

## **Article: “Share the Faith”**

The Augsburg Confession defines the Church as “*the assembly of the believers among whom the Gospel is purely preached and the holy sacraments are administered according to the Gospel*” (VII.1). This definition comprises two parts. First, it identifies the Church as the assembly of believers in Jesus Christ. Second, it identifies the Church as present wherever the Gospel is purely preached and the Sacraments are administered according to the Gospel. Wherever this is taking place, faith is being created and sustained, and we know that the Church is present.

This definition is helpful as we think about sharing the faith with others, because it includes two things we aim to accomplish. First, we want to share the Gospel so that others are called to faith in Christ. Second, we want to share what the Gospel is when it is purely preached and the Sacraments are administered according to the Gospel. We want people to understand what the Gospel is when it is not mingled with Law. We want people to understand what the Sacraments are when they are received as Christ’s Gospel gifts. This is what we believe and confess as Lutherans, and we want others to share in this as well.

It can be challenging to share the faith with others. How do we start a conversation about this topic?

The Church is a great place to start. Ask a person: “Do you have a church home?” No matter what the answer is, follow up by asking, “Were you raised in a/that church group?” These questions easily initiate a conversation that addresses faith in Christ and what a person believes. They tell you whether a person believes in Christ and something about the background of how they arrived at their current status. This is helpful to know if the conversation continues or for a later time.

Your response is then to talk about your church. One can say: “I am a member at \_\_\_\_\_ Lutheran Church. I love how in my church I receive forgiveness and eternal life through the Word and the Sacraments because Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead.” This brief statement sets forth the Gospel – the good news about the forgiveness and life we have through Christ’s death and resurrection. It ties the Gospel to the Word and Sacraments, for these are the means by which Christ comes to us. By focusing on these Means of Grace, it articulates a distinct Lutheran confession about how God works. And it says that this faith and confession are a blessing in your life.

We never know where the conversation will go from there. Our only job is to share what Jesus Christ has done for us by His death and resurrection, and what He still does now through His Means of Grace. If the person indicates that he or she does not have a church home, it is very easy to follow up and invite them to visit your congregation. If the person does have a church, your confession about receiving the Gospel through the Word and Sacraments is an invitation to discuss this further in comparison to what that person’s church believes.

It may not lead to anything, or it may lead to an opportunity later to do so. This is not something we can control, but our job — our only job, is to share.