

A Statement of Belief¹

Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church, Fort Wayne, Indiana, is a member congregation of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS or Synod). The LCMS is a mission-oriented and Bible-based church body that confesses the historic, orthodox Christian faith in the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a faith built on “the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone” (Eph. 2:20). With the true Christian Church of all time, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod teaches and responds to the love of the Triune God: the Father eternal, “not made nor created,” the Son of the Father eternal, “neither made nor created, but begotten,” the Holy Spirit eternal, “of the Father and of the Son,” “neither made nor created nor begotten but proceeding” (*Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions*, the Creed of Athanasius). This Holy Trinity is one God, who created all that exists, who redeemed the world by sending the Son into human flesh – Jesus Christ, our Lord – to suffer, die, and rise again for the world’s sins, and who sent the Holy Spirit to call sinners to repentance and faith through the Gospel and Sacraments. The three persons of this Holy Trinity – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – are coequal and coeternal, one God.

LCMS congregations voluntarily choose to belong to the Synod, and, although diverse in many ways, all hold to a shared confession of Jesus Christ as taught in Holy Scripture. We believe without reservation that “the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures of the Old and the New Testaments” are the written Word of God, “the pure, clear fountain of Israel” (*Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions*, Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Rule and Norm, ¶3). We teach that “God’s Word alone should be and remain the only standard and rule of doctrine,” faith, and practice. We confess that “the writings of no man should be regarded as equal” to the Scriptures (FC, SD, RN, ¶9).

In addition, the Synod accepts without reservation the writings contained in the *Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (namely, the three ecumenical creeds; the Unaltered Augsburg Confession and its Apology; the Small and Large Catechisms of Martin Luther; the Smalcald Articles and the Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope; and the Formula of Concord, the Epitome and Solid Declaration) because they are a correct exposition of the Holy Scripture. Believing, therefore, in the authority of Holy Scripture and that the Lutheran Confessions are a correct interpretation and presentation of biblical doctrine, our congregations agree to conform all their teaching and practice to the Scriptures and the Confessions.

¹ This document, which was adopted on August 13, 2017, by the Congregational Assembly of Zion Ev. Lutheran Church, was adapted from *PROTECTING YOUR MINISTRY from Sexual Orientation Gender Identity Lawsuits: A Legal Guide for LCMS Churches, Schools and Ministries*, written by the Alliance Defending Freedom and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, © Alliance Defending Freedom, August 2016. Used with permission.

The Synod “is not an ecclesiastical government, exercising legislative or coercive powers” (LCMS Constitution, Article VII) concerning its member congregations and ministers. However, the voluntary association of member congregations and ministers includes their agreement to respect and honor and uphold (Bylaw 1.7.2, 1.8.1) decisions (resolutions) made by the Synod in its national conventions regarding the understanding of the teachings of Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions and practices that are consistent with such teaching. The Synod in convention is the “principal legislative assembly” of the LCMS (Bylaw 3.1.1) and its resolutions and statements are the position of the Synod in matters of doctrine and life. The Constitution and Bylaws of the LCMS provide specific guidance for the implementation and supervision of the teaching and practice of its members (congregations and rostered church workers).

Congregations of the LCMS, while upholding teachings and practices that are consistent with Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions and while honoring Synod convention resolutions, are self-governed and establish policies based on local circumstance and expediency. An LCMS congregation or ministry operates according to its own constitution and bylaws, which are required by the Synod Bylaws to be reviewed by the District through which the congregation holds membership in the Synod. It establishes therein an orderly way of making decisions and determines which individuals or entities in the congregation (e.g., the pastor, Administrative Council, Council of Elders) will have authority to act on behalf of the congregation in specific circumstances. The Constitution and Bylaws of this congregation govern our decision-making and policies. A copy is available upon request.

Statement on Marriage, Gender and Sexuality

We believe that God wonderfully and immutably creates each person as male or female (Gen. 1:26-27; Ps. 139:14). God created these two distinct, complementary sexes with a purpose: to “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth” (Gen. 1:28), and He instituted marriage out of which this purpose is to be accomplished (Gen. 2:18-25). Modern attempts of society to redefine marriage to include homosexual relationships and modern attempts of persons to self-choose a gender or identify with a gender that contradicts one’s biological sex are rejections of God’s creative purpose for mankind.

We believe that they also distort God’s teleological purpose for mankind, namely mankind’s salvation (1 Tim. 2:3-4), for we believe that God instituted marriage as a picture of God’s redemptive work in sending His Son Jesus Christ as the husband of His wife, the Church, sacrificing Himself for her, and sanctifying her to present her to Himself (Eph. 5:22-33). This institution is clearly defined in Scripture: marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union (Gen. 2:23-24; Matt. 19:3-6). Polygamy, polyandry, homosexual unions, etc., distort not only God’s institution of marriage but also the Gospel message of His redemption in Christ.

We believe that God intends sexual intimacy to occur only between a man and a woman who are married to each other (1 Cor. 6:18; 7:2-5; Heb. 13:4). God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between a man and a woman (Ex. 20:14).

We believe that any form of sexual immorality (including adultery, fornication, homosexual behavior, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest, and use of pornography) is sinful and offensive to God (Lev. 20:10-16; Matt. 15:18-20; Rom. 1:18-32; 1 Cor. 6:9-10).

We believe that in order to preserve the function and integrity of Zion congregation as the local Body of Christ, and to provide a biblical role model to the congregation's members and the community, it is imperative that all persons called or employed by Zion congregation in any capacity, or who serve as volunteers, agree to and abide by this Statement on Marriage, Gender, and Sexuality (Matt. 5:16; Phil. 2:14-16; 1 Thess. 5:22).

We believe that Christ came for sinners and that by His cross He cancelled the debt of their sins (Luke 5:32; Col. 2:14). We confess that God offers the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ to all who confess their sin and believe the gospel. (Acts 3:19-21; Rom. 10:9-10; 1 Cor. 6:9-11). We reject modern attempts to characterize as unloving or hateful God's word of law or its preaching that leads sinners to repentance.

We believe that, even while she confronts sin, the church must afford compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity to all people (Mark 12:28-31; Luke 6:31; Col. 3:12-14). Hateful and harassing behavior or attitudes directed toward any individual are not in accord with Scripture or the doctrine of the Evangelical Lutheran Church and are to be repudiated.

"The Wedding Service at Zion" contains our wedding policy—philosophy and principles, arranging for the wedding and associated costs. A copy is available upon request.

Statement of Final Authority for Matters of Faith and Conduct

We believe that God Himself is the final authority in all matters of faith and conduct and that He has revealed His will in the Holy Scriptures. We believe that the Confessions of our church set forth a correct understanding of His will.

We believe that God provides for mankind through the governing authorities whom God Himself appoints for our good (Rom. 13:1-7). We teach that the governing authorities are owed honor and respect. We confess, however, that when the government makes laws or sets forth regulations that seek to force Christians to disobey God's Word or violate their conscience, "we must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

Zion congregation's Constitution states, "Under the authority of God's Word and in accordance with the Confessional Standard of Article III, the Congregational Assembly shall have operative authority over the internal and external administration and management of all congregational

business; its operative authority shall usually be exercised through the Council of Elders ..., the Administrative Council ... and the Education Council.” Specifically, “The Congregational Assembly delegates its authority in matters related to the spiritual life of Zion to [the] Council of Elders.” Ordinarily, the pastor represents Zion congregation “publicly.”

Statement on the Sanctity of Human Life

We believe that all human life is sacred and created by God in His image. Human life is of inestimable worth in all its dimensions, including pre-born babies, the aged, persons with physical or mental disabilities, and persons at every other stage or condition from conception through natural death. We are therefore called to defend, protect, and value all human life (Ps. 139).