



**Mission of the Cross
Lutheran Church-
LCMS**

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Mission of the Cross Lutheran Church is a member of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS) serving people in the Brainerd Lakes area of Minnesota. We are a confessional and liturgical congregation called, gathered, and strengthened by Christ's Word and Sacraments. We are Biblical in doctrine and observe the historic liturgy of the Western Church which is notable for its dignity and reverence.



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Why is Silver and Gold Used for Communion Vessels?

Communion vessels are among the items we decided to purchase in thanksgiving to God ahead of the 35th anniversary of Mission of the Cross Lutheran Church. Traditionally, communion vessels were made of silver and gold, but we rarely ask ourselves why.

The Lord hasn't left us detailed commands about how to build churches or specific instructions about the materials that should be used for communion vessels. There is no divine command, so it is truly a matter of Christian freedom. However, even when there is no command from God, we can often still make inferences from the Scriptures concerning what might be good, better, or best. In matters of freedom, one should take care that consciences aren't burdened. At the same time, in these matters of freedom something will be chosen or done, so it is good for instruction to be given based upon our knowledge of the Scriptures and wisdom.

When the Lord brought the Israelites up out of Egypt they plundered the Egyptians, taking silver and gold with them (Exodus 12:35-36). The Lord was with his people and led them by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night (Exodus 13:21). Later, silver and gold were used to make the tabernacle and its furnishings as the Lord commanded (Exodus 25:1-9). The tabernacle was a mobile tent and dwelling for the Lord to meet with his people and forgive their sins until he brought them into the promised land. Then the temple was built, and the glory of the Lord dwelled there in the midst of his people. The temple was much larger than the tabernacle, but again silver and gold were also used in its construction, furnishings, and vessels, much of which the Lord prescribed.

The Israelites soon became unfaithful, and the Lord brought down conquerors from the north who sent the Israelites into exile. This also resulted in the temple being destroyed. The glory cloud of the Lord left the temple right before it was destroyed (Ezekiel 10:18-19). The Lord brought his people back from exile, but the glory of the Lord didn't return even after the temple was rebuilt. Then after several hundred years at the beginning of John's Gospel we hear, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). The glory of the Lord had returned, but not in a building, just as Jesus said about his own body, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2:19).

The Lord's visible bodily presence disappeared from the apostles and Church when he ascended into heaven, and yet you know where to find him. In the Holy Communion the Lord is present with us and his glory draws near as we receive the very body and blood of Christ. But what vessel could possibly be fit for the King of Kings? Silver and gold were a natural and obvious choice for communion vessels on account of the example of the tabernacle and temple. However, this is far from the only reason.

The metals themselves are precious and expensive. Such extravagance and luxury have long been associated with royalty. They are also the best we have, and we certainly shouldn't give God less than our best. We should take pride in the construction and care of the church building and its furnishings since the Lord has spoken through his prophet, "Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, and this temple to lie in ruins?" (Haggai 1:4). If a congregation can't afford silver or gold or if such metals are unavailable, there is no shame in using something else. However, reverence for God would strongly suggest we use the best available to us and not merely the cheapest.

The use of our best is in keeping with the First Commandment, "You shall have no other gods" (Exodus 20:3). We should not withhold anything from the Lord, just as the Lord spoke to Abraham concerning Isaac whom he was about to sacrifice at the Lord's command, "Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me" (Genesis 22:12).

The use of our best is a sacrifice and one that points to our greatest treasure, Jesus Christ. Yet, even silver and gold aren't worth comparing with Christ and the price of our salvation just as we have learned to confess from Luther's Small Catechism,

"I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the virgin Mary, is my Lord, who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death, that I may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness, just as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity (LSB, 322).

On one hand, silver and gold pale in comparison to Christ, our dearest treasure, but on the other, they are the best we have and very fitting for the Lord. We should not doubt that the Lord—who wasn't born in a great city, for whom no room was found in the inn—is happy to dwell among us in vessels like these. He who for salvation came down from heaven and was crucified for our sins is pleased to come to our lips in these vessels. The Lord has instituted the precious sacrament for this very purpose to give us his best which far exceeds ours through which he forgives our sins and comforts us with his presence.

Silver and gold not only remind us of the tabernacle and temple, but of the heavenly city of God that we will soon see and enjoy. The Lord gave St. John a vision of it, and yes, it was adorned with gold and other precious materials (Revelation 21:18).

Another reason silver and gold are desirable materials for communion vessels is their antimicrobial properties. Lee Maxwell explains,

The use of the chalice (or ‘common cup’) used to be universal in Lutheranism but in the last century its use has become infrequent. One of the reasons for replacing it with ‘individual glass’ was hygiene. People believe (mistakenly) that germs are easily transmitted by using the chalice. However, the combination of the noble metal of the chalice (such as gold or silver) and the alcohol content of the wine makes the possibility for germs to be transmitted almost nonexistent (Maxwell, *The Altar Guild Manual*, 102).

Maxwell goes on to say that questions about disease transmission are best answered by scientific research. He mentions a study on the possibility of disease transmission from the use of the chalice that was performed by professors Burroughs and Hemmers. Their findings were published in the *Journal of Infectious Diseases*:

Experiments on the transmission of organisms from one person to another by common use of the chalice showed that 0.001% of the organisms transferred even under the most favorable conditions and when conditions approximated those of actual use, no transmission could be detected (Maxwell, 102).

Studies like the one mentioned by Maxwell should have carried the day during Covid, and yet fears about one’s health and false information not only tempted some to not use the chalice, but to disobey the Lord and forego communion and the Divine Service altogether. This isn’t the first time there were concerns about a virus, and it probably won’t be the last. It wasn’t long ago that some suggested that we might be able to contract the AIDS virus by using the chalice, but such an idea has been debunked.

We should encourage the use of the chalice in our midst, not only on account of the antimicrobial properties of silver and gold, but especially because it is a visible sign of Christ and our unity in Him just as it says in our hymnal on the basis of 1 Corinthians 10:17, “For we are all one bread and one body, even as we are all partakers of this one bread and drink from the one cup” (LSB, 291).

At the same time, we ought to be sympathetic to our brothers and sisters who for one reason or another choose to receive the blood of Christ in an individual cup. The chalice, even if it is beautifully adorned with silver and gold, isn’t required for a worthy reception of the Lord’s Supper. This also is a matter of Christian freedom, and consciences shouldn’t be burdened. It is ideal that everyone receive the blood of Christ from the chalice and where that isn’t yet done, love and charity must prevail.

Let us also remember that “individual cups” have an unfortunate name since communion isn’t only a matter of individual’s communion with Jesus. We commune with Jesus and each other and the cup is a visible sign of that unity. Even without the exclusive use of the chalice that is still what is happening in our midst. Let us ever remain in the unity and remember how truly blest we are that God gives us his best, his very own Son. Here in the Lord’s Supper, he has united many individuals into one confession and faith of the one Christ and gives us the salvation that silver and gold could never buy.

Schedule of Divine Liturgies for May

May 5	Rogate (Easter +5)	9:30 a.m.	Divine Service
May 9	Ascension of Our Lord	6:00 p.m.	Divine Service
May 12	Exaudi (Easter +6)	9:30 a.m.	Divine Service
May 19	Pentecost	9:30 a.m.	Divine Service
May 26	Holy Trinity		

Birthdays, Baptisms, Confirmations, and Anniversaries

May 1	Shelley Fritch	Confirmation
May 9	Patricia Berg	Confirmation
May 10	Kevin Brand	Confirmation
May 12	Dan Marquardt	Confirmation
May 12	Debra Wessels	Birth
May 13	Judy Hansen	Baptism
May 14	Diana Ulring	Confirmation
May 16	Phil Juracek	Confirmation
May 16	Arlyne Selvestra	Baptism
May 16	William Traphagan	Confirmation
May 17	Rhonda Trees	Confirmation
May 20	Buzz Fritch	Confirmation
May 20	Diane Johnson	Confirmation
May 20	Arlyne Selvestra	Confirmation
May 21	Jerry Ferguson	Confirmation
May 21	Jan Staricha	Confirmation
May 21	Diana Ulring	Birth
May 22	Garry McCreary	Baptism
May 22	Sandra Tiegen	Confirmation
May 23	Jeff Tobias	Confirmation
May 23	Mark Wessels	Confirmation
May 25	Garry McCreary	Confirmation
May 25	Richard Radintz	Confirmation
May 26	Paula Juracek	Confirmation
May 30	Joel Ulring	Confirmation

Mailing Address

We decided to get a PO Box for the church to avoid the issues with our mailbox being buried by snowplows during the winter. It also has the advantage of better security. Please make sure that anything you send to the church is addressed to: PO Box 718, Crosslake, Minnesota 56442.