

DENOMINATIONS: Lutheranism

Religion: the belief in a god

Denomination: a religious grouping where congregations are united in their adherence to its beliefs and practices

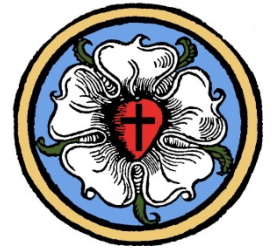
Synod: Greek for “walking together.” Congregations voluntarily choose to belong to a synod, which is a group of congregations that are in agreement with each other.

Basic History of Christian Denominations:

1054: “Great Schism” (Split of Orthodox and Rome)

1530: Reformations

- Conservative Reformation: Lutheranism
- Swiss Reformation: Reformed
- English Reformation: Anglicanism
- Radical Reformation: Anabaptism



The Solas

- **Scripture Alone**
(Sola Scriptura)
- **Grace Alone**
(Sola Gratia)
- **Faith Alone**
(Sola Fide)
- **Christ Alone**
(Sola Christus)

Confessional Lutheranism

Core Truths

What do the following verses say about Christ’s work of salvation for you?

1. John 3:16-17
2. 1 John 2:2

What do the following verses say about our ability to contribute to our own salvation apart from the indwelling of Christ?

1. Acts 5:31
2. Acts 11:18
3. Romans 8:7
4. Ephesians 2:1

How is it possible for anyone to believe in Jesus?

1. Romans 10:17
2. Ephesians 2:8-9
3. John 11:38-44

Only the Word

What do the following verses say about the inspiration and authority of the Word?

1. John 20:31
2. 2 Timothy 3:16-17
3. 2 Peter 1:21

What do the following verses say about the power of the Word?

1. Isaiah 55:10-11
2. Jeremiah 1:12
3. Jeremiah 23:29
4. 1 Thessalonians 2:13

Certain Faith

What do the following verses show how Baptism is God's act for you, delivering forgiveness to you?

1. John 3:3
2. Titus 3:5-7
3. 1 Peter 3:21

What does Matthew 26:26-28 say about Holy Communion as God's act of delivering forgiveness to you?

When we understand that the Means of Grace (Word and Sacrament) are God's ways on delivering salvation to you, what perspective does this give you on the Third Commandment (Remember the Sabbath Day, to keep it holy)?

Confessional Lutheranism

Source of Doctrine: The sole source and standard of teaching in the Lutheran church is Holy Scripture. It is given by inspiration of God and is God's inerrant Word in all its parts, to make us "wise for salvation" (2 Timothy 3:15). Scripture is infallible and reliable in all that it says. As Luther said, "God's Word cannot err."

Role of Christ/Way of Salvation: Jesus Christ is true God, begotten as the Son of God from eternity, and also true man, taking on human nature in the womb of the virgin Mary. As a man, He became the perfect substitute for sinful human beings, and as God He provided an infinite and all-sufficient atonement for every one of them. He satisfied the demands of God's Law by keeping the Commandments in our place. He bore the punishment for our disobedience by His holy suffering and death. He rose bodily from the dead, ascended into heaven to reign over all things at the right hand of the Father, and shall come again to be the Judge of the living and the dead.

The Sacraments: From the Greek meaning "mystery"; literally, "something sacred." In the Lutheran Church, a sacrament is a sacred act that (1) was instituted by Christ, (2) has a visible element, (3) offers the forgiveness of sins earned by Christ. The Sacraments are:

1. Holy Baptism
2. Confession and Absolution
3. Lord's Supper (aka: Sacrament of the Altar and Eucharist)

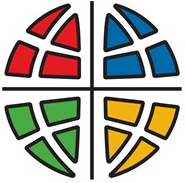
Election: Lutherans believe in an election of grace. God predestines the elect to eternal life. Election is not on the basis of merits or works, but solely because of God's grace and the merits of Christ.

We believe, teach, and confess that the only rule and guiding principle according to which all teachings and teachers are to be evaluated and judged are the prophetic, and apostolic writings of the Old and New Testaments alone, as it is written, "Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Psalm 119:105), and St. Paul: "If ... an angel from heaven should proclaim to you something contrary, ... let that one be accursed!" (Galatians 1:8). – Introduction to the Epitome of the Formula of Concord

"I believe that by my own understanding or strength I cannot believe in Jesus Christ my LORD or come to him, but instead the Holy Spirit has called me through the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, made me holy and kept me in the true faith, just as he calls, gathers, enlightens, and makes holy the whole Christian church on earth and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one common, true faith. Daily in this Christian church the Holy Spirit abundantly forgives all sins – mind and those of all believers. On the Last Day the Holy Spirit will raise me and all the dead and will give to me and all believers in Christ eternal life. This is most certainly true." – Martin Luther, Luther's Small Catechism: Third Article of the Creed.

End Times (Eschatology): On the Last Day Christ will come visibly to judge the world. Lutherans, like all ancient Christians, believe Christ could come at any moment and do not take the thousand-year reign of Christ mentioned in Revelation 20 literally, but symbolizes the reign of Christ from His first appearing to His reappearing at the end of time (amillennialism). To all who believe in Him, He will give the eternal life and glory that He has gained as the Redeemer. They will forever behold Him in His glory and praise Him. But for those who do not acknowledge Christ as their savior, Jesus will pronounce the doom of everlasting punishment.

American Lutheran Synods Today



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) – 1988-present

Merger of: Lutheran Church in America (LCA), The American Lutheran Church (ALC), and Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches (AELC).

Separations: The American Association of Lutheran Churches (AALC) – 1987; Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ (LCMC) – 2001; North American Lutheran Church (NALC) – 2010.

The ELCA formed on January 1, 1988. The basis of the ELCA merger was not on doctrinal agreement, but on the ecumenical movement. Of the three merging churches, the ALC was the most cautious. The LCA had been pushing for Lutheran union. The smallest AELC, which left the LCMS in 1976 was the catalyst for the merger. The AELC hoped that more members would have left the LCMS following the Concordia Seminary walkout, but only 100,000 had joined the AELC. The AELC and LCA were the liberals of the merging church bodies as their primary focus was on compassion, not orthodoxy. Prior to the merger, many dissenting congregations of the ALC created the AALC, which is now in fellowship with the LCMS.

Immediately after the merger, the ELCA began to seek union with churches outside Lutheranism. The broad emphasis of the ELCA is the Social Gospel – issues of human need and justice.

The ELCA has developed doctrinal positions that are far removed from Scripture, including calling the following Bible events as myths: Creation account, the Great Flood, and Jonah's three days in the great fish, many of Christ's miracles, and the Pauline Epistles were of Paul's opinions. These are the positions of the ELCA leadership, in spite of what the people in the pews might believe.

Source of Doctrine: The ELCA interprets Scripture using Higher Criticism (Higher-Critical Method), which places human reason as master in theology over Scripture. Higher Criticism adjusts and conforms beliefs that are in accord with human reason. (See Introduction to Denominations for more information.)

Role of Christ/Way of Salvation: The ELCA teaches that salvation is found in two ways (1) as a free gift by grace through faith in Jesus Christ and (2) universalism that there are various ways to salvation. This second way became official at the 2019 ELCA Churchwide Assembly.

Sacraments: The ELCA teaches two ways on the Sacraments (1) the historic Lutheran teaching of the Means of Grace and (2) that fellowship is not bound to the Lutheran Confessions. In direct

The Affirmative Teachings:

We believe, teach, and confess that in the Holy Supper the Body and Blood of Christ are truly and essentially present, truly distributed and received with the bread and wine. – Epitome of the Formula of Concord, Affirmative Theses 1.

We believe, teach, and confess that no genuine believers – no matter how weak – as long as they retain a living faith, receive the Holy Supper as condemnation. For Christ instituted this supper particularly for Christians who are weak in faith but repentant, to comfort them and to strengthen their weak faith. – Epitome, Affirmative Theses 9.

The Contrary, Condemned Teachings:
When it is taught that words of Christ's testament ought not to be understood or believed simply as they sound, but that they are an obscure expression, the meaning of which must be sought in other passages. – Epitome, Negative Theses 4.

The Contrary, Condemned Teachings:
That the bread and wine in the Holy Supper are only representations, similes, and symbols of the far-distant Body and Blood of Christ. – Epitome, Negative Theses 7.

violation of the Formula of Concord, the ELCA became full altar and pulpit fellowship partners with the following church bodies:

1. Presbyterian Church (USA) – 1997
2. Reformed Church in America – 1997
3. United Church of Christ – 1997
4. The Episcopal Church – 1999
5. The Moravian Church – 1999
6. The United Methodist Church -- 2009

Life Issues: ELCA is pro-choice. Endorses LGBTQAI2S+ marriage. Endorses gender change.

Ordination: Women, LGBTQAI2S+



The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod (LCMS) – 1847-present

Merged into LCMS: English Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, and Other States (1911); Slovak Evangelical Lutheran Church (1971).

Separations: Association of Evangelical Lutheran Church (AELC) – 1976.

The LCMS was formed in Chicago in 1847 by 12 pastors and 15 congregations as “The German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States.” The merger of the Lutheran and Reformed churches in Germany known as “The Prussian Union” led thousands of Lutherans to leave Germany and come to America.

Source of Doctrine: Inerrant Word of God found in the Scriptures and, as an exposition of the Scriptures, the Lutheran Confessions found in the Book of Concord.

Role of Christ/Way of Salvation: Salvation is a free gift by grace through faith in Christ Jesus. Salvation is found in Christ alone.

Sacraments: Baptism, Confession, and Holy Communion, which bestow forgiveness of sins earned by Christ. Only repentant sinners who believe that the bread and wine is the true body and blood of Jesus, as well as believe what the LCMS teaches may commune at the Lord’s Table. All others, if commune, would be doing so at their own peril.

Life Issues: The LCMS is pro-life from conception to natural death.

Other: From the 1960s-1970s, Concordia Seminary in St. Louis began teaching higher criticism with the Historical-Critical Method to interpret the Bible. As this became public and with laity concerned, LCMS president JAO Preus suspended Concordia Seminary President John Tietjen for allowing false teaching. This eventually led to the “Walk Out” on Jan. 20, 1974. Seminex gradually became its own synod (Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches) and merged into the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in 1988. Today, this event has been known as the “Battle for the Bible” and this was the first time in American Christian history that a major Christian synod turned back a liberal trend and retained its founding doctrine.



Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) – 1850-present

Merged into WELS: Minnesota Ev. Lutheran Synod (1917), Michigan Ev. Lutheran Synod (1917).

Separations: Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC) – 1963.

The WELS organized as the German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Wisconsin in 1850. In 1867, it joined the Lutheran General Council (LCA’s founding affiliate) but left in 1868 because of doctrinal disagreements. In 1872, the WELS, LCMS, and Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS) created the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America. The Synodical Conference was later dissolved in 1967.

Source of Doctrine: Inerrant Word of God found in the Scriptures and, as an exposition of the Scriptures, the Lutheran Confessions found in the *Book of Concord*.

Role of Christ/Way of Salvation: Salvation is a free gift by grace through faith in Christ Jesus. Salvation is found in Christ alone.

Sacraments: Baptism, Confession and Holy Communion, which bestow forgiveness of sins earned by Christ. Only repentant sinners who believe that the bread and wine is the true body and blood of Jesus, as well as believe what the WELS teaches may commune at the Lord's Table. All others, if commune, would be doing so at their own peril.

Other: WELS will only pray with those who are in fellowship with WELS and does not allow for women's suffrage in voting matters of the synod.

Summary of Differences between major Lutheran Synods

	ELCA	LCMS	WELS
Scripture <i>2 Timothy 3:16, 2 Peter 1</i>	Contains the Word of God	Inspired, inerrant, infallible Word of God	Inspired, inerrant, infallible Word of God
Lutheran Confessions	Only Historical Docs	Norm of Scripture	Norm of Scripture
Communion <i>1 Corinthians 11</i>	Open Communion	Closed Communion	Closed Communion
Life Issues <i>Jeremiah 1:5, Psalm 139, Micah 6:7</i>	Pro-Choice	Pro-Life	Pro-Life
Sexual Identity <i>Romans 1, 1 Corinthians 6, 1 Timothy 8-11</i>	Open and affirming of all sexual identities.	God created humanity as male and female. He makes no mistakes.	God created humanity as male and female. He makes no mistakes.
Fellowship <i>Romans 16:17</i>	Doctrinal agreement is not required for fellowship.	Teaches that there are different levels of fellowship among Christians: Altar/Pulpit and prayer fellowship.	Teaches that all Christians must agree on all doctrines before there can be any form of fellowship.
Doctrine of Ministry <i>1 Timothy 2</i>	Only the Pastoral Office is divinely established, all others are human institutions.	Only the Pastoral Office is divinely established, all others are human institutions.	Both the Pastoral Office and Day-school Teacher are divinely established.
Role of Women <i>1 Corinthians 11, 14</i>	Women may serve as clergy, vote, serve on boards.	Women may not serve as clergy, but voting is allowed. Women may serve on various elected boards.	Women may not serve as clergy, nor vote in their congregations, since they would be exercising authority over men.

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North American Lutheran Church: NALC Commission on Theology and Doctrine releases letter on Holy Scripture: https://thenalc.org/blog/projects/nalc-commission-on-theology-and-doctrine-releases-pastoral-and-educational-letter-on-holy-scripture/?fbclid=IwAR39DKLJCR1vayNSW3zYXXwVvk37QBzSTH68c5a9c_CV7JOPwleyaeQooauE

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America: www.elca.org

The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod: www.lcms.org

Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ: www.lcmc.net

North American Lutheran Church: www.thenalc.org

Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod: www.wels.net

John Baumgart, *The Doctrinal Situation of Three Merging Churches*

Overview of the Lutheran Confessions

The Creeds

Christianity confesses the faith through the words of the three ecumenical creeds: the **Apostles'** (the baptismal creed), the **Nicene** (confesses the equality of the persons of the Trinity), and the **Athanasian** (confesses the teaching of the Trinity and the person and work of Jesus Christ). Lutherans speak these creeds in their worship and use these texts to frame their discussion of the faith. The inclusion of these three ecumenical creeds in the *Book of Concord* demonstrates that Lutherans are not a sect but confess the orthodox Christian faith.

The Augsburg Confession of 1530 (Unaltered Augsburg Confession)

Holy Roman Emperor Charles V invited the Lutheran princes and theologians to a gathering in Augsburg to discuss settling the religious controversy arising from Dr. Martin Luther's writings. The resolution was considered necessary to ensure the Lutheran princes would help with the military effort to keep the Turks out of Europe. Philip Melancthon, a lay associate of Luther, wrote the Augsburg Confession to clarify what the Lutherans believed. Melancthon summarized Lutheran teaching from the Bible, addressed the controversies of the day, and identified the abuses that the Lutherans corrected. This confession remains a standard of Lutheran teaching.

The Apology of the Augsburg Confession (1531)

The Apology (or defense) was also written by Melancthon. It was prepared as a response to the Romanist theologians' Confutation (or reply) to the Augsburg Confession. The Apology defends the Lutheran position as defined in the Augsburg Confession and further explains Lutheran beliefs.

The Smalcald Articles (1537)

On June 4, 1536, Pope Paul III announced that a council of the church would be held in Mantua in 1537 to address the issues raised by the Lutherans. The elector of Saxony asked Luther to prepare some articles for the discussion at this council. Although they were never used at the council, Lutherans recognize the value of these talking points as statements of belief on which they would stand fast. The articles also identify areas of churchly practice in which compromise might be possible.

The Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope (1537)

Written by Melancthon, this document was originally presented as a treatise at the same gathering at which the Smalcald Articles first appeared. It is actually an appendix to the Augsburg Confession, and it states the Lutheran perspective on the office of the pope.

Luther's Small and Large Catechisms (1529)

Luther wrote his **Small Catechism**, or little manual for Christian instruction, in 1528. His intention was to give heads of households a booklet for teaching the basics of the Christian faith to all those under their care. The **Large Catechism** was a collection of sermons preached by Luther in 1528. These sermons were edited into book form and expanded on the topics of the Small Catechism. Both catechisms were first published in 1529.

The Formula of Concord (1580)

Following Luther's death in 1546, confusion disrupted the Lutheran churches. Some wished to compromise on matters of doctrine in order to attain greater peace and unity with the Reformed and Roman Catholics. Others claimed to be true Lutherans but strayed from Luther's teaching. In 1576, Elector August of Saxony called a conference to clarify the issues. The result was the Formula of Concord (*concord* means "harmony"). The **Epitome** is an abridged version (intended for congregational study), while the **Solid Declaration** is the unabridged version.