

Augsburg Confession

The Augsburg Confession is generally considered to be the primary confession of faith of the Lutheran Church, and is part of the *Book of Concord: the Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (sometimes referred to as *The Confessions*.)

These are the sections most often referred to in the discussions around whether ordination is limited to a specific gender. *V* and *XIV* speak of ministry and of order in the church, *IV* is included here because “faith” is often spoken about in these discussions, *VII* is included because it defines what is necessary for the church to be Church, and the final few lines of *XXVIII* because the notion of burdened consciences is also raised in the discussions.

These excerpts are from the translation from the Latin version of the Augsburg Confession, edited by Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, Fortress Press, 2000.

Article IV. Concerning Justification (p. 39 and 41)

Likewise, they teach that human beings cannot be justified before God by their own powers, merits, or works. But they are justified as a gift on account of Christ through faith when they believe that they are received into grace and that their sins are forgiven on account of Christ, who by his death made satisfaction for our sins. God reckons this faith as righteousness Rom. 3[:21-26] and 4[:5].

Article V. Concerning Ministry in the Church (p. 41)

So that we may obtain this faith, the ministry of teaching the gospel and administering the sacraments was instituted. For through the Word and the sacraments as through instruments the Holy Spirit is given, who effects faith where and when it pleases God in those who hear the gospel, that is to say, in those who hear that God, not on account of our own merits but on account of Christ, justified those who believe that they are received into grace on account of Christ. Galatians 3[14b]: “So that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.”

They condemn the Anabaptists and others who think that the Holy Spirit comes to human beings without the external Word through their own preparations and works.

Article VII. Concerning the Church (p. 43)

Likewise, they teach that one holy church will remain forever. The church is the assembly of saints in which the gospel is taught purely and the sacraments are administered rightly. And it is enough for the true unity of the church to agree concerning the teaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments. It is not necessary that human traditions, rites, or ceremonies instituted by human beings be alike everywhere. As Paul says [Eph. 4:5,6]: “One faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all ...”

Article XIV. Concerning Church Order (p. 47)

Concerning church order they teach that no one should teach publicly in the church or administer the sacraments unless properly called.

Article XXVIII. The Church's Power, excerpts from the final two paragraphs (p. 101)

There are still tremendous debates concerning the change of the law, concerning ceremonies of the new law, concerning the change of the sabbath, all of which have arisen from the false assumption that worship in the church should be like Levitical worship and that Christ commanded the apostles

and bishops to devise new ceremonies that were necessary for salvation. There errors crept into the church when the righteousness of faith was not taught with sufficient clarity. ...

The apostles commanded abstention from blood, etc. Who keeps this command now? Those who do not keep it certainly do not sin, because the apostles did not wish to burden consciences through such bondage. They issued the prohibition for a time to avoid scandal. For the general intention of the gospel must be considered in connection with the decree.