

Confessions of a Lutheran: Reformation **REMIX**

Virginia Synod Faith Formation - Fall 2021

Playlist 3: United to Christ

Track 1: United to Christ Video by Dr. Vince Everer

Watch [here](#). (You can also stream directly from the website.)

Study Questions:

- Think about baptism as incorporation into Christ's body, and about the Lord's Supper as a place where God strengthens our union with Christ through faith and our union with our neighbors through love. What does it mean to say that the church is the body of Christ? How does/should this belief shape our worship and common life? How does it shape our witness to the world?

Foundational Reading:

- Luther, "The Freedom of a Christian," in [Annotated Luther 1: The Roots of Reform](#), edited by Timothy Wengert (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015): esp. pp. 487-502, 523-25, 530-31 (concluding with the word "Amen").
- Luther, "A Sermon on Preparing to Die," in [Annotated Luther 4: Pastoral Writings](#), edited by Mary Jane Haemig (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016); the introduction to this text begins on p. 283.

For deeper study, you may wish to read:

- For an overview of various historical understandings of atonement Douglas John Hall, "We are not alone: Reflections on Atonement," Touchstone 31, no. 2 (June 2013), available online: https://touchstonecanada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Touchstone_June-2013.pdf
- On communicatio idiomatum in Luther's theology. Johann Anselm Steiger, "The communicatio idiomatum as the axle and motor of Luther's theology," Lutheran Quarterly 14, no. 2 (Summer 2000): pp. 125-158.

- For better understanding of Luther's "Sermon on Preparing to Die," cited in the preceding list, I encourage you to consult and discuss. Donald F. Duclow, "'Dying Well' from the Fifteenth Century to Hospice," Lutheran Quarterly 28, no. 2 (Summer 2014), pp. 125-148.

Track 2: 2 Corinthians 5.15-17 NRSV

Christ died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them.

From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!

Track 3: Reflection by Kayley Greenday (Christ, Richmond)

As I sit down to write this reflection, I'm struck immediately by the title of this study: "Confessions of a Lutheran" (which, not to brag, but ... was my idea. 🙋). I have a lot of thoughts about what it means to be "United to Christ", but really, I can't think of a better way than through confession.

Confession is when you're at your most vulnerable. Finally admitting in prayer (sometimes more to yourself even, than God) the sins of which you're so ashamed. For me personally, the only connection with God that I feel more powerfully than through confession, is that of communion, which of course includes an element of confession. It's true that this Holy Sacrament is an experience that can be equal parts humbling and renewing, but I have to admit that for me, the act of searching myself, and of laying bare my very soul before the Lord at His altar while consuming his symbolic flesh and blood takes a LOT of courage. And yet it's the same reason why I love it! Never do I feel more ***united*** with Christ.

And, it turns out, there's a reason for that! Dr. Evener explains in his video series that part of being ***united*** with Christ is the change in possession of the soul from death to life; he says "the victory of Christ becomes the possession of the believers". And this possession through faith occurs all

over the place: through the Sacrament of Baptism, through daily grace and faith, through the confession of sins and yes, through communion.

It's interesting that Martin Luther's paradox of Christ is also mentioned, because I have to tell you that I experience that paradox most vividly in communion. In this video, Dr. Evener's point is the inexplicable contradiction that though Christ was victorious in his battle to overcome sin, death, and the devil, the very same battle simultaneously continues within our very beings as we live out our faith every minute. We are replicas of the great battle over sin, made in the image of God, and this bonds us to Christ forever. We are ***united*** in the battle, and ***united*** in the victory.

The paradox shows up once more in the "incarnation" – the union of humanity and divinity in Christ. And again I'll say that the mystery continues for me into the act of Communion. I feel equal parts penitent and reinvigorated at that altar, which is part of what leads me back to Christ over and over. And I'll submit to you one last paradox, arguably Luther's greatest: the relationship between inherent sin and unconditional forgiveness graced to us forever.

Whatever it is that makes you feel ***united*** with Christ, know that you're forever bonded to Him, whether you feel it or not. Whether Martin Luther or Dr. Evener or myself (like how I lumped myself in there with the greats?) tells you so, the never-ending paradox is that God is love in the midst of hate, always. And aren't we lucky to be thusly ***united***?

Track 4: Art



From Janet Gomez: "Timothy Wengert said our crosses should be made out of Qtips – to clean out our ears so we can hear the Gospel."

Track 4: Art Continued



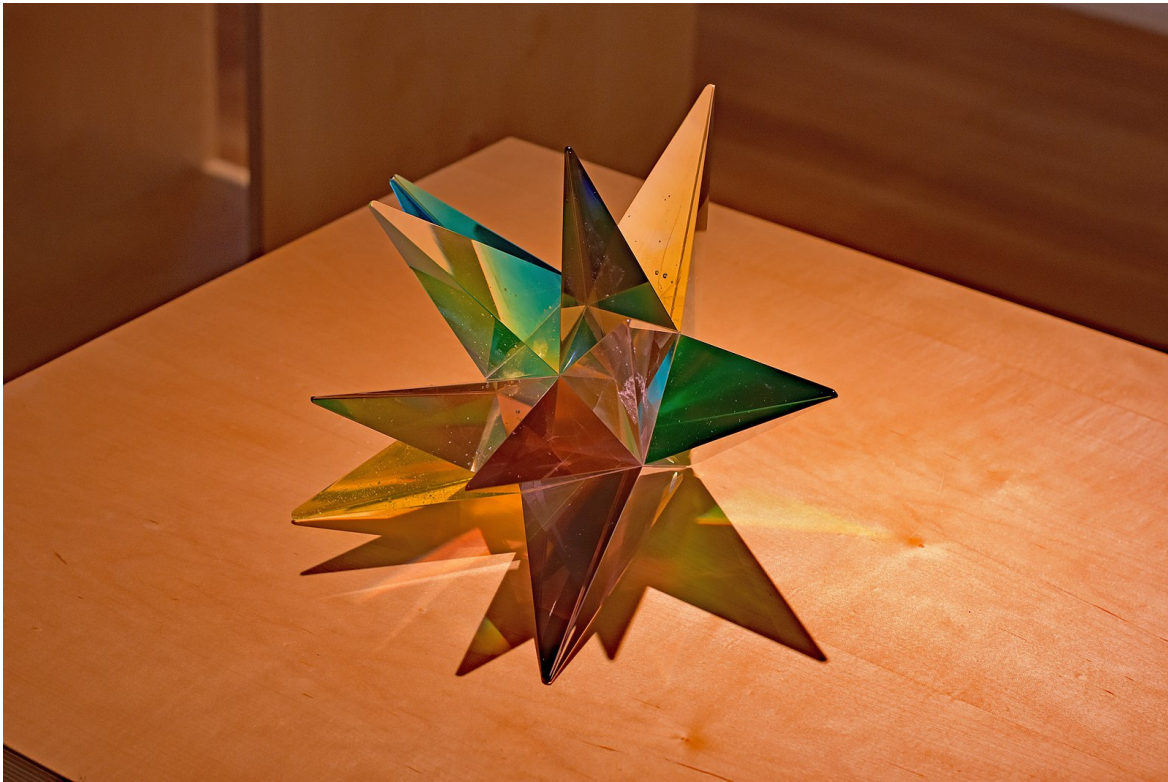
The New Creation, by Louis Comfort Tiffany (Stained glass window at Brown Memorial Presbyterian Church, Baltimore) JGHowes, 2007. [Wikimedia Commons] Attribution James G. Howes.

New view of the Pillars of Creation (ESA Hubble Space Telescope), 2015
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The NASA/ESA Hubble Space Telescope has revisited one of its most iconic and popular images: the Eagle Nebula's Pillars of Creation. This image shows the pillars as seen in visible light, capturing the multi-coloured glow of gas clouds, wispy tendrils of dark cosmic dust, and the rust-coloured elephants' trunks of the nebula's famous pillars. The dust and gas in the pillars is seared by the intense radiation from young stars and eroded by strong winds from massive nearby stars. With these new images comes better contrast and a clearer view for astronomers to study how the structure of the pillars is changing over time.



Track 4: Art Continued



IGEL | Artist: Jan Surýnek | 2014 | Oven glass, cast, sanded, polished.

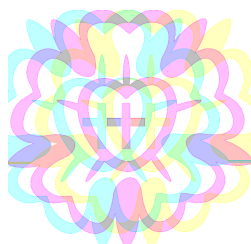
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Track 5: Music

- ["Cristo Sólo Tú"](#) Un Corazón, with Lluvia Richards (2017)
- ["I'm So Glad Jesus Lifted Me"](#) (African-American spiritual) Performed by Knee-C
- ["Wonderful Words of Life"](#) - United Methodist Hymnal #600 Text and Music: Philip P. Bliss, 1838-1876



Track 6: Continued Reading

- From [Christian Faith: The Basics](#) by Walter Kallestad.
 - “Can you and I really have communion with Christ as we would with earthly friends? . . . I don’t mean can we treasure his words or try to follow his example or imagine him. I mean is he really alive? Can we actually meet him, commune with him, ask his help for our everyday affairs? The Gospel writers say yes. A host of men and women down the ages say yes.” -Peter Marshall (p. 25)
- From [Crazy Talk: A Not-So-Stuffy Dictionary of Theological Terms](#) Jacobson, Rolf A. ed. Crazy Talk: A Not-So-Stuffy Dictionary of Theological Terms. Fortress Press, 2017.
 - Word – a person, a book, and an event – all at the same time.
 - We dare you to ask ten people to finish this sentence: “The Word of God is. . .” You’ll get eleven answers. Or one answer: the Bible. But it’s more complicated than that. The Word of God refers to (1) Jesus, God’s word to us (see John 1:1-4); (2) the Bible; and (3) any spoken WITNESS that the Holy Spirit uses to create FAITH and change hearts and lives. On top of that, the Bible says the Word is living and active (Hebrews 4:12), unstoppable (2 Timothy 2:9), and gets things done (Isaiah 55:11). So watch out: you might hear the Word of God, and then who knows what’ll happen to you? (page 181)

Track 7: Stories from others

- A story told to Janet Gomez by Deacon Mindy Reynolds – “Mindy was getting ready to be in part of a procession into a worship service when she remarked that she had forgotten to put on her processional cross and Pastor Chip Gunsten, former Assistant to the Bishop, overhearing Mindy, said that she didn’t need to worry about that because she had been marked with the cross of Christ forever in her Baptism.”