

Grace Lutheran Church and School
“The Lutheran Distinctive”
+ In the Name of Jesus +

STATEMENT OF FAITH

Apostles' Creed

The Apostles' Creed is the oldest of the church's statements of faith. Already by 150 A.D. this creed was in use at Christian centers all along the Mediterranean Sea, such as Jerusalem, Alexandria (North Africa), Rome, and even Spain. The Apostles' Creed developed in conjunction with Baptism. As the water was applied, the question would be asked: "Do you believe in God the Father? God the Son? etc." Very quickly the answer developed into what we now call the Apostles' Creed. It is often called the baptismal creed. In addition to its primary use at all baptisms, it is also very appropriate for use in daily devotions.

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth,

and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord: Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. On the third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, from there He shall come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen. (Christian: the ancient text reads “catholic,” meaning the whole Church as it confesses the wholeness of Christian doctrine.)

Nicene Creed

The Nicene Creed was written in 325 A.D. at the Council of Nicea. Hundreds of pastors and theologians were gathered at this council to respond to a false teaching that had arisen in the Church. This false teaching stated that Jesus was not true God. If you look carefully at the second section of the Nicene Creed, you can see all kinds of phrases that were included specifically to refute this false teaching. In the 325 version, the section on the Holy Spirit was not as developed. It was at the Council of Constantinople in 381 A.D. that it was lengthened to its present version, this time to emphasize that the Holy Spirit is also true God. For centuries the Nicene Creed has been the chief creed in the Sunday service.

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made; who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried. And the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures and ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father. And He will come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead, whose kingdom will have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets. And I believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church. I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins, and I look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

A Faith Summary

We believe the three persons of the Trinity are coequal and coeternal, one God. Our Heavenly Father, who loves each one of us and desires to see us in Heaven with Him. Jesus Christ the Son, who became human to suffer and die for the sins of

all human beings and rise to life again in the ultimate victory over death and Satan. The Holy Spirit, who creates faith through God's Word and Sacraments.

A Lutheran Perspective

Being "Lutheran", means we accept and teach the Bible as God's inspired and inerrant Word. Our teachings can be summarized as being founded on three truths.

Grace Alone

A Lutheran believes in "Grace Alone." God loves the people of the world (John 3:16) even though they are sinful, rebel against Him and do not deserve His love. He sent Jesus, His Son, to love the unlovable and save the ungodly. That is, a Lutheran believes that on the basis of God's Holy Word that a person is forgiven and enters heaven by God's grace alone. The Biblical word "grace" refers to God's attitude of undeserved kindness toward us. "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that- not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast." (Ephesians 2:8-10).

It is not our conduct or performance that moves God to save us, it is his grace that moves God to save us. In fact, we can't do a thing to save ourselves. According to the Bible we are dead in sin (read Eph. 2:1; Romans 5:6). But God offers us full forgiveness and heaven as a free gift because Jesus lived and died to atone for our sin. Our salvation is not teamwork between us and God. It is not a matter of us doing our part and God doing His. We are not saved by God's grace plus our good works or anything we do. We are not saved by God's grace plus anything. We are saved by God's grace ALONE. We don't deserve this. What we do deserve is eternal punishment in hell for our sin. But God, because Jesus bore our punishment on the cross, gives us what we don't deserve: eternal life. "For the wages of sin is death. But the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

All people are saved by the work of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:3; Mark 13:11; Luke 12:12; John 14:26; 1 Corinthians 2:13).

We are not born of any physical ascent or acceptance but of the gift of God's grace (John 1:12-13; John 6:44; 6:63; 15:16; Philippians 2:13)

Faith Alone

By His suffering and death as the substitute for all people of all time, Jesus purchased and won forgiveness and eternal life for them. Those who hear this Good News and believe it have the eternal life that it offers. God creates faith in Christ and gives people forgiveness through Him.

We believe that a man is justified [declared innocent, righteous] by faith, apart from the works of the law" (Romans 3:28). Throughout the history of the Church, Christians have been tempted to believe that faith in Jesus as Savior (or faith in the Gospel promise) is not enough. They have been tempted to believe that something WE do must be added to faith: our keeping of God's Commandments, our love, our holiness, our victory over sin, or something else that we do. But the Scriptures consistently teach that we are saved through faith plus NOTHING. We are saved by faith ALONE.

Since God truly promises heaven as a gift to the human race on account of Christ, then there is only one way to receive a promised gift: faith. The moment we think that our entrance into heaven is contingent upon our conduct in any way, at that moment heaven ceases to be a gift and begins to be something we have earned and deserve. For a gift to remain a gift it must simply be received. Faith in Jesus as Savior is the open hand that receives God's gift of salvation. "For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him may not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

Romans 10:8-10; 17 Faith comes from the power of the Word in our lives
1 Corinthians 12:3 "...no one can call Jesus Lord except by the Holy Spirit."

Scripture Alone

Lutheran believes in "Scripture Alone." The Bible (the Book) is God's inerrant and infallible Word, in which He reveals His Law and His Gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ. It is the sole rule and norm for Christian doctrine.

We believe that all teaching that claims to be Christian is to be drawn from the Bible alone. The canonical books of the Bible are the only source, the only authority, and the only judge of Christian teaching. When the question is raised, "is this teaching or practice Christian?" the Holy Scriptures are the highest Court of Appeals and only they can decide the matter.

The reason the Bible is such an authority for Lutherans is because we believe that Holy Scripture is not merely the word of man; it is also the inspired and inerrant Word of God himself. The human authors were inspired by the Holy Spirit to write down exactly what they did. Every word of the canonical Bible is the Word of God. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2 Timothy 3:16) and "Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:21).

Some Resources

Luther's Small Catechism
A Summary of Christian Doctrine, Edward W. A. Koehler

End Notes

The Apostles Creed Explained

As the Head of the Family Should Teach It in a Simple Way to His Household

The First Article

CREATION

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.

What does this mean? I believe that God has made me and all creatures; that He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my reason and all my senses, and still takes care of them. He also gives me clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and home, wife and children, land, animals, and all I have. He richly and daily provides me with all that I need to support this body and life. He defends me against all danger and guards and protects me from all evil. All this He does only out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me. For all this it is my duty to thank and praise, serve and obey Him. This is most certainly true.

The Second Article

REDEMPTION

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.

What does this mean? I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord, who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death, that I may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting

righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true.

The Third Article

SANCTIFICATION

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

What does this mean? I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith. In the same way He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. In this Christian church He daily and richly forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers. On the Last Day He will raise me and all the dead, and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ. This is most certainly true.