

WHAT OUR CHURCH BELIEVES

Baptism, but also provides for the baptism of adults. The mode of baptism is that of sprinkling rather than of immersion. It, however, recognizes the validity of baptism by immersion. The meaning of baptism is twofold. It is both a sign and a seal. It is a symbolic act indicating the washing away of sin, and the dedication to a new life. In the case of infants the parents or sponsors take upon themselves the vows to renounce all worldly ways and to nurture the child in the doctrines and duties of the Christian faith. After due instruction and at the proper age the child takes these vows upon him or herself in an act which we call *Confirmation*, which act now takes him or her into full membership with the Church.

Baptism is likewise a seal. It ratifies the promise of Christ to bestow His grace upon His children. The sacrament implies the formal dedication of a child to God and the ingrafting of the child into the fellowship of the Church, whereby becoming a partaker of Christ and all His benefits.

The Lord's Supper stands at the center of the whole Christian worship. This is in accordance with the practice of the early Church. As sacred elements it uses common bread and wine, which symbolize the broken body and shed blood of Christ. The Lord's Supper is more than a memorial, or calling to remembrance. In it the Church recognizes the *spiritual* presence of Christ, and believes that its members receive spiritual strength by participating in the same. Both Baptism and the Lord's Supper are regarded as means of grace, whereby Christ bestows spiritual blessings upon His people.

On the Way of Salvation

Our Church believes that we are "*saved by grace through faith*," Eph. 2:8 Jesus Christ is our only Savior. Salvation is a free gift offered to all who will accept it. Our Church holds that all humans are sinners and stand in need of salvation.

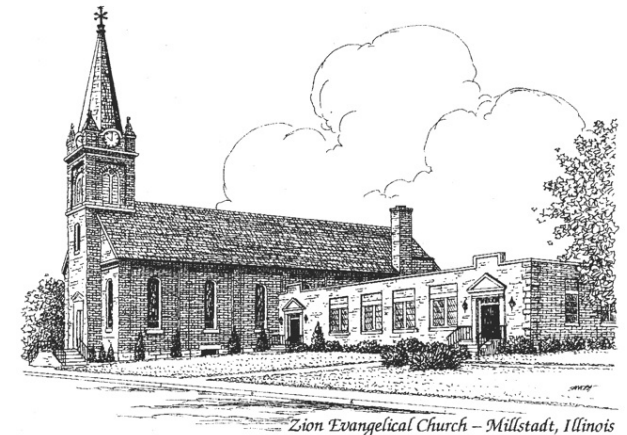
This can't be achieved by human effort. It has been wrought out through the incarnation, sinless life, atoning death and resurrection of our Lord. Men, women and children can accept it only by faith.

Salvation implies more than being saved at death from everlasting punishment. It refers also to a new life which begins here and now - a life created by Christ, through His Word and Spirit, in the heart of the believer. Eternal life means a new order of life in Christ which begins in time and continues through all eternity.

On the Christian Life

Our Church expects its members to lead a Christian life. Their conduct should conform to the standard set forth in the Word of God. They are to be "*the salt of the earth*," (Matt. 5:13) and "*the light of the world*," (Matt. 5:14). Christians have duties as well as privileges. Their lives should be a continuous gratitude to God for His salvation. Therefore the Church expects its members to pray, to read the Bible, to attend public worship, to give generously for the support of the Gospel and to labor earnestly for the extension of the Kingdom.

They are to be supremely loyal to Jesus Christ and useful citizens in the State. Our Church has expressed itself definitely on social and moral issues (e.g., marriage between one man and one woman for life, sexual faithfulness in marriage and chastity outside of marriage, pro-life from conception), believing that a deep-rooted identity with the life and spirit of Christ will lead the Christian to the doing of God's will in all the relationships of life.



Adapted from a publication by
Rev. Charles E. Schaeffer, D.D.
Commission on Evangelism
Evangelical and Reformed Church

*A Brief Statement of the
Essential Beliefs of
Zion Evangelical Church*

General Statement

Every Christian Church holds to certain fundamental articles of faith. In the early Church *“they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers,”* Acts 2:42. On this basis they were all united at the first. But soon differences developed. Parties sprang up among them which threatened to divide the body of Christ. Paul labored incessantly to keep *“the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace,”* Eph. 4:3.

Differences arose because of different emphases and interpretations of certain basic beliefs and practices. These pertained principally to forms of government, to modes of worship, to statements of doctrine and to Piety or the way of life. It is around these four factors that all differences between Christian denominations have developed. If we want to know what is distinctive in any one of the many Christian denominations we can discover this by studying its attitude with reference to policy, worship, doctrine and piety. Prior to the Protestant Reformation in 1517 there existed only two main streams of the Christian Church, the Eastern Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Church. The Reformation opened the way for the rise of a great variety of denominations and sects, each and all of which claim to have found and to hold that which is regarded as essential in the scheme of salvation and in the practice of true Christian faith.

Our Church

Zion was established in 1835 by German immigrants, under Rev. J. J. Riess, as an Evangelical - Lutheran and Reformed - union Church. It joined similar churches in the growing Evangelical Synod of North America, which was established in 1840.

Zion joined the *Evangelical and Reformed Church*, which was formed in 1934 by the merger of the Reformed Church in the United States

(founded in America in 1726), and the Evangelical Synod of North America. The two bodies brought their respective beliefs and practices into the new union. A statement of doctrine was formulated setting forth the theological position; and a system of rules and regulations was wrought out whereby the denomination was governed in its organization and methods of work.

Zion entered into the 1957 denominational merger that formed the United Church of Christ (UCC). But, in 2005 Zion withdrew from the UCC over conflict with doctrinal, social and moral issues, in order to restore our Evangelical and Reformed faith and heritage.

In 2012 Zion joined similarly minded churches in the Evangelical Association of Reformed and Congregational Christian Churches (founded in 1998). This nation-wide association of Churches holds fellowship with believers in Evangelical, Lutheran, Reformed, Congregational, Christian and in many other Christian communions.

Fundamental Beliefs

True to the Protestant principle that the Bible is the sole and infallible guide of faith and life our Church believes in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament. It believes that the Bible is the inspired Word of God and contains all that a Christian needs to know about God and His Son Jesus Christ. It adheres to the ancient formula of faith called the Apostle’s Creed. It accepts as interpretations of the Bible and of the Creed, Luther’s Catechism, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Evangelical Catechism and the Augsburg Confession. In a sense, therefore, it is a Confessional Church, but allows full liberty to members to adhere to any one of these interpretations, according to the individual conscience, but the final norm is the Word of God.

On the Church

Our Church believes that the Church of Jesus Christ is a divine-human institution, founded by Christ Himself for the purpose of carrying forward His life and work through all time and throughout the world. The Church is therefore regarded as the *“body of Christ,”* (Eph. 5:23) an extension of His incarnation through history. It is composed of human beings who have entered into a fellowship with Christ and with each other to extend His Kingdom, *“go and make disciples of all nations ...”* (Matt. 28:19), upon earth through the preaching of the Word and the holy sacraments.

In order to render this service an outward organization has been found necessary. This organization is constituted of ministers and members. It has established a form of government, called *“Presbyterial,”* which simply means that it recognizes the eldership as the ruling body of the Church. It believes in an educated ministry - persons duly ordained to preach the Gospel and to shepherd the flock of Christ.

It believes that membership in the Church confers certain privileges and involves certain responsibilities on the part of those who have joined the fellowship.

It believes in a democratic form of organization wherein each member has a part, though this part is generally performed through chosen representatives. This organization includes the Church Council and various committees.

Our Church is liturgical in its worship. We have a Book of Worship, but do not make such use mandatory. We are accorded full freedom in worship style, so long as the essential parts and the dignity of true worship are maintained.

On the Sacraments

Our Church accepts the two sacraments instituted by Christ, viz.: Holy Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Our Church practices Infant