

## RECOVERING THE LOVE FEAST

## Broadening Our Eucharistic Celebrations

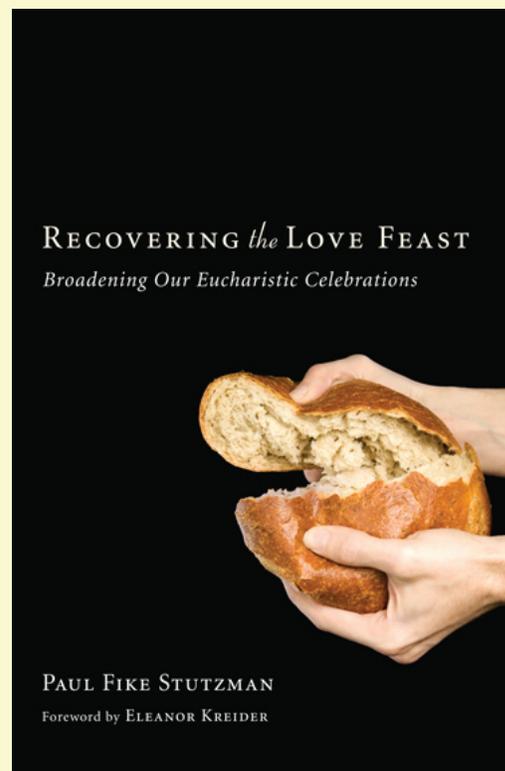
Paul Fike Stutzman *foreword by* Eleanor Kreider

What is a Love Feast? How did the early church celebrate the Love Feast? How might Christians today celebrate the Love Feast? In *Recovering the Love Feast*, Paul Stutzman addresses these questions, offering a unique blend of liturgical history and practical theology. Part I outlines the history of the Love Feast, noting its prevalence in early church worship, its gradual decline, and its reemergence in the practices of several Pietist groups (e.g., the Moravians, Methodists, and Brethren). Particular focus is given to five elements of the celebration, that is: eucharistic preparation, footwashing, the fellowship meal, the holy kiss, and the Eucharist proper.

In Part II, Stutzman argues that the Love Feast is a valuable Christian practice and a celebration worth recovering in those traditions that may have forgotten the feast. Rather than prescribing a specific method for celebrating the Love Feast, Stutzman proposes that there are five key disciplines that today's Love Feasts should embody: submission, love, confession, reconciliation, and thanksgiving. This book encourages Christians from a range of traditions to experiment with reclaiming the Love Feast, with the hope that each celebration serves as an act of worship to God and an authentic expression of Christian discipleship.

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PAUL FIKE STUTZMAN is a licensed minister in the Church of the Brethren, and currently lives with his wife and daughter in Rocky Mount, Virginia. He received his MA in Religion from Eastern Mennonite Seminary in Harrisonburg, Virginia.



“As a young scholar, Paul Fike Stutzman offers careful exegesis of scripture and historical and theological texts on the Love Feast and Eucharist, traces the varieties of beliefs and practices associated with the Love Feast across the centuries, and invites readers—those familiar with the Love Feast as well as the uninitiated—into a provocative reconsideration of its significance for the postmodern church seeking to embody the gospel in a hungry world.”

—RUTHANN KNECHEL JOHANSEN, author of *The Narrative Secret of Flannery O'Connor: The Trickster As Interpreter*

“Rather than treat the Love Feast as a static artifact, like an insect in amber, he envisions a future in which the rite becomes an active, innovative, and integral part of the life of confession, reconciliation, and thanksgiving in the church. Paul Stutzman’s book should go a long way towards recovering the inclusive celebration of the Love Feast for the people of God. Those who take Jesus seriously will give serious consideration to this book.”

—FRANK RAMIREZ, author of *The Love Feast*

“In a book world teeming with Christian inspirational and practical treatises, Paul Fike Stutzman offers something rare. *Recovering the Love Feast* anchors a fresh vision of the practical disciplines of Christian living in a sweeping history of Love Feast practices. Historical, liturgical, and pastoral sensibilities rarely intersect so well.”

—CARL DESPORTES BOWMAN, author of *Brethren Society: The Cultural Transformation of a Peculiar People*

“Using a theological and historical-theological approach, Paul Stutzman’s *Recovering the Love Feast* invites readers to reconsider the ancient evidence for the Christian Love Feast and accompanying practices of footwashing and the holy kiss. Stutzman adds a creative exploration of new interpretations in an effort to find meaning for these Christian practices in the present.”

—JEFF BACH, Director of the Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies, Elizabethtown College