



St. John Lutheran Church Newsletter

Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod

**6960 Parkwood Blvd
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<http://www.stjohnfrisco.org/>

972-802-0444 (pastor) 9:30 a.m. Sunday Divine Service & 10:45 Bible Study

May 2023 A.D.

The Formula of Concord Epitome V: Law and Gospel¹

*Pastors' Study Group, Faith, Plano, TX, by Rev. Clint Stark, St. John of Frisco, TX, May 2023
(clipped for church newsletter)*

Before addressing the question of, “Why did the Formula of Concord write and include Article V?”, a reminder of why we have any of the documents included in our Lutheran Confessions must be put forth. If the assertion, “*justificatio est articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae*—” justification is the article by which the church stands and falls.”, which has been said² and echoed through the centuries is true, then we should see it

¹ Text of Epitome V taken from, <https://bookofconcord.org/epitome/law-and-gospel/>

² “So what about the phrase attributed to Luther than *justificatio est articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae*—” justification is the article by which the church stands and falls.” From what I’ve been able to find, the first use of this exact phrase was by Lutheran theologian Balthasar Meisner who said that it was a “proverb of Luther” (Anthropologia sacra disputation 24, [Wittenberg: Johannes Gormannus, 1615]). [Source: Arthur Carl Piepkorn / Jack Preus] In 1618 Reformed theologian Johann Heinrich Alsted wrote *articulus iustificationis dicitur articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae* (in *Theologia scholastica didacta* [Hanover, 1618], p. 711)— “The article of justification is said to be the article by which the church stands or falls.” [Source: Alister McGrath] We don’t have record of Luther using the exact phrase, but very close: *quia isto articulo stante stat Ecclesia, ruente ruit Ecclesia*—“Because if this article [of justification] stands, the church stands; if this article collapses, the church collapses.” (WA 40/3.352.3) [Source: Alister McGrath] Luther certainly expressed the same thought in numerous ways, but this is the closest I’ve seen to the famous quote. (Thanks to Carl Trueman for the translations.)” <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justin-taylor/luthers-saying/>

permeate every page of *The Book of Concord 1580*, which we most certainly do. Justification is not limited to Augsburg Confessions IV, but is the golden thread woven throughout our Confessions. As Rober D. Preus wrote:

The Lutheran Confessions were not written in a vacuum or out of any party spirit. The Lutheran Reformation was not a “revolt,” as Roman Catholic historians used to call it, much less a heresy. What motivated the Reformation and the Confessions, which were its most significant fruits and its permanent legacy to us who wish to be called Lutherans today? What was the central backdrop for our Confessions, the context for these different documents which were finally incorporated in the Book of Concord? A reading of our Confessions will reveal that they all sprang from an urgent need to give articulation to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to teach and give witness to this Gospel. And what is this Gospel which incited the most blessed and significant spiritual awakening since the days of the apostles? In our Confessions (FC SD, V, 20) we read:

The Gospel, however, is that doctrine which teaches what a man should believe in order to obtain the forgiveness of sins from God, since man has failed to keep the law of God and has transgressed it, his corrupted nature, thoughts, words, and deeds war against the law, and he is therefore subject to the wrath of God, to death, to temporal miseries, and to the punishment of hell-fire. The content of the Gospel is this, that the Son of God, Christ our Lord, himself assumed and bore the curse of the law and expiated and paid for all our sins, that through him alone we reenter the good graces of God, obtain forgiveness of sins through faith, are freed from death and all the punishments of sin, and are saved eternally.

This statement may well be considered one of the most important and formative statements in our Lutheran Confessions. Why? Because it is the most complete and beautiful definition of the Gospel to be found in them. And that is what our Confessions are all about—the Gospel! Our great 24 Lutheran Confessions were written for the sake of the Gospel. The Augsburg Confession, Luther’s catechisms, the Formula of Concord were not written just to blast or correct abuses in the Roman Church, or to defend Lutheran theology against the attacks of papists, or to perpetuate party spirit. These Confessions were all prompted by a faith in the Gospel, a love for it, and a determination to teach and confess it according to the Scriptures.

In this respect our Confessions resemble the New Testament itself. Paul and the other apostles. Preach, admonish, and say everything for the sake of the Gospel (1 Cor. 2:2; 9:16; John 20:31; 1 Peter 5:12; 1 John 5:13). That was their commission from Christ (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15). It is remarkable how consistently our Confessions emphasize this central theme of the Gospel, how all their discussions support and lead to this theme of salvation by free grace through faith in Christ. Melancthon in the Augsburg Confession clusters all the articles of faith around the redemptive work of Christ and justification through faith in Him. When the writers of our Formula of Concord at a later date try to settle certain controversies over original sin, the spiritual powers of man’s will before conversion, the third use of the Law (as a pattern to regulate our lives), or even church usages, they make it crystal clear that their concern for the right doctrine on these matters is to enhance the Gospel and its comfort to poor sinners. When Melancthon speaks out so strongly and at such length against the legalism and work-righteousness of the Roman Church of his day, it is only because “the Gospel (that is, the promise that sins are forgiven freely for Christ’s sake) must be retained in the church” (Ap, IV, 120). And when he insists so vehemently that a sinner is justified by faith in Christ, it is because to deny or undermine this great fact “completely destroys the Gospel” (ibid.).

Martin Luther in the Smalcald Articles structures all of Christian doctrine around the simple doctrine of the Gospel, the doctrine of Christ and faith in Him. Here is what he says (SA, II, i): The first and chief article is this, that Jesus Christ, our God and Lord, “was put to death for our trespasses and raised again for our justification” (Rom. 4:25). He alone is “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).... Inasmuch as this must be believed and cannot be obtained or apprehended by any work, law, or merit, it is clear and 25 certain that such faith alone justifies us, as St. Paul says in Romans 3, “For we hold that a man is justified by faith apart from works of law” (Rom. 3:28), and again, “that he [God] himself is righteous and that he justifies him who has faith in Jesus” (Rom. 3:26). Nothing in this article can be given up or compromised, even if heaven and earth and things temporal should be destroyed.... On this article rests all that we teach and practice against the pope, the devil, and the world. Therefore we must be quite certain and have no doubts about it....

This is the spirit of Luther and the Lutheran Confessions. This is why our Confessions, like Scripture itself, are always contemporary and useful. If we share this Gospel spirit, we will see how helpful and exciting our Confessions are and we will read them with avidity and profit.³

In light of this true and articulate summary of our Confessions, *Epitome V on Law and Gospel* is also not simply correcting some isolated error. No, it is the overarching doctrine of justification applied to a specific controversy for the sake of poor sinners. And since the Church stands on the article of justification, this is precisely the point where the devil attacks hoping we fall. The devil hates Christ and the Gospel. The devil hates justification. The devil hates the proper distinction between Law and Gospel. The redundancy of the previous three sentences aside, the devil delights in lawlessness when sinners are misled into sin, great shame and vice. He loves misbelief and false doctrine. He celebrates when sinners hear the Law void of the Gospel and fall into despair. He loves when the ‘law’ is turned into ‘gospel’ and sinners wrongly think they can earn God’s favor and merit righteousness through works. The devil doesn’t care if you are Judas or a Judiazar; despair and self-righteousness both lead to hell. He doesn’t care if you are on the highway to hell through antinomianism—sinning so grace may abound—claiming Jesus as your savior *to* sin, and not *from* it. He doesn’t care if you think you are on the stairway to heaven as a white washed tomb, only to learn too late that the stairs were headed down into the dark abyss.

Again, the devil does this by twisting, adding to and subtracting from God’s Word. God speaks Law and Gospel in His written word. His word of Law curbs evil, shows our sin, and guides our Christian lives. His Gospel shows our savior and makes no demands on us. This proper distinction between Law and Gospel is not something that Walther came up with nor the Lutheran reformers before him, but is given in the perspicuity of Scripture. That we believe, teach and confess justification or Law and Gospel properly is not something we have by merit or worthiness, but through grace alone. It has been revealed to us by the Holy Spirit in the Word, Who enlightens us and removes the veil from our face. Thanks be to God that we have eyes to see, hearts to believe and mouths to confess. May our confession of His pure Word and condemnation of the leaven continue to sustain us in the faith and convert other poor sinners. This was the motivation behind *Epitome V*, which we should probably actually look at now, if not several paragraphs ago.

.....[clipped for newsletter]

³ Getting into The Theology of Concord by Robert D. Preus (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1977), pgs. 7-29. <https://bookofconcord.org/other-resources/confessions-and-gospel/>

Let us now look at the text of Epitome V:

STATUS CONTROVERSIAE: The Principal Question In This Controversy.

1 Whether the preaching of the Holy Gospel is properly not only a preaching of grace, which announces the forgiveness of sins, but also a preaching of repentance and reproof, rebuking unbelief, which, they say, is rebuked not in the Law, but alone through the Gospel.

***AFFIRMATIVE THESES: Pure Doctrine of God's Word.*

2 1. We believe, teach, and confess that the distinction between the Law and the Gospel is to be maintained in the Church with great diligence as an especially brilliant light, by which, according to the admonition of St. Paul, the Word of God is rightly divided.

3 2. We believe, teach, and confess that the Law is properly a divine doctrine, which teaches what is right and pleasing to God, and reproveth everything that is sin and contrary to God's will.

4 3. For this reason, then, everything that reproveth sin is, and belongs to, the preaching of the Law.

5 4. But the Gospel is properly such a doctrine as teaches what man who has not observed the Law, and therefore is condemned by it, is to believe, namely, that Christ has expiated and made satisfaction for all sins, and has obtained and acquired for him, without any merit of his [no merit of the sinner intervening], forgiveness of sins, righteousness that avails before God, and eternal life.

6 5. But since the term Gospel is not used in one and the same sense in the Holy Scriptures, on account of which this dissension originally arose, we believe, teach, and confess that if by the term Gospel is understood the entire doctrine of Christ which He proposed in His ministry, as also did His apostles (in which sense it is employed, Mark 1:15; Acts 20:21), it is correctly said and written that the Gospel is a preaching of repentance and of the forgiveness of sins.

7 6. But if the Law and the Gospel, likewise also Moses himself [as] a teacher of the Law and Christ as a preacher of the Gospel are contrasted with one another, we believe, teach, and confess that the Gospel is not a preaching of repentance or reproof, but properly nothing else than a preaching of consolation, and a joyful message which does not reprove or terrify, but comforts consciences against the terrors of the Law, points alone to the merit of Christ, and raises them up again by the lovely preaching of the grace and favor of God, obtained through Christ's merit.

8 7. As to the revelation of sin, because the veil of Moses hangs before the eyes of all men as long as they hear the bare preaching of the Law, and nothing concerning Christ, and therefore do not learn from the Law to perceive their sins aright, but either become presumptuous hypocrites [who swell with the opinion of their own righteousness] as the Pharisees, or despair like Judas, Christ takes the Law into His hands, and explains it spiritually, Matt. 5:21ff; Rom. 7:14. And thus the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all sinners [Rom. 1:18], how great it is; by this means they are directed [sent back] to the Law, and then first learn from it to know aright their sins—a knowledge which Moses never could have forced out of them.

9 Accordingly, although the preaching of the suffering and death of Christ, the Son of God, is an earnest and terrible proclamation and declaration of God's wrath, whereby men are first led into the Law aright, after the veil of Moses has been removed from them, so that they first know aright how great things God in His Law requires of us, none of which we can observe, and therefore are to seek all our righteousness in Christ:

10 8. Yet as long as all this (namely, Christ's suffering and death) proclaims God's wrath and terrifies man, it is still not properly the preaching of the Gospel, but the preaching of Moses and the Law, and therefore a foreign work of Christ, by which He arrives at His proper office, that is, to preach grace, console, and quicken, which is properly the preaching of the Gospel.

*NEGATIVE THESES: Contrary Doctrine which is Rejected.***

11 Accordingly we reject and regard as incorrect and injurious the dogma that the Gospel is properly a preaching of repentance or reproof, and not alone a preaching of grace; for thereby the Gospel is again converted into a doctrine of the Law, the merit of Christ and Holy Scripture are obscured, Christians robbed of true consolation, and the door is opened again to [the errors and superstitions of] the Papacy.

...[clipped for newsletter]

Justified by grace alone through faith alone,
Pastor

Don't forget to check the Church Calendar page on the website for up-to-date activities and times: <http://www.stjohnfrisco.org/category/events/>

Note: St. John/Pastor is using the email addresses pastor@sjlcfrisco.com and pastorstark@gmail.com to send information and requests for information to the members. Please check your Spam or Junk mail folders for emails from these addresses.

Christian Education, Human Care & Evangelism

Audio of the [sermon is available on our website](#). **Homebound Communion:** If you are unable to attend the Divine Service, you may always arrange communion with pastor.

Audio of Bible Class: No need to sign-up anymore. I will attach the previous week's recording(s) to the eblast each week. If an eblast doesn't have them attached, assume the recorder failed or I failed in some way 😊

Sunday Bible Class: Adult Catechesis for several weeks before beginning our study of Proverbs—probably fall 2023.

Ladies' Group meets this **month on 5/18 at 6:30p at the church.** (Hannah)

Men's Study Wednesday at **10:00 a.m.** *The Book of Concord 1580.* (Break at Memorial Day)

Midweek Bible Study: Mondays, **1:00 p.m.** Genesis is the topic. Break at Memorial Day. We will resume in

the fall and try to make our way through the Pentateuch (first 5 books).

Sunday School is in full swing. (Break at Memorial Day)

Youth Catechesis: Youth Confirmation was on Palm Sunday. Class will resume in the fall.

Adult Catechesis: If you know someone who would like to learn more about what we as Lutherans believe, please have them contact Pastor.

Private Confession and Absolution offered all week upon request.

For Information on Closed Communion, check out the brochure at church or see our website. You may always talk to me too. <http://www.stjohnfrisco.org/holy-communion/> & <http://www.stjohnfrisco.org/why-closed-communion/>

Issues, Etc. is a radio talk show hosted by LCMS Pastor Todd Wilken and produced by Lutheran Public Radio in Collinsville, IL. You can listen at your convenience at <https://www.issuesetc.org> and on the Lutheran Public Radio mobile app. You can **listen to Lutheran music** at <https://www.lutheranpublicradio.org>

BIBLE STUDY: The Word of the Lord Endures Forever is a daily 15-minute verse-by-verse Bible study produced by Lutheran Public Radio in Collinsville, IL You can listen at your convenience at <https://www.thewordendures.org>, on your favorite podcast provider, or the LPR mobile app.

Children's Bulletins Available: *Lessons for Lambs* is not meant to serve as a way to keep kids busy and quiet during the service, but rather to involve them in what's going on in the service so they can begin thinking about it. The bulletins are geared toward kids in 2nd through 6th grades with varying degrees of independence. They could certainly be used with younger kids, in part, with help from their parents.

Got questions? *What About Series:* <https://steadfastlutherans.org/whatabout/>

Home Devotions Resources: Reminder that there are resources on the table in the Narthex. The "Lesson for Lambs" and "Lambs at Pasture" are great resources to use in the home during the week. There is even an answer guide. Also, additional resources are on our website. **Home Devotional Resources:** <https://www.mlchouston.org/about-us/memorial-moments> & <http://www.steadfastlutherans.org/2017/02/lambs-at-pasture-daily-devotions-for-the-family/>

Evangelism: [Sharing our website with others is a great way to let others to learn about us.](#) **Church Business Cards** still available for you to take. Let's get our name out there and invite others to hear the sweet Gospel! **Evangelism Tracts using the Small Catechism AVAILABLE! Also, tracts on the Explanation of the Church Service available now too!**

Frisco Family Services is now known as Frisco Family Services Market. This rebranding reflects a heartfelt consideration for the health, safety, and respect for our neighbors during an unexpected crisis. Now, Frisco Family Services Market better portrays the experience families and individuals are used to when shopping in a grocery store.

In addition to in person client-choice shopping, they have added **Market Express**, an online shopping alternative for those who are ill, do not feel comfortable with in person shopping, or have limited time to shop due to their work schedule. Similar to retail curbside pickup, their clients access an online shopping list, make their selections and schedule a convenient pickup time. Clients arrive at their scheduled time and volunteers load their chosen items into their vehicle.

For seniors and those who are unable to drive or do not have transportation, their **Mobile Market** provides home delivery. Having these options will ensure the health, safety, and confidentiality of those needing to use Frisco Family Services Market while navigating their crisis.

Additionally, they have added a Fresh produce section for the shoppers, funded by a recent Leadership Frisco class.

As a church, St. John continues its support of Frisco Family Services Market with stable food item donations to their food pantry. A collection basket has been placed at church for your donations. Please consider donating any regular sized canned or boxed goods that are within the expiration date. They also need laundry and cleaning supplies. We will not be able to provide fresh produce through this collection basket. Thank you for helping!

Christian Stewardship -Time, Talent, and Treasure

Choir: Please lend your voice and come sing with us. Rehearsals are held on Tuesdays at 7p.m. Text or call Becky Greer, 504-812-7951, to be added to the Tuesday choir reminder/info text list. **Handchime Choir:** Rehearsals are held from 8:45 till 9:10a.m. only on the Sunday mornings we plan to ring during the Worship Service. Please come ring with us. If you are interested in ringing please let Becky Greer know so that you will begin to receive the Saturday handchime choir texts and know when our next rehearsal/ringing will be.

Weekly Stewardship bulletin sentences from synod are in our bulletin most weeks—check them out.

The new 2023 Volunteer Church Cleaning Calendar is available in back of the church. We are in need of volunteers for next year. If you have any questions, please speak with Denise Eggert after church. **Thank you** to all volunteers who have served.

A flower chart is posted on the wall by the coffee station. We have updated our **Altar flower sign up**

procedure. Flowers will be available for order to be displayed on the Sunday of your choice. The cost is \$30 per vase. We encourage multiple families to sign up together (one for each vase) on the Sunday they would like to commemorate or give thanks in this way. As is needed, the elder board will purchase the second vase and distribute those flowers to our homebound members. Please sign up at least one week in advance, either on the sheet near the bulletin board or by sending your altar flower request to our volunteer church secretary at admin@sjlcfrisco.com or text message to 214-425-9777.

Amazon Smile: Don't forget you can support our church by designating St. John through *Amazon Smile*.

“Merchant Rewards Programs: In addition to Amazon Smile, St. John is now set up with Kroger.

1. Apply for a Kroger rewards card, if you don't already have one.
2. Sign in, or create an account with Kroger at <https://www.kroger.com>
3. Go to the Savings & Rewards menu.
4. Select Community Rewards and enter "Saint John Lutheran Church" in the search window, and then search.
5. We should be the first entry in the search results. Our Organization Number is: YV240
6. Select "ENROLL" and hit enter. You're set up.

Prayer: Please continue to pray for our congregation. Also, please take home your bulletin and pray during the week for those who have requested our prayers.

Interested in serving as a Church Greeter? Please speak to an elder.

Human Care Group: Want to be available to make a meal, give a ride, and such, to a fellow member in a time of need? Speak with an elder to sign-up to be on our human care group list.

Building Fund: If you would like to contribute to the fund, please write, "Building Fund" on your check. The **Capital Campaign** handout is in the narthex if you missed it.

Welcoming Committee: If you have an interest in welcoming and contacting first-time visitors with a call, card, or home visit to simply say, “We are glad you came. Hope you come again.”, please contact an elder.

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

<https://www.lcms.org/stewardship>

(Check out the monthly article)

What should I be doing as a steward of the gifts the Lord has given me? Our *Small Catechism*, from Scripture, shows us our duties in our God-given vocations. Each month, I plan to cycle through parts of the *Table of Duties*:

Table of Duties Monthly Review: To Husbands

Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers. **1 Peter 3:7** Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them. **Col. 3:19**

Table of Duties Monthly Review: To Wives

Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. **Eph. 5:22** They were submissive to their own husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear. **1 Peter 3:5–6**

Other News

Ascension Potluck Sunday May 21st. Please save the date and look for an email sign-up.

For current events, please visit our website and see the church calendar. You can sync our calendar to your computer or smartphone. <http://www.stjohnfrisco.org/st-john-church-calendar/> Church events are shown at <http://www.stjohnfrisco.org/category/events/>

Also, please see the two bulletin boards by the coffee cart for announcements that aren't always in the bulletin and newsletter. **Financial Reporting is on the whiteboard above the coffee cart.**

A list of who is serving is posted on the bulletin boards in the narthex. Thank you to all our volunteers.

Connecting the Dots: Before the service, try reading through the Gospel lesson and see if you can link it to the other lessons, Introit, Gradual, and Collect. (Hint: Start with the Collect as it usually summarizes the theme of the day)

Newsletter Deadline is the 20th of each month. Send submissions to pastorstark@gmail.com

Other Articles/Resources

<https://www.lutherclassical.org/podcast/>

<https://www.lcms.org/news/publications>

<https://steadfastlutherans.org/>

<https://www.lcms.org/steffenson>

To God be the Glory!