From Conflict to Communion:

Shared Sacrament of Baptism & Five Imperatives for Commemorating the Reformation

Discussion Leaders:

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Agenda

• Welcome and Objectives
• Opening Prayer
• Quick Review of previous session topics and key takeaways
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• 6 Critical Principles for Meaningful Dialogue

• Baptism as a Shared Sacrament and Entry into the Body of Christ

• Imperatives for the Catholic-Lutheran Commemoration of the Reformation
Review of Previous Sessions

• Session 1:
  - Commemorating the Reformation in an Ecumenical & Global Age
  - New Perspectives on Martin Luther & the Reformation
  - Historical Sketch of the Lutheran Reformation and the Catholic Response
Review of Previous Sessions

• **Session 2:**

  - Two Major Themes of Martin Luther’s Theology in Light of Lutheran-Catholic Dialogues:
    - Justification and the Eucharist
Review of Previous Sessions

• Session 3:
  - Ministry, Scripture and Tradition
Principles for Meaningful Dialogue

• Based on 50 yrs of dialogue between Lutheran and Catholic theologians, there are 6 principles we should follow in any interaction, per Rev. Lowell Almen

• Question: As we review them, be thinking how these principles could be helpful for local on-going ecumenical discussion?
Principles for Meaningful Dialogue

1. A genuine, sustentative dialogue must be open.
2. It must be an authentic encounter, with clear, accurate explanation of what is meant.
3. Dialogue must be courageous and fearless.
4. It must imagine the possibilities.
5. But Christian charity must always prevail.
6. A capacity for repentance and renewal must be possible.
What is the Body of Christ?

- St. Paul talks about unity and variety as spiritual gifts in 1 Cor 12:12-27

  "As a body is one though it has many parts, and all are the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jew or Greeks, slaves or free persons, and we were all given to drink in one Spirit. Now the body is not a single part, but many.... Now you are Christ's body and individually parts of it.”
Pentecost: Birthday of the Church

- Christian Churches have their origins in the Pentecost event
- And in the proclamations of the Apostles
- Acts 2: 1-12, 32, 38-39, 41

From Conflict to Communion | Baptism & Imperatives
We Share a Common Heritage

• Division in the Body of Christ is opposed to the will of the Lord (Ephesians 4:2-6)
  – “…bearing with one another through love, striving to preserve the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace: one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all and in all.”

• The initial intent of the reformers was not to found a new Church but to reform the Church (source: From Conflict to Communion, 222)
Baptism: Gateway to Life in the Spirit

• Through Baptism we are cleansed of our sin and enter into the Body of Christ, reborn as Children of God.

• From the day of Pentecost, the Church has celebrated and administered baptism to all who believe in Jesus.
Catholics & Lutherans Recognize One Baptism

• Nicene Creed: “...I confess/acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins...”

– Luther’s Catechism: “Baptism brings about forgiveness of sins, redeems from death and the devil and gives eternal salvation to all who believe it, as the words and promise of God declare... Christ our Lord says: “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.” (Mark 16:16)
Catholics & Lutherans Recognize One Baptism

- **Nicene Creed:** “...I confess/acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins...”

- **Catholic Catechism:** “Baptism makes us members of the Body of Christ: Therefore...we are members of one another. Baptism incorporates us into the Church. From the baptismal font is born one People of God of the New Covenant, which transcends all the natural or human limits of nations, cultures, races and sexes: For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body.” (CCC 1267)
Lutheran Definition of Sacrament

• Luther defined a sacrament as:
  – Has an earthly element (e.g. water; bread & wine)
  – Was commanded by Christ
  – Conveys forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation

• The Lutheran Rite of Baptism states:
  – Our gracious heavenly Father frees us from sin and death by joining us to the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ...by water and the Holy Spirit we are reborn children of God
The Roman Catholic definition of a sacrament is:

- An outward sign, instituted by Christ to give grace.

The Catholic Rite of Baptism states:

- The God of power and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has freed you from sin, given you new birth by water and the Holy Spirit, and welcomed you into His holy people.
Baptism in summary....

• The Sacrament of Baptism:
  – Incorporates us as members of the Church, the Body of Christ
  – It blesses us with a relationship with our Triune God
  – Baptism is birth into new life in Christ, forgiveness of sins and the promise of eternal life with God.
  – Accepted by both churches. One Baptism.
The Five Ecumenical Imperatives

• Catholics and Lutherans realize that they and the communities in which they live out their faith belong to one Body of Christ.

• The condemnation resulting from the struggles of the 16th century may be over, but the dialogues continue...
The Five Ecumenical Imperatives

• As a way to dialogue, the Catholic-Lutheran Joint Commission identified 5 imperatives as they commemorate 2017 together.

• The imperatives are meant to help us recognize each other mutually as Christians and orient ourselves toward unity as the Body of Christ.
First Imperative- Focus on Unity

- Catholics and Lutherans should always begin from the perspective of unity and not from the point of view of division in order to strengthen what is held in common even though the differences are more easily seen and experienced.
Second Imperative: Transformation

• Lutherans and Catholics must let themselves continuously be transformed by the encounter with each other and by the mutual witness of faith.
Third Imperative: Evidence of Unity?

• Catholics and Lutherans should again commit themselves to see visible unity, to elaborate together what this means in concrete steps and to strive repeatedly toward this goal.
Fourth Imperative: Power of the Gospel

- Lutherans and Catholics should jointly rediscover the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ in our time.
Fifth Imperative: Witness

• Catholics and Lutherans should witness together to the mercy of God in the proclamation and service to the world.

• Unity in the Body of Christ and the Church is important so that the world may come to believe!
1. Does it make a difference to begin from unity instead of division? What does it mean to focus on unity in the Body of Christ? How can focusing on this unity be beneficial to the community of believers?

2. How do we allow our interactions with each other to transform us thru mutual faith and unity points so we can continue to re-evaluate where we still stand on the problem points?
3. Why is it important to show concrete steps and actions? What are visible ways to show unity? Why do we have to strive repeatedly? How do we make sure the unity is really there and not rushed because there’s pressure to do so?

4. How can we use our unity as Christians to share the Good News? As society becomes more secular, how does our missionary task become more important? More difficult?
5. How can our small efforts in Arlington Heights witness to the world? Might we be the mustard seed?
In Conclusion...

• “True ecumenism is based on a shared conversion to Jesus Christ as our Lord and Redeemer. If we draw close to Him, we draw close to one another.” Pope Francis

• And Jesus said…”Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always until the end of the age.” Matt 28:19-20
Q & A

• Questions for our coordinators
  – Pat Farrell, St. James
  – Rev. Les Weber, Our Saviours
Next Steps

• Where do we go from here?
  – Working together
  – Learning together
  – Serving together
  – Praying together
• Almighty, ever-living God, who gather what is scattered and keep together what you have gathered, look kindly on the flock of your Son, that those whom one Baptism has consecrated may be joined together by integrity of faith and united always in the bond of charity. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Prayer for the Unity of Christians