

# Alternate Confessions of Faith

WELS Arizona-California District Worship Committee  
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Congregations that want to add variety to the service on festival occasions may appreciate an alternate text for the post-sermon confession of faith. This document provides ideas for alternate statements of faith. Because this is a public confession of faith, the texts that are presented here all come from the Book of Concord. By using the official confessions of the Lutheran Church, worshippers are assured that they are making a statement of faith they can confess in good conscience—one that is accepted throughout the confessional Lutheran church.

The translation of the Athanasian Creed is from *Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal*. The WELS 1998 translation of the Small Catechism is used. For larger excerpts from the Book of Concord, the translation by Kolb and Wengert (Augsburg-Fortress, 2000) and the revised and edited translation by McCain *et alia* (Concordia, 2005) are used.

## Suggested Uses

Athanasian Creed, first half (Trinitarian section)	Trinity Sunday
Athanasian Creed, second half (Christological section)	Christmas Day
Small Catechism, First Article	Thanksgiving, New Year's Eve
Small Catechism, Second Article	Ascension, Christ the King
Small Catechism, Third Article	Pentecost
Small Catechism, Holy Baptism	First Sunday after Epiphany
Small Catechism, Holy Communion	Maundy Thursday
Large Catechism, Second Article (excerpts)	Reformation
Large Catechism, Third Article (excerpts)	Church Anniversaries
Augsburg Confession (excerpts, spoken responsively)	Presentation of the Augsburg Confession
Augsburg Confession (excerpts, spoken in unison)	Installation and Ordination Services

## CONFESSION OF FAITH

## Excerpts from the Athanasian Creed

*The Athanasian Creed is a fifth century Christian confession of faith. The first section of the Athanasian Creed, printed here, explains the Bible's teaching about the Triune God. The entire Athanasian Creed is found on pages 132-133 in Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal.*

*The minister and congregation will speak the Creed responsively. The congregation speaks the bold, indented text.*

Whoever wishes to be saved must, above all else, hold to the true Christian faith.

**Whoever does not keep this faith pure in all points will certainly perish forever.**

Now this is the true Christian faith:

**We worship one God in three persons and three persons in one God,  
Without mixing the persons or dividing the divine being.**

For each person—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—is distinct,  
**but the deity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is one,  
equal in glory and coeternal in majesty.**

What the Father is, so is the Son, and so is the Holy Spirit.

The Father is uncreated, the Son uncreated, the Holy Spirit uncreated;

The Father is infinite, the Son infinite, the Holy Spirit infinite;

The Father is eternal, the Son eternal, the Holy Spirit eternal;

**yet they are not three who are eternal, but there is one who is eternal,  
just as they are not three who are uncreated, nor three who are infinite,  
but there is one who is uncreated and one who is infinite.**

In the same way the Father is almighty, the Son is almighty, the Holy Spirit is almighty;

**yet they are not three who are almighty, but there is one who is almighty.**

So the Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Spirit is God;

**yet they are not three Gods, but one God.**

So the Father is Lord, the Son is Lord, the Holy Spirit is Lord;

**yet they are not three Lords, but one Lord.**

For just as Christian truth compels us to confess each person individually to be God and Lord,

**so the true Christian faith forbids us to speak of three Gods or three Lords.**

The Father is neither made nor created nor begotten of anyone.

The Son is neither made nor created, but is begotten of the Father alone.

The Holy Spirit is neither made nor created nor begotten,

but proceeds from the Father and the Son.

**So there is one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three Sons;  
one Holy Spirit, not three Holy Spirits.**

And within this Trinity none comes before or after; none is greater or inferior,

**But all three persons are coequal and coeternal,**

so that, in every way, as stated before, all three persons are to be worshipped as one God and one God worshipped as three persons.

**Whoever wishes to be saved must have this conviction of the Trinity.**

## CONFESSION OF FAITH

## Excerpts from the Athanasian Creed

*The Athanasian Creed is a fifth century Christian confession of faith. The second section of the Athanasian Creed, printed here, explains the Bible's teaching about Jesus' divine and human natures. The entire Athanasian Creed is found on pages 132-133 in Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal.*

**It is necessary for eternal salvation truly to believe  
that our Lord Jesus Christ took on human flesh.**

**Now this is the true Christian faith.**

**We believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, God's Son,  
is both God and man.**

**He is God, eternally begotten from the nature of the Father, and he is man, born in time  
from the nature of his mother, fully God, fully man, with rational soul and human flesh.**

**equal to the Father as to his deity, less than the Father as to his humanity;  
and though he is both God and man, Christ is not two persons, but one,  
one, not by changing the deity into flesh, but by taking the humanity into God;  
one, indeed, not by mixture of the natures, but by unity in one person;  
for just as the rational soul and flesh are one human being,  
so God and man are one Christ.**

**He suffered for our salvation, descended into hell, rose the third day from the dead.**

**He ascended into heaven, is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty,  
and from there will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**This is the true Christian faith.**

**CONFESSION OF FAITH**

**Luther's Explanation of the First Article of the  
Apostles' Creed from the Small Catechism (1529)**

**I believe that God created me and all that exists, that he gave me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my mind and all my abilities.**

**I believe that God still preserves me by richly and daily providing clothing and shoes, food and drink, property and home, spouse and children, land, cattle, and all I own, and all I need to keep my body and life. God also preserves me by defending me against all danger, guarding and protecting me from all evil. All this God does only because he is my good and merciful Father in heaven, and not because I have earned or deserved it. For all this I ought to thank and praise, to serve and obey him.**

**This is most certainly true.**

**CONFESSION OF FAITH**

**Luther's Explanation of the Second Article of the  
Apostles' Creed from the Small Catechism (1529)**

**I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord.**

**He has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sin, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver but with his holy, precious blood, and with his innocent suffering and death.**

**All this he did that I should be his own, and live under him in his kingdom, and serve him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as he has risen from death and lives and rules eternally.**

**This is most certainly true.**

**CONFESSION OF FAITH**

**Luther's Explanation of the Third Article of the  
Apostles' Creed from the Small Catechism (1529)**

**I believe that I cannot by my own thinking or choosing believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him.**

**But the Holy Spirit has called me by the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith. In the same way he calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith.**

**In this Christian church he daily and fully forgives all sins to me and all believers.**

**On the Last Day he will raise me and all the dead and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ.**

**This is most certainly true.**

## CONFESSION OF FAITH

## Luther's Explanation of Holy Baptism from the Small Catechism (1529)

**M:** What is Baptism?

**C:** **Baptism is not just plain water, but it is water used by God's command and connected with God's Word.**

**M:** Which is that Word of God?

**C:** **Christ our Lord says in the last chapter of Matthew, "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."**

**M:** What does Baptism do for us?

**C:** **Baptism works forgiveness of sin, delivers from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, as the words and promises of God declare.**

**M:** What are these words and promises of God?

**C:** **Christ our Lord says in the last chapter of Mark, "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned."**

**M:** How can water do such great things?

**C:** **It is certainly not the water that does such things, but God's Word which is in and with the water, and faith which trusts this Word used with the water. For without God's Word the water is just plain water and not baptism. But with this Word it is baptism, that is, a gracious water of life and a washing of rebirth by the Holy Spirit.**

**M:** Where is this written?

**C:** **Saint Paul says in Titus, chapter three, "God saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. This is a trustworthy saying."**

**M:** What does baptizing with water mean?

**C:** **Baptism means that the old Adam in us should be drowned by daily contrition and repentance, and that all its evil deeds and desires be put to death. It also means that a new person should daily arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.**

**M:** Where is this written?

**C:** **Saint Paul says in Romans, chapter six, "We were buried with Christ through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life."**

## CONFESSION OF FAITH

## Luther's Explanation of Holy Communion from the Small Catechism (1529)

**M:** What is the sacrament of Holy Communion?

**C:** **It is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ under the bread and wine, instituted by Christ for us Christians to eat and to drink.**

**M:** Where is this written?

**C:** **The holy Evangelists Matthew, Mark, Luke, and the Apostle Paul tell us:**

**“Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, ‘Take and eat; this is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’**

**“Then he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.’”**

**M:** What blessing do we receive through this eating and drinking?

**C:** **That is shown us by these words, “Given and poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins.” Through these words we receive forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation in this sacrament. For where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation.**

**M:** How can eating and drinking do such great things?

**C:** **It is certainly not the eating and drinking that does such things, but the words, “Given and poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins.” These words are the main thing in this sacrament, along with the eating and drinking. And whoever believes these words has what they plainly say, the forgiveness of sins.**

**M:** Who, then, is properly prepared to receive this sacrament?

**C:** **Fasting and other outward preparations may serve a good purpose, but he is properly prepared who believes these words, “Given and poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins.” But whoever does not believe these words or doubts them is not prepared, because the words “for you” require nothing but hearts that believe.**

*Because the Words of Institution are spoken later in the service, it would be possible to omit the second question (“Where is this written?”) and answer in this excerpt.*

## CONFESSION OF FAITH

### Luther's Explanation of the Second Article of the Apostles' Creed from the Large Catechism (1529, excerpts)

- M:** If you are asked, “What do you believe in the Second Article, concerning Jesus Christ?” answer briefly:
- C:** **“I believe that Jesus Christ, true Son of God, has become my Lord.”**
- M:** What is it to “become a Lord”? It means that he has redeemed me from sin, from the devil, from death, and from all evil. Before this I had no Lord and King but was captive under the power of the devil. I was condemned to death and entangled in sin and blindness.
- C:** **When we were created by God the Father, and had received from him all kinds of good things, the devil came and led us into disobedience, sin, death, and all evil. We lay under God's wrath and displeasure, doomed to eternal damnation, as we had deserved.**
- M:** There was no counsel, no help, no comfort for us until this only and eternal Son of God, in his unfathomable goodness, had mercy on our misery and wretchedness and came from heaven to help us. Those tyrants and jailers now have been routed, and their place has been taken by Jesus Christ, the Lord of life and righteousness and every good and blessing.
- C:** **He has snatched us, poor lost creatures, from the jaws of hell, won us, made us free, and restored us to the Father's favor and grace. He has taken us as his own, under his protection, in order that he may rule us by his righteousness, wisdom, power, life, and blessedness.**
- M:** Let this be the summary of this article, that the little word “Lord” simply means the same as Redeemer, that is, he who has brought us back from the devil to God, from death to life, from sin to righteousness, and now keeps us safe there. The remaining parts of this article simply serve to clarify and express how and by what means this redemption was accomplished — that is, how much it cost Christ and what he paid and risked in order to win us and bring us under his dominion.
- C:** **That is to say, he became man, conceived and born without sin, of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin, that he might become Lord over sin; moreover, he suffered, died, and was buried that he might make satisfaction for me and pay what I owed, not with silver and gold but with his own precious blood.**
- M:** All this in order to become my Lord. For he did none of these things for himself, nor had he any need of them.
- C:** **Afterward he rose again from the dead, swallowed up and devoured death, and finally ascended into heaven and assumed dominion at the right hand of the Father.**
- M:** The devil and all powers, therefore, must be subject to him and lie beneath his feet until finally, at the last day, he will completely divide and separate us from the wicked world, the devil, death, sin, *et cetera*.
- C:** **Indeed, the entire Gospel that we preach depends on the proper understanding of this article. Upon it all our salvation and blessedness are based, and it is so rich and broad that we can never learn it fully.**

## CONFESSION OF FAITH

### Luther's Explanation of the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed from the Large Catechism (1529, excerpts)

- M:** I cannot give the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed a better title than "Sanctification." This phrase expresses and represents the person of the Holy Spirit and also his office, namely, to make us holy.
- C:** **For as the Father is called Creator and the Son is called Redeemer, so also it is because of his work that the Holy Spirit is to be called a Sanctifier, one who makes persons holy.**
- M:** How, then, is the work of making people holy accomplish?
- C:** **Just as the Son wins his dominion over us by His birth, death, and resurrection, so the Holy Spirit accomplishes his work of sanctification through the means presented in the Third Article, namely, the community of the saints, or the Christian church, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.**
- M:** For neither you nor I could ever know anything about Christ or believe in him and receive him as our Lord if it were not first offered to us and laid on our hearts by the Holy Spirit through the preaching of the Gospel.
- C:** **The redemptive work has taken place and is finished, for Christ has purchased and won the treasure for us through his suffering, death, and resurrection.**
- M:** But if that saving action stays hidden and no one knows about it, then it would all be for nothing, wasted. In order that this treasure might not remain buried but be taken up and enjoyed, God has let the Word go forth and be proclaimed. In the Word he has given us His Holy Spirit to lay the treasure of redemption on our hearts and make it our very own.
- C:** **Thus to sanctify or make holy is nothing else than to bring us to Christ our Lord to receive this treasure, which we could never have obtained by ourselves.**
- M:** The term Holy Christian Church is defined in the Creed as the communion of saints. The sense and substance of this phrasing is: I believe that a holy little flock or community exists on earth consisting entirely of saints under one head, Christ. It is called together by the Holy Spirit into one faith, one mind, one understanding. It possesses a variety of gifts, yet is united in love without sect or schism. I too am a part, a member of it. I am a copartner, participating and sharing in all its blessings. I was brought to and incorporated in this community by the Holy Spirit through my hearing and my continuing to hear the Word of God, which is the first step for entering the Christian church.
- C:** **Previously, before we came to this point, we belonged completely to the devil and did not really know God or Christ at all. But now the Holy Spirit through the Word remains present in the holy community and with the Christian people until the last day.**
- M:** We further believe that in this Christian community we have forgiveness of sins, which is given to us through the holy sacraments and absolution as well as through all the comforting passages of the entire Gospel. Therefore everything that is to be taught concerning the sacraments, in fact all Gospel preaching and all the functions of the Christian community focus on the forgiveness of sins.
- C:** **There is continuous need for this forgiveness. For although God's grace has been won by Christ and although the Holy Spirit effects holiness within the fellowship of the Christian church through the Word of God, yet because we are weighted with the burden of our flesh, our fallen nature, we are never without sin.**

- M:** Meanwhile, since holiness has begun and is daily growing, we are waiting for the day when our flesh will be executed and buried with all its uncleanness, only to come forth and arise in glory to a complete and perfect holiness in a new and everlasting life. For the present we are only partially pure and holy.
- C:** **The Holy Spirit must continue to do his work in us through his Word, daily applying forgiveness until we reach that life where forgiveness will no more be needed.**
- M:** There people will be completely pure and holy, full of goodness and righteousness. In their new immortal, glorified bodies, they will be rescued and totally free from sin, death, and every evil.
- C:** **All this, then, is the office and function of the Holy Spirit, to begin holiness on earth and to increase it daily through the Christian church and the forgiveness of sins. But when we have returned to dust, he will complete His work in a moment and maintain it in us forever.**

## CONFESSION OF FAITH

## Excerpts from the Augsburg Confession (1530)

- M:** It is with one accord taught and held that there is one divine essence which is named God and truly is God. But there are three persons in the same one essence, equally powerful, equally eternal: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.
- C:** **All three are one divine essence, eternal, undivided, unending, of immeasurable power, wisdom, and goodness, the creator and preserver of all visible and invisible things.**
- M:** It is taught among us that since the fall of Adam, all human beings who are born in the natural way are conceived and born in sin. This means that from birth they are full of evil lust and inclination and cannot by nature possess true fear of God and true faith in God.
- C:** **Moreover, this same original sin is truly sin and condemns to God's eternal wrath all who are not in turn born anew through baptism and the Holy Spirit.**
- M:** Likewise, it is taught that God the Son became a human being, born of the virgin Mary, and that the two natures, the divine and the human, are so inseparably united in one person that there is one Christ.
- C:** **He is true God and true human being who truly "was born, suffered, was crucified, died, and was buried" in order both to be a sacrifice not only for original sin but also for all other sins and to conciliate God's wrath.**
- M:** Moreover, the same Christ "descended into hell, truly rose from the dead on the third day, ascended into heaven, is sitting at the right hand of God" in order to rule and reign forever over all creatures, so that through the Holy Spirit he may make holy, purify, strengthen, and comfort all who believe in him, also distribute to them life and various gifts and benefits, and shield and protect them against the devil and sin.
- C:** **Finally, the same Lord Christ "will come" in full view of all "to judge the living and the dead."**
- M:** It is taught that we cannot obtain forgiveness of sin and righteousness before God through our merit, work, or satisfactions, but that we receive forgiveness of sin and become righteous before God out of grace for Christ's sake through faith when we believe that Christ has suffered for us and that for his sake our sin is forgiven and righteousness and eternal life are given to us.
- C:** **For God will regard and reckon this faith as righteousness in his sight.**
- M:** To obtain such faith God instituted the office of preaching, giving the gospel and the sacraments.
- C:** **Through these, as through means, he gives the Holy Spirit who produces faith, where and when he wills, in those who hear the gospel.**
- M:** It is also taught that at all times there must be and remain one holy, Christian church. It is the assembly of all believers among whom the gospel is purely preached and the holy sacraments are administered according to the gospel.
- C:** **For it is enough for the true unity of the Christian church that the gospel is preached harmoniously according to a pure understanding, and the sacraments are administered in conformity with the divine Word.**

- M:** Concerning baptism it is taught that it is necessary, that grace is offered through it, and that one should also baptize children, who through baptism are entrusted to God and become pleasing to him.
- C:** **Concerning the Lord's Supper it is taught that the true body and blood of Christ are truly present under the form of bread and wine in the Lord's Supper and are distributed and received there.**
- M:** Concerning confession it is taught that private absolution should be retained and not abolished.
- C:** **However, it is not necessary to enumerate all misdeeds and sins, since it is not possible to do so.**
- M:** Concerning repentance it is taught that those who have sinned after baptism obtain forgiveness of sins whenever they come to repentance and that absolution should not be denied them by the church.
- C:** **True repentance is nothing else than to have contrition and sorrow, or terror about sin, and yet at the same time to believe in the gospel and absolution that sin is forgiven and grace is obtained through Christ.**
- M:** Concerning church government it is taught that no one should publicly teach, preach, or administer the sacraments without a proper call.
- C:** **Concerning church regulations made by human beings, it is taught to keep those that may be kept without sin and that serve to maintain peace and good order in the church, such as specific celebrations and festivals.**
- M:** This is a summary of what is preached and taught in our churches for proper Christian instruction and the comfort of consciences, as well as for the improvement of believers.
- C:** **This teaching is clearly grounded in Holy Scripture and is, moreover, neither against nor contrary to the universal Christian church.**

## CONFESSION OF FAITH

## Excerpts from the Augsburg Confession (1530)

**Our churches teach that the Word, that is, the Son of God, took upon himself human nature in the womb of the blessed virgin Mary. Therefore, he has two natures, one divine and the other human. They are united in one person and cannot be separated. Thus there is only one Christ, true God and true man, who was born of the virgin Mary. He truly suffered, was crucified, died, and was buried. He went through all this so that he could restore us to peace with the Father and be a sacrifice, not just for original sin, but also for all other sins. Christ also went down into hell, and truly rose again the third day. Afterward he went up into heaven so that he might sit on the right hand of the Father. There he rules forever and has power over all creatures, making holy all those that believe in him. He does this by sending the Holy Spirit into their hearts to rule, comfort, and make them alive, as well as defending them against the devil and the power of sin. This same Christ will openly come again to judge the living and the dead, as the Apostles' Creed says.**

*III:1-6*

**Our churches also teach that humans cannot be justified before God by their own power, merits, or deeds. Rather, they are freely justified for Christ's sake through faith. By faith we mean this: that they believe that they are both received into God's favor and that their sins are forgiven for Christ's sake. For by his death, Christ has paid the debt for our sins. Thus God views the person who has this faith to be righteous in his sight.**

*IV:1-3*

**So that we might receive this faith, God established the ministry of teaching the gospel and administering the sacraments. For the Holy Spirit is given to people through the Word and sacraments, the tools through which God works. Whenever and wherever it pleases God, this ministry creates faith in the hearts of those who hear the gospel. And the gospel message is this: that not because of our own merits, but for Christ's sake, God justifies those who believe that they are received into grace because of what Christ did.**

*V:1-3*

**Our churches also teach that there is and always will be one holy church. The church is the gathering of all believers, in which the gospel is purely preached and the holy sacraments are properly administered.**

*VII:1*

**No one should teach publicly in the church or administer the sacraments unless he has been called in a proper and normal way.**

*VIX*