

This Church

+ This church confesses the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; our Creator, Redeemer, and Advocate.

+ This church confesses Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and the Gospel as the power of God for the salvation of all who believe.

These first two statements are from the Confession of Faith in the ELCA Constitution. All true expressions of the Christian faith make this confession.

+ This church believes in the Word of God, and receives God's Word in Jesus Christ, the Word incarnate; in proclamation of God's message to us as both Law and Gospel; and in the canonical Scriptures, the inspired and written Word of God, which provides the authoritative source and norm for proclamation, faith and life.

The Gospel of John speaks of Jesus as the Word which was in the beginning creating. This same Word became flesh and lived among humankind, God with us, being and proclaiming the Gospel of God for the salvation of all who believe. As that message from God is faithfully proclaimed in Law and Gospel, revealing judgment and mercy, we receive the Word of God. The Bible, the Old and New Testaments, is the inspired and written Word of God, providing the authoritative source and norm for this church's proclamation, faith and life. The witness of the Scriptures to the Gospel of God bears the authority of the Word.

+ This church accepts the historic creeds (Apostles, Nicene, Athanasian) as true declarations of the faith, and the Lutheran Confessions as faithful witnesses and interpretations of the faith.

The historic creeds formulated by the Church to embrace and confess its belief and understanding of the Christian faith remain foundational to this church. The Lutheran Confessions have served to give witness and interpretation to the faith in the light of time and experience, seeking in particular to maintain the emphasis where it must always be, on the Gospel of God in Jesus Christ and the power of grace to redeem and to make a new creation.

+ This church is gathered around God's Word and Sacraments, and its worship flows into witness and service that proclaims God's love to this broken world.

This church understands its life primarily as being constantly gathered and sent: gathered for worship around God's Word and the Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion; and having been challenged and nurtured and nourished by God's Word, we are sent out into the world to bear God's redeeming word to all. This is what it means to be in God's mission. As the Body of Christ, we are called to participate in the redeeming and creating work of God through our witness in word and deed.

+ This church, awash in God's baptismal grace, creates a safe place for all of God's children.

This church is determined to see all of God's children. This includes especially those who have been historically hidden or somehow separated from the center of its life: women, people living in financial poverty, persons of color and primary language different from the traditional majority of this church, persons marginalized by sexual identity, the differently-abled, the youngest and the oldest. The Kingdom of God is not only for all, it is of all. So this church is perpetually engaged in the vital work of reconciliation for the sake of the Gospel. In part, this means that this church seeks to live with a transparency of faith and life that leaves it open to criticism, which we receive with thanks when it is offered as constructive admonition and as it leads to faithful mutual conversation and consolation.

+ This church, knowing its unity in Christ and uniquely gifted for ecumenism by its confessions, works in God's kingdom as a bridge-church for diverse traditions that share this faith.

This church is able to reach out to other denominations in a way that is unparalleled. So we are able to grasp the hand of Episcopal brothers and sisters for the sake of God's mission and at the same time hold in equal full communion relationship the Reformed churches who have no bishops and a different understanding of church organization. At the same time, this church remains engaged in bilateral dialogues with the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox churches, based in a common commitment to the historic Christian faith and the creeds that express it. For the sake of serving others in the world, this church will boldly form relationships with Christians whose faith-understandings are very different from our own and with members of other faiths, believing that our call to love God with all of our heart and mind and strength and soul and our neighbors as ourselves can be served to the glory of God even in these relationships. The ELCA Vision for Ecumenism adopted in 1991 is the blueprint for our ecumenical endeavors.

+ This church maintains a deep and abiding commitment to ministry with children and youth.

Is there any church that can gather and engage 37,000 youth and adults in servant mission in a city and surrounding communities ravaged by hurricanes? And, in the same gathering form church around Word and Sacrament in an arena filled with song and prayers and video images of the servants? And, in its regions and synods continues that ongoing ministry with and to children and youth, reflecting the tremendously high value its congregations place upon caring for their young? This church is deeply committed to nurturing its children in the faith.

+ This church engages in global mission with deep respect for the rich gifts of our brothers and sisters in other lands and so understands this mission engagement as primarily focused in accompaniment.

Building on the faithful work of missionaries and mission units and societies from decades ago, this church has listened to its global mission partners and has committed itself to provide resources that enable and empower other churches to develop indigenous leadership and to share their God-given gifts with us. Now, some of these churches send pastor-developers and evangelists to us for work in the mission field that is the USA. We have received our brothers and sisters in Lutheran churches around the world as partners in Christ and are blessed by their receiving us. In faith we accompany one another.

+ This church believes that the risen Christ is encountered daily in God's world, and so we commit ourselves to be a public church, working for justice and peace for all.

This church is a public church when we hold public worship. This church lives as a public church as we engage our neighbors, our communities, our nation and the world with the Gospel. We believe that we can by God's grace be and create signs of God's justice and peace in this world. We know that every human system that holds sway over the lives of human beings ultimately stands under the reign and judgment of God and can hold the potential for good in society. Through advocacy this church gives voice to our concern for those who are denied fair access to the necessities of life or who are treated unjustly within the human systems of community and government. We hear the call of Matthew 25 to be more than occasional charity.

+ This church continues a rich heritage of theological reflection and discernment and is dedicated to strong theological education in preparing leaders.

This church places high value on education of its clergy and lay-rostered leaders. As part of that commitment there are eight seminaries across this country that belong to the whole church and draw their governing trustees largely from the region where they are located. The core of biblical studies, systematic theology, church history and confessions, preaching and liturgy, and Christian ethics is maintained in each seminary.

+ This church believes in the vocation of the baptized to ministry in daily life, translating Sunday's faith into Monday's world.

Through preaching, Christian education, and by maintaining relationships with twenty-seven colleges, this church endeavors to prepare its people to understand their calling in baptism to give witness in the world to the Gospel and to live faithfully and responsibly as persons sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever.

+ This church is committed to interdependence in its three expressions and as the vision for networks of mission agencies in the United States and throughout the world, including Lutheran Services in America, Lutheran World Relief, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, Lutheran Disaster Response, and the Lutheran World Federation.

The network of serving agencies related to this church is second to none, extending the mission reach of its members globally, and serving God with love born out of thankfulness and imagination born out of the abundance of God's grace. In this church, soli deo gloria!

This church is the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.