

# Conversion

A Lutheran Look Through the Lens of  
the Augsburg Confession

A Presentation by Dave Daubert

# Conversion

- Not a common Lutheran word
- Sometimes even avoided (associated with “decision theology”)
- Not necessary in a state church environment (citizenship = Christian)

# Some Truths About Our Context

- 43% of U.S. citizens belong to no religious institution (including non-Christian ones)
- About 2/3 of those who do belong to Christian churches are not in church on any given Sunday
- Only about 20% of all people are in church on any given Sunday

# Some Truths About the ELCA

- The ELCA has lost about ¼ million members since it started in 1988.
- We are under 5 million members for the first time
- Only about 1.5 million of our members are in church on any given Sunday (less than 1/3<sup>rd</sup>)
- We have historically relied on births, marriages and immigration to grow the church.
- Lutherans are not coming to the U.S. in large numbers.
- To grow, we need to reach non-Lutherans and especially non-Christians (conversion).
- ***None of the above reasons are primary reasons why conversion should concern us!!***

# Why Convert Others?

- We love Jesus and other people enough to want them to meet each other
- We believe faith in Jesus makes a difference
- We love the church because it is Christ's body and want it to thrive
- The Church is an instrument of God's work toward the kingdom and participates in God's dream for the world

# The Augsburg Confession

- Written in 1530 to clarify the concerns of the “evangelicals.”
- Centered on the doctrine of “justification by grace through faith” (Article 4)
- Chief concern of Lutherans is that we are justified by faith (belief/trust in Jesus matters)

# Augsburg Confession: A Look at the Building Blocks

- Article I – God is God (*“Concerning God”*)
- Article II – We Aren’t (*“Concerning Original Sin”*)
- Article III – What We Aren’t Jesus Is (*“Concerning the Son of God”*)
- Article IV – What Jesus is We Get (*“Concerning Justification”*)

# The Articles of Primary Application

- Article V (Concerning the Ministry of the Church): *“So that we may obtain this faith, the ministry of teaching the gospel and administering the sacraments was instituted...”*
- Concern is for propagation of the faith –  
The issue: “How is it obtained?”



# The Articles of Primary Application

- Article VI (Concerning the New Obedience):  
*“Likewise, they teach that this faith is bound to yield good fruits and that it ought to do good works commended by God on account of God’s will and not so that we may trust in these works to merit justification before God...”*
- The first fruit of faith is a changed life!

# The Articles of Primary Application

- Article VII (Concerning the Church):  
*“Likewise, they teach that one holy church will remain forever. The church is the assembly of saints (German text “all believers) in which the gospel is taught purely and the sacraments administered rightly.”*
- People of faith assemble/gather in community

# So What Is Conversion?

- Faith in Christ is *part* of conversion
- A changed life is *part* of conversion
- Christian community is *part* of conversion

Conversion = faith + changed + Christian  
in Christ life community

6. Each of these elements of the Christian life are essential for all of us. None of us exhibit fullness of all (or maybe any) of these.
7. For Lutherans, confessional conversion is a way of living a balanced Christian life – not just an event or moment in time.
8. For good ministry – help people check up on where they are now and plan for personal growth.