

What We Believe

From Good Shepherd Lutheran Church Constitution
Adopted July 31, 2011

Article 02 Confession of Faith

- 02.01 This Church confesses the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit – three distinct persons in one Godhead.
- 02.02 This Church confesses Jesus Christ alone as Lord and Savior and the Gospel as the power of God, for the salvation of all who believe him.
- a. Jesus Christ – true God, Son of the Father from eternity, and true man, born of the Virgin Mary – is the Word of God incarnate, through whom everything was made and through whose life, death, and resurrection alone delivers from sin, death, and the devil and inaugurates a new creation.
 - b. The oral proclamation of God’s message to us as both law and gospel is the Word of God, revealing judgment and mercy in the person and work of Jesus Christ through whom God by his grace lone was pleased to reconcile the world and all things to himself.
 - c. The canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the Word of God. Inspired by the Holy Spirit speaking through their authors, they record God’s revelation centering in Jesus Christ. Through them the Holy Spirit speaks to us creating and sustaining Christian faith and fellowship.

THEREFORE:

- 02.03 This Church accepts the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the sole authoritative source and norm of our proclamation, faith, and life.
- 02.04 This Church accepts the Apostles’ Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds as true declarations of the scriptural faith of the congregation.
- 02.05 This Church accepts the Unaltered Augsburg Confession and the Small Catechism as true witnesses to the Word of God, normative for our teaching and practice. This Church acknowledges as one with it in faith and doctrine all churches that likewise accept the teachings of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession and the Small Catechism.
- 02.06 This Church accepts the other confessional writings in the Book of Concord, namely, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Smallcald Articles, the Treatise, the Large Catechism, and the Formula of Concord, as further valid expositions of the Holy Scriptures.
- 02.07 This Church confesses the Gospel that we are justified by grace alone, that is, by faith alone through Christ alone as the heart and center of the Holy Scriptures, the ecumenical creeds and the Lutheran confessional writings. This Gospel is the sole criterion against which all teaching, practice, structure and polity must be judged. It is the power of God for salvation and creates and sustains a holy Christian people and priesthood of all believers for God’s mission in the world.

Article 03 NATURE OF THE CHURCH

- 03.01 Luther wrote, “Thank God a seven year old child knows what the church is namely, holy believers and sheep who hear the voice of their shepherd. So children pray, ‘I believe in one holy Christian church.’ Its holiness does not consist of surplices, tonsures, albs, or other

ceremonies. . . . invented over and above the Holy Scriptures, but it consists of the Word of God and true faith" (SA 3/12, SS2-3.)

- 03.02 Jesus Christ is the Lord of his church and its head. All power to create, sustain, and perpetuate the church comes from the risen Christ through his Spirit. God's children are called, gathered, enlightened, and sanctified by the Holy Spirit through the proclamation of God's Word, which is Christ (CA 5). All actions of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church are carried out under Christ's rule, authority, and final judgment on the Last Day.
- 03.03 The holy Christian church is Christ's body on earth, living under God's Word as law and gospel; it exists to serve and glorify Christ until he returns. In this church sins are forgiven and believers, simultaneously justified and sinners, are daily raised up to lead new lives using their various gifts to serve their neighbors and creation to the glory of God.
- 03.04 The holy Christian church is unequivocally revealed solely by the proclamation of the holy Word of God, that is the preaching of the Gospel in its purity and the distribution of the Sacraments according to the Gospel. Thus while Christ's Spirit may shape his church in a variety of forms for differing times and places, it is not necessary that church structure and polity be the same everywhere.
- 03.05 The word "church" ("ecclesia") refers both to the local church and to the whole Christian church on earth and in heaven. While the church as the body of Christ finds its end and fulfillment in the eschatological kingdom of God, it also exists now even though it is hidden and oppressed by false belief, hypocrisy, and sin (CA 8). By faith the church is linked already to the eschatological kingdom in hope while in this age it experiences fellowship under the cross and with other believers in Christ.

Article 04 STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

- 04.01 The mission of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church is to bear witness to the good news that sinners are put right with God by faith alone in Jesus Christ and resist any corruption of this gospel.
 - a. Looking only to the cross of Christ, we proclaim God's Word as law and gospel for the redemption of his people today. May God help us to the glory of his name.
 - b. The Body of Christ (congregation) is a people created by God in Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit, called and sent to bear witness to God's creative, redeeming, and sanctifying activity in the world.
- 04.02 Called and sent to be disciples in God's mission, this Church as part of the Body of Christ shall:
 - a. **Worship God** in proclamation of the Word and administration of the sacraments and through lives of prayer, praise, thanksgiving, witness and service.
 - b. **Proclaim God's saving Gospel** of justification by grace for Christ's sake through faith alone, according to apostolic witness in the Holy Scripture, preserving and transmitting the Gospel faithfully to future generations.
 - c. **Carry out Christ's Great Commission** by reaching out to all people through witness and service, to bring them to faith in Christ and doing all ministry with an awareness consistent with the understanding of God as Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier of all.
 - d. **Serve in response to God's Love** to meet human needs, caring for the sick and the aged, advocating dignity and justice for all, working for the peace of God to be known among nations, and standing with the poor and powerless, committing itself to their needs.

- e. **Nurture its members in the Word of God** so as to grow in faith and hope and love, to see daily life as the primary setting for the exercise of their Christian calling, and to use the gifts of the Spirit for their life together and for their calling in the world.
- f. **Manifest the unity given to the people of God** by living together in the love of Christ and by joining with other Christians in prayer and action to express and preserve the unity which the Spirit gives.

04.03 To fulfill these purposes, this Church shall with the help of God

- a. **Provide services of Worship** at which the Word of God is preached and the sacraments administered.
- b. **Provide pastoral care** in adherence to scripture, to assist all members to participate fully in this ministry. This shall include but is not limited to: wedding ceremonies, anniversaries, vow renewals, and other observances for one man and one woman as biologically defined by their natural birth, baptisms and confirmations, funerals and memorial services for deceased members or relatives of members, and Christian counseling for any purpose for members or non-members with counseling needs. Church facilities may be used in furtherance of this, under provisions of the By-Laws.
- c. **Challenge, equip, and support all members** in carrying out their calling in their daily lives and in this Church.
- d. **Teach** the Word of God.
- e. **Witness** to the reconciling Word of God in Christ, reaching out to all people.
- f. **Respond** to human need, work for justice and peace, care for the sick and the suffering, and participate responsibly in society.
- g. **Inspire** its members to provide financial support for this Church's ministry.
- h. **Foster and participate** in interdependent relationships with other churches.

04.04 This Church shall develop an organizational structure to be described in the By-Laws. The Church Council shall prepare descriptions of the responsibilities of each committee, task force, or other organizational group and shall review their actions. The Council will oversee the activities and efforts to carry out the Statement of Purpose.

Article 17 STATEMENTS

Added August 30, 2015

17.01 Statement on **Marriage, Gender, and Sexuality**

- a. Among many other negative cultural developments over the last several decades, a widespread acceptance of sex outside of marriage and other sexual sins as biblically defined, including homosexual behavior, constitute direct attacks upon the timeless and universal institution of marriage.
- b. Marriage between one man and one woman for life uniquely reflects Christ's relationship with His church. Marriage also serves as the foundational unit of a stable society. It provides the best chance that children will grow up in the same home with both their parents.
Appropriate scripture includes:

²¹ Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

²² Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. ²³ For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. ²⁴ Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her ²⁶ to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, ²⁷ and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. ²⁸ In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹ After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church—³⁰ for we are members of his body. ³¹ “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” ³² This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. ³³ However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

Ephesians 5:21-33

² But since sexual immorality is occurring, each man should have sexual relations with his own wife, and each woman with her own husband.

1 Corinthians 7:2

- c. We believe that God wonderfully and immutably creates each person as male or female. These two distinct, complimentary genders together reflect the image and nature of God, as is stated:

²⁷ So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

Genesis 1:27

- d. Some individuals reject their biological sex and present themselves as the opposite sex. In so doing, these confused individuals reject God’s design and the person He created them to be. From the above scripture, rejection of one’s biological sex is a rejection of the image of God within that person.
- e. God created and sanctioned marriage to bring together men and women, the complementary halves of humanity, by joining them in “one-flesh” unions. 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:

¹⁸ The LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.”

²¹ So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man’s ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. ²² Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

²³ The man said, “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called ‘woman,’ for she was taken out of man.”

²⁴That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.

Genesis 2:18, 21-24

- f. We believe that God intends sexual intimacy to occur only between a man and a woman who are married to each other:

¹⁸Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body.

²But since sexual immorality is occurring, each man should have sexual relations with his own wife, and each woman with her own husband. ³The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. ⁴The wife does not have authority over her own body but yields it to her husband. In the same way, the husband does not have authority over his own body but yields it to his wife. ⁵Do not deprive each other except perhaps by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

1 Corinthians 6:18, 7:2-5

- g. We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between a man and a woman.
- h. We believe that any form of sexual immorality (including adultery, fornication, homosexual behavior, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest, and the use of pornography) is sinful and offensive to God.

¹⁸For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. ¹⁹Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. ²⁰For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 5:18-20

⁹Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men ¹⁰nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

1 Corinthians 6:9-10

- i. We believe that in order to preserve the function and integrity of this Church as the local Body of Christ, and to provide a biblical role model to members and the community, it is imperative that all persons employed by this Church in any capacity, or who serve as volunteers, agree to and abide by this statement.

(Partial justification for this is found in Matthew 15:18-20 above. Additional verses follow)

¹⁴Do everything without grumbling or arguing, ¹⁵so that you may become blameless and pure, “children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.” Then you will shine among them like

stars in the sky ¹⁶ as you hold firmly to the word of life. And then I will be able to boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor in vain.

Philippians 2:14-16

²⁰ Do not treat prophecies with contempt ²¹ but test them all; hold on to what is good, ²² reject every kind of evil.

1 Thessalonians 5:21-22

- j. We believe that God offers redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ.

¹⁹ Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, ²⁰ and that he may send the Messiah, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus. ²¹ Heaven must receive him until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets.

Acts 3:19-21

⁹ If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.

Romans 10:9-10

⁹ Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men ¹⁰ nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹ And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

- k. We believe that every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect and dignity.

²⁸ One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, “Of all the commandments, which is the most important?”

²⁹ “The most important one,” answered Jesus, “is this: ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. ³⁰ Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ ³¹ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.”

Mark 12:28-31

- l. Hateful and harassing behavior or attitudes directed toward any group or individual are to be repudiated and are not in accord with Scripture nor the doctrines of the church.

³¹ Do to others as you would have them do to you.

Luke 6:31

17.02 Statement on the **Sanctity of Human Life**

- a. We believe that all human life is sacred and is created by God in His image. Human life is of inestimable worth in all its dimensions, including unborn 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.

- b. We believe that life begins at conception, and we are in awe at the involvement of God our creator in the process. As the psalmist said,

¹³For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. ¹⁴I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.

¹⁵My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. ¹⁶Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

Psalm 139:13-16

- c. We believe these are sacred matters of personal faith, conviction, and conscience – not to be interfered with nor imposed on by legislation or government intrusion or interference, as we understand the United States Constitution.