

# Who We Are

## An Overview of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

### Historical Roots

Sixteenth century reformation of the Christian church led by Martin Luther.

### Founded in the United States

Established in April 1847 by Saxon and other German immigrants seeking the freedom to practice their faith as they saw fit. Charter congregations were located in Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Wisconsin, and New York.

### Members

- 2,400,000 baptized
- 1,900,000 confirmed
- Second-largest Lutheran church body in North America
- Among the 10 largest Christian denominations in the United States

**Congregations:** 6,170

**Clergy:** 9,000

**Educators:** 26,600

**Missionaries:** 800

**Recognized Service Organizations:** 300

### Auxiliaries

- International Lutheran Laymen's League (Lutheran Hour Ministries)
- Lutheran Women's Missionary League

**President:** Dr. Gerald B. Kieschnick

**Annual Budget:** \$81 million

**LCMS Foundation Assets:** \$888 million

**Lutheran Church Extension Fund Loans in Force:** \$1.5 billion

### Worldwide Partners

The Synod is in full doctrinal fellowship with 30 other confessional Lutheran churches on every continent except Antarctica.



LCMS International Center, St. Louis, Mo.

# Key LCMS Ministries

## World Mission

LCMS World Mission is the global Gospel outreach of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, focusing on church planting and leadership development in North America and around the world. Approximately 320 career missionaries work in some 85 countries. In addition to its career missionaries, LCMS World Mission works with thousands of national and volunteer mission workers in these countries. An additional 230 military chaplains from the Air Force, Army, Navy, Veteran’s Administration, Civil Air Patrol, National Guard, and Reserve serve the Armed Forces around the world.

## Education

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod operates two seminaries, 10 universities, and the largest Protestant school system in North America comprising some 2,500 preschools, elementary, and high schools. LCMS universities offer programs that serve the needs of students preparing for professional service in the church, students studying to enter lay careers, and graduate students. All programs provide a Lutheran and Christian foundation for academic study. LCMS seminaries educate pastors to serve in Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod congregations, and also offer masters and doctoral level educational programs that meet the needs of pastors and theologians.

## Worship

The Commission on Worship provides guidance and materials for worship designed to foster understanding and love for the Lutheran heritage. A primary responsibility is the development and/or revision of service books and hymnals for both individual and corporate use.

## LCMS World Relief/Human Care

LCMS World Relief/Human Care operates a host of ministries to meet urgent human need. On its own and in cooperation with other Lutheran groups, LCMS World Relief/Human Care provides aid to victims of famine, disease, war, and natural disasters both domestically and around the world. Its mission is to reach out in mercy and compassion to those in need, work to alleviate suffering, and enable people in need to provide for themselves and their families.

## Black Ministry

LCMS Black Ministry works to assist congregations in reaching out more effectively with the Gospel of Jesus Christ among African Americans. Programs include focusing on planting new churches, revitalizing existing congregations, recruiting pastors and professional church workers, assimilating African immigrants, and working to increase enrollment in Lutheran schools.

## Ministerial Growth and Support

This Commission serves LCMS pastors and other professional church workers by providing continuing education, vocational development, care and counsel in the performance of official duties, and support of the personal well-being of church workers and their families.

Visit [www.lcms.org](http://www.lcms.org) for information about all our ministries, including Communications, District & Congregational Services, Theology and Church Relations, and many others.

# Faith and Practice

## Like other Christian churches

The LCMS teaches and responds to the love of the Triune God: the Father, Creator of all that exists; Jesus Christ, the Son, who became human to suffer and die for the sins of all human beings and to rise to life again in the ultimate victory over death and Satan; and the Holy Spirit, who creates faith through God's Word and Sacraments. The three Persons of the Trinity are coequal and coeternal, one God.

## Being "Lutheran"

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod accepts and teaches the Bible-based teachings of Martin Luther that inspired the Protestant Reformation of the Christian church in the 16th century. The teachings can be summed up in three phrases:

Grace alone.  
Scripture alone.  
Faith alone.

### *Grace alone*

God loves the people of the world, even though they are sinful, rebel against Him, and do not deserve His love. He sent Jesus, His Son, to love the unlovable and save the ungodly.

### *Scripture alone*

The Bible is God's inerrant and infallible Word, in which He reveals His Law and His Gospel of

salvation in Jesus Christ. It is the sole rule and norm for Christian doctrine.

### *Faith alone*

By His suffering and death as the substitute for all people of all time, Jesus purchased and won forgiveness and eternal life for them.

Those who hear this Good News and believe it have the eternal life that it offers. God creates faith in Christ and gives people forgiveness through Him.

## The word "synod"

The word "synod" comes from the Greek words that mean "walking together." LCMS congregations voluntarily choose to belong to the Synod. Diverse in their service, these congregations hold to a shared confession of Jesus Christ as taught in Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions.

## LCMS congregations are "confessional"

LCMS congregations believe that the Lutheran Confessions are the correct interpretation and presentation of Biblical doctrine. These statements of belief, or confessions, were put into writing by church leaders during the 16th century. The simplest of these is *Luther's Small Catechism*. The confessions are contained in *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*.

# Meet the President

## Dr. Gerald B. Kieschnick



Upon election to his first three-year term as president of the 2.6 million-member Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in July 2001, Dr. Gerald B. Kieschnick said, “The focus and mission of the church has to be communicating

the love, mercy, and grace of Christ to the people of the world.” Dr. Kieschnick has been working since his election as the church body’s 13th president to carry out that mission.

Just prior to becoming LCMS president, Dr. Kieschnick had been president of the Synod’s Texas District for 10 years. He also served that district as circuit counselor from 1978 to 1981 and as director of public relations from 1977 to 1986. Prior to his Texas District presidency, Dr. Kieschnick was director of development at Lutheran Foundation of Texas from 1986 to 1988, and then served as its executive director from 1988 to 1991.

From 1988 until his election as LCMS president, Dr. Kieschnick chaired the LCMS Commission on Theology and Church Relations. He also served on the program committee of the LCMS Council of Presidents.

Born in Houston on January 29, 1943, Kieschnick attended Texas A&M University, from which he graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in 1964. He graduated in 1970 from Concordia Theological Seminary, Springfield, Ill. (currently Fort Wayne, Ind.), obtained his Master of Divinity degree in 1977 at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, and received an honorary Doctor of Laws degree in 1996 from Concordia University, Austin, Texas.

After his ordination in 1970, Dr. Kieschnick served as pastor at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Biloxi, Miss., until 1973; at Redeemer Lutheran Church, Beaumont, Texas, 1973 to 1981; and at Faith Lutheran Church, Georgetown, Texas, 1981 to 1986.

Dr. Kieschnick and his wife, Terry, have two grown children, Andrew and Angela (Keith), and two grandchildren, all of whom live in Texas.

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