

How does LCMC compare with the ELCA?

Comparison	ELCA	LCMC
Definition of Church	The “Threefold Expression” assumes that “the Church” includes offices and legislative assemblies. ELCA officers refer to it as “a Constitutional Church.”	Affirms the Augsburg Confession: “The Church is the congregation of saints, in which the Gospel is rightly taught and the Sacraments are rightly administered.” LCMC is a Confessional Church.
Statement of Faith	ELCA & LCMC have nearly identical statements of faith in their constitutions.	
Authority of Scripture	Scripture is “the authoritative source and norm.” In practice the ELCA modifies the witness of Scripture by appeals to context and experience. (e.g. Sexuality Social Statement.)	Scripture is “sole rule and norm.” LCMC takes the use of Biblical texts throughout history very seriously.
How does one receive salvation?	Depends whom you ask. Some official publications and websites speak of salvation for the whole world, regardless of faith.*	Salvation is through Jesus Christ alone, given to us by grace through faith in him.
Women pastors?	ELCA and LCMC are the only Lutheran Church bodies in the United States that affirm the call of women to be pastors.	
Non-celibate Gay pastors?	Yes.	No. A congregation which called a pastor in violation of the Ministry Standards would be removed from the association.
Call Process	Only those candidates approved by the ELCA and nominated by your bishop can serve as your pastor. Background checks are by the Synod office.	A congregation has the freedom to call whomever it chooses to serve as their pastor. Websites and a network of contacts help provide congregations with names of pastors to consider. Background checks are by congregations.
Structure?	A “threefold expression ” of congregation, synod and national body, which are “interdependent.”	An Association of Congregations with a flat organizational structure.
How are benevolence dollars handled?	Benevolence dollars are sent to the Synods, which use about half the money for their administration and local missions; the other half is sent to churchwide. That money is used for its administration expenses and other ministries.	Congregations are encouraged to give some money for the administration of LCMC. All other benevolence money is distributed by local congregations to the ministries of their choice: local, regional and/or international.

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How are church wide decisions made?	Constitution and Ministry Standards decisions are made at the Church Wide Assembly. Voting members of the CWA are elected by synods (one for every 5800 members). Each delegation must contain specified percentages of clergy & lay, male & female, and ethnic minority members. Voting members are instructed that they do not represent anyone. Most changes are proposed by the 36 member Church Council and voted on by the CWA.	Each congregation is entitled to send at least two delegates to the National Gathering. Once a change is made to the Constitution or Ministry Standards by the national gathering, it must be ratified by 2/3rds of the congregations. In this way every congregation and member has an opportunity to vote on major decisions of the association.
What constitution can we use for our church?	ELCA has a model constitution that congregations are required to use. Any variance must be approved by the synod.	LCMC recommends that you consult your state's corporate law and write a constitution that works for your church.
If there is a dispute, who interprets the constitution?	There are processes and committees for review and interpretation. THE ELCA says that the ELCA Secretary in Chicago and the Bishop are the final interpreters of the constitutions.	Common sense and Webster's Dictionary work pretty well. As a matter of corporate law, a court could be the final interpreter of the constitution.
What if we want to end our affiliation?	The congregation must take two votes, at least 90 days apart, each passing with a 2/3rds super-majority. There is a required "consultation" by the Bishop in between, and in some cases, Synod approval is required.	One vote, simple majority according to your congregation's procedures.
Who owns the property?	The congregation owns the property, with some restrictions.	The congregation owns the property.
What if we can't afford or do not have a pastor?	In most places the ELCA mandates that ordained pastors preside at communion. Sometimes pre-consecrated bread and wine is made available; otherwise, congregations without pastors are not to celebrate the Lord's Supper.	LCMC understands that Luther's biblically-based principle of the priesthood of all believers means that a congregation can, if it chooses, appoint one of their own number to preach, teach, and administer the sacraments.
Pension & Health Benefits for pastors & staff?	Health and benefit plans are in place. Pension funds are fully vested and can be transferred.	
Position on abortion	Depends on personal opinion and individual choice. Health plan <i>does</i> pay for abortions.	Health plan <i>does not</i> pay for abortions.

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Worship and Liturgy	Congregations are given “guidelines” and published resources which tend toward political correctness, gender-neutral language, and ecumenical theology.	Congregations are free to choose and structure their worship services in their local setting. A variety of resources are available, including ReClaim Lutheran Worship Resources.
Educational material	Augsburg Fortress is the official publisher for the church.	Free to choose from a variety of resources, including A-F, CSS, Concordia, Group, Logos, ReClaim Resources, Sola Publishing, etc.
Seminary and lay Education	Eight seminaries; some synods operate a Lay School of Theology	Currently working with 11 seminaries; some students in training at ELCA seminaries; Institute of Lutheran Theology, Beyond the River Academy, and others provide additional educational opportunities for all.
Youth	Churchwide youth office schedules national and regional conventions.	Local congregations take responsibility for organizing national and regional gatherings and invite other members of the Association.
Women’s organization	WELCA is funded by mission dollars and operated out of the national headquarters.	Women of the Word (WOW) is a small but growing, grassroots organization.
Camping	Most synods own and operate church camps.	Free to support any Bible camp program that the congregation deems faithful. Some camps are operated by LCMC churches.

* ELCA universalism is documented, among other places, at <http://www.elca.org/What-We-Believe/New-or-Returning-to-Church/Dig-Deeper/Salvation.aspx>

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