

Statement of Faith – Our Savior’s @ McCall, Idaho Draft Date 2018

Introduction

Our Savior Lutheran Church (OSLC) is part of a historical, orthodox Christian denomination called, “The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.” The LCMS is an historical denomination of Christianity with roots in the period of history called the Reformation in the 16th century. The LCMS is a distinctly American church body that originated during the 19th century in the state of Missouri. The LC-MS is the second largest denominational, organizational gathering of Lutheran congregations in the United States. As such, OSLC is committed to be a mission-driven and Biblically-based faith community 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 all other followers of Jesus, OSLC teaches and responds to the love of the Triune God, who created and loves all that exists; embraced humanity in order to live, suffer, die, and rise again in order to live in relationship with us. We believe that God is alive and active in our world and that God brings people to faith and new life.

Faith

OSLC embraces a Trinitarian faith as expressed historically in the ecumenical creeds (Apostles, Nicene, and Athanasian). OSLC voluntarily chooses to belong to a denomination that shares in the confession of and mission with Jesus Christ as taught in the Bible. 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, OSLC embraces the historical, orthodox faith as expressed through the Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church.

OSLC teaches and responds to the love of the Triune God. Father/Creator; Son/Savior/Jesus; Holy Spirit/Sanctifier/Healer. The three persons of the Trinity are coequal and coeternal, one God. We accept and teach the Bible-based teachings of Martin Luther that inspired the Reformation of the Christian Church. Though we identify ourselves unapologetically as Christian people, we also uniquely uphold the teachings that can be summarized in four short phrases: Grace alone, Faith alone, Scripture alone, Christ Alone.

Sola Gratia – Grace Alone

God loves the people of the world. Jesus, God made flesh, reveals the nature and character of God and God’s disposition to bring love, salvation, and the presence of His Kingdom into people’s lives outside of their works or sense of self-righteousness. All we receive from God is a gift of His grace.

Sola Fide – Faith Alone

By His suffering, death, and resurrection, Jesus shares the grace of God and the gifts of forgiveness and eternal life to all people. Christ Jesus is this Good News and those who embrace Jesus as Savior and follow Him as Lord live under His grace, love and mercy from now and through eternity. God is the giver of the gift of faith in Christ and calls us to respond to His gift of faith by living faithful lives.

Sola Scriptura – Scripture Alone

The Bible is the revelation of God’s grace, purposes and will for the world. Christians call the Bible “God’s Word.” In the Bible we experience the story of salvation as well as witness the incarnation of God’s nature, character and purposes throughout history culminating in the life and sacrifice of Jesus as the perfect revelation of God. As it is written in 2 Timothy 3:16, “All scripture is good for teaching, reproof, for training in righteousness” and for the equipping of people who follow Jesus into actions that enable God to fulfill His mission in the world and bring glory to God.

Sola Christus – Christ Alone

Christ alone does all the work for our salvation through His life, death and resurrection. Christ alone empowers the believer through His promised Holy Spirit. Jesus is the embodiment, proclaimer and foundation of the Gospel. In the Christian faith, there is no “Jesus plus...” there is only Christ Alone. Christ gives salvation (Jesus makes His kingdom alive in the hearts and lives of His disciples) by grace alone through faith alone to those who trust in Him alone.

Salvation

OSLC believes that God saves us by grace alone, through faith alone in Christ alone. There is nothing we can do to make ourselves right with God. In Jesus, God has done everything necessary for our salvation. When we put our faith in Jesus, his righteousness is credited to us and our sins are forgiven for his sake. (Ephesians 2:8-9, Romans 3:21-26, Romans 4:23-24)

How God works in us

OSLC believes God’s Holy Spirit works in our lives through the Means of Grace. God’s Word teaches both “Law and Gospel.” In the Law, God restrains sin by threat of punishment, reveals our sin in contrast to his perfect will, and guides believers into good works. In the Gospel, God reveals the good news of our salvation, offers forgiveness of sins, works faith and enables us to do the good works that please him. We believe that the Gospel is a “who” and not necessarily a “what.” Jesus is the Gospel. Jesus is the focal point of our lives together in “Loving Jesus, Loving Others and Living for Jesus.” We celebrate the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Baptism is God’s means of grace, giving new birth to both children and adults. The Holy Spirit also works through the Lord’s Supper to strengthen faith and give the forgiveness of sins. (Romans 3:20, John 1:16-17, 1 Peter 1:23, John 3:3-6, Acts 2:38-39, Titus 3:4-7, 1 Corinthians 11:23-27)

OSLC believes that God works in and through the gathering of His people into and through faith communities (commonly called, “churches”, what Jesus said was the gathering of “two or more in His name” Matthew 18:20). The Church consists of all those who trust in Christ wherever they are found all over the world. Jesus followers come together as a community to be equipped for life as ambassador of God’s Kingdom. We believe that the Church must be defined as much by action as it is by confession. We define the Church in light of: 1) Who God Is and What God has done and is doing; 2) Who He has made and Who He is making the Church to Be; and 3) What He has saved, created, empowered the Church to do. OSLC believes in church “health” just as much as church “growth.” As we trust in Jesus and are surrendered to His will, ways and power, the Spirit molds us in the likeness of Jesus bringing forth fruits of His presence as well as personal and corporate growth. We believe that the primary purpose of the gathering of God’s people is disciple-making. We believe that mission is not what a church does as much as how a church and a disciple of Jesus actually lives. We gather around the Means of Grace (Word and Sacrament). The church is the Body of Christ and is called to worship and

serve him. Christ created his church to preach repentance and forgiveness of sins throughout the world and to make disciples of all nations. (Ephesians 4:4-6, Matthew 18:20, Luke 24:47, Matthew 28:18-20)

We are a Sacramental Church

OSLC is also a “sacramental” faith community. Martin Luther wrote, “A Sacrament is a sacred act - instituted by God; containing certain visible means connected with His Word; by which God offers, gives and seals unto us the forgiveness of sins...essentially a sacrament is a means of grace. A means of grace is a way God creates faith, brings about conversion, justification and sanctification.”

OSLC proactively embraces this notion and deep theology of how God reveals Himself sacramentally to the world through and in the acts of ekklesia (the Greek word translated “church” in many bibles, that being, the gathered faith community, i.e. baptism, communion and the Word of God). OSLC also believes in the significant and transformational reality that those who follow Jesus, in other words, the WE of the Body of Christ are sacraments. God INITIATED and INSTITUTED our restored relationship with Him. Jesus followers are "chosen" and called by God, established in a new identity because of new life in Jesus. The Body of Christ, the value of discipleship, the mission and purpose of living our lives in and through His Spirit is God's idea. We as people who love and follow Jesus, are a visible means that God uses to communicate the truth of His Word. We are the hands and feet of Jesus today. WE are the Body of Christ in the world. We are agents of reconciliation. We offer the love that Jesus gave to us to others. We love because He first loved us. We love "one another as I (Jesus) have loved." We forgive each other. We extend God's healing hand through prayer. We in our own small but significant manner are "outward signs which have God's command and promise." A Sacrament is a sign of the covenant of grace and those who are called as followers of Jesus embody God's covenant in our world. Through the Holy Spirit, the real presence of Jesus lives in us and through us in our relationships and bridges we build in our communities.

OSLC believes that God uses a multitude of expressions of Himself and His love through people who are part of His Body. This does not mean that WE do the actual work. We simply bear the presence of the ONE whose work has been, is being and is going to be done in our lives. Jesus is the one who saves, justifies, and sanctifies. It is His work alone. We are "sent" to the world to "go and make disciples." We are a means of God's grace in and through our mission. In that way, every follower is a sacrament. Every person who loves Jesus is poured out, broken, bringing the washing of new life that only comes through Jesus into the presence of the relationships in which we have been blessed. We (as the gathered community of faith) not only handle the means of grace, we ARE a means of grace.

Leadership and Decision Making

OSLC is part of a denomination that “is not an ecclesiastical government, exercising legislative or coercive powers” concerning its member congregations and leaders. However, our voluntary association includes our agreement to respect and honor decisions made by the denomination regarding the understanding of the teachings of Scripture and the historical Confessions. OSLC operates according to our own constitution and bylaws and articles of Incorporation which establishes an orderly way of making decisions and determines which individuals or entities in the congregation (e.g., the Pastor and Board of Directors and Elders) will have authority to act on behalf of the congregation in specific circumstances. Our Constitution and bylaws govern our decision-making and policies. A copy is available upon request.

Our Lifestyle - Our Commitment to Life and biblically define Moral living

OSLC believes it is God's desire is for us to become like Jesus. Through faith in Jesus Christ we are born again as new creations. By the work of the Holy Spirit, Christ lives in us and we live in him, so that day by day we are transformed into the image of God's Son. This life-long process of sanctification is not complete until we get to heaven. (2 Corinthians 5:17, Romans 8:28-30, 2 Corinthians 3:18, Ephesians 2:10) We believe that God is not going to stop His work within us until His faithfulness has completed His work (Philippians 1:6). We as Jesus followers are committed to living a biblical lifestyle as we trust God's grace for guidance, forgiveness, and power to honor Jesus in all we are and do. OSLC recognizes and acknowledges that we give witness to God's truth and presence by being committed to living a transformed life. We believe that a Christian should live for the glory of God and well-being of their fellow men and women; that a Jesus follower's conduct should be blameless before the world; that he or she should be a faithful steward of their possessions; and that they should seek to realize to God's glory and for the sake of others the full stature of maturity in Christ. (II Corinthians 9:6-8; Ephesians 4:11-16, Philippians 2:14-16; Colossians 3:17-23; I Thessalonians 5:17, 18). We believe that a Holy God is our ultimate source of moral living. We believe that Jesus is not only our Savior but our Lord. We believe that God is the source of truth, a foundation for living, and the ultimate source of accountability for the choices we make in life. We embrace a God-focused frame of reference for life and seek to live our lives according to God's design. Having Jesus as Lord shapes our worldview. A worldview is a vision FOR life (not just a vision OF life). It gives a lens to interpret the world and is prescriptive for the world in that it provides the community with its most foundational values and norms. Our Lord Jesus is the ultimate source of reference wherein we find ourselves revealed. The Gospel is a response to the questions of who we are, what we may hope for, how we may aspire to act, what endures, what is important, what is of true value. Following Jesus, does not merely change the way we worship...it changes the way we play, work, buy, sell, love, do life.

We believe that all human life is sacred and created by God in His image. 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) The statement of faith does not exhaust the extent of our beliefs. The Bible itself, as the inspired and infallible Word of God speaks with final authority concerning truth, morality, and the proper conduct of humankind, is the sole and final source of all that we believe. For purposes of OSLC our faith, doctrine, practice, policy, and discipline, is overseen by our Leadership Team in accordance with our Congregation's Constitution, Statement of Faith and Bylaws.

OSLC embraces God's design in marriage for one man and one woman as well as God's will for gender differentiation and identity in maleness and femaleness. We believe that God wonderfully and immutably ("unchanging") creates each person as male or female. These two distinct, complementary genders together reflect the image and nature of God (Gen. 1:26-27). When we embrace our God-given gender, we embrace God's design and image in our lives. 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 (Gen. 2:18-25, Ephesians 5:21-33). The Bible tells us that marriage is a "living testimony" and vivid picture of Jesus' love for His Body, the Church and His people, you and me.

Church Membership

The membership of this Church shall be composed of individuals who are believers and followers of the Lord Jesus Christ and affirm the tenets of our faith, the primacy and authority of the scriptures, the doctrinal foundation of the Confessions, our Church Constitution, and who offer evidence, by their confession and their conduct, that they are living in accord with their affirmations and this Constitution and Bylaws, and are actively pursuing and continuing in a vital fellowship with the Lord, Jesus Christ.

The Board of Directors of this Church shall have final authority in all matters of church governance, as set forth and described in the Bylaws. Membership is achieved through a public affirmation of faith, through baptism into Jesus Christ, and/or by participation in an intentional training session with the Pastor and Leaders of OSLC that gives an overview of our church's purpose, values and mission. Membership is a serious decision made by individuals and families who seek to partner with and become part of a community committed to the principles and values listed above. Membership is maintained through active participation in the congregation's life and mission (as defined in the Constitution and Bylaws of OSLC).

Employment Criteria for OSLC

Federal law prohibits employment discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, or age. However, OSLC is a religious organization that considers an applicant or employee's religious beliefs in hiring and firing. And under a First Amendment doctrine known as the "Ministerial Exception," churches, Christian schools, and other qualifying organizations are exempt from employment non-discrimination laws for hiring and firing their ministerial employees – individuals who are tasked with performing the organization's rituals or teaching and explaining its beliefs. OSLC embraces this employment criterion. We mirror local, state and federal law prohibiting discrimination based on religion and unchangeable characteristics such as race, color, and national origin.

Signed Statement of Belief

As an employing organization, OSLC requires all employees and volunteers to sign a statement affirming that they will not act contrary to our statement of beliefs and values and are willing to comply with our standards of conduct. OSLC will retain these signed statements as part of the individual employee's permanent record." In addition, OSLC will have as part of this signed statement, that actions deemed contrary to our statement of belief or in violation of our standards of conduct (if any) constitutes good cause to terminate employment or volunteer services.

Employee or Volunteer as a Minister

As an employee or volunteer in our church and educational, children's ministry (i.e. Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, etc.), you are regarded as a minister. OSLC will provide each employee/volunteer with a distinct, descriptive, and clear job title. Your educational qualifications, duties, responsibilities, or activities will be clearly articulated in the position description. Please note that as an employee/volunteer there are religious grounds for limiting some employment/volunteer opportunities based upon the congregation's beliefs, values, mission or mutually agreed upon Code of Conduct (see below).

Code of Conduct expected of Employees and/or Volunteers

OSLC has adopted a code of conduct, grounded in the statements of belief and values and based upon our understanding of the Bible and Christian tradition. As a Christian organization, we value the intentionality of our witness to the transformational power of God as well as God's call to biblically defined moral living. This code of conduct expects all employees/volunteers to: (1) dress in conformance with one's biological sex; (2) use the restrooms and changing facilities that conforms with one's biological sex; and (3) to strive toward the goal of relational fulfillment in a marital union of one man and one woman. Our organization's statement on marriage, gender, and sexuality (stated above) highlights why this conduct is required. OSLC links all code of conduct expectations and requirements to scriptural teaching. Employees/Volunteers are expected to maintain an honorable, biblically defined moral lifestyle and as such refrain from actions such as cheating, stealing, disrespect for authority,

excessive abusive language, divisive actions, broken confidentiality, open hostility, blatant racism, unprovoked outbursts of anger, public intoxication, and malicious behavior.

Failure to comply - The church retains the right to discipline or to withdraw from employment or volunteering for any reason, but that failure to comply with expected standards of conduct will subject the employee or volunteer to potential disciplinary action, up to and including expulsion or dismissal from employment/volunteer action.