

Bethlehem Parma

What We Believe

Summary

We believe that God – *the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit* – made us, loved us, and saved us! Then, through Holy Baptism, God the Father worked by the Holy Spirit to clothe us in the righteousness of Jesus Christ, by which He made us His very children, who are fully forgiven, spiritually alive, and awaiting the return of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Basics

- **We base all we believe, teach, and confess on the Holy Bible**, which is God's very Word to us ([Psalm 119:160](#); [2 Tim. 3:16-17](#); [2 Peter 1:20-21](#)).
- **Bible Interpretation Method:** We use the Historical-Grammatical method, so we take the Bible to mean what it says (unless the context indicates a non-literal meaning). We use Scripture to interpret Scripture; when a passage is difficult to understand, we use other passages to help us properly understand it.
- **The Way of Salvation:**
 - + We believe, teach, and confess that all have sinned ([Romans 3:23](#)) and deserve God's eternal punishment ([Romans 6:23](#)).
 - + Nevertheless, God's awesome love moved Him to send His Son to be our Savior ([John 3:16](#)). Then Jesus lived a sinless life ([Hebrews 4:15](#)), received our sins and our penalty ([2 Corinthians 5:21](#); [1 John 2:2](#)), died to seal His victory ([1 Peter 3:18](#)), and rose victorious over sin, death, and the devil ([Acts 10:41](#); [1 Corinthians 15:56-57](#)).
 - + Now God is working through the means of grace – thus Word and Sacrament – to bring sinners into

His kingdom, based on Jesus' finished work, and freely giving them the precious gifts of forgiveness, spiritual life, and eternal salvation!

The Holy Scriptures and Confessional Writings

- The **66 books of the Bible** are ♦the written Word of God and ♦the only rule [*accepted principle*] and norm [*standard*] of faith and practice.
- The Bible is the starting point in *rightly* understanding ♦the world, ♦right and wrong, ♦the purpose of life, ♦the reason for death, ♦the places of heaven and hell, and ♦much more!
- Those who are repentant (*sorry for their sins*) and trusting in Jesus for eternal life know the Bible is true. These are some key passages:
 - + [Isaiah 40:8](#) “...the word of our God stands forever.”
 - + [Proverbs 30:5](#) “Every word of God is tested [*and proven to be true*]...”
 - + [2 Timothy 3:16](#) All Scripture is inspired by God [*God breathed*]...”
 - + [2 Peter 1:21](#) “...men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.”
- The Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions, that is, The Book of Concord, are what we subscribe to in our confirmations and ordinations. The BOC contains these ten documents: The three Ecumenical Creeds (the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, the Athanasian Creed), the Unaltered Augsburg Confession, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles, the Large Catechism, the Small Catechism, and the Formula of Concord.

- [A Brief Statement \(1932\)](#) addresses issues that have arisen since the Lutheran Confessions were written.

Some Details

- **God:** He is one divine essence, yet there are three Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit ([Matthew 28:19](#)).
- **Creation:** God created all things in six days ([Genesis 1:1](#), [Genesis 2:2](#)).
- **Original Sin:** Since Adam's fall into sin, all people are sinful from conception; therefore, all are spiritually blind, dead, and enemies of God, thus deserving of eternal punishment ([Romans 5:12](#); [Psalm 51:5](#); [1 Corinthians 2:14](#); [Ephesians 2:1](#); [Romans 8:7](#); [2 Thessalonians 1:9](#)).
- **Bible:** It is God's very Word to us, without error, without contradiction, and for our eternal benefit; furthermore, it shows us our sin, our Savior, and the true meaning of life ([2 Timothy 3:16](#); [2 Peter 1:20-21](#); [Romans 3:20](#); [John 5:39](#); [John 14:6](#); [Acts 17:24-31](#)).
- **Jesus:** He is the Son of God, the second Person of the Holy Trinity, who became flesh and dwelt among us in order to live without sin, receive our sins, receive our eternal punishment, and lay down His life for our salvation ([Mark 1:1](#); [John 1:1](#); [John 1:14](#); [Hebrews 4:15](#); [1 Peter 2:24](#); [1 John 2:2](#); [John 10:11](#)).
- **Justification:** Since no one can overcome his sin or make himself just in God's sight, God has done that for us in Jesus! Though no one is able to earn God's forgiveness, God declares us to be forgiven and justified through faith in Jesus – knowing about Him, believing such things to be true, and trusting in Him for eternal life ([Romans 3:20-24](#); [Romans 3:28](#); [John 3:16-18](#)).
- **Means of Grace:** Since all are spiritually helpless, God is the one who unites us to Jesus and His Saving work through Baptism and directly through His

Word ([Acts 2:38-39](#); [Titus 3:5](#); [James 1:18](#); [1 Peter 1:23](#)).

- **New Obedience:** Having been made alive in Christ, we desire to live for Christ, do the works God has prepared for us, and show forth the fruit of the Spirit ([2 Corinthians 5:15](#); [Ephesians 2:10](#); [Galatians 5:22-23](#)).
- **Spiritual Nourishment:** God is the one who strengthens and preserves us unto everlasting life through His Word and the Lord's Supper ([Philippians 1:6](#); [Matthew 4:4](#); [1 Corinthians 11:23-26](#)).
- **Repentance:** God is calling and enabling all people to admit their sins, be sorry for their sins, trust in Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins, and seek to live unto God's glory by living according to His Word ([Romans 3:23](#); [Acts 2:36-37](#); [Acts 3:19](#); [1 John 1:9](#); [John 5:24](#); [Matthew 5:16](#); [James 1:22](#)).
- **Jesus' Return:** At the appointed time, *and like a thief in the night*, Jesus will return, raise all the dead, separate the believers from the non-believers, give the fullness of eternal life to all believers, and send all non-believers and evil angels to eternal punishment ([Acts 17:31](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:2](#); [Matthew 24:37-39](#); [Hebrews 9:28](#); [John 5:28-29](#); [Matthew 25:31-46](#)).