

# A Brief History of Weekly Communion

## I. Apostolic Times

- Acts 2:42; Acts 20:7; I Cor 11

## II. Early Church Record

- The Didache. It was written about the year 100 AD and possibly earlier, even before the last apostles had died. In this writing the people are directed to, “Assemble in common on the Lord’s own day to break bread and offer thanks; but first confess your sins so that your sacrifice may be pure.”
- Justin Martyr- abt 150 AD: On the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things. Then we all rise together and pray, and, as we before said, when our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and the president [the pastor or minister who presided] in like manner offers prayers and thanksgivings according to his ability, and the people assent, saying Amen; and there is a distribution to each and a participation of that over which thanks have been given, and to those who are absent a portion is sent by the deacons. [\[1\]](#)

## III. The Middle Ages- a number of problems (surprise, surprise!)

- Liturgy in Latin- people don’t understand- communed less and less. The Sacrament of the Altar became a “spectator’s sport”
- Thomas Aquinas day 1277- 2 to 4 times a year was a LOT.
- Catholic Church had to MANDATE communion at least 4x year/ Easter!
- Communion in one kind- Stopped giving the wine/blood to the people.
- What does Jesus SAY: I Cor 11:23-26- \_\_\_ \_\_\_ ! But people were not doing it.

## IV. Early Lutherans

- Luther Reed notes: The church has everywhere retained the Service for its normal Sunday service. Other Protestant churches promptly abandoned the historic liturgy and established a type of preaching service separate from the Holy Communion.... The Lutheran Church restored the “primitive synthesis” of the early church by including in balanced proportion the preaching of the Word and the administration of the Sacrament in the principal service of the day. [\[2\]](#)
- “The Twin Peaks”- Distinctly Lutheran elevation of Word and Sacrament vs Catholics/Reformed

## V. Modern Era- Three things that chipped away at the Lutheran practice of every week communion.

- Pietism
  - The Sacrament was surrounded with an atmosphere of awe and fear; excessive emphasis was placed upon personal and intensely introspective preparation; and there grew up in the people’s minds a dread of possibly being unworthy and of “being guilty” of the body and

blood of Christ. These morbid and exaggerated emphases upon preparation for the Sacrament, rather than upon the Sacrament itself, are still occasionally in evidence.<sup>[3]</sup>

- Rationalism
  - Reason and understanding elevated above Scripture- loss of belief in the real presence= Sacrament loses value in their minds
- The influence of Reformed./ Baptist theology on the Frontier
  - “Circuit Riders”
- Twentieth Century – Present
  - 1920s-1930s- often quarterly
  - 1960s-1970s- monthly
  - Today – 2x a month/ every Week
  - 1995 LCMS Convention: Resolved That the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod in convention encourage its pastors and congregation to study the scriptural, confessional, and historical witness to every Sunday Communion with a view to recovering the opportunity for receiving the Lord’s Supper each Lord’s day.

Source: COMMUNION EVERY SUNDAY  
WHY?  
by Rev. Klemet Preus  
Epiphany 2001

<sup>[1]</sup> In the Stead of Christ, Kent Heimbigner, Repristination Press, 1997, p. 69-70

<sup>[2]</sup> Reed, p. 243-244

<sup>[3]</sup> Reed, p. 244