

Resource

Because of some questions regarding the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, this document has been produced in response to numerous requests.

Some say that:	Response
The ELCA disregards the authority of the Bible	<p>False. The official teaching of the ELCA regarding the authority of the Word is stated in our governing documents:</p> <p>*C2.02. This congregation confesses Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and the Gospel as the power of God for the salvation of all who believe.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Jesus Christ is the Word of God incarnate, through whom everything was made and through whose life, death, and resurrection God fashions a new creation. b. The proclamation of God’s message to us as both Law and Gospel is the Word of God, revealing judgment and mercy through word and deed, beginning with the Word in creation, continuing in the history of Israel, and centering in all its fullness in the person and work of Jesus Christ. c. The canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the written Word of God. Inspired by God’s Spirit speaking through their authors, they record and announce God’s revelation centering in Jesus Christ. Through them God’s Spirit speaks to us to create and sustain Christian faith and fellowship for service in the world. <p>*C2.03. This congregation accepts the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the inspired Word of God and the authoritative source and norm of its proclamation, faith, and life.</p>
The ELCA does not follow the Bible	<p>False. The ELCA uses the Confessional terms of “inspired” and “authoritative” to describe the Holy Scriptures.</p>
The ELCA does not abide by the Lutheran Confessions	<p>False. The Confessional position of the ELCA is described as follows:</p> <p>*C2.04. This congregation accepts the Apostles’, Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds as true declarations of the faith of this congregation.</p> <p>*C2.05. This congregation accepts the Unaltered Augsburg Confession as a true witness to the Gospel, acknowledging as one with it in faith and doctrine all churches that likewise accept the teachings of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession.</p> <p>*C2.06. This congregation accepts the other confessional writings in the Book of Concord, namely, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles and the Treatise, the Small Catechism, the Large Catechism, and the Formula of Concord, as further valid interpretations of the faith of the Church.</p> <p>*C2.07. This congregation confesses the Gospel, recorded in the Holy Scripture and confessed in the ecumenical creeds and Lutheran confessional writings, as the power of God to create and sustain the Church for God’s mission in the world.</p>
The ELCA has “voting members” not “delegates” at synod and churchwide assemblies.	<p>True. Persons who attend synod assemblies are elected by local congregations; persons who attend churchwide assemblies are elected by congregational voting members at synod assemblies. Persons have been historically elected to such representative positions based upon their commitment to the Lord and his church, prayerfulness in discernment, and common sense in making faithful decisions on behalf of all. Assemblies seek the Spirit’s guidance and movement through conversation and deliberation.</p>

The ELCA mixes politics and religion	<p>The ELCA holds that faith is more than a spiritual relationship with Jesus. Faith also involves “love in action” for the sake of neighbor. Scripture and our baptismal vocation call us into the world to advocate for peace, mercy, and justice. This call means that the people of God are engaged in the public square, speaking and acting on behalf of the poor, dispossessed, and those whose voices are not heard by the powers of this world. Further, the ELCA engages disaster relief, HIV/AIDS, hunger, sustainability, access to health care, etc. – all of which have political implications – close to home and around the world.</p> <p>Promises made at Baptism: “. . . trust God, proclaim Christ through word and deed, care for others and the world God made, and work for justice and peace” (<i>ELW</i>, p. 228); and in Affirmation of Baptism: “. . . to serve all people, following the example of Jesus, and to strive for justice and peace in all the earth?” (<i>ELW</i>, p. 236)</p>
The ELCA endorses “universalism”	False. The ELCA does not endorse universalism nor is it endorsed at any of the eight seminaries of the church. An old article posted on the ELCA website that some interpreted as universalism and an editing error in the first printing of the <i>Lutheran Study Bible</i> gave rise to this claim. *C2.02.a states the ELCA confession of faith regarding the salvation work of Jesus. *C2.02.b addresses Law and judgment, Gospel and mercy.
The ELCA is abandoning the Lord’s Prayer, the virgin birth, the resurrection, praying in the name of Jesus, the Bible as Word of God, Jesus as the Son of God, etc.	False. Anecdotal rumors are sometimes spread and then embraced as facts by those looking to find fault with the ELCA. The ELCA is not abandoning the Lord’s Prayer, believes the virgin birth, the resurrection, praying in the name of Jesus, the Bible as Word of God, Jesus as the Son of God, etc.
The ELCA is abandoning the Trinitarian language of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit	False. The ELCA’s primary authorized worship resource is the <i>Evangelical Lutheran Worship</i> . It faithfully maintains the historic practice and understanding that there is but one name into which, and by which we baptize, namely, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Other uses (like invocations) are not “fixed” historically or theologically; for example, in addition to the more familiar Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, <i>ELW</i> includes alternative language that does not seek to “name” God in a different way, but to describe our understanding of the Triune God. These additional options are drawn from Scripture, as is so much of our liturgical language.
The ELCA supports the marriage of homosexuals	False. A ministry policy adopted at the 2009 Churchwide Assembly permits local congregations, if they choose to do so, to “recognize” the relationship between same gender, committed persons. The ELCA has no authorized rite of blessing for such unions. The ELCA defines marriage as between one man and one woman: “Marriage is a covenant of mutual promises, commitment, and hope authorized legally by the state and blessed by God. The historic Christian tradition and the Lutheran Confessions have recognized marriage as a covenant between a man and a woman, reflecting Mark 10: 6–9.” <i>A Social Statement on Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust</i> , 2009, p. 15.
Congregations of the ELCA may be sued if they refuse to interview a pastor in a committed, same-gender relationship	False. Local congregations are free to determine who they wish, or do not wish, to have as their pastor. In the same way that most Lutheran bodies deny the pastoral office to women without legal liability, so too local congregations may choose not to consider any pastoral candidate for any reason.
The ELCA does not pray in the name of Jesus	False.
The ELCA endorses “mother goddess” descriptions for God	False. There have been instances where local faith communities have portrayed feminine imagery for God, but the ELCA’s official worship material contains no such descriptions. Some congregations choose to use the feminine imagery of God contained in the Scriptures in their worship services as a way to expand descriptions of the breadth for which God acts toward creation.

The ELCA endorses sources of salvation other than Jesus	False. *C2.02. This congregation confesses Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and the Gospel as the power of God for the salvation of all who believe. a. Jesus Christ is the Word of God incarnate, through whom everything was made and through whose life, death, and resurrection God fashions a new creation.
An ELCA congregation can hold membership in another church body.	False. Neither clergy nor congregations can be “dual rostered.” ELCA Constitution provision 9.91.01 provides a dual roster relationship <i>only</i> for ELCA congregations who are in a federated relationship with a congregation of a full-Communion denomination. All other “dual” relationships are precluded.