

Lutheranism 101 – information to get started

A couple years ago, one of our seminary students (Ben Colahan) offered this helpful description for newcomers to Lutheranism. We hope that this helps to orient you to some of the ideas and practices you might encounter in our parish.

Lutheran Principles

- Principle #1: We cannot love until we have first experienced love.
- Principle #2: Fortunately, God's love is freely given to us without precondition or requirement in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- Principle #3: The experience that God really does love us is called faith. Faith is not a prerequisite for God's love; faith is a gift from God.
- Principle #4: Having experienced God's love, we want to respond with love to both God and our neighbor.
- Principle #5: However, as humans we continually doubt and forget that God really does love us unconditionally, which in turn makes it difficult to love others unconditionally. So we constantly return to where we hear the good news of God's love.

Consequences for our practice of worship & liturgy

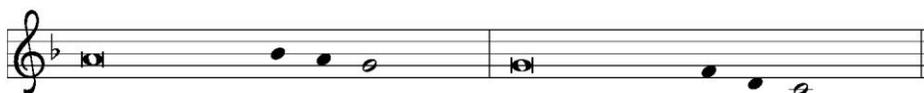
- Consequence #1: Worship is where we come to hear about God's love, not earn it.
- Consequence #2: Nothing is required of you in worship. If you don't feel comfortable saying or doing something, don't do it.
- Consequence #3: Nothing is prohibited from you in worship. You are invited to participate in any part of the service.

Some helpful tips for worship

- Tip #1: The service is divided into 4 parts, which enact the drama of faith:
- Gathering—The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.
 - Word—God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.
 - Meal—God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.
 - Sending—God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.
- Tip #2: Some text in your bulletin is **bold**, for parts that you are invited to speak.
- Tip #3: You are not required to put money in the basket.
- Tip #4: You are welcomed and encouraged to participate in communion, no matter what your background or what you believe. It is Christ's table, and Christ welcomes all.
- Tip #5: When in doubt, ask someone next to you—we're friendly!

And the Chapel's liturgical idiosyncrasies!

- Idiosyncrasy #1: We try to emphasize that God's love is found in relationships, and that our faith is sustained by community. Therefore, the sanctuary is often arranged so that in any seat, you are aware of the presence of your brothers and sisters in Christ around you.
- Idiosyncrasy #2: Kneelers are available at the entrance to the sanctuary. Their use is based entirely on individual preference. Many members use the kneelers during confession and forgiveness, and after communion. If you would like a kneeler, please get one before the service starts.
- Idiosyncrasy #3: When we prepare to celebrate communion, the pastor will invite everyone to crowd around the altar. If you are comfortable, please join in the throng. The bread and wine will be given to you by someone next to you with the phrases "the body of Christ, broken for you," and "the blood of Christ, shed for you." After you have been given bread and wine, please do the same for a person next to you. After you have communed, stay standing around the altar; the party's just starting.
- Idiosyncrasy #4: Following Luther, we believe that the pastor does not transform the bread and wine into Christ body and blood, but instead, God's promise allows the community to realize that Christ's body is present in, with, and under the bread and wine. Therefore, the entire congregation is often encouraged to say the words of institution together.
- Idiosyncrasy #5: During communion, there is a place for prayer and healing by the baptismal font. If you would like to pray or receive healing simply walk up to an unoccupied minister behind the organ. You may specify a particular request for prayer or ask for prayer on a general subject.
- Idiosyncrasy #6: We often chant psalms. To chant a psalm, match the text before the vertical line with the long note, and the text after the vertical line with the short notes:



*I will extol the Lord | at all times;
God's praise will always be | on my lips.*

Psalms are usually two phrases long. Match the first phrase with the first measure of music, and the second phrase with the second measure of music.

- Idiosyncrasy #7: The words we use to describe God affects how we live our lives and relate to one another. Historically, only using male language for God within the Church has provided justification for the subjugation of women. However, the Bible describes God in many ways and with many names - including many feminine ones. For this reason, we embrace a rich variety of Biblical names for God and do not give preference to masculine descriptions.

God is not male. To avoid conceiving of God outside of Christ as a man, we avoid using exclusively male language to describe God.