

fed and
forgiven



Names for Holy Communion and What They Mean

Lutherans use several names for the communion meal because one name alone can't capture the depth of meaning of this meal. Just as we appreciate the beauty of a diamond when we see all its facets together, we come to a deeper understanding of the communion meal when we understand its many different aspects. Every name for the communion meal recognizes that this meal is a means of grace in which we encounter and receive the love of God shown to us in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ in the eating and drinking of bread and wine.

Holy Communion

The name "holy communion" emphasizes the relationship between the assembly and Christ and the relationship among those who eat the meal. When we eat and drink the bread and wine of the meal, we receive the body of Christ as the presence of Jesus and become the body of Christ as a community. We are bound together as one community by sharing this meal together, now and with those from every time and place.

Lord's Supper

Calling the communion meal the "Lord's supper" emphasizes the one who hosts this meal: the crucified and risen Lord, Jesus Christ, who invites us into his presence and to share in the meal. "Lord's supper" recalls the story when Jesus instituted this meal with his disciples and also indicates a feast yet to come when Jesus comes again to share a great feast with all who believe in him. The Lord's supper in which we participate today connects past events, present reality, and the future hope. In all time, it is Jesus who gives us the gift of the feast.

Eucharist

"Eucharist" comes from the Greek word for thanksgiving, and it describes both the communion meal and the whole worship service. "Eucharist" emphasizes the assembly's celebration and thanksgiving in word and song for all of God's creation, for the gift of salvation in Jesus Christ, and for God's gift of the communion meal.

Mass

"Mass" comes from the Latin word "missa" which means "mission." In the communion meal, we are not only connected to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, but we are also connected to all the joys and needs of others who gather at the meal and throughout the world. "Mass" points toward the mission of Christ in service to the world. The meal strengthens Christians to serve those in need, including those who are hungry, hurting, lonely, and hopeless. After sharing the meal, the assembly is sent into the world to serve as Christ would with the command, "Go in peace. Serve the Lord."

Sacrament of the Altar

The altar is representative of Christ's presence in the worship space. Altars are traditionally used as a place of sacrifice and offering, and using "Sacrament of the Altar" emphasizes the gift Jesus Christ gives by offering himself as a final sacrifice for the sake of the world. The gift of the body and blood of Christ in the meal then assures us of the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. The altar of sacrifice is transformed, once and for all, into a meal table where we gather at Christ's invitation.

