

The Bell Tower

PRAY FIRST (A Continuing Article)

Personal Prayer -

As	Adoration
The	Thanksgiving
Christian	Confession of sin and of faith
I	Intercession
Pray	Petition

Confession – The prayer of confession is admitting our sins and asking God to forgive us. We need to be transparent before God (open to conviction of sin by God) and honest in acknowledging our sin and our repentance from it. The world today would prefer to justify sin in psychological terms, or at least to call it by more socially acceptable names. If we are to take our relationship with God seriously, however, we need to call sin what it is and be truly repentant for it. We also need to recognize that our sins are often in the nature of omissions (things we should have done but didn't) rather than commissions (specifically sinful acts).

There are a number of ways in which we can confess our sins. The general confession is a regular part of corporate worship. Some people who find it helpful to confess to God before another person, do so with their spiritual guide, prayer partner or in their prayer group. Oral confession before a priest/pastor is meaningful to many people. We all have the opportunity to confess our sins daily to God in prayer. Many people, in addition to including confession in their daily quiet time earlier in the day conclude the day with the prayer of confession following reflection on the events of the day and ways in which they have failed God. And, of course, we can confess at any time; it is good to keep short accounts with God, confessing to Him immediately upon realizing that we have sinned.

The steps in confession are as follows:

1. Sensitivity. Living a life in consciousness of our obligations to God and others.
2. Self-examination. Discovering our sins, wherein we have failed in our obligations to God and others.
3. Confession. Admitting those sins we have discovered and our responsibility in them.
4. Seeking Forgiveness. Asking God to forgive our sins.
5. Making Restitution. Sometimes God will require some act from us to show the sincerity of our confession or to bring a needed reconciliation. This could involve for instance,

- apologizing to the person we have offended.
6. Accepting God's Forgiveness. The act of confession is not complete until we have acknowledged within ourselves God's release of us from the sin.

There are a number of methods of self-examination that can be helpful aides in the act of confession. Self-examination may be based upon passages of Scripture such as the Ten Commandments (looking specifically at the spirit of the Commandments) and the Beatitudes (wherein do we fall short of the Christian lifestyle as spelled out in Matthew 5:3-11 or use the prayers from the LBW.

As with adoration and thanksgiving, there are also Psalms of penitence.

At last I admitted to you I had sinned;
No longer concealing my guilt,
I said, 'I will go to the Lord
And confess my fault'.
And you, you have forgiven the wrong I did,
Have pardoned my sin. (32:5)

The Lord is near to the broken-hearted,
He helps those whose spirit is crushed. (34:18)

Have mercy on me, O God, in your goodness,
In your great tenderness wipe away my faults;
Wash me clean of my guilt,
Purify me from my sin. (51:1)

Some other Bible passages relating to confession are:

But if we acknowledge our sins,
Then God who is faithful and just
Will forgive our sins and purify us
From everything that is wrong. (1 John 1:9)

He who conceals his faults will not prosper,
He who confesses and renounces them will find
mercy. (Proverbs 28:13)

I will leave this place and go to my father,
And say, Father, I have sinned against heaven
And against you. (Luke 15:18)

As mentioned above, sensitivity to sin is the first step in the prayer of confession. Whereas an attitude of penitence is essential to a life of wholeness as a person and as a Christian, sensitivity to sin is essential to penitence. The saints thought themselves the greatest sinners because of their acute sensitivity to sin. God calls us to grow in a consciousness of our obligations to Him and to others, and that growth

should lead to an ever-increasing knowledge of the many ways in which we fall short of these obligations.

Scrupulosity, on the other hand, is carrying sensitivity to the extreme; it is seeing sin in every temptation and shortcoming we experience. Temptation itself is not sin; sin comes from consciously exposing ourselves to temptation, indulging in it or yielding to it. Shortcomings such as failure to achieve a worthy goal also are not, in themselves, sin; those failures can result from lack of physical stamina, mental or emotional inadequacies, or the free will of others that have nothing to do with sin on our own part. In the process of self-examination, we should not lose touch with reality and fall victim to scrupulosity.

In considering the prayer of confession we also need to touch upon the importance of forgiving others. As Christians, we should not be people who hold grudges. We should be quick to forgive. We are taught, in the Lord's Prayer, that we are forgiven for our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.

Finally, it is extremely important to realize that the process of confession is not complete until we have accepted God's forgiveness. Once we, in a truly repentant manner, have confessed our sin to God, asked His forgiveness and taken any action (by way of restitution or contrition), we are forgiven. "As far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us" (Psalm 103:12).



NC Synod Awards Theological Scholarship in Costa Rica

The 2010 Synod Assembly will mark the fifth anniversary of the companion synod relationship between the North Carolina Synod-ELCA and the Lutheran Church of Costa Rica.

Raising up new leaders is one of the many needs currently facing the Lutheran Church of Costa Rica. To help fulfill this need, the NC Synod agreed to sponsor Cristina Mora Ramirez of the Lutheran Church of Costa Rica during her theological studies. Cristina is enrolled at the University of San Jose, Costa Rica where she is majoring in theology, and with plans to become a Lutheran pastor in Costa Rica. In the small community of Puriscal, Cristina is very involved in her home congregation which, until its recent upgrades, was a literal example of the "Church Without Walls."

The North Carolina Women of the ELCA, along with other congregations and individuals across the NC Synod, have offered support for the scholarship. Additional funds are needed to ensure that Cristina will be able to complete her studies. Consider making a contribution to the Costa Rica Scholarship today. For other ways you can support the scholarship or our companion synods, contact Pr. Phil Tonneson, synod staff at ptonneson@nclutheran.org or 704-633-4861.

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**Free Medications for Low Income People with No Insurance** – The Community Clinic is pleased to offer a new service called "NC MedAssist". They want to provide FREE medications for people who have no insurance, live in the Guilford County, Archdale or Trinity area and have incomes between 0 and 200% of the Federal Poverty Level.

If you know of anyone in need of medication assistance, tell them to call 841-MEDS (6339). See the flyer on the church bulletin board for more information.

Who is eligible for NC MedAssist? **Adults and children at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL).**

**Adults and children who have no other means for prescription medications, such as:**

- Medicaid
- Veterans Administration
- Private Health Insurance
- Medicare Part D participants who fall in the donut hole may be eligible after consultation with NC MedAssist

### WEEKLY ATTENDANCE AND RECEIPTS January 3<sup>rd</sup> through February 14<sup>th</sup>, 2010

|           |    |          |
|-----------|----|----------|
| 01/03/10  | 32 | 1,308.50 |
| 01/10/10  | 25 | 910.00   |
| 01/17/10  | 24 | 510.00   |
| 01/24/10  | 32 | 982.00   |
| 01/31/10* |    |          |
| 02/07/10  | 23 | 1,272.00 |
| 02/14/10  | 27 | 919.89   |

\*Canceled due to inclement weather

## **Thank You! Thank You!**

A special thank you to Kathy Miller for acting as our “contact” person with Thrivent and asking for the remainder of St. Michael’s 2009 allotment for outreach programs. We received a check for \$180.00 which will reimburse us for food which we supplied to the West End Ministries. Your help with this endeavor is greatly appreciated.

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Recognizing a Stroke

During a barbecue a woman stumbled and took a little fall – she assured everyone that she was fine (they offered to call paramedics). She said she had just tripped over a brick because of her new shoes. They got her cleaned up and got her a new plate of food. While she appeared a bit shaken up, she went about enjoying herself the rest of the evening.

Her husband called later telling everyone that his wife had been taken to the hospital and passed away at 6 p.m. She had suffered a stroke at the barbecue. Had they known how to identify the signs of a stroke, perhaps she would be alive today. Some don’t die – they end up in a helpless, hopeless condition instead.

A neurologist says that if he can get to a stroke victim within three hours, he can totally reverse the effects of a stroke – totally. He said the trick was getting a stroke recognized, diagnosed, and then getting the patient medically cared for within three hours – which is tough.

Remember these three steps: **S T R.**

Sometimes symptoms of a stroke are difficult to identify. Unfortunately, the lack of awareness spells disaster. The stroke victim may suffer severe brain damage when people nearby fail to recognize the symptoms of a stroke. Now doctors say a bystander can recognize a stroke by asking three simple questions:

S Ask the individual to SMILE.

T Ask the person to TALK and SPEAK A SIMPLE SENTENCE (Coherently – i.e., It is sunny out today.)

R Ask him or her to RAISE BOTH ARMS.

If he or she has trouble with ANY ONE of these tasks, call emergency immediately and describe the symptoms to the dispatcher.

Also: Ask the person to ‘stick’ out his tongue. If the tongue is ‘crooked’ or goes to one side or the other, that is also an indication of a stroke.

So – quick test? Signs of a stroke? **Smile, Talk, Raise both arms -- and Stick Out Your Tongue!**

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## **A Church Garden**

First, plant five rows of peas: Presence, Promptness, Preparation, Purity, Perseverance

Next to these, plant three rows of squash: Squash gossip, squash indifference, squash criticism

No garden is complete without turnips: Turn up for meetings; turn up with a smile; turn up with determination to make everything count for something good and worthwhile

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ARE YOU IN ONE OF THESE GROUPS?

Of all the people who belong to our churches today:

10% cannot be found

20% never pray

30% never read the Bible

40% never give anything to the church

50% seldom attend services

60% never give to missions

75% serve nowhere in the church

85% never go to midweek prayer worship

90% never have family worship

95% have never told another person about Christ

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### **The Measure of a Man**

Not, how did he die?

But, how did he live?

Not, what did he gain?

But, what did he give?

Nor, what was his station?

But, had he a heart?

And, how did he play

His God given part?

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Mid Week Lenten Events

Soup-Supper/Worship/Video Presentations

THE HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY

The Early Years

Wednesdays, February 24, March 3, 10, 17, 24

6:30 p.m.

People will be needed to prepare soup, dessert and to setup each week

A sign-up sheet has been posted on the bulletin board in the hallway.

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**The Summer Camp information for both Kure/Agape and Lutheridge/Lutherock is on the bulletin board in the hallway.**

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Annual Yard Sale – Saturday, May 29th, 2010.

January-February-March issues of the devotional booklet, “Christ in Our Home”, are available in the Narthex. These are printed in both regular and large print editions. There are also Lenten prayer booklets available on the coffee table in the sitting room off the Narthex.

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### Holy Week

March 28: 11:00 a.m. Palm Sunday

April 1: 6:30 p.m. Holy Thursday  
Potluck (Finger Food) “Agape” Meal at  
Emmanuel Lutheran Church

April 2 7:00 p.m. Good Friday  
Service of Darkness at St. Michael (A  
combined service with Emmanuel Lutheran)

April 4: 11:00 a.m. Easter Sunday  
If you are interested in bringing Lilies for the  
Altar, there will be a signup sheet in the  
hallway.



There is a trailer in place behind the church for your donations for the yard sale. If you have any large items, please ask Bob Cecil for help transporting them in his pickup. We need someone to handle the bake sale items – we will also be selling sausage biscuits again this year. **Want to help?**

## Saint Michael Lutheran Church

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