

The Concordia DIFFERENCE

*How our theology
informs the way we
educate students*



The Concordia DIFFERENCE

You don't have to be Lutheran to appreciate Lutheran theology. And you don't have to be a trained theologian to understand how theology intersects with education and informs the way we teach and treat each other at Concordia.

Concordia is one of the 10 colleges and universities in the Concordia University System of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Nationwide, approximately 80 percent of our full-time faculty is Lutheran. That means about 20 percent are Catholic, Protestant, or “none of the above.” Students do not have to be Lutheran to enroll in Concordia. They choose Concordia for a quality education and to prepare for a life of service.

Concordia is not Lutheran by accident but by choice. Our full-time faculty shares our beliefs. We recruit Lutherans who are talented faculty at other universities to teach in our system. We strive to maintain a critical mass of Lutheran students in each entry class. We want each campus to radiate a healthy, Christian atmosphere. We proclaim the Good News that through Jesus Christ we can find forgiveness of sin and eternal life. We have no intention of becoming merely a historically Lutheran institution.

Whether you are a life-long Lutheran or come from another faith tradition, you may be wondering what we believe and what difference it makes in the classroom. Following is a brief guide on how Lutheran doctrines inform the acts of teaching and learning.



GRACE

When we get paid for a day's work or put in jail for committing a crime, we are merely getting what we deserve. However, if we receive full payment without working or receive forgiveness when we deserve punishment, then we are receiving grace. We are getting what we do not deserve. The grace of God toward sinners is like this. God offers us forgiveness and eternal life without our having to do anything to earn it. Grace is the undeserved favor that God shows us.

As we teach we want to remember that our salvation and all the blessings we enjoy on our campus come from the grace of God. We want to live each day with thankful and humble hearts. We want to extend grace to other faculty, to staff, and to our students as a reflection of God's grace toward us.



VOCATION



Lutherans believe that all Christians are called by God, not just professional church workers. The word vocation is derived from the Latin word for calling. In fact, all believers have multiple callings. We are called to be children of God. We are called to be responsible citizens here on earth. If we are married, we are called to be a good spouse and if we have children to be a good parent. We are also called by God to serve Him in the world through our career by faithfully carrying out our responsibilities in that role. The Bible provides guidance

for how we should live out each of these callings. Any occupation that is not opposed to God's Word can be an act of service to Him.

At Concordia we want to prepare students for a job, but we also want to prepare them to fulfill all of their callings in life. We focus on developing the whole person. We want our students to be responsible citizens and good parents. We want them to be highly skilled and to value producing quality products and delivering superior service in their line of work. Our aim is that they view their career as a way to serve God as they serve the world. As faculty, taking our interactions with students seriously and teaching well is an important aspect of fulfilling our calling as teachers.

We are Lutheran by heritage, in doctrine, and with intention

TWO KINGDOMS

*M*artin Luther taught that all Christians live as citizens in two kingdoms simultaneously. One is the civil kingdom (the kingdom of the left), and the other is the spiritual kingdom (the kingdom of the right); the former is ruled by civil law, the latter by Christ. We become members of the former by physical birth, the latter by grace through faith. In the kingdom of God we are motivated by the Gospel. Here on earth we are ruled by civil laws. This does not imply a false distinction between things secular and sacred, but that God has ordained human government just as He has established the Church. Each has an important function but in different realms. This is foundational for the modern principle of the separation of church and state.

This means that our faculty and students have a dual citizenship. We are all earthly citizens, and those who have come to faith in Christ are also citizens of the kingdom of God. At Concordia, we teach students what it means to be good citizens of both. A clear understanding of the two kingdoms helps our students to make ethical choices in life. In matters dealing with the kingdom of God, we follow what God has revealed in the Bible. In matters dealing with this world, we stay within the boundaries of human laws except in those instances when they may conflict with Scripture.

LAW & GOSPEL

Preachers work hard at applying Law and Gospel appropriately. The Law refers to God's laws revealed in the Bible and the Gospel is the Good News of the grace of God and forgiveness of our sins and salvation through Christ. The law serves as a curb, a mirror, and a rule. As a curb it helps maintain outward discipline and decency in the world. As a mirror, it shows us our sin. As a rule, it provides guidance for the Christian life of sanctification.

When we interact with students in and outside of class, sometimes they need to hear the Law and at other times they need the reassurance of the Gospel. For example, if a student turns in an assignment late because he or she was partying all weekend, we need to apply the Law by assigning a lower grade. If a student is caught plagiarizing, we also apply the Law. However, if the student is remorseful, the student needs to hear the Gospel and receive assurance of forgiveness. Knowing when to apply the Law and when to apply the Gospel with students requires wisdom.



WORD & SACRAMENT

Forgiveness for sin and salvation come to us through specific means of grace. These means are God's Word and the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion. People hear about forgiveness of sin through preaching and teaching of the Scriptures. Christ instituted Baptism as a way to convey forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. The visible element is water. Christ instituted Holy Communion to seal our forgiveness for sin, increase our love of God and neighbor, confirm our hope in eternal life, and deepen our union with Christ. The visible elements are bread and wine. The Holy Spirit continues to use these means of grace to strengthen and preserve our faith.

On our campuses we make Word and sacrament ministry a priority. We want all students to hear the Good News of life and salvation through Jesus Christ and have the opportunity to follow Him. We want all believers to be strengthened in their faith and progress in their spiritual formation. This cannot happen apart from Word and sacrament ministry.



THREE SOLAS

The three solas are *sola fide*, *sola gratia*, and *sola Scriptura*. These are watchwords of the Reformation. *Sola fide* is Latin for “faith alone.” This means we are saved solely by faith in God’s gift of salvation and not by good works or any actions on our part. *Sola gratia* is Latin for “grace alone.” This means we are saved solely by God’s undeserved kindness and not by our own merit. *Sola Scriptura* is Latin for “Scripture alone.” This means we regard the Bible as God’s infallible Word, in which He reveals His law and His gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ. Scripture is the sole rule and norm for Christian doctrine.

While we prepare students for living a life of service in the world, we also teach that a life of good works does not score points toward their salvation. We want them to know that they are justified before God by grace alone and through faith alone. We want our students to become lifelong students of the

Bible and continue to hear, read, and study it diligently.

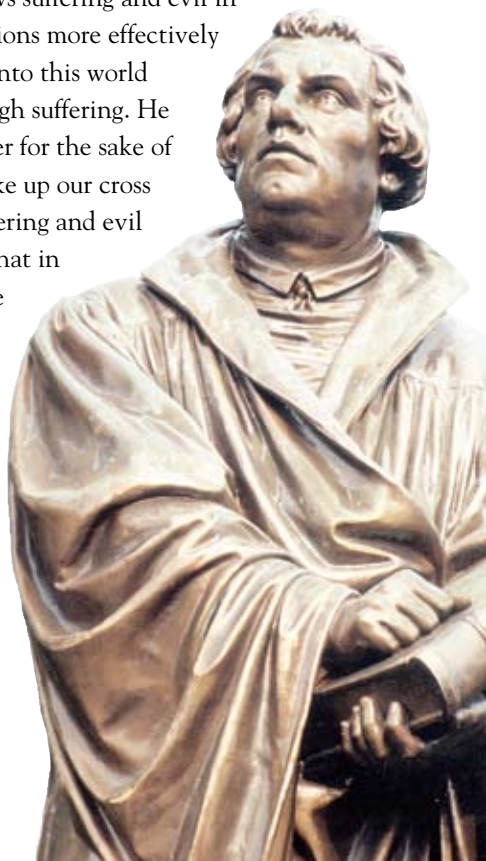


THEOLOGY OF THE CROSS

*M*artin Luther coined the term “theology of the cross” to contrast it from what he called the “theology of glory.” Theology of the cross starts at the foot of the cross where Christ has died for the sin of the whole world and paid for it all for us. We can do nothing to earn our salvation or add to our righteousness before God. A theology of glory starts with natural reason and human perceptions. It emphasizes what we can do and how we cooperate with God to gain salvation. It wants to quickly move beyond the cross to emphasize other aspects of Christian living. Luther said a theologian of the cross looks at all things in life through suffering and the cross.

Students often wonder why God allows suffering and evil in the world. They can deal with such questions more effectively when they are reminded that God came into this world and suffered. Jesus paid for their sin through suffering. He richly blesses us but also invites us to suffer for the sake of the Gospel. Jesus charges each of us to take up our cross and follow him. God allows pain and suffering and evil to happen in the world, but he also uses that in an astonishing way to drive us back to the foot of the cross and to Jesus.

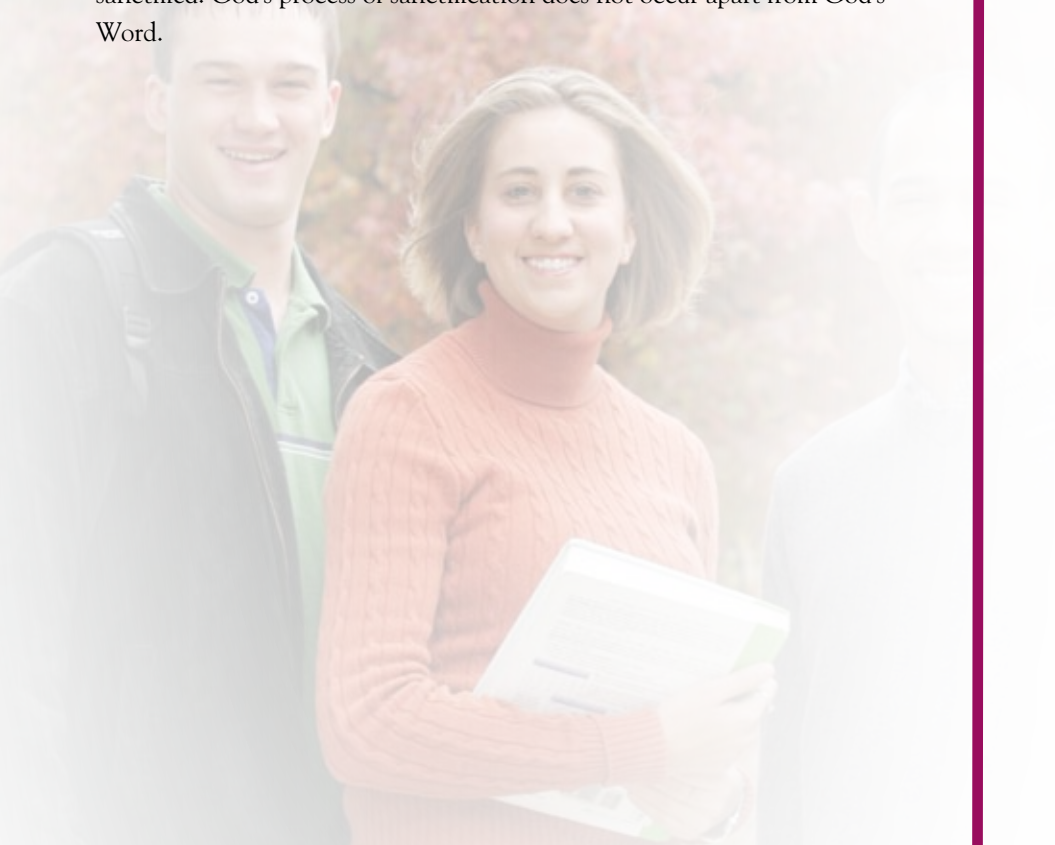
*We are part of
a system of 10
universities across
the nation*



CHARACTER

Character is a summary or impression of someone's moral and spiritual qualities. At Concordia we mean instilling Christian virtues in students' lives through God's work of sanctification. Sanctification includes all the beneficial effects of God's Word in us. After coming to faith in Christ, the Holy Spirit continues to work in us to increase faith, instill virtues, and make us more and more like Christ. We cooperate with God in this ongoing process of sanctification. In heaven, our sanctification will finally be made complete.

No university wants a reputation for producing graduates with serious character flaws. So, many institutions of higher education include some type of statement about character development or ethical conduct. Character education apart from God's work in a life has limited effectiveness. To develop character, we want students to have the opportunity first to come to faith in Jesus and be justified, then to grow morally and spiritually while being sanctified. God's process of sanctification does not occur apart from God's Word.



HUMILITY

*H*umility is a virtue where people are mindful of unworthiness before God, acknowledge their weaknesses, have an honest estimate of their own worth, and willingly submit themselves to God and others. Because humility is a virtue that we must voluntarily assume, nobody can humble us. We can only humble ourselves. We easily confuse humility with timidity. Humility is not self-denigration but being realistic and avoiding arrogance.



We have all studied under or worked with academics who are filled with arrogant pride. They always want to be seen as superior teachers or researchers and will tear others down to make themselves look better. We don't want our faculty to be like that and we don't want to produce students like that. Instead, we want the atmosphere on our campus to be one of seeking truth fiercely with a spirit of quiet humility. We want to deliver a quality education in a Christian atmosphere and that requires humble faculty members.



HOW WE LIVE OUT THIS FAITH

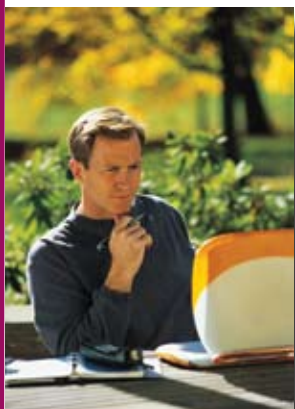
These doctrines characterize the faith we proclaim and live at Concordia. Our full-time faculty has declared their agreement with it. Our staff and adjunct faculty promise that their work will be done in a manner that is consistent with this faith. Staff and students come from a variety of religious traditions and may share in this confession or continue in their own profession of faith as we live and work together.

We believe that the Holy Spirit works faith through the Gospel. This response of faith cannot be coerced or legislated. We introduce students to the content and application of this faith and we invite them to hear and respond to the Gospel, but a faith-response is not demanded of students. We treat everyone with respect and dignity.

The pursuit of knowledge in a variety of academic fields is a valid Christian vocation. It is legitimate for Christians to study and teach subjects that are not directly concerned with the Holy Scriptures. Serving God in the various vocations He has given us motivates us to strive for excellence in all that we do.



Studying viewpoints and issues that are non-biblical and even antagonistic to biblical faith is legitimate. Such exploration is necessary if we want to comprehend this world, expand our knowledge, and understand our own position. Christians should understand various viewpoints as they really are and not distort them. At the same time, Christians should articulate a response to challenges to the Gospel.



CUEnet

To gain a fuller understanding of Lutheran doctrine and the mission of Lutheran education, you may want to consider taking some of the online courses developed by the Concordia University Education Network. These are specially designed for non-Lutheran teachers serving in Lutheran schools. Courses available online include

Lutheran Perspectives on the Old Testament, Lutheran Perspectives on the New Testament, History of the Church, Lutheran Doctrine, and The Role of the Teacher in a Lutheran School.

For more information, visit www.cuenet.edu or call 1-800-238-3037.

Links for further study

The Web site for The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod offers helpful resources for more information on these and other doctrinal questions. On the LCMS home page, click on the tab labeled “Belief and Practice.” Also, you can enter key words in the search bar to find related documents. Simply point your browser to www.lcms.org.

*We have agreed to
handle our academic
freedom responsibly*



- **Concordia University • Ann Arbor, MI**
(888) 282-2338 • www.cuaa.edu
- **Concordia University Texas • Austin, TX**
(800) 865-4282 • www.concordia.edu
- **Concordia College—New York • Bronxville, NY**
(800) 937-2655 • www.concordia-ny.edu
- **Concordia University • Irvine, CA**
(800) 229-1200 • www.cui.edu
- **Concordia University Wisconsin • Mequon, WI**
(888) 628-9472 • www.cuw.edu
- **Concordia University—Portland • Portland, OR**
(800) 321-9371 • www.cu-portland.edu
- **Concordia University Chicago • River Forest, IL**
(877) 282-4422 • www.cuchicago.edu
- **Concordia University • St. Paul, MN**
(800) 333-4705 • www.csp.edu
- **Concordia College • Selma, AL**
(334) 874-5700 • www.concordiaselma.edu
- **Concordia University Nebraska • Seward, NE**
(800) 535-5494 • www.cune.edu



Concordia University System
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
 1333 S. Kirkwood Road
 St. Louis, MO 63122-7295
 1-800-248-1930, Ext. 1252
www.lcms.org