



Here We Stand

A Christian's
Guide to the
Lutheran Church

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Introduction: What is a Lutheran?



What in the world is a Lutheran? Have you ever asked that question? Perhaps you married a nice guy and found out he was Lutheran. (lucky gal!) Maybe you wandered into a nice church and found out it was Lutheran. (wise choice!) Or it could be that you were raised in a Lutheran Church yourself! (do you love jello?) In any of these cases, this guide is written to help you start to answer the question, “What in the world is a Lutheran?”¹

The best answer to this question is really very simple: a Lutheran is a Christian who has been given an unshakeable faith in the

belief that God’s gracious love for his children is free, life-changing, and everlasting. Now, Lutherans aren’t the only people who believe this about God. We just go back to a time in history when this good news (gospel) about God wasn’t being preached much anymore. A guy named Martin Luther² rediscovered this good news and brought it back to people’s attention. And ever since, Lutherans have tried to hang on to this good news themselves and share it with others. The unique and particular ways we hang on to it and share it are what really make us Lutheran Christians.

A Lutheran is a Christian? Yes. First, last and in the middle, a Lutheran is a Christian. We are not a cult or sect or the flavor of the month when it comes to religion. We join Christians everywhere who believe the words of John 3:16: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life.” Lutherans generally don’t think we are the best Christians, or the right Christians; we just have some traditions and perspectives that we have found helpful to being devoted Christians. This guide is not about being a Christian in general but rather the specific ways a Lutheran lives as a Christian.

¹ This guide was written by Andy Hagen c.2011. For more resources, information, and links on this topic go to www.andyhagen.org or www.adventboca.org.

² See Chapter One

Our traditions give us roots that are often lacking in a world where anyone with a notion can start the “Church of What’s Happening Now.” Some of those churches do a great job of reaching out in new ways (and good Lutheran churches pay attention to this!). But new isn’t always better. Holding on to some really great things from the past like the Bible, the Creeds seems like a good idea to us. We like it that Lutheran children get extensive (and relevant) training in the faith and pastors actually get a Master’s degree in Theology. We think it is good that members can vote on the things that happen at their church and call their own pastors. We still get pumped up about Candlelight Christmas Eve Services and Confirmation Sunday.³

But don’t mistake important Lutheran traditions for the cultural trappings many Lutherans also enjoy. Fans of National Public Radio’s “A Prairie Home Companion,” are regularly treated to descriptions of the prototypical Lutherans by Garrison Keillor. Lutherans in his fictional hometown of Lake Woebegone are serious, humble, caring, dependable and a little bit boring except for their love of green Jello with carrot shavings in it. The Lutheran culture some of us grew up in includes potlucks after church, singing hymns at the top of our lungs, passing on the faith to our children, and Len and Ollie jokes.⁴ While many of us appreciate these Midwestern Lutheran traditions many members of Lutheran churches have never heard of lutefisk and don’t have any interest in Bach Chorales. That’s okay because being a Lutheran is much more than these cultural connections.

Our perspective gives us a guide for being Christians, being a Church and sharing the good news. Lutherans can let go of the old hymns but not the old story of Jesus’ love. Knowing that we did not deserve and indeed can never be worthy of his death for our sins makes us very humble and thankful. Lutherans don’t believe it’s possible to buy or build a “Stairway to Heaven.” God alone is responsible for our salvation. He did it on the cross. We are given the opportunity to trust that he has taken care of that business because of his great love for us. Now we are to live with an “attitude of gratitude,” love others as “he first loved us,” and share the good news “so that all might come to know.” Our preachers don’t promise that if you trust God enough he will make things go the way you want. This is one of the most popular messages in this country today. Rather, they tend to preach, “ask not what God can do for you but what you can do for God.” Our worship services are not flashy performances for an audience even though that is another popular trend. We believe substance is more important than style and

³ See Chapter Three

⁴ *Ole and Lena went to the hospital so Lena could give birth to their first baby. As Ole waited in the lobby, the doctor came out to inform him that he had some good news and some bad news. "The good news is that you have a normal baby boy. However, the baby will be delivered Caesarian." Ole started crying: "Vell, I'm glad it is a healthy baby...but I was kinda hoping it would be a Lutheran."*

that there is no audience, only worshipping Christians. And while others require a confession of faith first, we baptize babies as a sign of just how undeserving we all are to receive that gift.

Lutherans try to be pretty clear about one thing-it's all about grace.⁵ They didn't come up with this idea and neither did Luther. It is St. Paul's summary of the good news he had come to know in Jesus Christ, "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith..." Ephesians 2:8. A great new praise song by Matthew West could easily be an old Lutheran hymn:

*There's only grace , There's only love , There's only mercy , And believe me it's enough
Your sins are gone , Without a trace , There's nothing left now , There's only grace
You're starting over now , Under the sun
You're stepping forward now , A new life has begun , Your new life has begun*

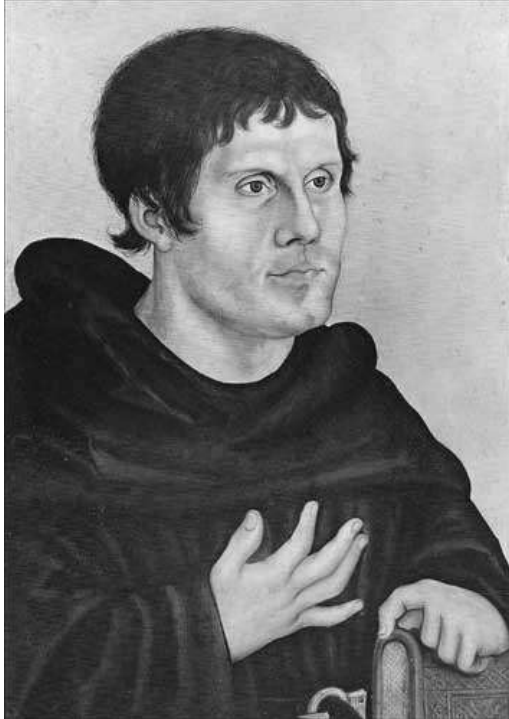
We will try to share in this guide how Lutherans live this new life they have been given.⁶ We think we've learned a few things over our 500 years we've hung around. In the first chapter we will take a look at this Luther guy (not Martin Luther King, Jr. although there are some similarities!). In the second chapter we take a closer look at Lutheran theology. In the third chapter we look at how the Lutheran church has grown and spread out over its history and how it compares with other denominations. In the fourth chapter we look at Lutheran practices in worship and ministry. Finally, in the fifth chapter we look at what it is like to live like a Lutheran. In the sixth chapter we answer some frequently and not-so frequently asked questions about Lutheranism.

If you are a Lutheran (or play one on TV) we hope this will be a good reminder of your heritage and maybe encourage you to celebrate your affiliation. If you are not, we hope this will be a good travel guide in this wonderful world of Lutherans. Most of all, we hope that this guide will be an illustration of how people "grabbed by grace" have found ways to live in it and share it as Lutheran Christians.

⁵ See Chapter Two

⁶ See Chapter Five

1. Martin Luther



It would make sense to say that being a Lutheran means being a devotee of Martin Luther. After all, being a Christian means you are a follower of Christ. However, Martin would turn over in his grave in the King's Church in Wittenberg, Germany if anyone were to suggest such a thing. In fact, Luther's final written words were, "We are beggars. This is true!" Born in Eisleben (in modern day Germany) in 1483, Luther was a bright and eager student. Although his father wanted him to become a lawyer, Luther committed his life to God after surviving a terrible thunder storm.

From his first years as an Augustinian monk it was clear that he took seriously the biblical message that we are all sinners in need of God's forgiveness if we are to ever hope for salvation. But Luther struggled with the way the church was offering that forgiveness.

The church preached that good deeds were necessary for salvation. But he couldn't understand how anyone could ever be good enough to deserve Christ's death on the cross. From personal observations, he felt that this message would lead any serious Christian into despair.

Perhaps Luther was one of the only ones who took the church's message to its logical conclusion: if we must be good enough to be saved then none will be saved. It is fair to say that this dilemma made Luther crazy! Other Christians concerned about their salvation did good deeds like running around visiting relics of the saints or became priests or nuns. Others just hung their heads and hoped for the best without a lot of hope. But Luther became unhinged one day when a priest authorized by the Pope came into town selling notes (Indulgences) that granted forgiveness of sins to all who purchased them. He wrote a series of complaints about the church and her message (the 95 Thesis) and posted them on October 31, 1517 on the King's Church door in Wittenberg for debate. As a biblical scholar he noted that selling indulgences and many other of the current Christian practices had no basis in scripture.

This protest (where the term Protestant comes from) and the period of struggle to reform the church (the Reformation) led by Luther would result in his trial in 1521 and excommunication from the mother Church. Those that joined him were derisively called “Lutherans.” Luther detested that name and preferred that they be called “evangelical”⁷ Christian referring to the “good news” that we are saved (Lutherans often use the word-justified) not by works but by God’s grace through faith in Jesus Christ. Other protestant leaders left what came to be known as the Roman Catholic Church over this issue and others.

While many who had tried to reform the church in the past had met persecution and even martyrdom, Luther was fortunate to be protected by Germanic princes who were weary of the power and influence Rome had over their realms. They shielded Luther and gave him an opportunity to reform churches in their territory. Despite terrible health most of his life he produced a remarkable number of writings that form the foundation of Lutheran faith and practice today. Although his efforts are diverse and far-ranging, they all stem from the core conviction that we are “saved by grace through faith.”

One of Luther’s first concerns was how to share this good news he found in the bible with as many people as possible. In 1521, while in exile in the Wartburg Castle he began translating the New Testament, available only in Latin at that time, into German so that more could read it. He also wrote many essays that were published and distributed widely. Thanks to the development of the movable type printing press, Luther’s writings were made available in unprecedented quantities. These writings addressed the corruption of the Roman Catholic Church at that time and offered biblical principles for the “Protestant” churches to follow as they went their own way. He rejected the authority of the Pope, thought priests and nuns should be allowed to marry, suggested the Mass be translated into German, wrote stirring hymns for worship, denounced the adoration of saints and relics, encourage faith education, and urged Christians to care for those in need. Luther’s words were the fuel for the fire of reformation that swept across Western Europe.

In his heart, Luther loved the mother church and wanted her to seek reform. He cherished many of her practices and traditions and suggested that wherever they did not contradict the central doctrine of “Salvation by Grace through Faith,” they should be retained. However there were more radical reformers who had no love for Rome. They gutted churches of their statues and windows and reduced the Mass to singing and preaching. While Luther held to infant baptism as a great sign of God’s grace, others looking to scripture saw only examples of adult

⁷ The term “Evangelical” is used differently in Europe than in the U.S. There it refers to belonging to the Lutheran Church. Here it refers to Christians of any denomination who are biblically and morally conservative.

baptism after conversion and followed suit in their practices. While Luther did not believe that the bread and wine were changed in their substance in Holy Communion, he did believe that they became what Jesus promised, “this is my body and blood.”

Theological, biblical and ecclesiastical (church organization and structure) issues once decided by Rome now became matters for every Christian to review in the light of the scripture. After Splitting only once in 1500 years (the Eastern Orthodox Church branched off in 1054) the church would now begin to sprout many branches.⁸ The credit and blame for much of this must be placed at Luther’s feet. He is the one who would not recant his writings against the church when he was placed on trial unless they could be disproved by scripture. And one pillar of the movement he created was “sola scriptura” that is, scripture is the only authority for Christian faith. Ironically, Luther found himself attacked by Rome for being too radical and by other reformers as being too moderate.

He continued to serve as a pastor of the local Wittenberg church and a professor at her university. Using the core principle of “salvation by grace through faith,” Luther wrote and delivered sermons and commentaries on the scripture as well. He was also a major contributor to the writing of the basic summary of Lutheran beliefs in the Augsburg Confession in 1530.⁹ He married (a former nun!), had children, and kept a house full of students and colleagues at all times.¹⁰

A controversial figure to the end, Luther took strong positions on many issues of the day. Lutherans today would disagree with the anti-Semitic tone of some of his writings and might be confused by his lack of support for the uprisings of the oppressed peasants around him. His hyperbolic rhetoric against the Roman Catholic Church and her leaders has taken many centuries to heal. Luther, in these instances was a vivid illustration of a sinner in desperate need of God’s grace as are we all.

Despite all of his great and lasting achievements the one most treasured by Lutherans today was one of his smallest. Convinced that parents should raise their children in the faith, he wrote a “Small Catechism” (summary of Christian principles) for the family to use. In a question and answer format, families reviewed the texts and meanings Luther presented on the Ten Commandments, the Lord’s Prayer, the Apostles Creed and several other topics. Lutheran

⁸ See Appendix Four for “The Christian Family Tree”

⁹ See Appendix Three for a summary of the Augsburg Confession

¹⁰ See Appendix Two for “Luther’s Table Talks,” quotes from Luther around the family table

churches around the world still use this simple but powerful catechism with youth today.¹¹ Luther died in 1546 surrounded by his family and friends. He had opened the barn doors imprisoning the good news of the grace of God and the animals would run across Western Europe and eventually cross the seas to the shores of a new land. Lutherans in the U.S. today are doing their best to preserve his legacy and keep the doors wide open for grace.

Luther's Address to the Diet of Worms



Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Holy Scriptures or by evident reason-for I can believe neither pope nor councils alone, as it is clear that they have erred repeatedly and contradicted themselves-I consider myself convicted by the testimony of Holy Scripture, which is my basis; my conscience is captive to the Word of God. Thus I cannot and will not recant, because acting against one's conscience is neither safe nor sound. Here I stand. I can do no other. God help me. Amen.

¹¹ See Appendix One for Luther's Small Catechism

2. Lutheran Theology



Just as a Lutheran is really a Christian first and foremost, Lutheran theology is Christian theology first and foremost. (Theology is humanity's faithful attempts to understand God's ways and will in this world for His Children) The Lutheran tradition has more beliefs in common with other Christian traditions than beliefs that differ. After all, Luther wasn't trying to start a new religion; he was trying to reform the church's preaching about and practice of Christianity. He didn't deny that God would forgive the sins of a penitent sinner; he just refused to believe the poor soul had to buy a ticket (Indulgence) to

prove it. Luther didn't drop the idea of Sacraments. He simply pointed out that only Baptism and Holy Communion were instituted by Jesus in his earthly ministry.

For Lutherans, as with nearly all Christians, everything begins with God as known in the Holy Trinity: as the Creator/Father, the Redeemer/Son, and the Sanctifier/Holy Spirit. (It is a mystery how one God is also known in three ways. Consider water-it is known as water, ice and steam.) For Lutherans, the most important thing to know about God is that he loves us first and that His love has the power to save us from the mess we deserve and to live with him forever! The Bible is the authority on who God is, what God has done, how God relates to us, and what God is planning for this world. Although they are not word for word written in the Bible, Lutherans and most other Christians believe in the three Christian Creeds which sum up our faith as revealed in the Bible: the Apostles, Nicene and Athanasian Creeds. On a lower but still important level, Lutherans also agree upon writings that came from the early years of the Reformation. These are called the "Lutheran Confessions."¹² Finally, Lutherans do believe that God continues to reveal His way and will to His people. However, these new "words from God" must be tested against these foundational writings to make sure that they are not in conflict.

¹² See Appendix Three

One way Lutherans have summarized their theological convictions is in five phrases. This commentary on the five phrases is by James Montgomery Boice in his book, Whatever Happened to the Gospel of Grace.

Scripture alone. *When the Reformers used the words sola Scriptura they were expressing their concern for the Bible's authority, and what they meant is that the Bible alone is our ultimate authority—not the pope, not the church, not the traditions of the church or church councils, still less personal intimations or subjective feelings, but Scripture only. Other sources of authority may have an important role to play. Some are even established by God—such as the authority of church elders, the authority of the state, or the authority of parents over children. But Scripture alone is truly ultimate. Therefore, if any of these other authorities depart from Bible teaching, they are to be judged by the Bible and rejected.*

2. Christ alone. *The church of the Middle Ages spoke about Christ. A church that failed to do that could hardly claim to be Christian. But the medieval church had added many human achievements to Christ's work, so that it was no longer possible to say that salvation was entirely by Christ and his atonement. This was the most basic of all heresies, as the Reformers rightly perceived. It was the work of God plus our own righteousness. The Reformation motto solus Christus was formed to repudiate this error. It affirmed that salvation has been accomplished once for all by the mediatorial work of the historical Jesus Christ alone. His sinless life and substitutionary atonement alone are sufficient for our justification, and any 'gospel' that fails to acknowledge that or denies it is a false gospel that will save no one.*

3. Grace alone. *The words sola gratia mean that human beings have no claim upon God. That is, God owes us nothing except just punishment for our many and very willful sins. Therefore, if he does save sinners, which he does in the case of some but not all, it is only because it pleases him to do it. Indeed, apart from this grace and the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit that flows from it, no one would be saved, since in our lost condition, human beings are not capable of winning, seeking out, or even cooperating with God's grace. By insisting on 'grace alone' the Reformers were denying that human methods, techniques, or strategies in themselves could ever bring anyone to faith. It is grace alone expressed through the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit that brings us to Christ, releasing us from our bondage to sin and raising us from death to spiritual life.*

4. Faith alone. *The Reformers never tired of saying that ‘justification is by grace alone through faith alone because of Christ alone.’ When put into theological shorthand the doctrine was expressed as “justification by faith alone,” the article by which the church stands or falls, according to Martin Luther. The Reformers called justification by faith Christianity’s “material principle,” because it involves the very matter or substance of what a person must understand and believe to be saved. Justification is a declaration of God based on the work of Christ. It flows from God’s grace and it comes to the individual not by anything he or she might do but by ‘faith alone’ (sola fide). We may state the full doctrine as: Justification is the act of God by which he declares sinners to be righteous because of Christ alone, by grace alone, through faith alone.*

5. Glory to God alone. *Each of the great solas is summed up in the fifth Reformation motto: soli Deo gloria, meaning ‘to God alone be the glory.’ It is what the apostle Paul expressed in Romans 11:36 when he wrote, ‘to Him be the glory forever! Amen.’ These words follow naturally from the preceding words, “For from him and through him and to him are all things” (v. 36), since it is because all things really are from God, and to God, that we say, ‘to God alone be the glory.’”¹³*

There are a few more key Lutheran theological principles that are important to note.

Law and Gospel- Lutherans reading the Bible see God’s commands (law) and God’s promises (gospel). The law is good because it shows us the right way to live. But since none of us can ever perfectly obey the law we need the gospel that tells us we are saved by God’s love for us. Lutherans are careful never to preach the law as a “Stairway to Heaven,” but rather as a reminder of our need for the gospel.

Means of Grace- God’s grace does not come to us by our actions or efforts. It is received as a gift in baptism, communion and preaching. These are the times we can be sure that “Grace Happens.” God’s grace knows no bounds, but here it is given clearly and definitively. Lutherans are committed to receiving these means of grace regularly in worship.

Theology of the Cross- For Lutherans especially, faith begins at the foot of the cross. We see what lengths God was willing to go for our sins and we are inspired to trust in him. Not only that, but we expect that the life of faith is always under that cross. While some preach and

¹³ James Montgomery Boice, *Whatever Happened to the Gospel of Grace?* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2001), pp. 65-149.

believe that being faithful will bring rewards on earth and heaven, Lutherans simply say, “Because of what you have done for me, I will accept whatever plan you have for me!”

Saint and Sinner- Lutherans have a peculiar ability to hold two contradictory ideas in a dynamic tension in their understanding of faith. One such example is that they believe that they are at the same time a sinner by nature and a saint by God’s grace. While some believe that the sinful side slowly diminishes, Lutherans are not so optimistic. They know that the only good they ever do is when Christ is working in them. Each day is a struggle where the only victory is found in trusting in God’s goodness and not our own.

Good Works- Because Luther (and St. Paul before him) rejected the power of good works to save us, some accused the Lutherans of having no interest in good works. Luther believed that while good works could not save us, they were a fruit of the saved. He expected that Lutherans, grateful for the grace of God they had received, would share it far and wide. While it is true that Christians under the mistaken impression that good works can save them might desperately perform them, only those who let good works be their thanks to God will find true joy and peace.

Priesthood of All Believers- In Luther’s time, it was understood that only priests had direct access to God. The average Christian had to appeal to God through the priest as an intercessor. Luther declared that all Christians had direct access to God through Jesus Christ. Even more, he preached that all of the callings of life, work, marriage, parenthood, were callings of God. That meant that each person, serving faithfully in their station of life was serving as a priest of God.

Another complimentary way to go at Lutheran theology is based on the key principles that guide all the theological assumptions and decisions. Carl Braaten lists and describes the following principles.¹⁴

1. The Canonical Principle

Martin Luther translated the Bible into German, the language of the people. His decisive break with medieval theology was locating the authority of Scripture in its Gospel content. For Luther, the Gospel is a promise; therefore, the Bible is a book of promises that circulated first in the Word of preaching and proclamation.

2. The Confessional Principle

The confessions of the Lutheran church are contained in the Book of Concord

¹⁴ Adapted by Rich Barbour from: Principles of Lutheran Theology by Carl Braaten, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983.

(1580) and include the Apostles', Nicene and Athanasian Creeds, the Augsburg Confession (1530), Apology of the Augsburg Confession ((1531), The Smalcald Articles (1537), Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope (1537), The Small Catechism (1529), The Large Catechism (1529), and Formula of Concord (1577). The heart of the confessions is Article IV of the Augsburg Confession, "justification by grace through faith, apart from works of law."

3. The Ecumenical Principle

Article V of the Augsburg Confession states, "For the true unity of the church it is enough to agree concerning the teaching of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments." In the same article, the only definition of the church we find is this: "The church is the assembly of saints in which the Gospel is taught purely and the sacraments are administered rightly."

One of our traditional slogans has been: *ecclesia semper reformanda* (the church always reforming). Lutheranism began as a confessing movement: the church was in bondage to Rome, so the Lutheran tradition continues the liberation process which Luther began. Liberation means removing three walls which the Roman church had built in its defense: 1) the superiority of the pope; 2) the exclusive right of the pope to interpret Scripture authoritatively; and 3) the claim that only the pope could summon a council and confirm its actions.

4. The Christocentric Principle

The 10 commandments of the Christian doctrine of salvation: 1) Only God can save; 2) God's only saving bridge to the world is Jesus; 3) Salvation is not cheap; 4) The whole life of Jesus from birth to resurrection must be preached; 5) The atonement is a once-for-all act which is valid in itself, apart from any subjective response on the part of believers; 6) The human condition consists in sin as guiltiness before the living God which can be rectified only by divine forgiveness; 7) God's way of salvation is by identification with sinful humanity; 8) In Christ God offers salvation to the whole human race; we are all in Adam's boat through original and hereditary sin; 9) God in Christ bears the whole guilt of sin and all its consequences; 10) The cross of Christ is a victory over the tyrants, principalities and powers which oppress the world.

5. The Sacramental Principle

A sacrament is an outward and natural symbol of an inner and spiritual grace. "A sacrament is a special synthesis of nature and history in the context of community" (Braaten). "The birth of Jesus (the incarnation of the Word of God) makes flesh and blood spiritual" (Barbour). "Do not listen to those who say, 'The flesh is good for nothing.' Rather say, 'God without flesh is good for nothing'." (Luther) "In a sacramental vision there is nothing the matter with matter. As C.S. Lewis aptly said, 'God likes matter; he invented it'." (Braaten)

The difference between a Roman Catholic and Lutheran understanding of the “real presence” of Jesus in the sacrament of Holy Communion has traditionally been expressed as the difference between “transubstantiation” and “consubstantiation”: “trans” = the bread and wine are changed in substance; “con” = Jesus is present “in, with and under” but the bread and wine are not changed in substance.

6. The Law/Gospel Principle

Like two sides of the same coin, the Word of God is both law and gospel. The law is God’s controversy with his people; it terrifies, accuses, condemns, denounces, punishes, and kills. The Gospel is a promise of future hope and a proclamation of present grace. The Gospel is an “acoustical affair.” (Luther) The law tells us what we ought to do; the Gospel tells us what God has done for us. The law demands and threatens; the Gospel gives and forgives.

In traditional Lutheran theology, the law has three functions: 1) it orders and protects life; 2) it accuses and drives us to the Gospel; 3) it describes a sanctified life.

7. The Two Kingdoms Principle

On earth there are two kingdoms in conflict: the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. These are not spheres that can be separated but dimensions to be distinguished. There is not a political sphere alongside a spiritual sphere. The two kingdoms must not be confused with the separation of church and state. The cosmic struggle between the divine and satanic forces penetrates every dimension of human life, including the religious. Through the orders of creation, God works creatively to promote what is good for human life in all its personal and social dimensions. Through the Church God works redemptively to bring the world toward the final consummation in Christ.

Luther on Salvation by Faith

"This doctrine is the head and the cornerstone. It alone begets, nourishes, builds, preserves, and defends the church of God; and without it the church of God cannot exist for one hour.... For no one who does not hold this article – or, to use Paul's expression, this 'sound doctrine' (Titus 2:1) – is able to teach aright in the church or successfully to resist any adversary . . . this is the heel of the Seed that opposes the old serpent and crushes its head. That is why Satan, in turn, cannot but persecute it."

3. The Lutheran Story



Is being a member of a Lutheran denomination or congregation what makes someone Lutheran?¹⁵ On paper this is probably true. By belonging to a Lutheran organization you are lumped in with the group the rest of the world calls Lutherans whether you like it or not. The half dozen Lutheran denominations in the U.S. train pastors, feed the hungry, provide resources to congregations, send missionaries out to the world, and a host of other things we appreciate and some other things we

may not. Many Lutheran churches have a particular flavor to their ministry. For example, we call our ordained leaders, pastors, not “father,” baptize infants and adults, believe that the bread and wine are really his body and blood, think Lent and Holy Week are important, and say the Lord’s Prayer and Creed at every service every week. Does going to a Lutheran church make you Lutheran? The answer to that question is probably up to you. Does going to a Lutheran Church help you become a stronger Christian? We hope the answer to that is, “Yes!”

In order to better understand the Lutheran Church it helps to trace its history. Although Luther never desired to start a new denomination, after he was excommunicated from the Roman Catholic Church there was no other option. The German princes that supported Luther broke with the Roman Catholic Church as well and the churches in their territories (mostly northern Germany) became Lutheran. By the late 1500s the Reformation had spread throughout Europe. Followers of Martin Luther’s teachings were labeled “Lutherans” by their enemies and adopted the name themselves. Lutheran beliefs became widespread, especially in Germany and the Scandinavian countries (Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Iceland and Finland).

¹⁵ Thanks to Rich Barbour for his contribution to this chapter and to the excellent resources at www.elca.org.

Meanwhile, reformers named Ulrich Zwingli in Switzerland and John Calvin in France promoted reforms that rejected many more traditions of the past, promoted strong personal morality, and laid the foundation of what would be called the Reformed Church. At about the same time, King Henry the 8th of England could not get a divorce from Rome. He decided to form the Anglican Church which mirrored most Roman Catholic teachings except for those regarding the authority of the Pope. Over time, many more denominations rejecting Anglican traditions and doctrines formed including the Baptists, Methodists, Congregational, Assemblies of God and the United Church of Christ. Most non-denominational churches today trace their theological roots back to these denominations.¹⁶

Lutheranism came to the Americas early on; some of the earliest settlers in the Americas were Scandinavian, Dutch and German Lutherans. Their first permanent colony was in the West Indies, and by the 1620s there were settlements of Lutherans along the Hudson River in what are now the states of New York and New Jersey.

As people migrated to the New World they continued to speak and worship in their native languages and use resources from their countries of origin. Europeans from a particular region would migrate to a particular region in America and start their own churches. As the number of these congregations grew, scattered groups would form a “synod” or church body, and as the nation expanded so did the number of Lutheran church bodies. The history of the Lutheran Church in America can seem like the making of an alphabet soup as each of these smaller groups grow and merge.

By the late 1800s the 20 or so Lutheran church bodies that would eventually merge to become The American Lutheran Church and the Lutheran Church in America had been established. Massive immigration from traditionally Lutheran countries had started, and between 1840 and 1875 alone 58 Lutheran synods were formed in the U.S.

There were revivalist and confessional movements within Lutheran churches in Europe and in America, and as Lutherans migrated to this country they were influenced by the evangelicalism of various Protestant sects. Consequently, a wide variety of expressions of Lutheranism developed in North America. Nineteenth-century Lutherans still looked to their homelands to supply pastors and worship materials, but as second and third generation Americans spoke English more than German, Norwegian or Danish, a need arose to provide formal theological training, hymnals, catechisms and other materials.

¹⁶ See Appendix Four “The Christian Family Tree” for a visual perspective on denominations

Immigration of Lutherans continued to be heavy through the first two decades of the 20th century. This prompted many mergers of which we list a few:

- 1917 when three ethnic Norwegian synods joined to form the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America (NLCA)
- 1918 when three ethnic German synods joined to form the United Lutheran Church in America (ULCA)
- 1930 three churches with German origins had merged to form the American Lutheran Church
- 1960 the American Lutheran Church (German), United Evangelical Lutheran Church (Danish) and the Evangelical Lutheran Church (Norwegian) merged to form The American Lutheran Church (ALC). The Lutheran Free Church (Norwegian), which had dropped out of merger negotiations, came into the ALC in 1963.
- 1962 the ULCA (German, Slovak and Icelandic) joined with the Augustana Evangelical Lutheran Church (Swedish), Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church and American Evangelical Lutheran Church (Danish) to form the Lutheran Church in America (LCA).

The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (LCMS) firmly rooted in confessional conservatism and relatively unchanged since its organization in 1846-47. Holding to a strong belief in the inerrancy of the Bible, her leaders rejected some of the biblical interpretation methods being taught at their seminary. In 1974 the seminary president was suspended and many seminarians and faculty left the seminary to continue their work in another setting, forming "Seminex," a seminary-in-exile. Approximately 300 congregations and 110,000 people formed the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches (AELC) in 1976.

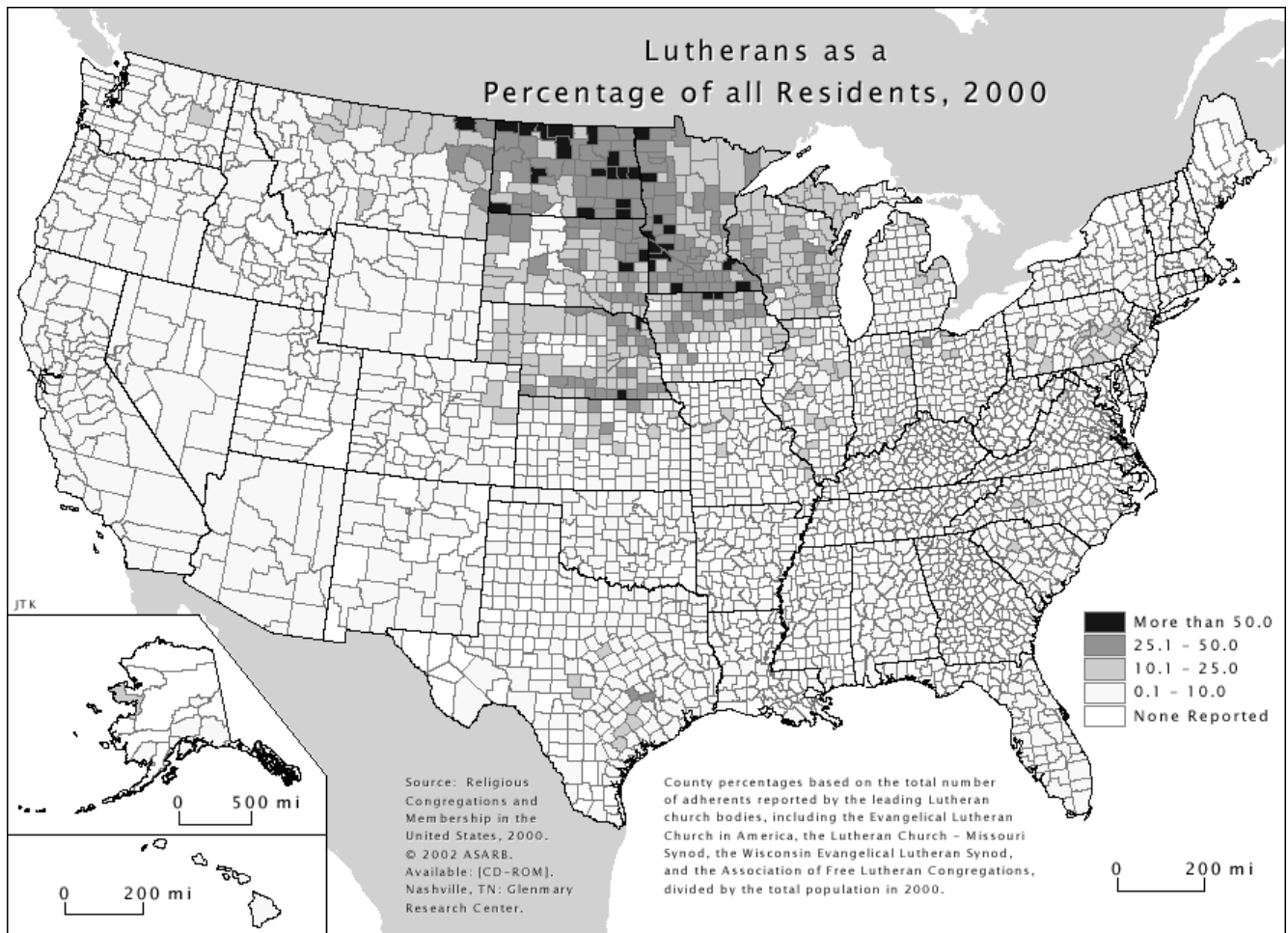
In 1988 the American Lutheran Church (ALC), the Lutheran Church in America (LCA) and the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches (AELC) merged to form the Evangelical Lutheran Church.

In 1999, the ELCA and Episcopal Church entered into full communion together (recognizing each other's baptisms and ordinations). The agreement provided that the ELCA would also accept the "historic episcopate" (a line of succession of bishops dating back to the early church). Some in the ELCA believed this violated one of the basic principles of the Reformation (regarding the place and function of bishops in the church). As a result, Lutheran CORE was formed, "Coalition for Reform."

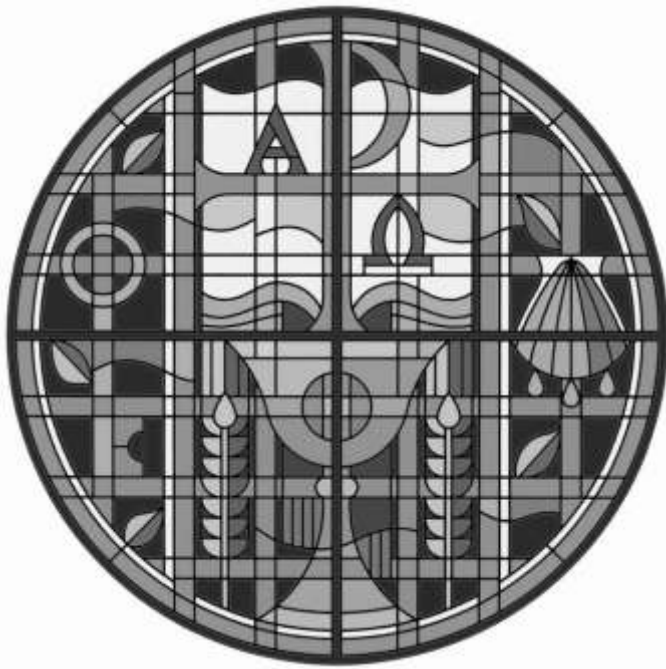
In 2009 the ELCA Churchwide Assembly adopted a controversial social statement on human sexuality and agreed to allow pastors to be in committed same-sex relationships. Dissenting

from this position, Lutheran CORE's 2010 Convocation approved the formation of a new church body, the North American Lutheran Church, and the continuation of Lutheran CORE as a community of confessing Lutherans regardless of church body affiliation.

Lutherans taken as a whole would be the third largest denomination (9 million) in the U.S. after Roman Catholics (68 million) and Southern Baptists (16 million). The ELCA's 4.6 million members make it the seventh largest denomination in the U.S. There are about 64 million Lutherans worldwide today.



4. Lutheran Sacraments and Worship



A sacrament in general is a sacred act of the church with a special blessing attached to it. The Roman Catholic Church in Luther's day and now believed in seven Sacraments: Baptism, Communion, Confirmation, Penance, Marriage, Ordination, and Anointing of the Sick. They believe that each of these rituals of the church convey a grace from God that is greater than any other blessing and cause a change to occur in those who receive it. As Luther considered these seven he rejected five of them for various reasons. Since he felt that all baptized Christians are part of the priesthood he didn't consider ordination

as a sacrament. Confirmation, Marriage and Penance were indeed important acts but not uniquely grace-filled. Anointing of the Sick (also known as "Last Rites") was also a blessing but not one found in the Bible. For Luther, only Baptism and Communion met his criteria of a true sacrament : an action instituted by Jesus, with an outward sign (water, bread and wine), granting forgiveness of sins. Lutherans today continue to practice the other five rituals but only recognize Baptism and Communion as sacraments. Later, some Protestant churches dismissed the concept of a sacrament although they may still carry out some of the rituals in their ministry.

There is not better concise description of the blessings of Baptism and Communion for Lutherans than that Luther shared in his Small Catechism.¹⁷ In practice, most Lutheran parents seek Baptism for their infants, as is true with most Christian traditions. The Church sees an infant Baptism as the joyful adoption of that child into the family of God and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Parents want their child to receive the blessings of Baptism at the beginning of their Christian life as well as the promise of eternal life. Some Christians studying scripture note that Baptism in the Bible followed a confession of faith. Their churches dedicate children to the Lord at birth but wait until a child is old enough to make that confession for Baptism. But

¹⁷ Appendix One

for Lutherans Baptism is a great sign of God's unconditional grace for a child that cannot deserve it or even understand it. Of course, it remains the same sign for adults who receive it!

The amount of water used is not important to Lutherans. Lutherans see this is a Christian act, not a denominational one. Therefore, they do not require other Christians to be re-baptized when they join the church. They also see it as a one-time action that does not wear off and need to be repeated. Lutherans insist that the parents make a commitment to raise their child in the Christian faith. Lutheran churches have Christian education programs for children to help the parents in that task. After a particularly rigorous program usually held in the 7th and 8th grades, children are given an opportunity to have the faith that was given to them in baptism "confirmed" by the church. At this time, a child is considered a disciple of Jesus Christ and an adult member of the church with all rights and responsibilities.

Holy Communion is such a beautiful ritual of the church it is a shame that it has often been one of the most confusing and divisive. All biblical Christians recognize that Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread and wine, blessed it, called it his "body and blood" and gave it to his disciples for the forgiveness of sins. For Roman Catholics, the bread and wine are literally changed into Jesus' body and blood and he is sacrificed as an offering for our sins only by an ordained priest. This sacrament is the central focus of nearly all Roman Catholic worship services. For some Christian traditions, the "Last Supper" is a reminder of Jesus' sacrifice and the bread and wine remain as they appear. These churches usually have communion on a less frequent schedule and it does not require an ordained pastor to share it.

The Lutheran understanding and practice of communion falls distinctly in the middle of these two views. Luther took Jesus at his word; that the bread and wine were his body and blood. There wasn't a literal change to these substances but, in faith, Jesus was present "in, with, and under" them. While most European Lutherans follow the Roman Catholic tradition of weekly communion, some churches in the U.S., perhaps influenced by other Protestant practices, have it twice a month or even once a month.

Luther, upset that the practice in his day often only involved given the bread, insisted that the worshipper had the right to both even if only one was necessary. Lutherans have never been teetotalers so wine is typical but certainly not a requirement. As with Baptism, Communion is almost always offered by an ordained pastor. For Lutherans this does not mean that a pastor is the only one who has the spiritual privilege but that some have been trained and set apart "for the sake of good order." Indeed, in emergencies any baptized Christian can baptize or commune another as part of the "priesthood of all believers."

For many generations, a child's "First Communion" was on the day of their Confirmation (around 8th grade). Some Lutherans reflected on the sign of grace inherent in communion and have prepared and admitted children at younger years. Practices vary with churches: some use loaves of bread others use wafers, some have long ceremonies while others simple ones, some close their table to non-members while others open it to all who "trust in Jesus's gift." The most important thing for Lutherans regarding Baptism and Communion is that they be offered as signs of God's grace to sinners.

Traditional Lutheran worship still closely resembles those of Roman Catholic churches in style, form, words and even bible readings. Although Luther was not a fan of all the "pomp and circumstance" of worship in his day he did not reject the basic form of the Mass. Most services begin with an uplifting hymn and often a procession with the worship leaders and cross. Confession is offered as a congregation and the pastor pronounces the forgiveness of sins.¹⁸ The congregation then sings a prayer asking for God's mercy (Kyrie) and a hymn of praise to God (Gloria). Bible readings from the Old Testament, Psalms, New Testament and Gospels are then read and the pastor preaches a sermon. During the offering that follows the choir often sings an anthem. The congregation then speaks (confesses) the creed and prayers for all the concerns of the church are offered. On Sundays where Holy Communion is offered the pastor gives thanks for all of God's blessings (The Great Thanksgiving), speaks the words of Jesus at the Last Supper (The Words of Institution) and the congregation prays the Lord's Prayer. After the distribution the pastor blesses the members and most services conclude with a hymn and recessional of the worship leaders and cross.

The seasons of the church year continued to be observed: Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, and Pentecost. But far less focus was placed on saints' days because of Luther's conviction that we are all made saints by God's grace. Although Luther was devoted to Mary, Lutherans do not consider her an intercessor for people to God; so there are no altars to Mary in Lutheran churches. The architecture of most traditional Lutheran churches follows the cathedral style of Rome and often included stained glass windows, a large central altar, permanent baptismal font and prominent cross (usually without the body of Christ on it top focus on the resurrection).

In contrast to some of the reforming churches that eliminated all traces of Rome's influence; literally tossing out altar furnishings, destroying statues and windows, and stripping the order of the service to a bare minimum. The most modern example of this trend is the "mega-

¹⁸ Luther did not reject private confession but it is not a very common practice in Lutheran churches today.

church” that often looks more like a theater than a sanctuary. Some of these churches do not even have a cross or altar, only a podium for the preacher. Contemporary services at Lutheran churches have been influenced by these trends. However, the goal is less to turn from Rome than to try to create an inviting experience for those with no traditional religious backgrounds.

Luther was willing to give his life so that the good news of God’s grace could be heard. As a result, he insisted that all the words of the service be in the common language of the people, not in Latin. This reform allowed the least educated peasant to finally understand what was going on at the services they attended! Because most Christians at the time were ignorant about their faith, Luther lifted up preaching as a major element of worship.¹⁹ He saw the sermon as a kind of sacrament, where the Word of God is offered in words that change lives.

Lutheran preaching is characterized by the “law and gospel” concept. The preacher shows how the text conveys God’s true will for his people (the law) and our inevitable failure to be perfectly obedient. But then the preacher shares the good news (the gospel) that we are forgiven and saved by God’s grace. Those who accept this by faith can now allow God to use them to accomplish his will. Lutherans have avoided “fire and brimstone” preaching that seems to leave out God’s grace. At the same time, they have struggled to avoid preaching “cheap grace” that lets Christians feel nothing is required of them.²⁰

A great lover of music and its power to communicate, he wrote many great hymns to help carry the good news of God’s grace to the people.²¹ Some have said that he took the stirring tunes he heard in local taverns and added his own words. He is quoted to say that, “Why should the devil have all the good music?” Lutherans are especially proud to count Johann Sebastian Bach as one of the great Lutheran composers. Traditional Lutheran worship includes three or four hymns, sung liturgy and choral anthems led by an organ. Lutherans traditionally sing loudly and some even in four party harmony! Perhaps because of their strong musical heritage, Lutherans have been slow to adapt to the growing interest in praise music. However, if it is true that Luther used the popular songs around him to spread the word, then it seems like a truly Lutheran move to do the same with the popular musical styles today!

¹⁹ Go to <http://www.orldutheran.com/html/mlserms.html> for a wide selection of sermons by Martin Luther.

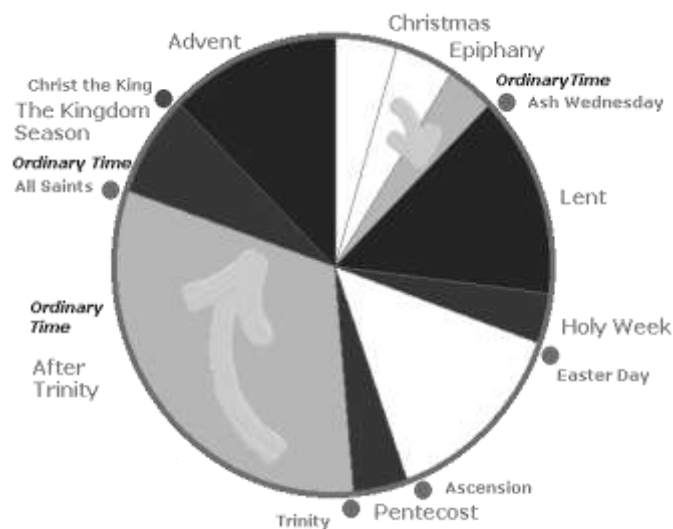
²⁰ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a Lutheran pastor in Germany during World War Two, coined the term “cheap grace” when he observed that Christians were doing nothing to resist Hitler’s attempts to coopt the church. He argued that God’s grace cost Jesus his life and that Christians who have received that grace must be willing to risk their lives for the sake of the truth. He was executed shortly before the end of the war but has become a reminder that those who have received God’s grace become emboldened to live by faith alone.

²¹ See Appendix Five for the words to his greatest hymn “A Mighty Fortress”

A survey of hymnals of Lutheran churches over the past 50 years in this country quickly reveals that Lutheran worship has undergone a number of changes. While most Lutheran congregations have at least one traditional service, many have added services that are considered contemporary in style. These contemporary services may be simplified in their structure or less formal in their style. Contemporary services may use music that is led by piano rather than organ or even full rock bands! These changes have largely been made as an evangelistic effort to reach newer generations less interested in the past traditions and styles as well as those who did not grow up as Lutherans. In some Lutheran congregations today, the contemporary service, whatever style that may be, is the largest while traditional services continue to shrink.

As with all changes, these issues of worship style have led to what are often called “worship wars” in many Lutheran congregations. Some desire to hold on to the treasures of the past and others desire to offer them in new ways to new generations. Luther would probably be a little surprised at churches with his name using video screens and rock bands! But for Luther, the style of worship was less important than its substance. A Lutheran worship service should always be where God’s children experience God’s grace through preaching and the sacraments. A Lutheran pastor’s greatest charge is to make sure that all services reflect this goal whatever their style may be. Members should encourage one another to worship the God of grace in whatever way that grace is best experienced by them.

Chart of the Seasons of the Church Year



5. Living Lutheran



An advertising campaign for one of the Lutheran denominations a few years ago used this tag line, "You might be surprised that a Lutheran lives next door to you!" I think that they wanted to share that Lutherans were not some weird cult group. But another meaning could also be found, namely that Lutherans don't tend to say much about their faith. Lutherans have been accused of being shy (unless you meet one at an Oktoberfest!). Historically, Lutherans have tended to share their faith within their family, not with strangers. As a result, Lutherans today tend to

love their heritage but not talk about it too much. Lutherans are also very concerned about showing off their religiosity that it might be seen as an attempt to prove that they are worthy of their salvation.²²

Yet another meaning is worth considering here: perhaps you don't know you have a Lutheran living next door to you because they don't talk, act or live differently than anyone else on the block. Given the fact that your block may have everything from apathetic Christians to atheists, this is a concern. If you can't tell you have a Lutheran living next door, at least you should know that you have a Christian neighbor. Luther was very concerned that the grace God gave freely through Christ should be evidenced in a life lived with love for God and for the neighbor. Somewhere down the line you should have had a sense that the good neighbor next door to you is a Christian either by their words or their deeds.

Let's follow that Lutheran next door to see what difference their faith makes to their life and to the lives of others around them.²³ We'll follow Lars and Laurie Lutheran and their two children Logan and Liz through their busy week.

²² The "shyness" of Lutherans may well be one of the biggest reasons for their decline in numbers in this country. People became Lutheran in the old world by being born in a Lutheran village. They didn't evangelize because everyone was already a Lutheran in their town. Lutheran numbers grew here primarily through "babies and boats" (i.e. births and immigration), not through evangelistic activities. However, Lutherans are pretty committed to expressing their faith in deeds and as we all know, "actions speak louder than words."

²³ See Appendix Six for a chart that shows the basic faith practices of those who are "Living Lutheran."

Sunday- The first thing you'd notice on Sunday morning is that there is a lot of noise at the Lutherans house! Laurie is yelling across the house to wake the kids and Lars is singing "A Mighty Fortress" in the shower! You can smell the coffee pot brewing, yes, brewing. The Lutherans think drip coffee is for sissies and Starbucks is too expensive. While Lars' mom would make pancakes with Lingonberry jam every Sunday morning, Laurie, who didn't grow up Lutheran, feeds her kids the bagels at her church! The Lutherans will be running late and peel down the block with two cars because Logan has confirmation class after church and Lars is helping teach. When they can get out of the house early they go to the traditional service that Lars grew up with and that Liz likes because her best friend worships at that service. When they are late, most of the time, they end up at the contemporary service that Laurie prefers because it is more like the non-denominational church her family attended. Logan likes to sit up in the balcony and pretend to help with the sound and video system.

When they arrive, the Lutherans will rush to the back row, only to find it filled by other humble and shy church members. So they find seats half way up just as the service begins. They like the opening songs and even clap along although only Laurie lifts her hands in praise. Lars tried once but then he wondered if he had put his deodorant on and put them down. When they are told to share the peace they zero in on the new family sitting behind them and never forget Mrs. Katy who always has a peppermint for the kids. Some days they share the peace so long the pastor has to cut it off. During the announcements Lars takes note of the upcoming Men's Group meeting, Laurie considers responding to the need for canned goods in the food pantry, Liz decides her family should sponsor a child in Haiti, and Logan finds out the youth group is doing bumper cars later that night. They open the bibles when the pastor gives the message, Laurie opens up her purse when the offering is passed, and they all open their mouths to eat the bread and drink the wine at communion.

After worship Lars and Laurie drink more coffee, Liz runs around the courtyard with friends and Logan goes to his confirmation class. He knows it is important to learn about the bible and stuff but he mainly likes being with the other kids his age and goofing off. Today they are having a special meeting about going on a mission trip to the Bahamas. He doesn't know what a mission trip is but he wants to go on a cruise ship and goof off. To his great embarrassment his dad comes into the class and begins to recite something he memorized when he was in Confirmation class. It was written by a monk about a million years ago and has something to do with the Lord's Prayer. At least when they drive home, his dad puts the Minnesota Vikings game on the radio.

Monday-Laurie has looked forward all day to her Bible Study group later that evening. She is the hostess and she has already made cookies for the seven ladies who are coming. They are studying the Book of Ruth, a book Laurie never read before. She really enjoys the prayer time at the end even though sometimes they need to pass the tissues around. When she was first invited to join the group, she was hesitant because she didn't know much about the Bible. She soon found out that they all felt the same way and that is why they were studying it! She also found out that they really cared when someone was having a problem or celebrating a joy! She would never forget how much it meant that her Bible Study group came to her mother's memorial service even though they had never met her. While on a break at work Laurie told her friend Jill about the group meeting that night. Then, all of a sudden, she blurted out, "I really want you to come. I could use the moral support!" Jill laughed and said she would think about it. Jill didn't have a church and generally steered the conversation away from that topic. But at the end of the day, Jill stopped by Laurie's desk, smiled and said, "I'll be there. Just don't ask me any questions about the Bible!"

Tuesday-Logan was in a lot of trouble. It was Ten P.M. and he was clueless about the math test he was taking tomorrow. He hadn't been paying much attention in class lately and he sure hadn't been studying. He was worried about flunking and even more worried about how his parents would feel. For some reason he grabbed the Bible they gave him in Confirmation class and it opened to Psalm 3:5-"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding." So he started to pray that God would get him out of the test; maybe by giving him the flu. But that prayer didn't seem right so he texted his Youth Minister, Steve. He knew Steve drank a lot of coffee and stayed up late. Sure enough, Steve wrote back: "Trusting in the Lord is the most important thing in the world. No matter what happens tomorrow, God will always love you. But if you want to do well on a test in the future, maybe you'd better work a little harder on you own understanding!" Logan laughed and then prayed a different prayer: "Lord, help me trust you more and goof off less!"

Wednesday-Lars pulled his car up to the old house just as the sun was beginning to set. He was nervous. As a member of the church's "Extreme Home Makeover" Team he was given the assignment of considering the next project. The pastor told him about an elderly man who wanted to stay in his home but couldn't handle or afford the repairs. Lars had a small home repair company so he was perfect for the job and excited about it. But as he sat there he thought, "How would I feel if I couldn't swing a hammer anymore. I'd feel useless and bitter and embarrassed." He was surprised when Mr. Johnson opened the door in his

wheelchair with a big smile. “You must be Lars! Thanks for coming! Sit down and have a cup of coffee, it’s not fresh but it is strong!” As they talked Lars found out that Mr. Johnson had been a member of the church for 150 years until a car accident left him stuck at home. He was grateful for the EHM Team’s offer and promised to feed them his famous Bar-B-Q beef sandwiches until they would need a wheelchair.

After Lars surveyed the house as was preparing to leave he couldn’t help but ask Mr. Johnson, “How do you have such a great attitude?” Mr. Johnson looked at Lars, took a breath, and said, “The attitude I have now is something God has given me recently. After my accident I felt worthless. About all I could do was sit and read. So I read everything I could until one day I even started reading the Bible. One day I read the whole Gospel of John and found myself crying. I thought about how much God loved me even though I couldn’t walk or work anymore. Then I thought about how I needed to stop pitying myself and have an ‘attitude of gratitude.’ Now I record books in my living room for blind people and have four men in prison I write to and pray for. God is so good!” Lars left Mr. Johnson’s house looking forward to coming back to help, but knowing on this trip, it was Mr. Johnson who had helped him.

Thursday-Liz had it all worked out. She went on the internet and printed off pictures of children from Haiti. Then she glued them on to pieces of paper with the words, “Help Me!” coming out of their mouths. When her mom wasn’t looking she put them on the dining table as placemats. Her family never had a chance. When she handed them the pledge card to sponsor a child after dinner even Logan said he would give a dollar a week from his paper route.

Friday-The Lutherans were looking forward to having dinner with the Jones at the pier. Lars and Pete had worked for the same company a few years ago and Laurie and Penny had become good friends. Their son, Patrick, was only three but he loved Logan and Liz. When they got together, they could talk about anything; anything except religion. Growing up, Pete lost his dad when he was young and that seemed to stick with him. It had been a big deal for Penny to get his approval to enroll Patrick in the pre-school run by the Lutherans’ church. After walking on the beach for a while and then spending twenty minutes dumping the sand out of one of Patrick’s pockets, they grabbed hot dogs at the concession stand and sat down at a big picnic table. Just as Pete lifted the dog that had been “dragged through the garden,” he saw something out of the corner of his eye. Patrick had reached out his hands to Logan and Liz. “I want to say the prayer,” he said. All eyes turned to Pete. After a moment, he put down the hot dog, took a deep breath, and put his hands out to Laurie and

Penny. Everyone pretended not to see the tear in Pete’s eye when Patrick began, “Come, Lord Jesus, be our guest...”

Saturday-Logan and Lars were wiped out. It had been super-hot and humid all morning as they had cut the lawn, trimmed the hedges, and edged the walks. They were both looking forward to a cold drink and a hot Minnesota Twins baseball game on television. Just as they were about to walk in the front door, Laurie and Liz came out carrying dishes. Laurie had a casserole that smelled delicious and Liz had a shimmering Jello mold with carrots shavings inside. “Where are you going?” asked Lars, who was not only thirsty but hungry. Laurie answered, “Remember that I told you Mrs. Katy’s husband was sick?” Liz blurted, “And we are going to cheer them up.” “Honey, that is just great, have fun” Lars said, trying to slip by her to get through the door. Then Logan messed everything up. “Mom, do you think Mr. Katy has been able to keep up with his yard work?” Lars paused at the threshold, turned around and said, “Come on, son, help me get this lawn mower into the car. The Twins don’t have a pitcher today, anyway.”

Luther’s Prayers for Families

Morning Prayer

My Heavenly Father, I thank You, through Jesus Christ, Your beloved Son, that You kept me safe from all evil and danger last night. Save me, I pray, today as well, from every evil and sin, so that all I do and the way that I live will please you. I put myself in your care, body and soul and all that I have. Let Your holy Angels be with me, so that the evil enemy will not gain power over me. Amen.

Evening Prayer

My Heavenly Father, I thank You, through Jesus Christ, Your beloved Son, that You have protected me, by Your grace. Forgive, I pray, all my sins and the evil I have done. Protect me, by Your grace, tonight. I put myself in your care, body and soul and all that I have. Let Your holy angels be with me, so that the evil enemy will not gain power over me. Amen.

6. Frequently Asked Questions About Lutherans: A Top Ten List



1. How does someone become a Lutheran? Initially, most people became Lutherans when the prince or ruler of their territory adopted Luther's reforms. This occurred mainly in Germany and the Scandinavian countries (Sweden, Finland, Denmark and Norway). If you happened to be born in Iceland, there is a 94% chance you would be a Lutheran! Talk about the "frozen chosen!" Most Lutherans since then were born into a

Lutheran family or married another Lutheran. Since Lutherans tend to respect other Christian denominations they don't push hard for conversions. Missionary work over the centuries has yielded some converts especially in Indonesia, Tanzania, and Ethiopia. An amazing 50% of Namibians are Lutherans! New Lutherans today are generally Christians who felt comfortable at a local Lutheran church and became a member. Most new member classes touch on the history and theology of Lutheranism but the primary focus is on becoming part of a Christian community with other disciples of Jesus.

2. What is the biggest difference between Lutherans and Roman Catholics? We have so many customs and beliefs in common that Lutherans and Catholics have buried the hatchet on most issues. We have even come closer to agreement on the concept of salvation by grace through faith (the issue that tore us apart). Some of the little differences may seem big: our pastors can marry, we do not have a pope, our bishops are elected by church members who also run their own churches, divorce is regrettable but permitted, and there are only 2 sacraments. But the biggest difference is probably that Lutherans believe that the bible as the final authority in matters of faith.

3. Why are there different groups of Lutherans? Lutherans naturally clustered geographically in the old world. When they came to the new world they kept their language and cultures for a few generations. As time went by, their ethnic differences seemed less important and the groups merged. Today there are some Lutheran groups who might be considered conservative on certain issues such as the Wisconsin Synod, the Missouri Synod and the New American Lutheran Church and a moderate group called the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

(ELCA). The more conservative tend to have a more literal interpretation of the bible, prohibit women serving as pastors and do not tend to associate with other denominations.

4. What is the Lutheran interpretation of the Bible? Thanks to Luther, most Lutherans not only call the Bible their ultimate authority on matters of faith but they also study it with great enthusiasm. Lutheran children are taught the stories of the Bible in their Sunday School classes, teens dig deeper in their Confirmation preparation, and adults attend Bible study classes or join groups. Also thanks to Luther, most Lutherans have a fairly unique interpretation of the Bible that is not quite literal and certainly not only inspirational. All scripture is interpreted in the light of God's gracious love for his children. Where that message shines brightest Lutherans gaze hardest. Where that message is either secondary or obscured Lutherans keep searching.

So Lutherans have a far greater interest in the gospels or Paul's letters than they do of the books of laws or history in the Old Testament. As a result, Lutherans do weigh teachings in the Bible differently. While not all Lutherans deem it necessary to believe that Samson's hair gave him superhuman strength, or that women should not be allowed to speak in worship, they do believe that Jesus forgave the adulterous woman's sins.

5. What's the deal with Lutheran pastors? The title "pastor" comes from the latin word for "shepherd." Lutheran pastors are people who have been asked by a church/flock to lead/shepherd them. Most Lutheran pastors are trained to "shepherd" at a seminary and have been approved by their denomination. They then become eligible to be "called" by a congregation to lead in the areas of preaching, teaching and worship. They can have great influence over church matters but the final authority in the Lutheran church, unlike some denominations, rests with the congregation members, not the pastor. Unless there is a crisis, pastors tend to serve a congregation as long as they sense God's call. Lutheran pastors can marry and if they want, they can drink or dance or smoke or even gamble in moderation. Lutherans not expect their pastors to be perfect, but they do look to their pastors to be humble examples of Christian discipleship. Lutheran pastors sometimes wear clergy collars as a uniform and usually wear white robes with colored scarf-like stoles for traditional worship services. Most Lutheran groups today ordain women as pastors.

6. Why do Lutherans baptize babies? Lutherans view baptism as God's gracious gift that does not depend on the readiness or the worthiness of the receiver. What better example of this than a baby! The baptized receive forgiveness of sins, the promise of eternal life and the Holy Spirit who brings them to faith and guides them into the path of discipleship. Lutherans do not reject baptisms that are performed only when a person has "accepted Jesus as their Lord and Savior." But Lutherans worry that this approach to baptism makes it seem like a reward instead of a gift. Even when Lutherans baptize adults they are careful to note that this is God's gift not

their right. Because Lutherans believe there is only need for one baptism and do not re-baptize people from other denominations who wish to join their churches. Lutherans do not see being “born again” or “born of the spirit” as occasions for a different baptism.

7. What do Lutherans think about homosexuality? Because there are passages in scripture that seem to condemn homosexual behavior, most Lutherans do not approve of homosexuality as a lifestyle. They would probably say, “we love the sinner but not the sin.” Recently, the ELCA allowed homosexual pastors to have committed same gender relationships by the smallest of votes in assembly. This controversial decision was influenced by the idea that people are born homosexuals and should have an opportunity to live in a committed relationship.

8. Where do Lutherans stand on the other moral issues of our time? Lutherans stand all over the place on moral issues. Some are pro-life and some pro-choice, some are pacifist and others serve in the military, some drink or smoke or dance or gamble and others do not, some accept divorce and others reject it as an option. Most agree that sex is meant within marriage although some have lived together before marriage. Lutherans disagree over genetic research, euthanasia, prayer in school, and other hot issues. Why is there such a wide variety of views among Lutherans? The simplest reason is that Luther felt the church’s primary focus was to transform people’s lives through the message of God’s grace, not run their daily lives. Those saved by God’s grace naturally seek to live moral lives with the guidance of the scripture. He rejected the idea that some church authority should decide all these matters. Luther felt that it was the government’s job was to enforce whatever moral behavior provided for security and good order. So today we have a variety of views on these issues based on people’s understanding of the bible and their relationship to the government.

9. Why don’t Lutherans stick out more in the world? It is interesting that a denomination started by a monk whose words and actions shook the foundations of Christendom seems relatively calm and collected today. Part of the reason Lutherans may seem low key is that they do not seek any glory for themselves but only for God. They are suspicious of fame and fortune for their pastors or themselves. Lutherans also have a very humble view of themselves in general. They recognize that they will always be sinners in need of God’s forgiveness. They do not seek to change the world, that is God’s job. But they are willing to be God’s instruments when he needs them. Lutherans may not be as large in number, politically influential or flashy as some denominations, but if you look closely you will see a surprising number of hospitals, colleges, orphanages, social service agencies, and nursing homes were started by Lutherans. You might be surprised to see that Lutheran disaster relief often arrives early and stays late in a crisis at home or abroad. And Lutherans annually raise large sums to feed or clothe people who may

never know where their help came from. One could say that Lutherans like to do God's work and let God take the credit!

10. What's the future of the Lutheran Church? There is no doubt that the Lutheran church is going through tremendous challenges today. The European birth place of the Lutheran church is also a part of the world where church attendance is now at record lows. For example, although nearly everyone in Norway is a Lutheran, only about 3% attend worship! Lutheran churches in the U.S. are generally declining in membership. The fact that many members are seniors could mean a significant change in membership in one more generation. Some Lutheran Baby Boomers and their children have drifted to other denominations through marriage, been attracted to non-denominational churches, or become the infamous "C & E's" (Christmas and Easter attendees).

At the same time, because of the way Lutherans respect other denominations, there is an interesting new development occurring. ELCA Lutherans are now in full communion²⁴ with the Episcopal Church, Presbyterian Church USA, United Church of Christ, and Reformed Church. In a sense, they are forming a unified "Mainstream"²⁵ denomination that is likely to remain a strong witness and in this country. At the same time, many Lutheran congregations in the U.S. have adopted newer worship and ministry styles and seen some growth locally. Other Lutheran congregations have adopted social justice or social ministry emphases that are attracting a new generation of Christians with those convictions. Meanwhile, the Lutheran missionary efforts in Africa have produced some rapidly growing communities. Some have said that they will soon be sending missionaries back to Europe to reinvigorate their mother churches!

For many Lutherans, the answer to this question is that it really doesn't matter. While they feel that their denomination has had a powerful and positive impact on Christendom for almost 500 years, they are not ultimately concerned about her survival as an institutional church. They are far more concerned that the message that gave her birth continues to be preached and taught and heard and believed: that we are saved by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ. If a Lutheran Church is the best way for that message to be heard, then may God grant it a long life! If there are other ways that message can be shared, then "Amen!" After all, Martin Luther did not desire to start a new church but to make sure that the gospel be known to all. In that spirit, wherever God's grace is made known, a little bit of the Lutheran church will live!

²⁴ This means that they share the same basic Christian convictions and creeds and may even allow for pastors or members to transfer amongst them freely.

²⁵ This term refers to the groups of Protestant denominations that established themselves early in the life of this country and formed a center stream of Christianity as compared to the Roman Catholic Church or Evangelical streams. A far better name for this group would probably be "American Protestants," as they are the American expression of the Protestant Reformation.

Conclusion

“Here We Stand” A Christian’s Guide to Lutherans just touches the surface of the history, theology, ministry and ways of a unique group of Christians. Martin Luther, first obsessed by sin and later possessed by grace, set the stage and the tone for who and what would come. Lutherans are still fully aware of their sinfulness. It keeps them humble and realistic; like a Norwegian farmer in North Dakota.²⁶ And they are still possessed by God’s grace. They know they need it, can’t earn it and don’t deserve it. But through the power of the Holy Spirit they are given the faith in Jesus Christ to receive God’s amazing grace. And that grace sets them free to love God and their neighbor with all they’ve got. Sinners still and always, they nevertheless become God’s saints. Who are the Lutherans? Nothing more than a children of God so captured by His grace that they humbly and gratefully seek to become instruments of that grace in everything they do and everywhere they go. If there is only one Lutheran left on the earth, she would tell the world, “We are saved by God’s grace through faith in Jesus Christ. Here I stand. I can do no other. So help me God. Amen!” As Luther would say, “this is most certainly true.”

Let’s let Luther have the last word:

Faith is a work of God in us, which changes us and brings us to birth anew from God (cf. John 1). It kills the old Adam, makes us completely different people in heart, mind, senses, and all our powers, and brings the Holy Spirit with it. What a living, creative, active powerful thing is faith! It is impossible that faith ever stop doing good. Faith doesn't ask whether good works are to be done, but, before it is asked, it has done them. It is always active.

Faith is a living, unshakeable confidence in God's grace; it is so certain, that someone would die a thousand times for it. This kind of trust in and knowledge of God's grace makes a person joyful, confident, and happy with regard to God and all creatures. This is what the Holy Spirit does by faith. Through faith, a person will do good to everyone without coercion, willingly and happily; he will serve everyone, suffer everything for the love and praise of God, who has shown him such grace.²⁷

²⁶ Although he did not grow up a Lutheran, writer and host of “A Prairie Home Companion,” Garrison Keillor, has a lock on the Lutheran culture. In his stories from “Lake Wobegon” he pokes fun at their foibles and lifts up their qualities. The book, “Life Among the Lutherans,” by Augsburg Press, is a collection of some of his stories.

²⁷ Martin Luther’s “Preface to the Letter of St. Paul to the Romans.”

Appendix One

The Small Catechism of Martin Luther (Translation by Robert E. Smith)

Part One: The Ten Commandments:

A. The First Commandment

You must not have other gods.

Q. What does this mean? A. We must fear, love, and trust God more than anything else.

B. The Second Commandment

You must not misuse your God's name.

Q. What does this mean? A. We must fear and love God, so that we will not use His name to curse, swear, cast a spell, lie or deceive, but will use it to call upon Him, pray to Him, praise Him and thank Him in all times of trouble.

C. The Third Commandment

You must keep the Sabbath holy.

Q. What does this mean? A. We must fear and love God, so that we will not look down on preaching or God's Word, but consider it holy, listen to it willingly, and learn it.

D. The Fourth Commandment

You must honor your father and mother. [So that things will go well for you and you will live long on earth].

Q. What does this mean? A. We must fear and love God, so that we will neither look down on our parents or superiors nor irritate them, but will honor them, serve them, obey them, love them and value them.

E. The Fifth Commandment

You must not kill.

Q. What does this mean? A. We must fear and love God, so that we will neither harm nor hurt our neighbor's body, but help him and care for him when he is ill.

F. The Sixth Commandment

You must not commit adultery.

Q. What does this mean? A. We must fear and love God, so that our words and actions will be clean and decent and so that everyone will love and honor their spouses.

G. The Seventh Commandment

You must not steal.

Q. What does this mean? A. We must fear and love God, so that we will neither take our neighbor's money or property, nor acquire it by fraud or by selling him poorly made products, but will help him improve and protect his property and career.

H. The Eighth Commandment

You must not tell lies about your neighbor.

Q. What does this mean? A. We must fear and love God, so that we will not deceive by lying, betraying, slandering or ruining our neighbor's reputation, but will defend him, say good things about him, and see the best side of everything he does.

I. The Ninth Commandment

You must not desire your neighbor's house.

Q. What does this mean? A. We must fear and love God, so that we will not attempt to trick our neighbor out of his inheritance or house,

take it by pretending to have a right to it, etc. but help him to keep and improve it.

J. The Tenth Commandment

You must not desire your neighbor's wife, servant, maid, animals or anything that belongs to him.

Q. What does this mean? A. We must fear and love God, so that we will not release his cattle, take his employees from him or seduce his wife, but urge them to stay and do what they ought to do.

K. The Conclusion to the Commandments

Q. What does God say to us about all these commandments? A. This is what He says:

"I am the Lord Your God. I am a jealous God. I plague the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of those who hate me with their ancestor's sin. But I make whole those who love me for a thousand generations."

Q. What does it mean? A. God threatens to punish everyone who breaks these commandments. We should be afraid of His anger because of this and not violate such commandments. But He promises grace and all good things to those who keep such commandments. Because of this, we, too, should love Him, trust Him, and willingly do what His commandments require.

Part Two: The Creed

I. The First Article: On Creation

I believe in God the Almighty Father, Creator of Heaven and Earth.

Q. What does this mean? A. I believe that God created me, along with all creatures. He gave to me: body and soul, eyes, ears and all the other parts of my body, my mind and all my senses and preserves them as well. He gives me clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and

land, wife and children, fields, animals and all I own. Every day He abundantly provides everything I need to nourish this body and life. He protects me against all danger, shields and defends me from all evil. He does all this because of His pure, fatherly and divine goodness and His mercy, not because I've earned it or deserved it. For all of this, I must thank Him, praise Him, serve Him and obey Him. Yes, this is true!

II. The Second Article: On Redemption

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried, descended to Hell, on the third day rose again from the dead, ascended to Heaven and sat down at the right hand of God the Almighty Father. From there He will come to judge the living and the dead.

Q. What does this mean? A. I believe that Jesus Christ is truly God, born of the Father in eternity and also truly man, born of the Virgin Mary. He is my Lord! He redeemed me, a lost and condemned person, bought and won me from all sins, death and the authority of the Devil. It did not cost Him gold or silver, but His holy, precious blood, His innocent body -- His death! Because of this, I am His very own, will live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him righteously, innocently and blessedly forever, just as He is risen from death, lives and reigns forever. Yes, this is true.

III. The Third Article: On Becoming Holy

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the community of the saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and an everlasting life. Amen.

Q. What does this mean? A. I believe that I cannot come to my Lord Jesus Christ by my own intelligence or power. But the Holy Spirit call me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, made me holy and kept me in the true faith,

just as He calls, gathers together, enlightens and makes holy the whole Church on earth and keeps it with Jesus in the one, true faith. In this Church, He generously forgives each day every sin committed by me and by every believer. On the last day, He will raise me and all the dead from the grave. He will give eternal life to me and to all who believe in Christ. Yes, this is true!

Part Three: The Lord's Prayer

I. Introduction

Our Father, Who is in Heaven.

Q. What does this mean? A. In this introduction, God invites us to believe that He is our real Father and we are His real children, so that we will pray with trust and complete confidence, in the same way beloved children approach their beloved Father with their requests.

II. The First Request

May Your name be holy.

Q. What does this mean? A. Of course, God's name is holy in and of itself, but by this request, we pray that He will make it holy among us, too.

Q. How does this take place? A. When God's Word is taught clearly and purely, and when we live holy lives as God's children based upon it. Help us, Heavenly Father, to do this! But anyone who teaches and lives by something other than God's Word defiles God's name among us. Protect us from this, Heavenly Father!

III. The Second Request

Your Kingdom come.

Q. What does this mean? A. Truly God's Kingdom comes by itself, without our prayer. But we pray in this request that it come to us as well.

Q. How does this happen? A. When the Heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit, so that we believe His holy Word by His grace and live godly lives here in this age and there in eternal life.

IV. The Third Request

May Your will be accomplished, as it is Heaven, so may it be on Earth.

Q. What does this mean? A. Truly, God's good and gracious will is accomplished without our prayer. But we pray in this request that it be accomplished among us as well.

Q. How does this happen? A. When God destroys and interferes with every evil will and all evil advice, which will not allow God's Kingdom to come, such as the Devil's will, the world's will and will of our bodily desires. It also happens when God strengthens us by faith and by His Word and keeps living by them faithfully until the end of our lives. This is His will, good and full of grace.

V. The Fourth Request

Give us our daily bread today.

Q. What does this mean? A. Truly, God gives daily bread to evil people, even without our prayer. But we pray in this request that He will help us realize this and receive our daily bread with thanksgiving.

Q. What does "Daily Bread" mean? A. Everything that nourishes our body and meets its needs, such as: Food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, yard, fields, cattle, money, possessions, a devout spouse, devout children, devout employees, devout and faithful rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, discipline, honor, good friends, faithful neighbors and other things like these.

VI. The Fifth Request

And forgive our guilt, as we forgive those guilty of sinning against us.

Q. What does this mean? A. We pray in this request that our Heavenly Father will neither pay attention to our sins nor refuse requests such as these because of our sins and because we are neither worthy nor deserve the things for which we pray. Yet He wants to give them all to us by His grace, because many times each day we sin and truly deserve only punishment. Because God does this, we will, of course, want to forgive from our hearts and willingly do good to those who sin against us.

VII. The Sixth Request

And lead us not into temptation.

Q. What does this mean? A. God tempts no one, of course, but we pray in this request that God will protect us and save us, so that the Devil, the world and our bodily desires will neither deceive us nor seduce us into heresy, despair or other serious shame or vice, and so that we will win and be victorious in the end, even if they attack us.

VIII. The Seventh Request

But set us free from the Evil One.

Q. What does this mean? A. We pray in this request, as a summary, that our Father in Heaven will save us from every kind of evil that threatens body, soul, property and honor. We pray that when at last our final hour has come, He will grant us a blessed death, and, in His grace, bring us to Himself from this valley of tears.

IX. Amen.

Q. What does this mean? A. That I should be certain that such prayers are acceptable to the Father in Heaven and will be granted, that He Himself has commanded us to pray in this way and that He promises to answer us. Amen.

Amen. This means: Yes, yes it will happen this way.

Part Four: Holy Baptism

Q. What is Baptism? A. Baptism is not just plain water, but it is water contained within God's command and united with God's Word.

Q. Which Word of God is this? A. The one which our Lord Christ spoke in the last chapter of Matthew: "Go into all the world, teaching all heathen nations, and baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

Q. What does Baptism give? What good is it? A. It gives the forgiveness of sins, redeems from death and the Devil, gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, just as God's words and promises declare.

Q. What are these words and promises of God? A. Our Lord Christ spoke one of them in the last chapter of Mark: "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved; but whoever does not believe will be damned."

Q. How can water do such great things? A. Water doesn't make these things happen, of course. It is God's Word, which is with and in the water. Because, without God's Word, the water is plain water and not baptism. But with God's Word it is a Baptism, a grace-filled water of life, a bath of new birth in the Holy Spirit, as St. Paul said to Titus in the third chapter: "Through this bath of rebirth and renewal of the Holy Spirit, which He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ, our Savior, that we, justified by the same grace are made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. This is a faithful saying."

Q. What is the meaning of such a water Baptism? A. It means that the old Adam in us should be drowned by daily sorrow and repentance, and die with all sins and evil lusts, and, in turn, a new person daily come forth and

rise from death again. He will live forever before God in righteousness and purity.

Q. Where is this written? A. St. Paul says to the Romans in chapter six: "We are buried with Christ through Baptism into death, so that, in the same way Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, thus also must we walk in a new life."

Part Five: Confession

Q. What is confession? A. Confession has two parts:

First, a person admits his sin. Second, a person receives absolution or forgiveness from the confessor, as if from God Himself, without doubting it, but believing firmly that his sins are forgiven by God in Heaven through it.

Q. Which sins should people confess? A. When speaking to God, we should plead guilty to all sins, even those we don't know about, just as we do in the "Our Father," but when speaking to the confessor, only the sins we know about and feel in our hearts.

Q. Which are these? A. Consider here your place in life according to the Ten Commandments. Are you a father? A mother? A son? A daughter? A husband? A wife? A servant? Are you disobedient, unfaithful or lazy? Have you hurt anyone with your words or actions? Have you stolen, neglected your duty, let things go or injured someone?

Part Six: The Sacrament of the Altar

Q. What is the Sacrament of the Altar? A. It is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ under bread and wine for us Christians to eat and to drink, established by Christ Himself.

Q. Where is that written? A. The holy apostles Matthew, Mark and Luke and St. Paul write this: "Our Lord Jesus Christ, in the night on which He was betrayed, took bread, gave thanks, broke it, gave it to His disciples and said: "Take! Eat! This is My body, which is given for you. Do this to remember Me!" In the same way He also took the cup after supper, gave thanks, gave it to them, and said: "Take and drink from it, all of you! This cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for you to forgive sins. This do, as often as you drink it, to remember Me!"

Q. What good does this eating and drinking do? A. These words tell us: "Given for you" and "Shed for you to forgive sins." Namely, that the forgiveness of sins, life and salvation are given to us through these words in the sacrament. Because, where sins are forgiven, there is life and salvation as well.

Q. How can physical eating and drinking do such great things? A. Of course, eating and drinking do not do these things. These words, written here, do them: "given for you" and "shed for you to forgive sins." These words, along with physical eating and drinking are the important part of the sacrament. Anyone who believes these words has what they say and what they record, namely, the forgiveness of sins.

Q. Who, then, receives such a sacrament in a worthy way? A. Of course, fasting and other physical preparations are excellent disciplines for the body. But anyone who believes these words, "Given for you," and "Shed for you to forgive sins," is really worthy and well prepared. But whoever doubts or does not believe these words is not worthy and is unprepared, because the words, "for you" demand a heart that fully believes.

Appendix Two

Luther's Table Talks

On Christ

- *I have a better Caretaker than you and all the angels. He it is who lies in a manger ... but at the same time sits at the right hand of God, the almighty Father. Therefore be at rest.*
- *Anything that one imagines of God apart from Christ is only useless thinking and vain idolatry.*

On Sin

- *Original sin is in us, like the beard. We are shaved today and look clean, and have a smooth chin; tomorrow our beard has grown again, nor does it cease growing while we remain on earth.*
- *Either sin is with you, lying on your shoulders, or it is lying on Christ, the Lamb of God. Now if it is lying on your back, you are lost; but if it is resting on Christ, you are free, and you will be saved. Now choose what you want.*

On the Bible

- *The Bible is the cradle wherein Christ is laid.*
- *Let him who wants a true church cling to the Word by which everything is upheld.*

On The Christian Life

- *It is the duty of every Christian to be Christ to his neighbor.*
- *Next to faith this is the highest art -- to be content with the calling in which God has placed you. I have not learned it yet.*
- *The whole being of any Christian is Faith and Love... Faith brings the man to God, love brings him to men .*
- *Be a sinner and sin boldly, but believe and rejoice in Christ even more boldly...*

On Prayer

- *Pray, and let God worry.*
- *All who call on God in true faith, earnestly from the heart, will certainly be heard, and will receive what they have asked and desired, although not in the hour or in the measure, or the very thing which they ask; yet they will obtain something greater and more glorious than they had dared to ask.*
- *Grant that I may not pray alone with the mouth; help me that I may pray from the depths of my heart.*

On Marriage

- *There is no more lovely, friendly and charming relationship, communion or company than a good marriage.*

On Music

- *Music makes people kinder, gentler, more staid and reasonable. The devil flees before the sound of music almost as much as before the word of God.*

Appendix Three

Summary of the Augsburg Confession

Article Title	Description
I God	Lutherans believe in the Triune God and reject other interpretations regarding the nature of God.
II Original Sin	Lutherans believe that the nature of man is sinful, described as being without fear of God, without trust of God and with concupiscence. The only "cure" for sin is to be reborn through Baptism and the Holy Spirit.
III The Son of God	Lutherans believe in the incarnation, that is, the union of the fully human with the fully divine in the person of Jesus. Jesus Christ alone brings about the reconciliation of humanity with God.
IV Justification By Faith	Man cannot be justified before God through our own abilities; we are wholly reliant on Jesus Christ for reconciliation with God. (This is often described as the one article by which the "Lutheran church stands or falls".)
V The Office of Preaching	Lutherans believe that to see to it that the gospel of Jesus Christ is proclaimed throughout the world, Christ has established His office of the holy ministry.
VI Of The New Obedience	Lutherans believe that good deeds of Christians are the fruits of faith and salvation, not a price paid for them.
VII Of The Church	Lutherans believe that there is one holy catholic church, and it is found wherever the gospel is preached in its truth and purity and the sacraments are administered according to the gospel.
VIII What The Church Is	Despite what hypocrisy may exist in the church (and among men), the Word and the Sacraments are always valid because they are instituted by Christ, no matter what the sins may be of the man who administers them.
IX Of Baptism	Lutherans believe that Baptism is necessary for salvation, and that through Baptism is offered the grace of God. Children are baptized as an offering to them of God's grace.
X Of the Lord's Supper	Lutherans believe that Christ's body and blood is truly present in with and under the bread and wine of the sacrament and reject those that teach otherwise.

XI Of Confession Lutherans believe that private absolution should remain in the church, though a believer does not need to enumerate all of his sins as it is impossible for a man to enumerate all of the sins for which he should be forgiven.

XII Of Repentance Repentance comes in two parts: in contrition for sins committed according to the Law and through faith offered through the Gospel. A believer can never be free from sin, nor live outside of the grace of God.

XIII Of the Use of the Sacraments The Sacraments (Baptism and the Eucharist) are physical manifestations of God's Word and His commitment to us. The Sacraments are never just physical elements, but have God's word and promises bound to them.

XIV Of Ecclesiastical Order Lutherans only allow those who are "rightly called" to administer the Sacraments.

XV Of Ecclesiastical Usages Lutherans believe that church holidays, calendars and festivals are useful for religious observance, but that observance and ritual is not necessary for salvation. Human traditions (such as observances, fasts, distinctions in eating meats) that are taught as a way to "merit" grace work in opposition to the Gospel.

XVI Of Civil Affairs Secular governments and vocations are considered to be part of God's natural orders; Christians are free to serve in government and the military and to engage in the business and vocations of the world. Laws are to be followed unless they are commandments to sin.

XVII Of Christ's Return to Judgment Lutherans believe that Christ will return to judge the world and all men; the "godly" will be given everlasting joy, and the "ungodly" will be condemned. This article rejects notions of the earthly kingdom of the godly, or that Christ's judgment will not be final.

XVIII Of Free Will Lutherans believe that we have free will in the realm of "civil righteousness" (or "things subject to reason"), but that we do not have free will in "spiritual righteousness". In other words, we are free to choose and act in every regard except for the choice of salvation. Faith is not the work of men, but of the Holy Spirit.

XIX Of the Cause of Sin God does not cause people to sin — sin is instead the work of the "ungodly and the devil" (i.e., our selfish concerns of this world).

XX Of Good Works The Lutheran notion of justification by faith does not somehow condemn good works; our faith causes us to do good works as a sign of our justification (or salvation), not a requirement for salvation.

XXI Of the Worship of the Saints Lutherans keep the saints, not as saviors or intercessors to God, but rather as examples and inspirations to our own faith and life.

Abuses corrected

XXII Of Both Kinds In The Sacrament (Eucharist) It is proper to offer communicants the consecrated bread and wine, not just the bread.

XXIII Of the Marriage of Priests Lutherans permit their clergy to enter the institution of marriage, for the reasons that the early Church bishops were married, that God blesses marriage as an order of creation, and because marriage and procreation is the natural outlet for human sexual desire.

XXIV Of the Mass Lutherans retain the practice of the Mass, but only as a public gathering for the purposes of community worship and the receiving of the Eucharist. Lutherans reject the practice of using the Mass as a "work" for both salvation and worldly (monetary) gain.

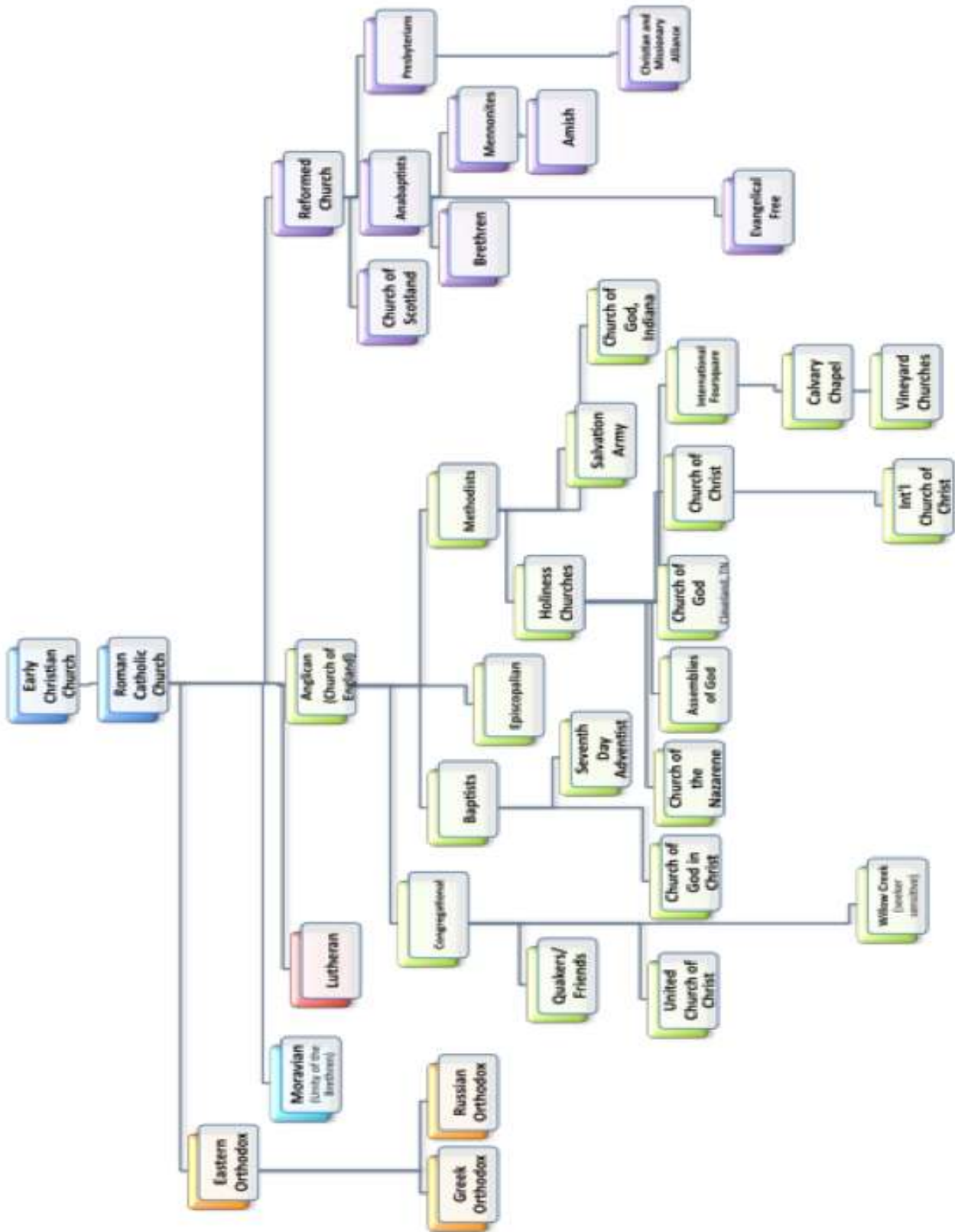
XXV Of Confession Lutherans uphold the need for confession and absolution, but reject the notion that Confession should induce guilt or anxiety to the Christian. Absolution is offered for all sin, not just sins that can be recounted in a confession, as it is impossible for a man to know all of his transgressions.

XXVI Of the Distinction of Meats Human traditions that hold fasting and special observances with dietary restrictions as a means of gaining the favor of God are contrary to the gospel. While fasting and other practices are useful spiritual practices, they do not justify man nor offer salvation.

XXVII Of Monastic Vows Man cannot achieve purity in community or isolation from the rest of the world, and perfection cannot be attained by any vow taken or actions of man alone.

XXVIII Of Ecclesiastical Power The only power given to priests or bishops is the power offered through Scripture to preach, teach and administer the sacraments. The powers given to the clergy in issues of government or the military are granted and respected only through civil means; they are not civil rulers of governments and the military by divine right.

Appendix Four "The Christian Family Tree"



Appendix Five

A Mighty Fortress

EIN FESTE BURG

Martin Luther, 1529

Martin Luther, 1529

1. A might - y For - tress is our God, A Bul - wark nev - er fail - ing; Our
 2. Did we in our own strength con - fide, Our striv - ing would be los - ing; Were
 3. And though this world, with dev - ils filled, Should threat - en to un - do us, We
 4. That Word a - bove all earth - ly powers, No thanks to them a - bid - eth, The

Help - er he a - mid the flood Of mor - tal ills pre - vail - ing. For
 not the right Man on our side, The Man of God's own choos - ing. Dost
 will not fear, for God hath willed His truth to tri - umph through us. The
 Spir - it and the gifts are ours Through him who with us sid - eth; Let

still our an - cient foe Doth seek to work us woe; His craft and pow'r are
 ask who that may be? Christ Je - sus it is he, Lord Sab - a - oth his
 prince of dark - ness grim, We trem - ble not for him; His rage we can en -
 goods and kin - dred go, This mor - tal life al - so; The bod - y they may

great; And, armed with cru - el hate, On earth is not his e - qual.
 Name, From age to age the same, And he must win the bat - tle.
 dure, For lo! his doom is sure; One lit - tle word shall fell him.
 kill: God's truth a - bid - eth still; His king - dom is for - ev - er.

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Appendix Six “Lutheran Faith Practices”

These practices are ways Lutherans live in God’s grace and show their love to their neighbors.

- Inner Ring –Areas of Discipleship
- Middle Ring-Church Discipleship Ministries
- Outer Ring-Personal Faith Practices

