



Lutherans are Protestants

As participants in the ongoing reform of the church in Europe which began in the 15th century, Lutherans see themselves as Protestants. To protest means to “stand in favor of something.” Martin Luther, a professor of Old Testament in 16th century Germany, stood in favor of making the Bible available in the language of the people, relying upon the Word of God over tradition, and correcting errors where the church had fallen subject to power and wealth. Luther’s strong emphasis on justification by grace through faith (*Romans 3: 24-28*) carries great importance for Lutherans today as well.

Lutherans Have a Growing Heritage

Although the Lutheran Church began through reforms to the church in Germany and Scandinavia and then moved into North America, its movement has continued to spread throughout the world. From Malaysia to Liberia, the Lutheran church is growing as we emphasize that in Christ, the whole human race, along with all creation is reconciled to God and to one another.

Lutherans Connect Through Congregations

The local church, or congregation, is where Lutherans place their time and energy. We gather weekly to praise God in worship. We gather to receive the body and blood of Christ in Holy Communion.

We gather to pray for the church, the world, our leaders, and all who are in need. We gather to strengthen others and to be strengthened as community in Christ. We gather to be intentional about reaching out in love and service to neighbor. The Pastor of the local Lutheran congregation is a professionally trained and “called” member devoted to preaching, teaching, pastoral care, celebration of worship and evangelism. Their gifts are intended to complement the many gifts of the congregational members so that ministry in the local church can be done effectively and faithfully.



Lutherans Are a Work in Progress

We believe our forgiveness is complete in the work of Jesus upon the cross. At the same time, we continue to be made over in the image of Jesus our whole life long. We are a project in progress—an unfinished painting. God, the master artisan, continues to dapple the canvas of our lives, working in us something both beautiful and profound, which we will not see in full until the day of resurrection. Thus, we are called to be patient with ourselves and patient with others, for God is not finished with us yet!

What is a Lutheran?



Lutherans are Saints and Sinners...

...both at the same time!

As people who are baptized into Christ's death and resurrection, Lutherans know they have been raised to new life and are blessed with the forgiveness of sins.

At the same time, we recognize that the transformation into Christ-likeness is not complete in this lifetime. We continue to fall short of God's expectations.

As people who are "justified by grace through faith", we are not disturbed by guilt or pre-occupied with worry. We strive to trust in God's power to forgive and renew us every day.

Lutherans Are Evangelical...

...in a different way than you might think. The word "evangelical" means: the public proclamation of the good news. We believe that we are called to reach out and share the love of God and the good news of forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation with all who have not yet heard.



Lutherans celebrate... "One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism"

Like 9 out of 10 Christians in the world, Lutherans are baptized as infants. Why infants? Because we believe the emphasis in baptism

should be upon God's work, not ours. In baptism, we believe God adopts us as His children, and makes us members of the whole Christian church on earth. We accept the baptism of anyone who is baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We believe every day should be a return to our baptism—to remember that our sins have been washed away and that we have been freed to rise and follow Jesus in words and actions.



Lutherans Strive to Be Good Stewards

We believe that everything in this world belongs to God and that we are called to be good stewards or care-takers of what we have "on loan" from God. That good stewardship involves everything from our care of the earth, to maintaining good health, to sharing the first fruits of our financial resources for God's work in the world.

Lutherans Make a Difference in the World

We believe God can certainly work without us, but we are glad to participate as laborers in the vineyard.

In Micah 6:8 it says: "And what does the Lord require of you, but that you do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God?"

With nearly 11,000 congregations in the United States and 4.7 million members who strive to serve God in their daily living, we are making a positive difference in the world.

Last year ELCA Lutherans gave over \$20 million dollars to combat hunger around the world and right here at home.

Through Lutheran Services in America, a network of nearly 300 helping organizations in the areas of health care, aging and disability supports, community development housing, and child and family strengthening, the lives of one in 50 Americans each year are touched.

Lutherans Work toward "One-ness"

Lutherans believe in celebrating our common calling as Christians to be faithful to the preaching and teaching of God's word and to the celebration of baptism and Holy Communion. Jesus prayed that his followers would be "one." We don't know what that one-ness will look like—but we continue to work towards it in dialogue with our sister church bodies in many denominations. Currently we have full communion partnerships with the Moravian Church, Episcopal Church, Reformed Church in America, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), and United Church of Christ. We expect in 2009 to have a Full Communion partnership with the United Methodist Church as well.