

## **Bethel Lutheran Church**

# **What We Believe**

Our Lutheran Christian faith is formed by the following documents:

The Holy Scriptures, The Unaltered Books of the Lutheran Confessions, The Book of Concord, and The Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds.

Therefore, we believe:

### **GOD**

We believe in God who reveals Himself in the Bible, as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, known as the Trinity. He is holy, all-knowing, all-powerful, and loving. God makes himself known in many ways throughout life, inviting us into a relationship with him. God remains active in life today. (Genesis 1:1-3; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Matthew 3:16-17; John 10:30)

### **GOD, THE FATHER**

We believe that God the Father created the universe from nothing. In love, He sustains His creation and desires an intimate relationship with all people. He continues the creation process and is active in life today. (Genesis 1:1; John 3:16-17)

### **JESUS, THE SON**

We believe that because of His love for us, God became a human being, Jesus Christ. Being fully divine and fully human, He lived the life of a servant, and in His death on the cross, Jesus suffered the punishment we deserve for our sin. In His death and bodily resurrection, Jesus won for us victory over death and the power of the devil. Only through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ can we experience forgiveness, be made acceptable to our Holy Maker, and enjoy a close relationship with Him. (Romans 5:8-9; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Philippians 2: 5-11; Hebrews 2:14-15; 1 Peter 1:18; 2:24)

### **GOD, THE HOLY SPIRIT**

We believe that God the Holy Spirit works in the lives of people and brings them to faith in Jesus Christ. He desires to be so fully active in believers that they are filled to overflowing with His presence and are empowered with His gifts to tell about Jesus Christ and do the work of the Church in the world. (Acts 1:8; 2:1-42; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11)

### **THE BIBLE**

We believe that the Bible is the *living* Word of God. In the scriptures God gives us opportunity to know His character and will, see our own sinful reflection, and learn of God's offer of eternal life in Jesus Christ. The entire Bible, comprised of 66 books and divided into two testaments, which speak of God's relationship with His people, is inspired by God and is the final authority in faith and life. (John 1: 1-14; John 21: 24-25; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21)

### **SIN**

We believe that *sin separates* us from God and one another. Sin is our rebellion against God's will and is seen in our brokenness in relationships - with God, others, and ourselves. We sin in thought, word, and deed because we are born sinful and are naturally self-centered. We share the sin of our first parents, Adam and Eve, which is called original sin. (Genesis 3: 16-23; Genesis 6: 5-8; Isaiah 59:2; Luke 24:46-47; Romans 6:23)

### **PRIESTHOOD OF BELIEVERS**

We believe that everyone is called by God into ministry. Gifted to serve and empowered with talents and skills, God provides each person opportunity to use their gifts to “build up the body of Christ.” As Martin Luther reminds us, we are to be “little Christ’s” to each other seeking to care for those around us. (Ephesians 4: 11-13; 1 Corinthians 12)

### **GRACE**

We believe that we enter into a relationship with God not by anything we do, but solely by what God has done for us through Jesus Christ. Knowing that we are sinners, we trust completely in God's amazing grace (unearned merit and favor) to save us from condemnation and to give us an eternal home with Him. (Ephesians 2:8-9; Galatians 2:16)

### **JESUS’ RETURN**

We believe that, as He has promised, Jesus will return to earth to judge the living and the dead and to fulfill His promise to give all believers eternal life. Although, we don't know when Jesus is coming we should live our lives in hope and expectation that He is coming soon. We desire to share this hope we have in Jesus with all people. (Acts 1:11; Mark 13:32-37)

### **THE CHURCH**

We believe that the church is the body of Christ, the family of God, in the world. Through baptism and through faith God unites us together as his church. God calls us into local communities and empowers believers with different gifts for the purpose of serving together. We cherish our unity with all believers, locally and around the world, who preach, teach, and live the Good News of Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 12:12-27; Ephesians 4:11-16; Romans 12:3-8)

### **THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM**

We believe that through the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, which is commanded by Jesus, God adopts us as His children. Through Baptism, we are born again into God’s eternal family and receive God’s gifts for His people: forgiveness of sin, eternal life and salvation. We baptize infants and adults because in Baptism it is God who works, cleansing and forgiving our sin and making us part of His family. (Romans 6:4-6; Matthew 18:1-6; Acts 2:39; Acts 16:30-33)

### **THE SACRAMENT OF COMMUNION**

We believe that in the Sacrament of Holy Communion, God comes to love and forgive us. Through this meal, He brings us His love in a tangible way and renews us in our relationship with Him. As He promised, Jesus is truly present in the bread and wine and we remember Him when we celebrate this meal. As we come to communion, we bring to Jesus our sin with a sincere desire to be forgiven and to be changed to be more like Him. (1 Corinthians 11:23-26; John 6:53-56)

### **HUMAN WORTH**

We believe that every human life (born and unborn) is precious, being created in the image of God. Because God loved us, Jesus Christ chose to die for us. Life is sacred, a holy gift given by God. Abortion, euthanasia and mercy killing or murder is not pleasing to God and Christians are called to value life as God does. Our worth is determined by God's view of us, which is demonstrated in Jesus, not by our own self-estimation. (Genesis 1:27; John 3:16; Psalm 136; Psalm 139:13-16)

**PRAYER**

We believe that the Lord is powerful and desires to be active in our lives. Prayer is our daily conversation with God. We enjoy this privilege because God loves us and sent Jesus to die for our sins. God desires that we speak with Him often as part of a growing relationship with Him. More than just speaking, prayer involves listening to God because prayer is two-way communication. Since one way God speaks is through His written Word, regular reading of the Bible is an integral part of daily prayer. (Luke 11:1-13; Matthew 5:33)

**FAITH AT WORK**

We believe that our primary call from God is to make disciples of Jesus Christ by baptizing and teaching others what He has commanded us. This is called the Great Commission. We engage in actions of love and mercy (do good works) to show God's love to others, not to earn God's approval. We are thankful for eternal life promised and received in Jesus Christ. Jesus calls us to be disciples and servants. (Matthew 16: 24-26; Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 8: 34-38; 1 John 3:16-18; Ephesians 2:8-10)

**THE CHRISTIAN IN THE WORLD**

We believe that as disciples of Jesus Christ we are to show Jesus to the world. This is done by consistently and generously being involved in acts of love and mercy. Jesus calls us to interact with others in the world as salt and light. Salt flavors and creates a thirst for God. Light illumines even the darkest corridors. We are to live our lives relating to the world not by means of intimidation or manipulation, but rather by persistent, loving witness to Jesus Christ. (Matthew 5:13-16; 2 Corinthians 10:4-5; Ephesians 4:15)

**HUMAN SEXUALITY**

We believe that our sexuality is a good and gracious gift from God. God has created us to be in relationship with one another. Sexual intimacy is blessed by God when expressed according to God's design, within the context of monogamous heterosexual marriage. Outside of that context, sexual intimacy, whether heterosexual or homosexual, is sin. All who desire to turn from sin, sexual or otherwise, can be forgiven and renewed by the grace of God in Jesus. (Genesis 2:24; Exodus 20:14; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20; Romans 1:26-32)