



A Guide for Engaging in Mutual Conversation and Consolation

According to Martin Luther's listing in the *Smalcald Articles*, Mutual Conversation and Consolation of the Brothers and Sisters is a form of the gospel alongside preaching, baptism, Holy Communion, and confession and forgiveness.

For Luther, Mutual Conversation is rooted in Matthew 18:15-20, where Jesus outlines a process for seeking reconciliation with each other, and centers especially on Jesus' promise, "For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them." (Matthew 18:20)

Mutual Conversation is not a liturgical rite. Rather it is a more fluid and informal expression of God's grace and mercy in Christ that can occur among God's people in a variety of settings and circumstances in the church, at home, and beyond.

Like each means of grace, God uses Mutual Conversation and Consolation as a vehicle to communicate the realities of the gospel, namely:

- ✚ Awareness of the claims of the Law on us via truth-telling in love
- ✚ God's love in claiming us even amidst our sin
- ✚ Forgiveness of sins
- ✚ Grace-filled awareness of our justification by faith
- ✚ Bringing us to faith and/or renewed faith

When we experience such qualities and effects in conversation, then we might conclude that such is an occasion of Mutual Conversation and Consolation.

Mutual Conversation and Consolation often simply happens spontaneously in our encounters. Even so, we might also endeavor to be intentional about seeking opportunities for such consoling conversational engagement with others.

Also, even though Mutual Conversation is not a liturgical rite of the church, some may wish to know what it might look like in practical terms. Here are some of the things that might occur in conversations among two or more which are in keeping with the spirit of Mutual Conversation and Consolation:

- ✚ Persons share as they desire what is on their hearts and minds
- ✚ Prayer may be offered, presenting these concerns to God
- ✚ Persons might read a psalm and/or brief scriptural passage that articulates God's promise of forgiveness and grace
- ✚ As they are moved, participants might name particular burdens for which they seek forgiveness and release
- ✚ Forgiveness may be proclaimed, using these or similar words: "In the name of Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven"
- ✚ Prayer may again be offered, giving thanks for God's mercy and grace, perhaps concluding with the Lord's Prayer
- ✚ Participants might greet one another with a sign of God's peace

May God's Spirit lead you to occasions of Mutual Conversation and Consolation in your walk of faith and ministry in daily life!