

Response to the Request for a Supplement to the 1997 CTCR Opinion
Response to “Concerns of the South Wisconsin District Circuits 18 and 19
Regarding Infant Communion”

(Note: This document, together with the document [*Knowing What We Seek and Why We Come: Questions and Answers Concerning the Communion of Infants and Young Children*](#), was prepared by the CTCR in response to a November 9, 2012 request by LCMS President Matthew Harrison for a supplement to the 1997 CTCR opinion [*Response to “Concerns of the South Wisconsin District Circuits 18 and 19 Regarding Infant Communion.”*](#))

In response to the President’s request, the Commission first reiterates its 1997 opinion, commending it once again to the Synod as a substantive exegetical and confessional basis for maintaining the historical practice of Lutheran churches since the Reformation of not communing infants and very young children until they are able to examine themselves.

Second, the Commission has produced and endorses the document, *Knowing What We Seek and Why We Come* (2014), a further exploration of the matter of infants and very young children receiving the Sacrament (“paedocommunion”). This document examines questions about historical precedence for this practice. It notes, among other things, that paedocommunion was known to exist at the time of the Reformation in parts of Bohemia, but that no Lutheran Reformers introduced or supported it. The age of first communion varied in Reformation churches, but the most common age was 12 years (and no earlier age than six years can be documented). *Knowing What We Seek* goes on to note the lack of exegetical support for paedocommunion and to explore Luther’s contention for worthiness based solely on faith and his understanding that such faith is consistent both with self-examination (“knowing and understanding certain things”) and examination by the church. He emphasizes that no one should be permitted to commune who does not “know what they seek or why they come.” *Knowing What We Seek* concludes:

The pattern for baptized children in Lutheran congregations has been clear and consistent until very recently: instruction was followed by examination leading to confession, absolution, and the reception of the Lord’s body and blood. As more and more groups promote the Eucharist for all the baptized or simply the Eucharist for all, it becomes all the more important that we remain faithful stewards in our own generation of the mysteries entrusted to us.

WHEREAS, The Commission has studied the question of paedocommunion (the communion of infants or very young children) in both 1997 and yet again this year (2014), therefore be it

Resolved, That the CTCR supports the conclusions of its 1997 opinion, *Response to “Concerns of the South Wisconsin District Circuits 18 and 19 Regarding Infant Communion,”* and its recent study, *Knowing What We Seek and Why We Come*, as faithful to Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions and consistent with Lutheran practice since the Reformation; and be it further

Resolved, That while the CTCR recognizes that there is no precise numerical age for first communion required by Scripture or the Confessions, worthy reception *does* involve conscious self-examination so that communicants know what they seek to receive at Christ’s altar and why they come to the Sacrament coupled with pastoral examination to encourage worthy use of the Sacrament; and be it finally

Resolved, That the CTCR supports the opinion that the communing of infants and very young children prior to their instruction and examination in the faith is contrary to Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions and should not be the practice of Lutheran congregations and pastors.

Adopted September 13, 2014
Commission on Theology and Church Relations
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod