

The History of the ELS

The Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS) believes and confesses:

- *The Bible is God's Word, inspired by the Holy Spirit, without error. It is the only authority for Christian faith, knowledge and life.*
- *The Bible's primary purpose is to reveal Jesus Christ—God's Son, born a sinless man—the Savior of the world.*



Produced by the Board for Evangelism of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod

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The History of the ELS

(Evangelical Lutheran Synod)

We're Glad You Asked!



The History of the ELS!

FOUNDING AND HISTORY

In 1853, some Norwegian Lutherans who had immigrated to the United States came together to form a new Lutheran church body in Wisconsin. They named their new church the Norwegian Synod. It was built on a true biblical confession of faith. It spread quickly through much of the United States.

However, years later, in 1917, the majority of the Norwegian Synod desired to merge with two other Norwegian-American Lutheran church bodies despite the fact that these church bodies did not fully agree on what the Bible teaches. Rather than enter this merger under such unbiblical circumstances, a handful of pastors and congregations reorganized themselves, again under the name Norwegian Synod.

In 1958 the synod changed its name to the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS). With the distinct Norwegian culture in the United States disappearing, combined with the synod's desire to broaden its identity both home and abroad, the name change was essential.

THE ELS TODAY

The ELS presently consists of 140 congregations in 18 states. The nationwide membership of the ELS numbers about 22,000 souls.

The *home mission program* of the ELS is working to start new congregations year by year. Its *foreign mission program* is now directly active in the countries of Peru, Chile, and Korea. It also provides support for Lutheran church bodies in Australia, the Ukraine, Czech Republic, and India.

THE ELS AND HIGHER EDUCATION

Since 1927 the ELS has operated Bethany Lutheran College. Bethany is located in Mankato, MN, on a fifty-acre campus with modern housing, educational, and athletic facilities. For many years, it operated as a junior college. In 1999 it made the move to a four-year liberal arts college. It is accredited by the NCA (North Central Association of Colleges and Schools). Bethany offers an expanding range of baccalaureate degrees. Its student enrollment continues to increase. For more information, please visit Bethany's website: www.blc.edu

Also located on the Bethany Campus is Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary (BLTS) which has been training pastors and missionaries for service in the ELS since 1946. It is an accredited seminary which offers graduates a Master of Divinity. The Seminary operates from its own facility, which opened in 1996. For more information on Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary, please visit its website: www.blts.edu

THE ELS BELIEVES AND CONFESSES

The ELS is founded on two basic biblical principles.

- The entire Bible—the Old and New Testaments—is the Word of God. God inspired it, without error. In the Bible, God reveals everything a person needs to know for salvation. It is the only authority for Christian teaching, faith, and life.
- The central truth of the Bible is Jesus Christ! Jesus Christ is God's Son, who was born into the world as a sinless man, died innocently for the world's sins at the cross, and rose again to victory! The Bible is written so that all people may believe in Jesus as their Savior from sin, and that by believing, have eternal life in His Name!

For more information on the history, teaching, and present ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS), please visit its website: www.els.name

