



Some LCMS churches only use wine for communion. They don't believe it's right to offer grape juice, since Jesus used wine. But I see you offer grape juice as well as wine. Why is that?

A good question. One that came from a desire to remain true to God's Word. Here's how I answered it:

Making grape juice available for communicants is a question people in the LCMS have differing opinions about. Both perspectives have very valid points, and I'm not sure there's a definitive answer. In a perfect world, wine would be the answer. Unfortunately, we live in a world where lots of people can't or shouldn't have alcohol. I used to think, "That little bit of alcohol won't hurt anyone." Then, a few years ago, for whatever reason, my body decided to not tolerate dairy. Even the slightest bit of cheese messes me up for hours! It's tough, because everything made of dairy is so tasty - and it's really difficult to find foods made without some! But that opened my eyes to what some people deal with regarding alcohol - and how little it takes to have an adverse effect. (We also have available gluten-free wafers, because there are also people with an intolerance to gluten or wheat.)

When we first looked at making a limited amount of grape juice available for folks who can't have alcohol, we found something Martin Luther said very helpful: It is the Word of God that gives the Sacraments their power, not the elements or the one who administers them. When the decision was made to have grape juice available we decided that we would use only 100% grape juice (as opposed to the more readily-available stuff "watered down" with apple juice). We wanted to stick with "the fruit of the vine" as scripture refers to it.

Funny thing. As I was pondering that question, the thought hit me, "It sure seems to me that the grape juice we have available bears a much closer resemblance to the wine Jesus used than those mass-produced "styrofoam" wafers resemble the bread He used. (And nobody gives those wafers a second thought. I know I never did.) Thankfully, it is God's Word that gives that "bread" its power and delivers Jesus' real presence through it! (And, thankfully, we have confirmation students willing to make wafers that actually look and taste like unleavened bread!)

Thanks for asking,
Pastor David

Send your questions to pastor@livingwordlutheran.net