

We Believe...

The Lutheran Reformation took place during the 16th Century. It began with Martin Luther, who protested the church's teaching that one can merit God's favor and salvation by the good things that he or she does. Luther ardently defended and proclaimed that man was saved by God's undeserved kindness –his grace- through Christ Jesus alone. This was not based on personal innovation, but Luther's thorough study of the Holy Bible and its teachings.

The Reformers, a group dedicated to this teaching, sought to study and understand the Bible on its own terms. They eventually composed *confessions* - statements of belief- to carefully express the Christian faith according to the teachings of scripture. These confessions do not trump God's Word, or even stand equal to it, but simply state clearly the teachings found in it.

Trinity Lutheran Church of Gillette, Wyoming is a member of that greater Lutheran Church committed to the Lutheran Confessions, and most importantly, the Word of God. We belong to the *Lutheran Church- Missouri Synod*, a group of over 6,000 congregations who walk together in the same confession of faith.

Trinity Lutheran Church serves as a steward of God's grace in Christ Jesus. We are a community gathered around the Means of Grace, committed to the faithful preaching and teaching of God's Word and the right administration of the sacraments. In the midst of a very confused, sin-filled, and bleak era, we proclaim the message of clarity, forgiveness, and eternal hope given to each of us in Jesus Christ.

The following are statements of faith that outline the major teachings of the Christian faith. We pray that you would give them thoughtful consideration along with the scripture passages listed.

According to what is taught in the Holy Scriptures, we believe that:

- There is only *one true God*, namely, the God revealed in the Holy Bible.
- God is *triune*, having three unique persons in one divine being- Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. All are God, yet each is unique from the other two. They do not comprise three Gods, however, but one God. He is the only true God as revealed by the Son, Jesus Christ, and also the prophets, apostles, and evangelists in the Bible (Ps. 110:1, Mt. 28:19, 2 Cor. 13:14).
- God is *eternal*, without beginning or end. He is uncreated; he has being in and of himself (Ex 3:14, Is. 40:28, 1 Tim. 1:17).

God *created* everything that exists out of nothing in the course of six days: The universe, stars, moons, and planets, most especially Earth, where he created seas and land, plants, animals, and his crowning work, man. He declared his creation *very good*, that is, sinless and perfect (Gen 1:1; 31; 2:1-2, Jn. 1:1-4, 1 Cor. 8:6).

- Every human being is *conceived and born in sin*. We each are born inclined to sin, dead to God, and lacking any ability or desire to turn to or seek him. We are not free to choose either good or evil, God or what is not God, for the human will is

enslaved to sin, making us, by our inborn human nature, enemies of God. This innate hostility toward him is often called *original sin* (Gen. 6:5, Ps. 51:5, Rom 8:7-8).

- The punishment for sin is *death and damnation*. When our first parents sinned in the original bliss of creation, God pronounced a curse upon them, and therefore all humankind, who inherit their sin. Thus, death is not natural, but rather the just judgment and consequence of sin. Moreover, sin brings about damnation, that is, eternal separation from God and suffering in Hell, from which there is no escape (Gen. 2:17; 3:19, Rom. 5:12; 6:23).
- No person can, by any amount of decent living or good works, earn God's favor or merit himself salvation. Even the most morally upstanding person is sinful and is accountable to God for it (Rom. 3:23, Gal. 5:4-5, Eph. 2:8-9, Phi. 3:8-9).

God's great love and compassion for his creatures was such that *he made provision to save humanity* from its sins. God sent his Son, Jesus, to live a sinless life and die a sacrificial death on behalf of sinful humankind. Through these he won the forgiveness of sins and eternal life for everyone who believes in him (Acts 4:12, Rom. 3:21-24; 6:23; 8:1, 1 Jn. 5:12).

- We are *justified* –declared not guilty- by God solely by his grace, his undeserved and unmerited kindness to us. This happens when a person trusts, by faith, in the saving work of Christ Jesus. This faith is worked by the Holy Spirit, not by any power or will in the individual, making salvation entirely God's work (Rom. 3:28, 1 Cor. 12:3, Eph. 2:8-9).
- The Holy Spirit works faith in a person through the hearing of the Word of God, particularly the *Gospel*, which is the good news of the forgiveness of sins in Jesus Christ alone. Just as he is instrumental in bringing one to faith, he also sustains that faith and directs the person's life according to the Word of God (Rom. 10:17, 1 Cor. 3:16, Titus 3:5).

Good works, prayer, and a holy life are the responses of faith. They are not done to earn God's favor or merit, but flow from a heart that has been changed by God's grace and forgiveness in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17, Titus 2:14).

Concerning the Savior, Jesus Christ, we believe, according to scripture, that:

- *Jesus of Nazareth*, also called the Christ, is both God and man. He is God of the substance of the Father and man of the substance of his mother. Thus, he has *two natures*, one divine, one human, joined together in a personal union. Each retains fully its own characteristics, yet Jesus is not half God and half man, but simultaneously 100% God and 100% man (Lk. 2:7, Jn. 20:28, Rom 9:5, Col. 2:9, 1 Jn. 5:20).
- Jesus *died by crucifixion* and his body was laid in a tomb (Mt. 27:35; 50; 59-60).
- Christ physically *rose from the dead* on the third day after his crucifixion. Over 500 people were witnesses to the truth and validity of his resurrection (Acts 13:30-31, 1 Cor. 15:3-8, 2 Pt. 1:16).

- Christ bodily *ascended into heaven* where he sits at the right hand of the Father. (Mk. 16:19, Lk. 24:51, Acts 1:9).
- Christ *will return visibly* on the Last Day to usher in his eternal kingdom. On that day, all the dead will be raised to life and after that, all people will be judged. Those who believe in Christ will go on to eternal life, but those who do not believe will be condemned to eternal death. The entire creation will then be restored and freed from the damage and decay of sin (Job 19:25-27, Jn. 5:28-29, Acts 1:11, 1 Thess. 4:16, Heb. 9:28, Rev. 21:5; 22:12).
- Christ instituted the *Office of the Ministry* for the public preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments. This office is occupied by pastors, who minister the means of grace in Christ's place and according to his Word (Mt. 16:19, 28:19-20, Jn 20:21-23).

Regarding the Means of Grace -God's Word and Sacraments- we believe that:

- We receive the blessings of Jesus' saving death and resurrection through the *means of grace*. These are the various forms of the Gospel, offered, delivered, and applied to us, particularly the written and preached Word, Baptism, Absolution, and the Lord's Supper.
- *The Holy Scriptures* are God's revelation of humanity's salvation in Jesus Christ, and the only source that determines the content of Christian teaching. They are comprised of the *Old and New Testaments*, written by human authors under the direction of the Holy Spirit, making them God's Word, not man's. These writings are where God has revealed himself so that people might know about him, their sinful condition, and God's plan of salvation accomplished through his Son. Thus, the message of the entire Scriptures is centered on Jesus Christ, the only savior from sin, death, and eternal damnation (Jn. 20:31, Acts 4:12, 1 Cor. 2:13, 2 Tim. 3:15-16, 2 Pt. 1:21).
- *Baptism* is the application of water to a person in the name of the Triune God-Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. By it one receives the forgiveness of sins, rebirth and renewal in the Holy Spirit and, therefore, eternal salvation (Mark 16:16, Gal. 3:27, Titus 3:4-7).
- *The Lord's Supper*, or Holy Communion, is the true body and blood of Jesus present in elements of bread and wine given to Christians to eat and to drink. It was instituted by Christ himself and bestows forgiveness, life, and salvation (Mt. 26:26-28, 1 Cor. 10:16).
- *Absolution* is the forgiveness of sins spoken by a pastor to a penitent sinner. It is done in Jesus' name and in his place, making the word of pardon as sure and certain as if it came from the lips of Christ himself (Mt. 16:19, Jn. 20:22-23).

We proclaim with confidence that God wants all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. That salvation and truth are found only in Christ Jesus, who died for the forgiveness of your sins and the sins of all mankind. We encourage you to visit Trinity Lutheran Church, speak with one of our pastors, and hear the message of forgiveness and salvation that God has spoken to us by his Son.