

## What is an Anabaptist? (Part 4) by Pastor Nathan Good

In 1517 Martin Luther nailed 95 disagreements with the Church to the door of his church. This started the Protestant Reformation which led to the Anabaptist Reformation several decades later. As theologians, pastors, and churches moved away from the Vatican, they splintered into their own groups. One of the biggest disagreements between Protestants was around The Lord's Supper, which we call communion. In an attempt to unite the Protestant Reformation, Martin Luther and Ulrich Zwingli hammered out 14 theological points where they agreed, but the 15<sup>th</sup> point that kept them divided was their views of the Lord's Supper.

Within Roman Catholic theology, there are seven sacraments. In Jesus, God came into the physical world. Jesus shows that this physical world can be made holy. Jesus' body was made holy by the grace (favor) of God, and through Jesus' body others were healed. On the cross, Jesus' blood was spilled, and so it was through physical means that salvation came. So the teaching of the church was that now, through the power of the Holy Spirit, God continues to give grace to Jesus' followers through physical means. These are known as sacraments. The root of the word "sacrament" is the same as the word "sacred". The idea of a sacrament is that these things bring the grace of God thereby growing holiness in a person. The seven sacraments of the Roman Catholic Church are baptism, confirmation, Eucharist (communion), reconciliation (confession and penance), anointing with oil, marriage, and ordination.

As the Protestant Reformers hammered out a theology of salvation by grace alone, through

faith alone, in Christ alone, as revealed by Scripture alone, they wrestled with the meaning of the sacraments as well.

The four main views that are discussed are:

**Transubstantiation:** The Roman Catholic belief that the bread and wine of communion are transformed into the body and blood of Christ, which then impart the grace of God for holiness to the believer.

**Consubstantiation:** The Lutheran view that, while the bread and wine remain unchanged in and of themselves, Jesus is physically present "in, with, and under the elements".

**Reformed:** The typical Reformed view is that the bread and wine remain unchanged, but Jesus is in some way more spiritually present when his people celebrate the Lord's Supper.

**Memorialism:** This is the view held by Baptists and other "low church" denominations that there is no real presence of Jesus at the Lord's Supper. Instead it is a sign of remembrance or a memorial.

Interestingly, while Anabaptists are often said to hold to the last view, the earliest Anabaptist documents actually teach something else entirely.

While Roman Catholics and Protestants focus on the elements of communion, the bread and wine, and debate in what ways Jesus might be present, Anabaptists argued that Jesus was present at the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper is an act of re-membering the body of Christ, which is the church. Jesus is present at the Lord's Supper, not in the bread and the wine, but in his people!

This means that the focus of the Lord's Supper is as much about our relationships with each other as it is about our relationship with God. Celebrating the Lord's Supper

unites us in a spiritual sense with those we eat and drink with, so we must guard the purity of the body of Christ and be careful in how we celebrate and participate in communion.

Historically, this was done by having strict rules of purity for the congregation. Communion was intentionally celebrated infrequently, only once or twice per year in most Anabaptist congregations. Before the communion service there was a preparatory service where the covenant of the congregation was reviewed and those who were not living as faithful followers of Jesus would confess their sins and be reunited in reconciliation with the body of Christ so that when communion was received all persons were united in holiness.

At times, this theology and the practices connected with it led to legalism, self-righteousness, and hypocrisy. At other times it led to discipleship, accountability, and holiness. I think that the early Anabaptists would grieve over the history of spiritual abuse that has resulted at times from this theology, but in the 1500's they were united in the belief that:

"All those who wish to break one bread in remembrance of the broken body of Christ, and all who wish to drink of one drink as a remembrance of the shed blood of Christ, shall be united beforehand by baptism in one body of Christ which is the church of God and whose Head is Christ. For as Paul points out we cannot at the same time be partakers of the Lord's table and the table of devils; we cannot at the same time drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of the devil. That is, all those who have fellowship with the dead works of darkness have no part in the light.

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Therefore all who follow the devil and the world have no part with those who are called unto God out of the world. All who lie in evil have no part in the good. Therefore, it is and must be [thus]: Whoever has not been called by one God to one faith, to one baptism, to one Spirit, to one body, with all the children of God's church, cannot be made [into] one bread with them, as indeed must be done if one is truly to break bread according to the command of Christ.



## Directory Time

It's that time of the year again. With a new year on the horizon, it's time for the annual review of all information for the 2023 edition of the Church Directory. Please take a few minutes to look at your information as it appears in the current directory. In addition, be sure to review anniversary and birthdate information in the back. You may email any additions and/or changes to the church office at [info@justswamp.com](mailto:info@justswamp.com).

Later this month, a table will be set up in the foyer by the sanctuary. Three-ring binders will be placed on it containing pages with the most recent information that has been provided to the office for your final verification. It is hoped to complete this process by mid-December so a new directory can be printed and placed in church mailboxes sometime in January.

## This 'n' That by Arlene Yothers

Thank You to those who attended the Worm Project banquet on Saturday night. Thank you to all who donate on a regular basis. Many children have been helped over many years now because of the little pill that cost 2 cents. It keeps their systems clear of parasite worms for 6 months. The Worm Project gives these pills to other organizations who distribute them at clinics in countries around the Equator. There is a book written about Claude Good and his start with the Worm Project. If you would like to read or purchase a copy, please see me.

The Care and Share Shoppes are going through changes. If you would like to volunteer, please contact Suzanne Kratz at [skratz@careandshareshoppes.org](mailto:skratz@careandshareshoppes.org) or stop in or call. The mailing address and phone number is in the church directory. Gift Cards from

Care and Share are a great Christmas list idea! You can purchase one at any of the stores and they can be used in all the stores.

The Mennonite Heritage Center has many programs of interest all year long. I try to post updates on the bulletin board in back foyer. I still didn't kick off the interviews with the youth and seniors yet. There are youth that are interested in doing interviews. The scheduling of where and WHO is the hold up right now. Please bear with me on little details. It will work when we get it started. Thanks to all who came out to the revised Apple Butter Frolic. The goal was sell the food that was premade and there were a few demonstrations in the barn. All this was because of the bad weather that day. It was considered a success.

