



## **Church Terms and Rituals and Their Practice in the Church**

### **Baptism**

One of two sacraments of the Lutheran church (the other being Holy Communion). In Baptism, God connects water with God's promises of forgiveness and grace. Baptism is initiated by God to welcome individuals into God's family and is to be celebrated in the community of believers during worship. In the baptismal rite promises are made by the baptized (or by their parents if an infant) and by the congregation. In most cases baptismal training is to take place beforehand with those being baptized or their parent(s) and is performed by an ordained clergy. In special circumstances when an ordained clergy is not available, and with permission of the Synodical bishop, baptism may be provided by a layperson. In an emergency (immediate life or death) situation and only upon request of person or parent, anyone may baptize without the bishop's permission. However, if the person lives, notification of baptism must be given to the congregation of the person/parent's choice and the Synodical bishop must be notified.

### **Confirmation**

Also called the Affirmation of Baptism. When a young adult affirms the promises made on their behalf in Holy Baptism. Confirmation preparation usually consists of education in the catechism (Lord's Prayer, 10 Commandments, the Creeds, Lutheran Theology and the Sacraments). This can be provided by a trained layperson or pastor. In most cases the Affirmation of Baptism takes place during worship with an ordained clergy. If an ordained clergy person is not available this may be conducted by a congregational representative or council member.

### **Congregation**

The local expression of Christ's Church in the world. The congregation is a community of believers gathered around Word and Sacrament, and witnesses of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

### **First Communion**

Before receiving Holy Communion for the first time new members and children should learn the history and meaning of this holy meal. This can be done by an ordained clergy or a lay person in the congregation.

### **Funerals**

The celebration of life is a holy time in the life of a family. The order of service depends on local customs and church policy. In most cases an ordained clergy person presides at a funeral but when an ordained person is not available a trained layperson may lead the service.

## **Holy Communion**

One of two sacraments in the Lutheran church (the other being baptism). In Holy Communion, God connects the ordinary elements of bread and wine (or grape juice) with God's promises of forgiveness and grace. Holy Communion is to be provided during worship by an ordained pastor. In special cases a trained lay person may be given permission by the Synod Bishop to preside over this holy meal.

## **Preaching**

The act of proclaiming the Gospel during a worship service. Normally, by an ordained pastor. In special cases a trained lay person may be given permission by the Synod Bishop to preach in a specific context for a designated length of time.

## **Weddings**

Weddings always have two components. The celebration of the covenant between two people before God and the Witnesses and the legal signing of the marriage certificate as an agent of the State. Only an ordained clergy can represent the church and state. It is true that anyone in the State of Montana can perform a wedding; however, if you choose to do so it is not as a representative of the church unless you are ordained or have permission from the Synodical Bishop.

## **Worship**

At its most basic level this is adoration of God. More specifically this is time set aside for reading scripture, prayer, proclamation, and Holy Communion. In the ELCA worship is lead by a called and ordained pastor except in special cases where the Synod Bishop allows lay leaders or ecumenical partners to lead.

## **Church Leadership Terms:**

### **Bishop**

An ordained clergy person elected and called by the Synod to serve a 6-year term as leader of the synod. The Bishop is responsible for Word and Sacrament ministry within their territory.

### **Clergy**

Someone who is called and ordained into Word and Sacrament ministry. Also called Pastor or Reverend in the Lutheran denomination.

**Congregation**

A community of believers joined together around Word and Sacrament ministry. Governed locally but under the care and leadership of the synod Bishop.

**Deacon**

Refers to someone who is consecrated into the ministry of Word and Service. Deacons wear a stole at an angle to show their status as a deacon.

**Lay person**

Anyone not an ordained Clergy or consecrated Deacon in the church.

**LPA (Lay Pastoral Associate)**

A lay person recognized for completing the necessary requirements of the LPA program. LPAs are not pastors although they sometimes serve in a pastoral role in the congregation. Please see the guidelines for licensing an LPA for worship leadership.

**Pastor**

Refers to someone ordained into the ministry of Word and Sacrament. The ministry of Word and Sacrament is designated by those who wear a stole as a symbol of servanthood.

**SAM (Synodically Authorized Minister)**

Anyone not an ordained pastor licensed to serve in a congregation long-term. Each year in January this license is renewed at the Bishop's discretion and depends on the needs of the congregation.

**Synod**

Congregations serving together within a geographic area under the leadership of a Bishop. The ELCA has 65 Synods that vary in size and number of congregations. The Montana Synod includes all of Montana and northern Wyoming and is comprised of 126 congregations.