



50 years ago, a handful of faithful Lutherans worked hard to establish our congregation here at Trinity Lutheran Church. **Literally**, through their *blood, sweat, and tears*, the Holy Spirit worked and a congregation was formed; a building was built, a Pastor was Called, and people gathered to hear the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

**For 50 years,
the Lord has been working
through His Word and Sacrament
to make disciples in this place!**

This year we have celebrated it in many and various ways, culminating in the 50th Anniversary Dinner on Reformation weekend. I hope you were able to rejoice with us in celebrating God's faithfulness to this congregation over the past 50 years¹.

Today, we make the transition away from celebrating the 50th Anniversary to working towards the next 50 years. The work of ministry continues until the Lord Jesus returns on the Last Day.

¹ If any of you are here 50 years from now, let the people know that we strived to be faithful in all things. The Lord provided us with excellent leaders, gifted volunteers, abundant resources, a beautiful campus and facilities, and dedicated staff. For us, it was "all about Jesus!" One of our founding members, Ernie Mueller, said it well 26 years ago (1998) when he added to the congregational meeting minutes: "We enter into Phase One of our Master Vision Plan with great thanksgiving to God for His grace and with great faith in Him to continue to provide for all our needs!"

As we think about the work that we do here at Trinity, one New Testament word describes it well: it's the word "**Confess**²". The word literally means to "**say the same word.**" We say the "**same word**" as God does in Holy Scripture: that is our confession³. Its like an **echo**: **His Word is our word!**

This word **confess** shapes what we do as a conservative Lutheran Congregation, and for each of us as individual Christians. Let me show you a some good examples.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9

Here we learn about both of our sin and our Savior. Rather than hide our sin, deny it, or justify it, we humbly admit that we are poor miserable sinners who need the Son of God to cleanse us from our unrighteousness.

Together as a congregation, and as individuals, we confess that we have "*missed the mark*⁴" of God's holy and righteous will. In this word picture, the 10 Commandments are the bullseye, and every time you do not live exactly according to the 10 Commandments in your thoughts, words, or deeds, you have *missed the mark*, you have sinned.

Along with this, John teaches us that we are *unrighteous*⁵. This means that we are guilty of breaking God's Law and we have no excuse. We are NOT righteous: and we deserve to have the judge to "*throw the book at us*" if you will.

² The New Testament Greek word for "Confess" is *ὁμολογέω* (*homologeō*); and it means "to say the same thing." [literally: "homo" = same; "logeo" = word] As conservative Lutheran Christians, we "say the same thing" when we repeat what we have learned in Holy Scripture. Holy Scripture teaches us, and we "echo" what we hear — we say the same thing and that is our Confession of the Christian faith to the world. Synonyms would be "witness" and "testimony".

³ I was reminded of these truths from LCMS President Matthew Harrison's article "Hold Fast The Confession" in the November, 2024 issue of The Lutheran Witness.

⁴ The word for sin in 1 John 1:9 is the common word for sin (*ἁμαρτία*); the word picture is of an archer "missing the mark."

⁵ The word for unrighteous in 1 John 1:9 is an alpha privative (*ἀδικία*) which means not righteous. It means that we are guilty in God's courtroom: "caught red handed in sin" we might say.

When we *confess our sins*, we are *saying the same word* back to God that we learned from Him. We confess that we are sinful and unrighteous and we need Him to cleanse us and to forgive us.

And that is exactly what He does!

In the same way that we *confess our sins*, we also *confess our faith* in Jesus Christ. He is the One who suffered and died on a cross to set you free⁶ from your sin! Without Christ, we are crushed under our sin and its guilt, and we have no way out. Jesus took our sins upon Himself when He died on the cross, and *you are set free* – that is, you are *forgiven*.

Another way to confess that, and *say the same word* as God teaches us, is that you are cleansed⁷ from your sin. The work of Jesus purifies you of all sins; you are clean and holy in God's eyes because of the life, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

As a congregation, and as individual believers in Christ, we *confess* these truths of Holy Scripture. Our *confession* unites us as conservative Lutheran Christians. Confession always points to Jesus, the Son of God, the Savior of the World!

If you *confess* with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you *confess* your faith and are saved. Romans 10:9-10

One *unique way* that we have as conservative Lutheran Christians “*to say the same thing*” is the **Book of Concord**. The **Book of Concord** contains the confessional writings of the Lutheran Church: it's our way as Lutheran Christians of *saying that*

⁶ The word *forgives* in 1 John 1:9 is the common word for forgiveness (ἀφίημι); it means that you are set free from your sin and its guilt and punishment. This “setting free” only happens through faith in the Savior: Jesus Christ! *There is no other way!*

⁷ The word *cleanses* in 1 John 1:9 is a word that means to make clean (καθαρίζω); you are no longer defiled nor ‘dirty’ with sin. You are cleansed and purified. The English word “cathartic” comes from this Greek word. [“Cleansing” easily reminds us of the ongoing power of Baptism that continually “washes” us clean from sin, guilt, and shame.]

we all believe the same thing about God, His Word and His teachings⁸. The **Book of Concord** contains the three Ecumenical Creeds and seven doctrinal statements that were developed during the Reformation era, and they define exactly what it means to be Lutheran⁹. You are probably most familiar with Martin Luther's Small Catechism, which is part of the **Book of Concord**. We hold that the **Book of Concord** accurately confesses the truth of Holy Scripture; that it *says the same thing* as God teaches us in His Word. This is so important to us, that it is included in every Lutheran Church Missouri Synod congregation's constitution, including ours¹⁰. The **Book of Concord** unites us with Lutherans for the past 500 years, with the Holy Christian Church of the last 2,000 years, and with other conservative Lutherans around the world today. It's the **formal and official way** that we have "*to say the same thing*" about Holy Scripture: to confess the truth of God's Word.

Today marks a transition for our congregation: we have celebrated 50 years of God at work in this congregation with His grace and mercy. And now we look forward to the years to come, continuing to work in His Kingdom with His Word and Sacraments, and together *saying the same thing* as Holy Scripture: confessing together the truths of God's Holy Word!

Amen!

⁸ In Lutheran Theology, the word Concordia is used to reference the Book of Concord. Concordia is a Latin word that means harmony and agreement; literally "to be in one mind" and "to be of the same mind." The doctrines of the Book of Concord allow conservative Lutheran Christians through the ages and around the world to confess the truth of Scripture "in harmony" -- we are of the same mind about the teachings and doctrines of Holy Scripture. The word Concordia is used today to signal an allegiance to the Book of Concord.

⁹ The Book of Concord contains the three Ecumenical Creeds (Nicene, Apostles, and Athanasian), the Augsburg Confession, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Small and Large Catechisms, the Smalcald Articles, the Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope, the Epitome of the Formula of Concord, and the Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord. If you would like more information, please see <https://www.lcms.org/about/beliefs/lutheran-confessions>. If you would like to study the Book of Concord, you are welcome to join the Men of Faith group that meets here at Trinity on Tuesdays at 6:30pm. Copies of the Book of Concord are available for \$25. See Pastor Bolte for more details on all these things.

¹⁰ Here is how it is stated in our own constitution: "This congregation acknowledges and accepts all of the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments without reservation and acknowledges and accepts all the Symbolic Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, contained in the **Book of Concord of 1580**, to be the true exposition of the doctrines of the Holy Scriptures . . . All doctrines shall be taught and examined in the congregation according to these Scriptural and Confessional norms" Constitution, Article III: Confession of Faith of Trinity Lutheran Church, Litchfield Park, Arizona,

Holy Trinity,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
we praise and thank You for this
congregation and Your blessings
over the past 50 years. We thank
you for all the men, women, and
children who have used their gifts
and talents to glorify You and serve
others in this place. Lord, we ask
that Your Holy Word will continue to
work in those who have heard the
Gospel here, and by Your grace and
mercy, grow into faith and lives of
discipleship. We pray this in the
Name of Jesus, our only Savior from
sin, Amen!

Psalm 48:9-14

Within your temple, O God, we meditate on your unfailing love.

10 Like your name, O God, your praise reaches to the ends of the earth; your right hand is filled with righteousness. 11 Mount Zion rejoices, the villages of Judah are glad because of your judgments. 12 Walk about Zion, go around her, count her towers, 13 consider well her ramparts, view her citadels, that you may tell of them to the next generation. 14 For this God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide even to the end.

Romans 10:5-13

Moses writes this about the righteousness that is by the law: “The person who does these things will live by them.”⁶ But the righteousness that is by faith says: “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’” (that is, to bring Christ down)⁷ “or ‘Who will descend into the deep?’” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).⁸ But what does it say? “The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart,” that is, the message concerning faith that we proclaim:⁹ If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.¹⁰ For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.¹¹ As Scripture says, “Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame.”¹² For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him,¹³ for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

Matthew 10: 26-33

“So do not be afraid of them, for there is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. ²⁷ What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs. ²⁸ Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. ²⁹ Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father’s care. ³⁰ And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. ³¹ So don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows. ³² “Whoever confesses me before others, I will also confess before my Father in heaven. ³³ But whoever disowns me before others, I will disown before my Father in heaven.