

The 95 Theses to the ELCA

We young Christians of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America have served the church faithfully since our baptism. During our time as faithful laymen, seminarians, and pastors, we have seen our sect of Lutheranism walk away from the path of Christ and instead follow the path of the world. The ELCA is no longer a denomination that pleases God, but one that seeks to please the world. We, the Society of Orthodox Lutheran Advocates, have created a new 95 Theses, in honor of Martin Luther, to seek reformation in the ELCA. We ask that you read these theses and consider joining our efforts to reform the ELCA.

1. The Lutheran Church must affirm its commitment to the authority of Scripture as the ultimate, inspired, and infallible Word of God, guiding all aspects of faith and practice.
(John 1:1, John 7:38, John 10:35, Matthew 4:4, 2 Timothy 3:16-17, Joshua 1:8, Hebrews 4:12, Psalms 119:9, Isaiah 40:8)
2. As stewards of God's truth, the Church must guard against the influences of secularism and relativism that seek to dilute and distort biblical teachings.
(Romans 12:2, James 4:4, 1 John 2:15-17, 1 Peter 1:14, Exodus 23:2, Colossians 2:8, Psalm 1:1-3, Ephesians 4:17)
3. When the church seeks to innovate its teachings, it must be cautious, ensuring that any changes or adaptations are firmly rooted in scripture and the historical teachings of the church
(1 John 1:3, 2 Corinthians, 11:14, 2 Peter 2:1)
4. The Lutheran Church should uphold the doctrine of justification by faith alone as a central tenet of its faith, emphasizing that salvation is a gracious gift from God.
(Ephesians 2:8, Romans 3:28, Galatians 2:16)
5. It is essential to resist the pressures of cultural accommodation, instead seeking to maintain the timeless principles of Christian ethics and morality.
(Romans 12:2)
6. The Church should stand firm on the belief that Christ is the sole mediator between God and humanity. Saints are to be honored as examples of God's grace on Earth, and the Virgin Mary is to be honored as a fellow Christian. Asking a saint for intercession should be done at one's private devotion, not in a church.
(John 14:6, 1 Timothy 2:5, Deuteronomy 16:21)
7. In matters of theology and practice, the Lutheran Church must prioritize the teachings of the Book of Concord and include readings from said confessions, along with other confessional documents, as faithful expressions of biblical truth.
(Timothy 3:16-17; Proverbs 1:7-9; 3:5-6)
8. The Church must guard against theological pluralism and syncretism, holding steadfast to the distinctiveness of Lutheran doctrine and avoiding compromise with heterodox beliefs.

(2 Corinthians 6:14, 1 Corinthians 15:33, Deuteronomy 22:10)

9. The role of liturgy and sacraments should remain central in worship, serving as conduits of God's grace and drawing believers closer to Him through the means of grace.

(Matthew 26:26-29, 1 Corinthians 10:16)

10. The Lutheran Church should nurture a strong sense of community and mutual support among its members, emphasizing the importance of fellowship and accountability within the body of believers.

(Acts 2:42, 1 John 1:3, 1 Thessalonians 5:11)

11. The Church should actively promote the education and discipleship of its members, equipping them to defend their faith and engage with contemporary challenges in a biblically sound manner.

(1 Timothy 3:11, 2 Timothy 3:16)

12. The Lutheran Church should maintain a cautious approach to certain cultural practices or innovations that may compromise traditional values or obscure the Gospel message.

(1 John 2:15-17, John 15:18-19, 2 Corinthians 6:14-18)

13. The Church should actively foster a sense of reverence and awe in worship, recognizing the sacredness of liturgy and the Holy Eucharist, and avoiding any casual or irreverent practices.

(John 6:53, Luke 22:19, 1 Corinthians 11:26-30, John 6:55, 1 Corinthians 10:15-22)

14. In light of the prevalence of individualism in contemporary culture, the Lutheran Church must emphasize the importance of the Christian community and the accountability it provides for spiritual growth and support.

(1 Thessalonians 5:11, Hebrews 10:24-25, 1 John 1:7, Galatians 6:2, Romans 12:10)

15. The Church should remain steadfast in its commitment to the traditional understanding of marriage as a sacred union between one man and one woman, by biblical teachings.

(Genesis 2:24, 1 Corinthians 7:1-40, Ephesians 5:22-33, 1 Peter 3:7, Matthew 19:4-6)

16. The Lutheran Church should exercise discernment in embracing contemporary cultural trends, ensuring that any cultural engagement aligns with biblical principles and does not compromise doctrinal integrity.

(Romans 12:2)

17. As a confessional Church, the Lutheran community must prioritize catechesis and the proper understanding of Lutheran doctrine, ensuring that future generations are firmly grounded in the faith.

(Deuteronomy 6:6-7)

18. All ELCA ministers must affirm the Lutheran real presence of the body and blood of Christ and the sacramental union.

(Matthew 26:26-28)

19. All ELCA ministers must affirm the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed.

(1 Corinthians 4:6)

20. The Lutheran Church should actively promote and support traditional family values, recognizing the importance of raising children in a nurturing environment that instills Christian virtues and teachings.

(Ephesians 6:4)

21. In matters of social justice and advocacy, the Church must seek solutions that align with biblical principles and respect the dignity of every human life, from conception to natural death.

(Micah 6:8)

22. The Lutheran Church should prioritize missions and evangelism, proclaiming the Gospel to the lost with unwavering commitment, while respecting the diverse cultural contexts in which it is shared.

(Matthew 28:19-20)

23. The Church needs to maintain a spirit of humility, acknowledging its historical imperfections and actively seeking forgiveness and reconciliation where needed.

(James 4:10)

24. The Lutheran Church should preserve its distinctive liturgical heritage, cherishing hymnody and worship practices that have enriched the faith of believers for generations. (Psalm 147:7)

25. In response to contemporary pressures for theological inclusivity, the Church must remain unwavering in its commitment to the biblical teachings on salvation through faith in Christ alone, excluding any form of universalism.

(John 14:6)

26. The Church should nurture a culture of prayer and devotion, encouraging believers to cultivate a personal relationship with God through regular prayer and study of Scripture.

(Ephesians 6:18, Revelation 3:20)

27. The Lutheran Church must maintain the historical emphasis on the role of vocation, affirming that all aspects of life can be acts of service and obedience to God.

(Romans 1:20, Revelation 5:13, Psalm 19:1, Psalm 66:4)

28. As the Body of Christ, the Church should prioritize pastoral care and support, providing spiritual guidance and comfort to individuals facing trials, doubt, and suffering.

29. In an era of rampant materialism, the Lutheran Church should promote stewardship and simplicity, recognizing that God's blessings are meant to be used for His glory and the welfare of others.

(Luke 12:15, Hebrews 13:5, 1 Timothy 9:9-10, Ecclesiastes 5:10)

30. The Church must address the challenges of technological advancements responsibly, utilizing digital platforms to spread the Gospel while safeguarding against the potential erosion of face-to-face community and authentic relationships.

31. Emphasizing the sacredness of human life, the Lutheran Church should advocate for the protection of the unborn, the elderly, and all vulnerable individuals, championing a consistent pro-life ethic.

(Psalm 139:13-16, Psalm 127:3, Job 31:15)

32. The Church should actively engage with the arts and media, encouraging the creation of works that reflect biblical values, inspire faith, and contribute positively to culture.

33. The Lutheran Church should promote intergenerational connections, valuing the wisdom of its elders and incorporating the enthusiasm and energy of the youth into the life of the Church.

34. It is essential for the Church to actively confront and address the challenges of religious apathy and nominalism, nurturing authentic faith and commitment among its members.

35. The Lutheran Church should seek unity within its ranks, emphasizing the essentials of the faith while showing grace and understanding in areas of non-essential differences.

36. While attempting to bring individuals with same-sex attractions to Christ is a noble goal, the Church must give such individuals the tools they need to fight their unnatural sexual urges, rather than affirming what it knows to be sinful.

(Leviticus 18:22, Leviticus 20:13, Jude 1:7, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11)

37. The Lutheran Church should note that loving individuals who identify as LGBTQ+ does not necessarily mean celebrating them as they continue in sin but rather redirecting them to the will of God; we are called to love those of the LGBTQ+ community, but this should not extend into acceptance. We should not endorse any sexual relations between two men, two women, two or

more men/women, and any other source of sexual immorality. This does not mean that those who struggle with homosexuality may not be part of the church.

(Leviticus 18:22, Leviticus 20:13, Jude 1:7, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11)

38. To teach that gender is fluid and subject to change while that homosexual attractions are essential to one's identity is wrong, especially when one's gender is defined in one's DNA and when Scripture tells us that God made us to be male and female.
(Genesis 1:27)
39. Polyamorous relationships are adulterous and sinful innovations from pagan/atheist culture, and therefore should never be tolerated. We note that we are against polyamorous relations, not polyamorous people, as scripture teaches us to hate sin and love the sinner.
(Hebrews 13:4, Genesis 2:23, Exodus 20:14)
40. Jesus taught that "there is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends" (John 15:13)- therefore, let us stop sexualizing love, for it is something far greater and far more beautiful than mere sexuality!
41. The Church should distinguish between brotherly and erotic love, just as the Greeks did, this distinction is vital to the proper understanding of scripture.
42. Presenting love as a mostly sexual act is nothing short of blasphemy, considering that Jesus, the most loving person in human history, died a virgin.
43. The Church should be more afraid of the wrath of the Father than of the wrath of any secular political faction.
44. The Church should preach the message of Christ, rather than the message of any secular political faction.
45. The Church should be led by the Holy Spirit, rather than by any secular political faction.
46. The Church should note that it is entirely capable of making mistakes and should allow itself to be corrected by God, who is perfect in every way, from time to time.
47. A church that teaches contemporary politics instead of the Gospel is like a restaurant that sells rocks instead of food- it is rendered worthless by its definition, and its demise is a foregone conclusion. Let us then preach the Bible, rather than any political faction's self-serving message!
48. Ministers in the Lutheran Church who hold atheistic, agnostic, heretical, or universalist beliefs should stop misleadingly using labels like "Evangelical", "Lutheran", or "Christian", and recuse themselves from jobs in a Lutheran denomination.
(2 Corinthians 6:14, Deuteronomy 22:10)
49. The Lutheran Church should reject racist ideologies that posit theological differences between different racial and ethnic groups, such as Critical Race Theory and eugenics.
(Amos 9:7-8, Ezekiel 18)
50. Instead, let us teach the orthodox Christian doctrine that all have sinned and fallen short of God's Law, regardless of race or ethnicity.
(Romans 3:23, 1 John 1:8)
51. Let us also teach the orthodox Christian doctrine that the Gospel of Christ is open to everyone, regardless of race or ethnicity.
(Galatians 3:28)
52. The Lutheran Church should embrace technology as a tool for spreading the word of Christ while understanding the potential pitfalls and distractions in the digital age.
53. As Lutherans, we should actively care for the environment and work towards preserving God's creation, understanding that it is a clear biblical responsibility.

54. The older generation in our Church should be encouraged to share valuable life experiences and advice with the youth, nurturing intergenerational bonds and strengthening our faith community.
55. Due to being run by humans, we must understand that the Lutheran Church, like any institution, is not immune to mistakes. To remain faithful to God's guidance, we must be willing to acknowledge our wrongdoings and seek correction. This commitment to recognizing and learning from our mistakes reflects our desire to grow in grace and truth.
56. In the face of challenges and adversities, let us stand firm in our faith in God. Denying our faith should never be an option, for it is through our unwavering strength in Him that we find strength.
57. "Visions and Expectations" should be restored as pastors are expected to live as a moral example to their congregation.
58. Unmarried candidates for ministry should become celibate when accepted as a candidate for minister of word and sacrament or service.
59. Pastors are expected to either marry or remain celibate for as long as they are pastors of the church.
60. In marriage, pastors are expected to have sexual relations with their spouse and only their spouse. Any sexual contact with people other than his or her spouse is adultery.
61. Marriage is a God-ordained bond between one man and one woman, (Genesis 2:24) that should last, unless divorce is necessary (Matthew 5:31-2), till "death do them apart." The ELCA should encourage all married couples to stay with one another.
62. Likewise, to thesis thirty-six, we should note that certain heterosexual attractions are similarly sinful, such as adulterous attractions, incestuous attractions, and sexual attractions toward children.
(Philippians 4:8; Exodus 20:14, 17; Leviticus 18:6-18, 20; 1 Corinthians 7:1-3,7)
63. The church should fight against addictions to pornography, being one of the last institutions to do so.
64. Similarly, the church should also stand against abuse and abandonment in marriages.
65. The church should also uphold Adam and Eve (before the Fall) as the model God has given us for married couples: opposite genders, both adults and with a clear love between them.
66. The church should also honor men and women who choose to remain single for the sake of their faith, as many of the great saints across Christian history, such as St. Paul, were single and celibate.
(1 Corinthians 7:1-2)
67. As well as those who want to find a partner but have yet to meet the right person, to combat frustration and instill values of patience.
68. Christians are to be taught theology and apologetics, so their faith can remain resilient against attacks.
69. Christians are to be taught an accurate portrayal of church history for the same reasons.
70. The church should invest in its children from an early age on towards adulthood, lest they stray from the faith later.
71. The church should invest in young adults too, since they play a very important role in ministry and are often forgotten about in the church's social structure.
72. The church should invest in families with children, to encourage a healthy and traditional environment for children.
73. The church should invest in and care for its elders too, for the sake of maintaining its distinctive traditions.

74. Every church must remember that it is a key part of the eternal kingdom of God so that it will never fall apart due to a lack of a cause.
75. This includes building and maintaining ministries for the poor and downtrodden, to reflect God's goodness.
76. As well as building and maintaining top-tier universities and seminaries, to reflect God's wisdom.
77. As well as building and maintaining beautiful sacred spaces for worship, to reflect God's beauty.
78. The ELCA has a large commitment to and celebration of diversity, yet it does not adequately accept and introduce persons of color to the ELCA and evangelize to them.
79. The ELCA blames this lack of diversity on racism in the church and this is not true, as the ELCA and biblical Christianity is fundamentally against views of racism.
80. The ELCA claims it wants diversity but does not accept differing viewpoints from persons of color.
81. The ELCA has a great commitment to ending discrimination against women, but in that fight, it has completely forgotten men.
82. Men across the ELCA are pushed out of leadership positions and left out of the discussions for positions for being male. This is gender discrimination.
83. The ELCA is doomed to die without male leadership and should encourage more participation from men and should not shame men for being men. Masculinity and femininity should both be taught as a gift from God.
84. The two genders (male and female) have distinct characteristics that are both valuable to God.
(Genesis 1:27)
85. Jesus Christ died for our sins. Because of his death, we are forgiven of our debts against God and are invited to follow him as disciples.
(Matthew 20:28, John 3:16, Romans 5:8, Romans 4:25, 1 Corinthians 15:3, 1 Peter 2:24, etc.)
86. God became incarnate on earth as a human to die for our sins and because of Christ's actions, we are saved. We reject any doctrine that says Christ did not have to die for our sins. This is because there would be no atonement if he did not die.
87. Faith and politics are intertwined, but there is more to faith than political squabbles. Sermons should be about the word of God and not strictly about current events, however, if the focus is strictly on the word of God, it shall be permitted in strict moderation.
88. We reject any doctrine that is formed by the political agendas of any political group other than the agenda of Christ.
89. We must offer a different message to people other than the message people hear from the secular culture.
90. The Church must not be formed by secular culture, for the Church must form culture.
91. The Church has a commitment to help others and should focus on the commission of Jesus Christ to feed the poor, and help others.
92. Baptisms are only to be done in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Any baptism done in any other name is not valid.
(Acts 2:38, Acts 22:16)
93. The Holy Trinity is sacred and should not be tarnished by unnecessary analogies such as "Redeemer," "Creator," and "Sustainer." Or, "Parent" and "Child."
94. Affirming what we know as sin is not love. Telling someone who is sinning that they are not is not love, but lying.
(Galatians 6:1, James 5:19-20)



95. Persons who lie about their beliefs in Christianity and scripture while denying him personally risk God's judgment.

(Ephesians 4:25; Acts 5:1-11; Revelation 17:5, 16-17; 1 Corinthians 3:10-20)

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