



Making and Maturing Disciples of Christ to Minister

STATEMENT OF BELIEF

Bethel Evangelical Lutheran Church of Morton, Illinois ("Bethel") is part of The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod (LCMS or Synod). The LCMS is a mission-oriented and Bible-based denomination that confesses the historic, orthodox Christian faith in the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, a faith built on "the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone" (Eph. 2:20). With the universal Christian Church, The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod teaches and responds to the love of the Triune God, who created all that exists; became man to suffer, die and rise again for the world's redemption; and brings people to faith and new life through His Word and Sacraments. The three persons of the Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – are coequal and coeternal, one God.

LCMS congregations voluntarily choose to belong to the Synod, and, although diverse in many ways, all hold to a shared confession of Jesus Christ as taught in Holy Scripture. We believe without reservation that the Scriptures of the Old and the New Testament are the written Word of God and the only rule and norm of faith and of practice. In addition, the Synod accepts without reservation the writings contained in the *Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*. Believing in the authority of Holy Scriptures and that the Lutheran Confessions are a correct interpretation and presentation of biblical doctrine, our congregations agree to conform all their teaching and practice to the Scriptures and the Confessions.

We believe that God wonderfully and immutably creates each person as male or female. The two distinct, complementary genders together reflect the image and nature of God (Gen 1:26-27). Rejection of one's biological sex is a rejection of the image of God within that person.

We believe that the term marriage has only one meaning: the uniting of one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union, as delineated in Scripture (Gen. 2:18-25). We believe that God intends sexual intimacy to occur only between a man and a woman who are married to each other (1 Cor. 6:18; 7:2-5; Heb. 13:4). We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between a man and a woman.

The Synod "is not an ecclesiastical government, exercising legislative or coercive powers" (LCMS Constitution, Article VII) concerning its member congregations and ministers. However, the voluntary association of member congregations includes their agreement to respect and honor and uphold (Bylaws 1.7.2, 1.8.1) decisions (resolutions) made by the Synod in its national conventions regarding the understanding of the teachings of Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions and practices that are consistent with such teaching. The Synod in convention is the "principle legislative assembly" of the LCMS (Bylaws 3.1.1) and its resolutions and statements are the position of the Synod in matters of doctrine and life. The Constitution and Bylaws of the LCMS provide specific guidance for the implementation and supervision of the teaching and practice of its members (congregations and rostered workers).

Congregations of the LCMS, while upholding teachings and practices that are consistent with Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions and while honoring Synod convention resolutions, are self-governed and establish policies based on local circumstances and expediency. An LCMS congregation or ministry operates according to its own constitution and bylaws – which are required by the Synod Bylaws to be reviewed by the District through which the congregation holds membership in the Synod – and therein establishes an orderly way of making decisions and determine which individuals or entities in the congregation (e.g., the pastor, church council, board of elders) will have authority to act on behalf of the congregation in specific circumstances. The Constitution and bylaws of Bethel govern our decision-making and policies.