

## A Brief Summary of Christian Doctrine: Faith Evangelical Lutheran Church

### **THE BIBLE:**

1. We believe and teach that the Bible is in all its parts and words the Word of God Himself (**Verbal Inspiration**). It contains no errors or contradictions. It stands forever as the infallible and unchangeable truth.
2. We believe and teach it is clear in and of itself.
3. We believe and teach that it contains everything necessary for man's eternal salvation and all that is necessary to train Christians in holy living. The Holy Scriptures are therefore, the only source from which all teachings in the Christian Church must be taken.
4. We believe and teach the Holy Scriptures are the only standard by which all religious teachings, doctrines, and practices are to be judged.

(**Bible References:** 1 Cor. 2:13; Matt. 5:18; John 10:35; 17:17; Ps. 119:105; II Peter 1: 19-21; Luke 16:29-31; II Tim. 3:16-17.)

### **GOD:**

1. We believe and teach on the basis of the Holy Scriptures that the only true God is the Triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit -- three distinct but co-equal Persons in one indivisible Divine Being (or Substance).
2. We believe and teach that to deny even *one* Person of the Trinity is to disavow the entire Godhead.
3. We believe and teach that while the existence of God can be known from creation and from man's own conscience, only the Holy Scriptures reveal *who* the true God is and *what* He has done for man's salvation.

(**Bible References:** Deut. 6:4; Matt. 28:19; 3:16,17; John 10:30; Romans 1:19,20; John 5:23, 39.)

### **MAN:**

We believe and teach:

1. That man was specially created by God in His own image as the foremost of His visible creatures.
2. That man was given a rational and immortal soul.
3. That man was originally created holy and endowed with a perfectly free will.
4. That man voluntarily yielded to the temptation of Satan and sinned against God by disobeying His command; and thereby lost the image of God entirely: namely, his holy estate, his free will in spiritual matters, his perfect knowledge of God, and his happiness in such knowledge.
5. As a result of his disobedience to God he deprived himself of loving communion with his Creator, became totally corrupt in body and soul, and brought upon himself God's just punishment resulting in spiritual, temporal, and eternal death.
6. Man cannot by any powers of his own re-establish a right relationship with God and escape His just wrath and condemnation.

### **We reject:**

1. That man is a product of evolution, either natural or theistic.

**(Bible References:** Gen. 1:27, 31a; 2:7; Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10; Gen.3; Rom. 5:12,18; 6:23; Ps. 51:5; John 3:5,6; 1 Cor. 2:14.)

### **GOD’S LAW:**

We believe and teach:

1. The Law of God tells us what we are to do and not do and how we are to be and not be in thought, word and deed.
2. The Law of God demands perfection in thoughts, words, and deeds; and condemns all who transgress it in even the slightest detail as being guilty of all, therefore deserving of everlasting punishment in Hell.
3. It serves a threefold purpose: As a curb, it checks to some extent the coarse outbursts of sin in the world, both for the unconverted and for Christians in their sinful flesh; As a mirror (its chief purpose) it shows man his sin, his hopelessly depraved and lost condition before God, and his desperate need for a Savior; and, As a rule or guide, it shows Christians how to lead a God-pleasing life (a desire of all genuine Christians) as proof of their faith.
4. The Law, however, cannot save sinners – not because of any defect in itself – but solely because no man, not even a Christian, is capable of fulfilling its demands perfectly.

### **We reject:**

1. That the Law of God is not intended for Christians
2. That men can come to the knowledge of their sins not only by the Law but also by the Gospel (Antinomianism)

**(Bible References:** Lev. 19:2; Ex. 34:11a; Matt. 5:48; James 2:10; Gal. 3:10; 1 Tim. 1:9,10; Rom. 3:20; Ps. 119:9, 105; 14:3; Is. 64:6)

### **SIN:**

We believe and teach:

1. According to Scripture sin is the transgression of God’s Law in thought, word, or deed.
2. Since the fall of Adam and Eve, every human being is conceived and born in sin, and so all men sin, and deserve to spend eternity in the punishment of Hell.
3. The natural man, that is, the unconverted person, is completely corrupt in body and soul, desires only that which is evil, opposes all that is good in the sight of God, cannot by his own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ or come to Him, and is therefore unable to please God in the slightest degree.
4. The original or inherited sin manifests itself in acts against God’s Law in acts of commission and omission, whether one is conscious of them or not.
5. All evil in the world is the result of sin, whether the temptation to sin comes from our flesh, Satan, or the world. The ultimate consequence of sin (apart from faith in Christ) the Bible tells us is death-spiritual death, temporal death, and eternal death in hell.

**(Bible References:** I John 3:4; Gen. 5:3; Ps. 51:5; Eccl. 7:20; John 3:6; I Cor. 2:14; Rom. 8:6-8; Heb. 11:6; Matt. 15:19; James 1:15; 4:17; Gen. 3:16-19; Rom. 6:23a.)

## THE GOSPEL:

We believe and teach:

1. The Gospel is not a new or higher law, but that doctrine of the Bible which reveals what God in His perfect love and mercy has done and still does for the salvation of mankind.
2. The Gospel simply announces to all men the free gift of God's grace in Christ Jesus, the Savior, "**That whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life,**" and the blessed assurance that God earnestly desires the salvation of every soul.
3. The Gospel is the means by which God makes people believers, changes their hearts and lives, and keeps them in true and saving faith.
4. While the Law of God must be preached to all men, this Gospel of comfort and peace with God through Christ should be preached only to penitent sinners, i.e. those who have already been struck down and terrified by the Law on account of their sins. (See also THE SAVIOR and JUSTIFICATION below.)

(**Bible References:** I John 4:9; Eph. 2:8,9; John 3:16; I Tim. 2:4; Rom. 3:23,24; Mark 1:15; Luke 24:47; Rom. 1:16; Matt. 7:6; II Tim. 2:15; Rom. 5:1; John 14:27; Col. 1:20.)

## THE SAVIOR:

We believe and teach:

1. Jesus Christ is true God, begotten of the Father from eternity and co-equal with His Father and the Holy Spirit in every respect.
2. Jesus Christ is true man, conceived in the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit and was born in the fullness of time a true human being.
3. He was made man in order to redeem the world from sin.
4. He perfectly satisfied the demands of God's Law in man's stead (**Active Obedience**), crediting this perfect righteousness to our account with the Father.
5. He bore the punishment we deserve because of our sins by suffering and dying vicariously, that is, in our place as our substitute (**Passive Obedience**).
6. He rose bodily from the dead on the third day after death as He had promised, ascended visibly on high to reign in His exalted state, for the benefit of His Church.
7. He will come again visibly for the second and last time at the end of the world to judge the living and the dead.

(**Bible References:** I John 5:20; Matt. 17:5; John 1:1-3,14; 10:30; Luke 1:35,38; Gal. 4:4,5; Matt. 5:17; Rom. 5:19; Is. 53:4,5; Heb. 2:9; I Cor. 15:20; Eph. 1:20-23; Phil. 2:5-11; Rev. 1:7; Matt. 25:31-46.)

## JUSTIFICATION:

We believe and teach:

1. Because of Christ's entire work of redemption, by both His active and passive obedience, God declared all men righteous in His sight, not charging their sins against them, and thus reconciled the whole world unto Himself.
2. God's judicial declaration of general or OBJECTIVE JUSTIFICATION is proclaimed to men in the Gospel and becomes the personal property of the individual by faith in the merits of Christ. This faith simply lays hold on God's gracious forgiveness like the hand of an unworthy beggar.
3. Only those who, through faith in the merits of Christ lay hold on God's gracious forgiveness, are personally or SUBJECTIVELY JUSTIFIED and are saints of God.

**Bible References:** Rom. 5:18,19; Is. 53:11; II Cor. 5:19; Rom. 3:21-24; Eph. 1:7; Rom. 4:5-8; 3:28; Acts 10:43; Gal. 3:26; Rom. 5:1.)

### **REPENTANCE:**

We believe and teach:

1. True repentance consists in a person's humble acknowledgment of and heartfelt sorrow over his sins (**Contrition**), willing admission of sin to God (**Confession**), together with the sure confidence that for Christ's sake, all his sins have been forgiven (**Faith**).
2. All who thus repent of their sins are assured by the Gospel of God's free and full pardon.
3. True repentance includes the willingness thereafter to turn from evil and bring forth fitting fruits. (**Bible References:** Ps. 51:17; II Cor. 7:10; Acts 16:31; Mark 1:15; Matt. 3:8.)

### **SAVING FAITH:**

We believe and teach:

1. Justifying or saving faith is the confidence of the heart in the gracious promises of the Gospel.
2. In this faith, the penitent sinner gratefully acknowledges and humbly clings to Jesus Christ alone as his personal Savior.
3. The penitent sinner disclaims any merit or worthiness of his own. He trusts the assurance of the Gospel that all who remain in this faith to their earthly end will be eternally saved.
4. Saving faith is a work of the Holy Spirit, Who works in the hearts of men through the Gospel both to will and to do God's good pleasure.

### **We reject:**

That saving faith is a personal achievement, an act of human merit, or a decision by man.

**Bible References:** John 1:12,13; Rom. 4:20-25; 4:1-5; Gal. 3:26; Eph. 2:8,9; John 3:16; 17:3; Matt. 19:25,26; Phil. 2:13; Matt. 24:13.)

### **CONVERSION:**

We believe and teach:

1. Conversion is the gracious operation of God the Holy Spirit in which sinful men, recognizing from the Law of God their hopelessly lost condition, their inability to please God, and the certainty of eternal damnation because of their sins, are brought to saving faith in the Gospel.
2. Conversion is not a mere reformation of one's conduct or character.
3. Conversion is not a man's self-determination to turn to God or to "make a decision for Christ".
4. Conversion is neither in whole or in part the work of man. Conversion is solely the gracious and powerful work of God Himself, apart from any work, cooperation, right attitude, or lesser resistance on the part of man.
5. This gracious work of the Holy Spirit, known also as regeneration, new birth, enlightenment, and quickening, is wrought in the heart of man alone by the power of the Holy Spirit working through the MEANS of GRACE.
6. The MEANS of GRACE for conversion refers to the Gospel and the Sacrament of Holy Baptism.

**We reject:**

Any doctrine or idea of man that conversion is wrought apart from these God-ordained MEANS of GRACE.

(Bible References: Col 1:12,13; Acts 26:18; II Cor. 4:6; I Pet. 2:9; Eph. 2:1; I Pet. 1:23; Tit. 3:5.)

**SANCTIFICATION:**

We believe and teach:

1. Scripture uses the term “sanctification” in two ways. Sanctification in the first, or wider sense, refers to the entire work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of men (1 Cor. 6:11). Scripture uses the term sanctification in a second or narrow sense with reference to the Christian life.
2. Sanctification in the narrow sense, i.e. Godly living follows justification as the result and necessary fruit of saving faith.
3. Sanctification in the narrow sense never precedes faith, for the Bible states plainly: “without faith it is impossible to please (God),” Heb. 11:6.
4. Sanctification is the creation of a new man within who is able, by God’s grace, to avoid sin and do works pleasing to God, walking in the fruits of the Spirit, moved by the Spirit, and led and enabled by the Spirit of God through the Means of Grace.
5. Good works in Christian sanctification are produced by the urgings of the Gospel, which remind us of God’s great love for us in Christ Jesus. It is that love which constrains us to be rich in good works, walking in accordance with His holy Law, because of and as evidence of our love for Him.
6. Sanctification is progressive in the Christian in this life, but perfection in sanctification will not be attained until he enters eternal life.

**We reject:**

1. That sanctification is self-produced in the least or the result of a self-motivated process of renovation in the believer.
2. That good works in Christian sanctification can be produced by the compulsion of the Law.

(Bible References: Col. 2:6; I Thess. 4:3; Matt. 5:16; I John 4:19; Rom. 6:22; 8:13,14; II Tim. 3:16,17; II Cor. 5:17; Eph. 4:24; 2:10; Rom. 12:1; 7:18-25; Phil. 1:9; 3:12-14; II Pet. 3:18; Eph. 4:13; I John 1:8.)

**THE SACRAMENTS: (Baptism and the Lord’s Supper)**

We believe and teach:

1. On the basis of Scripture, there are only two sacred acts instituted by Christ, in which, through visible elements connected with His command and promise, He offers, gives, and seals to believers the forgiveness of sins and the strength to walk in newness of life.
2. We call these visible acts “sacraments”, namely, the Sacrament of Holy Baptism and the Sacrament of the Altar (or the Lord’s Supper or Communion).

## **BAPTISM:**

We believe and teach:

1. Baptism (“washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit”, Titus 3) is the divinely instituted application of water according to Christ’s command and connected with His Word.
2. Baptism is the only Means of Grace revealed by God for infants and small children who, like all men, are conceived and born in sin. Since they are too young to be taught the Gospel, faith cannot be worked in them by telling them of Christ.
3. Through Baptism, infants and small children are received into the kingdom of God’s grace, brought to saving faith in Christ, and thereby become the children of God and heirs of eternal life.
4. In the case of adults who are brought to faith by the hearing of the Gospel (Rom. 10:17), Baptism washes away their sins and confirms and seals to them the blessings of the forgiveness of sins, life and salvation through the redemption in Christ Jesus apprehended by faith.

**(Bible References:** Matt. 28:19; John 3:5,6; Acts 22:16; I Pet. 3:21; Gal. 3:26,27; Mark 10:14; Matt. 18:6; Acts 2:38,39.)

## **THE LORD’S SUPPER: (COMMUNION)**

We believe and teach:

1. The Lord’s Supper is that sacrament in which the Savior gives, in, with, and under the visible elements of bread and wine, His true body and blood for the remission of sins.
2. All communicants receive the body and blood of Christ in this sacrament.
3. Only true believers receive the body and blood to their everlasting blessing as a visible seal of the forgiveness of sins and for strength to amend their sinful lives.
4. Hypocrites and other unbelievers receive Christ’s body and blood to their condemnation.
5. Communing together serves externally as a testimony of oneness in faith and confession and a public acknowledgment that no unremoved offense exists between those who commune together.
6. Close communion, that is, serving those whom we are confident are able to properly examine themselves and won’t be eating or drinking to their own condemnation.

### **We reject:**

1. The doctrine of transubstantiation taught by the Roman Catholic Church.
2. The reformed teaching that the Lord’s Supper is merely a memorial observance in which the body and blood of Christ are only symbolically present.
3. Open communion, where all who come are served.

**(Bible References:** Mark 14:22-24; I Cor. 10:16; 11:24-29; Heb. 7:27; 9:25, 26; 10:14; I Cor. 10:17.)

## **THE CHURCH:**

We believe and teach:

1. In Scripture, the word “church” is used in two different senses.
2. On the one hand, “church” is used to designate the Communion of Saints, Christ’s spiritual body, consisting of all and only true believers in Him as their Savior. Since true faith in the heart cannot be seen, the membership of this church is invisible to us and known only to God. Hence the communion of saints is often called the Invisible Church.

**(Bible References:** Eph. 1:22, 23; Col. 1:18; Eph. 2:19-22; 5:25-27; II Tim. 2:19; Luke 17:20, 21.)

The Bible also uses the word “church” in speaking of local Christian congregations. This, of course, does not mean that there are two different kinds of churches (local and invisible); for the local congregation, as God sees it, consists only of the believers in it. But the word “church” in Scripture, also designates local congregations as men see them, that is, where membership is determined (and can only be determined) by the profession of faith. In such visible churches or congregations there may, of course, also be hypocrites or false Christians who masquerade as believers. It is, for example, this visible local congregation, to which the Savior refers when He says, “Tell it unto the church,” Matt. 18:17.

**(Bible References:** I Cor. 1:12; II Cor. 1:1; Eph. 1:1; Matt. 13:47,48; 22:2,11; Rev. 1:11; Matt. 18:17; III John 9,10.)

1. According to Scripture, it is God’s will and command that Christians establish and maintain local churches for: a) the regular hearing and learning of His Word as it is proclaimed by their divinely called pastors; b) the regular celebration of the Lord’s Supper (according to God’s Word) ; c) the continuous exercise of both spiritual gifts and duties of Christian fellowship and love, and d) the loving public exercise of the office of the Keys and church discipline according to God’s Word.
2. Groups in the local church or groups of believers from numerous local churches may gather for some Godly purpose, but these groupings are not to be construed as the local visible church. While we have freedom to gather in these groupings, they are in no way the same as the divinely instituted local congregation.

### **We reject:**

1. The belief that any gathering of Christians is the church in the local and visible sense. If a gathering of Christians is intended only for a certain group from the local congregation it cannot be construed as the local visible congregation.
2. Meetings of Christians from various congregations for whatever the purpose are the local visible church. Since these are not divinely commanded, but are manmade and of human origin for the purpose of carrying out joint ventures which are difficult for local churches to do on their own, they are not the same as the local visible church or congregation.

**(Bible References:** Tit. 1:5; Acts 20:28; I Pet. 5:2, 3; I Cor. 11:23-29; Heb. 10:23-25; Col. 3:15,16; Matt. 18:15-17.)

## **THE MINISTRY:**

We believe and teach:

1. In accordance with Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions that the Pastoral Office of the local congregation is the only divinely ordained office in the Church. Synonymous terms for this office in the Scriptural usage of our orthodox fathers are: "Public Ministry," "the Ministry," "Bishop" (overseer), "Elder" – laboring in word and doctrine. To use these terms for other than the Pastor is a purely human, ecclesiastical invention. These purely human inventions have been often used to pervert the Scriptural doctrine of the ministry. Incumbents of this sacred office must have specific qualifications according to God's Word (as listed in the books of Timothy and Titus).
2. When the Holy Spirit, through the unanimously issued Divine Call of the local congregation, makes a man its pastor, He makes him the overseer of the work of all other offices which the congregation in its liberty may establish. Thus, all other offices in the church are auxiliary and under the office of the Pastor. The congregation may create or dispense with any office other than the Pastor by simply appointing or releasing their incumbents as it sees fit since these are not God ordained offices.
3. The office of the Pastor must be established in accordance with God's Word through a call issued by unanimous vote of the voter's assembly of the congregation. Likewise the Pastor may be terminated only by the unanimous vote of the voter's assembly in accordance with God's Word, namely, for false doctrine and/or practice, willful neglect of official duties, or a scandalous life and inability to minister.
4. There is no difference between Pastors and laymen in rank, but only in office.
5. The office of Pastor is conferred upon a man by the Holy Spirit, mediately, through the call of the local congregation and acceptance by the man called.

**(Bible References:** Acts 20:28; Heb. 13:17; I Thess. 5:12,13; Acts 6:1-6; I Pet. 5:3; Matt. 23:8-10; I Tim. 3:1-7; 2:11,12; I Cor. 14:34,35; Titus 1:5-9.)

## **We reject:**

The unscriptural practice of calling or having female pastors.

## **PRAYER:**

We believe and teach:

1. Prayer is an act of worship in which believers confess their sins, bring their petitions before God, and offer up praise and thanksgiving to Him for His blessings.
2. Christians are to pray in the Name of Jesus, that is, with faith in Him as their Redeemer, and with confidence that, for His sake, their prayers are heard and will be answered in God's own best way and time, according to His will, and always for their spiritual and eternal welfare.
3. Prayer is divinely commanded and a special privilege which God has bestowed upon His children.
4. Prayer should be practiced daily by every Christian for his own sake and for the benefit of others.
5. Prayer is an act of worship and hence Christians should not engage in joint prayer with those of a different faith or profession, lest they become guilty of the sin of religious unionism or ecumenism contrary to the Word of God.



## **We reject:**

1. Prayer is a means of grace.
2. Joint prayers with other than Christians. Prayer offered by non-Christians is idolatry.
3. Prayers with those who promote false doctrine.

**(Bible References:** Ps. 65:2; 19:14; 50:15; I Tim. 2:1-8; I Thess. 5:17; James 1:6-8; Heb. 9:27; Phil. 4:6; Amos 3:3; Rom. 16:17.)

## **THE DEVIL AND HELL:**

We believe and teach:

1. Powerful evil spirits called by the Bible “devils” or “demons” were originally created as holy angels, but they rebelled against God, lost their blessed estate, and are forever rejected by Him.
2. Chief among these devils is Satan, also called “the devil,” “Beelzebub,” “the prince of darkness.”
3. These personal spirit-beings have been condemned to spend eternity in hell, a place of unspeakable torment, everlasting regret and despair. Until the Last Day, however, the devils still move about freely in the world, trying to destroy the works of God and especially to lead men to reject Jesus Christ as their Savior, worship false gods, and so to join the ranks of the damned in hell.
4. When Christ died on the cross, He crushed the power of Satan to claim all mankind as his own (Gen 3:15) and enabled true Christians of all times to resist and overcome his temptations and be delivered from the slavery caused by the fear of death.
5. Scriptures teach that hell is a real place of torment and complete desertion by God from which there is no reprieve or escape.
6. Those who do not believe in Jesus Christ as their only Savior will suffer Satan’s own fate and be consigned to live in hell forever on Judgment Day.

**(Bible References:** Eph. 6:12; Mark 5:9; II Pet. 2:4; John 8:44; I Pet. 5:8,9; James 4:7; Jude 6; I John 3:8; Heb. 2:14,15; Matt. 25:41; Is. 66:24; II Thess. 1:8,9; Matt. 10:28.)

## **THE ELECTION OF GRACE:**

We believe and teach:

1. Though God will have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:4), God has in eternity specially elected or chosen some to eternal life. Nothing good in us, or that God foreknew that we would have faith, but only His grace in Christ, moved Him to do this.
2. We are to know that He has elected us and that in time He has also brought us to a saving knowledge of Jesus, our Savior, sanctified our lives, preserves us in the faith, and assures us of eternal salvation.
3. God has elected no one to damnation. This idea is completely foreign and opposed to God’s own revelation of His will that all come to repentance and be saved eternally.
4. Since the doctrine of election is pure Gospel, it should be used for the comfort of true believers who are troubled by their sins.
5. The Election of Grace is the cause why men are brought to faith in Christ and are saved eternally.
  6. God’s Word teaches men are lost eternally because they judge themselves unworthy of everlasting life, stubbornly resist the Holy Spirit by rejecting the Gospel in unbelief, and so are damned by their own fault.
- 7.

7. Human reason, not bound by the Word of God, considers the two doctrines of Universal Grace and the Election of Grace to be contradictory; but we must impose silence on our sin darkened reason as being incapable in this life of completely comprehending the mysteries of God. The seeming disharmony between these Scripture truths will disappear in the perfect light of knowledge in heaven. Until that time, we must trustingly accept both teachings and not try to speculate as to how we might reconcile them according to our limited and sinful reason.

**We reject:**

1. God has elected some to damnation.
2. The Election of Grace is a cause why men remain unbelievers after hearing the Gospel.
3. Some are elected without faith in Christ.

**(Bible References:** Eph. 1:3-6; II Thess. 2:13,14; Acts 13:48; Rom. 8:28-30; Ezek. 33:11; I Tim. 2:4; I Pet. 1:1-5; II Pet. 1:3-11; 3:9; I Cor. 10:12; Acts 7:51; Matt. 23:37; I Cor. 13:12; Rom. 11:33-36.)

**TEMPORAL DEATH AND LIFE THEREAFTER:**

We believe and teach:

1. We believe that temporal death is the separation of the soul from the body.
2. At death the Christian's soul is immediately in the presence of God in the bliss of heaven, while his body is laid to rest to await the resurrection at the last day.
3. The unbeliever at the time of death faces the judgment of a holy and just God. Without the righteousness of Christ to cover his guilt, he faces the "the wages of sin," i.e. eternal damnation in hell. At the moment of death, his soul will find itself forever forsaken by God, and consigned to everlasting torment.
4. At the Last Day, the souls of believers and unbelievers will be reunited with their bodies in the resurrection of the flesh. The believer's body will be raised a glorified body, and along with his soul will be received into everlasting glory. The unbeliever, body and soul, will be sent to spend eternity in the fires and torment of hell.

**(Bible References:** Eccl. 12:7; Phil. 1:23; Luke 23:43; Rev. 14:13; Luke 16:23,24; Matt. 10:28; John 5:29; 11:24; Job 19:26,27; Phil. 3:21; I Thess. 4:14; Is. 66:24; Matt. 25:46.)

**THE LAST THINGS:**

We believe and teach:

1. Christ's Kingdom on earth will remain under the cross until the end of the world.
2. Up to Christ's second coming spiritual conditions in the world and even in outward Christendom will grow worse and worse.
3. Christians are assured in God's Word that Christ, at the right hand of God, rules and controls everything for their spiritual and eternal welfare.
4. According to Scripture, the time of the Last Day is unknown and will remain unknown until He returns.
5. The purpose of Christ's second and final coming will be to judge the living and the dead and to receive His beloved Church in to heavenly glory.
6. This present earth and universe will be destroyed by fire.
7. A new heaven and a new earth will be created.

**We reject:**

1. Every form of Millennialism or Chiliasm (i.e. the teaching that Christ will come again to rule on earth for a thousand years before the end) as being in direct contradiction of and opposition to God's Word.

**(Bible References:** John 15:18-21; Matt. 24; Acts 14:22; John 16:33; Rom. 8:28; Acts 17:31; Mark 13:32; Matt. 25:31; II Cor. 5:10; John 14:3; 18:36; II Pet. 3:10.)

**FELLOWSHIP:**

We believe and teach:

1. Inasmuch as God has ordained that the Holy Scriptures be the only source and standard of Christian doctrine and practice, any doctrine or practice that does not conform to God's clear Word should be rejected as HETERODOX.
2. Every Christian should carefully distinguish between ORTHODOX (those that conform to God's Word) and HETERODOX churches, their teachers and their followers (Rom. 16:17a; 1 John 4:1), and to avoid the heterodox as dangerous to their very souls (Rom. 16:17b; Matt. 7:15; Tit. 3:10).
3. ORTHODOX CHURCHES and church bodies are those which teach the Word of God in its truth and purity, administer the sacraments (Communion and Baptism) according to Christ's institution, and consistently apply the pure doctrines of Scripture, not only in word but in public deed and public practice.
4. HETERODOX CHURCHES and church bodies are those in which false doctrine is persistently taught from the pulpit, in the classroom, and official publications. Included with these are those which tolerate false doctrine and/or practice to stand side by side with the truth.
5. When false doctrine and practice is exposed in an orthodox body, it must be actively combated and removed immediately to prevent it from spreading like leaven throughout the body.
6. Christian unity is based on perfect agreement in doctrine and practice. (Amos 3:3; John 8:31,32; Eph. 4:3; I Cor. 1:10). When those who share an orthodox position in doctrine and practice, they are in "confessional fellowship." (In Article VII of the Augsburg Confession the word "Gospel" refers the Gospel in its wider sense that is the whole Word of God. See p.47, Triglot. See also Matt. 28:20; John 8:31,32; I Cor. 1:10,13.)
7. Church Fellowship (i.e. altar and pulpit fellowship, joint prayer and church work) can be practiced only by those who are in confessional fellowship with one another (Amos 3:3; Rom. 16:17). Failure to observe Biblical principles of fellowship results in indifference to the Word of God and ultimately to total denial of the truth. (Gal. 5:9; II Tim. 2:16-18; Col. 2:8).

**We reject:**

1. Ecumenism which is practicing fellowship without true unity in doctrine and practice, II Cor. 6:14-18; I Tim. 6:3-5).
2. Sinful separatism which is standing aside or separating from fellow Christians with whom we are in confessional fellowship. This is contrary to God's command (II Tim. 1:8; I John 2:19).
3. Selective fellowship which is practicing church fellowship between individuals without confessional fellowship in doctrine and practice and without the agreement of those with whom we are already in confessional fellowship. (I Cor. 1:10; Amos 3:3). (See (Formula of Concord, Thorough Declaration, XI, Triglot, p. 1095, para 95.)

## **THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE CHURCH:**

We believe and teach:

1. According to God's Word, women are not to teach men or have authority over men.
2. Women may not become pastors.
3. Women are not to speak in the public assembly, where such speaking may usurp authority over men.
4. Since God forbids women to have authority over a man, and since the voters' assembly wields the decision making authority in a church, women are not permitted to exercise authority by voting.
5. Women may not hold any office in the church which involves leadership over men.
6. Women may not serve in any capacity that requires them to teach or have authority over a man.

### **We reject:**

1. Female pastors.
2. Female voters in the church.
3. Female Bible teachers teaching men.
4. Female leaders in the church when their position requires them to exercise authority over a man.

**(Bible References:** I Cor. 14:34ff; I Tim. 2:11-14.)

## **ADIAPHORA:**

We believe and teach:

1. Adiaphora refers to matters which are neither commanded nor forbidden by the Word of God ( also known as "non-essential matters" and "matters indifferent".
2. Since these are matters that are not settled by Scripture, Christians have liberty in these matters.
3. Agreement (where needed) in adiaphora is reached through the patience and brotherly love of all involved until the matter is resolved.

**(Bible References:** Matt. 23:8-12; I Cor. 7:23; 14:40; Phil. 4:14, 15; Gal. 5:13-16, 25,26; Eph. 4:31,32; I Pet. 5:5,6.)

## **OPEN QUESTIONS:**

We believe and teach:

1. These are defined as questions concerning Christian doctrine which God's Word has not answered definitively. They are only open in the sense that they are incapable of being solved in this life because God's Word furnishes no conclusive answers.
2. Scripture does not answer every conceivable question that men may have. Attempts to speculate about matters and to know the mind of the Lord, where He Himself has not revealed His mind and will in His Word, are anti-Biblical and unscientific.
3. We should speak and teach only those things that God plainly reveals in His Word. Where God's word doesn't speak we must confess that we don't know.

This congregation accepts, acknowledges, and confesses all the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments as the inspired and inerrant Word of God, and all the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church contained in the Book of Concord of 1580, because they are a true and sound exhibition of the Christian doctrine taken from and in full agreement with Holy Scriptures; and in this congregation no doctrine shall be taught or tolerated which is at variance with these symbols of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, viz: (1) The Three Ecumenical Creeds, the Apostolic, the Nicene, and the Athanasian; (2) the Unaltered Augsburg Confession; (3) The Apology of the Same; (4) the Smalcald Articles; (5) Luther's Large and Small Catechism; and (6) The Formula of Concord. According to this norm or doctrine all doctrinal and religious controversies, which may arise in this congregation shall be decided and adjudicated. This congregation also accepts the Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House 1932), which is a more recent statement of Scriptural doctrine in agreement with the historic Lutheran Symbols.