



What About . . .

# *The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod*

**B**y God's blessing, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is committed to being strongly in the Word, Christ-centered and people-sensitive, reaching out boldly with the Gospel, faithful to the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions, and marked by peace and unity in the Lord. This pamphlet will help you better understand what The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is all about.

## **A peace that passes all human understanding.**

In the fullness of time, the Son of God descended to earth and became man in the womb of the Virgin Mary. In Jesus, God Himself was with us on earth. Jesus was not only with us, but for us. He came into this sinful and dying world to fight our enemies: sin, death, and the devil. He came to set us free. He defeated these enemies by laying down His own life.

Through His perfect life and by His death on the cross, Jesus paid the full debt of sin for all people. He rose again and gives us a new life, a life that has meaning, purpose, and direction, a life filled with hope and confidence, even during times of sorrow and trouble. Jesus Christ is with us. He loves us and cares for us, giving us the peace that truly passes human understanding.

## **A Family of Christian Believers**

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is a family of 2.6 million Christians, gathered in more than 6,000 congregations throughout the United States. Our church body was founded more than 150 years ago by a small band of immigrants in America who were dedicated to preaching and teaching the Gospel of the forgiveness of sins through Christ alone. Many of the founders of our Synod were from Missouri, hence the word "Missouri" in our church's name.

Our congregations are united in an association of Christian fellowship called a "Synod," which means "walking together." Every congregation is self governed and unique. We believe and teach the same Biblical truths, but our congregations also reflect the diversity of the people we serve. Some are located in rural areas, others in inner cities. Some are large, others are very small. Most use English, but some offer worship services in Vietnamese, Spanish, Laotian, and other languages. We are a family gathered from all nations, united in the wonderful truth that Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world.

## **Strongly in the Word**

The voice of Jesus calls sinners to repentance, and comforts the brokenhearted through the preaching and teaching of His Word from our pulpits and in our classrooms. We are a church that honors the Bible as the written Word of God—the very voice of Jesus, our Good Shepherd. God the Holy Spirit, through this Word, creates and sustains trust in Jesus Christ. Through this living and powerful Word, Jesus Himself rebukes, comforts, forgives, and guides His people through the perplexing, difficult, and confusing questions and decisions we face in our lives.

We believe strongly that Jesus is with us and that He still rules His church today through His Word. Therefore, we are committed to reading, studying, and growing in the Word of God, the Holy Bible. Our church's deeply spiritual and reverent liturgical worship is filled with the Word of God, through which Jesus blesses us with His presence and peace.

## **Christ-Centered and People-Sensitive**

We treasure the special means by which Jesus Himself dwells among us with His forgiving grace. Therefore, our Synod is very much Christ-centered. Our focus is on Jesus Christ and His presence among us.

We believe that Jesus is present among us through the life-giving waters of Baptism, a sacrament that unites us with Jesus' death and resurrection, washes away our sins, and brings us into the body of Christ, the Holy Christian Church. We rejoice in the gracious presence of Jesus in the sacrament called the Lord's Supper. It is the true body and blood under bread and wine given to Christians to eat and to drink. In this sacred meal, Jesus feeds us and sustains us with the forgiveness of sins, strengthening us for a life of service to Him in this world, and preparing us for life forever with Him in heaven.

As the people of the Missouri Synod, we rejoice in Christ's presence, not only in our public worship assemblies, but also in our daily lives. Whether our place of service is small or great, humble or exalted in the eyes of the world, it is a holy calling in which we serve the Lord Jesus Christ with joyful hearts.

Together and individually, we strive to follow the example of Jesus who loved us and cared for us when we had no strength. Through our church's relief programs, our Synod is present with material and spiritual resources to care for those

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who suffer from natural disasters and tragedies in the world. We have built and help to maintain a large network of Lutheran hospitals, nursing homes, and human-care agencies to serve the sick, the elderly, the victims of abuse, those struggling with addictions, and many others coping with difficult situations and transitions in life.

The Missouri Synod has been a strong voice in America in defense of the sanctity and value of all human life from the unborn to the handicapped to the elderly. Because we are people-sensitive, we want to serve others as God has loved and served us in Jesus Christ.

### Reaching Out Boldly with the Gospel

The Bible calls Jesus “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). Having paid our debt with His blood, Jesus rose from the dead and returned to the heavenly Father to reign over all things. He gave His disciples the command to go into all the world to baptize, teach, and observe all that He commanded. He promised that He would continue to be with them through the ages.

Through congregations, and our regional and national offices, we strive to carry out our Lord’s command to make known His love and forgiveness to the whole world. The LCMS operates a worldwide mission program, sending more than 400 missionaries into nearly 70 countries around the world. These missionaries bring the good news of Jesus into places where His Name is not yet known and help to strengthen existing churches. Because each Christian is a witness for the Lord Jesus Christ, it is our duty and privilege to tell the good news of Jesus to our family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, and all the people God puts in our lives.

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is a respected leader in the field of Christian education. We place great emphasis on instruction in the Word. We recognize this as one of the most effective ways of reaching out boldly with the Gospel. Therefore, we administer the largest Protestant school system in the United States, operating more than 2,000 preschools, elementary schools, and high schools serving more than 250,000 students. We also value higher education, operating 10 colleges and universities. Our Synod’s schools are not merely private alternatives to public education, but Christ-centered, Word-saturated havens of God’s Spirit.

To maintain the high quality and spiritual direction of our schools, we educate a large number of Lutheran school teachers in our universities. These teachers are dedicated servants of the Lord who are able to lead students into the love of Christ. To fill our church pulpits with mature men of God who know the Scriptures and are able to proclaim and apply the Word, we operate two seminaries.

### Faithful to the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions

Martin Luther, the great Christian Reformer of the 16th century, boldly proclaimed the Bible’s most important message: that Christ came into the world to save sinners, and lived among us to defeat our enemies—sin, death and, the devil. Luther believed and taught that Jesus’ sacrificial death on the cross washed away the sins of the whole world, and that those who place their trust in Him are forgiven. They are declared righteous and are reconciled to God.

What Luther began in 1517 reached its culmination in 1580, when the official statements of Lutheran belief (the Lutheran Confessions) were gathered together in what is known as the Book of Concord. We place great value in retaining and advancing the cause of the Lutheran Reformation. We see in the Reformation movement the hand of God working to preserve the truth of His Word and the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Therefore, we are committed to genuine, historical Lutheranism.

### Marked by Peace and Unity in the Lord

Finally, we are united, not by our color, or our occupations, or our social and economic status, but by our union with the living Lord Jesus Christ and our common confession of the truths of His Word. We rejoice and live in the faith that God has given us. We are eager to share that faith with many others, so that all may come to know Jesus Christ, the one who brings us real peace, deep joy, and life forever.

Welcome to The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod!

*To locate an LCMS congregation near you, or to receive more information about us . . .*

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