

What We Believe, Teach, and Confess

“Doctrine is not faith, but there is no faith without doctrine: we need to know in what we believe. Old Zion subscribes to the Christian Book of Concord, as it is written and as it stands — no ifs, no buts, no perhaps', no whether, no maybes, nor any wobbling about or mumbling in the bushes. We know that our Redeemer lives !”

~ The Rev. Dr. Carl H. Schmutzler



The above memorable words were first penned by the sainted Rev. Heinrich Schmutzler († 2008) who served with distinction as pastor of our congregation for fifteen years. And his words continue to describe our commitment here at Old Zion to Scripture and to the Lutheran Confessions. Today, too, we know that our Redeemer lives! In a day of sectarian revisionism and an all-too-general “watering down” of God’s word, we are determined to proclaim the truth of Scripture which has been given to us. Therefore, we believe, teach, and confess:

- **the Holy Trinity:** The only true God has revealed Himself as three distinct Persons in one divine essence, as the Church of Christ has always proclaimed in her creeds.
- **the incarnation of the Son of God:** Christ Jesus is both true God, begotten of the Father from all eternity, and also true Man, born of the holy Virgin Mary.
- **Our need for a Savior:** Without Christ, all human beings are lost in sin and separated from their Creator.
- **the Atonement:** Purely out of His love, God sent His Son to be our Savior from sin and death. Christ Jesus, the incarnate Son of God, gave His life on the cross to atone for the sin of all humanity.
- **the Resurrection:** On the first Easter, Jesus Christ rose from the dead, smashing the power of the grave also for all those who put their trust in Him.

- **the Ascension:** Forty days after His resurrection, Christ ascended into heaven to “sit at the right hand of the Father”—to fill and rule all things. He will come again, at the appointed end of time, to judge both the living and the dead.
- **Salvation by grace alone, through faith alone:** The forgiveness and life which Christ has won for us are offered purely as His gift, without any deserving on our part. He bestows these gifts only through His Gospel as it comes to us in His word and the sacraments which He has commanded and to which He has attached His promise: Baptism, Absolution, and the Lord’s Supper. These gifts are received only through faith in Christ, apart from any works of ours. Such faith itself is God’s gift, created and sustained in us by the Holy Spirit in no other way than through these same “means of grace”—the Gospel in word and sacrament.
- **Baptism:** Baptism is the true “washing of regeneration” of which St. Paul speaks because our Savior has commanded it and has attached to it His promise of forgiveness and life. We baptize infants because they, too, need these gifts which Christ has won for us and which are bestowed through this sacrament, and because the Holy Spirit, who works through the word of God with the water in baptism, can and does create faith also in their hearts.
- **Holy Communion:** On the night in which He was betrayed, our Savior instituted for His Church the sacrament of His holy Supper. By virtue of His word which is spoken over the bread and wine at His command, Christ gives to us His true body to eat and His true blood to drink for the forgiveness of our sins. Through this blessed mystery the Holy Spirit works to nourish and strengthen our faith in Christ.
- ***simul iustus et peccator, at the same time saint and sinner:*** In this life, Christ’s people of faith remain sinful beings who always need the forgiveness won by Christ, and at the same time they are saints—God’s holy ones, holy and righteous with the holiness of Christ Himself.
- **Law and Gospel:** Christ’s people need to hear both Law and Gospel. Through the Law, the Holy Spirit reveals to us our sinfulness and our need for Christ. Through the Gospel the Holy Spirit gives to us what Christ won for us and works in us the faith to receive it.
- **The one work of the Church is to proclaim Christ in word and sacrament:** The Church of Christ has one mission—to proclaim the Word of God in all its truth. We do strive to enact the love of Christ that has been given to us. Therefore we gladly serve our neighbors in our daily vocations, and we also want to be responsible and caring citizens in our communities. But as Christ’s Church, we have one task, and that is to proclaim His saving Gospel.