



The St John Lutheran Newsletter is a monthly publication of St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church, a congregation of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.

Volume 4 Issue 2

From the Desk of Rev. Samuel Beltz

Confession and Absolution

Over the past few weeks we have been discussing the means of grace. The one true God rules over his creation through Jesus and in the Holy Spirit. God is at work through Jesus and in the power of the Holy Spirit to redeem his creation. The means of grace are the means by which God extends his reign and rule in Jesus and the Spirit to us. Through them, God gives his favor and grace to the recipients. Because they are the works of God, the means of grace accomplish salvation. We've already talked about baptism. Today we'll talk about absolution.

Confession and Absolution in the Biblical Story

First, it will be helpful to define our terms. Absolution is the term Christians use for the act of forgiving sins. To absolve someone means to pronounce that person clear of blame and guilt—it means to promise that the sins that were committed will not be held against the sinner.

Several things are required in the act of absolution. First, the person who absolves needs to have the authority to clear someone of blame and to forgive sins. If the person who is pronouncing someone free from guilt doesn't have the authority to do so, the act of absolution isn't valid. For instance, when a judge pronounces someone not guilty, his authority as a judge gives power to his declaration, "not guilty." Because he has been assigned that authority by law, the judge's words effect freedom from guilt before the court of law and the judicial system of his jurisdiction.

God sent Jesus to absolve sinners of their sins. Recall the break and the tension between the Old Testament and the New Testament. At the end of the Old Testament, God declared through the prophet Malachi that the great and glorious Day of Judgment was approaching (Malachi 3–4) and Elijah would prepare the way. At the beginning of the New Testament, John the Baptist filled Elijah's shoes by proclaiming a baptism of repentance because that the reign of God was at hand. "I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire" (Matthew 3:11–12).

But to everyone's surprise, when Jesus began his ministry, he didn't come with fire and the winnowing fork. He came with mercy and forgiveness. God sent Jesus to search out the lost and the sinners and forgive their sins (Matthew 9:9–13). And that's exactly what Jesus did. With the authority of God (what greater authority can there be than the jurisdiction of the creator?), Jesus simply pronounced people forgiven (Matthew 9:1–8).

Weekly Schedule:

- Service 9:00 am
- Adult Bible Study/
Sunday School
10:15am
- Confirmation 12:00pm
- Monday Night Bible
Study 6:00pm
- Wednesday Coffee
Time 8:30am
- Wednesday Scripture
Study 9 am
- Wednesday Night
Senior High Youth
Group 5:30pm

Special Activities:

- Elders February 5 @
6pm
- LWML Valentines
Brunch February 7 @
10am

February Duties:

Elder

John Shmalcs

Altar Guild

Tara Crile
Judy Webb

Acolyte

Abram Beltz

Processional Cross

2/22 Bristol Duffy

Greeter

Monica Prickett

Hospitality

2/1 Sara Anderson & Lisa Forschler
2/8 Cassie Beltz & Rebecca Duffy
2/15 Julie Rice & Marjorie Roach
8/22 Brooklyn Vanderwilt & Evie McKain

Ushers

2/1 Malichi Schauer & Jacob Anderson
2/8 Marty George & Alan Pickett
2/15 Curt Jager & Gabe Hoy
2/22 Lawrence Smith & James Horn

A big THANK YOU to all members who served as organists, Hospitality servers, and cleaning crew last month.

This is just another part of STEWARDSHIP in action at St. John.

LWML NEWS

LWML will have a Valentine Bruch on February 7 @ 10am.
There will be Bingo
Hostesses will be Marjorie Roach, Carol Fynaardt, Karen Westercamp and Sue George.

All Women are welcome to join us.

Mite box Sunday is the first Sunday of the Month. Please remember to bring your mites and put in the LWML box.

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

Carol Fynaardt	2-07
Diane Nicholson	2-10
Evie McKain	2-10
Tom Pitts	2-10
Madison Smith	2-10
Mark Anthony	2-11
Sarah Anderson	2-17
Joan Wefer	2-19
Beth Fenton	2-21
Tamra Van Haaften	2-25
Lawrence Smith	2-26
Beckett Vanderwilt	2-26
Ken Bowie Jr	2-27



IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER















Ash Wednesday Service
February 18 @ 5:30pm

Lenten Service
February 25 @ 5:30pm

Lenten Meal
February 25 following Lenten Service



Please include in your prayers daily

-  Sean Strothman, Luke Letzring, Rod Hacker, Karen Westercamp; Tamra Van Haaften 
-  **Prayers for the Mocks for: strengthening of relationships** at our local church with both existing and newcomers, **wise technology decisions** the improve effectiveness of both Luther Academy and the Eurasia Region, **language learning, activities and friendships** for Eva and Moriah 
-  For those in Isreal, Ukraine, Russia, Uvalde and other places suffering from acts of senseless violence; 
-  For those serving in our Armed Forces and for our Police Officers and Fire Fighters; may they remain safe in their service; 
-  For the many that continue to struggle with isolation and loneliness; For those directly and in directly affected by the conflict in Ukraine; For the many who continue to struggle with natural disasters and bad storms; 
-  For our Church, that God would continue to grant us new members and make us a good gift to each other and our community; 
-  For us as a congregation to faithfully receive God's good gifts this day. 



Continued from page 1

When those who questioned Jesus' authority had enough of him, they crucified Jesus as a blasphemer. But God raised Jesus from the dead, vindicating Jesus as his Son, that is, the one who possesses the creator's authority. Then Jesus sent out his disciples to continue his mission. "'As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.' And when he had said these things, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of anyone, they are forgiven; if you withhold forgiveness from anyone, it is withheld'" (John 20:21–23).

See Luther's Small Catechism, Confession, Office of the Keys...

Does the office of the keys only belong to Pastors?

Confession and Absolution in the Life of the Christian

The practice of confession and absolution has two significant roles to play in the life of the Christian. First, confessing our sins and receiving absolution is good for repentance. Second, absolution is good for the burdened conscience.

First, the life of the baptized is a life of repentance. Because, in baptism, we have been assigned to Christ, we no longer belong to the present evil age of sin and death. Paul says, "We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4). But the old creature still clings to us. Our flesh still belongs to the present evil age. Therefore, as Luther says, baptism "signifies that the old creature in us with all sins and evil desire is to be drowned and die through daily contrition and repentance, and on the other hand that daily a new person is to come forth and rise up to live before God in righteousness and purity forever" (Small Catechism, Baptism, 12). Repentance is the way we live out our baptisms daily. In baptism, we've already been transferred from the kingdom of sin, death and the devil to the kingdom of God in Jesus. But since the old creature still clings to us we are to put it to death daily.

Confessing our sins is a means of repentance. 1 John says, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:8–9). The idea is pretty simple. If we don't own up to our sin, then we're fooling ourselves and worse. We're walking right into the wrath and anger of a jealous God—a jealous God who is set on killing us and our sin (Malachi and John weren't entirely wrong!). But if we confess our sins, God who is faithful and just will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Owning up to our sin turns us back to God's mercy and faithfulness—a mercy and faithfulness found in his Son, Jesus of Nazareth, who was sent by God for one reason: to forgive sinners their sins. So God has given us confession and absolution to reconcile us to himself and restore our relationship with him. When we confess our sins we own up to them. We say, "Yes, I'm that person." Then in absolution, Jesus forgives our sins and we have a new identity. No longer am I defined by sin, but by the forgiveness of the Lord Jesus himself.

Second, absolution is important for the troubled conscience. In the ordinary course of each of our lives as God's people, stuff come up and things happen—things and stuff that bring the judgment of God. Some issue or incident may begin to trouble us and accuse us. We may, of course, remember our baptisms, but what if that isn't enough? What if the issue or incident is so great that we're not even sure it can be forgiven? What do we do then?

This is the place of absolution. In the Large Catechism Luther writes, "[The rite of absolution] comes into play when some particular issue weighs on us and attacks us, eating away at us until we can have no peace nor find ourselves sufficiently strong in faith...So if there is a heart that feels its sin and desires comfort, it has here [in absolution] a sure refuge where it finds and hears God's Word because through a human being God looses and absolves from sin" (Large Catechism, Confession, 13).

Continued on page 4

Continued from page 3

Sound Bite Theology

The Good

- The pastor is Jesus' mouthpiece for our good.
- If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves.
- If we confess our sins, God, who is faithful and just, will forgive our sins.

The Bad

- No human being can forgive my sins. Only God can forgive my sins.
- I can pray to God and I know in my heart that he'll forgive me.

The Ugly

- I'm already baptized, so I don't need forgiveness.
- Baptism only forgives my original sin. Confession and absolution cover the rest.

(Transfer of kingdoms...)

What is Sin?

But what is sin? What should we confess? Sin is rebellion against God. It is the refusal to let God be the one who determines what's right and how things should go. Instead of being totally dependent on God for all things, we take it upon ourselves to determine things for ourselves and take care of things for ourselves. Recall our discussion of the first article of the Creed. There we said that because God is the creator, who controls and determines all things, our most basic relationship with God is determined by our trust. Do we fear, love and trust in God above all things, or do we disregard, hate, and distrust God. The Ten Commandments are a tool God gives us to identify our sin—to observe our fear, love and trust or our disregard, hate, and distrust at work in our daily lives.

Read Luther's Catechism, First Commandment. What does it mean to have no other gods?

All the other commandments stem from the first. Read explanations to other commandments in Luther's catechism. How does each one relate to the first?

What sins, therefore, should we confess? Read Luther's Catechism on this question.

Pastor Samuel Belts

SOUPER BOWL SUNDAY

Kick Off a Season of Giving & Serving!

Join us as we tackle hunger in our community!

We are **kicking off a season of giving and serving** in Sunday School, and our Sunday School kids will be collecting soup cans to help those in need.

Sunday, February 8

If you'd like to participate, you are more than welcome to bring soup cans!

You can start bringing donations **now** and place them on the back narthex table.

♥ Let's fill the table and make a big difference together! ♥

Stack of soup cans: Chicken Soup, Tomato Soup, Vegetable Soup, Bean Soup, Bean Soup.

Goedeken Educational Scholarship Applications Now Available

It's time to apply for the Goedeken Educational Scholarships! Applications are now available in the church office. These scholarships are open to high school seniors and current college students.

The deadline for consideration is **April 1, 2026**, so be sure to pick up your application soon. We encourage all eligible students to apply!

St John' Evangelical Lutheran Church

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February 2026

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Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<p>1</p> <p>9am Divine Service with Communion 10:15am Bible Study/ Sunday School</p> <p>12:00 pm</p>	<p>2 6:00pm Monday Night Bible Study</p>	3	<p>4 8:30am Coffee Hour 9:00am Scripture Study 5:30pm Youth Group</p> <p>Bulletin items due</p>	<p>5 Elders Meeting 6:00pm</p>	6	<p>7 LWML Valentines Brunch 10am</p>
<p>8</p> <p>9am Divine Service with Communion 10:15am Bible Study/ Sunday School</p> <p>12:00 pm Confirmation</p>	<p>9 6:00pm Monday Night Bible Study</p>	10	<p>11 8:30am Coffee Hour 9:00am Scripture Study 5:30pm Youth Group</p> <p>Bulletin items due</p>	12	13	14
<p>15</p> <p>9am Divine Service with Communion 10:15am Adult Bible Study/ Sunday School</p> <p>12:00 pm Confirmation</p>	<p>16 6:00pm Monday Night Bible Study</p>	17	<p>18 8:30am Coffee Hour 9:00am Scripture Study 5:30pm Ash Wednesday Service</p> <p>Bulletin items due</p>	19	20	21
<p>22</p> <p>9am Divine Service with Communion 10:15am Bible Study/ Sunday School</p> <p>12:00 pm Confirmation</p>	<p>23 6:00pm Monday Night Bible Study</p>	24	<p>25 8:30am Coffee Hour 9:00am Scripture Study 5:30pm Lenten Service 6:00pm Lenten Meal</p> <p>Bulletin items due</p>	26	27	28

