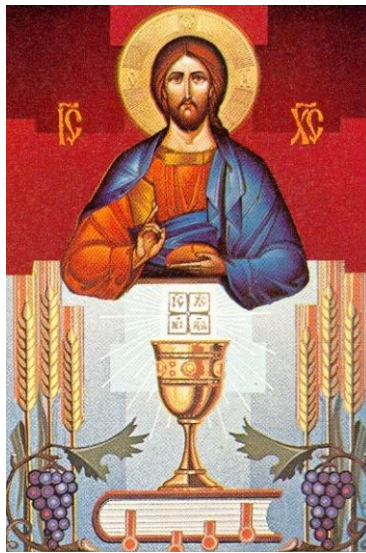


An Introduction to the Independent Lutheran Diocese



Independent Lutheran Diocese
Klamath Falls, OR 97603

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THIS WE BELIEVE

The Bible is the inspired Word of God, completely free from error. It is the final authoritative guide for faith and practice. The Word of God and the Sacraments are the means of grace through which the benefits of Christ's redemption are bestowed to all who believe.

There is only one true God, who eternally exists in three distinct persons in one divine essence, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is called "the Trinity" or "the Triune God."

God created Adam and Eve in His image to live in fellowship with Him. Through their disobedience they fell into sin. As a result, the entire human race became self-centered sinners who oppose God and as such are separated from Him and under His eternal wrath. Because human nature is sinful, and because the promise of God includes little children: infants are baptized into faith and are subsequently led by the Holy Spirit and the nurturing influence of the church into a personal assurance of faith in Christ as their Lord and Savior.

Jesus Christ is true God and true Man. By His perfect obedience and substitutionary death on the cross, He made full satisfaction for all human sin. He arose bodily from the dead, ascended into heaven, where He is now seated at the Father's right hand to make intercession for those who believe. Finally, He will come again to judge the living and the dead, make an eternal separation between believers and unbelievers, and establish His eternal Kingdom.

The Holy Spirit is God -eternally one with the Father and the Son. Through the Word of God, He convicts people of sin, persuades them to acknowledge their sinfulness, and calls them to faith through the Gospel. He regenerates, sanctifies, and preserves believers in the one true faith; and empowers them to proclaim the message of salvation to the world.

The Church consists of all those who have truly accepted and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. The confessing membership of our local church shall include only those who have been baptized into the name of the triune God and confess a personal and living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

We accept the Apostles Creed, the Nicene Creed, the Athanasian Creed, and the doctrines of the Church as expressed in the Book of Concord as being in conformity with the Word of God.

Our Vision

- **To return to an Authentic Christian Worship Experience**
- **To seek and find True Spirituality in our hearts & lives.**
- **Discover & present Genuine Christianity to those around us**
- **Experience the Joy of Jesus Christ in our daily life.**

Myth and Misconceptions about Lutheran Beliefs

Myth #1 The Frozen Chosen

Lutherans are often accused of believing that God preordained people to salvation before the creation and these are the only ones who will be saved. The Scriptures are very clear on God's election and predestination, From Genesis to Revelation the Scriptures talk about people (or peoples) God chose for His service. However, Scriptures also state that God wants no one to perish but to come to repentance. Article XI of the Formula of Concord states, neither can nor should investigate and fathom everything [concerning predestination and salvation]" and "We should with Paul, place a finger on our lips, and remember and say, 'Who are you, O man, to answer back to God?' [Romans 9:20]

The concept of the "frozen chosen" is based on John Calvin's Reformed Theology of Limited Atonement (Christ only died for the elect) and double predestination stating that a person is either predestined to salvation or damnation. Lutherans argue against both of these doctrines.

Myth #2 Only Lutherans will be Saved

Lutherans are often accused of believing that a person must be a Lutheran to be saved. There are probably some Lutherans who do believe this, just as there are those of any faith who believe they are the only ones who are saved. However, such a belief is not rooted in Lutheran doctrine. Article VII of our confession states "Our churches teach that one holy Church is to remain forever." That is the Church of which Christ is the head. They go on to state "It is not necessary for human traditions...[to] be the same everywhere." "The Church is the congregation of saints in which the Gospel is purely taught and the Sacraments are correctly administered."

On the other hand, the Roman Catholic doctrine does state that a person must be a member of the Roman Catholic Church to be saved. In the book *Letter to My Non-Catholic Friends*, the author states, "All creatures are therefore obliged to become members of Christ's church [Roman Catholic]" if they are to be saved. The author goes on to say, "Through his faith a bad Catholic is nearer to God than a Protestant is, for he is a member of the household [Catholic church], whereas the Protestant is not,"

It is not the church that saves us, but our faith in Christ which is a gift of God by His grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)

Lutherans are too Catholic

When people say Lutherans are too Catholic they refer to the Order of Service without knowing anything concerning Lutheran Doctrine. These rituals tie the church to the old

and ancient church of the Apostles established by the Eastern and Western churches. Luther was never opposed to the Church itself but to the human traditions that had supplanted the clear teachings of the Scriptures. He did not want to create a new church but to simply return to the truth of the Scriptures. It was never his intent to "throw out the baby with the bath water."

Our rituals do not save us, but they do keep us focused on God's Word. Each part of the service has a distinct and specific purpose that places Christ in the center and keeps him there. The loss of this structure can, and has, caused many churches to lose sight of Christ as the central figure and replaced him with human wants, desires, and ideals. The Apostle Paul admonishes to "Let all things be done decently and in order." (1 Cor 14:40)

We should worship and praise God. But church is not about worship and praise it is about hearing His Word and receiving the Sacraments as a means of receiving His grace and increasing our faith. It is a place where God comes to us that we might grow in faith and bear witness to and with others.

Denomination is not a Four Letter Word

Some Christians use the word "non-denom" as some badge of courage or a declaration of independence from some tyrannical overseer. When someone says they are a non-denom they say nothing. When someone says they are a Lutheran they firmly state what they believe. A person may say, "I believe in one god." But what does that mean? "You believe there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe - and tremble." (James 2:9). When someone says they are a Lutheran they state that they believe in 28 articles of faith presented before Charles V in 1530. Those articles do not override Scripture but explain what the Scriptures say and mean.

The Confessions help Lutherans retain the purity of God's Holy Word and not allow it to be changed by the corrupt thoughts of one man or a changing society. "The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God endures forever." (Isa 40:8 NIV) Man may change but God never does (Psa 55:19, Mal 3:6, Jas 1:17).

"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever." (Heb 13:8) The Lutheran Confessions, along with other documents in the Book of Concord, help Lutherans retain that focus on Christ and an unchanging God even as the world changes and Satan leaves an indelible mark and spreads his vicious lies on a naive and vulnerable world.

Notes to our readers:

The statements presented here are based on the doctrinal position of a specific church body and may not reflect the beliefs or understandings of a particular member of that body. It is unfortunate, but none the less true, that many members of a particular church whether denominational or nondenominational, confessional or non-

confessional have not studied or understand the doctrinal teachings of the church.

For those people who do not believe a church have a stated doctrine it should be pointed out that Acts 15 records the first written doctrinal statement of the Church.

God does not change based on the social or cultural desires of people. "I am the Lord, I do not change." (Malachi 3:6) "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever." (Heb 13: 8) Neither should man be so brazen as to think he understands the mind of God outside of Scriptures. "'For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways,' declares the Lord." (Isa 55:8)

DIFFERENCES WITH OTHER LUTHERANS

We are a Confessional and Orthodox Church. The Unaltered Augsburg Confession of 1530 AD is a particular guidance for Parishes within the Independent Lutheran Diocese. This confession expresses the entire Christian faith of the one ancient holy and apostolic church. Further guidance is found in the 1580 Book of Concord which includes Luther's Small and Large Catechisms and the Three Creeds of the Christian Church.

We are however distinct in viewpoints with other Lutherans. We seek to be a home for those who desire authentic, genuine Christianity and true spirituality. In doing so, we seek those who have lost their way from the Church. We seek out those who have no church home, disenfranchised, disheartened, hurting, lonely, and weary and nowhere to turn to spiritually.

Our church services of Baptism, The Lord's Supper, weddings, funerals, and other services, are held using biblically based liturgies.

We hold that communion should be open to those who:

1. Confess that they are sinners in need of God's forgiveness, and repent.
2. believe that Jesus Christ is their only Savior from sin, Satan and death, and is also Lord of their life.
3. believe that Christ is really present (Real Presence) in the Sacrament and that with the bread and wine they receive His true Body and Blood.
4. resolve to dedicate their lives to the Lord and Savior in His Body, the Church, by regular worship and devoted Christian service and living.

The Independent Lutheran Diocese believes that while Seminary training is good and worthwhile, one does not need a college or Seminary degree to hold the office of Pastor. We further believe that ordination is necessary for those called for mission work and those who are starting Congregations.

We hold to the Biblical doctrine of anointing with oil those who are sick – see Mark 6:13, James 5:14-15.

We provide Free Seminary training for those who desire it. Above all else, we examine the heart, motives, and theological stances of each candidate before ordination. This includes those who transfer their credentials from other denominations.

DIFFERENCES WITH THE ELCA

Alternate Lifestyles

In faithfulness to God's Sacred Holy Word and the Lutheran Confessions, we express our deep regret and profound disagreement with the recent actions taken by the ELCA. We believe that the question of 'alternate lifestyle' is best answered by the literal interpretation of Scripture as stated in Romans 1:18-32. For the ILD There is no other interpretation that can be applied. Sin is sin, hence an 'alternate lifestyle' is also sin and one needs to repent of it who may be entrapped in it. Therefore, we do not accept into the Holy Ministry anyone who advocates or agrees with the GLBT lifestyle or is currently living this lifestyle. We do agree with Scripture wherein we are to love our neighbors even as much as we love our Lord Jesus Christ who gave His life on the Cross for all who would place their faith and trust in Him. While we do not condone the lifestyle some have chosen to live contrary to the Word of God, we are to love the individual, but hate the sin. We believe that even though we disagree with the alternate lifestyle, we are to show the same dignity, love and compassion that our Lord has shown unto us and which we are to share with those around us. We are to show them the way to repentance and freedom in the light of the Holy Scriptures through the guidance of the Holy Spirit to live according to the Will of God and not be a part of the "alternate lifestyle".

Role of Women in Ministry

In regards to women in the office of the Holy ministry, we believe that the Holy Scriptures give ample evidence that woman are not to serve in the Pastoral role. In the Epistles Paul discusses the qualifications for church leadership and says in 1 Timothy 3:1-4 that if anyone desires to be a church leader "He" must be the husband of one wife and that his must manage his family well. Paul also goes on to talk about the role of women in church in 1 Corinthians 14 and 1 Timothy 2 and in both cases Paul describes women's roles assisting the men in leadership in the ministry of the church (See also Genesis 3:16). Finally in 1 Corinthians 14:37 Paul stipulates that what He was writing is the Lord's command. This does not mean men are any better than women, just different by God's design. Yes women do have a role in church ministry, but not in pastoral leadership. Because of the special gifts God has given women, there are several areas of service in which women are better suited than men; examples being the teaching the youth in Sunday School, the Altar Guild, and Stephen ministries of the Church are best served by women in the Church because of the love and compassion that are needed in these areas. There are many who try to stretch and twist the Scriptures to make them fit what our postmodern culture today deems to be true or what political correctness dictates. However, it is easy to see that if we take God at His Word, women are not to be ordained to leadership positions, which means that we must all seek to minister for Jesus Christ according to the design of His Creation, the way He designed us with the gifts He has given us. We must serve our Lord according to His will and not our own.

TRUE WISDOM

2 TYPES OF WISDOM

SEEKING WORLDLY WISDOM

Do you seek wisdom through the Internet, TV, Movies, Friends, Relatives, Neighbors, Co-workers, Self-help Books? It's not wrong but is this what you really want? The Holy Scriptures explains to us: Proverbs 14:12 "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death".

SPIRITUAL WISDOM THE TRUE WAY

The Holy Scriptures, Prayer, and meditation. These things help us in our faith and to trust in Jesus Christ. Proverbs 3:5 Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

GAINING SPIRITUAL WISDOM

• **In the Bible** – John 17:17 Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

2 Timothy 3:15-17 "And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

• **Prayer** -James 1:5-6 If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.

• **Meditation** – Psalms 119:15-16 I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways. I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word".

• **Allowing the Holy Spirit to guide and direct** -Matthew 6:33 "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you".

HEREIN IS TRUE WISDOM

- To lay yourself at the foot of the Cross (to repent and have sorrow for your sins)
- To lay your sins at the foot of the Cross (to seek His Forgiveness)
- To Believe in the Forgiveness He offers you (freedom from condemnation)
- To have faith in the Salvation He brings you (to overcoming and breaking the chains that bind you)
- To Trust Him explicitly when all things around you are collapsing (by allowing the HS to guide and direct)
- To fully accept the Healing He brings you (Meditation on His Words)-Psalms 119:15-16 "I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways. I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word. (healing of both heart and mind - for "Old things have passed away, all things become new."

HOW TO KNOW THAT YOU ARE ON THE RIGHT PATH

True Wisdom does not Contradict Scripture – Such as the Ten Commandments

- No other gods
- No disrespect for parents
- No murder
- No stealing, etc

True Wisdom causes you to be thirsting for the Word and Righteous works. Matthew 5:6 Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

It will give you a desire to confidently do His Will and walk uprightly before God and man

- Because you love Him
- Because you have been forgiven
- Because He brought you salvation, full and free

SELF-EXAMINATION FOR HOLY COMMUNION

Dear Christian:

Our Lord Jesus Christ has instituted the Sacrament of the Altar for the special comfort and strengthening of those who are properly prepared, as he instructs us through the Apostle Paul (see 1 Corinthians 11:27-29 and 2 Corinthians 13:5).

For this reason, those who intend to partake of the Sacrament are cautioned to examine, or test, themselves beforehand. An honest self-examination will determine our attitude toward sin as well as our attitude toward the Savior from sin.

Although self-examination prior to attending the Lord's Supper may include many questions, only four are truly essential.

1. Do I actually believe that I am a sinner in need of God's forgiveness, and am I repentant? Using the Ten Commandments as a standard we must honestly concur with the Scripture which declares, "There none righteous, no not one" (Romans 3:10). Scripture also declares, "If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us". (1 John 1:10) If then, since we do sin, are we repentant – do we feel sorrow over what we have done and desire to turn from it?

2. Do I actually believe that Jesus Christ is my only Savior from sin, Satan and death, and is also Lord of my life? The second question is important for the person who has pondered his sin. "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Timothy 1:15). "In Christ God forgave you" (Ephesians 4:32). Forgiven sinners will not want to repeat their sins again. So Paul inquires: "What then? Shall we go on sinning so grace may increase? By no means!" (Romans 6:1). The assurance that our sin is forgiven will be followed by a new and better life. "Go now and forsake your life of sin" (John 8:11).

3. Do I actually believe that Christ is really present in the Sacrament and that with the bread and wine they receive His true Body and Blood? The next question involves the meaning of the Sacrament itself. Christ has promised that in this Sacrament he gives us his body and blood together with the bread and wine. "This is my body this is my blood," Jesus said. It is crucial that all communicants recognize and accept the real presence of Christ's body and blood in the Sacrament for God says, "Anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself" (1 Corinthians 11:29).

4. Do I resolve to dedicate my life to the Lord and Savior in His Body, the Church, by regular worship and devoted Christian service and living? This final question determines whether or not we really are what we claim to be. Scripture says: "You hypocrites! These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far

from me. (Matthew 15:7-8). We reflect Christ when we worship him in truth with other Christians and live a Godly life.

And so, having considered these four questions in the light of God's Word, let us confess our sins and our faith in the following way:

From the Ten Commandments, which I have not kept I believe and admit that I am a sinner. My hope is to be saved and I base this hope on my Lord Jesus Christ, who died on the cross in payment for my sins. I believe the promises of God concerning the Sacrament — that in this Sacrament Christ truly gives me His body and blood with the bread and wine for the forgiveness of your sins. I intend, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to amend my sinful life, to forsake sin and to serve God with all my heart, mind and soul. I do intend this, with the help of God.

May our Lord Jesus Christ, who has instituted this Sacrament for the strengthening of your faith, bless your communing and keep you in the true faith unto life everlasting. Amen.

THIS WE BELIEVE ABOUT ORDINATION

Mainline churches today are losing more clergy than they are currently replacing by Seminary graduates. Some denominations have resorted to "approving" lay persons to perform the sacerdotal duties of an ordained Minister.

We in the Independent Lutheran Diocese believe that this is a step in the right direction. However, there is such a distinction between clergy and laity built up, that while "lay ministers" are accepted as Pastors, they do not receive the full stamp of approval that fully ordained Pastors receive.

Where does the Independent Lutheran Diocese stand as far as Seminary and Ordination are concerned?

We believe that ordination is a confirmation of the Inner Call that God gives to Christians who desire to serve in the ministry and live a holy, pious life. It is a public office of the Church where one receives a Call from a church or group of Christians to perform the sacerdotal duties of the Word in truth and purity or a Call to start a congregation.

We believe that this office is not one of special recognition or rank. It is one of servitude to the church. The pastor is not to 'lord' it over the people. He is there as a shepherd, to guide and direct the people in love, teaching the truth in love and example.

We also believe that one does not need to have a college or Seminary diploma in order to serve as a Pastor. This is not to say that we despise Seminary training or education, but rather we do not ordain one just because they meet the educational level of other Synods. See Acts 4:13.

Today's Seminaries cost so much money, that often the Seminarian who becomes ordained seeks to serve in a church that is large enough to be able to pay him enough to live, support a family, and pay off the thousands of dollars in student loans. Hence, the smaller churches suffer as a result. We believe that while Theology training is necessary, it should not be the 4 year academic regimen and financial burden that becoming a pastor today entails.

We also believe that many of the Seminaries today are too liberal and are not reliable Seminaries. The very doctrines of the Virgin Birth, inerrancy of the Scriptures and other important doctrines are not being properly taught by all ordained Lutheran Ministers. Hence we need a more reliable means of determining who is able to function as a pastor in the Independent Lutheran Diocese.

We provide Free Seminary training to those who desire it. Above all else, we examine the heart, motives, and theological stances of each candidate before ordination. This includes those who transfer their credentials from other denominations.

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ON APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION

1. Priesthood of all Believers. Since all Christians have the Priesthood, they have the authority to call Pastors. This is especially true given Martin Luther's statement in a letter to the Bohemians in Prague. Yet, there are those within Lutheran circles that claim this is the only way one can become a Pastor (ordination in an established congregation only). The congregation ordains the Pastor. Yet, in the Holy Scriptures we find that not all prophets and leaders were ordained by laying on of hands or others of "authority" or called by an established congregation. Their call came from God directly. See Isaiah 6:1-9, Jeremiah 1:4-10 and Amos 7:14. Jesus tells His disciples, "You did not choose Me, but I chose you and ordained (appointed) you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you" (John 15:16). In scripture Ordination = Appointed. The Greek word for "ordained" or "appointed" is the word *kathistemi*, and means "to place down (permanently), i.e., designate, constitute, --appoint, be, conduct, make, ordain, set." It simply means to appoint, select, or choose --to designate or set in office.

2. So who ordains or appoints? The Pharisees of the time of Christ asked Him where did He get His authority. Those leaders who are more concerned about lineages of 'authority' than in the Doctrines of Scripture are surely are not of God. So on this question of authority we answer: God is the only one who can ordain, but an organization may indeed ordain those who are not ordained of God. See John 15:16 and 1 Cor.12:18.

3. Who holds the true succession? There are disputes over the various lines of Succession. The Eastern Orthodox not accepting Roman Catholic ordinations and vice versa. Other lines are outside either jurisdiction. Coupled with the fact that in 2000 years of 'Apostolic' lineage, was there ever anyone who was a Heretic? If the line of Apostolic Succession was broken by the excommunication of Martin Luther (a supposed Heretic), then most Protestant churches have no "valid" ordination either. The same holds true for the Old Catholic lines. If there was an earlier Apostasy from doctrinal truth, then there is no "valid" succession. Which then begs the question – Does God only view those whose baptism, etc is done by one holding Apostolic Succession?

4. Which is more important? One can be ordained in Apostolic Succession and yet not hold faithfulness to The Holy Scriptures and Doctrine. "They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine" (Acts 2: 42). Luther said, "All the world must admit that we have the gospel as pure and unadulterated as the apostles had it; it has come back to its original purity. . . . The papists themselves know that in all these and all other doctrines we are the same as the Old Church and may truly be called the Old Church; for these things are not new, not invented by us" (Luther, X, p.471). We then accept and believe in the Apostolic Succession of Faithfulness and Doctrine. This is not to say that we look down on those who hold to the Apostolic Succession concept, for this is wrong also. We just hold that the idea that only those who believe Apostolic Succession are the only ones who have "valid" sacraments, etc are in error and that we need to show them the same love and kindness our Savior held with Nicodemus and others of the Judaical System.