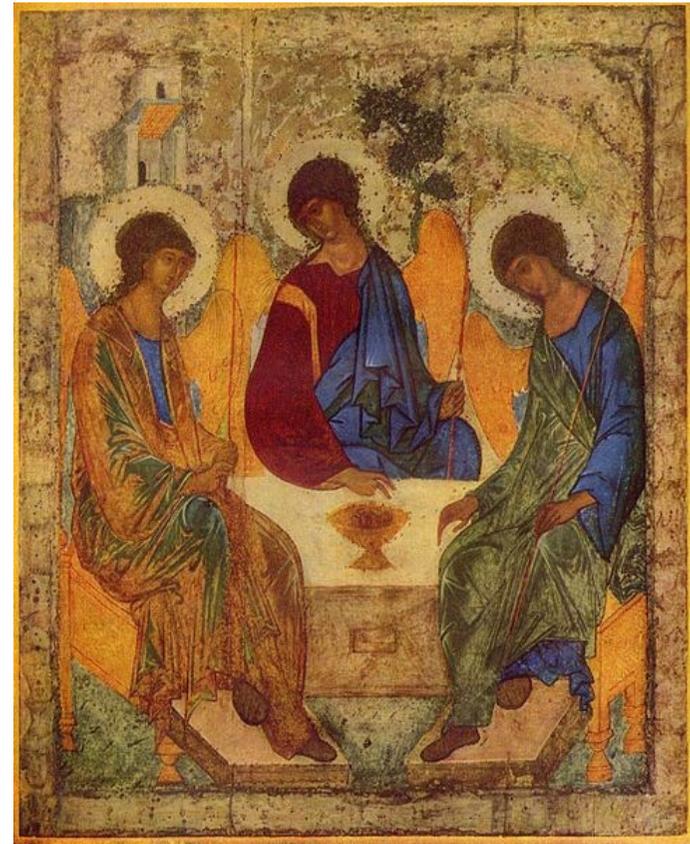


A Great Prayer of Thanksgiving, with Commentary

Prepared by the dialogue of the Lutheran Church of Australia
and the Uniting Church in Australia, April 2012



Presentation in Horsham



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INTRODUCTION

In December 1985, a paper entitled *The Eucharist* was produced by the LCA-UCA dialogue, with a view to furthering the understanding and agreement between the two churches into the future. That document contains further details of the relevant theological emphases of the LCA and UCA.

In October 2009, the revised *Declaration of Mutual Recognition* was adopted by the LCA, and then by the UCA in March 2010. Within that document, paragraph 3.7 reiterates our joint understanding that

We believe that the body and blood of Christ are truly present in the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper. Thus, the bread and wine we eat and drink are a participation in the body and blood of Christ and join us with the whole creation in thanksgiving and praise to God our creator and redeemer. We believe that we receive the grace of divine forgiveness and new life offered in the sacrament and respond with the thankful offering of ourselves for God's service.

The celebration of the Eucharist calls for the response of faith and the grateful worship of Christ's people, who are drawn into the thanksgiving and praise of the whole creation. A part of our response is to prepare liturgy and to deepen theological understanding so that all of God's people may be invited to receive the body and blood of Christ and join in that celebration together.

The accepted liturgies of the LCA and UCA have much in common, but there are differences in emphasis and in the features regarded as 'essential' which are not necessarily immediately obvious. This liturgy, with commentary, has therefore been produced from resources of both churches, to deepen appreciation of the forms

NOW THANK WE ALL OUR GOD

Now thank we all our God
with hearts and hands and voices,
who wondrous things has done,
in whom the world rejoices;
who from our mothers' arms
has blessed us on our way
with countless gifts of love,
and still is ours today.

O may this bounteous God
through all our life be near us,
with ever joyful hearts
and blessed peace to cheer us.
Lord, keep us in your grace,
and guide us when perplexed,
and free us from all harm
in this world and the next.

All praise and thanks to God
who reigns in highest heaven,
to Father and to Son
and Spirit now be given:
the one eternal God,
whom heaven and earth adore,
who ever was, is now,
and shall be ever more.

Martin Rinkart 1586-1649

tr. Catherine Winkworth 1827-78 *alt.*

7. PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

We thank you, Lord,
that you have fed us in this sacrament,
united us with Christ,
and given us a foretaste
of the heavenly banquet
prepared for all creation.

So strengthen us in your service
that our daily living may show our thanks;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

8. A HYMN AND A BLESSING MAY FOLLOW

7. The liturgy of the Eucharist appropriately ends with a prayer of thanksgiving for the sacrament itself. A wide variety of prayers is acceptable.

Unconsumed elements need to be disposed of with due respect.

8. The Song of Simeon (Nunc Dimittis) may be used (Luke 2: 29–32)

and intentions in the liturgy, to enrich worship, and so that cooperating congregations may celebrate the sacrament with confidence and understanding. The commentary notes elements and emphases which are especially significant to each of the churches. Particular attention has been given to the location of the epiclesis and the words of institution, placing them at the heart of the Great Prayer of Thanksgiving and emphasising their significance to our churches.

To quote from *The Eucharist*,

Very much that is common is found in the services of the Lutheran Church and the Uniting Church. As long as the dogma is preserved, variety in forms does not bother Lutherans. In respect of the celebration of the Lord's Supper, Lutherans would insist that the real heart of the Lord's Supper as gift and reception (words of institution, distribution, eating and drinking) be kept as the central and most important part of the service and that it not be concealed or obscured by elaborate ceremonial, however fine.

The Uniting Church also allows a variety of forms for Eucharistic worship, while stipulating that certain essential features must be included. (*Basis of Union*, Appendix 1 says: 'Christ's words of institution as found in the Gospels or Epistle, and the manual acts there commanded: the breaking of the bread, the taking of the cup, and participation in both kinds by ministers and people'.) The published orders of service indicate a desire to accept reforms in liturgy which ecumenical study in recent times has recommended. There are also debts to Anglican, Reformed and Roman Catholic resources.

The liturgy presented here is congruent with worldwide ecumenical reforms. It normally follows the liturgy of the word.

1. THE PEACE

The peace of the Lord be always with you.
And also with you.

The people may exchange a sign of peace.

2. INVITATION

The gifts of bread and wine are brought to the table (optionally during the singing of a hymn); or, being already in place, are uncovered and made ready for use.

Christ invites to his table
all who confess him as Lord,
who earnestly repent of their sin
and seek to live in peace with one another.

3. GREAT PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

3.1. PREFACE

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.
We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
It is right to give our thanks and praise.

1. Peace is a gift from the risen Lord (John 20:19,21), reconciling us in Christ with God and each other (Matt 5:23,24; 1 Cor 16:20). The Peace may be exchanged at various points in the service.

2. The setting of the table demonstrates that God is the provider of this sacrament.

A variety of forms of invitation may be used, at the discretion of the Presider.

3. The Great Prayer of Thanksgiving extends from what Lutherans call the Preface to just prior to the Lord's Prayer. This title emphasises the prayer's central focus on thanksgiving (Greek: *Eucharistia*, from which the word Eucharist is derived).

3.1. This ancient exchange between minister and people prepares the congregation for the prayer which follows.

4. FRACTION

The minister takes the bread and breaks it in full view of the people and says:

The bread we break is a sharing in the body of Christ.

The minister lifts the cup in full view of the people and says:

The cup we take is a sharing in the blood of Christ.

The minister holds out the bread and the cup to the people and says:

The gifts of God for the people of God.

5. LAMB OF GOD

Jesus, Lamb of God,
have mercy on us.

Jesus, bearer of our sins,
have mercy on us.

Jesus, redeemer of the world,
grant us peace.

6. DISTRIBUTION

The following is said before or during the distribution.

The body of Christ, given for you.
Amen

The blood of Christ, shed for you.
Amen.

4. In UCA practice, the fraction is an essential action, seen as following the pattern of 'breaking the bread' laid out in the narrative. After his resurrection, the disciples who encountered Jesus on the road to Emmaus recognised him in the breaking of the bread (Luke 24:30-31, 35). The early church continued the practice (Acts 2:42; 20:7; 1 Cor 10:16).

For the LCA the fraction is not necessary for the sacrament to be valid. However, celebrating the sacrament with a single loaf or wafer, which is broken here or in the distribution, emphasises our sharing in the one body of Christ (1 Cor 10:16).

5. This litany (Agnus Dei) may be said or sung here, or sung during the distribution of Holy Communion. Different forms may be used.

In this ancient prayer we confess with John the Baptist (John 1:29) and the apostles Paul and Peter (1 Cor 5:7; 1 Pet 1:18,19) that Christ is the Passover (Paschal) lamb without blemish, through whose death our sins are removed and we receive God's peace (Rev 5:6-14 and 19:7-9).

We join with the New Testament cries of those in need of the healing and reconciliation that only Jesus can offer (for example, Mark 5:23;10:48 and Luke 18:13).

6. Various methods of distribution and forms of words may be used.

The words 'for you' emphasise that each individual receives the forgiveness of sins, personal pastoral comfort, and incorporation into the reconciling life of Christ.

A dismissal such as the following may be used after the distribution: *The body of our Lord Jesus Christ and his precious blood strengthen and preserve you in body and soul to life eternal. Go in peace. Amen.*

3.9. THE GREAT AMEN

Join our prayers with those of your servants
of every time and every place,
and unite them with the ceaseless petitions
of our great high priest
until he comes as victorious Lord of all.

**Through Christ, with Christ, in Christ,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all honour and glory are yours,
almighty God and Father, now and forever.
Amen.**

3.10. LORD'S PRAYER

Gathering our prayers and praises into one,
let us pray with our Saviour as he has taught us:

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power, and the glory
are yours
now and forever. Amen.**

3.9. An ascription of glory
is an appropriate ending
for the prayer.

3.10. The sacrament
particularly joins us to
Christ, so we pray with him
to the Father. Matthew
6: 9-13, Luke 11:2-4.

[In the LCA the line 'Save
us from the time of trial' is
usually said as 'Lead us
not into temptation'.]

3.2. THANKSGIVING

It is right to give you thanks and praise,
for you alone are the true and living God.

[A seasonal preface may be used here.]

In the beginning
your Spirit swept across the face of the waters,
bringing order and beauty out of chaos.
You formed us in your image
and breathed into us the breath of life.

Through the waters of the Red Sea
you delivered us from suffering and oppression;
at the foot of your sacred mountain
you called us to truth and holiness;
in the words of your holy prophets
you called us to justice and compassion;
through the lives of your blessed saints
and martyrs
you taught us wisdom and faithfulness.

Though we turned away from you,
your love remained steadfast.

In the fullness of time
you sent your only Son Jesus Christ
to be the Saviour of the world.

By water and the Spirit
you open the kingdom to all who believe,
and welcome us to your table:
for by grace we are saved, through faith.

3.3. BRIDGE TO SANCTUS

And so we praise you
with the faithful of every time and place,
joining with choirs of angels
and the whole creation

3.2. The works of God in
creation and salvation history,
culminating in the saving work
of Christ, may be recounted in
various forms. A sentence
specific to the season (a
Seasonal Proper) may be
used at an appropriate point in
this prayer.

3.3. God's gracious deeds
give rise to the constant praise
of the whole creation,
including God's people of
every time and every place.
We are caught up in this
crescendo of cosmic praise,

3.4. SANCTUS AND BENEDICTUS

**Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.**

**Blessed is he who comes
in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

3.5. ANAMNESIS

We thank and praise you
for keeping your promise to the people of old
and sending your Son Jesus Christ,
whose life, death, and resurrection
for our salvation
we remember
as he comes to us in this holy meal.

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

3.6. EPICLESIS

By your word and Spirit,
bless and sanctify these gifts
that by receiving them we participate
in the body and blood of Christ
and that he may ever live in us
and we in him.

Amen. Come Holy Spirit.

3.4. This may be sung or said.

The 'Holy, holy, holy' (Isa 6:3, Rev 4:8) is a song of praise in the presence of the triune God.

'Blessed is he who comes...' echoes the Palm Sunday acclamation of Jesus by the people of Jerusalem (Mark 11:9). It praises Christ for his first coming, for his coming to us now in this holy meal, and for his coming at the end of time.

3.5.

In 'remembering' Christ we are 're-membered' in Christ, 'rejoined' to him as he is present with us in the action of this meal. We are 're-called' to the presence of Christ in our midst (*Uniting in Worship* 2 p. 136)

3.6. Here the role of the Holy Spirit in the consecration of the gifts for the building up of the body of Christ is explicitly invoked. It is an essential part of the Great Prayer of Thanksgiving for the UCA. It is placed before the Words of Institution in this order because for the LCA, the gifts are consecrated by the word of Christ spoken in the Words of Institution.

3.7. WORDS OF INSTITUTION

[Holy God, we praise you that]

Our Lord Jesus Christ,
on the night when he was betrayed,
took bread,
and when he had given thanks,
he broke it
and gave it to his disciples and said:
Take and eat;
this is my body, which is given for you.
Do this in remembrance of me.

In the same way
he took the cup, after the supper,
and when he had given thanks,
he gave it to them and said:
Drink of it, all of you;
this is my blood of the new covenant,
which is shed for you for the
forgiveness of sins.
Do this, as often as you drink it,
in remembrance of me.

3.8. ACCLAMATION

Therefore,
as often as we eat this bread
and drink this cup
we proclaim the Lord's death
until he comes.

**Christ has died. Christ is risen.
Christ will come again.**

3.7. These are the words of Christ, as recorded in the gospels and in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, by which Jesus gives this sacrament to the church. They are essential in both LCA and UCA traditions.

The LCA emphasises that because these words spoken by Christ are effective, we can be confident that when we eat and drink the consecrated bread and wine we are receiving the body and blood of Christ (1 Cor 10:16,17).

The UCA uses these words in different places with different emphases. They may be used as a warrant read before the Great Prayer of Thanksgiving, or within this prayer (connected with words such as 'Holy God, we praise you that...'), or may even be used at the Fraction.

1 Cor 11:23-26; Matt 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-26; Luke 22:14-23

3.8. These words remind us that the celebration of the sacrament proclaims the gospel in word and act (1 Cor 11:26). Our participation in the feast is as foretaste until Christ welcomes us to its fulfilment in the heavenly banquet (Rev 19:7-9).