

# STATEMENT OF BELIEFS FOR PRINCE OF PEACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

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## 2 SYNODICAL RELATIONSHIP

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This congregation, Prince of Peace Lutheran Church Freedom, Pennsylvania, 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 Scripture 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.

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 and ministers includes their agreement to respect and honor and uphold (Bylaw 1.7.1, 1.8.1) decisions (resolutions) made by the Synod in its national conventions regarding the understanding of the teachings of Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions and practices that are consistent with such teaching. The Synod in convention is the “principle legislative assembly” of the LCMS (Bylaw 3.1.1) and its resolution 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 church 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 circumstance 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 determines 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 this Prince of Peace govern our decision-making and policies. A copy is available upon request.

### **3 ON MARRIAGE, GENDER, AND HUMAN SEXUALITY**

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We believe, teach, and confess that God wonderfully and immutably creates each person as male or female. These 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, teach, and confess 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, Matt. 19:5-6) and that God gave marriage as a picture of the relationship between Christ and His bride the Church (Eph. 5:32).

As a member congregation of The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, our position is and always has been consistent with the Synod's beliefs on marriage. The official position of The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, as set forth in 1998 Res. 3-21 ("To Affirm the Sanctity of Marriage and to Reject Same-Sex Unions"), is that homosexual unions come under categorical prohibition in the Old and New Testaments (Lev. 18:22, 24; 20:13; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; 1 Tim. 1:9-10) as contrary to the Creator's design (Rom. 1:26-27). These positions and beliefs can be found on the LCMS website <http://www.lcms.org/>, along with other statements, papers and reports on the subject of homosexuality and same-sex civil unions and marriage. Our pastor(s) will not officiate over any marriages inconsistent with these beliefs, and our church property may not be used for any marriage ceremony, reception or other activity that would be inconsistent with our beliefs and this policy.

We believe, teach, and confess 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) and that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between a man and a woman (Ex. 20:14). We believe, teach, and confess that any form of sexual immorality (including adultery, fornication, homosexual behavior, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest, and use of pornography) is sinful and offensive to God (Matt. 15:18-20; 1 Cor. 6:9-10), and harmful to one's self (1 Cor. 6:18).

We believe, teach, and confess that in order to preserve the function and integrity of Prince of Peace as the local Body of Christ, and to provide a biblical role model to the Prince of Peace members and the community, it is imperative that all persons employed by Prince of Peace in any capacity, or who serve as volunteers, agree to and abide by this Statement on Marriage, Gender, and Sexuality (Matt. 5:16, Phil. 2:14-16; 1 Thess. 5:22).

We believe, teach, and confess that God offers redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ (Acts 3:19-21; Rom. 10:9-10; 1 Cor. 6:9-11).

We believe, teach, and confess that every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity (Mark 12:28-31; Luke 6:31). Hateful and harassing behavior or attitudes directed toward any individual are to be repudiated and are not in accord with Scripture nor the doctrines of Prince of Peace.

## 4 ON THE SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE

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We believe, teach, and confess that all human life is sacred and created by God in His image (Gen 1:26-27). Human life is of inestimable worth in all its dimensions, including pre-born babies, the aged, the physically or mentally challenged, and every other stage or condition from conception through natural death. We are therefore called to defend, protect, and value all human life (Ps. 139).

## 5 CONCERNING COMMUNION

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The Lord's Supper is celebrated here at Prince of Peace in the confession and glad confidence that, as He promised, our Lord not only gives to us the bread and wine, but His very body and blood to eat and drink for the forgiveness of sins and to strengthen our union with Him and with one another. St. Paul wrote: "Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself." (1Co 11:28-29 ESV) **Therefore, since we receive this Sacrament to our benefit or to our detriment, out of loving concern for the well-being of all who commune and from based upon the teachings of the Holy Scriptures, we request all who commune here:**

1. Be baptized Christians,
2. Have received instruction on the essence and significance of the Lord's Supper,
3. Are able to examine themselves, recognizing their sin and their need for God's grace through this beneficial gift,
4. Confess with us these important truths about the Lord's Supper:
  - That we stand before God as sinners in need of a Savior;
  - That as sinners there is nothing within us that makes any of us worthy to receive the Lord's Supper, that we do not deserve God's grace and forgiveness on the merit of our own works; (Romans 3:23)
  - That God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to be our Savior from sin, death and the devil; (John 3:16-17)
  - That in the Lord's Supper, we receive the real presence, that is in, with, and under the bread and wine, the body and blood of Jesus is truly present and it is not merely a symbolic representation; (Matthew 26:26-29)
  - That out of His boundless mercy, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ gives His body and blood in this Sacrament for the forgiveness of our sins and the strengthening of our faith; (Matthew 26:28, 1 John 1:7)
  - That our Lord Jesus invites to His table those who are sorry for their sins, who believe Christ's promise to be truly present in this Sacrament and who have faith in these words of Jesus, "given and shed **for you**" for the forgiveness of sins;

- That by our participation together at the altar of the Lord, we are proclaiming our common confession of the historic Christian faith. (1 Corinthians 10:16-17)

## **6 CONCERNING BAPTISM**

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According to the Word of God, Baptism is not mere water, but a promise imparting the grace of God, for all "who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death. We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his," as it is written in Romans 6.

Because this and many other Words of Scripture teach that Baptism gives the grace of God, with the true Church in every place, we also teach that Baptism is necessary, and so children are to be baptized as well as adults, for through baptism all are offered to God to be received into his grace.