

PRIVATE CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

To confess is to acknowledge what you know to be true. From the Holy Scriptures we acknowledge that we have sinned in thought, word, and deed. In fact, we are sinful from the moment we were conceived (Psalm 51:5). Yet, we also acknowledge that God is gracious and merciful and will forgive us for the sake of his Son Jesus Christ.

Through Private Confession and Absolution, the individual Christian confesses in general his sinfulness, and in particular those sins which are grievous to him. We confess our sins, being confident of God's promise. (1 John 1:8-10) We confess our sins in order to receive God's forgiveness.

Then, in the name and in the stead of Christ, the pastor forgives our sins. The Lutheran Confessions teach that this Absolution is the "voice of God" and that the "voice of one absolving must be believed not otherwise than we would believe a voice from heaven." Confession is not to the pastor, but to Christ. Therefore, the proclamation of forgiveness is not the pastor's, but Christ's. Unconditional forgiveness is ours!

Historically, the Confession of Sins was not a part of the Divine Service. It was done privately and individually. Unlike in the Church of Rome, we do not make Private Confession and Absolution mandatory; nor is it required that we enumerate our sins for them to be forgiven. Who could remember them all? Rather, we offer this "third Sacrament" because of its individual application of forgiveness. The Lutheran Confessions teach that it would be "wicked to remove private absolution from the church." Thus, the members of Good Shepherd are encouraged to practice it.

Since this confession is to Christ, not to the pastor, the pastor will never reveal it to anyone. It is *Private* Confession and Absolution. Your confession will be held in absolute confidence.

Private Confession and Absolution are available by appointment with the pastor, as well as four scheduled times a year. The four times it is scheduled and appointments need not be made roughly follow this schedule

- > The Saturday before or on Epiphany (Epiphany is always January 6)
- > The Saturday before Palm Sunday
- > The Saturday after Labor Day weekend
- > The Saturday after Thanksgiving weekend (just before Advent)

The exact date and time for Private Confession & Absolution near each target date will be confirmed in the church bulletin and on the pastor's blog.