



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

August 2014

Dear friend in Christ,

Grace and peace to you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ! We are writing about an important conversation that we need your help to facilitate across our church. The question we have been invited to consider is: Who is welcome and invited to receive Holy Communion in ELCA congregations?

The recommended practice in our church is that people who are baptized are invited to receive Holy Communion. Though this is the practice set out in the ELCA's statement, "The Use of the Means of Grace," there is wide variety of practice in this church.

Now the ELCA Church Council is calling all ELCA members into a conversation about "The Use of the Means of Grace," particularly on this matter of invitation to Holy Communion. Your leadership in engaging your faith community and fellow Lutherans in this conversation will be critical to our church as we seek to be faithful and grounded, yet hospitable and mission-minded in administering Holy Communion.

The recommendation also suggests that this matter not be studied in isolation from the rest of the statement, but rather we take this opportunity to encourage a renewed study of and conversation about "The Use of the Means of Grace" in our congregations.

As you plan for the upcoming church year, we hope you will find ways to engage in this important conversation in your setting. Perhaps you'll facilitate a small group study, workshop or adult education series. Resources to guide your discussion are now available at www.ELCA.org/worship. The study guide is flexible and may be adapted for use within different contexts. You may focus on the one issue or you may delve into the richness of many.

Your feedback is critical to our work, and it will be reviewed by the churchwide organization's worship team and shared with the ELCA Church Council for future direction. Your feedback may include:

- + Brief description of the nature of the conversation (Who was involved? In what setting? Over what period of time?)
- + Short summary of the conversations (What issues were discussed? What was affirmed? What was a surprise?)
- + Suggestions for future consideration
- + Anything else you would like to share

Please share thoughts, ideas and concerns that emerge from conversation with the churchwide organization's worship team by emailing worship@elca.org by May 2015.

Thank you for your faithful service and for the ways you will help members of this church to prayerfully consider the question of whom we invite and welcome to receive Holy Communion.

Peace,

Elizabeth A, Eaton, Presiding Bishop

Kevin L. Strickland, Director for Worship