

## The Third Sacrament?

[Pastor's note: Advent and Lent share a history as penitential seasons of the church year. The bulk of what follows was written during last Lent, for a newsletter that, as far as we know, the Postal Service simply misplaced! As we enter another season of self-reflection, it's worth recalling the incomparable importance of confession and forgiveness in our lives as disciples.]

Paging through the hymnal can reveal many secrets of the church. For instance, take a look at pages 243–244 in our red *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*. There you will find hidden in plain sight the church's liturgy for a rite largely unpracticed in the ELCA today: "Individual Confession and Forgiveness."

What's that doing there? The hymnal's introduction reminds us that individual confession may be offered in a congregation, at least on request or "in conjunction with pastoral care," but you could be forgiven for wondering if it's also there in part to save face. After all, the Augsburg Confession—the founding document of the Lutheran church that strives to demonstrate its conformity to the church catholic, if not the Catholic Church—expresses our commitment to individual confession: "Concerning confession it is taught that private absolution should be retained and not abolished."

Why individual confession has fallen into disuse is a matter of history, but it's worth remembering that the "sacrament of penance" was at the heart of the Reformation and in a sense remains at the heart of Christian life. Luther realized that the sacrament as practiced in the church of his day obscured God's grace—Christ's work—by making that grace dependent on the penitent's deeds of satisfaction (the "penance" part) and inward state of contrition (raising the question, "Am I inwardly contrite enough to deserve God's forgiveness?"). Instead, the Small Catechism teaches that "confession consists of two parts," our confession and God's gracious absolution, "that is, forgiveness, from the confessor as from God himself." Therefore, while the standard Protestant numbering of sacraments is usually two—baptism and the Lord's Supper—Lutherans might say that "Absolution can properly be called the sacrament of penance," and "Therefore the sacraments are actually baptism, the Lord's Supper, and absolution (the sacrament of repentance)" [Apology to the Augsburg Confession XII:41, Apology XIII:4].

Does that mean we are missing God's grace if we aren't having individual confession? By no means! For one thing, confession and forgiveness takes different forms. Our Sunday worship often begins with a "brief order of confession and forgiveness." Luther even reminds us that besides the pastor's words of absolution, God's gospel of forgiveness is also shared "through the mutual conversation and consolation of brothers and sisters." By your baptism, you have the calling to share God's word of forgiveness with others!

In the end, while the "third sacrament" of confession is always available to you (don't hesitate to ask), it too rests upon the foundation of your baptism. No one has said this better than Luther himself [Large Catechism IV:74–79]:

"Here you see that baptism, both by its power and by its signification, comprehends also the third sacrament, formerly called penance, which is really nothing else than baptism. What is repentance but an earnest attack on the old creature and the entering into a new life? If you live in repentance, therefore, you are walking in baptism, which not only announces this new life but also produces, begins, and exercises it. In baptism we are given the grace, Spirit, and strength to suppress the old creature so that the new may come forth and grow strong.

“Therefore baptism remains forever. Even though someone falls from it and sins, we always have access to it so that we may again subdue the old creature. But we need not have the water poured over us again. Even if we were immersed in water a hundred times, it would nevertheless not be more than one baptism, and the effect and significance would continue and remain. Repentance, therefore, is nothing else than a return and approach to baptism, to resume and practice what has earlier been begun but abandoned”.

In Advent especially we await the return of Christ, the Light of the World. As you anticipate his return, the day of resurrection, may this season find you experiencing God's forgiveness and power of repentance.

## † IN OUR PRAYERS †



**Nevagay Abel, Don Abel, Kelsey Dolan, Judi Fields, Bob Fritz, Lois Grueneberg, Stu Hoffman, Lois Johnson, Lisa Jones, Doris Kampfe, Roy Kloweit, the Lund family, Kevin Persaud, Carline Talmadge, Ruby Watson, Dan Webber** (friend of Bruce Solko), **David Johnson** (nephew of Dyvone Freburg), **Mildred Anderson** (mother of Cheryl Erdmann), the family of **Robert Kibble** (brother of Vee Kerley), **Pr. Paul Garchow** (friend of the Lund family), **Lyle Solko, Don Johnson** (friend of Lyle & Phyllis Johnson), **Cortney Stevens** (neighbor of Don & Neva Abel), **Kristin Haren** (daughter of Adolph Wacker), **Golda** (friend of Bev & Adolph Wacker), **Janet** (Cheryl Erdmann's deaconess sister), **Carol Triplett** (friend of the Smalley and Wacker families), **Micah Curry** (son of Danielle Dolan), **LeAnn Dahl** (daughter of Carol Dahl), **David Harris** (nephew of Kris Tukker), the **family of Deb Zandonatti, Caleb and Jacob Wood** (grandsons of Al and Phyllis Johnson, each serving in the military in Iraq), **Casper Blake, Charlotte** (mother of Kay Brindle), and **the Stubbs family** (missionaries in Tanzania).

(Please review this list and let either Pastor Scott or the church office know when a name can be removed).

Want to be a member of the body of Christ here at Shepherd of the Valley? Please speak with Pastor Scott after worship if you would like to be received into our community of faith at Easter.

## Meeting Night December 6

Come discuss the church's ministries at 7:00 pm. Tuesday, December 6. After brief devotions together in the sanctuary, we will convene into various committees to review where we've been and explore our hopes for what's next.

## NEW PRAYER GROUP

- Are you tired of all the crime in our city and world?
- Does it make your heart sick from all the innocent people dying?
- Do you want a better life for you, your family, and your community?

If you answered “yes” to any of those questions, then you will need to check out Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church's brand new “prayer warriors unite” group.

We are calling all members of the community who are believers in Jesus to join us for one night a month for a night of nothing but praying.

We are called by God to be bold prayer warriors. The power of God is not limited to law enforcement and is promised to all who call upon God.

Let the community take a stand and do our part to bring all the petitions of prayers to God in unison to help make our community and world a safe and crime-free place .

The first informational meeting will be held on **Sunday, December 11, 2016, at 11:00 a.m.** here at Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church. We hope to see you there!



CHRISTMAS IS THE CELEBRATION OF THE BIRTH OF JESUS, THE SAVIOUR OF MANKIND



## Library News

We hope you will take time to browse the library this month.

There is a special display of REFORMATION 500 books on the south wall. Advent and Christmas books will be displayed throughout the library. There are books for all ages-read as a family!

### MISSING BOOKS

Please look through your bookshelves, closets, etc. at home for books you may have checked out from the church library. We are happy when materials are checked out but hope they make their way home after you have finished reading them.

### Library Work Day

**NO LIBRARY WORK DAY IN DECEMBER**



## Senior News

### **SENIOR CHRISTMAS POTLUCK TUESDAY, DECEMBER 20 AT NOON**

Please sign up for one of the food items. Meat, beverage and table service will be provided. Following the lunch, we will sing carols with Linda Longardner and play Christmas Bingo. Please bring a "prize" for the game. Men bring a man's gift, ladies bring a lady's gift.

**PLEASE SIGN UP ON THE POSTER  
ON THE KIOSK.**

### **2017 COMMITMENTS**

You recently received a packet containing information about where your contributions go, a weekly giving guide, and the commitment cards for 2017 in the mail. If you haven't filled out the commitment card yet and turned it into the church, please do so as soon as possible. The finance committee is working on the church budget for 2017 so knowing what is expected to come in is very important.

If you have any questions please contact a member of the finance committee or Pastor Scott.

### **Blue Christmas**

Christmas is a time of joy, but for many of us it is also a time of sorrow. This time of year we may feel more deeply the loss of loved ones, the loneliness of Christmas without family, or simply the "holiday blues." But God's love and healing is for us in all seasons. Experience this healing at a "Blue Christmas" service of prayer and healing at 12:30 p.m. on Sunday, December 11.

### **SOCIAL MINISTRY**

Thank you to all who have contributed to our veteran display. We appreciate your service to our country.

Our collection for the VA clinic will continue into December.

The giving tree for students at Summerdale Early Childhood Center will be displayed beginning the week of Thanksgiving. We are asked to choose a tag(s) from the tree, purchase the items noted on the gift tag, wrap and return the gifts to SVLC. Carol Bailey is coordinating this program with teachers at Summerdale.



Attendance statistics average are based on  
the 4 weeks

October 30 - November 20

Average attendance - 86

Contributions average are based on  
the 4 weeks

October 30 - November 20

Average weekly contributions:

Current & Benevolence - \$ 2944.50

Building Fund - \$ 495.00

**FINANCIAL REPORTS**

Financial results as of October 31, 2016 and Year to date totals

	C & B Actual	C & B Budget	C & B YTD Actual	C & B YTD Budget
Income	\$15,032.32	\$13,346.67	\$154,188.03	\$147,861.66
Expense	\$13,069.31	\$14,444.60	\$160,554.47	\$157,913.19
Inc/exp	\$1,963.01	-\$1,097.93	-\$6,366.44	-\$10,051.53
plus offsets	\$827.78	\$270.00	\$15,045.33	\$5,210.00
plus interest	\$0.67	\$0.67	\$6.55	\$6.67
Net income	\$2,791.46	-\$827.26	\$8,685.44	-\$4,834.86

	10/31/16	9/30/16
C&B balance	\$4,846.03	\$2,393.48

	Building Actual	Building Budget	Bld YTD Actual	Bld YTD Budget
Income	\$1,770.00	\$2,400.00	\$20,668.00	\$23,309.00
Expense	\$2,257.40	\$2,257.40	\$22,564.00	\$22,574.00
Net inc/exp	-\$487.40	\$142.60	-\$1,896.00	\$735.00

	10/31/16	9/30/16
Building fund balance	\$18,665.05	\$19,152.45

Please note: Financials run one month behind in the bulletin  
Also note: The second installment cost \$4600 and we have paid  
\$1504 of this bill as of 10/31/2016  
Balance on our mortgage - \$296447.10

**Statements of Giving Now Available**

Look for your third-quarter giving statement on the narthex table to the left of the sanctuary doors.

**Youth Connect Advent Party**

December 4

5:00 - 7:00 pm

Alpine Lutheran Church  
Build gingerbread houses  
Play gagball and more!!  
Enjoy food & beverages.

**CHURCH DIRECTORY PICTURES**

For anyone that was not able to make the photo sessions and would like to find an alternate photo shoot, please call Alyssa Woody at Lifetouch at 800-521-4611 to schedule an appointment. You will need our church's name & address, our account number of 359802, and our color/format is horizontal & Carmel.



**CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE**

SPECIAL MUSIC BEGINS AT 4:30 PM  
WORSHIP SERVICE WITH COMMUNION  
BEGINS AT 5:00 PM

**CHRISTMAS DAY SERVICE**

WORSHIP SERVICE WITH COMMUNION  
9:30 AM

AROUND THE TOWN



*Salem Lutheran Church*  
**Annual Swedish Christmas Dinner**  
 With the  *Salvation Army Band*  
**Thursday, December 1, 2016**  
**6:30pm**

*Join us for our traditional homemade Swedish dinner* 

**Donations: \$15.00**  
 Call Pastor Bill @ 815/721-2550 or the Church Office @ 815/965-5131  
**Get Your Tickets Now!!**  
 1629 South Sixth Street      Rockford, IL 61104      815/965-5131

Swedish Historical Society of Rockford Presents  
**Julmarknad**  
**Saturday, December 3**  
 Trinity Lutheran Church  
 200 N. 1st St. Rockford, IL.  
 9:00am - 2:00pm

-  **Marknad (Vendors)**
-  **Swedish Food and Bakery**
-  **Kaffe Stuga - \$3.00**

  
 9:00am  
**Breakfast with Tomten**  
**Reservations Required** - Call 815-966-1218  
 \$6.00 Per Person

-  **Meet Tomten & Lucia**
-  **Sing Swedish Songs**
-  **Dance Around the Christmas Tree**

  
 11:30am - 1:00pm  
**Meatball Luncheon**  
 \$9.00 Per Person  
 Call 815-399-3737 for Information




**SONGS & SUDS**  
**(& SANTA)** 

*Sing with us Christmas songs, Celebrate Saint Nicolas Day & have some suds (beer & root beer)*  
*Live singing of a few songs from the Katie's Cup Christmas CD*

**TUESDAY DECEMBER 6, 2016 FROM 6-8PM**  
**CELEBRATE SANTA'S BIRTHDAY WITH SONG**

**MUSICIANS:** Marti Bein, Denver Bitner, Rob James, Jane McChesney, Chad McKenna, Julane Nease, Jay Quinn, Scott Stolberg, Michael Thomas & others!

**Questions: contact Michael Thomas**  
**methomas1966@gmail.com or 815-964-4609**

(Financial Donations benefit Katie's Cup)

**HELD AT KATIE'S CUP**   
 502 Seventh Street - Rockford, IL  
 Corner of Seventh Street & Fourth Avenue

First Lutheran Church announces its  
**58th Annual Lucia Celebration**  
**Saturday, December 10**  
**9 am - noon**



Traditional Kaffe Kalas  
 with  
 Santa Lucia  
 Candy Boy & Girl

Crafts, "treasures," & homemade bakery  
 plus Tabor Lutheran's Swedish Korv!

*Holiday Concert at 10 am in the sanctuary*  
*Music Academy of Rockford students*

225 S. Third Street, corner of Third & Oak  
 in the heart of Rockford's historic Haight Village  
 815.962.6691



Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church (ELCA)  
2715 S. Mulford Road, Rockford, IL 61109  
Phone: 815-399-5503 E-mail: [svlcsecretary@att.net](mailto:svlcsecretary@att.net)  
On The Web: [www.shep61.org](http://www.shep61.org)  
Office Hours, Monday - Thursday, 8:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

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## RETURN SERVICES REQUESTED

### Officers of the Congregation

President - Janette Erickson  
Vice-President - Kay Brindle  
Secretary - Vicki Nitz  
Treasurer - Phil Smalley

### Congregation Council

Carol Bailey, Christian Education  
Kay Brindle, Outreach  
Janette Erickson, Fellowship  
Chad Farris, Property  
Amy Kellogg, Youth Ministry  
Robert Maness, Finance  
Vicki Nitz, Preschool  
Laurie Pellant, Social Ministry  
Sherry Scheider, Worship/Music  
Bruce Solko, Personnel  
John Wolf, Stewardship

### Staff

The Rev. Scott Benolkin, Pastor  
Judi Fields, Secretary  
Linda Longardner, Organist  
Phil Smalley, Treasurer  
Susie Smalley, Music Director  
Patte Lund, Christian Educa-



CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE

WITH COMMUNION

5:00 PM

**SPECIAL MUSIC BEGINS AT 4:30 PM**

CHRISTMAS DAY SERVICE

WITH COMMUNION

9:30 AM

COME CELEBRATE THE BIRTH OF JESUS