



## The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod

### General Information

The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod (LCMS) describes itself as “a mission-oriented, Bible-based, confessional Christian denomination” that is “founded on the teachings of Martin Luther.”

More information about The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, including the Church’s beliefs, structure, and history, can be found by going to <http://www.lcms.org>

**Number of Members in the United States: 2.3 million**

### Theological References on Animals\*

#### *The world belongs to God. His “governance extends over all creatures”*

- The world belongs to God, not to human beings. God is the world’s creator, sustainer, and redeemer, extending compassion over “man and beast,” looking after the “welfare of oxen and...sparrows,” and extending his benevolence “even to the animal world.”
  - “God is our Father, and the world belongs to Him.”  
—from *The Lutheran Witness*, August 2011, Christopher Hall, “[Paper or Plastic?](#)”
  - “God’s governance extends over all creatures. Those who fear Him experience it as infinite compassion (Ps. 78:38ff). His benevolence extends even to the animal world (Jonah 4:11; Deut 25:4; Luke 12:6; Matt. 10:29).”  
—from The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, Commission on Theology and Church Relations, “[Creation in Biblical Perspective](#): Report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations” (1970), 7.
  - “...God continues to look after His creation. He persists in creating man and beast. He continues to provide sustenance for His creatures. He rules the universe, the nations, individuals. We are reminded that He looks out for the welfare of oxen and even of sparrows (Matt. 10:29).”  
—from LCMS, Commission on Theology and Church Relations, “[Creation in Biblical Perspective](#),” 8.

#### *“God made only His human creatures in His image” and placed us in “a unique relationship to God”*

- Although God cares for all His creatures, “God made only His human creatures in His image.” This special blessing gives men and women “a holiness...that God does not assign to any other creature.”

- “In Genesis the revelation from God is that man alone was and is created in the ‘image of God.’”
 

—from The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, Life Library—Christian Ethics, Rev. Richard C. Eyer, “[Human Ethics and Animal Rights](#)” (2000), 1.
- “God made only His human creatures in His image (Genesis 1). He formed Adam from the dust of the ground and later took a rib from Adam in order to create Eve (Genesis 2). This gave God’s human creatures a unique relationship to God. They were made to relate with God, to converse with God, and to live with God in a way that no other creature shared. Only human creatures are adopted as the children of God in Christ (Galatians 4).”
 

—from *The Lutheran Witness*, April 2009, Charles P. Arand, “[Together with All Creatures](#).”
- “There is a holiness God assigns to men and women that God does not assign to any other creature.”
 

—from LCMS, Life Library—Christian Ethics, Rev. Richard C. Eyer “[Human Ethics and Animal Rights](#),” 1.

**Although “humans are the crown of His handiwork,” God’s “infinite love extends to all of His creation”**

- While humans alone are created in God’s image, and thus “are the crown of His handiwork,” we must never forget that God declares all creation to be “good—very good.” God’s love, “which surpasses all understanding,” expresses itself in the “cosmic care God gives to the birds of the air, the lilies...the grass of the field,” and in the promises God makes to “every living creature.” “God’s intimate concern about the animal world” means that we, too, must care about the wellbeing of animals and must never “despise the material creation.”
- “Catch the cosmic care God gives to the birds of the air, the lilies, and how He carefully, lovingly clothes the grass of the field. His infinite love extends to all of His creation, although humans are the crown of His handiwork (Matthew 6:26-30).”
 

—from Peter M. Kurowski, Pastor at St. Paul’s Lutheran, Missouri Synod, *Animals in Heaven, Pets in Paradise* (Overland: MO: Torelion Productions LLC, 2011), e-book location 229.
- “As part of embracing the order of creation, Christians reject teachings that despise the material creation...God continues to preserve His creation as an expression of His love and favor...God is active in His creation as He sustains, nurtures, and provides for it and graciously makes provision for all, human and non-human.”
 

—from *The Lutheran Witness*, May 2007, Matthew Nelson, “[Is God Green?](#)”
- “As I started from Genesis and went through Revelation, I was struck by the fact that God’s intimate concern about the animal world... I kept seeing these promises that would involve the creatures of God, the rest of creation...Like, for example, in Genesis 9:12, after the flood, God said, ‘This is a sign of the covenant, the promise I’m making between me and you and every living creature with you. A covenant for all generations to come.’ Now we see and hear those words, ‘For all generations to come,’ but we don’t camp out at that important phrase, ‘every living creature.’ And so here we see God’s intimate, infinite love not only for mankind, but for the animals of the world. Once I sang a song to the kids in chapel, ‘Jesus loves the little puppies. All the puppies of the world. Whether yellow, black or white, they are precious in his sight.’ And it catches the nature of the love of Christ...”
 

—from KFUO: A Listener Supported Broadcast Ministry of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, [BookTalk with Host Rodney Zwonitzer](#), July 20, 2012, “Animals In Heaven; Pets in Paradise.” Interview with Rev. Peter Kurowski

- “In the first Garden of Eden there were all kinds of animals from cattle to birds to great sea monsters and every kind of animal that moves. One can opine that there were dinosaurs, Jurassic peacocks, and a host of animals that today we would categorize as extinct. When God created all these animals the verdict was: good—very good! Ten times that is the appellation celebration of Genesis 1.”  
—from Kurowski, *Animals in Heaven, Pets in Paradise*, e-book location 605.

**Humanity's special relationship with God includes “special responsibilities...to take care of His earth”**

- **Humanity's special status as God's image bearer on earth carries with it both “special privileges and special responsibilities.” God has placed us in the privileged role of “ruling over the earth,” but also has tasked us with the responsibility “of taking care of...the garden home that God created for all His creatures.”** This means that our rule “is obviously not a mandate to dictatorship or abuse of the creation,” but instead “is a holy charge to provide care” for all God's creatures.
- “God has given His human creatures both special privileges and special responsibilities for His creation. God formed His human creatures to take care of His earth. He did not give this responsibility to other creatures—not even to the angels. Herein lies our distinctive calling as humans. While we share much in common with other creatures, we do not share with them a common responsibility for taking care of—or for ruining—the garden home that God created for all of His creatures. That responsibility is ours alone as *human* creatures.”  
—from The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, Commission on Theology and Church Relations, *Together with All Creatures: Caring for God's Living Earth: A Report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations* (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 2010), 39.
- “Drawn from clay, and filled with God's animating spirit, man is of the earth, with the prescribed task of subduing and ruling over the earth. Quite appropriately, Genesis 1:28 has been dubbed *the first great commission*...Recognizing the normative and formative role of the creation account, God's command is not merely a directive for Adam, but is the commission for all mankind. In light of the creation account, this is obviously not a mandate to dictatorship or abuse of the creation. It is a holy charge to provide care and direction to the creation. This is man's task. It is his reason for existence.”  
—from The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod: *Faith Aflame: Resources for Stewardship Ministry: “Stewardship: A Theological Perspective,”* Congregational Stewardship Workbook, second Edition, Volume 1, 3-4.

**Our care of God's creatures must be one of stewardship: of caring for “that which belongs to another”**

- **Because the world belongs to God, not to human beings, it is helpful to think of our role within creation as one of “stewardship.” Stewardship—“names the practice of rightly managing or caring for that which belongs to another.”** This term reminds us that we are “under the jurisdiction of God and...accountable to Him in all things.”
- “First, God called us to care for *His* earth. Although God entrusted us with the earth and placed it into our hands, this does not mean that God gave it to us in such a way that He absented Himself from His creation or relinquished His ownership of it. The earth still belongs to Him. It remains His earth (Deut 10:14; Ps 24:1; Ps 95:4-5, 7).”  
—from LCMS, Commission on Theology and Church Relations, *Together with All Creatures: Caring for God's Living Earth*, 47.

- “...[T]he world is given for us, for us to use and care for, for us to tend and keep, for us to nurture and work. This is the first purpose given to humankind: ‘The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it’ (Gen. 2:15). Humans indeed are also given dominion over the earth and its creatures (Gen. 1:28), but it is to be a responsible dominion, a kindly lordship, based not on consumption but as a steward or land manager.”  
—from *The Lutheran Witness*, Hall, “[Paper or Plastic?](#)”
- “Stewardship...names the practice of rightly managing or caring for that which belongs to another. This means that a consideration of stewardship must take into account man’s place, purpose and responsibility in this world.”  
—from *Faith Aflame* “[Stewardship: A Theological Perspective](#),” 3.
- “The Biblical teaching that God is the Creator and man is his creature places man under the jurisdiction of God and makes him accountable to Him in all things. Autonomous man is man in rebellion against his Creator.”  
—from LCMS, Commission on Theology and Church Relations, “[Creation in Biblical Perspective](#),” 3.

**As stewards, we are meant to imitate Jesus, who “came not to be served but to serve”**

- In order to fulfill our obligations as creation’s stewards, we must turn to God for guidance. Such guidance appears in the Old Testament, where “God subverted ordinary and secular notions of kingship [when He revealed to Israel that]... a king’s rule equals service.” This model of kingship “found its perfect expression in Jesus...[who] came not to be served but to serve.” Christ’s redemptive service “was not only [for] all mankind but even [for] the animal world.”
- “...God subverted ordinary and secular notions of kingship. Israel’s king must never forget that he is a brother so as not to become a tyrant. A king’s rule equals service (1 Kings 12:7). This model of kingship finds its perfect expression in Jesus. The Creator became a creature and came not to be served but to serve (Mk 10:45). He exhorted His followers to the same manner of life (Mt 5:5). Our rule as image bearers should reflect God’s own compassionate care for all creatures (Ps 145:9; Ps 36:6).”  
—from LCMS, Commission on Theology and Church Relations, [Together with All Creatures: Caring for God’s Living Earth](#), 47.
- “[T]he Christian view of right rule is inextricably linked to the ultimate example of love, care, and self-sacrifice of our Lord Jesus that was done for the benefit of others.”  
—from *The Lutheran Witness*, Nelson, “[Is God Green?](#)”
- “The Gospel has many fabulous facets and one facet that we don’t think about too often...is how Jesus came into the world not only to die for all mankind but to restore this broken Humpty-Dumpty planet and cosmos of ours. And the scope of redemption on the cross was not only all mankind but even the animal world.”  
—from KFUO Radio, [BookTalk](#). Interview with Rev. Peter Kurowski.

**A “despotic rule” over animals is the result of sin; a life in Christ seeks the flourishing of all creatures**

➤ Despite God's manifest love for creation, His revelation to Israel that kingship equals service, and Christ's own self-sacrificial example, humanity too often has treated creation with a "heavy-handed despotic rule." Our frequent tyranny over animals and the earth is a result of sin, which caused "greed and pride [to] replace gratitude and humility." When we enter a life in Christ, on the other hand, our sins are forgiven and we are enabled to act "for the sake of the flourishing of [all] life."

- "...[S]ome have misappropriated the Genesis admonitions from God to our first parents to 'rule and subdue' the earth to mean a heavy-handed, despotic rule. The simplest argument against this misinterpretation is that sin had not entered the world when God gave this instruction that placed mankind at the head of creation. So it could not have had connotations of sinfulness or harsh rule."

—from *The Lutheran Witness*, Nelson, "[Is God Green?](#)"

- "The dominion that God gave His human creatures is often abused, carried out to the detriment of creation. First the fall into sin resulted in a rejection of God's gifts of creation. Rather than seeing creation as a gift received, human beings came to see it as something that belonged to them as a right. Greed and pride replaced gratitude and humility. Second, when we no longer see other animals and birds as fellow creatures, tyranny follows. A view of life in which 'It's all about me' will displace a view of servanthood that focuses on the well-being of the other. Even when we seek the preservation of nature and the creatures who live within it, more often than not it will be only for our pleasures and purposes (e.g., that we might have nice scenery)...Third, as a result of sin, we see and treat other creatures less as 'fellow creatures' and more as objects and commodities. In the pursuit of our own needs and desires, it has become easier to objectify other creatures by seeing them as little more than raw resources that serve our thirst for the acquisition of possessions...[But] 'Not only our relationship to God and ourselves is made new through justification by faith but at the same time our relationship with 'all creatures' is renewed.'"

—from LCMS, Commission on Theology and Church Relations, [Together with All Creatures: Caring for God's Living Earth](#), 50.

- "The heart of original sin ultimately lies in the refusal to accept our creaturely limits. As it did with Adam and Eve, this refusal brings disastrous consequences in our relationships to God, others, and the wider creation. As Christians who embrace the gift of our creatureliness we need to learn to live as creatures...This means we accept that we are part of a whole interconnected web of life within which each creature is a gift to the other. We see our lives as human creatures defined not by the freedom to exceed limits in the pursuit of personal fulfillment but by the freedom to limit ourselves for the sake of the other... Thus the question raised here is not one of human life versus animal life. It is a question of how we shall...live with God, with one another, and with creation for the sake of the flourishing of life."

—from LCMS, Commission on Theology and Church Relations, [Together with All Creatures: Caring for God's Living Earth](#), 71-72, 84, 90.

### **We work toward shalom with all creatures in anticipation of the fully renewed world to come**

➤ Our work as stewards who seek "the flourishing of life" anticipates the "new creation ushered in by the resurrection of Christ." Christ's "restoration of this fallen world into a new Eden," is a promise of "shalom—peace" in which all creatures live together in harmony. This promise

**calls upon us to live lives of “symbiosis that benefits [all] God’s human and nonhuman... creatures.**

- “Throughout the scriptures we see the prophets speaking of the new heaven and new earth. God is not only into saving mankind, but He also is into restoring this world. But in Isaiah chapter 65 and Isaiah chapter 11, we hear these wonderful things where the wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together, and the little child shall lead them. This is not only a picture of the shalom, the peace, that Jesus Christ as cosmic lord of the universe who holds all things together will bring us, but it’s a picture of a wonderful restoration here of God’s good earth that he desires to redeem.”  
—from KFUO Radio, [BookTalk](#). Interview with Rev. Peter Kurowski.
- “As Christians, we know who we are in relation to the wider creation: God created us to care for the earth as creatures among fellow creatures. As Christians we now carry out that task in anticipation of the new creation ushered in by the resurrection of Christ. This conviction and hope enables us to be proactive instead of reactive in our care of creation, regardless of the ecological crisis that might be on the horizon.”  
—from *The Lutheran Witness*, Arand, “[Together with All Creatures](#).”
- “So in light of the hope of the renewed creation, how might we live...today? ...In anticipation of that future harmony, we might try to work toward what might be called ‘reconciliation ecology,’ a workable symbiosis that benefits both God’s human and nonhuman... creatures.”  
—from LCMS, Commission on Theology and Church Relations, [Together with All Creatures: Caring for God’s Living Earth](#), 101.

## **Historical References on Animals\***

### **Martin Luther: God holds animals in “high esteem” and cares about their wellbeing**

- According to Martin Luther, whose teachings are highly valued by the LCMS, God loves animals so much that He takes personal pleasure in caring for them.
  - “Thus Christ now speaks:...you daily see how your heavenly Father feeds the little birds in the field, without their having any care...[H]e holds them in such high esteem that he daily feeds them, as if he had only these to care for; and he takes pleasure in it, that they quite without care fly about and sing, as if they should say: I sing and am cheerful...”  
—from Martin Luther, *Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount*, trans. Charles A Hay (Philadelphia; Lutheran Publication Society, 1892), 341 (re: Mathew 6:26-27).

### **Luther: Animals can help us recognize God’s presence within creation**

- Prior to the fall of Adam and Eve, humanity had perfect knowledge of “God’s word and command,” says Luther. Since the fall, our knowledge has become imperfect. Creation can help us recover some of our lost wisdom if we allow God’s creatures to teach us about God’s power and divine nature.
  - “But man has become crazy and foolish, since he fell away from God’s word and command, so that henceforth there is no creature living that is not wiser than he; and a little finch, that

can neither speak nor read, is his teacher and master in the Scriptures, although he has the whole Bible and his reason to help him.”

—from *Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount*, 342, (re. Matt 6:26-27).

- “In all things, in the least creatures, and their members, God’s almighty power and wonderful works clearly shine.”  
—from Martin Luther, *The Table Talk*, trans. William Hazlitt (electronic version: MobileReference), “Of God’s Works,” LXIII.
- “God’s entire divine nature is wholly and entirely in all creatures, more deeply, more inwardly, more present than the creature is to itself.”  
—from Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works*, Vol. 37, ed. Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1959), 60.

#### **Luther: On Judgment Day, animals will cry out against those who have abused them**

- All creatures “have speech intelligible to God and the Holy Spirit,” said Luther. God hears their cries and will listen “on the last day” when “all creatures will utter an accusing cry against the ungodly who have shown them abuse here on earth.”
  - “Just as we...endure many kinds of injustice and consequently sigh for and implore help and deliverance in the Lord’s prayer, so do the creatures sigh. Although they have not human utterance, yet they have speech intelligible to God and the Holy Spirit, who mark the creatures’ sighs over their unjust abuse by the ungodly.”  
—from Martin Luther, *Luther’s Epistle Sermons: Trinity Sunday to Advent*, Vol. III trans. John Nicholas Lenker (Minneapolis: The Luther Press, 1909), Fourth Sunday After Trinity, Romans 8:18-22 paragraph 17.
  - “Rightly was it said from the pulpit in former times that on the last day all creatures will utter an accusing cry against the ungodly who have shown them abuse here on earth, and will call them tyrants to whom they were unjustly subjected.”  
—from Luther, *Luther’s Epistle Sermons*, Romans 8:18-22 paragraph 18.

#### **Contemporary References on Animals\***

##### **Christians must speak out “on practices that we know are inhumane and cruel”**

- Too often Christians remain silent on the issue of animal cruelty, despite having “good reason for urging compassion on their fellow nonhuman creatures.” Christians must oppose “practices that we know are inhumane and cruel” or, by default, opposition will be left in secular hands that may not hold Christian values.
- “[W]here are the Christian voices objecting to the abuse of animals? Matthew Scully, a speech writer in the George W. Bush administration suggests that it is ‘by default...others with no religious faith are left to champion the causes of animals’ because Christians have so little to say on practices that we know are inhumane and cruel. In fact, he suggests that if it were not to oppose the radicalism of animal rights groups, many Christian thinkers would say nothing at all about the compassionate treatment of animals. This is a shame because Christians have good reasons for urging compassion for their fellow nonhuman creatures without demeaning the value of humans.”

—from LCMS, Commission on Theology and Church Relations, [Together With All Creatures: Caring for God's Living Earth](#), 97-98.

**Christians should oppose puppy mills and the release of unwanted pets "into the wild"**

- Since most of us have direct contact with animals only through our pets, practicing compassion toward animals logically begins with issues surrounding these animals. Regulating puppy mills and addressing the abandonment of unwanted pets "into the wild or...along the roadside" provides a good place to start.
  - "Today, most of us do not have direct contact with animals other than our pets...How do we care for our pets and other animals? In most states, dog fighting and cock fighting have been outlawed but puppy mills often remain unregulated. Tens of thousands of cats are released into the wild or dumped along the roadside."  
—from LCMS, Commission on Theology and Church Relations, [Together With All Creatures: Caring for God's Living Earth](#), 99.

**Food animals should be "allowed to live as God intended prior to giving their lives for us"**

- In order to show compassion toward the animals that we use for food, we must ensure that they are "allowed to live as God intended." To do this, we should do our best to purchase cage-free, range-fed beef, pork, and poultry.
  - "Eating animals was not part of God's original intention for creation. It was a concession to a fallen world. When we eat meat, we eat what [Thomas] Berry calls 'the broken body of creation.' In recognition of these two points, we can ask, 'How were the animals that we eat allowed to live out their brief lives?' This is not only to ask whether they were healthy with the help of antibiotics and vaccines. It is to ask a larger question. Were cows and hogs allowed to see the sun and feel the ground beneath them or to graze in the fields? Were turkeys and chickens allowed to spread their wings? We can choose to eat those animals that were allowed to live as God intended prior to giving their lives for us."  
—from LCMS, Commission on Theology and Church Relations, [Together With All Creatures: Caring for God's Living Earth](#), 99.
  - "*Things to Ponder and Things to Do:* ...Buy certified, organically raised dairy products, eggs, cereals, fruit, and vegetables. Purchase range-fed beef, pork, and poultry. How we eat determines the way in which our food is raised. This can be expensive, but we can begin by choosing one food that we will eat this way, for example eggs from cage-free chickens or range-fed beef from a local farmer."  
—from LCMS, Commission on Theology and Church Relations, [Together With All Creatures: Caring for God's Living Earth](#), 102.

**Laboratory and wild animals should be treated kindly and never killed "only for the sake of killing"**

- Compassion toward laboratory and hunted animals requires that we ask ourselves if we are honoring their status as God's creatures or, instead, are treating them as "economic commodities." God allows us to use animals for legitimate needs but not for frivolous purposes or to be killed "only for the sake of killing."

- “How are laboratory animals, used in experimentation for cures and cosmetics, treated? How do we treat the animals that we hunt? Are they simply economic commodities? God allowed us to kill the beasts of field and forest for food, but not to kill only for the sake of killing.”  
—from LCMS, Commission on Theology and Church Relations, *Together With All Creatures: Caring for God’s Living Earth*, 99.

**Endangered species should be protected. Their extinction “diminishes the song of creation”**

- **Of all the ways in which we damage God’s creation, “the one truly irreversible action to which we contribute” is the extinction of species. We must ask ourselves if “we have a right to render any species extinct” and must remember that with each extinction “the song of creation becomes much diminished. The witness to God’s work for unbelievers becomes muted.”**
- “Of all the ecological issues we face, the extinction of species is the only truly irreversible action to which we contribute. The very word extinction may send chills down one’s spine. It is ‘not just the death of an individual—but of all the individuals—past, present, and potential—that collectively make up a species.’ Consider the loss of the passenger pigeon, ivory-billed woodpecker, Carolina pigeon, and more recently, Yangtze fresh water dolphin. Scientists estimate that over 170 amphibian species have gone extinct in recent years and another 30 to 50 percent are threatened with extinction. A number of interrelated reasons account for this. Conservation biologists summarize those factors with the acronym HIPPO. It stands for Habitat destruction, Invasive species, Pollution, Population, and over harvesting or Over hunting...The question must be asked, do we have a right to render any species extinct?”  
—from LCMS, Commission on Theology and Church Relations, *Together With All Creatures: Caring for God’s Living Earth*, 71-72.
- “Human beings are unique among creation not only because we have the choice about whether we will make our lives a reflection of God, but also because we can in our activity severely impair the ability of other members of creation to reflect God’s grace.’ When we do so, as in the case of species extinction, replacing the beauty of creation with...ugliness... we stifle their voices if not remove them from the choir. The song of creation becomes much diminished. The witness to God’s work for unbelievers becomes muted.”  
—from LCMS, Commission on Theology and Church Relations, *Together With All Creatures: Caring for God’s Living Earth*, 111.

For more information and resources, visit The Humane Society of the United States Faith Outreach program at [www.humanesociety.org/faith](http://www.humanesociety.org/faith)

\*Headings, subheadings, and summation paragraphs appearing in bold print are written by HSUS personnel. Paragraphs appearing within quotations marks and followed by citation links are taken from LCMS sources.

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