

Statement of Faith for Living Faith Lutheran Church of Boyertown

The membership of Living Faith Lutheran Church of Boyertown, join together for common work and fellowship to state our beliefs in regard to the following matters.

I. Doctrine

- We bear witness that the Bible is our only authentic and infallible source of God's revelation to us and all men, and that it is the only inerrant and completely adequate source and norm of Christian doctrine and life. We hold that the Bible, as a whole and in all its parts, is the Word of God under all circumstances regardless of man's attitude toward it. (2 Timothy 3:16-17) We believe that the Holy Scriptures have been preserved to us by the Holy Spirit for our salvation and instruction.
- We accept the Bible alone as definitive for the life and practice of man and the church; we therefore reject any affiliations or associations which do not affirm this foundational truth.
- We accept the ancient ecumenical symbols, namely, the Apostles', the Nicene, and the Athanasian Creeds; Luther's Small Catechism and the unaltered Augsburg Confession as the true expression of the Christian faith and life.
- We submit all religious teaching to the test of II John 7-11.

II. Christian Unity

- The Holy Christian Church consists of those who in their hearts truly believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. He who believes in and accepts the sufficient work of Jesus for his salvation and is baptized, is a child of God. (Mark 16:16; John 3:5, 18)
- We believe that Jesus, in His High Priestly Prayer, prayed that those who believe in Him might find and accept each other. (John 13:34-35; 15:12-14)
- We recommend that our congregation cooperate wherever possible with like-minded Lutheran congregations and movements in programs of evangelism and witness.
- We envision opportunities for our congregation to cooperate with likeminded Protestant churches in the areas of evangelism and witness to our communities. However, care must be taken not to compromise the orthodox and historic Lutheran understanding of the Scriptures.

III. Church Polity

- We believe that final human authority in the churches is vested in the local congregation, subject to the Word of God and the Holy Spirit.
- We accept the Guiding Principles of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations (AFLC) as a true statement of our belief in regard to church polity.
- A free congregation selects and calls its own pastor/s, conducts its own program of worship, fellowship and service and owns and maintains its own property.

IV. Practical Life

- The Christian seeks to refrain from those acts, thoughts, and words which are against a stated law of God. Likewise, each believer should be aware that there is a separation which is necessary between the Christian and the world.
- The Bible sets the standards for human behavior. Fornication, adultery, homosexuality, drunkenness (including other addictive behaviors), persistent dishonesty, or other deviant or immoral sexual behavior is forbidden and contrary to the will and character of God. The unique roles and behaviors of men and women are clearly defined in Scripture. Romans 1:24-32 and Galatians 5:19-21 state that God recognizes unholy and immoral practices as an abomination and as such, are not acceptable in the lifestyle of a born-again child of God. Deviation from Scriptural standards, either in teaching or personal conduct, is in violation to God's Word and His design for a redeemed people; or requires the individual to seek God's forgiveness and transformation. (Romans 12:1-2; I Corinthians 6:9-20; Ephesians 4:1-11, 5:3-5; I Thessalonians 4:3-8; I Timothy 4:12; II Timothy 2:19-22; I Peter 1:15-16, 2:15-17; I John 3:1-3).
- Where actions and practices are neither forbidden nor encouraged in Scripture by name, the earnest believer will search in the Scriptures for principles to guide his decisions and conduct; welcoming the sincere counsel of fellow believers.
- Every Christian is responsible for the witness of his life to others and will govern himself, with the Lord's help, accordingly.
- The Christian will refrain from belonging to organizations which practice a religion without Christ as the only Savior. Belonging to such a group places the believer in a hopelessly compromised position and destroys his witness for Christ.

V. Church Life

- The preaching of the Word of God must be the central part of the worship service. True Gospel preaching endeavors to meet the needs of all who hear: the believer who desires to grow in his life with God, the

seeking and uncertain souls who want to see Him, the hypocrite who must be awakened from his self-righteousness, and the hardened sinner who must still be called to saving faith.

- We encourage simplicity in worship. We believe the earliest Christians were extremely simple in their order of service. Whatever is added to the service carries the danger of becoming only form.
- The Sacraments must always be met by the response of faith in the heart of the recipient to be efficacious.
- We value and encourage opportunities for Bible study and prayer fellowship.
- The Lord has given talents and gifts to Christian lay people as well as pastors, and opportunity should be given for the practice of these gifts in the life of the congregations, also in meetings of fellowship outside the congregation, and in service to a needy world.

VI. The Church Reflecting Christian Character in Culture

Because the sanctity of human life, the dignity of marriage as a union of husband and wife, and the freedom of conscience and religion are foundational principles of justice and the common good, we are compelled by our Christian faith to speak and act in their defense. We therefore affirm:

- The profound, inherent, and equal dignity of every human being as a creature fashioned in the very image of God (Genesis 1:27; 5:2-1), possesses inherent rights of equal dignity and life (Genesis 9:6; Exodus 20:13). Therefore, we defend and speak for the unborn, the disabled, and the dependent (Psalm 127:3; 139:13-16; Leviticus 19:32; Isaiah 46:3-4). We must be willing to defend, even at risk and cost to ourselves and our Church, the lives of our brothers and sisters at every stage of development (from conception to natural death), and in every human condition (Genesis 4:9-11; Exodus 21).
- Marriage is a conjugal and covenant union of one man and one woman, ordained by God from creation, and historically understood by believers and non-believers alike, to be the most basic institution in society. (Genesis 1:27-28; 2:18, 20-24; Matthew 19:4-9; Mark 10:2-9) We strive therefore, to strengthen families, and we seek to stop the glamorization of promiscuity and infidelity (Leviticus 18; 20:10-21; Romans 1:24-28; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10) and restore among our people a sense of the profound beauty, mystery, and holiness of faithful monogamous marital love. (Song of Songs; Ephesians 5:25-33) Likewise, it is out of love (not animosity) and concern for the common good (not prejudice or bigotry), that we pledge to work ceaselessly to preserve the Biblical definition of marriage as the union of one man and one woman and to rebuild the marriage culture. It is out of this commitment to support Biblically defined marriage that we will only allow traditional marriages (one man/one woman) to be performed on this property or under the oversight of this church. This commitment is equally binding on any Pastor called to serve Living Faith Lutheran Church of Boyertown.
- Religious liberty must be maintained, as grounded in the character of God, the example of Christ, and the inherent freedom and dignity of human beings created in the divine image. Jesus Himself admonished, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's." (Matthew 22:21); and that proper honor and submission be given to those in civil authority (Romans 13:1-2) However, Christians confess that God alone is Lord of the conscience. No one should be compelled to embrace any religion against his will, nor should persons of faith be forbidden to worship God according to the dictates of conscience or to express freely and publicly their deeply held religious convictions. What is true for individuals applies to churches as well.

"Because we honor justice and the common good, we will not comply with any edict that purports to compel our institutions to participate in abortions, embryo-destructive research, assisted suicide and euthanasia, or any other anti-life act; nor will we bend to any rule purporting to force us to bless immoral sexual partnerships, treat them as marriages or the equivalent, or refrain from proclaiming the truth, as we know it, about morality and immorality and marriage and the family. We will fully and ungrudgingly render to Caesar what is Caesar's. But under no circumstances will we render to Caesar what is God's." (The Manhattan Declaration, November 20, 2009)

"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives and freedom to prisoners; 2 To proclaim the favorable year of the Lord and the day of vengeance of our God; To comfort all who mourn, 3 To grant those who mourn in Zion, giving them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a spirit of fainting. So they will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified." (Isa 61:1-3)