

**CHRIST THE REDEEMER LUTHERAN CHURCH  
{CRLC}**



**Welcome to Christ the Redeemer Lutheran Church!**

**Attached are some documents describing our Lutheran heritage and faith. Please feel free to contact Pastor Randy O'Donnell with any questions or concerns.**

**Our website: [www.crlcbrecksville.org](http://www.crlcbrecksville.org)**

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# The teachings of the Lutheran Church

- Who is Jesus Christ?

Jesus is God's son, sent by God to become human like us. In his life and being he broke through the prison of sinfulness and the human condition to restore the relationship of love and trust that God intended to exist between God and humanity. Though Jesus is eternal, with God at the beginning of time, he was born on earth of a virgin, by the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus was at once truly God and truly human. The man, Jesus of Nazareth, lived and died in Palestine during the governorship of the Roman administrator Pontius Pilate; we believe him to be the Messiah chosen by God to show love for the world. Jesus was God, but yet lived with all the limitations of being human. His relationship to God, however, was not one of sin but rather of perfect obedience to the Father's will. For the sake of a sinful world, Jesus was condemned to death on the cross. But death could not contain him. On the third day after his execution, the day Christians observe as Easter, Jesus appeared among his followers as the risen, living Lord. By this great victory God has declared the Good News of reconciliation. The gap between all that separates us from our Creator has been bridged. Thus, Christ lives today wherever there are people who faithfully believe in him and wherever the Good News of reconciliation is preached and the Sacraments administered.

- What is the Church?

The Christian church is made up of those who have been baptized and thus have received Christ as the Son of God and Savior of the world. Sometimes it is referred to as "the Body of Christ." Lutherans believe that they are a part of a community of faith that began with the gift of the Holy Spirit, God's presence with his people, on the day of Pentecost. The church, regardless of the external form it takes, is the fellowship of those who have been restored to God by Christ. Indeed, to be called into fellowship with Christ is also to be called into community with other believers.

The church is essential to Christian life and growth. Its members are all sinners in need of God's grace. It has no claim on human perfection. The church exists solely for the hearing and doing of God's Word. It can justify its existence only when it proclaims the living Word of Christ, administers the Sacraments and gives itself to the world in deeds of service and love. Most Lutherans recognize a wider fellowship of churches and are eager to work alongside them in ecumenical ministries and projects.

- Why a Lutheran church?

Martin Luther (born November 10, 1483, in Eisleben, Germany and died February 18, 1546 in Eisleben) is known as the Father of Protestantism. He had studied to become a lawyer before becoming an Augustinian monk in 1505, and was ordained a priest in 1507. While continuing his studies in pursuit of a Doctor of Theology degree, he discovered significant differences between what he read in the Bible and the theology and practices of the church. On October 31, 1517, he posted a challenge on the church door at Wittenberg University to debate 95 theological issues. Luther's hope was that the church would reform its practice and preaching to be more consistent with the Word of God as contained in the Bible. What started as an academic debate escalated to a religious war, fueled by fiery temperaments and violent language on both sides. As a result, there was not a reformation of the church but a separation. "Lutheran" was a name applied to Luther and his followers as an insult but adopted as a badge of honor by them instead.

Lutherans still celebrate the Reformation on October 31 and still hold to the basic principles of theology and practice espoused by Luther, such as ***Sola Gratia, Sola Fide, Sola Scriptura***: We are saved by the **grace of God alone** -- not by anything we do; Our salvation is through **faith alone** -- we only need to believe that our sins are forgiven for Christ's sake, who died to redeem us; The **Bible is the only norm** of doctrine and life -- the only true standard by which teachings and doctrines are to be judged. Another of Luther's principles was that Scriptures and worship need to be in the language of the people.

Many Lutherans still consider themselves as a reforming movement within the Church catholic, rather than a separatist movement, and Lutherans have engaged in ecumenical dialogue with other church bodies for decades. In fact, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has entered into cooperative "full communion" agreements with several other Protestant denominations including the Episcopal, Presbyterian, United Church of Christ, Reformed and Moravian Churches.

Luther's Small Catechism, which contains teachings on the Ten Commandments, the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, Holy Baptism, Confession and Absolution, Holy Communion and Morning and Evening Prayers, is still used to introduce people to the Lutheran faith, as is the Augsburg Confession.

- The Only True Religion?

"Do Lutherans believe theirs is the only true religion?" One Lutheran teacher answered that this way: "Yes, but Lutherans don't believe they are the only ones who have it. There are true Christian believers in a vast majority of the churches, perhaps in all."

- How Do Lutherans Look upon the Bible?

To borrow a phrase from Luther, the Bible is "the manger in which the Word of God is laid." While Lutherans recognize differences in the way the Bible should be studied and interpreted, it is accepted as the primary and authoritative witness to the church's faith. Written and transcribed by many authors over a period of many centuries, the Bible bears remarkable testimony to the mighty acts of God in the lives of people and nations. In the Old Testament is found the vivid account of God's covenant relationship to Israel. In the New Testament is found the story of God's new covenant with all of creation in Jesus. The New Testament is the first-hand proclamation of those who lived through the events of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. As such, it is the authority for Christian faith and practice. The Bible is thus not a definitive record of history or science. Rather, it is the record of the drama of God's saving care for creation throughout the course of history.

- What Do Lutherans Believe About Creation?

Lutherans believe that God is Creator of the universe. Its dimensions of space and time are not something God made once and then left alone. God is, rather, continually creating, calling into being each moment of each day. Human beings have a unique position in the order of creation. As males and females created in God's image, we are given the capacity and freedom to know and respond to our creator. Freedom implies that we can choose to respond to God either positively or negatively.

- Where Do Lutherans Stand on the Question of Sin?

Lutherans believe that all people live in a condition which is the result of misused freedom. "Sin" describes not so much individual acts of wrongdoing as fractured relationships between the people of creation and God. Our every attempt to please God falls short of the mark. By the standard of the Law, of which the Ten Commandments are a classic summary, God expresses his just and loving expectations for creation, and our failure to live up to those expectations reveals only our need for God's mercy and forgiveness.

- What Sacraments Do Lutherans Accept?

Lutherans accept two Sacraments as God-given means for penetrating the lives of people with his grace. Although they are not the only means of God's self-revelation, Baptism and Holy Communion are visible acts of God's love.

In Baptism, God freely offers his grace and lovingly establishes a new community. It is in Baptism that people become members of Christ's Body on earth, the Church. The Lutheran church practices infant baptism, though any age person can be baptized if they have not been already, to visibly show this new creation in Christ.

In Holy Communion -- often called the Lord's Supper or the Eucharist -- those who come to the table receive in bread and wine the body and blood of their Lord. This gift is itself the real presence of God's forgiveness and mercy, nourishing believers in union with their Lord and with each other. All who believe in the promises of Christ are welcome to commune in the Lutheran Church whether or not they are members of that congregation.

- Do Lutherans Believe in Life After Death?

While there is much we do not and cannot know about life beyond the grave, Lutherans do believe that life with God persists even after death. Judgment is both a present and future reality, and history moves steadily towards God's ultimate fulfillment. This of course is a great mystery, and no description of what life may be like in any dimension beyond history is possible. Anxiety for the future is not a mark of faith. Christians should go about their daily tasks, trusting in God's grace and living a life of service in his name.

- What Must a Person Do to Become a Christian?

Jesus said, " Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die." (John 11:25-26)

To explore any of these or other issues deeper feel free to contact Pastor Randy or visit the ELCA website:

[www.elca.org](http://www.elca.org)

## SOME STATISTICS OF THE ELCA

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America resulted from a union of three North American Lutheran church bodies: The American Lutheran Church, the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches and the Lutheran Church in America in 1982.



The ELCA has 4.2 million members in 10,000 congregations organized into 65 synods in nine geographic regions. The ELCA is a diverse church body and becoming more so every day. This church is committed to growing in diversity and strengthening global, ecumenical and interfaith relationships around the world.

**Lutherans are a diverse group of people, convinced that the Holy Spirit is leading us toward unity in the household of God.**

Members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America are connected to the faith of the church through the ages and around the world.

Lutherans believe in the Triune God. We are part of God's unfolding plan.

When we gather for worship, we connect with believers everywhere and of every time.

When we study the Bible and pray, we are drawn more deeply into God's own saving story.

When we serve others and address social issues that affect the common good, we live out our Christian faith.

The ELCA invites you into this community of Christian faith. Welcome, and explore.



**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

God's work. Our hands.



## THE LUTHERAN SEAL

Very often you will see the symbol pictured to the left as an icon of the Lutheran faith. This symbol was designed by Martin Luther himself; below is his explanation.

### MARTIN LUTHER'S SEAL

The first thing expressed in my seal is a cross, black, within the heart, to put me in mind that faith in Christ crucified saves us. "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness." Now, although the cross is black, mortified, and intended to cause pain, yet it does not change the color of the heart, does not destroy nature -- i.e., does not kill, but keeps alive. "For the just shall live by faith," -- by faith in the Savior.

But this heart is fixed upon the center of a white rose, to show that faith causes joy, consolation and peace. The rose is white, not red, because white is the ideal color of all angels and blessed spirits.

This rose, moreover, is fixed in a sky-colored ground, to denote that such joy of faith in the spirit is but an earnest and beginning of heavenly joy to come, as anticipated and held by hope, though not yet revealed.

And around this ground base is a golden ring, to signify that such bliss in heaven is endless, and more precious than all joys and treasures, since gold is the best and most precious metal. Christ, our dear Lord, He will give grace unto eternal life. Amen.

Martin Luther

## OUR MISSION STATEMENT:

*“To engage people in the ministries of worship, learning, witness and service that the Word of God in Jesus Christ may transform their lives.”*

Any NOTES or QUESTIONS