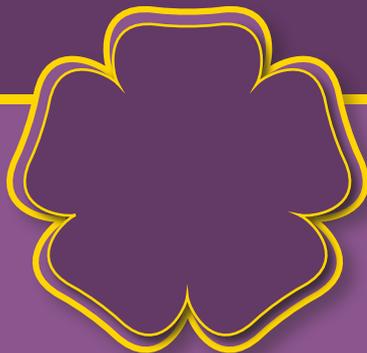




THE LUTHERAN
WORLD FEDERATION
GERMAN NATIONAL COMMITTEE



UNDERSTANDING LUTHERANS

A Pocket Guide to Lutheranism in Germany

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Edited by Oliver Schuegraf and Florian Hübner
on behalf of the Office of the German National Committee of the Lutheran
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PREFACE

Looking through a stained glass church window is always a peculiar experience. The colour and curvature of the glass alters the view. With the right lighting, you may be able to see a wealth of forms and colours. However, often enough the view can also simply be blurred, and people and proceedings in the building hardly recognisable. Either way, it will not be a genuine depiction of what is happening inside.

Looking into a church building may be compared to looking at a congregation or denomination, the Lutheran denomination for example. From the outside, it is hard to understand why they are doing things the way they are. Of course, one might have heard of Martin Luther who started his reformation in 1517 by nailing 95 theses to the door of the Castle Church of Wittenberg (at least as it is told). But how does that relate to the present churches carrying his name? Are they really only as old as 500 years? What did Luther mean with his »justification by faith alone«? Why is the Lutheran church a singing church and how is ecumenism a guiding principle for them?

Of course, these are questions even Lutherans themselves might find hard to answer. In an increasingly secular society, such as Germany, the denominational specifics within churches are los-

ing importance, so it seems. But are they indeed? For the Lutheran churches in Germany, their Lutheran denomination remains a cornerstone of identification. Knowing one's own identity makes it easier – or is maybe even the prerequisite – to engage with other churches, other religions, or a secular society.

Looking through coloured glass often doesn't offer the best view – regardless if you are looking in or out. Opening a window can help: not only to let in fresh air, but to get a good view of what lies outside – and, of course, to allow people to get a proper look inside. Similarly, this booklet wants to offer a better view of Lutherans over and above common knowledge or perception. Where do Lutheran churches come from? What is the core of Martin Luther's theology? How do Lutherans in Germany express and live their faith? How do Lutherans engage with other churches and organise themselves internally? The next pages want to give some first insights into these questions: short but hopefully not superficial, theologically grounded but not overly complicated, from a German perspective but with an eye for the world.

We wish you interesting and fruitful reading,

Oliver Schuegraf and Florian Hübner



WHERE
DO

LUTHERANS

COME
FROM?

1. WHERE DO LUTHERANS COME FROM?

The history of the Lutheran Church did not begin, strictly speaking, with the Reformation 500 years ago. The reformers rather considered themselves explicitly to be within the tradition of the »one, holy, catholic (= universal) and apostolic church«, and they wanted to re-establish its true expression.

Where is the starting point for all teaching and theology within the Lutheran church? According to Martin Luther (1483–1546), faith has always to be grounded in and correspond to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is Jesus Christ himself, who – by the Holy Spirit – gives witness to himself in people’s hearts and thus calls them to communion with himself. With this core understanding, the Lutheran Reformation was first of all a renewal movement in the western part of the worldwide church. It was not Luther’s intention to establish a new church, nor did he want to introduce new doctrine. On the contrary, his concern was to ensure that the one church remained in the truth (I John 4:13 ff.). The formation of independent church structures only came about once it was clear that the pope and most of the bishops rejected the Reformation. Luther never restricted the true church to his followers. He recognised the church wherever the word was proclaimed and the sacraments were administered in accordance with the Gospel – albeit with different emphases.



In 1517, Luther made his views and theological insights public for the first time in the 95 theses against the trade in indulgences. Contradicting the false security linked with indulgences, Luther pointed to true penitence and the real treasure of the church: the holy Gospel of God's unconditional grace.

Luther's protest, which was theologically based, did not only relate to the predominant church doctrine of the time but also to the Roman church order. Thus, for example, he disputed the unrestricted teaching authority of the pope. Consequently, the pope put a ban on him which was followed by the ban imposed by the emperor. Luther's regional ruler, Frederick the Wise, however, protected him. In 1521, after the Diet of Worms, he hid him in the Wartburg Castle. But in spite of the ban, there was no way of stopping the Reformation thrust which Luther had set in motion. In pamphlets, articles and hymns, the basic biblical message which he had rediscovered continued to spread.

Some states of the empire – especially the Electorate of Saxony, Brandenburg and Hessen – together with Nuremberg and other free imperial towns were finally able to get the Reformation movement recognised even under imperial law at various imperial diets including the famous Diet of Augsburg in 1530. But during the following period the Reformation movement did not evolve in a uniform way. Soon, clear differences became apparent between the Lutheran Reformation and the reform movements that started with Huldrych Zwingli in Zurich and John Calvin in Geneva. There was disagreement in particular over the

doctrine of the Lord's Supper. The internal differences between the Protestants caused divisions which considerably harmed the acceptance of the Reformation. It also led to Lutheran and Reformed Churches which are still distinct expressions of the Reformation today.

When Martin Luther died in 1546, many parts of Europe – especially countries in northern Europe – had been influenced by his teaching, but in Germany the Reformation was far from securely established. In Trent, a council was held (1545–1563) which gave Roman Catholicism a new identity and stability. The Protestant states of the empire were constantly involved in political and military disputes. Initially, these were pacified by the Augsburg Settlement of 1555. This introduced the principle that the regional princes could determine whether their states were to adopt the Roman Catholic or the Lutheran confession (*cuius regio, eius religio*). This enabled the territorial spread of the Lutheran Reformation to be established. It was not until the Peace of Westphalia of 1648 that the Reformed churches achieved equality with the Lutherans under imperial law. When the Brandenburg Elector Johann Sigismund converted to Calvinism, the Prussian estates, however, succeeded in ensuring that the Lutheran subjects did not have to follow the principle *cuius regio, eius religio*. This later led to a third denominational model of

an Evangelical¹ territorial church in Germany: that of a United church (unierte Kirche).

In Wittenberg, Luther's close friend and colleague, Philipp Melanchthon, continued to work until 1560. In a sense, Melanchthon was the theoretician of the Reformation, who knew how to relate Luther's insights to church politics. Serious effort for the unity of the church was very important to Melanchthon. It was also Melanchthon who drew up the document defending the Lutherans before the Emperor Charles V. Even today, this so-called »Confessio Augustana«, the Augsburg Confession of 1530, is one of the most important confessional documents of the Lutheran church. Admittedly, a group of Lutherans which exclusively followed Luther's words, the so-called »Gnesio-Lutherans«, suspected Melanchthon, the »teacher of Germany« (praeceptor germaniae), of deviating from Luther's teaching. The theological disputes relating to this were brought to an end in 1577 with a further confessional document, the »Formula of Concord«.

¹ The Evangelical churches in Germany are territorial churches that arose from the Reformation in the 16th century. They are either Lutheran or Reformed by confession, or United (uniert). The term *evangelisch* is rendered as Evangelical, reflecting the German word used in the full name of the regional churches. It indicates their origins in the Reformation period and is not meant in the more personal or narrowly theological sense of »evangelical« (*evangelikal*), with all its different expressions in the English-speaking world. For that reason it was preferred to the frequent translation of *evangelisch* as »Protestant«, which could cover a broader range of denominations

Making reference back to Luther, in the early 17th century two movements of great significance came into being. Representatives of a dogmatic orthodoxy (»true belief«) tried to systematise the diverse aspects of Lutheran theology in a subtle, formalised doctrinal structure. In connection with a widespread, profound dissatisfaction with conditions in the church, Pietism (»spirituality«) strove for a »new Reformation« concentrating less on true doctrine than on Christian spirituality and a corresponding Christian way of living.

The strong influence of the Enlightenment in the 18th century also had consequences for how Lutheranism understood itself. In this period, it was self-confident reason which formed the predominant framework for the interpretation and expression of Christian life. This was connected with an optimistic, active concern for the world. The theology of creation and ethics acquired special importance, while sin, redemption and eternity took second place.

At the same time, large groups of German Lutherans, however, remained faithful to the Pietist movement, represented e.g. by Johann Albrecht Bengel and Friedrich Christoph Oetinger. At the beginning of the 19th century they initiated the so-called renewal movements in Saxony, the Harz and Pomerania, among other places.

These were also associated with the rise of a new confessional self-confidence and an increasing interest in mission. Large missionary societies came into being in Leipzig, Hermannsburg,

Neuendettelsau and elsewhere, whose work led to the establishment of Lutheran churches in many parts of the world, especially in North America, Africa, Asia, and Australia.

In the German Empire (from 1871) the territorial church structures remained until the end of World War I. Up to that time, the state rulers had been responsible for the leadership of the churches in their states. As a rule, they were supported by consistories for the genuinely ecclesiastical matters. However, the collapse of state structures in 1918 forced the Lutheran churches to organise themselves independently of the state. The regional church borders were mostly not affected, but it was necessary to rewrite church constitutions and put them into practice. Since that time, they have been governed by synods, episcopal offices and a church administration (see p. 34ff. for details).

In 1933 the National Socialists seized power but the church did not present a united front in opposition to the Nazi regime. Even Christians of the »Confessing Church« who resisted the state's encroachment on internal church matters were able, at the same time, to support the Nazi party and anti-Semitism. The regional churches of Bavaria, Württemberg and Hanover succeeded in avoiding integration into the Reichskirche with its nationalist ideology propagated by the »German Christians«. The consequence, however, was that they had to engage in more tactical manoeuvring in relations with the Nazi state than did the alternative leadership structures (Bruderräte) of the »Confessing Church« within the synchronized regional churches. The

non-synchronized Lutheran churches and their Bruderräte intensified their cooperation across regional church borders from 1936 in the »Luther Council«. At the same time the work of the »Confessing Church« led to a hitherto unprecedented cooperation of Lutherans with Reformed and United churches.

The closer cooperation among Lutherans finally led to the establishment of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany (VELKD) in 1948 in Eisenach. Today, the VELKD is composed of the independent regional churches of Bavaria, Brunswick, Hanover, Saxony, Schaumburg-Lippe, Central Germany, and Northern Germany. The common foundation of this communion is the Lutheran confession.

Building on the experiences during the Nazi regime, the rapprochement between Lutherans, Reformed and United was further advanced. This is illustrated by a growing importance of the umbrella organisation of Lutheran, Reformed, and United churches founded in 1945, the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD). Finally, in 1973 the theological consensus reached in the »Leuenberg Agreement« led to church fellowship (= altar and pulpit fellowship) among the Lutheran, Reformed, and United regional churches in Germany (see p. 53).

On the global level, the convergence of Lutheran churches also experienced a leap after the Second World War. In 1947, the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) was established as a free asso-

ciation of Lutheran churches. By now, it is a communion of 148 Lutheran churches representing over 77 million Christians in 99 countries sharing altar and pulpit fellowship. Among them are eleven German Lutheran churches which form the German National Committee of the Lutheran World Federation (GNC/LWF).



WHAT IS AT
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LUTHER'S
THEOLOGY?

2. WHAT IS AT THE HEART OF MARTIN LUTHER'S THEOLOGY?

In this chapter, some core aspects of the theology of Martin Luther are introduced. Luther's central insights are still very much relevant for Lutheran theology today and they form the basis of present Lutheran theology in Germany and worldwide.

The Gospel

As already mentioned, the foundation of the Lutheran Church is the Gospel, the joyful news of the unconditional love of God for sinful human beings, as revealed in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This insight mirrors a personal experience of Martin Luther who, in his struggle against hatred of God and despair about himself, finally found the way to trust in God and to self-acceptance. In this process, he was plagued by the question of how to find a gracious God. Luther discovered the answer in a verse of the Bible (Rom 1:17) which enabled him to realize that he did not need to earn God's justice, nor to despair about God's benevolence, because God is always near and ready to come to our aid – and to do so without any prerequisites.

The young Augustinian monk, who was profoundly unsure of himself, experienced this unconditional nature of God's love as an existential liberation from all self-made and external demands, compulsions and fears. Luther's understanding of faith as



a new definition of the human being in his/her relation to God, one's own self and the world, reflected Luther's biographical experience. It meant being relieved of any pressure for self-justification by relying on God's prevenient mercy.

This experience of the Gospel was granted to Luther in the course of an intense study of Holy Scriptures, but it was not the immediate result of his own efforts and work. On the contrary, in the preface to the Latin edition of his works in 1545, Luther traced his understanding of God's righteousness back to God's merciful workings within him. Luther experienced the Gospel as an event beyond his control, in which the gift of divine righteousness was given to him in a miraculous way.

The reason why it was not within his control was that the Gospel is far more than the sum of its contents which could be described theologically. Rather, the Gospel is at work as the creative force (Rom 1:16) by which God's love – as an undeserved gift – addresses the human being him/herself and transforms his/her life to make a new creation.

Word of God and Holy Scripture

The Gospel is and remains fundamentally distinct from and in advance of any human attempt to witness to it. And yet it is not a power which directly overpowers human beings; rather it makes use of external words and signs to express and thus impart itself to our understanding and comprehending appropriation. In view of this dialectic, Luther distinguished between the divine

spirit, which our human words try to express, and the letter, that changes in the course of time and is used for this purpose.

This also has to be taken into consideration in regard to the Bible. The word of God as testified in Holy Scripture constitutes the exclusive criterion for statements of faith (*sola scriptura*) and is the foundation of the Lutheran churches. God binds himself to the external written word in the Old and New Testament. Yet the distinction must be kept, on the one hand, between the many different, historical expressions and forms of the biblical texts, and the one truth which is expressed through them on the other. According to Luther's basic Reformation insight, this truth and thus the criterion for the right understanding of Scripture can be found only in the Gospel of Christ, the incarnate son of God. It forms the clear centre of the Scriptures.

Hence, faith does not aim at a literalist devotion to the biblical text, but rather seeks and finds God's spirit and wisdom in and behind the letters. For this, it is necessary time and again to return to the Bible and to interpret the Scriptures anew for the church's preaching and teaching. They should be constantly »mulled over«, as Martin Luther recommended. If the Bible is interpreted »in the right way«, applied to personal life, to a particular time and its issues, then the *viva vox evangelii*, the living voice of the Gospel, can be heard. Then it can be as if Jesus Christ himself is speaking.

The Confessions of the Lutheran Church

The interpretation of the Scriptures that is grounded in the Gospel and serves as the foundation for the church's preaching requires binding guidelines. This is achieved by an internal church process, ending in agreement on a doctrinal consensus. For Lutherans, this function is fulfilled by the Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. This collection begins with the three Ecumenical Creeds and thus emphasizes the claim of the Lutheran Church to continuity with the Early Church. Then follows the *Confessio Augustana* with its Apology, Luther's Smalcald Articles, Melancthon's Treatise on the Power of the Pope, Luther's two Catechisms and the Formula of Concord. Those foundational texts formulate the doctrinal consensus of the Lutheran church which is intended to provide and safeguard the conditions under which the biblical witness can be grasped in the spirit of the Gospel which Luther rediscovered. The Lutheran confessional documents can therefore be described as summaries of Luther's discovery, which will be elaborated upon in what follows.

Justification by faith alone

However personal Luther's experience may have been, it was still far more than merely a central moment in an individual's biography. Indeed, Luther's experience mirrors in an exemplary fashion the basic religious situation which is characteristic for every person in their encounter with God – both in those times and today. So the Gospel did not only become the central factor

in Luther's life, but also the principal criterion for formulating his theology.

His experience of the Gospel – that God's mercy for human beings is unconditional – therefore logically leads to the heart of his theology. In accordance with insights of the Apostle Paul (cf. Rom 3:28), he expresses God's saving works in the doctrine of the justification of the sinner by grace alone. The righteousness of human beings before God – the fact that they are just, beloved, valued and dear – is based exclusively on the grace of God (*sola gratia*) and is received exclusively by faith and trust in this same grace (*sola fide*).

Luther connects two important insights with this doctrine.

1. The absolute value and inviolable dignity of our lives are not the product of human achievement, ability or strength, but rather lie mysteriously inherent in the concern which God bestows on every human individual, thereby acknowledging him/her. So Luther understands God's justice as »passive justice through which the merciful God justifies us through faith« (preface to the Latin edition of his works).

2. Although God's justice is ascribed to human beings without any contribution of their own, it must nevertheless be appropriated by them, when human beings for their part then also recognise God as God. This recognition or honouring of God takes place, according to Luther, in faith: »to give God the honour means to believe him, means seeing God as authentic, wise,

just, merciful and almighty.« In faith, the human being appropriates the divine concern actively and thus encounters God as a self-conscious person responsible before God.

Only in this dialectic unity of trust in God and self-consciousness is communion between God and human beings possible. So the doctrine of justification does not only say something about the relationship between God and humans; it also defines the conditions which make this relationship possible. For the Lutheran church, this is not just one doctrine among others but rather the article of faith by which the church stands or falls.

The joyful exchange

Communion between God and human beings is only possible if it is given to us by God, since humans are separated from God by sin. Sin describes the natural interest of human beings in themselves, trying by all means to give themselves the honour and not God. Sinful man is focussed on himself in a godless way; to put it in Luther's terms, he is »turned in on himself« – and hence subject to the powers of sin, death and the devil.

The only cure for this was seen by Luther in the person and work of the crucified Christ. The concentration of his Christology on the redemption of human beings from their godlessness was characteristic of Luther throughout his life. Luther's basic idea focussed on Jesus Christ on his cross, suffering for our sake under the alien powers which separate us from God, and thus taking upon himself the consequent remoteness from God. That

one person could bring salvation for all is, however, only conceivable given that Jesus was not just a human being like us but simultaneously shared in God's nature and God's power to overcome sin, death and the devil. The doctrine of the two natures of Christ – his human and his divine nature – was central for Luther.

The redemption of humankind takes place in a mysterious exchange. God lays the burden of human godlessness on Christ and identifies him with sinners. In exchange, Jesus' freedom from sin is attributed to us humans through the identity of Jesus' will with God's will. So God identifies us sinners with Christ. Luther calls this the »joyful exchange« because it liberates humans from turning inwards and leads them into communion with God. For Christ's sake alone (*solus christus*), God thus turns to humankind in his mercy. His grace is unconditional, but not unfounded. In this sense, the Gospel can be experienced only in the encounter with the crucified Christ. And, correspondingly, the Christian faith is also not a vague trust but rather directed towards a concrete object. For Luther, believing in a Christian way always means trusting Christ.

Simul iustus et peccator

The joyful exchange between Christ and the sinner opens up a new perspective on and for our lives. Christ is the goal towards which we can and should direct our lives.

Therefore, the image of Christ should not be viewed merely theoretically; rather it must take on existential form in human

beings and reshape their lives so that they become increasingly similar to Christ. In Luther's view, faith has a force which transforms existence. In faith, the human being becomes a new creature. But this force does not take hold of the person outwardly like a magic power; on the contrary, being shaped in Christ's image takes place in a lifelong process.

In this process, we do not only make progress; we repeatedly regress as well. Because, as Luther put it, the old images of death, sin and hell enter human hearts again and again and try to occupy them. Human beings are not freed once and for all from the temptations and threats from powers alien to God; on the contrary, they are constantly battling against them.

This tension cannot be resolved in this life and is therefore characteristic of Christian existence. On the one hand, Christians no longer seek and find the truth of their lives within the circumstances of this world, but rather in God alone. On the other hand, their lives continue to be lived in the realities of this world and must be shaped in and under worldly conditions which, however, are marked by the omnipresent power of sin and death. So, in Luther's words the Christian is both justified and a sinner at the same time: *simul iustus et peccator*.

God's two ways of ruling

This also influenced Luther's political ethics. He distinguishes fundamentally between the two ways in which God rules (God's two regiments or realms). These terms are more precise than the

frequent reference to the so-called doctrine of two »kingdoms«, because Luther was not concerned about areas of life which could be separated objectively; he was making a functional distinction between different contexts of God's rule to which our life is subject in its relation to God, to the world and to ourselves.

As experience teaches time and again, the interests of sinful people contradict the will of God and the wellbeing of our fellow humans. Human beings serve their own needs and aims to the detriment of other people. For this reason, authoritative rules are necessary, e.g. the law, patterns of social behaviour or political structures, in order to safeguard peaceful coexistence. These rules make human life in community in its social and political dimensions subordinate to the general good. And in certain cases they can and must be enforced, irrespective of the voluntary consent of individuals. In order to counteract the consequences of sin, measures of social discipline are essential and should be seen as an expression of divine order.

From the point of view of faith, however, human beings are justified by God and hence liberated from the power of sin. So they no longer need to be disciplined by the law in order to act according to God's will and for the wellbeing of their neighbours. Indeed, they are able to recognise, want, and do what is good of their own accord. As a consequence of the effects of the Gospel, God therefore aims at the free development of the conscience of each individual, which then serves as the guideline for all realms of life.

The church participates in both of the contexts in which God is at work. As a visible organisation it uses various structures to create order, e.g. different offices, leadership bodies and administration, or provisions of church law. But, as the hidden community of all believers, it is the communion of individual believers linked in Christian freedom by their conscience through the Holy Spirit.

The Church as »creature of the word«

The church is the place where God's word is heard. It is »the assembly of all believers among whom the Gospel is purely preached and the holy sacraments are administered according to the Gospel« (Augsburg Confession, Article VII). »Purely preached« means that the interpretation of Holy Scripture is guided by the statements in the Lutheran confessions.

The church is not an authority which stands between God and humankind. It is not the product of a group of people who think alike. It is formed, like faith, by hearing, tasting and seeing how good God is. It is nourished by the Holy Spirit which awakens faith in individuals and calls, gathers, enlightens and sanctifies the whole of Christendom.

The Lutheran definition of the church has great ecumenical breadth. It makes it possible to recognise all Christian communities as churches, provided that they practise pure preaching of the word and the right administration of the sacraments (see p. 52f.).

Fundamentally, all Christians are called to a priestly ministry. Therefore, one can speak of the priesthood of all the baptised. Every person can pass on the salvation in Christ. Every member of the congregation should use the gifts which he/she has received from the Holy Spirit to build up the body of Christ.

In order that the preaching of the good news may not come to a standstill or become inaccessible to people, there exists the ministry of public preaching of the word and administration of the sacraments. It has a special responsibility to serve the unity of the church. In the Lutheran church, »no one should teach publicly in the church or administer the sacraments unless properly called« (Augsburg Confession, Article XIV). Thus, the ministry is imparted either by ordination or commissioning. The individual called into the ministry commits him/herself to Holy Scripture and the confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. He or she is blessed by prayer and the laying on of hands and sent out to serve in the ministry of the church. The Lutheran regional churches in Germany ordain both men and women into ministry. The office of bishop is a special office of episkopé (oversight) within the onefold ministry. As the office of a »*pastor pastorum*« (shepherd of the shepherds, pastor of the pastors), it is an office of spiritual leadership as well. It based on an election, and the installation includes a renewal of the ordination commitments, prayer and blessing.

The task of leadership is shared by lay and ordained persons, as well as synods and church administrations, by administrative

bodies that are elected or appointed at various levels and in many forms, as well as by the bishops (see p. 34ff. for details).

Worship

»In worship nothing other should take place than that our Lord himself speaks to us through his holy word and we in turn speak to him through prayer and praise«. That is how Martin Luther expressed his conception of Lutheran worship in 1544 in his sermon at the dedication of the church in Torgau, and it is still determinative for Lutheran churches today.

Worship is communication of the Gospel. Who and what God is for the congregation should be put into words in a way that makes the Gospel effective, so that it comforts, exhorts, and changes people, speaks to their reason, their heart and all their senses and elicits a response. For this reason, worship must be comprehensible. It invites participation. It gives pleasure to the senses. Martin Luther stopped the iconoclasts of his time. He encouraged church music and made the Lutheran church a singing church.

The visible word: Baptism and Holy Communion

According to Lutheran understanding, the most important features of the church, apart from the preaching of the Gospel, are the celebration of baptism and Holy Communion. These two sacraments are nothing other than the visible and physical form of the assurance »Christ for you«. God's presence is felt tangibly

in sensual perception, awakening trust that he is there for us and redeems us.

In the sacraments, it is not primarily the pastors who act. On the contrary, God himself is at work. In the sacrament, the Holy Spirit induces faith and strengthens it.

In baptism, God promises his presence once and for all. Baptism is an unrepeatable act which affects the whole of the Christian's life. Martin Luther talked about people repeatedly »crawling« into baptism and coming out again every day. He said it tears »the devil out of the throat« of the baptised. In baptism God lays claim to the baptised for himself and strengthens the new person. It brings about »forgiveness of sins and gives eternal blessedness to all who believe in it« (Small Catechism).

Through baptism, God builds up his church and incorporates the baptised into the community of the one Church of Jesus Christ. The union with Christ which is given through baptism is a call to overcome divisions and to enable communion to become visible.

In the celebration of Holy Communion, Jesus Christ himself is present in, with and under the bread and wine. We can taste God's kindness to humankind. For Martin Luther, »the whole Gospel« is contained in Jesus' words of institution as a »short summary«: given for you, for your benefit. The doctrine of justification also influences the Lutheran understanding of Holy Communion. Christ who is present includes us in God's reconciliation with humankind and thus grants us forgiveness of sins. This takes

place independently of the personal disposition of the celebrant or of the recipient, but is a reality for those who believe in it.

The ecumenical conversations of the past decades have further broadened the Lutheran understanding of Holy Communion. The aspect of thanksgiving, of »Eucharist«, has become more widely accepted again. Just as Jesus took bread and wine and »gave thanks«, so the congregation now comes before God to praise and thank him for Jesus Christ. It perceives Jesus' self-sacrifice in the present and asks for the gift of the Holy Spirit. »It should be a great pleasure and joy for us that we serve God and praise and thank him for his grace and goodness.« Martin Luther preached.

Holy Communion, which is also called the Lord's Supper, creates communion with Christ, but also among us. By receiving the body of Christ, the congregation becomes one body and is united with those who participate at all times and in all places. In this way, the celebration of the Eucharist transcends the limits of space and time, aims at the renewal of the whole creation, and the celebration anticipates the coming of the kingdom of God.



HOW ARE
LUTHERANS
ORGANISED IN
GERMANY?

3. HOW ARE LUTHERANS ORGANISED IN GERMANY?

The centre of the organisation of the Lutheran church is the congregation gathered around the Word of God and the sacrament. The congregation is led by the pastor/minister and a board (or parish council or presbytery) which is elected by all members of the congregation. This form of leadership follows an Evangelical principle that lay and ordained people both bear responsibility in the church. This leadership also bears the responsibility for the work of the congregation: for word and sacrament, pastoral care, diaconal service and the administration of church property. Pastors of congregations, who can be male or female, are appointed cooperatively by the congregation and the regional church.

The regional church (Landeskirche) is the other main organisational level in German Lutheran churches. Lutheran regional churches vary considerably in size, members, and numbers of congregations – ranging from some 20 congregations to more than 1,500. They normally encompass the territory of historically sovereign states long gone. Regardless of size, each regional church is headed by three bodies. Firstly, the synod which is made up of elected lay and ordained persons (in most cases two thirds to one third). The synod is a forum for developing objectives in the regional church and embodying unity and diversity.



Secondly, the regional church is led by a church board, elected by the synod. And finally, the regional church is led by an ordained pastor charged with the task of episcopal oversight for the whole regional church and representation of this church. He or she is elected by the synod and carries the title of »Landesbischof/ Landesbischöfin«.

Depending on the size of the regional church, one or two intermediary levels of organisation lie between the two main organisational levels of congregation und regional church. Some 20 to 30 congregations normally form a deanery or church district. This level is led by its dean or superintendent, its district synod and its district council. In the larger regional churches an additional layer of church leadership exists. Here, a regional bishop (or regional superintendent or provost) assumes the episcopal ministry at this level. His or her duties include ordaining new pastors and visiting the parishes.

On the national level, seven Lutheran churches form the United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany (VELKD). This communion of Lutheran regional churches understands itself as one church. Its chief aim is the preservation and deepening of Lutheran teaching and unity in Germany. VELKD's governing bodies are the General Synod, the Church Council, the Bishops' Conference, as well as the Presiding Bishop. It works in close collaboration with the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD), a national church body of 20 Lutheran, Reformed, and United churches. VELKD and EKD share administrative structures and

a church headquarters in Hanover. All VELKD members are also members of the EKD.

Communion with Lutherans worldwide is an important concern of the Lutheran churches in Germany. Consequently, all eleven German Lutheran churches are members of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), among them all VELKD churches. They relate to the LWF via the German National Committee of the Lutheran World Federation (GNC/LWF). This church body is led by representatives of all its eleven member churches in the assembly of the GNC/LWF. It is represented by a chairperson who is a bishop of one the member churches. The Lutheran World Federation is rightly dubbed as »A Communion of Churches« (see more details below). Its highest governing body is an assembly of delegates of all 148 member churches. It meets every six to seven years (2003: Winnipeg, 2010: Stuttgart, 2017: Windhoek, 2023: Krakow).

In the meantime, the LWF is led by a council and a president. Other Lutheran churches, with a particular loyalty to the confessions and a conservative tradition of interpretation, joined together in 1993 to form the International Lutheran Council. It has 30 member churches with approx. 3.3 million Christians; in Germany these include the members of the Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church (SELK).

For further details on organisation see: »Lutheran – Reformed – United. A Pocket Guide to the Denominational Landscape in Germany«.

German Lutheran churches at a glance

	LWF and GNC/LWF	VELKD	EKD
Church of Lippe	X*		X
Evangelical Church in Central Germany	X	X	X
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Baden	X		
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria	X	X	X
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Brunswick	X	X	X
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Northern Germany	X	X	X
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Oldenburg	X		X
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Württemberg	X		X
Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hanover	X	X	X
Evangelical Lutheran Church of Saxony	X	X	X
Evangelical Lutheran Church of Schaumburg-Lippe	X	X	X

* Lutheran Section



HOW DO
LUTHERANS
EXPRESS AND LIVE
THEIR FAITH?

4. HOW DO LUTHERANS EXPRESS AND LIVE THEIR FAITH?

Parish Life

As already mentioned, the local parish or congregation is at the core of the Lutheran church. Here, the fellowship of the baptised comes together to worship, hear the word of God and celebrate the sacraments (see below). The parish also offers pastoral care and teaching, places to meet for various church groups, opportunities and rituals to grow in faith, and hospitality to bystanders, newcomers, and strangers. In short, the parish does not exist as an end in itself, but as the intermediary of the good news.

Pastoral care on the congregational level embraces a wide range of activities from short term counselling, baptism and marriage preparations, accompaniment of the sick, support of the dying and bereaved to birthday visits – just to name a few.

Confirmation classes are one the most typical gatherings in a Lutheran parish. Traditionally, they take place once a week and are taught by a pastor. In recent decades, other forms have been developed such as monthly classes on a Saturday, teaching blocks or confirmation camps. Other groups in the parish range from parish council meetings or bible study groups to afternoons for senior citizens. Parishes are also often responsible for a kindergarten and the local cemetery.

People can take part in parish life in various ways and intensities.



Some are deeply involved, identifying strongly with their parish. Others only come in contact with the parish from time to time or hardly at all, even though they are members of the church. The Lutheran churches in Germany positively accept that there are different types of participation which correspond to different religious needs.

Worship life

Worship services, particularly in a Lutheran context, are always subject to the tension between preservation and revision. They are influenced by the great Christian liturgical tradition and respect the existent local practice. At the same time, they are open to change and reorganisation, should this be demanded for the sake of the clarity of the Gospel. Forms have a serving function.

The present situation is marked by continuity and diversity. Regular services in the Lutheran churches are shaped by the order of worship commissioned by the United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany. It contains all unvaried and changing parts of the Sunday service through the church year as well as the liturgies for occasional services (e. g. confirmation or wedding).

In the course of a year, slightly less than one million services are celebrated in the 20 German regional churches. Each Sunday, about 680,000 people attend a service in those churches.²

² These and the following numbers refer to the most recent survey available (2018) and include all the Lutheran, United and Reformed regional churches within the Evangelical Church in Germany.

In addition to the traditional Sunday morning service there is a wealth of new, flexible forms for particular target groups, in different places, at unusual times, with new themes and alternative forms. One may find Lenten devotions, family or youth services, Taizé services, and alternative forms such as St. Thomas' Masses for seekers and doubters, or even tango services.

Services at turning points in their lives are often valued by people who normally have little contact with worship services on Sundays or feast days. On such occasions as baptism, confirmation, marriage and burial, the proclamation of the Gospel can fall on fertile soil if it is linked to the specific biographies and the particular situation of the people attending the service. Each year, over 152,000 children and 16,000 adults are baptised, approximately 166,000 young people are confirmed³, 42,000 couples are married, and 268,000 deceased are buried.

As in other Christian denominations, baptism is performed by pouring water three times and saying, »N.N., I baptise you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit«. As is typical for Lutheran thinking, the element of water is combined with the word of God. In Lutheran churches infants are baptised, as well as young people and adults. The special importance attached to the baptism of infants and small children is based on the conviction that God's acts are not tied to rational understanding, and

³ The fact that there are now more confirmations than baptisms shows that nowadays far fewer parents have their children baptised than was the case about 14 years ago.

that infant baptism expresses particularly clearly that God in his mercy always anticipates human actions. All baptisms performed with water and the invocation of the Triune God are recognized. Changing from one denomination to another does not require a re-baptism. The office of godparent can be assumed by anyone who belongs to a Protestant church or the Old Catholic Church and has been confirmed or baptised as an adult. Additional godparents can be admitted from other Christian churches.

In the Lutheran church, Holy Communion is celebrated according to the biblical words of institution: bread and wine are taken with thanksgiving, blessed with the words of institution (consecration), and distributed to the baptised believers in both kinds (bread and wine).

For centuries, Holy Communion was only celebrated on especially important feast days, e.g. on Good Friday. But since the middle of the 20th century it has increasingly become part of the regular Sunday service. Most parishes have a Eucharistic Sunday service at least once a month.

Within the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), all the member churches share Holy Communion fully with one another. As a result of the »Leuenberg Agreement«, Lutheran churches also share Holy Communion with Reformed, United, and Methodist churches as well with the other churches that are part of the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (see below).

Thanks to the »Meissen Agreement«, German Lutherans share Holy Communion with the Church of England. Furthermore, there are formal agreements with the Old Catholic Church and with the Association of Mennonite Congregations on mutual invitation to the Lord's Supper (Eucharist hospitality). Members of other churches, including the Roman Catholic Church, are invited to take part as guests.

Diaconia

Justification of faith as described above is the starting point for the diaconal and social work of Lutherans. Active charity is part of the life of a justified Christian. Inwardly freed from the pressure of having to contribute something ourselves to the success of our life, we are free in faith and ready for service to the world: »Look at what love and joy in the Lord flow from faith! Moreover, from love proceeds a joyful, gladsome, and free soul, prepared for willing service to the neighbour« – as Martin Luther expressed it.

Diaconal activity is the responsibility of each individual Christian, but also of the parishes and the church as a whole. In the 19th century, female nursing communities were formed on the model of Catholic religious orders: unmarried deaconesses lived together in communal mother houses (e.g. Kaiserswerth, Neuendettelsau or Bethel) and worked in nursing and education. Furthermore, in the course of industrialisation and the resulting social upheavals the »Inner Mission« emerged in the middle of

that century as an organisational form of the regional churches to take care of the socially destitute and the needy who were alienated from the church. The term »Inner Mission« shows that social work was to be understood as part of the proclamation of the Gospel.

Today, the term »diaconia« is used for the practiced charity of the churches. »Diakonie Deutschland« is the umbrella organisation in Germany for the 17 regional associations of the Lutheran, Reformed and United regional churches as well as for diaconal institutions of the free churches. Across Germany, around 525,000 employees work for the »Diakonie«, and a further 700,000 people are involved on a voluntary basis. They are committed to helping the sick, the needy, and people on the fringes of society. They do this by providing practical support and assistance as well as advocacy. Around 10 million people make use of these social services. More than 31,000 facilities such as nursing homes, hospitals, social welfare centres and counseling centres are under the responsibility of the »Diakonie«.

After the Second World War, the German churches received help from many parts of the world. Gratitude for the help received later led to a desire to also help people in need outside Germany. Thus in 1959 the campaign »Bread for the World« was founded (together with some free churches and the Old Catholic Church). Today, »Bread for the World – Evangelical Development Service« supports about 1,300 projects and programs in about 90 countries, mainly in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, but

also in South Eastern Europe and the Caucasus. While »Bread for the World« is involved in longterm projects, »Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe« (disaster relief), as the humanitarian arm of the institution, provides immediate aid in acute crises.

Mission and Partnership

In the first half of the 19th century the »External Mission« came into sight. Mission societies were established to provide pastoral care to Lutheran emigrants (for example in North America) and to send missionaries to Eastern Europe, Africa, or Asia to promote the Gospel.

Today six institutions foster the work of partnership, development and mission of the Lutheran regional churches: »MissionEineWelt« in Neuendettelsau (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria), »Zentrum für Mission und Ökumene« in Breklum and Hamburg (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Northern Germany), »Norddeutsche Mission« in Bremen (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Oldenburg, Church of Lippe among others), »Evangelisch-lutherisches Missionswerk in Niedersachsen« in Hermannsburg (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hanover, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Brunswick, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Schaumburg-Lippe), »Evangelisch-lutherisches Missionswerk« in Leipzig (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Saxony, Evangelical Church of Central Germany) and »Evangelische Mission in Solidarität« in Stuttgart (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Württemberg among others).

The »Vereinigte Evangelische Mission« in Wuppertal with roots in the Rhenish Mission and Bethel Mission as well as the »Berliner Missionswerk« are responsible for the mission contacts of the United and Reformed regional churches. Among their many partners are also Lutheran churches.

Mission societies serve God's mission by bearing witness to Jesus Christ's message of faith, hope and love. They maintain partnership relations with (Lutheran) churches overseas, which often emerged from the former missionary efforts. The number of missionaries sent by the mission agencies to the partner churches, however, is steadily decreasing, as more and more of their own qualified personnel is available. Today, the focus of the work of the mission agencies is rather on keeping in contact with the partners overseas, learning from each other and the respective local contexts, supporting each other, strengthening each other in church life and interceding for each other.

»Evangelische Mission Weltweit« (EMW; formerly known as the Association of Protestant Churches and Missions in Germany) is the umbrella organisation for all the Protestant mission agencies within the Evangelical Church in Germany and the Free Churches as well as for mission departments and associations supporting missionary, ecumenical and development cooperation.

Relations to politics and society

According to Lutheran understanding, the church and its members have the task and duty to critically accompany politics and society. They raise their voice in current debates, conflicts, and challenges. Lutheran ethics wants to develop and provide principles and orientation for responsible living in church and society from the perspective of faith. The Sermon on the Mount and the Decalogue are regarded as important biblical sources for ethical orientation. Furthermore, love, freedom and justice are central biblical concepts for responsible action in the world.

The church is an important player within civil society. Thus senior clergy, synods and church committees of experts comment on political and social issues in order to promote the formation of consensual opinion within the church and to bring that position into the general debate. Church academies play an important role in bringing together people from politics, business, culture, media, and church to respond to or even initiate political or socio-ethical discourses.

The »Deutscher Evangelischer Kirchentag« (German Evangelical Church Assembly), which brings together more than 100,000 people every two years, is an impressive sign that Protestant Christians wish to get involved in society and make their convictions known. This lay movement sees itself as a forum for committed and open dialogue on social, political, ecological and theological issues.



HOW DO
LUTHERANS
RELATE TO OTHER
CHURCHES?

5. HOW DO LUTHERANS RELATE TO OTHER CHURCHES?

Ecumenical commitment is integral to the self-understanding of the Lutheran churches in Germany. The Lutheran confessions, and the Augsburg Confession in particular, had the unity of the church in view from the very beginning. The Reformers saw themselves as catholic (= universal); their confessions were to be a witness to the faith of the Church as a whole. They made this clear by including the creeds of the Early Church, the so-called »ecumenical symbols«, at the beginning of their confessional writings. Originally, the Augsburg Confession was also never intended to result in the founding of a separate church organisation; it only aimed to make the fundamental convictions of the Reformation clear in the context of the Western church. In this sense, the Augsburg Confession had a basic ecumenical concern right from the start. It was to serve the unity of the church.

Guiding Principles

For the German Lutheran churches the guiding principles of this ecumenical commitment are the following:

The communion of Christians consists of a plurality of churches which differ in culture, nationality and denomination. This variety of expressions of the church does not only have historical roots – such significant events as the schism between the churches in



East and West in 1054 and, five centuries later, the development of Evangelical churches in the course of the Reformation. It is also a consequence of the Holy Scriptures which the churches had in common from the beginning. Indeed, the witness of the writings of both the Old and New Testament opens up a wide spectrum of different approaches to theological interpretation and ways of reflecting on the experience of God in Jesus Christ.

However, that does not mean that the churches with their denominational diversity exist side by side without relating to each other. They refer back to the one truth of the Gospel which precedes faith and gives rise to it. Therefore, the unity of the church is based on the common participation by the churches in this truth of the Gospel.

But unity cannot be found directly in the visible, institutional communion of churches. With their faith in the unity of the body of Christ brought about by God, however, the churches also face the task of witnessing to this unity in and through the form of their institutional and social organisation. This underlies the ecumenical commitment of the churches to endeavour to understand and witness to the truth together. So ecumenical conversations are aimed not only at resolving specific doctrinal differences; they also endeavour to go beyond the level of ecclesiastical, doctrinal development to the **level of unity** in the truth of the Gospel which is based on faith in the Gospel.

The joint recognition of and witness to the truth of the Gospel takes place on the basis of interpreting the Scriptures. This

task of understanding the Gospel as the common point of reference or as the key to understanding the Scriptures is therefore related to the diversities in the biblical texts.

In order for the right interpretation of the Gospel to be binding on the church's interpretation of Scripture, the church needs to reach an internal agreement in the form of a doctrinal consensus. The guidelines for this endeavour to understand and witness to the truth are found, for Lutheran churches, in the Lutheran confessions, especially the Augsburg Confession (*Confessio Augustana*) of 1530. The confessional documents set out precisely that doctrinal consensus of the Lutheran Church which is intended to help in understanding the biblical witness along lines corresponding to the Gospel as rediscovered by Luther (see p. 21).

Since the church is understood as the gathering of all believers, it is »sufficient – but also necessary – for the ›true unity‹ of the church to agree on the right teaching of the Gospel, i.e. on proclamation in accordance with the Scriptures, and on the celebration of the sacraments as instituted...« (VELKD, *Ökumene nach evangelisch-lutherischem Verständnis*, 2004 = *Ecumenism according to the Evangelical Lutheran Understanding*). These reflections are based on the relevant definition of the church in the Augsburg Confession, Article VII: »It is enough for the true unity of the church to agree concerning the teaching of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments. It is not necessary that human traditions, rites, or ceremonies, instituted by human beings be alike everywhere.«

Hence, for church communion, the two criteria necessary are those which also constitute the church in general: **word and sacrament**. Therefore, the Lutheran church stands for a broad ecumenical understanding of the church, not for tactical reasons but because of its confessional theology. It is able to acknowledge the factual plurality of churches and to recognise the one church of Jesus Christ also beyond its own church borders. The goal is recognition and communion, not demarcation. But, finally, this unity of the church is God's doing and can never be brought about by the churches themselves. For this reason, the statement on »Ecumenism according to the Evangelical Lutheran Understanding« comes to the conclusion that, when churches recognise that they share the same understanding of the Gospel, then »the churches must do justice to this by declaring and implementing church communion in word and sacrament with one another«.

In this way, German Lutherans give preference, among the various ecumenical models of unity, to »communion in word and sacrament« as spelled out by the Leuenberg Fellowship (now the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe) and expressed in the »Leuenberg Agreement« of 1973. On the basis of their common understanding of the Gospel, and the recognition that the doctrinal condemnations contained in their confessional documents no longer apply to the contemporary doctrinal position of the signatory churches, more than 100 Reformation churches in Europe declared that they were in »altar and pulpit fellowship« with one another.

However, the requisite agreement on a common understanding of the Gospel makes it necessary to establish the fact by means of theological dialogue. An appropriate model of unity must thus include communion in the confession of the faith. But communion in the confession of the faith does not mean that both parties must have the same confessional documents. Different confessional traditions can exist within the communion, provided that all agree that their differences are legitimate expressions of one and the same Gospel. And precisely this must first be clarified theologically.

Even churches which already enjoy church communion with one another are constantly called upon by God to make their communion visible, to strive for closer cooperation and, wherever possible, to carry out their ecclesial task together. But also churches which are not (yet) able to state a commonly accepted understanding of the Gospel can, according to the Lutheran understanding, cooperate already on as many levels as possible and continue to pursue their ecumenical conversations. So a Lutheran conception of unity is a model of **communion by various steps**. The consensus already reached must be reflected in corresponding steps along the road to unity. So the member churches of the GNC/LWF and the VELKD are convinced that, even if some differences still exist between churches, members of such churches can be invited to share in the word and sacrament (Eucharistic hospitality). By inviting sisters and brothers in the faith to the Lord's table, Lutherans recognise that the oth-

ers, too, are witnesses to the crucified and risen Christ, even if differences in doctrinal traditions and spirituality still remain. At the same time, this provides an opportunity to get to know one another's spirituality, thinking and experience in greater depth.

Communion among Lutherans

These ecumenical convictions become a reality in the communion practised with the other Lutheran churches worldwide. Thus, all the Lutheran regional churches in Germany belong to the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) which was founded in 1947 in Lund. The LWF, according to its constitution, sees itself as »a communion of churches which confess the triune God, agree in the proclamation of the Word of God and are united in pulpit and altar fellowship. The Lutheran World Federation confesses the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church and is resolved to serve Christian unity throughout the world« (Constitution, Article 3). It currently represents 148 churches in 99 countries with more than 77 million members. In addition to promoting unity among Lutherans, its tasks also include interconfessional dialogue on the world level, theological reflection, work on mission and development and aid to refugees and in emergencies.

Dialogues with other Denominations

A second contribution to the Lutheran commitment to unity are the various multilateral and bilateral dialogues and conversations with other confessional families in Germany. Through their

membership of the World Council of Churches (WCC), the Council of Christian Churches in Germany (ACK) or the Conference of European Churches (CEC) the Lutherans are involved in many multilateral dialogues and encounters.

In view of the different sizes of the various denominations in Germany, it is not surprising that the most intensive bilateral contacts of Lutherans are those with the **Roman Catholic Church**. Both churches have held theological conversations since 1976. In 1984, the Bilateral Working Group between the VELKD and the Catholic Bishops' Conference published a study document on church fellowship in word and sacrament. In 2000 followed a study on the communion of the saints, dealing *inter alia* with church fellowship and ministry, particularly the papal ministry, and the communion of the saints beyond death. Finally, in 2017, the third Bilateral Working Group published a document on God and human dignity.

However, those are not the only bilateral relationships by far. German Lutherans also foster intensive relationships with the **Old Catholic Church**. The results of theological conversations between VELKD and the Catholic Diocese of the Old Catholics in Germany led in 1985 to the »Agreement on a mutual invitation to participate in the celebration of the eucharist«. In 2017, the churches signed an »Agreement on the mutual recognition of baptism and confirmation« and adopted a joint liturgy for an ecumenical wedding.

The member churches of the EKD and therefore also the Lutheran regional churches have shared in a limited church fellowship / ecclesial communion with the **Church of England** since 1988 in the framework of the »Meissen Declaration«.

Furthermore, the VELKD can look back upon a fruitful dialogue with the **Evangelical Methodist Church**. As a result of this Lutheran-Methodist dialogue, all Evangelical regional churches have been in full communion with the Methodist Church since 1987, when the official declaration of pulpit and table fellowship was signed in Nuremberg.

A dialogue between the VELKD and German **Mennonites** led to Eucharistic hospitality in 1996. In view of their troubled history, both churches also came together to confess their guilt before God and asked for forgiveness.

Talks between VELKD and the Union of Evangelical Free Church Congregations (**Baptists**) showed that the necessary preconditions for church communion with the Baptists will not be achieved without a common understanding on the sacrament of baptism. This has not yet been reached. But a new round of an official Lutheran-Baptist dialogue on the national level has started in 2017.

Also in 2017 the GNC/LWF and the German **Seventh-Day Adventists** started exploratory conversations to come to a better understanding of each other and to address injuries of the past.

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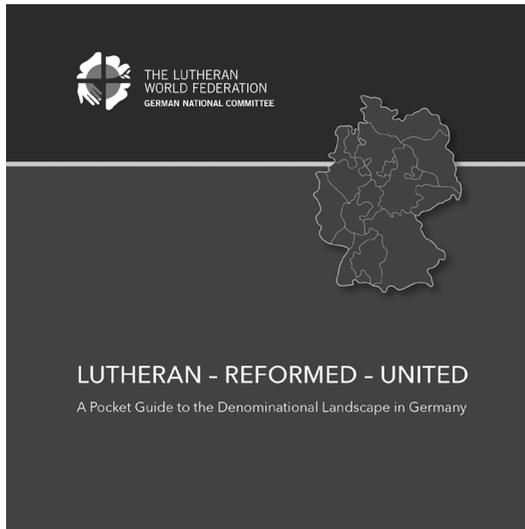
The Lutheran World Federation offers positions, statement, and views on issues concerning the Lutheran world on their website and in many publications. All can be accessed online on www.lutheranworld.org

Within Germany, the German National Committee of the Lutheran World Federation offers views and specific positions on international Lutheran or ecumenical matters from a German perspective. More information on www.dnk-lwb.de. For further basic information see also: »Lutheran - Reformed - United. A Pocket Guide to the Denominational Landscape in Germany«.

The VELKD publishes a variety of books, documents, statements on contemporary matters from a Lutheran perspective. »Texte aus der VELKD« provide regular views and information from the VELKD. Most publications can be accessed, with much more information, on www.velkd.de.

Hungry for more? Learn more about denominational landscape in German and the Lutheran, Reformed, and United churches with this publication:

Lutheran – Reformed – United



A Pocket Guide to the Denominational Landscape in Germany by the German National Committee of the Lutheran World Federation. Published for the first time in 2017.

Download at www.dnk-lwb.de/LRU or order for €2 plus postage at info@dnk-lwb.de.

It is not always easy for outsiders to understand a different Christian denomination or church family. One's preconceptions - for example about the Lutheran churches - may be coloured by common stereotypes or personal experience. This booklet is intended to show how German Lutherans see themselves from an insider perspective. What are their origins? What is Lutheran theology? How do Lutherans worship? And how do they relate to other churches?



THE LUTHERAN
WORLD FEDERATION
GERMAN NATIONAL COMMITTEE

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