

Augsburg Confession

Fall 2025 – Winter 2026

Session 14 – Article XI and XXV – Confession

Introduction

Luther wrote:

Consider your place in life according to the Ten Commandments: Are you a father, mother, son, daughter, husband, wife, or worker? Have you been disobedient, unfaithful, or lazy? Have you been hot-tempered, rude, or quarrelsome? Have you hurt someone by your words or deeds? Have you stolen, been negligent, wasted anything, or done any harm? (Small Catechism, Confession)

Question 1 - How do words such as these prepare us for confession of sins? What does it mean for your faith and life to be absolved of such sins?

Read Augsburg Confession Article XI (Pg 14)

Question 2 - Over half of the articles in the Augsburg Confession begin with these three words: "Our churches teach." What is the significance of our church's confessional statements beginning this way?

Question 3 - What do these words mean for a Lutheran synod with all its congregations, laypeople, pastors, universities, missionaries, seminaries, auxiliaries, and more?

Question 4 - What evidence do we have that the Lutheran Church teaches and confesses private confession and absolution? According to Article XI, what do Lutherans retain?

Question 5 - According to Article XI, what do Lutherans object to?

Question 6 - When do we confess to:

God?	
Our neighbor?	
Our pastor?	

The Two Parts of confession

Question 7

According to the following verses, what is the first part?

Psalm 3:3-5

Psalm 51:1-4 –

According to the following verses, what is the Second part?

John 20:19-23 –

Isaiah 1:18 –

The Role of the Pastor in Confession and Absolution

Read Article XXV (Page 28-29 or Handout)

Question 8 - With what Sacrament is Confession connected (1 Corinthians 11:27-28)?

Question 9 - Consider these words: "Our people are taught that they should highly prize the Absolution as being God's voice and pronounced by God's command. The Power of the Keys [Matthew 16:19] is set forth in its beauty" (AC XXV 3-4). Through whose mouth is God's voice publicly heard?

Question 10 - How does our liturgy reflect the Augsburg Confession in the words of the Absolution (LSB, p. 151), especially concerning each of the emphasized words?

*"Almighty God in His mercy has given His Son to die for you and for His sake forgives you all your sins. As a **called** and **ordained** servant of Christ, and by **His authority**, I therefore forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."*

What is Lutheran and what is not?

L	NL	Private confession and absolution is to be kept in the practice of the church.
L	NL	It is important for the Christian to list every single sin, and not miss any, when confessing before the pastor. (See Psalm19:12.)
L	NL	Only the pastor can forgive anyone's sin. (See James 5:16.)
L	NL	The very act of confessing one's sins is a good work that merits the forgiveness of sins. (See Ephesians 2:8-9.)

L	NL	The beauty of private confession and absolution is not so much the naming of sins, but the hearing of forgiveness. (See 2 Samuel 12:13.)
L	NL	Luther's intent for the Reformation was to do away with private confession and absolution.
L	NL	The pastor makes a sacred vow to God and to his people that he will never tell anyone else of any sins confessed to him. (See Psalm 103:12; Proverbs 11:13; 1 Timothy 3:1-2.)

Anabaptists

- ❖ According to AC XII 7-8, our churches condemn the Anabaptists for two things: (1) teaching "once saved always saved" and (2) teaching that a Christian can reach the state of perfection on earth in this life and no longer sin. (Modern-day Anabaptists include the Hutterites, Mennonites, Amish, Puritans, some branches of Baptists, and some Scandinavian Pietistic groups.) Lutherans do not teach an upward movement toward perfection, but rather a daily drowning of sin and rising with Christ in forgiveness and new life.

Summarize briefly how the following scriptural references shape Lutheran doctrine and practice.

Jeremiah 3:12 –

Galatians 5:16-26-

Romans 7:7-25 -

Question 11- Summarize briefly the following verses as to what gifts God gives to the repentant sinner who is forgiven daily?

Isaiah 40:1-2 –

Psalm 32:1-2 –

Matthew 18:21-22 -

Novatians

- ❖ According to AC XII 9, our churches condemn the Novatians for withholding forgiveness of sins from those who sinned after their Baptism, even though they had sincere repentance. The Novatians refused to forgive Christians who had committed mortal sins such as idolatry, murder, and adultery. They believed no man (including the pastor) could forgive such sins, but only God.

Consider Luther's "Short Form of Confession." Based on the evidence of his own words, What is Luther's biblical understanding of confession and absolution of each statement (Small Catechism, pp. 25-26).

1. *"Dear confessor, I ask you please to hear my confession and to pronounce forgiveness in order to fulfill God's will."*
2. *"God be merciful to you and strengthen your faith."*
3. *"Do you believe that my forgiveness is God's forgiveness?"*
4. *"Let it be done for you as you believe. And I, by the command of our Lord Jesus Christ, forgive you your sins in the name of the Father of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Go in peace."*

Scenario

Harold and Martha have been married for thirty-seven years. Though they've had their ups and downs, their marriage was a healthy one and they were faithful to each other. They believe in Jesus Christ, they love their church home, they attend Bible study regularly, and they go to the Sacrament often.

But at the end of one hot day when nothing seemed to be going right for either of them, they both came home irritable and edgy. One thing led to another, and Harold just let go with a long string of loud profanities, screaming at Martha and getting right into her face. He was hot with rage.

Harold and Martha slept in separate beds that night. Neither of them slept a wink. For both of them, their anger turned to sadness and their sadness turned into immense guilt. Neither of them was innocent in the argument, and they were both feeling quite ashamed of themselves.

The next morning at breakfast, Harold looked at Martha and asked if she wanted to talk about it. She nodded that she would. Harold proceeded to tell her he had a terrible day the day before and when he got home, he sinfully took it out on her. He told her he was ashamed of himself for talking to her that way and that he was very sorry. He looked Martha in the eye and said, "Martha, please forgive me. I sinned against you." Martha said, "Harold, I love you and I forgive you. I sinned against you too. Please forgive me as well." Harold forgave Martha. They decided it was a good idea to take out their Portals of Prayer and have their devotion together.

While Harold heard forgiveness from his wife, he couldn't help but still feel awful about his actions and his words. He was troubled for the next couple of weeks. One night after a church council meeting, Harold said, "Pastor, do you have a few minutes?" They went into the pastor's study, and Harold told Pastor Smith about the argument and how he felt so awful, even though Martha forgave him. Pastor Smith said, "Harold, would you like to have private confession and absolution?" Harold agreed, and Pastor Smith opened the hymnal to the page titled "Individual Confession and Absolution: Based on the Rite in Luther's Small Catechism."

As Pastor Smith heard Harold's confession, Pastor Smith read some passages from Scripture that spoke of God's great love for His people, His forgiveness of sins, and the comfort God promises to His repentant children.

When Harold heard God's forgiveness from the voice of his pastor, tears ran down his cheeks, and Harold was so relieved! He felt like a weight had been lifted from his shoulders.

Question 12 - *Did Harold have to confess his sin to his pastor in order for God to forgive him? Why was it refreshing to hear pastor's words of forgiveness? What may have been going thru Pastor's mind as Harold was confessing his sins?*

Question 13 - *While we live on this earth, we will sin every day. Daily we sin, and daily we seek God's forgiveness. Daily we drown our old man, and daily we rise with the new man. We live as 100 percent sinner, 100 percent saint all through our earthly journey. According to Revelation 21:1-4, when will sin and death be no more?*

References

Lutheran Doctrine and Practice Today, A Study Based on Scripture and the Augsburg Confession, Rev. Dr. James A Baneck, North Dakota District President. 2015. CPH.

The Augsburg Confession, <https://www.lutheranchurchcanada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Augsburg-Confession-Study-Guide.pdf>

Book of Concord Online, The Original Home of the Book of Concord, <https://bookofconcord.org/augsburg-confession/>