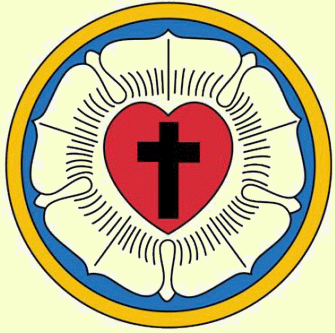


The Lutheran Church



Origin & History: The Lutheran Church is the oldest Protestant Christian tradition, dating back to the Protestant Reformation. The origins of the Lutheran denomination trace back to the 16th century where it began as a reform movement within the Roman Catholic Church and to challenge its doctrine and practices. When the conflict

escalated to a distinct separation with the Roman Catholic Church, those who accepted these proposed reforms became "Lutherans." Unlike the Reformed Churches, Lutherans have retained many of the sacramental understandings and liturgical practices of the "Old Catholics". Lutheran theology differs considerably from Reformed theology in its understanding of divine grace, predestination, baptism, sacraments of the altar and to eternity after death.



Who: Martin Luther, a German, Catholic monk and professor who has been called the "Father of the Reformation." Luther believed that each individual has the right to reach God through Scripture with responsibility to God alone. It is not necessary for a priest to mediate. He also believed that salvation is available to all humans through the redeeming work of Christ.

When: Founded in early 16th century. Estimated to be in 1517 CE

Where: Originated in Germany and spread to most countries across the globe and has become one of the largest Protestant denominations.

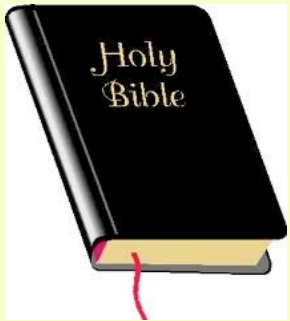
Total Members/Followers: Worldwide estimated at 64-70 Million

What Do Lutherans Believe

Deity: One creator and Lord of all existing eternally as the Triune (Trinity) of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit (Holy Ghost)

Jesus: As written in scripture; the eternal Son incarnate, full God and fully man. Conceived and born of the Virgin Mary. Was crucified, died and rose again, ascended into heaven and will come again.

Sacred Text: Scripture alone in The Holy Bible (the standard protestant canon of 39 old testament books and 27 new testament books) is the authority. (Note: Luther's many theological ideas have since been collected into the Book of Concord, which is still an authority in Lutheran doctrine and practice.)



Salvation: Forgiveness of sin (by God) and personal salvation is entirely by *Grace* alone, as gracious free gift from God, through *Faith* alone (*sola fide*) in Jesus Christ who died for our sins. We can do nothing to earn or even prompt this gift. Good works are the result of true faith but in no way save us or produce our righteousness before God.

Death and Eternal Life: Lutherans believe in the traditional idea of an immortal soul that spends eternity (life forever) either in a literal place of blessedness called heaven (with God) or a literal place of torment called hell (separated from God). Upon dying, the souls of believers go immediately to be with Christ in heaven. The souls of the wicked begin suffering immediately in hell.

Sacraments

Baptism: Baptism is necessary for salvation for children and adults.

Holy Communion & Eucharist: Lutherans recall the saving acts of God through Word, bread and wine, refers to the liturgical commemoration of “The Last Supper” and are connected with Christ and with Christians of all times and places. In this sacrament we are fed with the Body and Blood of Christ represented by juice and bread or crackers in some form.

Rites

The most obvious rite in Lutheranism, as in most forms of Christianity, is the Sunday worship service. Sunday services include many rituals: praying, hymn singing, communal readings by the congregation, blessings, and benedictions. Even scripture reading and sermons are highly ritualized.

Confirmation Ministry

Confirmation is a public rite of the church, for which students have spent time in instruction, designed to help them identify with the life and mission of the Christian Church. The Rite of Confirmation provides an opportunity for the individual Christian (focused on youth primarily), relying on God's promise given in Holy Baptism, to make a personal public profession of the faith and a lifelong pledge of faithfulness to Christ.

Recognized or Celebrated "Holidays"

Lutherans celebrate many of the same Christian faith based holidays and celebrations as the other reformed denominations as well as the Catholic Church. Lutherans recognize and/or celebrate Christmas, Good Friday, and Easter. One of the main differences in holiday is that they don't celebrate any specific saint. As with most protestant faiths, they do not put great value on Mary as being a holy mother of God and so do not celebrate any holidays related to her.

Although the American tradition of observing and celebrating a good season of harvest, known as Thanksgiving has "Christian" pilgrim and Puritan roots, protestant denominations do not recognize Thanksgiving as a formal Holiday. President of the United States, George Washington proclaimed the first nation-wide thanksgiving celebration in America marking November 26, 1789, "as a day of public thanksgiving and prayer to be observed by acknowledging with grateful hearts our blessings of Almighty God"