the gathered guests receive a statement of absolution. The pastor may express the peace and the congregation responds in a manner similar to the Salutation earlier in the service.

25.B. SHARING OF THE PEACE

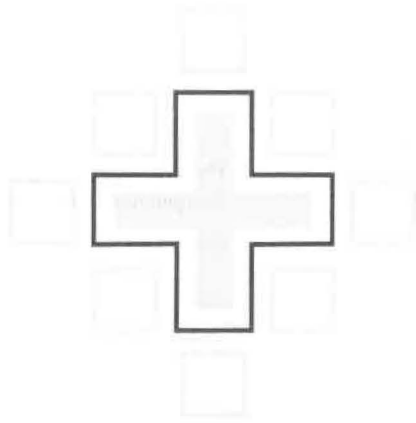
An equally effective communication of the peace invites all worshipers to exchange the words of peace with those around them. Some feel the chaos that results as people reach across pews or walk down the aisles disrupts the solemn flow of the liturgy. Originally, the peace was exchanged at the conclusion of the Service of the Word. However, the rationale for moving the exchange of peace seems to be theological—this action demonstrates the Fifth Petition of the Lord’s Prayer.¹⁸

In 1 Corinthians 11, Paul expresses the need for communal forgiveness and reconciliation. On numerous occasions, the apostles suggested that Christians greet one another with “a holy kiss” (Romans 16:16; 1 Corinthians 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:26) or “a kiss of love” (1 Peter 5:14). The sharing of the peace is an opportunity for the worshipers to be reconciled and to express the great love they have for one another.

26. AGNUS DEI

Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. John the Baptist pointed to the Paschal “Lamb of God” (Latin, *Agnus Dei*¹⁹) at the beginning of Jesus’ earthly ministry (John 1:29; cf. Isaiah 53:7; Ephesians 2:13–15). We are reminded in this canticle²⁰ that Jesus alone is the one who was our sacrifice for sin and through whom we have access to God’s mercy and peace. In this scriptural song we adore the one who comes to us as the Lamb slain for sinners.

During this first Communion hymn, the presiding minister and those assisting him may commune. It is also appropriate at this time to prepare the bread and wine for distribution. In fact, the *Agnus Dei* originally was included in the liturgy so the



LUTHERAN SERVICE BOOK

Companion to the Services

Edited by

Paul J. Grime

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D. Richard Stuckwisch Jr.

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further consider the sense of sight throughout.⁵⁰ While these gestures may relate primarily to one sense, they often involve two or more senses.

Touch. As we have seen, touching is a primary gesture for relationship between humans, God, and one another. Touch also relates to objects.

As noted earlier, Jesus blessed the children by placing His hands upon them; in many other places, He healed by touching the sick with His hands. Following Old Testament precedent for selecting prophets and priests, the New Testament, especially the Book of Acts and the Pastoral Epistles, witnesses to the apostolic ritual of laying on hands to designate those who were called to fill the Office of the Ministry and other offices in the Church and to confirm the presence of the Holy Spirit on new Christians. Laying on hands is a touch gesture used in many different places in *LSB*: at the post-baptismal anointing and blessing, at the blessing of the confirmand in Confirmation, at the absolution in both corporate and individual Confession and Absolution, at the conferral of the office in the Ordination rite, and in other places. It is a gesture that communicates Jesus' mercy, forgiveness, love, presence, and power. Here is a symbolic gesture that shares the Pentecost experience now; through it, we know the promise of our Lord that He will never leave us nor forsake us.⁵¹

LSB 159, 175, 207

The Exchange of Peace also reflects Jesus' promise to His followers. It reflects the post-Easter appearances of Jesus when He stood among His disciples and said, "Peace be with you" (John 20:19). The Church, in practicing the Exchange of Peace, participates in Jesus' peace and ritually expresses it throughout the entire Christian community. *Lutheran Service Book* locates the Exchange of Peace at the conclusion of the prayers with the following rubric: "Following the prayers, the people may greet one another in the name of the Lord, saying, 'Peace be with you,' as a sign of reconciliation and of the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Matt. 5:22–24; Eph. 4:1–3)."⁵² The Exchange of Peace during the Offertory rite serves as a symbolic bridge between the prayers, the offering, and the Service of the Sacrament. By the ritual Exchange of Peace, the assembly seals its prayer as one common act in the Spirit. It embodies through a reconciling gesture and words of reconciliation the truth that all are one Body who together offer sacrificial gifts of thanksgiving, praise, and service for the life of the world (Matthew 5:23–24). The ceremony embodies the peace they share (Colossians 3:15) as they eat and drink the peace of Christ, uniting as one those reconciled to God and one another. Ideally, the ritual moment would allow sufficient time for people in the assembly actually to reconcile with one another, confessing sins committed and seeking absolution from the one offended. In this way, Matthew 18 is ritually accomplished within the assembly, reconciliation and peace experienced as a common thread uniting the assembly that will partake of the bread of peace.

See p. 553 for more on the kiss of peace.

Various gestures associated with the Exchange of Peace reflect the cultural contexts in which the Church has practiced it. The Ancient Church exchanged peace through a ritual kiss, probably mouth-to-mouth and men with men and women with women. The kiss followed the Prayer of the Church and was also used by Christians in some places as a greeting when they saw one another in public. Over time in various cultural contexts, the physical kiss on the lips disappeared,

⁵⁰ Speaking and hearing have already been examined and so are excluded here.

⁵¹ Donghi, *Words and Gestures in the Liturgy*, 49–50.

⁵² The Exchange of Peace could be enacted at various places in the rite, such as following the absolution or following the Pax in the Service of the Sacrament.

replaced by a kiss on the cheek, an embrace, a handshake, or touching one's clasped hands to the lips and extending them to touch the tips of the hands of a fellow believer, then returning to touch one's own lips. Through these gestures, the Church practices the reconciling dominion of Christ.⁵³

We use our hands not only for acts of reconciliation but also to hold and receive things. The feeding of the five thousand contains numerous images of Jesus and the disciples taking things in their hands, holding them, and distributing them (Mark 6:30–44). Hands are very active in Christian worship as both leaders and the assembly hold, receive, and touch many things: processional crosses and torches, offering baskets, hymnals, worship folders, lectionary or Bible, ewer, baptismal shell, baptismal napkins, candles, bread, wine, chalices, flagons, pyx boxes, patens, veils, thurible or incense bowl, and on the list goes. With touching and holding objects, they are given and received, lifted and lowered, carried in procession, placed and removed, veiled and unveiled—all to draw visual attention to the objects as primary symbols or to transition focus to other acts and objects. Holding or touching something allows the object to be a means of relationship, for the abstract to become concrete in relation to our minds and spirits through our bodies.

One of the most prominent acts of holding something to place it visually at the center of the rite is the elevation of the bread and cup in the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Historically, there are potentially three elevations. There is the little elevation that occurs during the Words of Our Lord at "took bread" and "took the cup." This little elevation entails lifting the large host and chalice slightly above the level of the altar. The great elevation occurs at the end of each half of the words of consecration, that is, after the words over the bread are spoken and after the words over the cup are spoken. The host and the cup are held and elevated to at least eye level so that all may see the means of forgiveness, life, and salvation—the body and blood of Christ Jesus. The third elevation occurs during the proclamation of the Pax Domini, or The Peace of the Lord. Here, the presider elevates the chalice in his right hand and the paten in his left hand.⁵⁴ All three opportunities for elevating the body and blood visually reveal to our sight the life-giving means of salvation (John 20:20). Yet they also highlight the role of touch in the Lord's Supper. Normally, we must take hold of food in order to eat and drink. It is a very tangible activity. The written Word of God encourages us to take hold of eternal life (1 Timothy 6:12). Taking hold of something expresses the concrete nature of faith, that we cling to God in Christ firmly and with confidence.

The parallel ritual action to holding something is receiving something. So the parallel to the elevation is the reception of the body and blood of Christ Jesus in the mouth or in the hands. When in life someone wants to give us something, we receive it from them in our hands. (As an infant, we initially receive food in our mouths. Thus, receiving the Lord's Supper in the mouth highlights the dependency of the child of God upon the Lord.) Such a receiving posture is the

⁵³ Kissing is also a potential experience of touch in other Christian traditions' rites and practices. In these cases, as with the kiss of peace, kissing functions as a form of adoration that establishes relational intimacy and reciprocity between persons and between God and the believer. Kissing objects also establishes this type of relational reciprocity with Jesus.

⁵⁴ If the host and chalice are not elevated following the Words of Institution, then ritually it would be beneficial to show forth the body of the Lord by elevating a large host instead of the paten. If the presider elevated the host earlier, it might be best to elevate the paten here in order to distinguish the two elevations. But if the presider deems it beneficial to show forth the body of Christ Jesus again, then there would be nothing to prohibit elevating the host again.

to the season. Upon turning toward the altar, he pauses briefly and then may raise his hands in the *orans* position, the ancient gesture for prayer.

If there is an assistant who will read the prayer bids in the *ektene* form, he may do so facing the congregation from the horn of the altar or even from the lectern, while the presiding minister stands at the center of the altar, facing it. The pastor may lift up his arms in the *orans* position either for the entire prayer or only during the congregation's response, "Lord, have mercy." The assistant, however, does not raise his arms.

EXCHANGE OF PEACE

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

Among the many components of the Divine Service, perhaps none has a greater or more ancient attestation than the Exchange of Peace. Known in early times as the kiss of peace, it clearly derives from the greeting of peace that St. Paul encouraged the recipients of his letters to share when he wrote at the conclusion of several of his letters, "Greet one another with a holy kiss" (Romans 16:16; 1 Corinthians 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:12; see 1 Thessalonians 5:26; see also St. Peter's "kiss of love" in 1 Peter 5:14).⁴²⁰ Subsequent descriptions of the Church's worship clearly indicate that the kiss of peace became a regular feature already by the second century.⁴²¹

The earliest appearance of the kiss of peace within the service was after the reading and proclamation of the Scriptures. This part of the service, commonly called the Mass of the Catechumens, was open to all. But as the congregation prepared to move on to the celebration of the Sacrament of the Altar, the catechumens—namely, the unbaptized—were dismissed, leaving only the baptized, the faithful. It was at this point that the body of believers joined together in making intercession for the Church and the world in the Prayer of the Faithful and then, in preparation for receiving the Sacrament, ritually demonstrated the oneness they shared.

By the fourth century, however, the kiss of peace moved to a new location in much of the Western Church, beginning first in North Africa and then later in Rome. Apparently desiring to bring this sign of reconciliation closer to the Communion, the kiss of peace was moved to a location after the consecration and attached to the Pax Domini, to which the congregation responded, "And with your spirit." Though the manner of the kiss varied from place to place, the general practice was that the presider would often kiss the consecrated host and then proceed to pass that kiss to the other clergy, who would then take the kiss into the assembly. Thus, each individual did not share the kiss with every member but only with one's immediate neighbor, men sharing the kiss with men and women with other women. Over time, the kiss became more and more stylized such that in many cases only a minor embrace was permitted.⁴²² With the decreased participation in actual Communion during the Middle Ages, the kiss of peace

⁴²⁰ Some scholars have suggested that the apostle's encouragement for such a greeting was practiced immediately after the reading of his epistles, which might explain why the usual placement of the kiss of peace in the Early Church often followed the readings. See explanations in Gregory J. Lockwood, *1 Corinthians*, Concordia Commentary (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2000), 629–31, and Hermann Sasse, *This Is My Body*, rev. ed. (Adelaide: Lutheran Publishing House, 1959), 322, 324.

⁴²¹ See, for example, Justin Martyr, *First Apology* 65, and Tertullian, *De Oratio* 18, in the West; and *Apostolic Constitutions* 2.57.14 in the East.

⁴²² See Jungmann, *The Mass of the Roman Rite*, 2:327–30, for details regarding varying practices.

sometimes functioned as a substitute for communing, though in most cases it simply fell into disuse.

At the time of the Reformation, Luther provided something of a reinterpretation of the Pax Domini by speaking of it in terms not of reconciliation between communicants but as “a public absolution of the sins of the communicants, the true voice of the gospel announcing remission of sins.”⁴²³ By this time, any vestige of the kiss of peace had fallen out of use and was not connected to Luther’s use of the Pax Domini.

See pp. 612–13
for more on
the Pax Domini.

This omission persisted among Lutherans into modern times. In the Common Service and its subsequent expressions, there was no provision for an exchange of any kind, and the congregation’s response to the Pax Domini was a simple “Amen.” In the latter half of the twentieth century, however, an interest in reviving some form of exchange between congregants began to emerge. In *LBW*, the Pax Domini, there called the Peace, was moved to its more ancient location immediately following the Prayer of the Church, with the option provided for greeting one another at that time. The rubric indicates, however, that the Peace could be done after the Lord’s Prayer, which matches the practice in the Roman rite. Divine Service II in *LW* followed the latter by providing the option of exchanging the peace at the point of the Pax Domini, immediately prior to the Agnus Dei, just as *WS* had done.

LBW, p. 66

LW, pp. 171–72,
191; *WS*, p. 52

In preparing the rite for *LSB*, the Liturgy Committee believed that a return to the more ancient practice of exchanging the peace following the Prayer of the Church would be more fitting and less disruptive than during the Service of the Sacrament just prior to the distribution. The committee chose not to identify the exchange with a boldface heading like most elements in the service; rather, an extended rubric was provided in Settings One, Two, and Four that attempts to set the action within a clear theological framework (see below).

THEOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

When St. Paul gave encouragement to greet one another with a holy kiss at the conclusion of four of his epistles, it is not difficult to imagine that the words of Jesus from the Sermon on the Mount may have been echoing in the back of his mind: “If you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift” (Matthew 5:23–24). Of course, preparing to go to the Lord’s Supper is not directly analogous to the temple duties that Jesus was referencing. Still, given the concerns Paul raised about not approaching the Sacrament while harboring resentments or stoking divisive factions (see 1 Corinthians 10 and 11), his admonition to be at peace with one another, and even to enact that peace through the sharing of a kiss, seems a reasonable conclusion that one might draw. Perhaps the encouragement he gave at the conclusion of both of his Corinthian epistles to greet one another in this way bespeaks the significant challenges that the congregations in that ancient city faced.

The kiss of peace received considerable commentary during the earliest centuries of the Christian Church. In the *Apostolic Constitutions*, the following admonition is given prior to the exchange of the Lord’s peace: “Let no one have a quarrel with another. Let no one be a hypocrite.” Most intriguing is the following caveat that is given regarding the kiss: “But let no one do so deceitfully as Judas

⁴²³ *An Order of Mass and Communion* (1523), AE 53:28.

did when he betrayed the Lord with a kiss.”⁴²⁴ A few years later, Theodore of Mopsuestia, also from the East, wrote in a homily on the Eucharist concerning the kiss of peace:

All follow [the bishop’s] example by exchanging the peace with one another. By doing so they demonstrate their unity with and their love for one another. As far as possible each of us gives the peace to our neighbor, indicating, as it were, that all share the peace with all the others because by doing so we profess that all of us are to be the one Body of Christ our Lord. We are to show mutual love to one another. We are to support and assist one another. We are to consider the affairs of others as affairs of the whole community. We are to sympathize with the sorrows of others and rejoice in the good things that happen to them.⁴²⁵

It is unfortunate that the reappropriation of the kiss of peace—now commonly referred to as the Exchange of Peace—in the latter half of the twentieth century was not always accompanied by adequate catechesis concerning its purpose. All too frequently where the exchange occurs, any significant theological meaning is lost as congregation members use the occasion more as a “holy howdy” than an actual sign of reconciliation toward one another. To that end, the Liturgy Committee chose to provide a more extended rubric on this point than one finds in other parts of the service precisely to aid not only pastors but also congregants in developing a richer practice:

Following the prayers, the people may greet one another in the name of the Lord, saying, “Peace be with you,” as a sign of reconciliation and of the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Matt. 5:22–24; Eph. 4:1–3).⁴²⁶

LSB 159, 175, 207

In addition to the words of Jesus concerning reconciliation, Paul’s admonition to the Ephesians is also referenced, especially keeping in mind his words “bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:2–3).

PLANNING THE SERVICE

If the Exchange of Peace is new to the congregation, some significant catechesis will be of great benefit in advance of introducing the practice. This can be done in a variety of settings. A Bible class on the topic of forgiveness and reconciliation would be an ideal time to explain Paul’s words about greeting one another with a holy kiss, pointing out how early Christians incorporated his encouragement into their services. Likewise, when the topic comes up in preaching, this practice can serve as an appropriate sermon illustration.

If the congregation already practices the Exchange of Peace but its practice functions more as a general greeting that conveys little theological significance, the pastor will want to watch for every opportunity to talk about the original meaning

⁴²⁴ *Apostolic Constitutions* 2.57.14, in Johnson, *Worship in the Early Church*, 2:222.

⁴²⁵ Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Homily 15* on the Eucharist, 39, in Johnson, *Worship in the Early Church*, 3:264.

⁴²⁶ This rubric appears after the Prayer of the Church in Settings One, Two, and Four.

of the practice. Without impugning the desire for members to give a warm greeting to one another, one can over time begin to reorient the practice. Perhaps the pastor might invite the congregation to share the peace with one another, introducing it with words such as these: “Let us greet one another in the Lord’s name as we rejoice in the oneness we share in Christ’s forgiveness.” The pastor might then say, “Peace be with you,” as an encouragement for others to do the same. After some time of gentle catechesis, the pastor might be so bold as to say the following: “I know how much you enjoy greeting one another, and at the end of the service we’ll have plenty of time to do just that. But at this time, let us greet one another in a way that is unique to followers of Jesus as we share in the peace that He has accomplished for us. In so doing, we will be saying to one another that we are at peace not only with our Lord but also with one another!”

FOR THE PRESIDER

Following the prayers, the presiding minister turns toward the congregation. Depending on the congregation’s practice, he may initiate the exchange by inviting the congregation to greet one another in the name of the Lord. He would then extend the peace to anyone who is assisting him in the chancel before moving into the nave to greet members of the congregation. Practices vary widely concerning how many individuals the pastor should greet. Historic practice suggests that it is not necessary to greet everyone. The pastor will, however, want to be careful not to give the impression that he is avoiding anyone in particular.

OFFERING AND OFFERTORY

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT⁴²⁷

In the earliest days of Christianity, when the Eucharist was celebrated in conjunction with a meal, bread and wine were naturally at hand. Even after the Sacrament was separated from any feast, the gathering of Christians in the homes of prominent members meant that these elements were readily available; thus, there was no ritualistic presentation of the bread and wine. By the second century, an appreciation for created things began to emerge within the service, perhaps in reaction to the Gnostic disdain for the material world. At the beginning of the third century, for example, the following prayer appears in conjunction with the reception of the offering from the harvest:

O God, we give you thanks and we offer you the first fruits which you have given us to receive. You nourished them by your word; you ordered the earth to produce fruits of every kind for the joy and nourishment of the human race and of all animals. O God, we praise you for this and for all the benefits you have given us by adorning all creation with various fruits, through your Son Jesus Christ, our Lord. Through him be glory to you forever and ever. Amen.⁴²⁸

⁴²⁷ The following discussion draws from the extensive presentation by Jungmann, *The Mass of the Roman Rite*, 2:1–31.

⁴²⁸ *Apostolic Tradition* 31, in Johnson, *Worship in the Early Church*, 1:210.