



Baptism is the ritual with which a person is accepted into the community of Christianity. A basin of water is used for baptism. It is often placed in a large, decorated stone pedestal. In most churches today, children are baptized as infants, to show that they also belong to the Christian community.

The most important element of the baptism ceremony is water. The immersion in or – as in the Evangelical Lutheran church – pouring of flowing water means: “You belong to Jesus Christ. The water will wash away your sins. You are risen with Jesus Christ into a new life.”

At the baptism, the pastor speaks the words: “I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”

In the days of the early church, people who wanted to become Christians had to first learn much about the Biblical writings and about Christian beliefs. Two members of the congregation were assigned to the catechumen (the person preparing to be baptized). These two people, called catechists, helped the catechumen understand the tenets of the belief, and aided him or her in daily life as well.

The Baptismal Font



The explication of a Biblical passage for the congregation is called a sermon. The pastor holds the sermon during a worship service from a particular place, the pulpit. It is at a raised place in the church, so that the pastor can be seen by everyone in the congregation.

Many pulpits have a type of canopy. Before there were microphones, this canopy helped to reflect sound, so that the sermon could be better heard.

Because the sermon is so important in Protestant churches, many pulpits are richly decorated. They are often adorned with the four evangelists, who told the story of Jesus in the Bible. Generally they are depicted with their respective symbols: Matthew with a man, Mark with a lion, Luke with a bull, and John with an eagle. In some churches the pulpit is supported by a figure of Moses holding the tablets with the Ten Commandments.

Across the chancel from the pulpit is the lectern. This is where Bible passages are read during a worship service.

The Pulpit



Music plays a large role in the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Like the spoken language, the language of music proclaims the praise of God. Poets throughout the ages have written Christian poems, and musicians have put them to music. This is how hymns developed. These songs, along with prayers and Christian professions of faith are collected in a hymnal. At every worship service, the congregation sings songs and recites prayers from the hymnal.

The songs are accompanied by an organ, which, in most churches in Germany, is on the gallery above the entrance. For many centuries, composers have written beautiful music for the organ. The music of Johann Sebastian Bach is especially revered in the Evangelical Lutheran Church.

In many churches, the organ is played by a person with a specialized degree in church music. He or she also leads the congregation's choir. The choir sings during worship services, and sometimes gives concerts on special occasions.

Music in the Church

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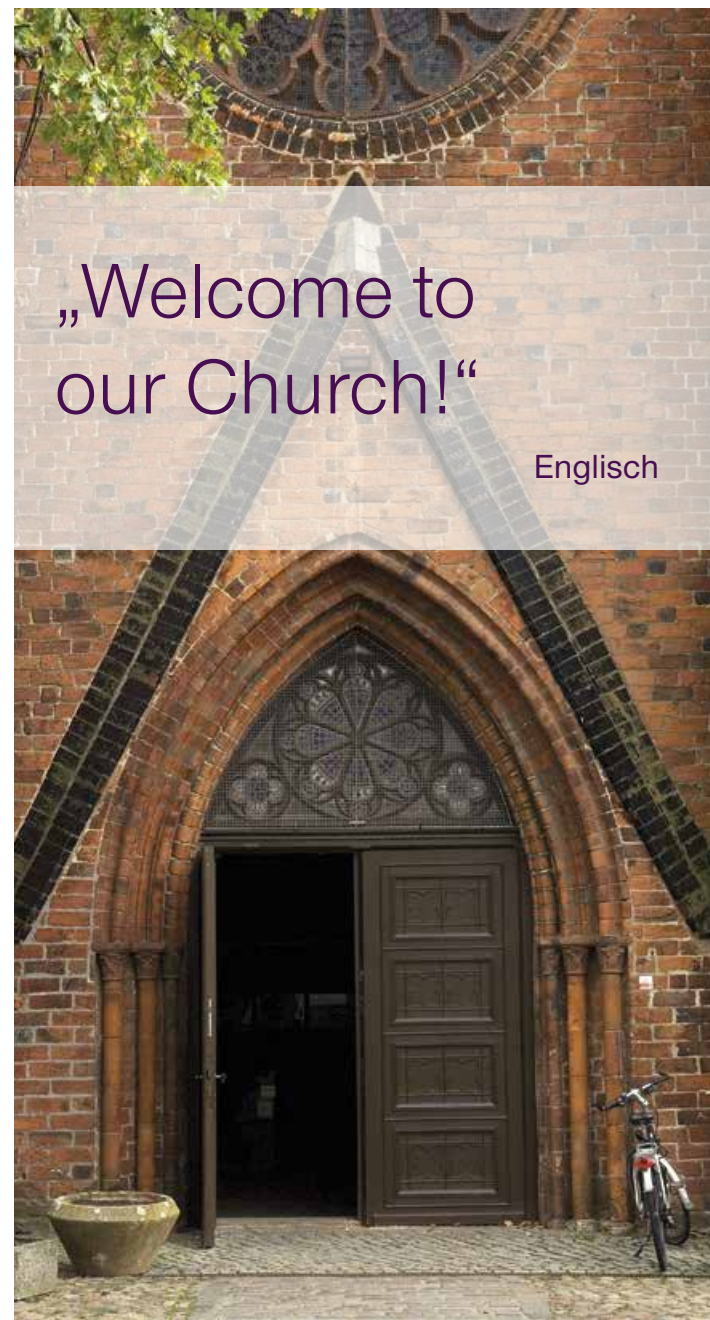
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Evangelisch-Lutherische
Kirche in Norddeutschland



„Welcome to
our Church!“

Englisch



Evangelisch-Lutherische
Kirche in Norddeutschland

Welcome!



Dear Visitors,

Thank you for coming to our church. We are pleased that you chose to visit us.

The church is the place that Christians gather to pray and to attend worship services. The architecture of the church and the objects in the sanctuary tell the story of the Christian faith.

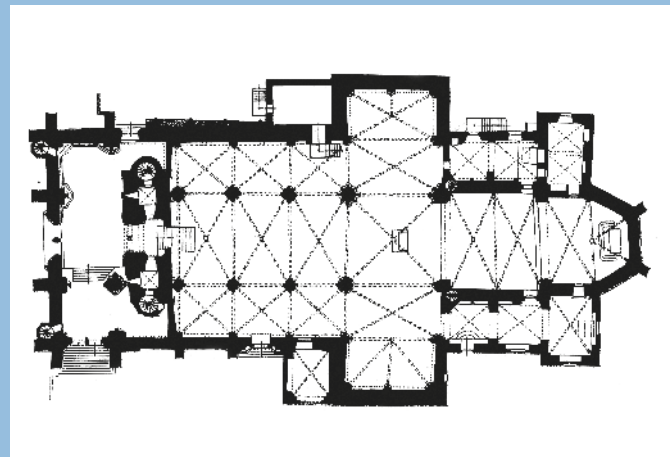
There are many denominations in Christianity. This is an Evangelical Lutheran church, a Protestant church that follows the teachings of the reformer Martin Luther. There are many other churches in the city. But Christians of all denominations belong to the one worldwide community of Christianity.

There is much to see and to discover in a church. You will recognize some of these things, but some may be new to you. Please take a moment to read through this brochure. It may answer some of your questions about our church.

It is good to know about our neighbors' religions. When we do, we can live together in peace and shape our country together.

As the Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Northern Germany, I am delighted to welcome you.


Gerhard Ulrich



The early Christians were persecuted during the era of the Roman Empire. They gathered in secret to pray and worship together. In the year 380, the Roman Caesar Theodosius made Christianity the state religion of the Empire, and many Christian congregations built churches. One very significant church is the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. According to tradition, the church complex contains the locations of the crucifixion, the grave, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

In earlier times, all churches were built facing east, the direction in which Jerusalem lies as seen from Europe or Africa. The rising of the sun in the east also reminds Christians of the light of the resurrection.

In the Middle Ages, large churches were often laid out in the shape of a cross. Thus the architecture of the church represented the primary symbol of Christianity.

The basic elements of a church are the chancel (the area around the altar), the nave (the main body of the church), and the narthex (the entrance or lobby area). Most churches also have a small room to one side called the sacristy or vestry. This is where the pastor's vestments and objects used in the worship service are stored.

Church Design and Architecture



When you enter a church, you will be facing the altar. It is at the front of the church, and generally raised.

In Biblical times, animals were sacrificed on altars. For example, Noah and Abraham built altars to God to offer thanks for saving them from great dangers. Animal sacrifices were later abandoned. Christianity also has no animal sacrifices.

The altar is, however, a symbol of the sacrifice made by Jesus Christ. He was prepared to die rather than deny his God and mankind. Again and again, he invited people to share bread, wine, and joy with each other. His mercy was so great that he even shared food with sinners, with the poor, and with the sick. No one was to be left out. This is why Jesus made a special effort to bring back into the community those who had been expelled.

A Christian congregation gathers in thankful memory of Jesus Christ around the altar, which is sometimes called the "table of the Lord". This is where Holy Communion is given and received. Every baptized person is welcome to partake in the sacrament.

The Altar



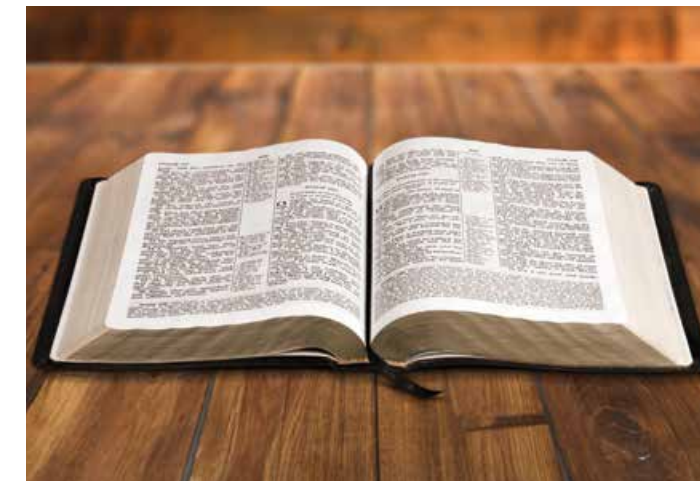
Christianity arose around 2000 years ago in Jerusalem. It is founded on the teachings and the life of a man named Jesus of Nazareth. He was a man full of love and mercy, and reconciled the people among themselves and with God. Christians recognize him as the Savior of the world sent by God, the Messiah, called Christos in Greek. Christians see God and His will with great clarity in Jesus Christ. This is why they call him the Son of God.

The Romans who occupied Jerusalem in those times saw the man of the Jewish people as an insurrectionist. They sentenced him to death and hung him on a wooden cross until he died. Christians believe, however, that the Almighty God and father of Jesus Christ reawakened him from death. Thus God broke the power of death and gave victory to life.

The cross has therefore been the most important symbol for Christians since the birth of Christianity. It reminds us that God suffers with His people and does not forsake them, even in death. The cross is also a symbol of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead and thus a symbol of hope for all mankind.

In Evangelical Lutheran churches there is generally a large cross above or on the altar.

The Cross



Christianity's Holy Scripture is the Bible. It has two parts: the Old Testament tells of the creation of the world and the story of God and his chosen people of Israel. The New Testament tells of the life and works of Jesus Christ, of his death and resurrection, and of the first Christian congregations.

Christianity is a religion of the book. The Bible is the fundament of belief for all Christians in the world. Passages from the Bible are read at every worship service. In his or her sermon, a pastor discusses the meaning of particular Bible passages for today's world.

Christianity has different denominations. Evangelical Lutheran churches like this one developed through the reformation of the church in the 16th century. One particular characteristic of Evangelical Lutherans is that they give more weight to the words of the Holy Scripture than to the words of church tradition.

In most churches, a large, ornately decorated Bible lies open on the altar. It symbolizes the presence of God in His word.

The Bible