

# NEW SCANDINAVIA LUTHERAN CHURCH

## JUNE 2024 NEWSLETTER



*<sup>3</sup>If you were to keep watch over sins,  
O Lord, who could stand?*

*<sup>4</sup>Yet with you is forgiveness, in  
order that you may be revered.*

*Psalm 130*

The Season of Easter is done. This means we will move back to the common rhythm of worship including Holy Communion twice a month and, while the baptismal font will still be open and filled with water for individuals to remember their own baptism, we will return to open our time together with Confession and Forgiveness.

I have been challenged over the years as to why we do Confession and Forgiveness; why do we need to begin our time with something so negative? I even had a person suggest that opening our time with something so “depressing” is why so many people don’t want to come to church. “The world reminds us every day that we aren’t good enough. Why can’t I get a break one day a week?”

I truly heard this person. Heck, it’s still on my mind so it did affect me and how I look at Confession and Forgiveness. The words that we say are and should be personal. They should make us look at ourselves in the midst of the world. And there is something good about sitting in the truth for a little bit. But confession is about something more.

To simplify it- imagine a young child who has done something wrong and placed in *time-out*. A parent will then ask the child why they are in time-out with hopefully the child knowing and understanding why they were in trouble in the first place- if the child doesn’t understand why they are in time out, that method is of no use (think about that when it comes to C&F). The child is then told to go apologize to the person they hurt and hopefully the person receiving the apology will forgive them. This is what we are doing in Confession and Forgiveness.

We begin our time together by realizing we can’t move on in our relationship with God until we start by telling God that we have not been focused on God-centered activities. While we may try hard, we still screw it up. Maybe it happens in the thoughts we have while watching the news or a conversation over the upcoming election or the latest community conflict. Maybe it comes through the things we didn’t do for those around us. No matter what it is, we need to

recognize our wrongs before our hearts can be in a place to welcome God and it is then we can begin our time of worship.

But let me be clear on one thing- We do not begin our time together with simply public confession. Forgiveness must ALWAYS follow. Let me ask you this; how many of you truly listen to the words of forgiveness? How many of you breathe in those very words that can bring you so much hope for the week? For your spiritual health, these are probably the most powerful words you will hear all week.

*“(As a called and ordained minister of the church of Christ, and by his authority,) I therefore declare to you the entire forgiveness of all your sins...”*

Or

*“... you are forgiven and loved into abundant life.”*

Do you hear the power in those words? Do you hear how different those words are compared to the words told to you by the world? God's words of forgiveness are beyond what you can begin to fathom or even deserve. But that is the God you are dealing with. Your God is the one that is willing to forgive all that has hardened your heart or caused you to turn from God. Your God will hear your words of confession, and immediately wipe the slate clean and remember your sins no more (Hebrews 8:12). There is no condition to God's forgiveness like “if you clean up your act and behave appropriately for one week, I will forgive you.” No. That's not the God you are dealing with. Your God is about unconditional love and unconditional forgiveness. When has the world ever given us that?

I invite you to hold tight to the words spoken to you by God. Hold them in your heart, not because forgiveness is few and far between, like the world tends to give, but because God's forgiveness is so powerful. God's forgiveness makes you right with God so that you can go into the world with the promise of God and share that Good News with all those you encounter.

Confession and Forgiveness is a beautiful thing and it only then that we can truly prepare ourselves for worship- to celebrate all that God is. There is no better thing than that.

God's peace (and forgiveness) be with you.

*Pastor Sara*