

Morrison Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church

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Festival of the Presentation of the Augustana

A Condensed Version of the Augsburg Confession

Pastor Randy Ott

Presentation of the Augustana

One Hundred Seventy-five years ago yesterday at Augsburg, the Augsburg Confession was presented by the Lutherans to defend their teaching as not a new innovation, but Scripturally based. This morning we read a condensed version of the Augsburg Confession. The original Augsburg Confession took two hours to be read at the Diet of Augsburg. This morning, we will read condensed versions of the Articles interspersed with hymns and as we go through it, even if you have never read the entire Augsburg Confession, please note how so many of the hymns that we sing in worship every week teach the truths that are confessed in the Augsburg Confession.

A Confession of Faith Presented in Augsburg, Germany, by Certain Princes and Imperial Free Cities to Emperor Charles V of the Holy Roman Empire on June 25, 1530.

On the basis of the Holy Scriptures we unanimously believe, teach and confess the following doctrines of the pure Word of God.

CONCERNING GOD we believe, in accordance with the decrees of the Council of Nicæa, that there is one Divine Essence, which is called and which is truly God, and that there are three Persons in this one Divine Essence, equal in power, wisdom and goodness, coeternal and indivisible: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

*Holy Father, Holy Son, Holy Spirit, three we name you;
Though in essence only one, Undivided God we claim you,
Then, adoring, bend the knee And confess the mystery. (#278, v.4)*

CONCERNING ORIGINAL SIN we believe that, since the fall of Adam, all people are conceived and born in sin, and, as a result of this original sin, all people are condemned to eternal damnation unless born again through Baptism and the Holy Spirit. Natural man has no free will in spiritual matters, and no one can do God's will without the working of the Holy Spirit. Sin is never the will of God, but is caused by the corrupt will of the devil and of wicked people.

*All mankind fell in Adam's fall; One common sin infects us all.
From one to all the curse descends, And over all God's wrath impends.
From hearts depraved, to evil prone, Flow thoughts and deeds of sin alone;
God's image lost, the darkened soul Nor seeks nor finds its heav'nly goal.
(#378, v.1,3)*

CONCERNING THE SON OF GOD we believe that he assumed the human nature in the womb of the virgin Mary, while retaining his divine nature which was his from all eternity, and that Jesus Christ is inseparably true God and true man in one person. He truly suffered and was crucified; he died and was buried that he might reconcile the Father to us, and be a sacrifice, not only for original sin, but also for all other sins and to satisfy God's wrath. The same Christ also descended into hell and truly rose from the dead on the third day; afterward he ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father that he may eternally rule and have dominion over all creatures, that through the Holy Spirit he may sanctify, purify, strengthen and comfort all who believe in him, that he may bestow on them life and every grace and blessing, and that he may protect and defend them against the devil and the power of sin. The same Lord Christ shall return openly to judge the living and the dead, as stated in the Apostles' Creed. We believe that we should honor the memory of the saints who have gone before us, but that we are not to worship or pray to saints, for Christ is our only Mediator, High Priest and Advocate with the Father, and he alone has promised to hear and answer our prayers.

CONCERNING CHRIST'S RETURN we believe that, on the Last Day, Christ will visibly return to earth for judgment, when he will raise up all the dead. He will give all the godly and elect eternal life and everlasting joys, but he will condemn the ungodly and devils to eternal torment and punishment.

*Jesus came, the heav'ns adoring, Came with peace from realms on high;
Jesus came to win redemption, Lowly came on earth to die,
Alleluia! Alleluia! Came in deep humility.*

*Jesus comes again in mercy When our hearts are worn with care;
Jesus comes again in answer To an earnest heartfelt prayer,
Alleluia! Alleluia! Comes to save us from despair.*

*Jesus comes on clouds triumphant When the heav'ns shall pass away,
Jesus comes again in glory; Let us, then, our homage pay,
Alleluia! Ever singing Till dawn of endless day. (#26, v.1,2,4)*

CONCERNING JUSTIFICATION we believe that nobody can be justified before God by his own strength, merits, or works, but that we receive forgiveness of sin and become righteous before God by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith, when we believe that Christ suffered for us and that for his sake our sin is forgiven and righteousness and eternal life are given to us. God regards and imputes this faith to the believer as righteousness in his sight.

*By grace I'm saved, grace free and boundless; My soul, believe and doubt it not.
Why waver at this word of promise? Has Scripture ever falsehood taught?
So then this word must true remain: By grace you, too, shall heav'n obtain.
By grace God's Son, our only Savior, Came down to earth to bear our sin.
Was it because of your own merit That Jesus died your soul to win?
No, it was grace, and grace alone, That brought Him from his heav'nly throne.
(#384, v.1,2)*

CONCERNING THE MINISTRY we believe that God has instituted the ministry of teaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments, in order that people may obtain this saving faith. Through these means he gives the Holy Spirit, who works faith in the hearts of people wherever and whenever it pleases God. The Gospel teaches that we have a gracious God, not by our own merits but by the merit of Christ.

CONCERNING ORDER IN THE CHURCH we believe that the duty of the public ministers of the Church is to preach the Law and the Gospel, to forgive and retain sins and to administer the Sacraments, according to their calling, in the name of Christ and on behalf of Christ's Church. Nobody should publicly teach or preach or administer the Sacraments in the Church without a regular call.

*Lord Jesus, you have come A Teacher sent from heaven
And by both word and deed God's truth to us have given.
You wisely have ordained The holy ministry
That we, your flock, may know The truth that sets us free.*

*O blessed ministry Of reconciliation,
That shows the way to God And brings to us salvation!
Lord, by your Gospel pure You bless and keep your fold;
You call, enlighten, keep; You comfort and uphold. (#546, v.1,3)*

CONCERNING GOOD WORKS we believe that this Christian faith is bound to produce good works, and that it is necessary to do all such good works as commanded by God, but that we should do them for God's sake and not place our trust in them as if thereby to merit favor before God. For we receive forgiveness of sin and righteousness through faith in Christ. Our works cannot reconcile us with God or obtain grace for us, for this happens only through faith, that is, when we believe that our sins are forgiven for Christ's sake, who alone is the Mediator who reconciles the Father. Whoever imagines that he can accomplish this by works, or that he can merit grace, despises Christ and seeks his own way to God, contrary to the Gospel. However, it is necessary for us to do good works, not that we should trust in them to earn grace but that we may do God's will and glorify him. It is always faith alone that receives grace and forgiveness of sin. Faith is trust and confidence in Christ and the salvation he freely gives us, and this faith enables and incites us to do good works to the glory of God. When through faith the Holy Spirit is given, the heart is moved to do good works.

*Renew me, O eternal Light, And let my heart and soul be bright,
Illumined with the light of grace That issues from your holy face.*

*Destroy in me the lust of sin; From all impureness make me clean.
Oh, grant me pow'r and strength, my God, To strive against my flesh and blood.*

*Create in me a new heart, Lord, That gladly I obey your Word.
Oh, let your will be my desire And with the new life my soul inspire. (#471, v.1-3)*

CONCERNING THE CHURCH we believe that the one Holy Christian Church will exist forever. The Church is the assembly of all true believers, who are united by the teaching of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments. Since in this life many hypocrites may be mingled with the Church on earth, we recognize that the presence of the Holy Christian Church depends, not on the character of the ministers or communicants, but on the correct teaching of the Gospel and administration of the Sacraments, which have their power because of the institution and command of Christ. It is sufficient for the true unity of the Christian Church that the Gospel be preached in conformity with a pure understanding of it and that the Sacraments be administered in accordance with the divine Word.

*The Church's one foundation Is Jesus Christ, her Lord;
She is his new creation By water and the Word.
From heav'n he came and sought her To be his holy bride:
With his own blood he bought her, And for her life he died.*

*The Church shall never perish. Her dear Lord, to defend,
To guide, sustain, and cherish, Is with her to the end.
Though there by those that hate her And strive to see her fail,
Against both foe and traitor She ever shall prevail. (#538, v.1,3)*

CONCERNING BAPTISM we believe that it is necessary for salvation, and that the grace of God is offered through it. Children also should be baptized, for in Baptism they are committed to God and are received into God's grace.

*All who believe and are baptized Shall see the Lord's salvation;
Baptized into the death of Christ, They are a new creation.
Through Christ's redemption they shall stand
Among the glorious, heav'nly band Of ev'ry tribe and nation. (#299, v.1)*

CONCERNING THE LORD'S SUPPER we believe that the body and blood of Christ are truly present, under the form of the bread and wine, and are distributed to all those who eat in the Lord's Supper. Christ instituted this Holy Sacrament to awaken our faith and comfort our consciences when we perceive that through the Sacrament grace and the forgiveness of sins are promised us by Christ. Accordingly the Sacrament requires faith, and without faith it is used in vain. It is against Christ's direct command for the clergy to withhold the cup from the laity.

*Lord Jesus Christ, you have prepared This feast for our salvation;
It is your body and your blood; And at your invitation
As weary souls, with sin oppressed, We come to you for needed rest,
For comfort, and for pardon. (#312, v.1)*

CONCERNING THE USE OF THE SACRAMENTS we believe that Christ instituted them, not only as outward marks of our confession of faith, but especially as signs of divine grace, to awaken and confirm faith in those who receive them. Faith is necessary to receive the blessings which Christ promises and offers in the Sacraments. We do not

believe that receiving the Sacraments is a good work which merits God's favor, either with or without faith.

*Here stands the font before our eyes, Telling how God did receive us.
Th' altar recalls Christ's sacrifice And what the sacrament gives us.
Here sound the Scriptures that proclaim Christ yesterday, today, the same,
And evermore, our Redeemer. (#529, v.4)*

CONCERNING CONFESSION AND REPENTANCE we believe that every Christian confesses his sins to God and to his brother whom he has offended. Christians may confess their sins privately to their pastors, but this has not been commanded by God. Private confession and absolution should be retained and not allowed to fall into disuse; however, in private confession it is not necessary to enumerate all sins, for this is impossible. True confession and repentance has two parts: the first is contrition, that is, terrors, which smite the conscience through the knowledge of sin; the other is faith which believes the Gospel, that sins are forgiven for Christ's sake. Then good works are bound to follow, which are the fruits of repentance. We believe that the Church is duty-bound to announce God's forgiveness and comfort to all truly penitent sinners.

*I, a sinner, come to you With a penitent confession.
Savior, show me mercy, too; Grant for all my sins remission.
Let these words my soul receive—Jesus sinners does receive.*

*Oh, how blest it is to know, Were as scarlet my transgression,
It shall be as white as snow By your blood and bitter passion,
For these words I do believe—Jesus sinners does receive. (#304, v.5,6)*

CONCERNING RITES AND TRADITIONS IN THE CHURCH we believe that those Church usages which have been established by men are to be observed as long as they are not contrary to Scripture, do not burden consciences, and are profitable for good peace and order in the Church, such as holy days, festivals and the like. However, we dare never place customs, rites or traditions over God's commands. No one can be justified or earn God's favor by observing human traditions; therefore we do not believe human observances to be necessary acts of worship.

*One thing's needful; Lord, this treasure Teach me highly to regard.
All else, though it first give pleasure, Is a yoke that presses hard.
Beneath it the heart is still fretting and striving,
No true, lasting happiness ever deriving.
This one thing is needful, all others are vain—
I count all but loss that I Christ may obtain! (#290, v.1)*

CONCERNING CIVIL AFFAIRS we believe that lawful government is ordained by God in order to bless mankind. Therefore Christians may serve as governmental officials, soldiers and judges, and may make legal contracts, hold property, engage in just wars, make an oath when required by magistrates, and marry. Christians are bound by their own government and laws unless the government demands something sinful; for we ought to obey God rather than men.

CONCERNING CHURCH AND STATE we believe that the power of the Church is to forgive and retain sins by the preaching of God's Word and administration of the Sacraments. Since the power of the Church deals with eternal matters, it does not interfere with civil government. For the concern of the state is with temporal matters, with preserving peace and protecting lives and property. God has empowered the government to use threats, punishments and the sword in order to carry out its duties. Therefore we believe that the power and operation of the Church and of the State ought not to be confounded.

*Christ, by heav'nly hosts adored, Gracious, mighty, sov'reign Lord,
God of nations, King of kings, Head of all created things,
By the Church with joy confessed, God o'er all, forever blest—
Pleading, at your throne we stand: Save your people, bless our land.*

*Give us rulers who will be Known for love and honesty;
Let the pow'rs that you ordained Be in righteousness maintained.
In the people's hearts increase Love of piety and peace.
Thus, united, we shall stand One wide, free, and happy land. (#617, v.1,3)*

IN CONCLUSION, these articles are a summary of our doctrine. These teachings are grounded clearly on the Holy Scriptures. We have introduced nothing, either in doctrine or in ceremonies, that is contrary to Holy Scripture or the universal Christian Church. For it is manifest and evident that we have diligently and with God's help prevented any new and godless teaching from creeping into our churches and gaining the upper hand in them.

IN KEEPING WITH THE SUMMONS we have desired to present the above articles as a declaration of our confession and the teaching of our preachers. If anyone should consider that it is lacking in some respect, we are ready to present further information on the basis of the divine Holy Scripture.

Your Imperial Majesty's most obedient servants,

John, duke of Saxony, elector
George, margrave of Brandenburg
Ernest, duke of Lüneburg
Philip, landgrave of Hesse
John Frederick, duke of Saxony
Francis, duke of Lüneburg
Wolfgang, prince of Anhalt
the Mayor and Council of the free city of Nüremberg
the Mayor and Council of the free city of Reutlingen