

What is a Lutheran?

(based on an answer provided by St Mark's Lutheran Church, Conshohocken, PA)

Lutheranism is a faith tradition that is open to all, regardless of background. The Lutheran World Federation is a global communion of 148 churches in the Lutheran tradition, representing over 75.5 million Christians in 99 countries.

To learn more about the Lutheran World Federation follow this link:

<https://www.lutheranworld.org/>

Lutherans are Christians

Lutherans, along with all Christians, believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. We believe Jesus was fully divine and fully human. In Jesus, God became human, bore our human condition and our sins, in order to save us from sin and death and restore us to a right relationship with God. Jesus came to make known God's love and grace to our broken and seeking world. The ultimate symbol of that love is the Cross, where Jesus was crucified, and gave his life for the sake of the world. In Christ we enjoy grace, mercy, freedom, and new life.

Lutherans are Protestants

In fact, Lutherans were the first Protestants. It all began in 1517 when a German monk named Martin Luther posted a list of 95 points of disagreement with the Roman Catholic Church on the doors of the Cathedral Church in Wittenberg on October 31st. The main differences between Luther and the Church concerned the nature of our salvation. Lutherans believe that we are saved by God's grace, which we receive through faith, not by anything we do.

Today, nearly five centuries later, Lutherans still celebrate the Reformation on 31st October and still hold to the basic principles of Luther's theological teachings, such as Grace alone, Faith alone, Scripture alone. These comprise the very essence of Lutheranism:

- We are saved by the grace of God alone — not by anything we do;
- Our salvation is through faith alone — a confident trust in God, who in Christ promises us forgiveness, life and salvation; and
- The Bible is the norm for faith and life — the true standard by which teachings and doctrines are to be judged.

Lutherans are Biblical

Lutherans love the Bible, but do not take it literally. They are not fundamentalists. They read the Bible through the lens of God's grace, believing that the Bible is the Word of God, inspired by the Holy Spirit and recorded by faithful people. It is the story of God and God's people — the story of God's great love for us. When they read the Bible Lutherans become part of the story. The heart of the biblical message is the good news that Jesus Christ died and rose again to bring human beings and the whole creation into relationship with God. That relationship gives hope, comfort, and purpose.

Lutherans are Liturgical

Worship is at the heart of every Lutheran community. They experience God together as they sing hymns and read passages from the Bible, as their pastor preaches, connecting the Bible lessons with daily life, and as they receive Holy Communion.

Each National Church is linked with Global Partners in the Lutheran World Federation

Over the years, different Lutheran church bodies have been established and organized to meet the needs of Lutherans in communities and nations all over the world. Lutherans continue to reform the Church and the whole of Christianity by diligently engaging their Christian brothers and sisters in dialogue between the different traditions; choosing to focus on ways that we can work together rather than be divided. The fruits of

those collaborative efforts are seen in the many ecumenical partnerships that have been established as “full communion” (meaning that we have reached agreements on many of the issues that used to keep us apart). For example, in America the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is in Full Communion with these Protestant denominations:

- the Moravian Church
- The Episcopal Church of USA (part of the Anglican Communion)
- the Presbyterian Church (USA)
- the Reformed Church in America
- the United Church of Christ
- the United Methodist Church

There are similar agreements in other parts of the world. Lutherans are in an ongoing dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church, and in 1999, representatives of the Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church signed the ‘Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification’. This represented a historic consensus on key issues of faith and called for further dialogue and study together.

To learn more about these agreements follow this link:

<https://www.lutheranworld.org/content/ecumenical-relations>