

# Why is an offering part of the worship service?

The following stewardship article first appeared in the October 2017 newsletter of Holy Trinity, Dubuque, and was written by Paris Comentino, a Wartburg Theological Seminary student who is serving as an intern at Holy Trinity.

After the congregation shares a sign of God’s peace with one another and before “the meal,” there is the part of the service for the offering. It starts with an invitation to offering, “With thanksgiving for God’s gifts to us, let us offer ourselves and the fruits of our labor for God’s work in the world.” This invites the church to respond with thanks to God’s gifts by giving back to God what is rightfully God’s.

“As the plates are being passed around and we are offering to God our gifts, the table is being set and God is giving us an offering right back — the gift of Christ.”

The focus of the offering is in itself very practical: to collect material goods for the mission of God’s church and to give the minister time to prepare the altar (the table) for the Lord’s meal. During this time we typically sing a song, which emphasizes how humbled and grateful we are by all the gifts we have personally received from God.

It is also very powerful and important to note that the offering is completely entangled with the preparing of the meal. God has given us many gifts, the gift of life itself, the gift of money, the gift of a particular skill-set — the list goes on — but the best gift we have been given is the gift of Christ — who humbled himself and became human for us, even though he was rightfully divine; who suffered a terrible death for us; and who gave us new and everlasting life in his resurrection and ascension.

There is no better gift in this world than Christ, and Christ invites us to gather with him around a table and literally ‘take him in’ as we eat the bread and drink the wine, which are his body and blood. As the plates are being passed around and we are offering to God our gifts, the table is being set and God is giving us an offering right back — the gift of Christ.

Anytime we gather together we are the church. Anytime we celebrate communion, we offer to God ourselves, our time, our talents, and our money. Then God, who never stops giving, turns around and gives us a gift right back

— Christ. We are so entangled with God that it is impossible to separate our gifts to God and the gifts we receive from God.



Paris Comentino

The very gift of Christ to us from God comes to us in the form of bread and wine, which we offer up to God from human labor in harvesting the grapes, making the wine, harvesting the wheat, kneading the dough, and baking the bread. We receive gratefully what God has given us and offer ourselves as participants in God’s mission for the life of the world.

Once we have stood up in praise of God and sang (traditionally) “Let the Vineyards be Fruitful,” we join together for an offertory prayer that brings together our offerings and the offering God gives to us at the table of the Lord, which then leads us right into the Great Thanksgiving.

“God of Life, you give us these gifts of the earth, these resources of our life and our labor (the bread, wine, and collection of monetary gifts). Take them, offered in great thanksgiving, and use them to set a table (for the Lord’s Supper/Communion) that will heal the whole creation.”

## NORTHEASTERN IOWA SYNOD

**Bishop** Steven L. Ullestad – [ullestads@neiasynod.org](mailto:ullestads@neiasynod.org)  
**Assistants to the Bishop**

Rev. Mark A. Anderson – [andersonm@neiasynod.org](mailto:andersonm@neiasynod.org)  
 Rev. Stephen Brackett – [bracketts@neiasynod.org](mailto:bracketts@neiasynod.org)  
 Linda J. Hudgins – [hudginsl@neiasynod.org](mailto:hudginsl@neiasynod.org)

**ELCA Director for Evangelical Mission**

Rev. Dr. Joelle Colville-Hanson – [colville-hansonj@neiasynod.org](mailto:colville-hansonj@neiasynod.org)

**Star Editor**

Marcia Hahn – [hahn@neiasynod.org](mailto:hahn@neiasynod.org)

The *Star* is published 11 times a year by the Northeastern Iowa Synod, 201 20th Street SW, PO Box 804, Waverly, IA 50677-0804; [www.neiasynod.org](http://www.neiasynod.org), phone 319-352-1414, FAX 319-352-1416.

Send news for the December issue to Marcia Hahn by Nov. 10. We welcome story ideas related to the 2017 theme, “Celebrating Renewal: Martin Luther – The Gospel.”

Articles in this newsletter may be duplicated for use in synod congregations and organizations, with credit to the *Star* newsletter.

Please notify the synod office with name and address changes. To receive an electronic version of the *Star*, rather than paper, send your request to [hahn@neiasynod.org](mailto:hahn@neiasynod.org).

