



**INFORMATION PACKET**  
**FOR**  
**THE UNITED LUTHERAN PARISH**

*A Multi-Point Cooperative Ministry  
of the following ELCA Congregations*

*Elias – Town of Herman*

*Peace – Tilleda*

*St. Johns – Leopolis*

*St. Matthews – Bowler*

*Zion – Tigerton*



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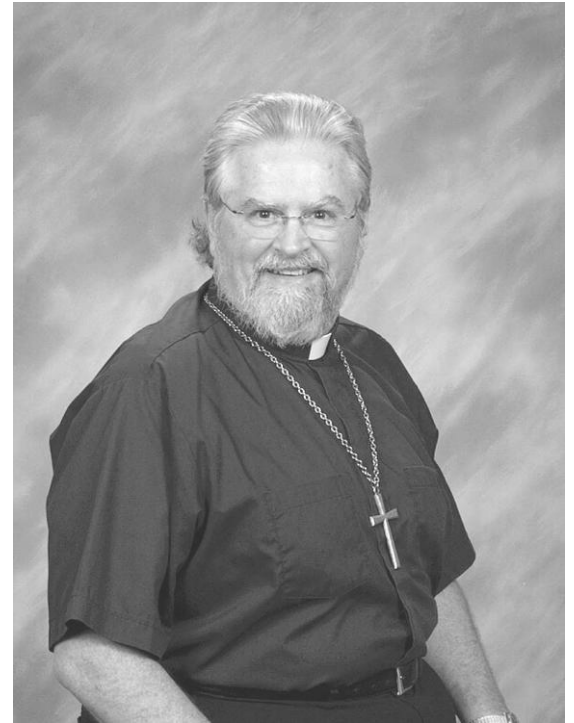
**Visit us on the Web @ [www.tulpchurch.com](http://www.tulpchurch.com)**

*The current pastoral team of  
The United Lutheran Parish consists of:*

**Pastor Dennis R. Creswell**

**Lead Pastor (Long-term Supply)**

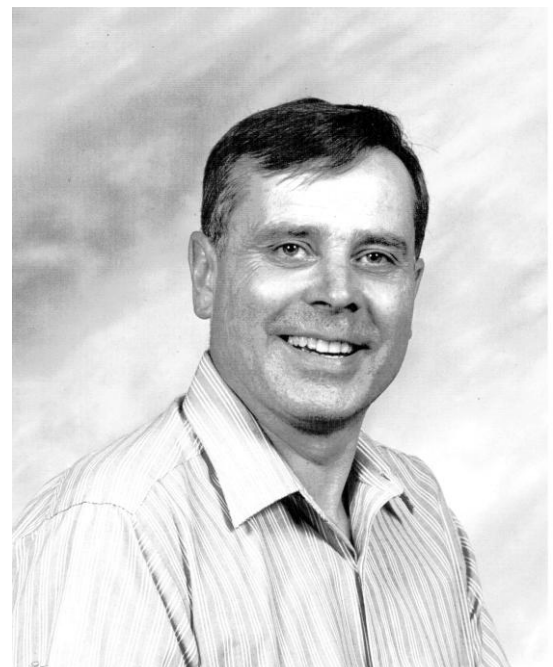
**142 Kent Street  
Wausau, WI 54403  
715-843-5256 (Home)  
715-853-2549 (Cell)  
dennis.creswell@gmail.com**



**Pastor Doug Helling**

**(Visitation and preaching Pastor)**

**7603 Feith Ave  
Weston, WI 54476  
715-432-1776 (Home)  
715-853-2561 (Cell)  
dhlingwi@yahoo.com**



# Church Locations and Sunday Worship Schedules

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***Elias Lutheran Church (Town of Herman)***

*N6106 County Road G*

*8:00am*

*Gresham, WI 54128*

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***Peace Lutheran Church***

*N6145 County Road D*

*9:15am*

*Tilleda, WI 54978*

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***St. John Lutheran Church***

*W11929 3rd Street*

*9:15am*

*Leopolis, WI 54948*

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***St. Matthew Lutheran Church***

*104 E. Main Street*

*10:30am*

*Bowler, WI 54416*

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***Zion Lutheran Church***

*511 Spaulding Street*

*8:00am*

*Tigerton, WI 54486*

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**All worship times are subject to change**

# HISTORY OF THE UNITED LUTHERAN PARISH OF SHAWANO COUNTY, WISCONSIN

The United Lutheran Parish, which originally consisted of seven ELCA churches in Shawano County, Wisconsin, is a cooperative ministry endeavor of Bethlehem Church, Pella; St. John's Church, Leopolis; Zion Church, Tigerton; Immanuel Church, Morris; St. Matthew Church, Bowler; Peace Church, Tilleda; and Elias Church, Herman. These seven churches officially joined as one parish on July 16, 2000, when their four pastors were installed at Zion ELCA, Tigerton in a service which included the ordination of Pastors Jim and Carol Johnson by Bishop John Beem. Pastor Shari Routh and Pastor Howard Buenting joined them to form the first Pastoral Team for TULP.

In 1998, Bishop John Beem of East Central Synod of Wisconsin, Mission Developer Rev. Davis Darrington, and other synod staff joined with significant congregational leaders of these seven churches, and began conversations regarding their need for pastoral assignments for their churches. They reviewed and began problem-solving as a core group regarding the complications facing smaller churches attempting to remain viable in their communities. The struggling financial situations of some of the churches, the limited number of available pastors to fill openings, and the isolated sites of some of the churches were all issues faced by the church leaders and their people. These seven churches lie within this 40 mile radius between Wausau and Shawano, Wisconsin. There were three natural "pairings" already in place within the seven-point parish, with a history of sharing pastors and ministry within those pairings. The success of such a venture, it was noted, was the combination of the faith and diligence of the people of God.

Many meetings eventually led to the formation of a Mission Statement:

"The seven-point cooperative ministry of The United Lutheran Parish is intent on assisting each individual congregation in carrying out their own defined ministry and mission. Together, under the direction and empowerment of the Holy Spirit and with encouragement from one another, we commit ourselves to share our faith, hope, and love in the strong name of Jesus, in our rural setting."

These seven churches formed an Advisory Council, consisting of church presidents and other leaders at each site, with the purpose of assisting each individual church council in joint decision-making, policy formation, and financial commitments. The individual councils continue to set policy for their own churches regarding issues relevant to their own history, context, and voices of their people.

The United Lutheran Parish Preamble contains these words:

"We are separate, independent congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. However, we believe that the church is more than our own congregation. Thus we join hands with neighboring congregations in order to give witness to Christ's love and life-giving power for changed lives in our community, country and world. The seven-point parish is not one parish serving multi-locations. It is multi-locations with their own missions and identity, working together through joint ministries."

The Parish defined agreements regarding each site's financial obligations to the TULP budget, the maintenance of their own properties, Sunday School or VBS programs (unless in cooperative arrangement), specific joint financial obligations, and mission commitments. Synod reports and annual reports would be prepared by each church site. Once the Pastoral Team was in place, joint adult education programs were arranged, joint confirmation programs coordinated, committees formed, and decisions were made regarding worship scheduling, visits to shut-ins and the sick, social ministry projects, and opportunities for fellowship within the parish.

Bulletins were synchronized in regard to liturgical flow, with each site devising their own bulletin covers, printing their own site announcements. Later, Sunday bulletins were prepared centrally, then sent to each site for final copying. Worship Planning Team members (representatives of each of the seven churches) began to work with a pastor to make decisions regarding music and liturgy for the worshipping community. All seven churches began singing the same hymns each Sunday, using the same worship tools (LBW and WOV) for the cause of unity. The churches made decisions regarding frequency of communion distribution, so that each site could have pastors distribute communion twice per month during worship.

Pastoral care visits to shut-ins and those in special need were charted and divided by the Pastoral Team. Weddings, baptisms, funerals, and special programs were planned at the discretion of the pastors. First Communion throughout the parish was offered to fifth graders who successfully completed their preparation classes. Confirmation classes began in the fall, with Gr. 7, 8, and 9, with Confirmation on Reformation Sunday for Gr. 9.

A TULP Central Office Site was selected in Tilleda (a former parsonage) where a part-time coordinator/treasurer, Diane Kryll, would serve the parish. Some sites chose to employ secretaries to assist in bulletin preparation, newsletter mailings, and to handle general business matters specific to that church. A parsonage serves the parish at Pella, where Pastor Jim and Pastor Carol Johnson became residents. Pastor Shari Routh agreed to initially serve part-time, commuting from New London. Pastor Howard Buenting agreed to contract as a part-time pastor for TULP, following his retirement in 2000.

The Red Tulip with a Cross became the logo for TULP, by its symbolic representation of a united central base, and separate functioning petals, bound in Christ's mission and commission.



Each pastor served a pairing of the churches each Sunday, or the single site, St. Matthew's. The scheduling cycle continued in a rotation of the four pastors staying at each site for two weeks, then rotating. It became important to synchronize worship times for certain sites to facilitate this movement.

The Pastoral Team has clearly defined pastoral duties, meeting regularly for staffing review of special events, planning, sermon preparation, reviewing special needs and prayer requests, in prayerful consideration of the parish and area. Division of labor, or defined areas of ministry for the Team include these areas: Administrative duties; Evangelism/Stewardship/Outreach; Adult Education; Social Ministry; Worship Planning; Youth Education; Youth Ministry; Pastoral Care; WELCA and Men's groups; Fellowship.

Leadership from the individual churches needed to be significant and reliable from the beginning, in order for the new programs, joint projects, and ministry opportunities to address the needs of the people. Lay ministry within the parish was noted as significant and vital, from all seven sites. Bill Kriegel of Tigerton became a graduate of the synod-sponsored Lay School of Ministry, to further equip himself for lay ministry commitments, and agreed to serve in pulpit supply or other parish needs occasionally.

Worship attendance within the parish gradually began to grow within a few months, as did membership and baptism at some sites. Pastors were intentional, as were evangelism groups, in attempting to reach out to those whose anxieties and questions needed to be addressed. A monthly TULP newsletter was developed and mailed to over 600 home sites within the parish. Eventually, Wednesday evening worship was put in place, at one (rotating) site within the parish.

It was noted by the people and by the pastors that the prayer life of the parish led to a greater movement of the Spirit to solidify the purpose and capacity of this cooperative parish ministry. Hospitality and compassion to inquirers and visitors was needed and began to rise. Willingness of church members to adjust to change, to negotiate, compromise, and instill hope and enthusiasm in others became a visible product of that faith-building. The Pastoral Team's love for the people and willingness to be available and approachable was recognized as an important element in bringing about a more peaceful transition period for the seven churches.

On July 22, 2001, The United Lutheran Parish celebrated its first full year of joint ministry with a joint worship at Pella Park, led by all four pastors and the joint TULP choir led by Linda Krueger of Zion. It was an occasion of shared Word and Sacrament, and good food and fellowship as the seven churches came together to remember their connectedness as a community rooted in Christ, bound together, yet separate. The large crowd which gathered provided a witness of faith to the community at large. It was decided that this would be an annual event.

Since that first anniversary, some things have changed, others have not. In June of 2003, Pastor Shari Routh left The United Lutheran Parish to serve as an Associate Pastor at a church in Fond du lac Wisconsin. In September of 2003, John Hielsberg agreed to become a Laity Associate on a part-time basis. John is a graduate of the Lay School of Ministry (as is his wife, Alice, who assists him in an unofficial capacity). He leads worship on Sundays and at special services when necessary. He also visits shut-ins and nursing homes on a regular basis. Worship with communion was adjusted at some of the sites in order to ensure that an ordained Pastor would be available on communion Sunday.

In 2004, the newsletter, which had been completely created, printed, assembled, and mailed in-house, joined hands with Liturgical Publication in Brookfield to improve the quality and reduce the amount of labor in it's production. The newsletter is still created at the TULP office, with input from all seven congregations, but it is then sent electronically to LPi for printing and assembly. The result is a very professional looking document that has been received well. The costs of printing and assembling are subsidized by advertisements from local businesses who wish to support this effort. This newsletter is now made available on our web site – [www.tulpchurch.com](http://www.tulpchurch.com).

In 2005, Pastors Jim and Carol Johnson left The United Lutheran Parish to answer a call to serve several congregations in South-western Wisconsin. We then extended calls to Pastor Doug Helling from Weston, and Pastor Jennifer Czarnota from Ohio (originally from the local area). Pastor Doug had a ¾ time position and Pastor Jennifer had a full-time position. After the new team had time to adjust to each other, Pastor Jennifer was given the role of Lead Pastor and job responsibilities were broken down between the members of the new team. As time went on, it was decided by the Advisory Council that we should change our reference from a 7-Point Parish to a Multi-Point Parish – thus allowing for changes of member congregations in the future.

In May, 2006, Lois Graper, a member at Peace in Tilleda, graduated from the Lay School of Ministry. She will continue to provide pulpit supply when needed and also has helped teach confirmation classes. In July, 2006, Pastor Howard Buenting stepped aside after 45 years serving as an ordained minister. The United Lutheran Parish decided to use lay pulpit supply to fill the staffing needs and Pastor Howard's visitations were absorbed by current staff members.

In June, 2008, Immanuel Lutheran Church in the Town of Morris elected to leave both The United Lutheran Parish and the ELCA. We also accepted the resignation of our lay minister, John Hielsberg. The parish called upon several gifted and dedicated lay school graduates to help lead worship on a rotating basis through the end of 2008, while the Advisory Council met monthly to develop a new plan for the future. In January, 2009, worship times at all 6 sites were changed to allow adequate time for our 2 ordained Pastors to travel between 3 sites each for Sunday worship. They also expanded the role of the Office Manager to add Volunteer Coordinator duties to her job.

In December, 2009, Pastor Jennifer Czarnota resigned her position at The United Lutheran Parish. The Council offered a 6-month 75% supply contract to Pastor Dennis R. Creswell from Wausau. He accepted the contract and is currently getting acquainted with the duties of a multi-point parish, and will be working closely with the advisory council to plot a future path that will allow us to continue to serve the congregations and work towards achieving our mission.

In September of 2010, Bethlehem Lutheran Church in the Town of Pella voted to leave the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America and also The United Lutheran Parish. Pastor Doug Helling also announced his plans to retire at the end of 2010, but offered to continue on as a supply pastor for the future beginning in 2011. As a group of 5 congregations, we have developed a task force to present ideas to the Advisory Council on how to serve these 5 congregations and remain financially secure. These ideas will be presented at the October meeting with a preliminary budget that will support these ideas and be financially affordable. Change is not new to us, and we realize that no matter what changes come upon us, the one steadfast and certain thing is that Our Lord is there for us - always! And His love will carry us through these times of change and we will emerge strong and faithful in His name.

We look forward to a time of growth and renewal as we have passed the first 10 critical years of "existing" as a joint ministry. We are looking to the future and considering new ways to offer specialized programs for our congregations, and will continue to support and nourish our shut-in and elderly population and the "unchurched". We will also strive to meet the needs of our changing congregations. The Lord has indeed blessed us, and we pray for continued strength and guidance as we continue to fulfill our mission.

**THE UNITED LUTHERAN PARISH**  
***MULTI-POINT PARISH AGREEMENT***  
(Revised – November, 2008)



**Preamble—**

In the belief that the Body of Christ, the Christian Church, can be strengthened in mission and service through closer fellowship and a cooperative ministry in congregations, we hereby set forth plans and covenant for a cooperative agreement among Zion Lutheran Church, Tigerton; St. Matthew Lutheran Church, Bowler; Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Pella; St. John Lutheran Church, Leopold; Peace Lutheran Church, Tilleda and Elias Lutheran Church, Gresham.

We are separate, independent congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. However, we believe that the church is more than our own congregation. Thus we join hands with neighboring congregations in order to give witness to Christ's love and life-giving power for changed lives in our community, country and world. The multi-point parish is not one parish serving multi locations. It is multi locations with their own missions and identity working together through joint ministries.

**PARISH NAME**

A parish name, The United Lutheran Parish, seeks to be reflective of the identity of the area or a shared common mission, rather than an individual congregation.

**MISSION STATEMENT**

The multi-point cooperative ministry is intent on assisting each individual congregation in carrying out their own defined ministry and mission. Together, under the direction and empowerment of the Holy Spirit and with encouragement from one another, we commit ourselves to share our faith, hope and love in the strong name of Jesus, in our rural setting.

**PURPOSE**

A cooperative effort of churches to:

Witness in multi communities to Christ's care and love.

Enable multi small rural congregations and their pastors to share strengths and benefits through shared ministry opportunities, resources, programming, and cost/purchase savings.

Enjoy the ability to attract and keep experienced pastoral leadership.

**PARISH RELATIONSHIP**

The Parish exists and cooperates in the spirit of mutual love and goodwill that each congregation has for the others. The commitment to mutual ministry grows out of the abiding love of Christ, described in the Gospel of John as "the Vine and Branches." It is this vision that binds us together.

- a. Each congregation maintains its own property, program and personnel, that is not jointly shared.
- b. The congregations of the Parish covenant together to seek ways to do ministry together, always

endeavoring to come closer together, while supporting and promoting the integrity and viability of each congregation.

- c. The Parish relationship may be terminated at the request of any of the congregations. The request would be accomplished by vote at a legally called meeting of the congregation. No such vote will be taken, or meeting held, without first consulting the leaders of the other Parish congregations, and a representative of the Synod staff.
- d. In the event that any congregation decides to discontinue participation in the Parish, the Parish relationship will continue for the remaining congregations.
- e. Property owned by each congregation prior to the establishment of the Parish shall remain the property of said congregation. Property and/or equipment acquired by the Parish after formation shall be considered Parish property. Property and equipment purchased by an individual congregation remains with that congregation.
- f. If a congregation leaves the Parish, ownership of Parish property remains with the Parish.
- g. If the United Lutheran Parish dissolves, all property owned by TULP will be turned over to another tax-exempt organization.

## **ADMINISTRATION**

### **Church Councils—**

Each congregation will elect and retain its own leadership, church council and officers according to the by-laws of the congregation. Meetings will be held as determined by the congregation.

### **The Joint Council—**

A council composed of all council persons from all congregations of the parish shall meet jointly at least once a year or as needed. The Joint Council sets perimeters and policy of the Parish Advisory Council to follow in the administration of the parish operation. Notification of meetings shall comply with constitutional requirements of the respective congregations.

### **The Parish Advisory Council—**

The Parish Advisory Council will consist of 2 persons from each congregation. Each congregation may appoint one alternate member to attend when one of the regular members is unable. This will include from each congregation: one council officer and one other congregation member, who may or may not serve on that congregation's council. Out of these individuals, an Advisory Council President, Vice-President and Secretary will be elected by the Advisory Council at the final meeting of the current year to serve the following year for a term of one (1) year. These officers may succeed themselves once. Should any of these elected officers no longer hold advisory council positions, a special election will be held at the first Advisory Council meeting following the change. The newly elected person will serve the remainder of the term and may succeed themselves once.

The Advisory Council will meet at least quarterly, or more often as needed by call of the President, Pastor(s), or three members of the Council.

The President will provide the agenda and preside over the meetings. The Secretary will take minutes and make them available to each congregation's secretary. A quorum shall consist of representation from a minimum of all but one (1) congregation. Should there not be representation from all congregations, no item shall be voted on that was not included on previously mailed agenda.

Duties:

- a. To advise, assist and supervise the work of the pastoral staff, recognizing that the pastoral staff retain the authority to make educational and programmatic decisions for the parish. Pastoral team retains the right to make decisions regarding educational and programmatic resources that affect the entire parish. Pastoral team will be responsible for keeping advisory council informed as to these programs and decisions. Individual congregations reserve the right to not participate in any programming that their council leadership determines is unhelpful for them at this time in their congregational life
- b. To determine, with pastoral staff; the schedule of services in each church.
- c. To make non-rostered staffing decisions.
- d. To schedule special worship services (i.e. Lent, Thanksgiving, Holy Week) and joint fellowship opportunities.
- e. To determine housing provisions for rostered staff.
- f. Establish a Mutual ministry committee consisting of the Executive officers of the Advisory council for the support and encouragement of rostered staff and to foster mutual discussion about the ministry needs of this parish.
- g. Establish a Personnel committee consisting of 3 or more persons appointed by the Advisory Council (and working under their auspices) for the purpose of maintaining a staff policy manual, yearly review of the rostered staff and their letter of call, as well as providing for support and yearly review of non-rostered staff persons.
  - The personnel committee shall be consulted by the financial sub-committee with regards to salary considerations based upon merit for all staff members
  - The personnel committee shall be responsible for the review and updating of all staff job descriptions
  - Yearly reviews shall be scheduled such that information will be made available to finance sub-committee by August 1<sup>st</sup> each year.
- h. To develop an annual parish budget for approval by the congregations, as laid out in "The United Lutheran Parish Operating Procedure.
- i. To establish parish task forces or committees as needed for the benefit of the entire parish.
- j. Make recommendations to the Joint Council for any duty changes and/or parish agreement covenant needs/changes.
- k. Set time and location for the annual Joint Council meeting and calling of special Joint Council meetings.
- l. Advisory council members are responsible for communicating information from meetings to their congregation's councils and membership.
- m. An advisory council vote requires approval of 2/3 of those present in order to pass. A request for a ballot vote by any one advisory council member must be honored.

## **STAFFING**

Pastoral leadership of the Parish shall be provided by ordained Pastors of the ELCA. A Letter of Call to serve as a Pastor of the congregations of this Parish shall be approved by a two-thirds vote at each congregation's meeting.

The multi-point Parish desires to call two pastors. Additional lay, rostered or seminary interns may be sought to work with the pastors.

The Parish may need its own secretary and treasurer.

The Parish encourages development of lay leadership, deacons and volunteers.

## **FELLOWSHIP GROUPS, CHRISTIAN EDUCATION, BIBLE STUDIES**

In the interest of being good stewards of leadership time and in promoting fellowship opportunities there may be service/fellowship groups and Christian education studies, i.e. confirmation, Bible studies, that not always need to meet in all seven locations but in more than one location. Agreement on joint settings will be welcomed.

## **PARISH FINANCES**

Each congregation will be responsible for their own offerings, budgets and accounting.

Parish level expenses, salaries, benefits, auto expense, and insurance will be shared proportionately based on example #3, see Addendum to Parish Finances. Expenses for maintaining all parsonages are shared as parish expenses. Each congregation will monthly submit their portion of parish expenses to the Parish treasury.

Offerings, after fixed costs (organists, bulletins, etc.) from special parish worship services or gatherings will be designated by the parish advisory council... i.e. World Hunger, Disaster Relief, special needs, community projects, etc.

## **PARSONAGES & PARISH OFFICE SPACE**

The Parish Advisory Board, in consultation with the pastor(s) will determine housing arrangements and office space. Each congregation will share in the housing and office space value and costs. If there is a parsonage not needed for present or future parish needs, the congregation that owns that parsonage determines if it is rented, sold or how utilized.

## **FUTURE COOPERATION**

This group of congregations is open to future cooperative ministry with other neighboring congregations. There is an openness for additional pastoral and lay staff. There is a willingness to discuss and seek mutual agreement for the benefit of other congregations, as well as our own ministry.



## The United Lutheran Parish Membership Covenant



Having received Christ as my Lord and Savior and been baptized, and being in agreement with The United Lutheran Parish mission statement and purpose statement, and the mission statement of the specific church within the TULP parish where I desire membership, I now feel led by the Holy Spirit to unite with The United Lutheran Parish, and in particular, \_\_\_\_\_ Church of \_\_\_\_\_. In doing so, I commit myself to God and to the other members to strive toward the following:

- 1) It is my desire to protect the unity of my church
  - ...by acting in love toward other members
  - ...by refusing to gossip
  - ...by following and cooperating with leadership of the church

*“So let us concentrate on the things which make for harmony, and on the growth of our fellowship together” (Rom. 14:19).*

*“Have a sincere love for other believers, love one another earnestly with all your heart” (I Peter 1:22).*

*“Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs” (Ephes. 4:29).*

- 2) It is my desire to share the responsibility of my church
  - ...by praying for its growth
  - ...by inviting the unchurched to attend
  - ...by warmly welcoming those who visit

*“To the church...We always thank God for you and pray for you constantly” (1 Thess. 1:1-2).*

*“The Master said to the servant, ‘Go out to the roads and country lanes, and urge the people there to come so my house will be full’ ” (Luke 14: 23).*

*“So, warmly welcome each other into the church, just as Christ has warmly welcomed you; then God will be glorified” (Rom. 15:7).*

- 3) It is my desire to serve the ministry of my church
  - ...by discovering my gifts and talents, and learning of the structure of programs and committees within my church
  - ...by being equipped to serve with my pastors, through worship and training
  - ...by developing a servant’s heart

*“Serve one another with the particular gifts God has given each of you”  
(1 Peter 4:10).  
“God gave ...some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up”(Ephes. 4:11-12).  
“Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who...(took on) the very nature of a servant” (Phil. 2: 3-4,7).*

- 4) It is my desire to support the testimony of my church
  - ...by attending worship faithfully as possible
  - ...by living a godly life
  - ...by giving financially to the church regularly

*“Let us not give up meeting together...but let us encourage one another”  
(Heb. 10:25).  
“Whatever happens, make sure that your everyday life is worthy of the gospel of Christ”  
(Phil. 1:27).  
“Each one of you, on the first day of each week, should set aside a specific sum of money in proportion to what you have earned and use it for the offering” (1 Cor. 16:2)  
(Some desire to tithe. Tithing means giving one tenth of what has been given to you, to the church, in God’s honor) “A tenth of all your produce is the Lord’s and is holy” (Lev. 27: 30).*

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**TULP Mission Statement:**

“This multi-point cooperative ministry is intent upon assisting each individual congregation in carrying out its own defined ministry and mission. Together, under the direction and empowerment of the Holy Spirit, and with the encouragement from one another, we commit ourselves to share our faith, hope and love in the strong name of Jesus, in our rural settings.”



**TULP Purpose Statement:**

The United Lutheran Parish is a cooperative effort of churches to:

- † Witness in multi-communities to Christ’s care and love
- † Enable multi small rural congregations and their pastors to share strengths and benefits through shared ministry opportunities, resources, programming, and cost/purchase savings
- † Enjoy the ability to attract and keep experienced pastoral leadership.



# Some Brief Definitions for Christianity and Lutheranism

## Who is Jesus Christ?

Jesus is God in the flesh, sent by God the Father to become human like us. In his life and being he broke open the prison of sinfulness and thus restored the relationship of love and trust that God intended to exist between himself and his children. Though he is eternal, with the Father at the beginning of time, he was born on earth of a virgin, by the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus is at the same time God and truly human.

The man, Jesus of Nazareth, lived and died in Palestine during the governorship of the Roman administrator, Pontius Pilate. We confess that he is the Messiah chosen by God to show his love for the world. He is God, yet with all the limitations of being human. His relationship to the Father, however, was not one of sin, but rather of perfect obedience to the Father's will. For the sake of a sinful world, Jesus was condemned to death on the cross.

But death could not contain him. On the third day after his execution, the day Christians observe as Easter, Jesus appeared among his followers as the risen, living Lord. By this great victory God has declared the Good News of reconciliation. The gap between all that separates us from our Creator has been bridged.

## What is the Church?

The Christian Church is made up of those who have been baptized into the death and resurrection of Jesus and thus have received Christ as the Son of God and Savior of the world. Sometimes it is referred to as "the Body of Christ". Lutherans believe that they are a part of a community of faith that began with the gift of the Holy Spirit, God's presence with his people, on the day of Pentecost. The church, regardless of the external form it takes, is the fellowship of those who have been restored to God by Christ. Indeed, to be called into fellowship with Christ is also to be called into community with other believers.

The church is essential to Christian life and growth. Its members are all sinners in need of God's grace. It has no claim on human perfection. The church exists solely for the hearing and doing of God's Word. It can justify its existence only when it proclaims the living Word of Christ, administers the Sacraments, and gives itself to the world in deeds of service and love. Most Lutherans recognize a wider fellowship of churches and are eager to work alongside them in ecumenical ministries and projects.

## Why a Lutheran church?

Martin Luther (born, November 10, 1483, in Eisleben, Germany, died, February 18, 1546 in Eisleben) is known as the Father of Protestantism. He had studied to become a lawyer before becoming an Augustinian monk in 1505, and was ordained a priest in 1507. While continuing his studies in pursuit of a Doctor of Theology degree, he discovered significant differences between what he read in the Bible and the theology and practices of the church. On October 31, 1517, he posted a challenge on the church door at Wittenberg University to debate 95 theological issues. Luther's hope was that the church would reform its practice and preaching to be more consistent with the Word of God as contained in the Bible.

What started as an academic debate escalated to a religious war, fueled by fiery temperaments and violent language on both sides. As a result, there was not a reformation of the church but a separation. "Lutheran" was a name applied to Luther and his followers as an insult but adopted as a badge of honor by them instead.

Lutherans still celebrate the Reformation on October 31 and still hold to the basic principles of theology and practice espoused by Luther, such as ***Grace Alone, Faith Alone, Scripture Alone***:

- We are saved by the grace of God alone — not by anything we do;
- Our salvation is through faith alone — we only need to believe that our sins are forgiven for Christ's sake, who died to redeem us;
- The Bible is the only norm of doctrine and life — the only true standard by which teachings and doctrines are to be judged.

Another of Luther's principles was that Scriptures and worship need to be done in the language of the people.

Many Lutherans still consider themselves as a reforming movement within the Church catholic, rather than a separatist movement, and Lutherans have engaged in ecumenical dialogue with other church bodies for decades.

Luther's *Small Catechism*, which contains teachings on the Ten Commandments, the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, Holy Baptism, Confession and Absolution, Holy Communion and Morning and Evening Prayers, is still used to introduce people to the Lutheran faith, as is the Augsburg Confession. These and other Lutheran confessional documents included in the *Book of Concord* may be ordered from Augsburg Fortress Publishing House at 800/328-4648.

## **The Only True Religion?**

“Do Lutherans believe theirs is the only true religion?” This question was once put to the late Dr. Elson Ruff, editor of *The Lutheran*. His answer was, “Yes, but Lutherans don't believe they are the only ones who have it. There are true Christian believers in a vast majority of the churches, perhaps in all.”

## **How Do Lutherans Look upon the Bible?**

To borrow a phrase from Luther, the Bible is “the manger in which the Word of God, which is Jesus Christ, is laid.” While Lutherans recognize differences in the way the Bible should be studied and interpreted, it is accepted as the primary and authoritative witness to the church's faith. Written and transcribed by many authors over a period of many centuries, the Bible bears remarkable testimony to the mighty acts of God in the lives of people and nations. In the Old Testament is found the vivid account of God's covenant relationship to Israel. In the New Testament is found the story of God's new covenant with all of creation in Jesus.

The New Testament is the first-hand proclamation of those who lived through the events of Jesus' life, death, and Resurrection. As such, it is the authority for Christian faith and practice. The Bible is thus not a definitive record of history or science. Rather, it is the record of the drama of God's saving care for creation throughout the course of history.

## **What Do Lutherans Believe About Creation?**

Lutherans believe that God is Creator of the universe. Its dimensions of space and time are not something God made once and then left alone. God is, rather, continually creating, calling into being each moment of each day.

Human beings have a unique position in the order of creation. As males and females created in God's image, we are given the capacity and freedom to know and respond to our creator. Freedom implies that we can choose to respond to God either positively or negatively.

## **Where Do Lutherans Stand on the Question of Sin?**

Lutherans believe that all people are born into, and live in a condition which is the result of misused freedom. “Sin” describes not so much individual acts of wrongdoing as fractured relationships between the people of creation and God. Our every attempt to please God falls short of the mark. By the standard of the Law, of which the Ten Commandments are a classic summary, God expresses his just and loving expectations for creation, and our failure to live up to those expectations reveals only our need for God’s mercy and forgiveness.

## **What Sacraments Do Lutherans Accept?**

Lutherans accept two Sacraments as God given means for penetrating the lives of people with his grace. Although they are not the only means of God’s self-revelation, Baptism and Holy Communion are visible acts of God’s love.

In Baptism, and it can be seen more clearly in infant Baptism, God freely offers his grace and lovingly establishes a new community. In Holy Communion, (often called the Lord’s Supper or the Eucharist), those who come to the table receive in bread and wine the body and blood of their Lord. This gift is itself the real presence of God’s forgiveness and mercy, nourishing believers in union with their Lord and with each other.

## **Do Lutherans Believe in Life After Death?**

While there is much we do not and cannot know about life beyond the grave, Lutherans do believe that life with God persists even after death. Judgment is both a present and future reality, and history moves steadily towards God’s ultimate fulfillment.

This of course is a great mystery, and no description of what life may be like in any dimension beyond history is possible. Anxiety for the future is not a mark of faith. Christians should go about their daily tasks, trusting in God’s grace and living a life of service in his name.

## **What Must a Person Do to Become a Christian?**

Jesus said, “Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.” (John 11:25-26)

## **What Must a Person Do to Become a Lutheran?**

To become a Lutheran, only Baptism and instruction in the Christian faith is required. If you are already baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, it will be necessary only to attend a membership class in a Lutheran congregation and thus signify your desire to become a part of its community. Active members of other Lutheran congregations usually need only to transfer their membership.

For further information, call the Lutheran congregation nearest you or use *Find a Congregation* on the ELCA website – [www.elca.org](http://www.elca.org).

*Adapted from “What Lutherans Believe, “published by Evangelical Outreach, Division for Parish Services of the former Lutheran Church in America, now out of print.*

# **Confession of Faith of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

*Here follows the official text as it appears in the  
Constitution of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in American*

1. This church confesses the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
2. This church confesses Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and the Gospel as the power of God for the salvation of all who believe
  - Jesus Christ is the Word of God incarnate, through whom everything was made and through whose life, death, and resurrection God fashions a new creation.
  - The proclamation of God's message to us as both Law and Gospel is the Word of God, revealing judgment and mercy through word and deed, beginning with the Word in creation, continuing in the history of Israel, and centering in all its fullness in the person and work of Jesus Christ.
  - The canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the written Word of God. Inspired by God's Spirit speaking through their authors, they record and announce God's revelation centering in Jesus Christ. Through them God's Spirit speaks to us to create and sustain Christian faith and fellowship for service in the world.
3. This church accepts the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the inspired Word of God and the authoritative source and norm of its proclamation, faith, and life.
4. This church accepts the Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds as true declarations of the faith of this church.
5. This church accepts the Unaltered Augsburg Confession as a true witness to the Gospel, acknowledging as one with it in faith and doctrine all churches that likewise accept the teachings of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession.
6. This church accepts the other confessional writings in the Book of Concord, namely, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles and the Treatise, the Small Catechism, the Large Catechism, and the Formula of Concord, as further valid interpretations of the faith of the Church.
7. This church confesses the Gospel, recorded in the Holy Scriptures and confessed in the ecumenical creeds and Lutheran confessional writings, as the power of God to create and sustain the Church for God's mission in the world.

**THE UNITED LUTHERAN PARISH**  
**New Member Intake Form**  
(Please complete and return to TULP office as soon as possible)



**FAMILY MAILING INFORMATION**

TULP

Family ID# \_\_\_\_\_ Last Name \_\_\_\_\_ First Name \_\_\_\_\_  
(assigned by office)

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Church \_\_\_\_\_

City, State Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Previous Church Membership \_\_\_\_\_

**INDIVIDUAL FAMILY MEMBER INFORMATION**

**Member #** \_\_\_\_\_ **First Name** \_\_\_\_\_ **Last Name** \_\_\_\_\_

Birthdate \_\_\_\_\_ Baptism Date \_\_\_\_\_ Where Baptized \_\_\_\_\_

Student (K-12)? Y/N \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_ School \_\_\_\_\_

**Member #** \_\_\_\_\_ **First Name** \_\_\_\_\_ **Last Name** \_\_\_\_\_

Birthdate \_\_\_\_\_ Baptism Date \_\_\_\_\_ Where Baptized \_\_\_\_\_

Student (K-12)? Y/N \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_ School \_\_\_\_\_

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(use back of page for additional members)

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Student (K-12)? Y/N    Grade \_\_\_\_\_    School \_\_\_\_\_

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Student (K-12)? Y/N    Grade \_\_\_\_\_    School \_\_\_\_\_

**(Return this form to TULP office as soon as possible)**

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