

Our particular way of participating in Christ's Church as the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is rooted in distinctive gifts visible in our **theology • practice • ecclesiology • legacy**. Claiming these gifts helps us recognize how God uses our distinctiveness to form and re-form us for partnership in ministry and witness.

The gift of our ELCA **theology** includes an emphasis on:

- Grace – *God's unconditional love for all, without exception*
- Paradox – *Life as God's both/and people in an either/or world*
- Cross – *Discovering how Jesus meets us in the margins of life and the world*

The gift of our ELCA **practice** includes an emphasis on:

- Word and Sacrament
We experience God's grace through the living Word, the promises of Baptism, and Christ's presence in a meal of forgiveness and life.
- Service to the neighbor
Our experience of God's grace leads us into the world in service where:
-we actively witness to God's justice and peace as a public church;
-we equip ourselves through ministries of Word and Service.
- Ministry of the Baptized
We carry out ministry in our daily lives and vocations.
- Lifelong Faith Formation
Our journey of faith and growth continues from birth to death.

The gift of our ELCA **ecclesiology** means that we understand church to be:

- GLOCAL (global + local):
Our local witness is always informed by our global relationships
- Ecumenical:
We find fullness in relationship with other churches even as we partner with other religions and communities for the sake of the world
- Interdependent:
Our threefold ELCA expression as congregations, synods, and churchwide ministries

Our ELCA **legacy** provides us with gifts from which to engage in God's mission:

- As heirs of the Lutheran reformation:
we are called to be a catalyst for the Spirit's continuing work of reform.
- As a church shaped by an immigrant history:
we are committed to ministry with refugees and immigrants even as we "decolonize Lutheranism" to expand our self-understanding and welcome
- As a church formed by mergers:
we are drawn together by what we share, not what divides.