

# **THE ORIGIN AND NATURE OF THE SERVICE WITH COMMUNION OF THE LCA, AS PUBLISHED IN THE LUTHERAN HYMNAL, 1973.**

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The Service with Holy Communion which was published in the 1973<sup>1</sup> *Lutheran Hymnal* is a full eucharistic service which contains both the service of the word and the service of the sacrament. It sought to preserve the ancient liturgical and musical heritage of the western church, and to provide for Lutherans in Australia a theologically sound English service order which could be accepted by all and serve as a basis for unity. Developed as a joint effort between the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Australia (ELCA) and the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in Australia (UELCA), it was the first service order used by the Lutheran Church of Australia (LCA), which formed when these two churches merged in 1966. It was included in the *Lutheran Hymnal with Supplement* (LCA 1989: 6-22) with only minor alterations, and is now one of three orders of service which have been approved by the LCA for the communion service (Kleinig 1998a: 33).

## **A Brief History of the Development of the Service Order**

The first Lutherans in Australia came here from Prussia. In the 1820s and 30s the Prussian King Friedrich Wilhelm III tried to unite the Lutheran and Reformed churches in his lands to form the United Protestant Church of Prussia. This involved producing a new book of worship orders, entitled *Kirchen-Agenda für die Hof- und Domkirche in Berlin* [Church worship book for the court and cathedral church in Berlin]. When some Lutherans opposed the use of the new worship book, attempts were made to force it upon them (Schubert 1991: 147). The main objections which they had to the new worship book revolved around its lack of precision. The words in themselves could be confessed by Lutherans, but they were deliberately written with sufficient ambiguity that the Reformed could interpret them differently. This was especially so in the Lord's Supper, where although the words of institution were present, the formula for distribution could be interpreted in such a way that the real presence was denied (Schubert 1988: 151-152). The theological differences

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<sup>1</sup> The *Lutheran Hymnal* was officially dedicated on October 28, 1973 at a service in the Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Adelaide (Graetz 1988: 218).

between the Lutherans and the Reformed had not been solved, and many Lutherans felt that if they accepted an ambiguous service order they would be failing to make a clear confession of their faith. Some of these Lutherans, including the groups led by Pastor Kavel and Pastor G. D. Fritzsche, decided to emigrate rather than accept the union (Schubert 1991: 147-148). This shows how important it was for them to make a clear and unambiguous confession of their faith. It also shows that they believed that what they did in worship was an important part of this confession.

The first Lutherans came to Australia in 1838 with Pastor Kavel (Graetz 1988: 28), but soon other groups followed. Each of these groups brought with them the orders of service which they had been using in Germany. In the early nineteenth century each regional church in Germany had its own service orders, and when Lutherans from these various regional churches came together in Australia, there was no common pattern of worship. Each of the various Synods and Lutheran churches in Australia, often operating in the same town, was using different service orders from the others (Graetz 1988: 54).<sup>2</sup> Therefore as soon as people moved outside of the confines of their own congregation, they were confronted with an unfamiliar liturgy which made it difficult for them to feel at home and participate fully (cf Commission on Worship, LCA 1987: 2).

During the nineteenth century the situation amongst American Lutherans was not much different. There were many Lutheran synods and each had different orders of service. This lack of common liturgical material was an obstacle to their union. Then in 1885 three of these synods worked together to produce a common service order in English. Their intention was to produce a service order which preserved the 'common consent of the pure Lutheran liturgies of the Sixteenth Century' (General Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the United States 1899: 21-22). This order was first published in 1888 and became known as the *Common Order* (Reed 1960: 189). It has been widely used in America since then (Inter-Lutheran Commission of Worship 1979: 6-7).

Quite apart from the variety of service orders in use in Australia was the problem of language. The German Lutheran immigrants had continued to worship in German after they came to Australia, but when their children grew up speaking English as their first language, services in German rapidly became unintelligible to them. Therefore an English liturgy became a matter of necessity (Leske 1996: 178-179).<sup>3</sup> The first complete English Liturgy to be used in Australia was the *Church Liturgy*

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<sup>2</sup> This situation had not completely disappeared by the middle of this century. Pastor H. F. W. Proeve recalls that in 1950 he lead three different services at three different churches in the Barossa Valley on the same day, using three different orders of service, all of which were in German (Proeve 1998b).

<sup>3</sup> C.F. Graebner noted in his preface to the 1914 *Church Liturgy for Evangelical Lutheran Congregations in Australia* the need for the change from German to English:

for *Evangelical Lutheran Congregations in Australia* published in 1914 by the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Australia (ELSA)<sup>4</sup> (Leske 1996: 179; Graetz 1988: 96). The content of this service order came almost directly from the Missouri Synod (Proeve<sup>5</sup> 1998b).<sup>6</sup> Then in 1922 the ELSA published the *Australian Lutheran Hymn Book* (ALH) which contained two communion orders of service. The first was loosely based on the *Church Liturgy for Evangelical Lutheran Congregations in Australia*, while the second was based on the *Common Order*. Although this started out as an ELSA venture, it was later widely used in the UELCA<sup>7</sup>, and became a quiet force in bringing the two churches together (Leske 1996: 180).

In the 1940s the UELCA decided to publish a new tune book and an appendix to the ALH (UELCA 1953: 85; LCA 1989: v), and in 1947 the general convention of the ELCA also appointed a committee to revise the hymn book (ELCA 1953: 126). The UELCA made approaches to ELCA to see if their efforts could be cooperative so that a common hymnal could be preserved. At first the approaches were unsuccessful, but eventually agreement was reached, and it was decided that the best course of action was to publish a new hymnal rather than to revise the old (UELCA 1953: 85; ELCA 1953: 126). The two committees first met together in August 1951 (ELCA 1953: 126), and the next year they joined to form a single committee (HBC Aug. 1952). In 1959 a sub-committee was formed to work on the liturgy, and they decided to use the *Common Order* as the basis for their work (HBC May 1960). Work was slowed by the fact that most of the men on the hymn book committee were busy church leaders and were involved in negotiations over the impending merger of the two churches (Leske 1996: 249). Yet by 1966 the order of service was completed. It was officially used for the first time on the 29th of October, 1966 at the Tanunda Show Hall, with Pastor H. F. W. Proeve officiating. This was for the opening service of the first convention of the newly

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‘The time has come for a transition to the more general use of the English language. This process will, indeed, in some localities be a gradual one, but even now the younger generation are abandoning the use of the German language ... The Liturgy which is herewith handed over to the use of the church is, therefore, not a needless addition to our ecclesiastical literature’ (Evangelical Lutheran Synod in Australia 1914: III-IV).

As Leske points out (Leske 1996: 178), the experiences of World War I such as the burning of German church papers also provided impetus for the change from German to English.

<sup>4</sup> The ELSA later became known as the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Australia (ELCA).

<sup>5</sup> Pastor H. F. W. Proeve was general secretary of the UELCA from 1945 to 1966, and then general secretary of the LCA from 1966 until 1984. He became a member of the joint hymn book committee in 1954 (HBC may 1954) and was still a member of this committee when the hymn book was completed in 1973 (LCA 1973: v).

<sup>6</sup> For a fuller treatment of the historical links between the Lutherans in America and Australia refer to Koch, J. B. , 1975, *When the Murray meets the Mississippi*, Adelaide, Lutheran Publishing House.

<sup>7</sup> By 1940 the ELCA formally recognised the UELCA as co-owner of the Word Edition of the ALH. As the 1940 edition shows, the ALH was by then a joint publication of the Lutheran Publishing Company, which was operated by the ELCA, and the Lutheran Book Depot, which was operated by the UELCA (Graetz 1988: 182).

formed Lutheran Church of Australia (Leske 1996: 226-227; LCA 1973: viii). It therefore truly was the first fruits of church union (cf ELCA 1966: 43).

## **Features of the Service Order**

A detailed commentary on the *Common Order* entitled *The Lutheran Liturgy* has been written by Luther Reed (1960), and so we will not discuss the features of the *Common Order* here. The following are the most significant differences between the *Common Order* as found in the ALH and the 1973 service with holy communion.

### Confession and Absolution

The confession and absolution in the 1973 service with communion did not retain the text of the original 1888 *Common Order* (General Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the United States 1899: 44), but was instead adapted from the order for ‘Confession before Holy Communion’ in the 1914 *Church Liturgy* (ELSA 1914: 98-99). The original version of the confession and absolution in the *Common Order* was derived chiefly from Melancthon’s order for Mecklenburg (1552) (Reed 1960: 258). This was retained in the ALH (1925: 22) and the hymn book committee recognised its value by retaining it in the 1973 service without communion (LCA 1973: 27). However, it was considered that in the context of the full eucharistic service ‘a more searching confession’ was desirable (Proeve 1998a).

The decisions of the hymn book committee show how much they emphasized that confession and absolution is the proper preparation for the Lord’s supper (cf 1 Cor 11:28). Earlier this century it was quite common for there to be a confessional service on Saturday evenings for those who wished to attend holy communion the next day (Proeve 1998a). An order for such a confessional service was included in the 1973 *Lutheran Hymnal* (LCA 1973: 38-40). Initially the hymn book committee resolved that the preparatory confessional service should be printed immediately before the service with communion in the hymnal, and that the service with communion should be printed without a confession of sins and beginning with the introit. They also resolved that if a preparatory service was not held, then the confession of sins could be placed either before the introit or immediately before the communion (HBC January 1962: 2). The latter was the more common practice in Germany at the time (Proeve 1998a). However, these resolutions were rescinded (HBC May 1966). It was decided instead to include the confession and absolution in the service with communion and to print this order first in the hymnal, with the confessional service appearing later. This reflected the fact that times were changing and preparatory confessional services were no longer standard

practice (Proeve 1998a). Yet the committee still thought it was desirable to precede holy communion with the more searching confession and absolution which was contained in the preparatory service, so they used this to replace the original confession and absolution of the *Common Order* (Proeve 1998a). A rubric was added that if the service began with the confessional service, then it should proceed from there straight to the introit (LCA 1973: 1).

The version of the confession and absolution which was adopted contains three questions which invite responses of affirmation from the participants.<sup>8</sup> Also, in contrast to the wording in the original *Common Order*, the absolution is worded in such a way that it cannot be mistaken as anything other than a performative declaration of absolution by the pastor, rather than a general announcement of grace (LCA 1973: 1-2, 39-40).

A final word needs to be added with regard to the confession and absolution. Many of the old German orders of service contained a formula for the retention of sins, which declared to those who did not repent and believe that their sins were not forgiven. There was much debate over whether or not such a formula should be added to the Australian order of service. In the end a compromise formula was adopted (Proeve 1998a) which was, ‘God forbid that through impenitence and unbelief any among you should reject His grace and forgiveness, and your sins be retained’ (LCA 1973: 2). This is a warning that sins may be retained rather than a performative declaration to those who do not repent and believe that their sins are retained (Proeve 1998a).

### Kyrie

The 1973 service with communion gave the option of using either Greek or English for the minister’s part of the Kyrie. German orders had traditionally used the Greek, but the services contained in the ALH (1925: 1,24) used the English. The ELCA, because of its Missouri Synod ties, had ceased using German orders earlier than the UELCA, and the final decision to use the English as an alternative for the minister’s part was a compromise between the two synods (Proeve 1998a).

The Kyrie as used in the 1973 service with communion is a surviving fragment of a litany type prayer (Reed 1960: 267). It is the beggar’s cry for help in time of need (Matt 15:22; 17:15; Mark 10:47-48; Reed 1960: 267), rather than a penitential prayer. However, in ‘The Order of Morning Service with Holy Communion’ in the ALH it was used as a penitential prayer (1925: 1). The

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<sup>8</sup> The service of ‘Confession before Holy Communion’ in the 1914 *Church Liturgy* had an additional two questions which were addressed to the believer. They were: ‘Do you heartily forgive those who have offended against you, even as you desire to be forgiven?’, and ‘Finally, do you believe that the absolution I pronounce in the name of Jesus Christ, is God’s forgiveness?’ (Evangelical Lutheran Synod in Australia 1914: 99).

English in the 1973 order was simply 'Lord, have mercy', as opposed to the 'Lord, have mercy upon us' of the *Common Order* (ALH 1925: 24). The hymn book committee decided to drop the 'upon us' to fit in with the reintroduced Greek (Proeve 1998b). This also has the effect of emphasizing the universal nature of the Kyrie. In the Kyrie we pray for the needs of the whole world, not just the needs of the congregation (Kleinig 1998a: 41). The omission of the 'upon us' serves to show more clearly that the Kyrie is a prayer for alms for the whole world rather than a penitential prayer for the sins of the congregation.

### Old Testament Reading

In keeping with the recent trend (Proeve 1998a; c.f. Commission on the Liturgy and Hymnal 1969: 3), the 1973 service with communion saw a reintroduction of regular Old Testament readings into the service (LCA 1973: 7). The orders of service in the ALH (1925: 4-5,27,33), as well as the early versions of the *Common Order* used in America (cf General Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the United States 1899: 48,53; The United Lutheran Church in America 1929: 15-16), only contained an epistle and a gospel reading. In the Australian lectionary, occasionally an Old Testament reading was used in the place of the epistle, such as Isa 52:13 - 53:12 on Good Friday (ALH 1925: 56), and most Sundays had alternative Old Testament lessons listed which could replace the epistle (ALH 1925: 51-65). However, on most Sundays the Old Testament was not read (Proeve 1998a). This neglect of reading the Old Testament in worship was rectified in the *Lutheran Hymnal* of 1973. The Old Testament pericopes which were listed in the hymnal (LCA 1973: 63-96) were taken from the Eisenach Lutheran Conference of the latter part of last century (Proeve 1998a).

### Prayer of the Church

The prayer of the church which was found in the original *Common Order* was retained in a modified form in the service without communion (LCA 1973: 36), but for the service with communion it was decided that it should be replaced with a shorter general prayer (HBC May 1966). This general prayer first appeared in America in the *Church Book* of the General Council in 1868, although it may have been translated or adapted from German sources (Reed 1960: 662). It has since been retained in other American Hymnals (The Evangelical Synodical Conference of North America 1941: 13; Commission on the Liturgy and Hymnal 1969: 239). To this general prayer was added a petition that the Holy Spirit would be granted to the communicants (HBC May 1966; LCA 1973: 11).

## Holy Communion<sup>9</sup>

In the ALH the service of the word (1925: 21-36) and the service of the sacrament (1925: 37-43) were printed as two separate orders. When holy communion was not celebrated the service of the word would end with the benediction (1925: 36), but when holy communion was celebrated one service would follow on from the other. However, it had become a common practice for those who were not receiving the Lord's supper to leave when the service of the word was completed and not stay for the service of the sacrament (Proeve 1998a). In the 1973 *Lutheran Hymnal* the service of the word and the service of the sacrament were combined into a single service with holy communion (LCA 1973: 1-25), and a service without communion was printed separately (LCA 1973: 26-37). This better reflects the fact that holy communion is the culmination and completion of the service of the word (cf Reed 1960: 321), not something additional which is tacked on at the end.

One significant change was made to the words of dismissal following communion. 'The Body of our Lord Jesus Christ and His precious Blood strengthen and preserve you in the true faith unto everlasting life' (ALH 1925: 41) was changed to 'The Body of our Lord Jesus Christ and His precious Blood strengthen and preserve you in body and soul to life eternal' (LCA 1973: 21). This wording comes from the liturgy of Wilhelm Löhe (1884: 37). The hymn book committee decided unanimously to include these words, and their decision was based on the theological opinion that holy communion is *Arznei* (medicine) for the body as well as for the soul (Proeve 1998a). This was the view of Martin Luther and many of the early church fathers (Sasse 1977: 148), and is expressed in the Lutheran confessions (LC 5, 68). Hermann Sasse had an important influence in making Australian Lutherans aware of this. Luther knew that according to Scripture the human body is the object of God's redemption as well as the human soul (Sasse 1977: 150), and that like baptism, the sacrament of the altar anticipates our resurrection and complete union with Christ in body and soul (Sasse 1977: 149). It therefore truly is the 'medicine of immortality' which has the power to give life to our bodies (Sasse 1977: 147-148).<sup>10</sup>

## The Salutation

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<sup>9</sup> There is an additional change to the order of holy communion which was discussed, but in the end was not made (HBC December 1961). This is the inclusion of some form of a eucharistic prayer. Luther completely abolished the use of all parts of the eucharistic prayer apart from the Lord's Prayer, because in the Roman Church it had become corrupted and bound up with the sacrifice of the mass (HBC December 1961; Reed 1960: 339-340). In recent times many Lutherans have advocated returning to the practice of the early church (see Reed 1960: 336-338; c.f. *Didache*, IX.1 - X.7, reproduced in Stevenson 1987: 10), and, like most other Christians, using a eucharistic prayer in our services (Reed 1960: 348-349). It is interesting to note that in 'The Service - Alternate Form' in the *Lutheran Hymnal with Supplement* and also in 'The Liturgy in Modern Form' in *Worship Today* (Schubert and Schmidt 1988: 18) the LCA has reintroduced eucharistic prayers (LCA 1989: 72).

The 1973 service with communion follows the 1914 *Church Liturgy* (ELSA 1914: 16) by placing the post-communion salutation before the post-communion thanksgiving, rather than following the *Common Order* and placing the salutation before the benedicamus (ALH 1925: 43). The salutation rests on Christ's promise of his presence (Matt 28:20), and acknowledges that the risen Lord is present with the congregation as the chief liturgist who leads all aspects of the worship (Heb 8:2,6; Kleinig 1998a: 43). When the salutation is placed before the benedicamus it is being used as a prelude to the benediction, and is indicating that the one who gives the blessing is Christ himself (Kleinig 1998c). When it is placed before the thanksgiving, it is indicating that the risen Lord Jesus is leading the prayers to God the Father (Kleinig 1998a: 44). This is more consistent with the way the salutation is used in other locations in the service (LCA 1973: 7,12). When it is used in this way it serves to remind the congregation that even in the sacrificial elements of worship, where they are active participants, Christ himself is active in leading them.

### Musical Setting

The musical setting for the order is based on the *Evangelisches Kirchengesangbuch* (1958: 5-15). This hymnal came out in the early 1950s and was common to all Lutheran churches in Germany. This was a landmark agreement between the various regional churches in Germany (Proeve 1998a). The form of the musical setting is Gregorian chant, also known as plain-song. It has a freer flowing melody line than the hymnic setting in the 1925 ALH which had a straighter rhythm and chords for every note (Collyer 1998). Gregorian chant was developed for the liturgy in the early middle ages and was carried over into many Lutheran orders of the sixteenth century (Reed 1960: 221). The adaptation of this musical setting to the order of service was mainly the work of James Thiele (Proeve 1998a), a layperson who was employed full time for two years to work on the music for the hymn book (ELCA 1965: 133).

### **Changes which were made for the Supplement**

In 1987 the LCA produced the *Supplement to the Lutheran Hymnal* (*Lutheran Hymnal with Supplement* 1989: ii). This retained the 1973 service with communion with some alterations. Most of the changes were to do with making the language more modern and did not substantially change the content. However, the following substantial changes were made.

### Alternative Absolution

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<sup>10</sup> For further discussion see Hermann Sasse, *This is my Body*, pages 147-150. See also Commission on Worship, LCA, statement 18, 'The use of the Service with Communion for the ministry to the sick'.



An alternative absolution was included after the confession of sins (LCA 1989: 7). This was to correct two problems which had arisen with the original form of the absolution. The first problem was that some people in the church were objecting to the fact that a human being can forgive sins. Therefore it became important that the scriptural mandate for the pastor's authority to forgive sins was made clear. The alternative absolution does this by providing the scriptural mandate in the opening sentence. The second problem was to do with the warning at the end of the absolution. Instead of leaving the absolution ringing as the last word in the ears of the hearers, this warning could sound as if the absolution which had just been given is conditional and could be taken away. In the alternative absolution the warning is given in the first sentence by the scriptural mandate, so that the absolution which follows is the last word (Kleinig<sup>11</sup> 1998b).

### Prayer of the Church

In the 1973 service with communion the Prayer of the Church was one long prayer said by the pastor, which the congregation affirmed as its own by saying 'Amen' at the end (LCA 1973: 11). In the *Lutheran Hymnal with Supplement* this prayer was broken up with the liturgical refrain 'Lord, in your mercy: Hear our prayer' (LCA 1989: 14). The invitation 'Let us pray for the whole people of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs' was also added (LCA 1989: 13). With or without the refrain and the invitation, the function of the prayer is the same. However, the refrain along with the invitation serves to encourage the congregation to recognise that this prayer is their own, and that through it they actively exercise their role as the priesthood of all believers (Reed 1960: 315).

The 1973 Service with Holy Communion represents a very carefully thought out approach to worship, where great attention is given to detail. It has been developed so that it clearly and unambiguously puts Lutheran sacramental theology into practice. It is not a new order of service, but seeks to continue the divine service through which God has served his church ever since its foundation. Those who worked on the committee which produced the order of service did not seek to create something new, but instead thoroughly examined the traditions of the church so that they could bring together the best elements from these traditions into a single service order. These traditions, many of which go back to the early church, were especially viewed in the light of the reformation and renewal of the divine service which took place in the great Lutheran reformation of the sixteenth century. In addition, consideration was given to the practices and theological emphases

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<sup>11</sup> Dr John Kleinig was a member of the committee which prepared the *Supplement to the Lutheran Hymnal*.

of the Lutheran churches in Australia. This order of service was intended to unite Australian Lutherans, that together they might be edified and bring glory to God.

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