



The Evangelical Lutheran Congregations of the Reformation

Doctrinal Position

Holy Scriptures: We teach that the books of the Bible, both of the Old and the New Testaments, are the Word of God, given by inspiration to the holy writers (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21). As such, in all its parts and words it is without error and is the absolute truth without contradictions, also in those matters which treat of historical, geographical and other secular matters (John 10:35; John 17:17).

We reject as horrible and blasphemous the teaching, which has gained popularity in the Visible church, that the Bible in part is the word of man and hence does, or might, contain errors. We teach that the Holy Scriptures are the only source from which the doctrines of the church are to be taken, and therefore the sole norm by which doctrine and practice are to be judged (Ephesians 2:20). We regard the Confessions of the Lutheran Church to be a correct explanation of the teachings of Scripture, and therefore teach that these doctrines are to be taught in the Church.

God: On the basis of the Holy Scriptures we teach the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, that is, that there is one God (Deuteronomy 6:4; 1 Corinthians 8:4), but three distinct persons, the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, all equally true God in power, eternity and majesty (Colossians 2:9; Matthew 28:19). We hold that all who deny this vital doctrine are outside the boundary of the Christian Church and forfeit their hope of salvation.

Law and Gospel: These are the two great doctrines of the Bible that must be taught in the church. Without a basic understanding of these doctrines, it is impossible to truly understand the Scriptures. The Law is the doctrine that tells us about our sin against God's Law, and God's

wrath and punishment we deserve because of it. The law also tells us we cannot be saved by our good works (Romans 3:20). The Gospel is the doctrine that tells us we have a Saviour from sin, Christ Jesus, who has paid for the sins of the whole world through His suffering and death on the cross. The Bible urges us to trust in Christ alone to be saved (John 3:16 ; Acts 16:31-32).

Man: We teach that man was not the product of evolutionary development, but was created in the beginning as an intelligent and moral being, consisting of body and soul. We teach that man was created holy and innocent, but in his present fallen estate is entirely depraved, and enslaved in the service of sin (Psalms 51:5; John 3:6)

Sin: We believe that sin is a transgression of the divine Law, and that man is subject to death and eternal damnation by reason of the guilt that attaches to sin (1 John 3:4; Romans 6:23).

Redemption: We teach that God in His infinite mercy, resolved to save mankind, and that the divine Redeemer appeared in Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Mary and Son of God, who perfectly obeyed the Law of God which man transgressed, and by His sufferings and death paid the penalty for the guilt of the entire world, and by His resurrection from the dead has been declared the all-sufficient divine Redeemer.

Faith: We believe that all who penitently accept Christ as the one and only Saviour in sincere faith are justified in the sight of God and made heirs of salvation.

The Church: We teach that all who thus in true faith accept the forgiveness of sins procured by Christ's atonement are members of the Church of Christ, which is an Invisible Church, since men cannot determine which of those who profess this faith are true Christians at heart. We believe that true Christians are found wherever the Gospel message of redemption through the atoning sacrifice of Christ is made known. We believe that no church-body, denomination or sect can rightfully claim to be the "only-saving Church", outside of which there is no salvation. Such a claim bases one's hope of salvation on the outward work of joining a church body, teaching salvation by good works.

We teach that there are also visible churches, composed not only of true Christians, but also hypocrites, those who claim to be true Christians but really are unbelievers. An orthodox church is one that teaches God's Word in its truth and purity, avoiding false doctrine, and also practises the same. A heterodox church is one which allows false doctrine to be taught in its midst, alongside of God's Word.

Church Fellowship: All false doctrine is dangerous to the Christian's soul. God therefore wishes the true Christian to cling to His pure Word in all points, and also to avoid all false doctrine. Therefore He commands the Christian to seek fellowship with and join that church which teaches God's pure Word (an orthodox church), but to avoid those churches which are corrupted with false doctrine (Amos 3:3; Romans 16:17; Matthew 7:15). Also when two churches join together, or seek fellowship with each other, God first demands that complete agreement be reached in matters of Scriptural doctrine and practice (1 Corinthians 1:10).

Church Fellowship between church bodies or individuals implies complete agreement in doctrine and practice. Since most church unions today have come about without such agreement, they are sinful and contrary to the Word of God. Finally, the Christian in an orthodox church is to have no church fellowship (prayer, worship, altar fellowship) with those who teach contrary to the Word of God.

Sacraments: We teach that the Sacrament of Baptism, when administered according to the command of Christ to infants and adults, is a means of grace which offers, conveys and seals the grace of God and the forgiveness of sins. We teach that in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper the communicants receive in, with, and under the bread and wine the true body and blood of Jesus Christ, and that all believing communicants are personally made certain of the forgiveness of sins procured by Christ's sacrifice.

The Second Coming of Christ: We teach that Christ will visibly return to the earth on the Last Day to judge the world, both living and dead. We teach that the belief that Christ will establish a visible kingdom on earth (Millenium) is not only contrary to the Scriptures, but directs the attention of the Christian away from his true hope, eternal life in heaven, and is therefore dangerous to the soul.

The Resurrection: We believe that on the Last Day the dead will rise, their souls being clothed in the bodies they possessed in this present life, the true believers with glorified bodies, the unbelievers with shame-covered bodies.

The Judgement: On the Last Day Christ will receive into glory His Invisible Church, including all who died in the faith, and will pronounce the eternal doom upon all who refused to believe in Him as their Saviour.

Creation: We teach that God has created the heavens and the earth, as recorded in Genesis 1 and 2 by His almighty creative Word, in six 24-hour days. We reject every doctrine that denies this teaching of Scripture; including evolution which claims that the world evolved over long periods of time more or less out of itself; and that the word "day" in Genesis 1 could refer to periods of thousands of years. All who deny in any way the teaching of Creation, are in danger of corrupting other vital doctrines of the Scripture, such as man's perfection before the fall, man's fall into sin, the first Gospel promise.