

FAITH NEWSLETTER

June / July 2017



Dear Friends in Christ,

If you grew up Lutheran, you probably were not taught to go to confession. You might have even learned that it was a “Roman Catholic thing.” You might have had to “announce” for communion, but that was as far as it went.

Would it surprise you to learn that the Lutheran Confessions actually promote private confession? Augsburg Confession XI begins, “Our churches teach that private Absolution should be retained in the churches.” Martin Luther even writes in the Large Catechism, “When I urge you to go to Confession, I am doing nothing else than urging you to be a Christian.” Private Confession and Absolution has been an important Lutheran practice from the very beginning.

So what happened? Why is private Confession so rarely practiced by Lutherans?

Mostly it’s due to human weakness and laziness. While we encourage people to come to confession, we do not require it. And as soon as you tell people you don’t have to do something, they are likely to abuse their freedom. It’s also difficult. We don’t want to expose our deepest, darkest secrets. It’s hard to trust even a pastor to keep your sins confidential.

And yet private confession and absolution is a tremendous gift and blessing that Jesus gives. In absolution you actually hear the voice of Jesus forgiving you and setting you free from the burden of our guilt.

For the past five years, we’ve been going through the Small Catechism over the summer months. We’ve studied the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord’s Prayer, and Holy Baptism. This summer we turn to the Office of the Keys and Confession. We’ll hear what God has to say about confessing our sins, and the men to whom He entrusts the keys of the kingdom of heaven.

Join us from July 9-30 as we discover together the joy and blessing of Confession and Forgiveness!

Pastor Birkholz

Ask the Pastor

I received a few questions about hymn selection, and so I'll answer them together.

Choosing hymns for a service is a very important task. Music connects to our emotions, and many people have favorite hymns for sentimental reasons. It can be frustrating when you are asked to sing a song that you don't know or the melody is difficult.

I start the selection process by looking at the gospel lesson. This will determine the theme of the service. Then I look for hymns that fit with the gospel, either by quoting from the reading, or by reflecting its theme. If it's a holiday season, I might add a hymn or two that fits the season, even if it's not directly connected to the readings. I also consider how the songs function in the service. Certain songs of praise and invitation fit well for opening hymns. Communion hymns are obvious choices for distribution. Hymns that talk about eternal life or the mission of the church work as closing hymns. For our summer Bible Class, we talk about the hymns each week and how the service fits together.

After I have all the hymns chosen, I take a look back through and try to decide how familiar they are to the congregation. If it looks like there are too many new or complicated hymns, I might take one or two out and substitute an old favorite or two. If there is a hymn that you like and we haven't sung in a while, please let me know, and I'll try to fit it in.

I also had a question about Patriotic Hymns and the Battle Hymn of the Republic in particular.

On patriotic hymns in general, these can be tricky. On the one hand, God encourages us to pray for our country and our leaders, and many hymns serve this function. On the other hand, our true citizenship is in heaven. We need to avoid giving the impression that God somehow favors our nation above others. Perhaps my time living overseas helped me to see how membership in the body of Christ transcends any earthly boundaries and borders.

As far as "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" goes, it's certainly a fun song to sing and play (especially on the trumpet). It does use lots of biblical language and imagery. The problem with singing this song in worship has to do with its history and the way that it interprets the events of the Civil War.

This song started out as a southern spiritual. At the start of the Civil War, the words were changed to focus on the fate of abolitionist John Brown. The song began, "John Brown's body lies a-mouldrin' in the grave, but his soul is marching on." Julia Ward Howe heard a company of Union soldiers singing the song, and changed the lyrics to what we know today.

Basically the song equates the Union army as the agents of God's wrath in punishing the Confederacy for its support of slavery. Ultimately it connects their work with the redeeming work of Jesus.

In the first verse the "terrible swift sword" is the Union army. This is made clear in verse two, "I have seen Him in the watch-fires of a hundred circling camps, They have builded Him an altar in the evening dews and damps; I can read His righteous sentence by the dim and flaring lamps." The third verse is probably the worst, "I have read a fiery gospel writ in burnished rows of steel: As ye deal with my contemners, so with you my grace shall deal; Let the Hero, born of woman, crush the serpent with his heel, Since God is marching on." The final verse includes the line, "As He died to make men holy, let us die to make men free."

As important as it was to put an end to slavery, it's not right to compare the Civil War to the return of Christ or to His work of dying on the cross. It's still a fun song to sing, and it might be okay in the right context, but that sort of theology is not appropriate to sing in church.

Schedule of June / July 2017 Events

Date	Time	June Event
3	9:00 AM	Food Pantry Distribution
4	9:00 AM	Worship / Communion
	10:15 AM	Sunday School
	10:30 AM	Adult Bible Class
11	9:00 AM	Worship / Communion
	10:15 AM	Bible Class
17	9:00 AM	Food Pantry Distribution
18	9:00 AM	Worship / Communion
	10:15 AM	Bible Class
25	9:00 AM	Worship / Communion
	10:15 AM	Bible Class

Weekly Meetings

Bible Study	Fri. - 10:00 AM
AA Groups	Mon. & Fri. - 6:00 PM
	Wed. & Thur. - 7:00 PM
	Sat. - 8:00 AM
Alanon	Tue. - 7:30 PM

Hymn of the Month

June: "O Love, How Deep" (# 544)

This Medieval Latin hymn is attributed to Thomas à Kempis, the author of *The Imitation of Christ*. The original is 23 verses long, of which seven are included in our hymnal. The hymn tells the story of Jesus from His incarnation through His baptism, His temptation, His ministry, His suffering, death, and resurrection, His ascension, and the sending of the Holy Spirit. Over and over the hymn emphasizes that all these were done "for us." The tune is an old English melody used to celebrate the victory of King Henry V over the French in the battle of Agincourt in 1415.

Date	Time	July Event
1	9:00 AM	Food Pantry Distribution
2	9:00 AM	Worship / Communion
	10:15 AM	Bible Class
9	9:00 AM	Worship / Communion
	10:15 AM	Bible Class
15	9:00 AM	Food Pantry Distribution
16	9:00 AM	Worship / Communion
	10:15 AM	Bible Class
23	9:00 AM	Worship / Communion
	10:15 AM	Bible Class
30	9:00 AM	Worship / Communion
	10:15 AM	Bible Class

Hymn of the Month

July: "Baptismal Waters Cover Me" (# 616)

This newer hymn on Confession and Absolution was written by Canadian Lutheran pastor Kurt E. Reinhardt, who is currently serving a congregation in Ontario. This song carries you through the process of confession and absolution, from kneeling before the Lord and laying your sin before Him, to hearing the words of forgiveness that give you joy and strengthen your faith.

VBS

Our theme for Vacation Bible School this summer will be "Christmas in June." VBS will be June 19-23, from 9:30a-12:00p each day. Please plan to attend our closing service on Friday, June 23 at 11:30p. All children 12 and under are welcome (under 3 will need an adult to stay with them). Please invite any young people you know to join us. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Amberleigh Birkholz.

June / July 2017 Elders, Ushers & Lay Readers

June Worship 9:00 AM Sunday

June 4	Alden Ketchum Ed Neaves Mary Slepiski Ray Bennett
June 11	Mike Kampenga Gene Osmanski Kenilynn Breibarth Mark Trojanowski
June 18	Alden Ketchum Richard Clark Marilyn Diehl Eleonore Lang
June 25	Mike Kampenga Ed Neaves Katie Kampenga Kenilynn Breibarth

July Worship 9:00 AM Sunday

July 2	Gene Osmanski Richard Clark Cheyenne Breibarth Mark Trojanowski
July 9	Mike Kampenga Alden Ketchum Mary Slepiski Ray Bennett
July 16	Ed Neaves Richard Clark Ray Bennett Dora Haynes
July 23	Gene Osmanski Alden Ketchum Marilyn Diehl Katie Kampenga
July 30	Mike Kampenga Richard Clark Cheyenne Breibarth Mark Trojanowski

Lay Readers 9:00 AM Sunday

June 4	Gene Osmanski
June 11	Mike Kampenga
June 18	Katie Kampenga
June 25	Ray Benett
July 2	Cheyenne Breibarth
July 9	Kenilynn Breibarth
July 16	Dora Haynes
July 23	Mark Trojanowski
July 30	Debbie Hochgesang

Ladies Aid

The ladies will have their annual Pizza and Game night on June 1st at 6:30 PM in the Parish Hall. This will be our last gathering until September.

We thank you for your support and we urge you to consider joining us in the Fall. We are planning on having a comment box on the table in the Narthex. If you are interested in joining the Ladies Aid or if you wish to know more about what we do for the church, please drop us a comment.

Kathleen Nowak
Membership Chairman

Church Picnic

Our annual church picnic is June 11th. We meet at Wolfe Wildlife Refuge, 109th and Laramie at noon. Hamburgers, Hot dogs, relishes and sodas are provided.

If you are planning to attend please bring a dish to share for the common table. After lunch, we will play games and Bingo. For participating in Bingo we ask that you bring a wrapped gift or gift card worth \$5:00 or more. There might even be a bean bag toss just waiting for you.

Going on Vacation?

Don't miss out on the opportunity to worship with your brothers and sisters in Christ across the country. If you need help finding a Lutheran congregation, check www.lcms.org or contact the church office.