

We Are...

A Brief Introduction to the CLB

Church of the **Lutheran Brethren**



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The organization of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren took place when five independent Lutheran congregations met in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in December of 1900 to form a new synod. They were not splitting from another synod or denomination, but were eager to join together for purposes of a shared Christian mission. Mission, both at home and abroad, would be at the heart of this new network of congregations. This central focus on evangelism and personal discipleship, so important in 1900, is just as important to the CLB today.

It might be asked why these congregations did not join synods already in existence. It is the answer to this question which supplies the reason for the establishment of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren.

During the last decade of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, there was a wide-spread spiritual awakening in the upper Midwest of the United States. This awakening was characterized by a deep conviction of sin and a faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ, God's solution to our broken relationship with Him. Scores of people entered the kingdom of God, many of them members of Lutheran churches, the predominant religious faith of the region. Some were new immigrants to America seeking to find meaning for their lives and finding it through salvation in Jesus Christ.

These new converts began to live their lives with great purpose. For them church life took on new meaning. They were not content to limit Christian living to Sunday morning worship gatherings, which in many rural communities were held once or twice a month. And it was evident that discipleship of adults as well as children was needed. Sunday school was rarely planned with adults or new believers in mind but was focused almost entirely on children. For many, this was about to change.

These new believers began to meet for Bible study and prayer, drawn together by a hunger to study God's Word. As scattered groups of believers began studying the Scriptures, many began to ask questions about how they should live their lives as Christians. Guidance was sought from the Bible. Patterns began to emerge. These new converts began to see that God's will for the believer

was to live a godly life, patterned after the principles of Scripture; they saw the Christian life is a life lived in daily relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ.

Their study further led them to questions about the church: How should it be organized? What about membership in the church, the local congregation? Who should receive communion and baptism? Careful study of God's Word led to a biblical understanding of the local congregation as a key to living in a community as Christians. As such, CLB congregations invite all who seek membership to confess their faith in Christ and live in accordance with God's Word in daily life. The local congregation is meant to be a body of believers in which the Word of God is rightly taught and the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper (Communion) administered in accordance with the teachings of Jesus Christ.

Worship forms were also studied and, as you will experience in our congregations, a simple, reverent and Scripture-centered worship service is the mark of all CLB congregations.

Since the beginning, members and friends of Lutheran Brethren congregations have dedicated themselves to prayer and the study of Scripture. Gospel preaching and personal witness, too, are stressed. We invite all who will come to hear the Word of God, be convicted of sin, receive the forgiveness of sins through Christ and live in an assurance of faith in Jesus. This emphasis in no way minimizes the effective working of the sacraments. However, the mere ceremonial use of baptism and the Lord's Supper is not to be a pillow upon which to rest for assurance of salvation. The Word and Sacrament, rightly taught and practiced, bring people everywhere into a living, loving relationship with God.

As the congregations of the CLB strengthened their focus a burden for Christian education and world and home missions developed. Today, these ministries are shared by the congregational network of the CLB through the work of the Synod based in Fergus Falls, Minnesota. Each year we gather representatives from our congregations to discuss and pray over the leading of God in these areas of mission.

Today, the CLB maintains a strong focus on world-wide mission, reaching out to neighbors in our communities and, through a

variety of mission commitments overseas, to neighbors in Chad, Japan and Taiwan, plus individuals in other countries.

We invite you to join us in our ongoing call to serve our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in following His call to bring the good news of salvation to the world.

Church of the **Lutheran Brethren**

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