

Ministry Policies of Edgewater Lutheran Church

Ministry at Edgewater Lutheran Church operates with the following policies in place. These guide the role of the pastor as he serves in his calling and delineate the appropriate circumstances for the following to take place.

Holy Communion

Our Beliefs

We view Holy Communion as a precious gift from God and handle all considerations with a greater measure of grace.

Pastoral Responsibilities

Before each celebration of the Lord's Supper, the pastor will verbally explain the following.

1. We teach that the true body and blood of Christ are truly present under the form of bread and wine in the Lord's Supper and are distributed and received there. (AC X)
2. We teach that the meal is for repentant sinners in pursuit of God's grace.
3. We understand that Holy Communion serves as a sign of confessional agreement and that by coming to the table one announces their agreement with the beliefs of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod.

As such, the pastor has the authority and burden to withhold Communion (the minor ban) in the following circumstances.

1. The individual does not believe the true body and blood of Christ are present under the form of bread and wine.
2. The individual continues to live in unrepentant sin.¹
3. The individual is a practicing member of another church body.

Additional Guidelines

In addition, Edgewater Lutheran Church adheres to AC XIV where it is taught that no one should administer the sacraments without a proper [public] call. When no ordained minister of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod is present, the worship service will not include the celebration of Holy Communion. In addition, because it is not the participant's understanding but the Holy Spirit that works in Holy Communion, it is the policy of Edgewater that children over the age of 10 may come to the table.

¹ These situations that might come to the attention of the pastor will be addressed in the manner described in Matthew 18:15-18. In the instance where unrepentant sin has resulted in a minor ban, the Board of Elders will be informed of the situation within the bounds of the confessional seal.

Baptism

Our Beliefs

We believe that baptism is necessary for salvation, that children are to be baptized, and that the baptism of children is not ineffective but is necessary and efficacious for salvation. (AC IX) Through water and the Word, the child or an adult gains a baptismal identity that begins a lifelong journey of discipleship. As such, the person becomes a member under the spiritual care of the pastor. Non-members seeking baptism should understand that they do not simply seek an empty rite for themselves or their children, but an incredible gift of God.

Pastoral Responsibilities

The pastor will baptize the children of members at Edgewater Lutheran Church. In the case of non-members seeking baptism for their children, it is up to the discretion of the pastor as to whether or not he will perform the baptism. Non-members pursuing baptism for themselves or their children necessarily express a desire for membership and faith formation themselves.

Additional Guidelines

Regarding godparents, Edgewater Lutheran Church requires that godparents be active Christians. This comes from our understanding that the vocation of godparents is to support the parents in raising the child in the faith.

We also recognize that “in urgent situations, in the absence of the pastor, any Christian may administer Holy Baptism.” (LSB 1023) In these situations, Holy Baptism administered by a layperson should be reported to the pastor for its recognition by the congregation.

Membership

Our Beliefs

At Edgewater, we nurture Christian development through worship, education, and prayer that we would be a faithful community that serves one another and the world.

Pastoral Responsibilities

The pastor at Edgewater Lutheran Church will facilitate and oversee the following membership process for new members or confirmands. Members transferring from other member churches of the LCMS will be accepted after the pastor at Edgewater has reached out to their previous pastor to share that information. The process below will be made available to them and existing members as an opportunity for spiritual growth.

Additional Guidelines

The adult membership and confirmation process at Edgewater reflects this in its multifaceted approach.

1. We believe that corporate worship forms our spiritual development in a unique and powerful way. Sunday mornings represent one instance where the experience is greater than the sum of its parts. While praising God, confession and absolution, hearing God's Word proclaimed, and the celebration of the Lord's Supper each impact and strengthen our faith on their own - participating in them all together with the community of the church provides spiritual formation that simply cannot be found anywhere else. With this understanding, regular worship attendance is a critical component of the faith formation curriculum. Participants will be expected to attend at least three Sunday's a month.
2. In a world inundated with information and questions, we believe that a deep understanding of the faith we profess is vital. This learning comes in the form of a flipped classroom style of education. Each participant will initially receive a devotional copy of Luther's Small Catechism, a Lutheran Study Bible, and a reading schedule. The participant will be responsible for spending time each day reading these materials for their daily devotions and keeping track of questions, concerns, and applications. Then the participant will meet with a mentor from the congregation once a week to talk through those notes. The participant and the mentor will then meet with the pastor once a month to address any questions or concerns that the mentor was unable to address. Following the completion of the Small Catechism, participants will work through daily devotions on reconciliation and then a series of devotions written specifically for them by the pastor.
3. Finally, Christian community forms a critical support system and source of prayer, encouragement, and guidance. Accordingly, we prioritize connecting people to one another. The participant in the faith formation program should get involved with a community group at Edgewater; for example, the men's group.

Completion of the devotional series will be celebrated with official induction into membership during worship on Sunday.

Furthermore, active members are defined as those who continue to attend worship over 50% of the time. When a member becomes inactive by virtue of missing worship, the pastor and the elders will reach out to check in and encourage the member.

Weddings

Our Beliefs

We believe that “God honors and praises marriage, endorsing it and protecting it by his commandment . . . married life is no matter for jest or idle curiosity, but it is a glorious institution and an object of God’s serious concern.” (LC 414) Edgewater Lutheran Church believes that marriage is between a man and a woman and that cohabitation prior to marriage is a sinful practice. Weddings, like other services, should be centered on Christ rather than on the couple.

Pastoral Responsibilities

The pastor of Edgewater Lutheran Church will marry members of Edgewater Lutheran Church, unless in the course of premarital counseling he becomes unable to do so in good conscience. In the case of non-members seeking marriage, the pastor is free to perform these weddings; however, he retains the right to refuse if in the course of premarital counseling he becomes unable to do so in good conscience.

Additional Guidelines

All couples seeking to be married must complete premarital counseling with the pastor.

Funerals

Our Beliefs

We believe that funerals are an opportunity to minister to the living, especially those outside the faith. When facing the death of a family member or friend, we are never in more need of the comfort of the Gospel. As such, we believe that funerals, like other services, should be entirely centered on Christ.

Pastoral Responsibilities

The pastor of Edgewater Lutheran Church will perform funerals for members of Edgewater Lutheran Church and their families. In the case of non-members seeking a pastor to lead a funeral service, the pastor is free to do so as an opportunity to minister to the living; however, he retains the right to refuse to do so. The pastor also might choose to conduct funerals for the loss of pets² as an opportunity to minister to the family.

Additional Guidelines

Funerals led by the pastor must have a Gospel, faith based focus.³

² These funerals should not take place in the sanctuary however.

³ This applies to the music selection and to the statements of any family members or friends given during the service (i.e. eulogies).