

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN SOUTHERN AFRICA
CAPE CHURCH
EVANGELIES-LUTHERSE KERK IN SUIDER-AFRIKA
KAAPSE KERK
EVANGELISH-LUTHERISCHE KIRCHE IM SÜDLICHEN AFRIKA
KAPKIRCHE

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To
The members and Congregations
Church Committee Members
Pastors

Celebrating Holy Communion during the Lockdown

Dear sisters and brothers, due to the Lockdown as result of the covid-19 virus pandemic we are faced with many challenges, which also create opportunities to find new ways of being church with one another. It is encouraging to hear and see how much is currently being done on congregational level to keep in touch with the members and in creative ways build community and serve, encourage and empower through the Word of God by using the virtual and printed media. It is further encouraging to hear that in many instances more people listen-in at home through social media, than what the average attendance has been on a Sunday morning. Congregations have become creative in ways of sharing the message with those who do not have smart phones or internet access. –In all this praying for one another plays an important role.

One aspect of church life and celebrating together that is dearly missed by many is the celebration of Holy Communion. Being strengthened by sharing and receiving the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ is good and encourages us for daily living. I have heard many saying: now we are not able to celebrate the sacrament as we are not gathering as church!

Dear sisters and brothers, we can, and we may celebrate Holy Communion as we gather in our homes. The doctrine of the Priesthood of all Believers reminds us in Christ that by the blood of Christ we are worthy to serve in His name. In his Small Catechism Martin Luther has given us sound teaching on the meaning and gift of Holy Communion.

Allow me to reflect on and share with you two different ways of experiencing the importance of the Sacrament of Holy Communion in this time.

a. Fasting from Holy Communion

Fasting is a conscious decision taken to give up something that is dear to me for a time or season for spiritual reasons. Fasting generally means going without food for such time. In Holy Communion we eat and drink the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ and are spiritually fed.

We find ourselves in extraordinary times due to the Lockdown and Covid-19. In such a time of crisis such a spiritual discipline of fasting from Holy Communion could strengthen us and encourage us to focus on the Bread of Life, Jesus Christ who feeds us through His life-giving word. Martin Luther reminds us that the Word is sufficient to nourish our faith.

Fasting and Prayer are spiritual disciplines that belong together. Jesus teaches on both in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6). Let us carry one another in prayer during this time of fasting.

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Holy Communion is important, and the time will come when we will celebrate it again as we gather as the local church.

In an attached document you find a sermon on Fasting. Maybe during the Holy Week you wish to fast and this reflection may encourage you on this journey.

b. Celebrating Holy Communion in your home.

Although for the sake of community and order, we usually only celebrate Holy Communion when we are together and the pastor or an appointed preacher is there to celebrate it. We may celebrate Holy Communion at home in this time, especially when we feel a need for the special comfort such a celebration gives to a home community e.g. a birthday or special day of celebration, or of course when there is illness or other distress.

Because Holy Communion is the meal of the whole faith community, when we do celebrate it in our homes it is important to let our brothers and sisters know that we are celebrating it, for them to intercede for us in prayer and rejoice with us in the celebration. Therefore, please inform your pastor about the celebration and mention who the celebrant was and who participated.

We attach a simple order for such a celebration..

A sermon on the topic of Holy Communion is included for your reflection.

We remain united in prayer and thought in these trying times with its many challenges and opportunities.

Kind regards,

Bishop Gilbert Filter and the members of Church Council