

TO BE A CHRISTIAN IN FINLAND

A Guidebook to Confirmation
for Immigrants and Finnish Expatriates

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TO THE READER

Welcome to Confirmation Class!

This book is intended for you:

- who take confirmation class after immigrating to Finland
- who live abroad, but take confirmation class in Finland or within a Finnish congregation outside Finland.

Our Church is open to all, and we wish you welcome! Our Church may seem different from what you had imagined. Active dialogue between Christians who come from different parts of the world, and those who live here, is important to us. The sharing of experiences through active discussion enriches our Church and the life and activities of its congregations. We hope that you, after Confirmation Class and Confirmation, will become an active part of your own Congregation, both on traditional church holy days and everyday, together in your own community of Christians.

This book has three chapters. The first chapter will familiarize you with the faith of the Church and Catechism studies in your own language. The second chapter describes the Evangelical Lutheran Church and its many activities, which we are inviting you to join in. The third chapter deals with the roots of the Church and its attempts to find unity.

This guidebook can be used in a number of ways. For example, it can be used for a Confirmation Class for adults or as self-study material. You may use it to support and prepare for your upcoming Confirmation Class experience in Finland.

The Church is the universal community of Christians which recognizes no borders. The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland is part of this church with room for those who come from different cultures and traditions. Diversity enriches us all and opens up many new opportunities as our world continues to grow more and more international. We hope this guidebook will help you find your place within Christ's Church.

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I THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

In confirmation class, you will study the basics of the Christian faith. Confirmation refers to the fact that, after concluding confirmation class, the confirmed has the right to partake independently in the Holy Communion. Formerly, private confession was required before Holy Communion. Nine out of ten Finns attend confirmation class. All baptized are welcome to confirmation class at the age of fifteen. In confirmation class one is provided the opportunity to learn about the community into which one was baptized as a baby. You may use this guidebook even if you have not been baptized. You may consult your confirmation class teacher and decide whether you want to be baptized into the congregation.

This guidebook has been produced especially for immigrants to Finland and Finnish expatriates. Chapter I contains the basic facts of the Christian faith. Chapter II describes the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. Chapter III explains the relationships between Judaism, the Christian faith, and Islam, the differences between the Christian churches, and the building of their unity.

ASSIGNMENTS:

Who are you?

Where do you come from?

What kind of church have you experienced outside of Finland?

1. The World – our common home

The world is our common home. When we move far away, we notice that things are done differently in different cultures. Everyone sees their environment in the light of his or her own language, culture, and customs. All aspects of a foreign culture seem strange until you learn to know, and grow accustomed to, them.

Certain principles of life can unite people, even when they are from very different cultures. Irrespective of culture, man is looking for his or her place in life. In a foreign culture, this may feel quite difficult. The Finnish way of life may be different from the way of life that you

experienced elsewhere. No one culture though is better than another. No culture is inherently good or bad. Different issues are valued differently in different cultures. As you learn more about Finnish culture, you will grow to understand how Finnish people think about the purpose of life.

ASSIGNMENT:

What has attracted your attention when living in two cultures?

Every culture has its own set of beliefs, and elements of faith. In Finland, there is a millennium-long tradition of the Christian faith. Although everyday Finnish life is full of work, studies, and stress, it is important for us to stop for a moment and ask ourselves fundamental questions such as: “Why do I exist?” and “Is there really life after death?”

2. Life – the purpose of existence

What do you expect from your life? When young, many people hope for a good profession and a happy family life. When we are adults, we long for steady living and health. For some, most important is being able to express oneself. Others may want to become rich and famous. The course of life is often determined, in a decisive way, by its beginnings. That is why it is good to stop for a while and think about your life and how it has been unfolding.

ASSIGNMENT:

Discuss the course of your life and your dreams.

Life is a great adventure. Amidst struggles for independence and upheavals of nations, there may be situations where the rights of an individual are violated. No one knows in advance what life will bring. Nor can we be responsible for all events. It is good therefore to pray for God’s guidance each day. But although you pray for guidance, it is you who make the decisions regarding your life. God provides no guarantee that all your wishes will be granted. Being created in the image of God, we are responsible for what we can control in our lives.

3. God – the reason behind everything

There is no culture without a religion. In atheistic countries, people believe there is no god and that there is no ultimate truth aside from the physical world. Materialism is a religion, too! Jesus was of Jewish nationality and religion. Christianity was born in the midst of Judaism. Islam, too, originated in the Middle East. These religions are based on the premise that there is only one God. Chapter III explains the common roots of these religions.

ASSIGNMENT:

What evidence exists for the existence or non-existence of God?

We are all looking for the purpose of our existence. There are many explanations. Sometimes a crisis awakens us and causes us to question the purpose of our existence. During such difficult times, we may well ask what the most important thing in life is. Distress in life may drive a man to cry out for help: “God, if you exist, please help me!”

We have to search for the purpose of our existence for the rest of our lives. During youth, the answer to this question may be different than when we reach old age. According to the Christian faith, you may trust that you are a valuable person, because the Creator wanted you to exist. The Christian faith calls people to believe in God and to show love towards their family, and all people.

A close friendship can mean a lot to a person. Through hobbies you may find interesting things to support you throughout your life. Loving and being loved is part of the meaning of life. Love is giving time and space to your neighbor. It is listening to and trying to understand another human being. By listening to your neighbor, you can help him or her. In the same way, by telling a friend about your troubles and worries, you may be empowered to move forward.

Beauty, culture, and art are sources of life to give us strength. Creativity is a power hidden within a human being. By drawing, painting, playing musical instruments, singing, or doing arts and crafts, you participate in the creation initiated by the Creator and use your creative capacities. Writing is also creating. Art may be one way for some to understand and perceive the closeness of God. God also speaks to people through nature. He also speaks to us when we relax and use our creative capacities. Because God is omnipotent, He may be found everywhere.

The Almighty God remains a secret for us. He cannot be controlled or defined. We can only know what He reveals about himself.

RECOMMENDED HYMNS:

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God almighty LBOW 165 = Pyhä, pyhä, pyhä! VK 134

All creatures of our God and King LBOW 527; Jumala loi VK 135

4. The Bible – the story of God’s deeds

The Bible is a collection of books which detail God’s Works in our world. The Bible is the word of God written by man. The Bible is thoroughly a *human* book but, at the same time, it is a completely *divine* book.

“No prophecy ever came by human will but men and women moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.” (2 Peter 1:21)

The Old Testament consists of 39 books. Its first books are called *Historical Books*. The Torah or the five books of Moses (the Pentateuch) are considered especially important. They begin with a description of the creation of the world. They also tell about how humans fall into sin. A major thread linking all the books is the history of the people of Israel. The story begins when Abraham is called by God to leave for the Promised Land. It continues with a description of Israel’s slavery in Egypt, of their being freed from slavery, and of their wanderings in the wilderness. God gave his law, the Ten Commandments, to Moses, who led his people to the Promised Land. The other historical books describe the phases of the people of Israel in the era of the judges and the kings.

In the Old Testament, there are four books describing the so called Major *Prophets* (*Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel*) and the twelve books describing other minor prophets. The names refer to comprehensive books versus shorter writings. The books of the prophets describe how God spoke to us through the prophets during the different historic phases of the people of Israel. The prophets told their contemporaries and rulers what God wanted them to do. Many times, the rulers disobeyed God's will and were punished for it. Those who ruled well though led their nations into an era of peace.

The Scriptures contain wisdom, proverbs, and songs telling of both the pain and joys of life. One entire book, *The Song of Songs* (*The Song of Solomon*), is dedicated to the love between a man and a woman.

ASSIGNMENTS:

Look up in the Book of Psalms one psalm of praise and one of lamentation.
Look up a piece of wisdom in the book of Proverbs you think is apt for a person being confirmed.

The New Testament begins with the *Gospels*, stories of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Each one of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, wrote his own narrative. The Gospels took their present form after the first Christian generation. They differ from each other in detail. The Gospels witness to the fact that Jesus was the Messiah as prophesied in the Old Testament. His death on the cross and His resurrection are the core of the Christian faith.

The Acts of the Apostles is the *Historical Book* of the New Testament. In this book, the Evangelist Luke portrays the life of the early church during the initial stages of Christianity. He emphasizes the meaning of the work of the Holy Spirit at the time of the birth of the church. The first Christians were Jews, but there became more and more people from other nationalities among the Christians, as the Gospel was spread.

The Epistles (*Letters*) form the central content of the New Testament; most of them being written by the Apostle Paul. In them, he gives instructions to congregations. Paul, "the Apostle of the Nations", mainly worked among Gentiles (non-Jewish people). He emphasized the fact that man is forgiven his or her sins, and saved only by faith in Jesus. Jesus redeemed us through his death on the cross and resurrection. In his *Letter to the Romans*, Paul underlines the fact that nobody is saved by obeying the Law. Man is justified through faith alone; "...the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction..." (Romans 3:22).

The last book of the New Testament, *The Revelation to John*, is a *Prophetic Book*. It was written during the persecutions of the early Christians. It portrays the last days before Jesus returns on earth and gathers all nations before him for the final judgement. In the Book of Revelation, there are also descriptions of heaven where those who have gone there rejoice with God.

The Bible is a large collection of books. It tells about the meeting of man and God. The content of the Bible is best understood, when we read it in prayer looking for the living God. The center of the Bible is Jesus Christ. That is why it is good to start reading the Bible by first reading the Gospels. The verse, John 3:16, sums up, in a few words, the core of the Bible:

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.”

DISCUSS WITH YOUR TEACHER:
How to read the Bible?

RECOMMENDED HYMNS:

*God's Word is our Great Heritage LBOW 239; On meillä aarre verraton VK 183
A Mighty Fortress is Our God LBOW 228 = Jumala omi linnamme VK 170*

5. The Creator – the common origin

The Apostles' Creed; the First Article of Faith

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.

God works in the world in three different ways. He created the world. In Jesus, He came to save the people who had fallen into sin. And He calls people to His kingdom through the Holy Spirit. All this is the work of one and the same God. God is called *triune*.

The Bible describes people's experiences of with God's work in their lives. The Bible's witness to God is *His self-revelation*. God, who is hidden, wanted to tell something of Himself. When the Israelites wanted to know God's name, He answered: *I am who I am* (Exodus 3:14). So God already existed before the creation, and nothing in all creation can influence His being. God wanted to remain in secret in the Old Testament. As stated in the New Testament, Jesus provides us the best picture of God. St. John writes in his Gospel: *No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known* (John 1:18).

According to the Old Testament, God created all things visible and invisible. He began by creating light. He separated the waters from the waters, created the sun, the moon, and the stars. The story of the creation reflects the conception of the world of its day, with the earth like a pancake and the heavens upon it like domes.

Lastly man was created. *So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them* (Genesis 1:27). God set man a task of multiplying and having dominion over the earth as well as cultivating and keeping it. He gave man the plants of the earth and the living beings for food. God looked at the outcome of His creation and saw that everything was very good. The creation took six days. On the seventh day God rested.

Praise to the Creator

Bless the Lord, O my soul.

O Lord my God, you are very great

*You are clothed with honor and majesty,
wrapped in light as with a garment.*

You stretch out the heavens like a tent,

you set the beams of your chambers on the waters...

You set the earth on its foundations,

*so that it will never be shaken...
You make springs gush forth in the valleys;
they flow between the hills,
giving drink to every wild animal;
the wild asses quench their thirst.
By the streams the birds of the air have their habitation;
they sing among the branches...
O Lord, how manifold are your works!
In wisdom you have made them all;
the world is full of your creatures. (Psalm 104:1–3,5,10–12,24)*

Some Christians think that creation, as described in the Book of Genesis, is a factual description of the history of creation. Nowadays people attempt to explain the origins of the world in a scientific manner and think that the narrative of the creation is not to be taken as a historical account of creation. Rather, the narrative of the creation answers two questions, who is behind everything, and what the role of human being is in the whole of the creation. Thus the narrative of the creation is not necessarily contradictory to a scientific world-view.

In light of the narrative of creation, no group of people can think they are worthier or better than others. All are equally worthy and close to God. All people have a common Father regardless of culture, ethnic background, or religion. Man was created in God's image and all was created good. Man also knows instinctively that he should be good and restrain from evil. As we are all images of God, it is our responsibility to maintain God's creation for which we were made responsible. The charter of the Christian faith provides grounds for the work for nature conservation and international peace.

The Peace Prayer of St. Francis from the Middle Ages

*Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace;
where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
and where there is sadness, joy.*

*O Divine Master,
grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;
to be understood, as to understand;
to be loved, as to love;
for it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to Eternal Life.
Amen.*

ASSIGNMENT:
What can you do for world peace?

By examining the world, we can, on the grounds of creation, draw some conclusions concerning God. This is called *the general revelation (the natural knowledge of God)*.

RECOMMENDED HYMNS:

Sing to the Lord of Harvest LBOW 412; Jo joutui armas aika VK 571
For the Fruit of All Creation LBOW 563; Nouskaamme vuorelle korkeimmalle VK 515

6. Nature – where we belong

Man is part of creation. Life on earth depends upon water and upon the self-regulating system of nature. Each climatic area has flora and fauna acclimatized to it. Man uses both plants and animals for nutrition. Man exists only as part of a natural ecosystem.

TO THINK ABOUT:

Compare the climatic conditions in your former and present countries of domicile.

Nature is living and constantly changing. Temperatures and weather conditions change unpredictably. The earth's crust is slowly moulding itself causing earthquakes. Volcanoes erupt regularly. Global climatic changes are partly caused by man. Humankind has burnt large volumes of coal, oil, and natural gas. Therefore the carbon dioxide content in the atmosphere has increased. Rainforest depletion also adds to this problem. Global warming may gradually melt polar glaciers and raise ocean levels. Pollution of nature and water systems also threatens life on earth. Overpopulation is also pushing nature to its tolerance limit. It is necessary to protect nature, because current human practices are threatening life on our globe.

ASSIGNMENT:

What can you do to conserve nature?

RECOMMENDED HYMNS:

All Creatures of Our God and King LBOW 527; Kiitä Herraa, yö ja päivä VK 461
How Great Thou Art LBOW 532; Soi kunniaksi Luojan VK 462

7. The Fall into Sin – man inclined to evil

After creation, the Bible describes the fall into sin (Genesis 3). Adam and Eve, the first human beings, were allowed to enjoy everything in Paradise. Only the fruit of the forbidden tree were they not to touch. Tempted by the serpent, first Eve and then Adam took and ate of the fruit of the forbidden tree. After doing wrong, they hid themselves from God. Having discovered what they had done, God drove them off from Paradise. From then on, they were to earn their living through hard work.

Man was created in God's image and everything created was good. Nevertheless, we see much evil around us. The fall reminds us of the fact that, in man, there is a natural tendency to evil. It leads to sinning and guilt before God. Man does wrong, though he or she might know what is right. The temptation to eat of the fruit of the forbidden tree was strong, because man imagined that by doing so they would be like God. Sin is not only single acts, which are wrong, but it is a defiant and proud attitude against God. Sin separates us from God and from other people.

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus the Lord. (Romans 6:23)

RECOMMENDED HYMNS:

Abide with Me LBOW 272; Tästäkin päivästä tahdon nyt kiittää VK 561

8. Jesus Christ – the Savior

The Creed; The Second Article of Faith

I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. On the third day He rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

Man was separated from God because of sin. However, God wanted to restore the unity. Therefore he sent His Son Jesus to save the world. In the Old Testament, it was foretold that the liberator of the people would come. In the fullness of time, the Savior was born in Bethlehem. But the people of Israel did not want to take Him as their Messiah.

Jesus was a historic person. He called twelve men to be His disciples, who followed Him. He paid attention to those who were held in contempt by others. He spoke for the oppressed. He healed the sick, cast out demons, and even raised the dead. His signs and wonders were connected to proclaiming the Gospel of the coming of God's Kingdom. His deeds attracted much attention. Contemporary historians also mentioned Him.

ASSIGNMENT:

Study Jesus' signs, for instance:

A wedding in Cana (John 2:1–12), Jesus heals a man by the pool of Bethesda (John 5:1–18), Jesus feeds five thousand men (Mark 6:30–44), Jesus heals ten lepers (Luke 17:11–19), Jesus in the synagogue in Capernaum (Luke 4:31–37).

Jesus became especially well known for His unforgettable teachings.
He proclaimed that the Kingdom of God had come in the midst of people.
He often used parables in His teachings.

ASSIGNMENT:

Study Jesus' teachings and parables. Think about how they might be connected with the life of an immigrant, for instance:

The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:29–37), The Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11–32), The Woman by the Well in Sychar (John 4:1–42), The Canaanite Woman's Faith (Matthew 15:21–28), The Parable of the Sower (Mark 4:1–20).

The Old Testament tells how animals had to be sacrificed in the temple for the atonement of the sins of the people of Israel. Once a year, the sins of the people were laid on the head of a goat that was driven into the wilderness. There was therefore atonement for the iniquities the people had committed. After Jesus' resurrection, the disciples realized that His death on the cross was the atoning sacrifice once and for all. The salvation promised to the people of Israel was also for all nations. This realization became the starting point of the Christian faith.

We can receive the salvation that Jesus prepared by believing that He suffered punishment for our sins. The faith by which the salvation is obtained is a gift of God. When we are convinced of God's grace and love, Jesus Himself comes to dwell in our hearts. Martin Luther taught that Christ is present in faith itself. So faith provides us with the salvation God has prepared.

Jesus Christ is the core of the Christian faith. He is God's *special revelation*. Jesus lived the life of an ordinary man, yet without sin. The Gospels tell us that he ate and drank, rejoiced and wept. He felt pain and agonies of life like each one of us. But He was not only an ordinary man. Jesus was God's envoy, God's Son. Jesus was God's *incarnation*, becoming flesh (John 1:14). God showed His love towards people by living a man's life. Christ was both man and God. God's becoming a human being is a secret of faith.

Jesus' disciples regarded Him as the Messiah, the Savior of the people of Israel. After Jesus' death and resurrection they understood that the Messiah wanted to free all nations from sin and guilt. Christ is a sign of hope in the world. God raised Him from the dead and showed that death is not the end of everything.

Prayer on Good Friday

*Dear Savior,
your holy Cross, the tree of atonement,
rises above your congregation also today.
Praise be to you for your death on the cross
and for the message of reconciliation, which we may hear.
Do not let any lie
darken for us the way of salvation,
or the clear message of the cross for us.
When our consciences are burdened with guilt
and we are confused by anxiety,
help us to be healed
and to find peace in your wounds.
Praise be to you forever. Amen.*

After the resurrection, Jesus returned to His Heavenly Father. Now He has all power in heaven and on earth. On the Last Day, Christ will gather all nations before Him to be judged. Then those who believe in Him go to heaven and those who have abandoned Him will be separated eternally from God.

ASSIGNMENT:

What evidence is there in the New Testament of Jesus' being man?
What evidence is there in the New Testament of Jesus' being God?
(Luke 2:21–24, John 11:32–44, Matthew 28:18–20, John 21:1–14, Hebrews 5:7)

The song Amazing Grace, arranged for a Scottish folk tune, describes the realization of the fact that God's grace in Christ belongs just to me.

Amazing Grace

1. *Amazing grace! How sweet the sound –
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
Was blind, but now I see.*
2. *'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed!*
3. *Thru many dangers, toils and snares
I have already come;
'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.*
4. *When we've been there ten thousand years,
Bright shining as the sun.
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we'd first begun.*

RECOMMENDED HYMNS:

*O Holy Spirit, Enter In LBOW 459; Totuuden Henki VK 484
God, Whose Almighty Word LBOW400; Jeesus meitä kosketa nyt VK 502*

9. The Holy Spirit – working in our midst

The Creed; The Third Article of Faith

*I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.*

Already at creation, God put His Spirit into man: “*Then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being*” (Genesis 2:7). Life itself, as such, is made possible only by God’s life-preserving breath. God’s Holy Spirit gave the Old Testament’s prophets the wisdom to speak the Lord’s words to their contemporaries. God’s Spirit is the spirit of life itself.

The New Testament tells us that the Christian congregation was born at Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was poured out.

“When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability” (Acts 2:1–4).

The events of the Pentecost aroused astonishment. The apostles were suspected of being drunk. Peter made a speech assuring that what was spoken by the Prophet Joel, of pouring out God’s spirit upon the people, was true. After the speech, people asked what they should do. Peter advised them to convert and receive baptism in the name of Jesus Christ, so that their

sins might be forgiven. In the Acts of the Apostles, we read that about three thousand people were added to the group of believers that day.

Christians have always gathered together to read God's word, to sing, and to pray. The Holy Spirit calls to believe in God and Christ. We are called to love each other and to share each other's joys and sorrows.

According to Jesus: "*But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have told to you*" (John 14:26).

Through the influence of the Holy Spirit, we can understand God's love in Christ. He creates the faith that brings Jesus to live in our hearts. The Holy Spirit also gives spiritual gifts. He gives man the ability and will to love and serve his or her neighbour and to bear witness to Christ. Many kinds of gifts are needed in the congregation, because there are many tasks. Some are leaders, others disseminate knowledge, some serve, and some again give encouragement. Some have the ability to heal, some prophesy and speak in tongues. These are called spiritual gifts. *All are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses* (I Corinthians 12:11). The gifts of the Holy Spirit aim at convincing people of God's love.

It is the task of every Christian to convey the good news of Christ. The Holy Spirit sends and enables man to proclaim the Word and to live in accordance with God's will. The Christian congregation is a communion of grace. No one can do God's will by his or her own power. The Holy Spirit is the Sanctifier. He makes sinful man holy. A Christian as such is, at one and the same time, a sinner, and yet, on account of Christ, righteous, that is acceptable to God.

The Holy Spirit creates the faith that Jesus has redeemed us from our sins. Christ lives in our hearts through faith. The reconciliation of our sins takes place in us, when the Holy Spirit reveals God's atoning sacrifice for us.

Come, Holy Spirit, the Golden Sequence
latinae.org/thesaurus/Hymni/
Translation by John Austin (1613–1669)

Veni Sancte Spritus. Sequentia,
S. Langton of Canterbury, s. XIII.

*Come, Holy Ghost,
Send down those beams,
Which sweetly flow in silent streams
From thy bright throne above.
O come, Thou Father of the poor;
O come, Thou source of all our store,
Come, fill our hearts with love.
O Thou, of comforters the best,
O Thou, the soul's delightful guest,
The pilgrims's sweet relief.
Rest art Thou in our toil, most sweet
Refreshment in the noonday heat;
And solace in our grief.
O blessed Light and life Thou art;
Fill with Thy light the inmost heart
Of those who hope in Thee.
Without Thy Godhead nothing can,
Have any price or worth in man,*

*Veni Sancte Spiritus,
Et emitte caelitus
Lucis tuae radium

Veni pater pauperum,
Veni dator munerum,
Veni lumen cordium.
Consolator optime,
Dulcis hospes animae,
Dulce refrigerium.
In labore requies,
In aestu temperies,
In fletu solatium.
O lux beatissima,
Reple cordis intima
Tuorum fidelium.
Sine tuo numine,
Nihil est in homine*

*Nothing can harmless be.
Lord, wash our sinful stains away,
Refresh from heaven our barren clay,
Our wounds and bruises heal.
To Thy sweet yoke our stiff necks bow,
Warm with Thy fire our hearts of snow,
Our wandering feet recall.
Grant to Thy faithful, dearest Lord,
Whose only hope is Thy sure word,
The sevenfold gifts of grace.
Grant us in life Thy grace that we,
in peace may die and ever be,
in joy before Thy face.
Amen. Alleluia.*

*Nihil est innoxium.
Lava quod est sordium,
Riga quod est aridum,
Sana quod est saucium.
Flecte quod est rigidum,
Fove quod est frigidum,
Rege quod est devium.
Da tuis fidelibus,
In te confidentibus,
Sacrum septenarium.
Da virtutis meritum,
Da salutis exitum,
Da perenne gaudium.
Amen.*

RECOMMENDED HYMN:

Kosketa minua, Henki VK 125; translation by Matti Kilpiö, see Appendix

10. The Ten Commandments – rules for the protection of life

God made a covenant with His people of Israel. He gave Moses laws the people had to obey. Then God promised to bless his people and take care of them (Exodus 20:1–17). The people of Israel broke the Commandments several times and had to suffer for their iniquities.

The Commandments God has given are life-protecting rules, the law of life itself. By following them, life remains whole. The breaking of Commandments causes suffering for one self, and for others.

ASSIGNMENT:

Read what the Catechism teaches about the Commandments.

Commandments one to three concern man's relation with God.

THE COMMANDMENTS 1 – 3

1. I am the Lord your God. You shall have no other gods.

The First Commandment asks who our God is. We build good life and security by our own work. We cannot, however, build security or hope for the future on a foundation of ourselves, or any false gods. Property, money or reputation may be false gods if we trust in them. Our security cannot be based on our own ability, wealth or fame. The only lasting refuge is Almighty God. Therefore we should honour and love Him above all things.

FOR DISCUSSION:

What do you do when the security of your life is shaken?

2. *You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.*

God is holy. God's name shall be used for prayer and devotions. He promises to be present where we pray to Him. Swearing or cursing by God's name is blasphemy.

3. *Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.*

Today's obsession with efficiency and stressful way of life often results in *exhaustion*. Rest is not valued enough. God rested, after He had completed His creation. People live happily, when they rest and sleep enough. The Third Commandment exhorts us to have enough time for reading the Bible, prayer, and worship service. The day of rest is held sacred by setting aside a holy day from a working day.

ASSIGNMENT:

How do you usually spend the day of rest?
Does it consist of rest, recreation, and sanctification?

Commandments four to ten concern man's relationship with his or her neighbor.

THE COMMANDMENTS 4–10:

4. *Honor your father and your mother.*

Every child should have a mother and a father, who love him or her. The parents guarantee basic security for their child. The child shall honour its parents. The Commandment also concerns the honoring of legal authorities. A Christian must act so that society promotes justice.

ASSIGNMENT:

How is the honoring of your parents visible in your family?
How is the honoring of parents in Finnish society?

5. *You shall not kill.*

It is relatively safe to wander around in Finland. This outward appearance of safety hides inner problems. Many people are troubled, because they feel lonely and forlorn, distrustful and alienated. This may lead to hatred and aggression. In a fit of anger, one can hurt other people, physically or with words. One should be able to handle hatred. It is good if we can share troublesome issues with a trustworthy person. We are to protect the life and well-being of our neighbors. To recognize the needs of other people is to love them.

ASSIGNMENT:

Everybody gets angry sometimes. What do you do when you are angry?
How does your anger fade away?

6. *You shall not commit adultery.*

Sexuality is part of God's creative work; we are created males and females. Sexuality gives energy to life. It must not be separated from love and responsibility. In marriage, we bind ourselves to love our spouses in good and bad days. Marriage offers a safe environment for the child to grow up and gives a model of living in an intimate relationship.

Deceiving one's spouse causes deep wounds to all involved. The mutual love and forgiveness of the partners may renew a broken marriage. A divorce may be better than continuous suffering, although it is always a painful process.

ASSIGNMENT:

What are the qualities you expect from your partner?

7. *You shall not steal.*

9. *You shall not covet your neighbor's house.*

10. *You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his workers, or his cattle, or anything that is your neighbor's.*

The Commandments seven, nine, and ten deal with the protection of somebody else's property. The more people gather property, the more there is crime against property. The entire good God created is meant for all, and nobody has the right to steal other people's possessions. You must not acquire property by deceit or wrongdoing. We should see to it that everyone has the necessities of life.

Each person has his or her own tasks and sphere in life. It is wrong to try to take another person's job or property. Instead, we must search and ask for our own place in life. When settling down in a new country, everybody needs trusted friends and people who can provide support. It is our Christian task to recognize our neighbors' needs and to help them in any way we can.

ASSIGNMENT:

What help have you got to adapt yourself in the new country?

What help would you have needed?

How can you help others in a similar situation?

8. *You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.*

A personal relationship is based upon honesty. Speaking evil of a neighbor harms him or her and ultimately the speaker, too. If you wish that other people would speak truthfully of you, do likewise. Jesus expressed the principle called *the Golden Rule*: "*In everything do unto others as you would have them to do you; for this is the law and the prophets*" (Matthew 7:12).

The Commandments are not only restrictive signs. They also show how we shall live, so that we might fulfil God's will. It is true, we do not necessarily kill anybody, but we certainly sometimes hurt somebody's feelings. Even an offence committed only in thought is a sin before God. Therefore we need grace and forgiveness based on Jesus' atoning work. The life of a Christian is the life of a pardoned sinner.

It is important that we try to live in accordance with the Commandments even if we do not always succeed in doing so. The law of God protects life. Jesus summarized the Ten Commandments in *the Dual Commandment of Love*: “*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. – – You shall love your neighbor as yourself*” (Matthew 22:37, 38).

The life of a Christian is a life dependent upon grace. Although we break the Commandments – on purpose or inadvertently – we may live as pardoned sinners. We must not approve of wrongdoing as a way of life. When we fall, we may confess our sins and, in the confession, receive forgiveness.

RECOMMENDED HYMNS:

*Children of the Heavenly Father LBOW 474; Kun on turva Jumalassa VK 397
Salvation unto Us Has Come LBOW 297; On hyvydessään Jumala VK 262*

11. The Congregation – a community of the baptized

The Baptism and Mission Commandment (The Great Commission)

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age (Matthew 28:18–20).

Jesus gave this mission to His twelve disciples. After two thousand years, one third of the world’s population are baptized Christians. The Christian Baptism in the name of the Triune God joins the candidate to the communion of Christ’s universal church. The sign of the cross drawn on your forehead reminds you that Christ suffered and died for you.

Adults who desired to become Christians were baptized in the early church. Baptism by immersion indicates that a sinner is drowned and a new man forgiven by Christ emerges in place of him or her. The custom of baptizing whole families began early. Thus little children were also baptized. At the same time, also baptism by the pouring of water became common. Baptismal water is poured three times on the head of the candidate. Most Christians in the world are baptized already during childhood. By having their child baptized, parents demonstrate a commitment to providing a Christian upbringing.

ASSIGNMENT:

What types of baptism ceremonies have you seen?

God bestows upon us His grace through His word and sacraments. Baptism is one of the two sacraments or sacred acts of our church. Baptism once administered is always valid. According to the Lutheran concept, Baptism and Communion are sacraments, because the promise of God’s word and a visible element are united in them, and because there is Jesus’ command of them. Baptismal water washes away our sin. The candidate gets the Holy Spirit, who will guide and lead him or her throughout his or her lifetime. The sacrament is a visible sign of grace.

Baptism is administered in the name of the Triune God. If the candidate is an adult, he or she first confesses his or her faith together with the congregation. When a child is baptized, the parents and the godparents confess their faith. Then the minister says the candidate's name and pours water on his or her head three times saying "I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit". The parents and the godparents bless the baptized person by the laying-on of hands while the minister says: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you now and for evermore." Baptism is a gift of God, which we cannot earn.

ASSIGNMENT:

If you have been baptized, find out where it took place and who were present there.
If you are preparing for Baptism, go through the arrangements for the coming ceremony with the baptizing pastor.

Baptism is the gateway to the congregation. It makes us members of the Church and disciples of Jesus. Every candidate has at least two godparents. These adults, who have taken confirmation classes and who have been confirmed, are there in order to support the parents in the Christian education of the baptized child. It is also their task to pray for the baptized child.

RECOMMENDED HYMNS:

Dearest Jesus, We are Here LBOW 187; Tuomme luokse Jeesuksen VK 218

12. Confession and Communion – a source of strength for life

Sometimes you may have something on your mind that you cannot get rid of by any means. Then it is good to confess *privately*. Confession is confessing the sin aloud, so that another person hears it, and receiving absolution, that is forgiveness. Confession may be made to any trustworthy Christian. The pastor is pledged not to tell anyone what he or she hears in connection with private confession. When we say aloud what is on our minds, it is easier for us to receive absolution from the confessor. In confession God forgives us all our sins. Every worship service begins with *general confession*.

The Holy Communion, or the Sacrament of the Altar, is the other sacrament of our Church. Jesus Himself is present at every Communion in a secret manner. Jesus commanded that we celebrate the Holy Communion. In the Holy Communion, we commemorate Jesus' last supper with His disciples. On the cross of Calvary, the Lamb of God shed His blood for the whole world. In the Holy Communion, He gives us His body and blood to eat and drink. When we enjoy the Lord's Supper, we are forgiven, strengthened in the faith in God, and empowered to love and serve our neighbors.

Holy Communion: The Words of Institution

*Our Lord Jesus Christ,
on the night when he was betrayed,
took bread,
and when he had given thanks,
he broke it,*

*and gave it to the disciples and said,
“ Take, eat;
this is my body which is given for you.
Do this in remembrance of me.”*

*In the same way also he took the cup,
and when he had given thanks he gave it to them,
saying, “Drink of it, all of you.
This cup is the new covenant in my blood,
which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this, as often as you drink it,
in remembrance of me.*

(Catechism, The Sacraments, p. 83; see Luke 22:26–28 and I Corinthians 11:23–25)

ASSIGNMENT:

What thoughts do you have regarding the taking of Holy Communion?

Communion or the Sacrament of the Altar is also a meal of communion and of thanksgiving, or the *Eucharist*. In church, as we kneel by the altar rail together with other Christians, we experience community with them. In our thoughts, we can also include our far-away relatives, friends, and family members at the Communion table. The unseen segment of the altar rail is there to remind us that we are also in communion with other Christians already in heaven. As the Bible states, communicants from all over the world will finally be gathered at a common wedding feast in heaven. The Holy Communion reminds us of eternal life, the first part of which begins on earth.

There are different ways of celebrating the Sacrament of the Altar in different churches. We can always go to Communion, when we feel the need. Partaking in the Sacrament of the Altar does not require special holiness or success in life. It is nourishment for the travelling sinner, which gives strength for continuing the journey of life. The Holy Communion strengthens spiritual life. It is comforting and calming. The Holy Communion is a treasure given to the Christians to use. It is a mystery that cannot be fully explained.

One characteristic of the early church was that its congregation enjoyed the Lord’s Supper together. *They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers* (Acts 2:42).

RECOMMENDED HYMNS:

Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence LBOW 198 = Vaiti kaikki palvokaamme VK 228

13. Prayer – the heart speaking with God

Prayer is the heart speaking with God. Jesus taught His followers to pray. By praying, we acknowledge that we ourselves have not power to decide on our lives. What happens is in God’s hands. We acknowledge in prayer that God is almighty (omnipotent). We approach Him humbly asking that His will be done in our lives. In prayer we may also ask for the forgiveness of our sins. We may pray for everything we need in life. We may thank God for all good things and ask for His blessings for our close relatives and friends. In time of need, we may pray that God would intervene.

Prayer can also be changed into a long list of what we wish to happen. It is not the function of prayer to persuade God into doing our will. In prayer, we can observe how God speaks to us. When we do not find proper words, we may use the Lord's Prayer, which Jesus taught us, or other existing prayers.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven. Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.
(Matthew 6:9–13 and Luke 11:2–4)

In prayer we may thank and praise God for what he has done. Prayer can also be just silence and listening. Indeed, it is good to read the Bible while praying, as then the Holy Spirit helps us to understand that God speaks to us through the word of the Bible.

Jesus often knelt in prayer. Prayer on one's knees demonstrates man's humbleness before God. Some people use the sign of the cross when they pray. Early on, the Christians started to clasp their hands and bow their heads as the sign of devoting themselves to prayer. In the Bible, we read how some people fell on their faces before God. Some people pray standing with raised hands as the sign of a prayer of praise. In some churches, each one prays aloud simultaneously for his or her own issues. There are many forms of prayer. Different types of prayer help us concentrate. They also reveal what kind of prayer it is each time.

Already at the time of the Old Testament, people asked for God's blessing. The best-known prayer dating back to ancient times is the *Benediction*, or by its other name, *Aaron's Blessing* (Numbers 6:24–26). It was used already in the days of the Israelite divine service in the Temple.

The Benediction

*The Lord bless you and keep you;
the Lord make his face to shine
upon you and be gracious to you:
The Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.
In the name of the Father, Son,
and Holy Spirit. Amen.*

Most Finns pray sometimes. However, in Finland, prayer is considered to be such a private matter that it is seldom discussed in public. Many Finns have the habit of praying in silence and with measured terms. The Apostle Paul taught that a Christian should pray without ceasing (Thessalonians 5:17). Therefore, prayer is not merely solemn speech. One can pray anytime in one's mind with sighs and expect God to listen. One of the shortest prayers is: "Lord, have mercy upon me!"

ASSIGNMENT:

Read what the Catechism teaches about prayer.
Compare the ways of praying in your former and present country.
How do they differ from each other?
What have they in common?
What different ways do you have to pray?

RECOMMENDED HYMNS:
O Thou, Who hast of Thy Pure Grace LBOW 442;
Kuule, Isä taivaan, pyyntö tää VK 501
Abide with me LBOW 272; Mua siipeis suojaan kätke VK 552

14. Suffering – pain belongs to life

The Bible tells about Job, who was a rich man. God and Satan disputed about whether Job was blameless only because he was so well off. With God's permission Satan was allowed to test Job. First Job loses his property and his family. In his agony, he curses that he was ever born, but not God. Job's friends come to comfort him. They think that Job has done something wrong in secret and therefore God is punishing him. Job does not agree (Job 1–31). Finally, his young friend Elihu comforts him by pointing out that nothing can restrict the will of the Almighty. Neither adversities, nor success in life, depend upon man's goodness or wickedness (Job 32–37).

Finally, also God speaks to Job. He shows that He is in control of everything. As the Creator, He is not dependant on man, and man has no right to condemn Him. Finally, Job humbles himself and admits that although he has lost everything, he still has no right to criticize God. The book of Job then describes Job's life turn good once again (Job 38–42).

In life, there is much suffering and anxiety, the meaning and cause of which cannot be explained. The Book of Job shows us a good example of this fact. God, in His omnipotence, is not obliged to explain to man why there is suffering. It just belongs to life. Many a psalmist has described how God hears the prayers of people in distress.

God Hears

*The cords of Sheol entangled me;
the snares of death confronted me.
In my distress I called upon the Lord;
to my God I cried for help.
From his temple he heard my voice,
And my cry to him reached his ears. (Psalm 18:5–7)*

There is also suffering that we take upon us voluntarily. When you listen to your friend's worries, you notice that you, too, lose heart. Sometimes you may offer yourself on behalf of your friend. Suffering for another person is a courageous choice in life. Christ Himself gave us an example of how we shall love our neighbors, even though it would mean abstaining from what is ours.

Suffering in our lives may also be caused by our own bad decisions. When we make wrong choices, we may have to suffer for the consequences of our stupid deeds.

ASSIGNMENT:

Share with others some suffering you have experienced.
Conclude whether your suffering is inexplicable, for the good of other people,
or your own fault.

Suffering belongs to life, and it cannot be removed. The message of the Christian faith though is that God does not leave you alone in your suffering. When someone near and dear to you dies, sorrow may become so deep that you are filled with grief. Then it is wise to look for help. Congregations arrange grief-counselling groups, and individual pastoral care may also be available. A psychologist or therapist may also be of support if you feel your grief is particularly acute.

God does not tempt anybody. There is not necessarily any purpose for suffering. Going through suffering may sometimes deepen a person's relationship with God. By consenting to suffering, we acknowledge at the same time that God is the Almighty whom we cannot understand. The pain of parting may lead to a new life.

In the song, "*Itkemättömät itkut*" lyrics by Anna-Mari Kaskinen, music by Petri Laaksonen, suffering is expressed. (In English, '*Even If Tears Don't Come*'; translation by Heli Tissari).

<i>Kerran vielä merkityksen saavat kaikki itkut, kaikki lyödyt haavat. aika kutoo suurta salaisuutta, kivun kautta Jumala luo uutta. Mikään vaihe ei voi mennä hukkaan, kyyneleetkin puhkeavat kukkaan. Vaikkei silmä vielä nähdä saata, tuskakin on toivon kasvumaata.</i>	<i>There's a reason for every tear we shed, for every wound we get, just not revealed yet. Time with her brush paints what's hidden from us, God has an aim when we go through some pain. No phase in our life is without strife, but what seems, isn't so bad, we shall be glad. We cannot see it now, and can't say how, but all our toil is soil for hope: we'll cope.</i>
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A well-known negro spiritual seeks comfort from prayer.

Nobody Knows

*Nobody knows the trouble I've seen,
Nobody knows but Jesus.
Nobody knows the trouble I've seen,
Glory, halleluja.
Sometimes I'm up, sometimes I'm down,
Oh yes, Lord.
Sometimes I'm almost to the ground,
Oh yes, Lord.*

RECOMMENDED HYMNS:

*When in the Hour of Deepest Need LBOW 303; Päivä vain ja hetki kerrallansa VK 338
Lost in the Night LBOW 394; Hyvyyden voiman ihmeelliseen suojaan VK 600*

15. The Christian Hope – the best days are ahead

Faith, hope, and love belong to the life of a Christian. We can be convinced of God's love through believing that Jesus died for us. Hope opens up new horizons even when we experience distress. Love is God's gift to us. We experience God's Love and goodness every day of our lives. To be loved and to show love to other people is the calling of a Christian.

Christian hope is hope for the future. We hope that God guides our lives. Christian hope also opens up a view to eternity. God so loved the world that He gave His Son as a ransom for the sins of all people. The love of God, which can be seen in Christ, touches us through the work of the Holy Spirit, especially when we read the Bible. Sometimes we may experience God's Love in the words of another person.

Summary:

God's activity in the world can be shown diagrammatically as follows:

The Creator sent His Son Jesus to tell, through the work of the Holy Spirit, about His love towards all people. It is His wish that, when people hear the call of the Holy Spirit, they could again have Communion with God, ransomed by Jesus Christ.

Communion with God is the goal of the Christian life. The Bible speaks of heaven, where faith will be changed into sight. Every baptized Christian is invited to the wedding feast in heaven. There we shall see God. Eternal life is a secret, of which little can be known. The prophet of the Book of Revelation lifts the veil of secrecy:

"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem. Coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I hear a loud voice from the throne saying, 'See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes, Death will be no more and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away'" (Revelation 21:1–4).

An internationally well-known song of American origin describes the hope of a Christian.

We Shall Overcome

*We shall overcome,
we shall overcome,
we shall overcome some day.
Oh, deep in my heart,
I do believe,
we shall overcome some day.*

*RECOMMENDED HYMNS:
Come, Thou Almighty King LBOW 522;
Jo mahtaisimme yötä ja päivääkin kiittää VK 345*

II THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN FINLAND

The word *church* means “belonging to the Lord”. The early Christians began to gather at homes soon after Pentecost in order to remember Jesus’ resurrection and his teachings. They also read the Old Testament and Paul’s letters, as well as the Gospels. They prayed, and together enjoyed the Lord’s Supper. The Church continues this spiritual mission to strengthen Christians in their faith and call all people to God’s Kingdom. The Church is God’s people. “The Church is the communion of saints where the Gospel is preached in its purity and the holy sacraments are administered according to the Gospel” (The Augsburg Confession VII 1). A church in a certain locality is called a congregation, the members of which are baptized Christians. Martin Luther stated on the church:

We, too, were born in the Gospel as heirs...through the Church. The Church teaches, tends to us warmly, carries us in her womb, upon her lap, and in her arms, models and makes us perfect according to the shape of Christ until we grow perfect...Thus everything takes place through the office of the Word.

The word *church* also means a church building, where a congregation gathers together. In Finland, there are churches everywhere. In the countryside, the church is often in the middle of a village. If you stand on a high place in Helsinki, you can see seven churches at a glance. The Mediaeval stone churches reveal that Christianity has influenced the life of Finns already for centuries. On the other hand, wooden churches indicate that even in small villages, people wanted to build churches of their own. Newly constructed churches in the ever expanding suburbs indicate that people want congregational halls built close to where they live. Some churches are difficult to recognize as churches. An example of this is Tempeliaukio Church located in the center of Helsinki. Its whole structure was excavated from solid rock.

Judging from the Christian burial traditions, Christianity came to Finland as early as the ninth century. Finland was a mission field then. The Orthodox faith spread from the East. In Finnish, the Slavonic loan words “risti”, “Raamattu”, and “pappi” mean “cross”, “Bible”, and “minister” respectively. From the West came Roman Catholic influences. Finns learned to know Christianity in its two main forms.

1. The Church and the State

In Finland, the Church and the State have carried out their duties in very close union. During *the Middle Ages* (circa 1200–1500), the Church in Finland was Roman Catholic. It had a strong legal and economic status. The church earned its income by collecting taxes directly from the citizens. The King of Sweden was the head of the Church. The clergy of the Church and the civil servants for the State were trained at the Cathedral School of Turku.

During the Reformation (in the sixteenth century), the Church changed to Lutheran, when Mikael Agricola brought the influences of the Lutheran Church with him from Germany. Following Luther, the church began to teach that man is saved only by faith for Christ’s sake. Agricola translated parts of the Bible into Finnish. Thus, he became the father of written Finnish. During the Reformation, the ideal was that each person could read the Bible in his or her own language. The King of Sweden was still though the head of the Church, and he confiscated large amounts of Church property.

During the Age of Orthodoxy and the Enlightenment (in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries), it still was compulsory for all to belong to the Lutheran Church. The Church administered education and teaching. Parish clerks were teachers in their own localities. The Academy of Turku was founded to meet increasing educational needs.

During the era of Russian rule (1809–1917), Finland was separated from Sweden and gained a large degree of autonomy. The Orthodox Tsar of Russia acted as the head of the Lutheran Church of Finland. The Church formed a decision-making body of its own: the General Synod. The activities of the Church and therefore those of the State began to be differentiated. At this time, the first private schools were established. Elementary schools and the National Board of Education were also established. Circulating elementary classes provided by the Church continued to be the most important educational institution for citizens.

From the period of Independence (1917–) the Church and the State have continued to be differentiated. The State is now responsible for general compulsory education. In schools, religion is taught to the pupils who belong to the Church. The Church is an administratively independent entity under public law. The Church has a right, based on the law, to collect taxes from its members in connection with the collection of municipal taxes. The Church still has societal obligations such as burials and the maintenance of graveyards.

The relationship between the State and the Church continues to change. A Freedom of Religion Act was passed in 1922. According to this act, everyone has the right to confess one's own faith or not to confess any faith, as long as one does not break the law, but observes good manners. Previously, when we had a State Church, the State decided on matters of the Church. Nowadays, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland is administratively independent. It is called a folk church, because the vast majority of people belong to the Church (83.1% in 2005). The State and the Church have many common challenges, for example the ethical discussions which have grown more and more intensive in recent years. The Church influences the citizens' opinions by its teaching of ethics.

Summary:

State church

- *All belong to the Church.*
- *The decision-making bodies of the State use their supreme power to decide Church issues.*

Folk church

- *Belonging to the Church is voluntary.*
- *The decrees of the Church are made by its own administrative bodies.*

The Finnish school system has developed as a result of cooperation between the Church and the State. The teaching of religion is one of its features. According to the Freedom of Religion Act, amended in 2003, religious faith is a basic right of citizens. It is not only the choice of an individual, but also part of community tradition. Church members receive instruction in their own religion at school. Students have the right and also a duty to participate. Non-church members may also participate. The Evangelical Lutheran Church also provides information about other faiths. For those who do not belong to any denomination, instruction in philosophy of life, ethics and comparative religion is arranged. Instruction in minority faiths is also arranged if there are enough of those who desire to receive it.

DISCUSS WITH YOUR TEACHER:

How is the centuries-long Christian tradition visible in Finland?

RECOMMENDED HYMNS:

God Bless Our Native Land LBOW 569; Sun kätös, Herra, voimakkaan VK 577

2. Worship service – Mass

Worship service or Mass is a common feast of the congregation and is held every holy day. Church service is a place where God nurtures our faith by serving us. From church service, we are sent to our everyday lives where we then can serve our neighbors, and live in such a way that brings glory to God. According to the Lutheran confession, a congregation is where the Word is proclaimed and the holy sacraments are administered correctly.

The Sunday service is most often Communion service. All baptized Christians may partake of the Holy Communion (see the Holy Communion I,12); Children may take Communion together with their parents. All who are already confirmed may take Communion independently.

During the church service, the *liturgist* officiates at the altar and usually also *preaches*. Together with an assisting minister, the presiding minister is responsible for the offering of Communion. Deacons or lay people who have been authorized to assist may assist with Communion. *The church musician* is responsible for music, for conducting the choir, and for playing the organ, if there already isn't *an organist* in the congregation. The church musician is assisted by members of the congregation who sing in a choir, or play instruments. The whole congregation sings *hymns*. Other people are also involved, for instance, in the reading of the Scripture, the collection of offerings or assisting with prayer of intercession.

Often those assisting with worship service contribute to other activities within the congregation. You may become active yourself. Find out the practice of your own congregation and volunteer! Some special worship services are prepared and directed to a certain group of congregation members. There may be services for young people, confirmation masses, end of school year services, or outreach services for people in a certain area. International services in different languages are organized in many of the biggest cities. The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland also serves Finnish expatriates by organizing church services and ceremonies for those who work abroad. Services may also be arranged in tourist areas popular among Finns.

ASSIGNMENT:

What types of church services are offered by the church in your current home country?
Find out if there are church services offered in your mother tongue in the country where you live.

Many Christian organizations also arrange special church services. For instance, *St. Thomas Mass*, which was first celebrated at Agricola Church in Helsinki, gathers together nearly a thousand people every week. At St. Thomas Mass, congregation members are more active and energetic. There is also a wider variety of music. Christian counselling is also available there. St. Thomas Masses are held regularly in the largest urban parishes.

Church services are the core activity of a congregation. During holiday seasons, such as Christmas or Easter, more people generally attend church. Church services are also broadcast regularly every Sunday. In addition, church services are telecast a couple times per month.

Other devotional programs are broadcast on the radio on a regular basis.

DISCUSS WITH YOUR TEACHER:

You may have heard people say that Finns are not religious because only a small minority (2.5%) attends church services regularly. Why is this?

Suggested link:

Finnish church services on the Internet at www.verkkokirkko.fi

RECOMMENDED HYMNS:

God Himself Is Present LBOW 249; Oi kuinka ihana VK 200

3. The church year

The life of the congregation is guided by the *Church year*. Church services and other religious ceremonies receive their contents and character from the events of *the salvation history* reflected in the Church year. The Biblical texts and themes of the holy days relate to the events foregrounded in the course of the Church year. The *liturgical colors* also tell us about these themes. The major festivals of the Church year are the following:

Liturgical colors:

White	- the color of glory, innocence, purity, and Easter time
Purple or blue	- the color of expectation, preparing, and penitence
Red	- the color of the Holy Spirit, fire, blood and witness
Green	- the color of growth and vigor
Black	- the color of grief for death

The Church year begins with *Advent* (Latin *adventus* = coming to); sometimes the first Sunday in Advent is already in November. The liturgical color on the First Sunday in Advent is white, thereafter purple or blue. In Advent, we prepare for the Nativity of the Savior. On the first Sunday in Advent, we light one candle, and on every following Sunday, one more candle is added until the fourth Sunday in Advent. The increasing candlelight relates to the Nativity of Jesus, the Light of the World, which is coming near. A further theme of the Advent Season is Jesus' return at the end of history.

RECOMMENDED HYMNS:

Prepare the Royal Highway LBOW 26; Käy, kansa, Herraasi vastaan VK 6

Christmas (white) is celebrated on the 25th of December. During Christmastime schools are on break. Many people attend church during Christmastime. The hours of devotion on Christmas Eve and the worship service on Christmas morning celebrate Christ's birth. *The Favourite Christmas Carols, Kauneimmat joululaulut* in Finnish, are especially popular occasions, gathering people to sing together, and serving to benefit foreign missionary work.

In Finland, Christmas is primarily a family festival, which children await using advent calendars. On Christmas Eve, people gather together for the traditional Christmas dinner. Carols, games, and exchanging Christmas presents in the presence of Santa Claus, are all connected with the celebration of Christmas. Finns, who live abroad, often try to organize Christmas celebrations that resemble Christmas in Finland. *Epiphany* (white) is the final Christmas celebration. It is celebrated to commemorate the visit by the Three Magi to the manger in which Jesus was lying.

ASSIGNMENT:

Compare the traditions of the different Christmas celebrations you know.

RECOMMENDED HYMNS:

From Heaven Above LBOW 51 = Enkeli taivaan VK 21

Easter is the climax in the history of salvation. It is celebrated on a Sunday in late March or early April. It is preceded by Lent, the period of forty days before Easter. During Lent, it is good to stop to consider our Lord's last days on earth. The week before Easter is called Holy Week. In the evenings during this week some parishes organize evening services with action sermons which follow the story of Christ's Passion. In some parishes, you can participate in so-called Easter pilgrimages by walking through several rooms dedicated to the different stages of Christ's journey to the Cross.

On *Maundy Thursday* (purple or blue) we commemorate the institution of the Holy Communion. On *Good Friday* (black) we stop to reflect on Jesus' death on the cross. The events culminate with the joyful resurrection festival on Easter (white). In addition to services and devotion hours, many people attend various kinds of concerts and passions (musical narratives) during the Holy Week; different congregations have their own traditions in arranging them.

Summary:

Easter is celebrated on the first Sunday after the full moon (March 22–April 25) after the vernal equinox (March 21).

ASSIGNMENT:

What is 'Good Friday' in your own language?
What does it reveal about the celebration?

RECOMMENDED HYMNS:

O Sacred Head, Now Wounded LBOW 117 = Oi rakkain Jeesuksen VK 63
That Easter Day with Joy was Bright LBOW 15; Lensi maahan enkeli VK 88

Ascension Day (white), the festival of Christ's ascension to heaven, is celebrated forty days after Easter. *Pentecost* (red), the birthday of the congregation, is celebrated fifty days after Easter in remembrance of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit. The Finnish word "helluntai" is based on the Swedish language: "helig dag" means "holy day". In other languages, Pentecost is named after the Greek word *pentekoste* (the fiftieth).

RECOMMENDED HYMNS:

Come, Holy Ghost, God and Lord LBOW 163; Henki, armon tuoja VK 199

The first Sunday after Pentecost is the day of *The Holy Trinity* (white). This holy day signifies the work of the unseen Triune God in the world. It also ushers in the second half of the Church year, marked by a relative lack of festivals. Subsequent Sundays are numbered according to the order in which they come after Pentecost.

RECOMMENDED HYMNS:

Come, Thou Almighty King LBOW 522; Me kiitämme sinua VK 126

One festival in the season after Pentecost (the general color green) is *Midsummer*, "juhannus" in Finnish, (white), celebrated in remembrance of St. John the Baptist. In early October, there is *Michaelmas* or the *Sunday of St. Michael and All Angels* (white). Angels, God's messengers, are celebrated at Michaelmas.

All Saints' Day (red or white) is celebrated at the beginning of November by lighting candles on the graves of close relatives. This prominent festival, important to Finnish culture, is celebrated by commemorating the faithful departed. *The last Sunday in the Church year* (green) reminds us that *Christ is the King* and the Lord. On the Day of Judgement, we are

called to account for our lives before God.

RECOMMENDED HYMNS:

For All your Saints, O Lord LBOW 176; Rauhan saivat pyhät Herran VK 146

4. Church ceremonies, sacraments and rites

Baptism is the most important of church rites. In Baptism, God joins man in the fellowship of Jesus Christ and takes him as a member of his Church. In Baptism, one becomes a member of the congregation. The baptism ceremony is also called christening, because, in baptism, the sign of the cross is marked above the person to be baptized as a sign that the person has been joined to the Christian fellowship. Baptism is officiated by a pastor. *Emergency baptism* can be officiated by any Christian if there is reason to believe that the newborn will not survive after birth. Baptism is then later affirmed in the ceremony of Affirmation of Baptism, which resembles christening. The child is not baptized again, however, as baptism is a unique event.

The majority of Finns (about 87% in 2003) are baptized as infants. This follows the old tradition of most major Christian churches, according to which God's blessing and gifts are also intended for children. Baptism is already in itself a worship service. Baptism takes place at home or at the parish premises. It is customary to invite family and friends to celebrate. The baptism ceremony connects different generations. Grandparents are often the guests of honor on this occasion.

The infant to be baptized needs at least two godparents, chosen by the child's parents. The task of the godparent is to lend spiritual support to the infant and to pray for him or her. Therefore only a confirmed member of the Church can be a godparent. The godparents should be chosen carefully. An adult not previously baptized can also receive baptism. A person baptized as an adult, must first go to confirmation classes for adults. A person baptized as an adult also needs two godparents to serve as support persons for his or her spiritual life.

RECOMMENDED HYMNS:

Take My Life, that I May Be LBOW 406; Jeesus, saavun kutsustasi VK 234

The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church follows the tradition of infant baptism of the old churches. Baptizing children has been an integral part of the Finnish way of life for centuries. The christening ceremony is an important event for the parents and all the family. In christening, the parents give the child a name by which he or she will be known for the rest of his or her life. God, too, knows the child by this name.

After joining the Church, the child is a member of the Church. According to the Freedom of Religion Act of 2003, a child's religious status is no longer automatically determined by that of his or her guardians. The child's guardians need to specifically express their will for the child to join or to leave a religious community. A child cannot become a member of the Lutheran Church if neither of their parents is a member. A child's right of self-determination was reinforced so that a 12-year-old child's religious status can only be changed with his or her own consent. A 15-year-old can still join or leave a religious community on his or her own by the written consent of his or her guardians. An 18-year-old can independently decide on his or her religious status.

Church membership guarantees congregational rights. A baptized and confirmed member of the congregation may independently partake of the Holy Communion. After the confirmation class and subsequent confirmation, at the age of 18, he or she is allowed to vote in the Parish Elections. He or she is also eligible to be a candidate for the Parish Board or Parish Council.

In connection with the baptismal rite, the child's name, native language, and religious affiliation are recorded in the state civil registry office. The child of Finnish citizens is then also recorded as a Finnish citizen and as a member of the parish in whose area he or she lives. This principle of parochial church activity means that there can only be one Evangelical Lutheran parish in a locality. Therefore, Church members in a certain geographical area all belong to the same parish. Accordingly, following this same principle, *the dioceses* in the Finnish Church have been regionally divided into *parishes* that cover the whole country. At the beginning of 2006 there were 548 parishes.

Without a permanent residence permit, an immigrant cannot be accepted as a member of the Church. An immigrant though may be baptized and become a member of a Lutheran Church outside Finland. If the person is baptized into some other Christian community, he or she should first find out if the two churches accept each other's baptism and ask for a permission to be baptized. The Bishops' Conference is preparing a proposal that a person on a short-term residence permit in Finland could also become a member of the Church.

Finnish expatriates will remain members of their Finnish home parishes as long as they remain Finnish citizens. When a Finnish citizen is born abroad prior to being baptized, an appropriate form must be acquired from the Finnish Consular office for registering a new Finnish citizen in the Finnish population register. He or she will be registered in the parish where his or her parent or parents are noted as absent members. In practice, this means the parish, from which the parents emigrated abroad. The form will have the child's first name(s) and last name, as well as the full names and parishes of the godparents. The form is then handed to the baptizing pastor, unless otherwise agreed. The entry in the population register must take place no later than two months from the child's birth. It is easiest done in connection with the child's baptism; recommended within two months. The child then also becomes a member of the local Finnish expatriate congregation. Should this not exist, the child will be baptized as a member of a parish of the Church in Finland. See www.evli.fi/ulkosuomalaiset for detailed instructions and the form to be filled.

At *Confirmation*, which follows the Confirmation Class, God strengthens those who have completed their Confirmation Class. The congregation prays for them, and they are blessed. During the Confirmation ceremony, the person being confirmed commits to being a disciple of Jesus by joining in the creed. After Confirmation, he or she may independently partake of the Holy Communion and also is entitled to become a godparent. After reaching the voting age of 18, he or she may be a candidate for positions of trust in the parish. In Finland, Confirmation is a memorable event for families. Most of the people who take the Confirmation Class are teenagers on their way towards independence and adulthood.

Summary:

Adult Baptism also includes Confirmation.

ASSIGNMENT:

Discuss your own Confirmation arrangements with your teacher.

RECOMMENDED HYMNS:

Take My Life, that I May Be LBOW 406; Jeesus, saavun kutsustasi VK 234

The Church *marriage ceremony* is both a legal and holy religious act, where God is asked to bless the marriage. Marriage is the foundation for establishing a family. In marriage, partners commit to each other in public in front of witnesses. Partners may have either a church or a civil wedding. Eight out of ten couples choose a church wedding. Finnish people choose their spouses themselves and get married on their own free will. Parental interference is not regarded as proper. Even though the Church does not recommend it, it has become common for couples to live together in a common-law marriage before being legally wedded. Most people get married when they wish to have children.

A Church Wedding is possible if both partners are confirmed members of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church. Should either one of the engaged partners not be a member of the Lutheran Church, the couple can still have a church wedding if the non-member is a member of some other Christian church or denomination. It is possible therefore to have an international wedding if the foreigner belongs to some other Christian church. The wedding can also be performed bilingually. If a Church Wedding is not possible, the couple can have a civil wedding. Such a marriage can then be blessed in a church ceremony.

The Marriage Act, according to the law of Finland, covers marriage and divorce as well as the rights and duties of the marriage partners. An informative brochure on the Marriage Act is available from Parish Offices and other population register keepers. Those planning to get married will receive the brochure upon request where possible impediments to marriage are explained. For a church wedding a foreigner's background is also investigated, in accordance with Finnish law, in order to determine if there anything would prevent them from getting married. The person to be married must be minimum 18 years of age, a confirmed member of the Lutheran Church, eligible for marriage by marital status, and not kin to the person to whom they will be married.

When the marriage ceremony is performed abroad, a Finnish pastor is usually only allowed to bless the marriage after a civil ceremony or a marriage ceremony taken place in some other Christian church. Some Finnish pastors have official wedding rights in specified countries. A prerequisite for the wedding is an examination of potential impediments to marriage. For this, it is necessary to acquire a certificate from his or her population register office. The certificate can be attained seven days after the completed form has arrived at the population register. Marriage laws are different in different countries. The religious denominations of the wedding couple also have an effect on how the wedding ceremony can be performed. If you plan on getting married abroad, remember to contact the appropriate authority in time to find out how to proceed according to law.

RECOMMENDED HYMNS:

For the Beauty of the Earth LBOW 561; Herra, rakkaastani VK 241

At a funeral, the congregation blesses the deceased to his or her last journey with prayers, trusting in God's Word. The family of the deceased finds support and comfort in the Christian hope. For a Christian, death does not mean the end of everything. It is only a gateway to eternal life where Christ is resurrected and rules over death. The burial service gives the family a chance to grieve and reminds those present of the inevitability of their own death. In laying the deceased to rest, the focus is upon the proclamation of Resurrection's hope and salvation in Christ.

The majority of Finns have a church funeral in a calm and peaceful manner. Church parishes maintain graveyards. Persons who are not members of the Church can also be buried in the graveyards maintained by the Church. Often, the most beautiful garden in the area can be

found in the graveyard. Church gardens allow one to seek solace at the grave of the beloved by remembering him or her, and by being reminded of one's own mortality.

As we grieve over the death of a loved one, the Congregation supports us. Following a loss, it is best to talk with a pastor at a parish office. The funeral arrangements can be discussed and when the parish can hold the funeral. The funeral will be held no later than a few weeks after the death. This gives relatives time to prepare themselves and have all the arrangements completed without hurry. The pastor will also recommend a funeral home, which will handle funeral arrangements in the manner desired by the relatives.

RECOMMENDED HYMNS:

I Know of a Sleep in Jesus' Name LBOW 342; Pois kirkas suvi kulkee VK 249

In Finnish culture, the deceased have always been respected. Some features may already date back to ancient traditions where food was taken to the graves of the dead at certain times. Today, respect for the family's deceased members is expressed by lighting candles on the graves of the beloved, both on All Saints Day and on Christmas Eve. It is definitely worthwhile going to the churchyard to see this. A sea of candles in the memorial grove is an uplifting sight. It tells of the longing to be connected with those who have passed away. At the same time, it proclaims that death does not have the last say. Behind death, there can be seen the hope of eternal life for the sake of Christ's resurrection.

5. Types of parish work

Parishes conduct a wide spectrum of activities. People of all ages can participate in various activities within their own age group even if not a church member. Here are some of the typical activities provided by the congregation.

Children's work is done e.g. in Sunday schools. *Sunday School* is a worship service for children where they are given the opportunity to be still and feel that our Heavenly Father is taking care of them. At Sunday School, children receive insight into Bible stories. They sing, do crafts, draw and play. Sunday schools are primarily meant for children aged 4 and above, but the whole family can also come along. Sometimes, Sunday School can be arranged simultaneously with the sermon during the communion service.

In some parishes, it is customary to send the parents of baptized children an invitation to a *family club*. *Children's day clubs* are clubs for 3 to 6 year-olds meeting on weekday mornings or afternoons for 1.5 to 3 hours at a time. A trained church nursery teacher always directs the club. The clubs aim at teaching children the Christian faith, supporting parents in their child rearing task as well as supporting children in their growth and development in a comprehensive manner. For school children, there are *afternoon clubs* at the end of the school day.

RECOMMENDED HYMNS:

Children of the Heavenly Father LBOW 474; Jumalan kämmenellä VK 499

A juniors' program exists for 7-14 year olds. Activities include cooperation with schools, various boys' and girls' clubs and camps and excursions.

The most popular types of juniors' program are various clubs, e.g. sport clubs, that are open to all. The meetings also feature teaching of the Christian faith. Many clubs need interested parishioners to lead the clubs.

RECOMMENDED HYMNS:

From God can Nothing Move Me LBOW 468; Taivaan Isä suojan antaa VK 503

The percentage of Finns attending *Confirmation Class* is about 90%. This is a higher percentage than the total of 15-year-old Finns belonging to the church. Confirmation Class is a part of congregational life, during which young people learn more about the faith of the Church and the meaning of Baptism. The aim is that Confirmation Class participants would be strengthened in their faith for the Triune God into which they were taken in the Holy Baptism and that they would grow in love to their neighbours and live in prayer and in communion with the congregation. The popularity of the Confirmation Class in Finland is partly a result of well-organized, patient work among the youth. Full-time youth workers, who include youth leaders and pastors, conduct this work. After attending Confirmation Class, many people who did not previously belong to the Church, decide to be baptized and become members of the Church. They are then confirmed after finishing the Confirmation Class. One can also attend Confirmation Class without even wishing to become a Church member. The common age for Confirmation Class attendance is 15. Whereas the classroom attendance of Confirmation Class is free, there is a charge for attending camps.

Summary:

The Confirmation Class takes about half a year. It can include weekend camps, a longer term camping period, participation in the activities of the congregation, and teaching in the evenings.

One, who did not have the chance to go to the Confirmation Class as an adolescent, can attend classes in connection with military service. Increasingly, congregations also organize private Confirmation preparation. Often, it is a question of someone wishing to have a Christian marriage and who, for some reason or other, did not go to the Confirmation Class earlier in life. The duration of the Confirmation Class for adults is at least 20 hours. For adults, teaching is also provided in groups.

Congregational *Youth Work* is closely tied with Confirmation Class. It includes, for instance, the training of the voluntary peer helpers called "*isoseit*" for the following years' Confirmation Classes. Youth Work provides the young opportunities to deepen their spiritual life and ponder the questions of life together with others. This work is often done during youth evenings and Bible study groups. The running of Youth Cafés, safe havens for youth gatherings, has become popular. It also offers volunteers opportunities to participate in congregational life. The Church's youth work is open to all. In it, immigrants, too, can find a good and safe model on how to live as young people in their new homeland.

Youth Work varies in type. The usual kinds of activities include courses, camps, and excursions. Many congregations have activities for young musicians, such as choirs or bands. There are also congregations which support those struggling with alcohol or drug abuse through special youth work. Groups of volunteers do street work, render assistance at youth meetings, and provide pastoral care. There are also activities aimed at individuals and groups with special needs.

RECOMMENDED HYMNS:

Lord, Take my Hand and Lead Me LBOW 333; Herra, kädelläsi VK 517

Diaconia is service based upon Christian charity. Church Law stipulates that every congregation must appoint a person responsible for diaconal work. Christian diaconia aims at meeting people who are otherwise out of reach of other type of help. Earlier, diaconal work took place mainly among the elderly in the congregation. Today, it is focused increasingly upon helping immigrants, the unemployed, or those otherwise disadvantaged in life.

Service does not only mean practical assistance. It can also be help through discussion and pastoral counseling. Diaconia workers meet people everyday during normally scheduled office hours as well at private homes, and various institutes. For those in different life situations, Diaconia personnel also organize clubs, recreational activities, outings, and camps. Special church festivals and celebrations are organized as well. They also cooperate hand in hand with volunteer organizations and social and health care professionals.

The objective of diaconia is to teach us to take responsibility for people around us. It provides for each and everyone an opportunity to participate in voluntary work for supporting those in need. Diaconia work though is not only the domain of diaconia workers. It is the responsibility of all Christians to care for their neighbours. There are indeed a large number of volunteers in the congregation doing diaconal work

ASSIGNMENT:

Find out from a diaconia worker in your congregation what type of volunteer work is on offer.

RECOMMENDED HYMNS:

Lord of All Nations, Grant Me Grace LBOW 419; Tänään tässä maailmassa VK 441

Music Work is a traditional field for the Church. In different cultures, the Christian church has always used music as a tool for building bridges and conveying its message. Congregational music is in professional hands, those of *the Church Musician*. There can be more than one Church Musician in a parish, depending upon its size. The Church Musician or *the Organist* has responsibility for the music during church services and ceremonies. Moreover, the Church Musician is the choir and bandleader, and supervises their concert activities. The Church Musician also builds cooperation with local music schools and institutes. The purpose is to create a lively music program for the Church; an important part of congregation life. Organs are the most common church instrument. Church music, in Finland, tends to be based upon the classical style. These days though, the choice of music is becoming more diversified. Gospel and ethno music, for instance have been introduced with interest. The Church Musician may be pleasantly surprised if you would offer your own musical skills as a means of adding to the musical life of the congregation.

Finnish churchgoers have always been strong in the hymn tradition. In past centuries, the *Hymnal* has been the traditional educator of the people. For a long time, it was the only book found in homes. The 1701 edition of the Hymnal contained strong language and remained in use for nearly two hundred years. The first Finnish language Hymnal by Jaakko Finno, was published in 1583. The Hymnal, in use today, contains music arising from different Christian

traditions. The singing together of the congregation, “*veisuu*” in Finnish, is an integral part of Lutheran church life. Today, the Hymnal also contains forms and liturgies of church services, ceremonies, sacraments and rites. The Hymnal, along with the Bible, is a basic book for every home library.

ASSIGNMENT:

Study the contents of the Hymnal. How are the hymns divided in groups?

Family Work supports parents with child rearing. Congregations provide parents an opportunity to meet in Family Clubs and discuss questions concerning their children’s upbringing. In immigrant families, children quickly adopt the values and customs of the Finnish youth. Sometimes, this creates tension inside families. Help is available for parents in this situation. Family Work may also be directed to supporting marriages. Many congregations organize courses for couples planning to marry. The program is known as “*Inter-Current*”, “*Virtaa välillämme*” in Finnish. Most Parish Unions employ marriage counsellors. When marriage partners come from different cultures, it is recommended that they share their concerns with people in similar situation or seek specialized marriage counseling. You can confidently turn to Church Family Workers in these matters.

Parish Unions also maintain *Family Counseling Centers*. Their basic task is, through Christian based discussions and therapy, to help adults with their family problems and life crises. Family Counseling Centers attempt to clarify questions pertaining to marriage, family, and other close personal relationships. Those needing help can come alone, in couples, or as a family. Besides offering counseling, most Centers also act as mediators in family disputes. The Centers also provide guidance and training to those working with families. Family counselors are sworn to absolute secrecy. You can seek help from Family Counseling Centers, even if you do not belong to the Evangelical Lutheran Church. *International Marriage Counseling, offered in languages other than Finnish*, is also available to an increasing degree.

ASSIGNMENT:

Find out where the Family Counseling Center nearest to you is located.

Adult Work is the name for congregation activities provided for those of working age. These include Bible study groups, voluntary diaconal work and game and sauna evenings. Most congregations also run grief groups for those who have recently lost loved ones. In these groups, the grieving can come to terms with their anxiety after the death of a loved one.

Missionary Work is the responsibility of every congregation. It is a privilege to share the liberating message of Jesus Christ all over the world through words as well as deeds. In Finland, the Church’s missionary organizations send out missionaries. Congregations often adopt missionaries of their own, who visit the congregation when leaving for and coming from the field. During the service term of office, the congregation pledges to pray for their adopted missionary and for the people he or she encounters in his or her work. The congregation also gives financial support to their appointed missionary. *The Mission Secretary* is responsible for organizing missionary work in the congregation. Participation in missionary work is part of bearing the responsibility of a Christian.

RECOMMENDED HYMNS
O God of Every Nation LBOW 416; Ylitse kaikkien rajojen VK 429

Pastoral counseling is closely tied to all forms of work in the congregation. It is needed whenever an individual needs a listener. The Pastor and the Parish Lector are sworn to secrecy regarding any confidences shared during their counseling. You can turn to a congregation worker when wanting to unburden your mind.

More than a million people of Finnish origin live outside Finland. The Church's work with Finnish expatriates is the responsibility of the Unit *Ministry to Finns Abroad*, which is under the Department of International Relations. The unit works in close cooperation with sister churches of the respective countries, with the Finnish Seamen's Mission, and with missionary organizations. Finnish expatriates take responsibility for carrying out congregational work in Finnish. They act in their communities as mature Christians. Ministry to Finns Abroad encourages Christians to bear responsibility for the churches of their new home country and its Finnish congregational work. In many countries, Finns can become members of the local Lutheran church or a church that is ecumenically similar. When this has not been possible, Finns have established "congregations" of their own. Finnish culture and values are appreciated in this work. Finnish expatriate work is flexible, in that congregational services adapt to the shifting needs of Finns wherever they are located. Work is developed in cooperation with the local churches.

ASSIGNMENT:

Find out what kind of activities your congregation has for immigrants.

Nearly all congregations maintain updated information of their activities on the Internet. You can find the web site for your home congregation at: <http://.evl.fi>

6. Parish workers

Each parish is headed by a *vicar*. The Finnish name "*kirkkoherra*" dates back to the Swedish "*kyrkoherde*" which means "church shepherd". Other ministers in the parish are called *curates* (*second pastors*) and *parish pastors*. Ministers are in charge of leading church services, baptisms, weddings, funerals, as well as partake in other congregational activities based upon either the type of parish work (e.g. diaconia or missions) or the parish location for which they are responsible. Before women were permitted to be clergy, female theologians worked as *parish lectors*. To this day, a small number of women still work in this capacity. Management of the congregation's finances is the responsibility of *the treasurer*, or *director of finance*, both positions requiring an economic degree.

The music life of the congregation is led by *Church Musicians*. *Diaconia workers* act in the field of Christian service. There are two types of Diaconia workers. The first has received basic training in nursing care and is called Deaconess. The second type is a specialized social worker and is called Deacon. *Youth leaders* in the congregation provide programs for juniors and youth as well as contribute to confirmation classes. *The Children's Work Counsellor* together with children's workers is responsible for directing day and family clubs. *The Mission Secretary* is responsible for activities related to missionary work. *The staff of the Parish Office* are responsible for various services, such as burial plot arrangements. The Parish Office of Finance is responsible for the finance and administration of the Parish.

The Finnish Evangelical-Lutheran Church owns a lot of real estate. The person overseeing Church property has been traditionally called *a church custodian*. Working closely with the church custodian is *the church janitor*. The church janitor manages congregational residences, camp centers, churchyards, graveyards, and other congregational real estate. The Church's graveyards, in particular, demand large numbers of seasonal workers. The Church camp centers employ housekeepers and other staff who organize congregational occasions.

Parishes located in the same municipality form *a Parish Union*. In some cases, neighboring congregations can, if desired, form such a union. The Union parishes can decide upon joint management of some activities. They may together employ *family counselors, work counselors, hospital chaplains, educational institute workers, and immigrant workers* who may themselves be immigrants.

The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church employs many people full time. The table below shows the number of people working in various congregational fields during 2005:

Number of Church Personnel and Person Years 2005

Task group	No.	
	Workers	Person years
Parish clergy	2 197	2 008
Parish lectors	24	21
Hospital chaplaincy	130	113
Family counseling	169	150
Church musicians	962	871
Diaconia	1 448	1 300
Youth work	1 355	1 148
Children's work	2 783	1 994
Other parish work	557	255
Total parish work	9 625	7 860
Administration and office work	2 706	2 410
Real estate and ancillary staff	3 967	2 920
Graveyard work	4 323	1 769
Other	606	402
Total	21 227	15 361

The large number of employees enables the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church to work on a wide front. In comparison with many other churches, there are a large number of permanent full-time workers. This also has its downside. Finnish congregational life has become employee-centred. Correction of this distortion has been attempted by giving congregation members the opportunity to volunteer for activities and to bear responsibility. Many members have indeed taken up the opportunity and volunteer for work as club leaders, helpers in confirmation classes, voluntary diaconia workers, on duty chapel parishioners, prayer intercessors, or assistants in church services. At times, volunteers also take over custodial duties. Congregations where members organize activities on their own are livelier and more extroverted. A congregation though is not equal to parish workers. A congregation is an assembly of Christians.

7. The special types of work in the Church

The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church has different types of Special Work designed to meet the needs of special groups. One of these, for example, is *the telephone helpline*. It provides help for people who have nowhere else to turn. The caller can speak anonymously. During the call, he or she will be coached into finding the best solution for their particular situation. Everything takes place on a deeply individual basis. Standard pre-packaged style answers to life questions are avoided. Judging from the popularity of the helpline, many find it a good opportunity to sort out matters that hurt. Anybody can call and receive help by discussing his or her life crises, fears, sorrows and worries. Finns even find spiritual matters easier to discuss, when they do not have to reveal their names. Volunteers on duty have been trained to refer callers, when necessary, to seek professional help.

Summary:

In Finland, the telephone counselling is available at tel: **10071**.

Hospital chaplaincy has a long tradition. A Hospital Chaplain works with patients, their relatives and the hospital staff in administering pastoral counseling. *Hospital Chaplains* also receive outpatients. Pastoral counseling discussions form the core of a Hospital Chaplain's work. Tasks also include organizing services, and hours of devotion, and Holy Communion. Hospital Chaplains also officiate at Church ceremonies, which are last rites and funeral services. Some of the most recent tasks have involved grief counseling, debriefing group during crises and major disaster preparedness. *Hospital Chaplains* may participate in hospital ethical boards as well as support the staff.

Military Chaplains are employed by the State. *The Church's work among the Defense Forces* began in the 1920s. Military Chaplains are responsible for proclaiming God's Word and for overseeing Confirmation Classes for those in the army. To handle crises, some clergy are trained as Conscript Pastors. As a rule, they assist Military Chaplains with spiritual work within the barracks. The greatest need is being there for the soldiers. Military pastoral counseling requires an active presence, staying right with the conscripts, their trainers and their leaders. In our Archbishop's words, "during the past 80 years, military chaplains have, in their work, sat beside the wounded, dying, anxiety ridden, restless, and those fearing eternal damnation. They have stood by those facing tough decisions. Most often, chaplains have been there just to listen to those worrying about loved ones back home as well as those approaching the limits of their mental and physical strength. The working conditions vary, but this vision of the work holds."

Full-time *Prison Chaplains and Deacons* are employed by the State. Their task is to provide pastoral counseling for prisoners and prison staff. They arrange for devotional hours and regular church services at prisons. Many congregational workers also work with prisoners in addition to their regular duties. Together with volunteers, Prison Chaplains also attempt to help foreign prisoners. There are many who have no one visiting them while in prison. For volunteers with language skills, there is a lot to do at prisons, e.g. leading a Bible Study group.

The aim of the Church's work for criminals is to ensure that Christian counseling is conducted in the spirit of religious freedom also in correctional institutions. Work for criminals is one way to influence state criminal policy from the viewpoint of Christian faith. The Church's

work for criminals organizes training for full-time Prison Diaconia Workers and Prison Pastoral Counselors. Cooperation with the police has also intensified in the 1990s. The police cooperate with congregational workers in supporting accident victims and next of kin. At present, there is one full-time Police Chaplain working on the Police department's payroll. This Chaplain provides pastoral counseling to crime victims and police staff. These types of cooperation indicate the respect felt for the Church in society.

Congregations cooperate on a wide front with various organizations in society. Within Youth Work, for example, the Church works, on many issues, hand in hand, with municipal organizations. Likewise, the Church maintains contact with schools and the educational field in general.

8. The revival movements and ordinary people's faith

There are various religious movements prevailing within the Churches. Some of the well-known spiritual leaders are *Augustine*, *Benedict*, *Francis of Assisi*, *Ignatius of Loyola*, *John Wesley*, *Martin Luther*, *Mikael Agricola* and *Mother Teresa*.

Within the Finnish Church, there are many Revival Movements that have first formed as small intimate circles but later, have spread around the whole country. These movements found their origin in spiritual awakening where matters of faith became the most important part of life. These movements have criticized the Church for not paying enough attention to personal salvation in its activities. Nevertheless the movements chose to remain within the Church. Devotional meetings (*seurat*) of these religious movements generally take place on the Church premises where members and congregational workers alike can participate as listeners and speakers.

The largest of these revivalist movements is *lestadiolaisuus (Laestadianism)*. Its origin is in northern Sweden, in the proclamation of *Lars Levi Laestadius* (1800-1861), who was a Swedish minister in the 19th century. He was a strong Pietistic preacher of repentance, who used violent language against people's sinful lives and against their alcohol abuse in particular. In Laestadian meetings, participants were overcome by spells of emotion, and when reaching a state of revival; they confessed their sins and received grace in Christ. The hallmark of the movement is that the preacher grants absolution individually to the listeners through *the name and blood of Jesus*. Many Laestadian preachers are laymen. Today the movement is split in several factions. The greatest and most influential movement is the Conservative Laestadians, whose (*suvisseurat*) *summer mass meetings* is attended by 80,000 participants. The movement's sphere of influence is mainly the Diocese of Oulu in northern Finland, but it has also spread elsewhere in Finland. Nevertheless, less than 5 percent of congregational workers claim affiliation with Laestadianism. The movement has preserved its lay leadership, regardless of the fact that there are a number of ministers working inside the movement. The umbrella organization for Conservative Laestadianism is Suomen Rauhanyhdistysten Keskusyhdystys (SRK). The most important activities of the organization are foreign and domestic missionary work, work among children and adolescents, and publishing. Apart from Conservative Laestadianism, other factions of the Laestadian revivalist movement are *Uusheräys (the Laestadian New Revival)*, *Esikoislestadiolaisuus (the Firstborn Laestadianism)*, and *Rauhan Sana (the Word of Peace)*. The movement uses many songbooks; e.g. *Siionin laulut (Songs of Zion)* used by the Conservative Laestadians.

*RECOMMENDED HYMNS:
Make Songs of Joy LBOW 150; Aurinkomme ylösnousi VK 105*

The Pietistic movement called *herännäisyys* (*The Awakened*) came about at the beginning of the 19th century in northern Savo province under the influence of Paavo Ruotsalainen (1777-1852), an active lay preacher. The movement has been described as *lowly Christianity*. One's own spiritual experiences are nothing to brag about, but the adherents *simply lean on the Grace that God has promised in his Word*. This is so despite the fact that, in the early stages of the movement, there also were ecstatic phenomena, such as falling and speaking in tongues. The Awakened have their strongest sphere of influence in Ostrobothnia on the west coast, in northern Savo and northern Karelia in eastern Finland. The Awakened work in good cooperation with local congregations. As many as two thirds of the parishes organize Pietistic revival meetings. More than half of the Finnish clergy participates in these meetings either regularly or occasionally. Every fifth congregation worker and every tenth elected official claim affiliation to the movement. The influence of the Awakened on the life of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church is therefore quite large. The Awakened activities are organized by a central association, called Herättäjä-yhdistys. The name of the songbook of the movement is *Siionin virret* (*Hymns of Zion*).

*RECOMMENDED HYMNS:
All Praise to Thee, My God, This Night LBOW 278;
Tästäkin päivästä tahdon nyt kiittää VK 561*

A split in the Pietistic movement brought about *evankeelisuus* (*the Finnish Evangelical Movement*). The movement's leader Fredrik Gabriel Hedberg (1811–1893) mainly worked in Varsinais-Suomi. Varsinais-Suomi and Ostrobothnia both remain a stronghold of this widely spread movement. In the movement the stress is upon *the rejoicing of God's Grace, gratitude, and the gift of Baptism*. Members of the Evangelical Movement work more often as elected officials in congregations than members of other revival movements. The umbrella organization of the Finnish Evangelical Movement is Suomen Luterilainen Evankeliumiyhdistys (SLEY), Lutheran Evangelical Association in Finland (LEAF) in English. The organization has a Swedish-language sister organization, Svenska Lutherska Evangeliföreningen i Finland (SLEF), Swedish Lutheran Evangelical Association in Finland (SLEAF). Both organizations are also engaged in missionary work. In the Finnish Evangelical movement they use the songbook *Siionin kannel* (*Zion's Zither*).

*RECOMMENDED HYMNS
My Heart Is Longing LBOW 326; Jeesuksesta laulan VK 276*

The sphere of influence of Finland's oldest revival movement *rukoilevaisuus* (*Supplicationism*) is mainly limited to Satakunta and Varsinais-Suomi. The movement was already born in the early 18th century under the influence of Liisa Erkintytär. This woman was in great distress because of her sins. Characteristic features of the movement include *adherence to the use of older versions of church books, kneeling down to long prayers and stressing man's humbleness in front of God*. Just three out of hundred congregational workers and seven out of hundred elected officials claim affiliation to this movement. The movement split into factions in the 1980s over the issue of female ordination. The Supplicationist heritage is

carried on by the associations Länsi-Suomen Rukoilevaisten Yhdistys (Western Finland Supplicationist Association) and Suomen rukoilevaisen kansan yhdistys (the Association of Finland's Praying Folk) which supports Eurajoen kristillinen opisto (Eurajoki Christian Institute). The movement's song books are *Siionin virret ja halullisten sielujen hengelliset laulut* (*Songs of Zion and the Spiritual Songs of Desirous Souls*).

RECOMMENDED HYMN:

Jeesus armon soi VK 265

English translation by Ernest Edwin Ryden and Toivo Harjunpää; see Appendix.

In the 20th century more modern spiritual movements sprung up alongside the early Pietistic revival movements. After the 1940s the so-called neo-Pietistic movements arose. They stress personal faith and penance. These movements have spread around Finland.

Suomen Evankelisluterilainen Kansanlähetyks (*The Finnish Lutheran Mission*) operates in all parts of Finland. Most of the adherents live in the dioceses of Mikkeli and Kuopio. The movement stresses the *personal decision on faith* and *the duty of a Christian to witness his or her faith*. About one half of the workers of the Finnish Lutheran Mission (FLM) are in missionary work. Apart from missionary work, the organization focuses upon evangelizing, working with children, young people and families, and upon publishing and materials services.

Suomen Raamattuopisto (*The Finnish Bible Institute*) cherishes the legacy of the proclamation of Urho Muroma, a passionate preacher of repentance. The Institute lives up to its name by focusing actively upon Bible teaching, evangelizing, and courses and camps for the youth. The movement finds it important that an individual *repents* and *makes a decision on faith*. The sphere of influence of this movement is strongest in the dioceses of Kuopio and Mikkeli. *Suomen Evankelis-luterilainen Opiskelija- ja Koululaislähetyks* with the English name The OPKO, IFES Finland (International Fellowship of Evangelical Students), promotes evangelizing and Christian teaching among schoolchildren and university students.

Kansan Raamattuseura (*Logos ministries*, also known as *The People's Bible Society*) is first among the *evangelism organizations*. The organization focuses upon preaching the Gospel, encouraging people to come into contact with the Church, and upholding Christian values. Christian work also involves helping people through pastoral counseling and material aid. Other focal areas for the People's Bible Society are supporting marriages, students, and the young, as well as helping the less privileged people spiritually.

In 1940 Brother Roger founded the *Taizé* ecumenical community in France, based on silence and prayer. Over the years, Finns who have visited the Taizé community have brought influences from the *Movement of silence* to our Church. Over the past twenty years these have also spread throughout literature, both in Finnish translations, or original Finnish. *Hiljaisuuden Ystävät ry* (*Friends of Silence*) was founded in 1973. The Society organizes silence retreats, training for retreat leaders, as well as research, courses, and teaching pertaining to silence, Bible meditation and the theology of prayer. Many parish workers find the movement of silence close to their hearts.

In the 1970s the *Charismatic Movement* originated in America and spread to Finland. It highlights the work and influence of the Holy Spirit in the life of a Christian. Every second congregation organizes special Evenings of the Word and Prayer where the participants pray for the sick. The movement stresses the use of gifts that are seen to include, among others,

prophesying, speaking in tongues, and healing of the sick. The charismatic movement is mainly concentrated in urban areas. The umbrella organization for the renewal is *Hengen Uudistus Kirkossamme ry* (*The renewal by the Holy Spirit in our church*). The charismatic movement has gained publicity e.g. through the intercessory prayer evenings organized by Ulla-Christina Sjöman, Seppo Juntunen and Pirkko Jalovaara. The media have often reported about the phenomenon of falling back caused by the laying on of hands of intercessors. The movement called *Nokian herätys* (*Nokia Mission*) headed by Markku Koivisto represents a more radical manifestation of the charismatic movement in Finland. Characteristic features include expressions of strong inner experience, dance of praise by the attendants, and close ties with international movements anticipating extensive revival.

Revival movements strongly influence the lives of many Finnish Christians. For some the revival movements are the real spiritual home, without which the Church's message could not be reached. Many other Christians have been influenced by more than one movement. In fact, spiritual movements cannot be seen as mutually exclusive, but complementary to each other.

Within the Lutheran folk church, there are many Christians who do not see themselves as having been influenced spiritually, in any decisive manner, by any of the revivalist movements. The Church's Sunday schools and Children's day clubs, the religious instruction given in schools and the comprehensive Confirmation class make that most Finns gain a fairly good knowledge of the basics of Christianity.

There are also movements and sects that have their origin in Christianity. Due to their doctrines they cannot be included in Christian denominations. Best known are *the Jehovah's Witnesses* and *Mormons*. Both are of American origin and both are heavily involved in missionary work. Increasingly, there also appear neo-religious movements whose origin and teachings are often hidden. Satanists, for instance, are a typical example of such movements. You can find information on strange religious movements through the Church's Office for Global Mission (Kirkon lähetystyön keskus, KKK) at <http://.evl.fi>.

9. Organizations and associations in connection with the Church

There are several organizations and foundations working in connection with the Church. They cooperate in many tasks of the Church, e.g. in mission, evangelism, diaconia, children's work, youth work, and publishing. Also a portion of church personnel training is carried out by these organizations. In return, the Church supports the work of the organizations financially.

Missionary work fulfils the commandment given by Jesus: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:18–20). *Mission means witnessing to Christ; it is proclaiming the good tidings of the Gospel and serving people*. As a result of missionary work, independent churches have been established. Likewise, schools and hospitals have been built, health care programs and development cooperation projects have been carried out. Following the example set by Christ, services are provided for suffering neighbors.

The Office for Global Mission (Kirkon lähetystyön keskus, KKK) at the Department for International Relations of the Church Council acts as the cooperative body for missionary organizations. The Office for Global Mission publishes a map showing where in the world each Church missionary organization and organization for international diaconia are working.

Through this office is found information about missionary work.

The biggest missionary organization is *The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission* (FELM), *Suomen Lähetysseura* (SLS) in Finnish. It was founded in 1859 on the grounds of the Evangelical Lutheran confession. According to the Church Act, the Church of Finland only works in Finland. Consequently a new organization had to be created. In 1870 the society began its own work in Ovamboland, in present Namibia. Nowadays, the society works in twenty countries in different parts of the world. All congregations of our Lutheran Church are members of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission. The missionary society organizes also confirmation training and youth work on a large scale.

The Lutheran Evangelical Association in Finland (LEAF), *Suomen Luterilainen Evankeliumiyhdistys* (SLEY) in Finnish, was founded in 1873. It operates in connection with the Evangelical movement and especially fosters a theology that is based upon the Lutheran confession. At first, the organization channeled its work through the Finnish Missionary Society (the present Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission), but later it launched its own missionary work at the turn of the century in Japan. LEAF is also engaged in youth work and annually organizes the youth festival *Maata näkyvissä*. At the moment this is the largest Christian youth event in Scandinavia. Its Swedish-language sister organization, *the Swedish Lutheran Evangelical Association in Finland* (SLEAF), *Svenska Lutherska Evangeliföreningen in Finland* (SLEF) in Swedish, was founded in 1922. This organization began its own work in Kenya in 1963.

The oldest organization in our Church, *the Finnish Bible Society* (FBS), *Suomen Piipliaseura* (SPS) in Finnish, was founded in 1812. For a long time, it concentrated on Bible work in Finland. In 1946, the society participated in the founding of the united Bible Societies, an international organization coordinating Bible translation work. Through the Finnish Bible Society you can find a Bible in almost every language of the world.

In 1967 *the Finnish Lutheran Mission* (FLM), *Suomen Evankelis-luterilainen Kansanlähetys* (SEKL) in Finnish, was founded for the domestic and foreign missionary work of the Fifth Revival Movement. FLM also conducts youth work of its own. Later on, (in 1973) *The Messengers*, *Sanansaattajat ry* in Finnish, specialized in radio missionary work, and (in 1974) *the Finnish Lutheran Overseas Mission* (FLOM), *Kylväjä* in Finnish, separated from FLM. Both became organizations of their own.

In addition to these official Church missionary organizations, there are several other organizations engaged in missionary work and evangelism in Finland.

FinnChurchAid, *Kirkon ulkomaanapu* (KUA) in Finnish, is the channel for international aid of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. FinnChurchAid operates as part of an international aid network of churches. It is one of the biggest development cooperation and disaster relief organizations in Finland. FinnChurchAid provides aid of about 15 million euros to nearly 50 countries annually. *This foundation has specialized in international diaconia* and it works for the most impoverished people irrespective of their ethnic backgrounds, religions, or nationalities. FinnChurchAid carries out, for instance, diversified village development programs: securing the supply of food and water, making farming more effective, education, AIDS work, health education, improving the women's status, environmental conservation, vocational training, and launching small-scale entrepreneurship. The local people's participation in the development work is a prerequisite for the activity. Refugees and victims of natural catastrophes and wars are helped by means of disaster relief aid. In international cooperation, FinnChurchAid helps young churches to gain economic and operational independence.

The official Church missionary organizations discuss how to intensify cooperation in organizing missionary work.

ASSIGNMENT

Find out if Finnish missionary organizations and international diaconia are represented in the countries in which you have lived.

The diaconia and social sector organizations are the largest group of Christian organizations in terms of staff. These organizations usually work fairly independently and apart from local parishes. Some have even closer ties with the state and municipal authorities than with the parishes. Their activities focus mainly on care and service institutions, as well as educational establishments. *The Deaconess Institutions* of Helsinki, Lahti, Oulu, and Pori, for example, are important developers of Diaconia. The most important system of a Church university of applied sciences is the Diaconia University of Applied Sciences, Diakonia-ammattikorkeakoulu (DIAK) in Finnish, where, for instance, youth and diaconia workers are trained.

The Finnish Seamen's Mission, Suomen Merimieskirkko in Finnish, is a church for Finns abroad. It was founded in 1875 to support Finns travelling abroad. Now it also serves international seamen ecumenically in Finnish harbors. The Finnish Seamen's Mission is a founding member of *the International Christian Maritime Association*, whose network covers over 600 harbors all over the world.

The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Parishes' Center for Child Work, Suomen Evankelisluterilaisten Seurakuntien Lapsityön Keskus ry (SLK) in Finnish, supports, guides, and develops the work with children in local parishes. The organization carries out its mission in cooperation with the parishes. The association started its work in 1888, and was then called Finland's Sunday School Association, Suomen Pyhäkouluyhdistys in Finnish.

The Christian Association for Boys and Girls in Finland, Suomen Poikien ja Tyttöjen Keskus – PTK ry in Finnish, acts as a service organization for early youth work of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. It organizes training for congregational club leaders and full time workers. It also organizes nationwide and local events, camps and hiking excursions for girls, boys, and leaders. The themes of the camps include the dangers of substance abuse, as well as various hobbies. In connection with these is a camp for expatriates. A jamboree held every fourth year attracts 2000-3000 participants at Partaharju in Pieksämäki. Out of those participants, 200-300 are international guests. The association publishes and distributes club materials and literature including JiiPee magazine for girls and boys aged 8-14. International connections are maintained through "Global Fellowship" and its European organization, "European Fellowship". PTK ry with its member organizations brings together over 80,000 early youth and their club leaders. Tievatupa In Lapland in Saariselkä is an inn for camps and courses and a base for hiking.

The Evangelical Lutheran Association for Youth in Finland, Nuorten Keskus in Finnish, is a nation-wide service organization of Christian youth work, whose members are congregations, organizations and associations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. This association trains youth, and assistants who work on behalf of youth, and workers. It also organizes youth events, youth camps, courses as well as helps young people facing difficult circumstances. It produces material and publishes a magazine. At the association's camp center, Pöyhölä, confirmation camps have been organized ever since the 1960s. This organization, together with local congregations and the Unit for Education and Youth Work at the Church Council is responsible for the annual event Church Youth Conference (Kirkon Nuorisopäivät). It organizes

training for confirmation class volunteers and many kinds of confirmation classes, also international ones, together with e.g. the Finnish Seamen's Mission.

There are so many Church organizations that a nation-wide umbrella organization *Church Resources Agency, Kirkkopalvelut ry* in Finnish, has been founded in order to promote cooperation. The Agency maintains *the Christian Study Center, Kristillinen opintokeskus* in Finnish, organizes the annual fund raising campaign *Common Responsibility, Yhteisvastuukeräys* in Finnish, and the biannual *Finnish Church Gathering, (Kirchentag) Kirkkopäivät* in Finnish, every two years. The Finnish Church Gathering is an important forum for church and societal discussions. The Christian Study Center may also grant financial support for the study groups of immigrants.

There are about thirty *Christian folk high schools* in our country. Many of these schools, started by revivalist movements, seek to preserve a spiritual legacy. A hundred years ago, Christian folk high schools were founded in order to provide complementary education to that given in compulsory schools. Nowadays, folk high schools give comprehensive education and organize various short courses. The largest folk high school in the country is *Turku Christian Institute, Turun Kristillinen Opisto* in Finnish. This is also the meeting place of the General Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland.

In addition to the organizations acknowledged by the Church, there are a large number of other Christian associations and communities in Finland. They concentrate on serving some spiritual movement, a certain group of people, or an important idea regarding Christianity. For example, *The Gideons in Finland Ry, Suomen Gideonit* in Finnish, concentrates on spreading the Bible. The organization distributes Bibles to all hotels. For a closer look at the many Church organizations, see the Internet at: <http://evl.fi/>.

10. Church tax

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland collects its membership fees in the form of a *church tax*, collected together with State communal tax. The locally elected parish officials determine the rate of tax to be collected from the members. The Church recompenses the State for any expenses related to the collection of taxes. In addition, the Church also taxes corporations, irrespective of whether or not their employees are Church members. Corporate taxation is justified by the social services provided by the Church, such as diaconia and the maintenance of graveyards and church property, all valuable in terms of cultural history.

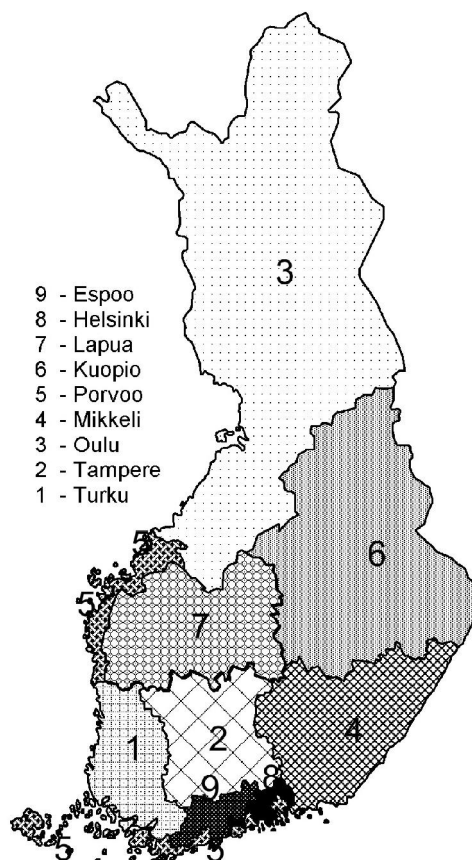
11. Church administration

Each local parish in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland is an independent working unit. Parish administration is based on democracy, which stresses the responsibility and executive power of the individual in the parish. In the parish, *the parish council, kirkkovaltuusto* in Finnish, is the supreme decision-making body. It is elected every four years in elections. The parish council approves, for instance, the annual budget proposal, determines the Church tax rate that will be charged, creates new posts and when necessary eliminates parish offices. The parish council selects *the parish board, kirkkoneuvosto* in Finnish, which is the highest executive body of the parish. The parish board is responsible for the preparation of initiatives and the execution of decisions made by the parish council. The parish board also elects the majority of the parish staff. The diocesan board appoints the parish pastors proposed by the parish board. The parish council elects the curates and the vicar is elected by general elections.

The Evangelical Lutheran parishes within the same city or municipality belong to the same *parish union, seurakuntayhtymä* in Finnish. This common finance administration preserves Church resources for their most essential tasks. Parishes in the same parish union have a *joint parochial council, yhteinen kirkkovaltuusto* in Finnish and *joint parish board, yhteinen kirkkoneuvosto* in Finnish, for the common administration of the whole union. In addition, each parish in the union has a *parish board, seurakuntaneuvosto* in Finnish, of its own, corresponding to the parish board of a single parish. The Church, with its parishes, is a public corporation in the same sense as municipalities and the State.

The elected officials are elected in Church elections, where the parishioners vote. Find out what kinds of electors' associations there are, or think about founding an electors' association of your own in the next election. As the number of church members of foreign origin is increasing, it is natural that more and more of them will be elected to be members of the parish councils and the parish boards.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland is divided into nine dioceses as follows:
A map of the dioceses



- | | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. The diocese of Turku | 2. The diocese of Tampere | 3. The diocese of Oulu |
| 4. The diocese of Mikkeli | 5. The diocese of Porvoo | 6. The diocese of Kuopio |
| 7. The diocese of Lapua | 8. The diocese of Helsinki | 9. The diocese of Espoo |

The Diocese of Porvoo consists of Swedish speaking parishes. It serves those who speak Swedish as their mother tongue. In the other dioceses there are also bilingual parishes. The newest diocese is Espoo Diocese, which was established in 2004. It was founded when the Diocese of Helsinki was divided into two. In every diocese, the bishop is responsible for its operations. In the Archbishopric of Turku there are two bishops: the Bishop of Turku and the Archbishop. One of the bishops is responsible for the Ministry to Finns abroad.

The dioceses are divided administratively into *the Diocesan Chapter, tuomiokapituli* in Finnish, and *the Operational Department, toiminnallinen osasto* in Finnish. In addition to the Bishop, the Diocesan Chapter is composed of *the Cathedral Dean, tuomiorovasti* in Finnish, two *canons responsible for theology, pappisasessorit* in Finnish, *one canon responsible for legal matters, lakimiesasessori* in Finnish, *a notary, notaari* in Finnish, and *the Diocesan Dean, hiippakuntadekaani* in Finnish, who is head of the Operational Department, and one *lay member, maallikkojäsen* in Finnish. The Diocesan Chapter leads and supervises the work of the parishes and selects and appoints the assistant parish pastors. Under the Bishop's lead, visitations are arranged in the parishes about once every ten years. During visitations, the activities and finances of the parish are inspected. In connection with the visitation, the parishioners, too, may set forth their views concerning the activities of the parish in the presence of the Bishop.

In the Operational Department, there are diocesan secretaries (e.g. in the fields of education, diaconia, pastoral work, work among immigrants, and foreign missions, working under the leadership of the Diocesan Dean. It is their task to support, coordinate and provide space for parish work as well as to provide training for the parishes. Parishes may ask for their support whenever necessary.

Fourteen lay representatives and seven clergy representatives are elected to *the Diocesan Council, hiippakuntavaltuusto* in Finnish. The council is chaired by a layperson. The members of the Diocesan Chapter are entitled to be present and contribute to their meetings. The Diocesan Councils can make proposals to the General Synod.

The dioceses are divided into deaneries "rovastikunnat" in Finnish. The deaneries consist of parishes near each other. Within the deanery, the parishes organize joint activities when the need arises. A deanery is also an administrative area with *the Area Dean, lääninrovasti* in Finnish, charge of it.

The General Synod, kirkolliskokous in Finnish, uses the highest authority to make decisions in the Church. It deals with doctrine and Church work as well as with its legislation, administration, and finance. Its permanent members are the Bishops, the Chaplain General, 32 clergy representatives, and 64 elected lay representatives of the dioceses, representatives of the State, and a Sami representative elected by the Sami Parliament. The Archbishop acts as the chairman. Usually the General Synod assembles twice a year for one week each time.

The General Synod approves the new Bible translation, Christian doctrine, the Hymnal, the Church Handbook, and the mass compositions. It can make legislative proposals, such as changes to the Church Act. It approves the Church Order and the Order of Church Elections. The Synod also makes statements and proposals to the Council of State for questions concerning the Church's relationship with the State or with other denominations in Finland. Issues of importance concern: marriage and family, human rights, employment, social security, religious instruction, public education, and church taxation.

The General Synod decides on the Church's relationships with other churches and religious groups and with the federations of churches. It also decides upon the establishment of dioceses and on the altering of their boundaries. The Synod also establishes and repeals the posts of the archbishop, other bishops, and heads of Church Council Units and the elected members of the Church Council. It also confirms the budget proposal of the Central Church Fund and decides how much the parishes must pay to the fund annually.

The Church Council, kirkkohallitus in Finnish, is in charge of the general administration, finance, and activity of the Church. The members of the Church Council include the Archbishop as

the chairman, two Bishops whom the Bishops' Conference selects for four years two pastors, and eight lay people whom the Synod has chosen for the same period.

The General Secretary, kansliapäällikkö in Finnish, is in charge of the work of the about 200 staff of the Church Council office. *The Administration Department, hallinto-osasto* in Finnish, is responsible for the Church's common administration, drafting of laws, population registration, data administration, and the common office services of the Church Council. *The Personnel Department, henkilöstöosasto* in Finnish, deals with the drafting of regulations and personnel administration development for the Church. *The Finance Department, talousosasto* in Finnish, acts as the Central Church Fund. *The Department of Parish Services, toiminnallinen osasto* in Finnish, develops and supports the work of the parishes and the connections with society linked with the activities of the Church. The units of the department are: Diaconia and Society, Worship and Music, Education and Youth Work, Family Counseling, Hospital Chaplaincy, and the Institute for Advanced Training, *Kirkon koulutuskeskus* in Finnish. Most issues concerning immigrants belong to this department.

The Church Department for International Relations, Kirkkohallituksen ulkoasiain osasto in Finnish, manages relations with other churches and inter-church organizations, and it is responsible for the coordination of the Ministry to Finns Abroad and missionary work. *The Communication Center, Kirkon tiedotuskeskus* in Finnish, is responsible for the communication of the Church and serves the media. *The Church Research Institute, Kirkon tutkimuskeskus* in Finnish, carries on and finances theological and church sociological research that is essential for the Church and produces materials that are needed for Church decision-making.

The Bishops' Conference, piispainkokous in Finnish, addresses questions regarding faith and Church doctrine. It approves, among other things, Confirmation class textbooks. It also directs pastoral and other parish worker examinations, provides guidance for visitations and renders opinions on doctrinal matters for the General Synod.

III CHURCH ROOTS, SPLIT AND STRIVE FOR ECUMENICAL UNITY

1. The common roots of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam

All three religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, are based upon monotheism. They are called *monotheistic religions* to distinguish them from *polytheistic religions*. There is one place on earth these religions meet one another; Jerusalem, in the Holy Land. For Jews, the holiest site in Jerusalem is *the Wailing (or Western) Wall*. Part of an original temple, this is an extremely important place at which Jews come to pray. There are two Islamic mosques in the vicinity of the Wall. For Christians, the city of Jerusalem is also a holy place for it was there where Jesus spent the last days of His life on earth.

All three religions believe that God created the world. Judaism and Christianity see God's creative work entirely good, but, according to Islam, God also created evil things. Each of these religions also shares the concept of creation and time: time has its beginning and its end. The three religions also hold that God wants to talk to the people He has created. Indeed, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are *religions of revelation*. Christians have adopted the whole revelation to Jews. Muslims refer to both the Old and the New Testament, although they do not read them as such. However, they speak of the Bible as a Holy Book.

The roots of *Judaism* go far back to an era from which there is no written documentation. Some Israelis originate from Palestinian roots. Some have come to the country from Egypt in a manner described in the Old Testament. Following the period of forced immigration to Babylon (587–539 B.C.), Israelis have been called Jews. The Jewish Creed is, according to the Old Testament, belief in one God, the God of *Abraham, Isaac and Jacob*. He chose Israel as His own people to protect it. A condition was that the people would obey the law of the Ten Commandments given by God. The goal of the Zionist movement was realized in 1948 with the founding of the State of Israel. Jews and Arabs, the majority of whom are Islamic, have been engaging in disputes over the entire life of the state. The management of the state affairs is greatly impeded by the fact that the Jews are divided in several political factions.

One thing Judaism and *Christianity* have in common is that the Old Testament is a Holy Book. However, interpretations are different. Jews see that God's selection is targeted only to their own people. For the majority of Jews, Jesus has been a controversial figure not spoken of widely; for others He was a remarkable teacher or, in His days, a demagogue. For other Jews Jesus was the much-awaited Messiah. Christians believe the Messianic prophecies are aimed at redemption of all people in the world. The center of Christianity, Jesus Christ, was a Jew. Christianity was born, following Jesus' death and resurrection, as a Jewish sect, before it became a religion in its own right. Christianity was much influenced by its Jewish heritage. During the early stages of the Church the majority of Christians were Jews who believed in Jesus as the Messiah (Christ = Messiah). Fairly soon, the majority of Church members turned out to be from other nationalities. Today, for example, Israel has about 5,000 Messianic Jews, whereas in the rest of the world, they number about 80,000. Jews, believing in Christ as the Messiah, are called Messianic Jews. Today, they form only a small minority among Christians.

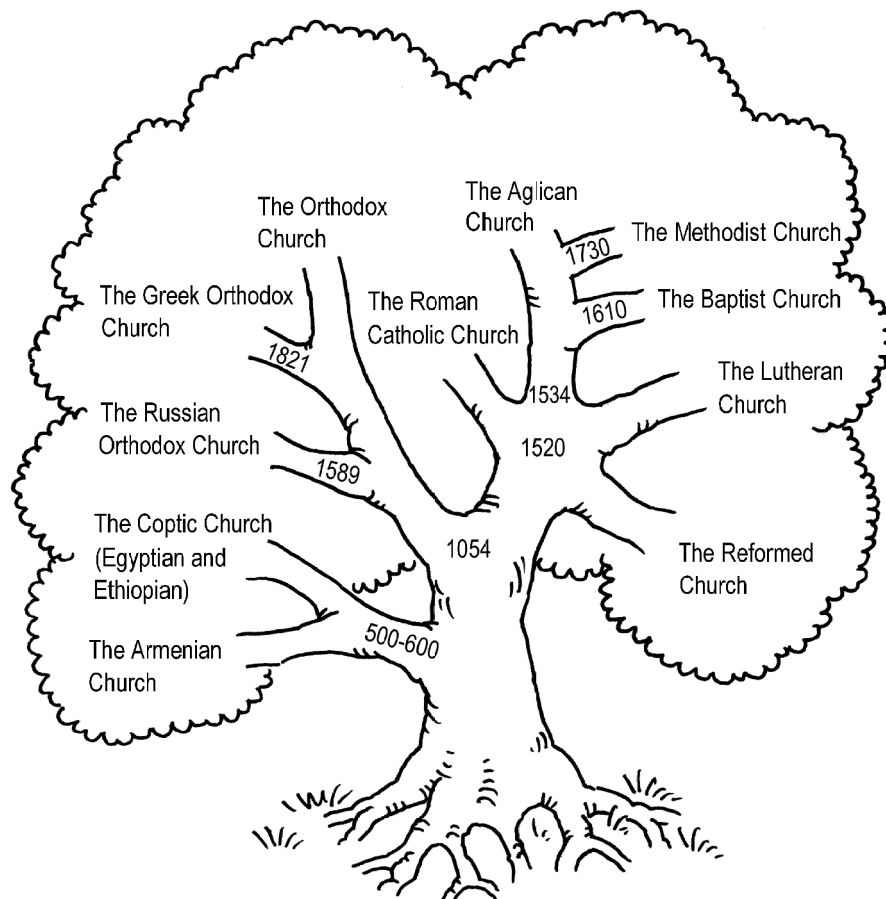
Islam was born from the revelations of the Prophet Muhammad (570–632 AD) – the name is sometimes written Mohammed – in the 7th century. Islam has been influenced by both Judaism and Christianity. Soon after Muhammad's death, the revelations were collected in the *Quran (Koran)*, which has 114 chapters. The Quran contains directions for spiritual life. It also advises on table

manners, marriage, and human behavior. There are five religious duties that Muslims must observe: confessing to one God (Allah is one and Muhammad is his Messenger), five daily prayers, giving alms or charity, fasting, and a pilgrimage to Mecca once in a lifetime. Islamic thinking does not distinguish between religion and the rest of life. Therefore religion is seen both as a cultural and a political phenomenon. The societal model is *theocratic*. God is the highest authority in society. According to an early societal model of Islam, the position of Jews and Christians has also been defined in Islamic society.

The Quran refers to biblical stories, and speaks of God as the God of *Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac* and *Jacob*. Jesus, Mary's son, is regarded a prophet, but the last revelation is believed to have come through Muhammad. Muslims hold their religion as the most flawless, as it is the last one of the monotheistic religions. The greatest number of Muslims can be found in Arab countries in the Middle East, northern Africa and Asia. Where Muslims are in the majority, there is unrest because the objective is to form an Islamic state. Islamic influence is spreading into Western countries along with migration. Muslims often form close-knit communities when living in the middle of Western culture. In France, for example, there are many millions of Islamic inhabitants.

Judaism, Christianity and Islam are all divided by the question of how to consider Jesus of Nazareth. He was a Jewish man whom the Muslims see as a prophet, but, for the Christians, He is the Savior of the world.

2. Diagram of the split within the Church



3. Reasons behind the division of the Church

The Early Church consisted of two types of congregations which differed considerably from each other: Judeo-Christian and Pagan-Christian. The Judeo-Christian congregations held to the regulations of the Old Testament even after Christ had been acknowledged to be the Messiah. The Pagan-Christians in turn, under Apostle Paul, declared that a new era in Christ had come whereby the regulations given in the law of the Old Testament lost their meaning. A compromise to make life together easier was reached at the Apostles' Conference, and observation of the Jewish Law was no longer required from the Pagan-Christians. At the same time, it was decided that all people should avoid flesh sacrificed to alien gods and flesh from which the blood had not yet been let (Acts 15:28–28).

The Greek language church of the East and the Latin language church of the West developed in different directions in their respective cultural spheres by creating their own theologies. The formal separation took place in 1054. Pope Leo IX and the Patriarch of Constantinople Michael Caerularius (Mikael Kerularios) excommunicated each other. The excommunication primarily concerned the Filioque Addition (Filioque Clause) to the Nicene-Constantinople Creed done in the West and the Papal Supremacy. In the Filioque Controversy, the different interpretation of the Doctrine of Trinity was at issue.

In the West, during the days of Augustine, people were already apt to think that the persons of the Trinity are equal. Therefore when the Creator sends the Holy Spirit, it is, at the same time, also the Spirit of Christ. This required the Western Church to add the word *filioque* to the Creed, meaning 'and from the Son'. They wanted to teach that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and from the Son. In the Eastern Church, it has been thought that the origin of everything is the being of the Father as the exclusive origin of the deity. Therefore the Holy Spirit can proceed from the Father alone, "from the Father through the Son, at the most", as it was decided in the Council of Florence in 1439.

The different Trinitarian reasoning of the Eastern and Western Churches did not prevent them from acting together up until 1054. On the other hand, the compromise negotiated later has not brought them into operational alliance. The biggest separating factor has been the status of the Pope. The Eastern Church does not recognize the papal status as a substitute for Christ, which the Western Church insists upon. Linguistic and cultural reasons led the development into different directions: The liturgy and theology of the Greek East and those of the Latin West developed in different directions.

Some churches date from this Common Era of Christianity, from the time before the breach between the Eastern and the Western churches. These are e.g. the Eastern Orthodox Churches or the Copts, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the Syrian Orthodox Church. The Eastern Orthodox Churches can partake in the activities of the World Council of Churches on the grounds that they approve of the Doctrine of Trinity and the belief in Christ's deity, even if they did not approve of the Doctrine of the Double Nature of Christ of the Council of Chalcedon (451 AD). According to the Doctrine of the Double Nature of Christ, Jesus was simultaneously both God and man.

From Christian groups prior to the Reformation, there are left *the Waldenses* (Peter or Pierre Valdés) who were the first signs of the Reformation in the 13th century, and the community of the Hussite *Bohemian Brethren* in the 15th century.

In the era of Reformation, several new denominations saw daylight. These were influenced, in a decisive way, by *Martin Luther's* (1483–1546) activity. His fight of faith to find the merciful God ultimately led to sharp criticism against the misuses of the Catholic Church's Doctrine of Earning. In his search, Luther arrived at the Principle of Justification by the Apostle Paul: man is saved by faith alone for Christ's sake, without the deeds of the law. This discovery was in direct opposition to the sale of indulgencies by the Catholic Church. The Roman Catholic Church traded in indulgencies to get enough financing for its construction needs. The misconception prevalent was that Salvation could be earned by purchasing indulgencies.

In Central Europe, the Reformation proceeded as an urban movement. Each independent township or principality underwent a religious and political transformation process. Many people were tempted to join the Reformation for political reasons. This enabled the separation from the Catholic Church and the recognition of the Papal Supremacy. The Reformation did therefore not proceed as a centralized movement. In Scandinavia, however, the Reformation was adopted under the guidance of the King, i.e. in a centralized manner. The history of the Reformation has traditionally been written as a "drawing of borders". The identity of a church has been built on how it differs from its predecessor. Therefore *the Methodists* tell how they differ from *the Anglicans*. *The Anglicans*, and *the Lutherans*, tell where they deviate from *the Roman Catholics*, and *the Calvinists* tell where they deviate from the Lutherans. During Reformation, churches were separated from each other by the fact how they understood Jesus' presence in the Holy Communion.

Since Reformation, the split between churches has continued. Generally, it follows the pattern of the drawing of the borders mentioned above. A church's own identity is defined by how it differs from the church it left. In recent decades, new Christian denominations have sprung up at an ever-increasing speed. Many of the new churches originate from *Pentecostal* thinking and stress the work of the Holy Spirit, miracles, and signs.

4. Ecumenia - building unity between churches

The split in the churches has resulted in a reverse movement; a counterforce. *The Ecumenical movement* has, for over hundreds of years now, worked towards increasing the unity among Christians across church borders. The name of the movement goes as far back as the Church Father *Origen* (185-250); then the Greek word *oikumene* meant 'the whole world'. In a wider sense, ecumenia may also be understood as building of bridges between the people of the world. In everyday speech, it is understood as the attempts towards unity between Christians.

At the turn of the millennium, the number of member churches in *the World Council of Churches* (WCC) was over 340 covering about 100 different countries all over the world. The membership is comprised of the major Orthodox and Protestant churches, such as *the Reformed Church*, *the Anglicans*, *the Baptists* and *the Lutherans* and *the Methodists*. In 1948, the Church of Finland participated in founding, together with European and North-American churches, the World Council of Churches. Today, the majority of the Council members come from Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Middle East, and the Pacific. *The Pentecostal* movement, too, has grown a closer relationship to the World Council of Churches. *The Roman Catholic Church* regularly sends observers to Council meetings, although it is not a member.

The World Council of Churches invites other churches into visible unity in sharing the execution of Holy Communion, Missionary work and Evangelizing. The organization tries to identify and address new common challenges in diaconia. It takes a stand for peace and justice in the name of unity of the creation.

The objective of the organization is to deepen the unity of churches so they would see in each other a genuine expression of "One, Catholic and Apostolic church". Confession of the Apostolic faith is the basis for doctrine. Sacramental unity is strived for as much as possible.

The Church of Finland was one of the parties to the establishment of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) in 1947. At the turn of the millennium, it had 136 Lutheran churches in various parts of the world. Through the federation, the member churches together maintain the challenges in international diaconia. The Lutheran World Federation also provides its member churches an opportunity to share their experiences of the actual situation of proclamation, service, and advocacy. The organization is also a forum for its member churches to conduct timely discussions on theological, spiritual, and ethical matters and on questions concerning different religions.

Our Church is also an active member in the Finnish Ecumenical Council (FEC) that is a cooperative organ for the churches, Christian denominations and congregations in Finland. The Council organizes, for example, an annual Ecumenical Prayer Week where prayers are said for the unity of Christians. The tradition was started in France at the beginning of last century.

Since 1970, the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church has been conducting fruitful bilateral ecumenical talks with the Russian Orthodox Church. The negotiations have mainly been theological in nature. Likewise, there have been doctrinal discussions with the Finnish Orthodox Church. Characteristic of these talks has been that two churches, living in the same social context but in different traditions, have been able to view together their own conceptions, and those of the other party, on important theological and pastoral questions. Discussions like these increase the mutual understanding and tolerance of the churches.

Bilateral talks are also being held, on a regular basis, with the Free Church of Finland, Pentecostals, Baptists and Methodists. Communication, in its different forms, serves our common Christian values here in Finland. Such talks have aimed to eradicate misconceptions towards each other and to increase mutual tolerance and respect. At the same time, there has been a search for practical forms of cooperation and ongoing discussion regarding the relations between churches, and religious communities, and the State. In doctrinal matters, there has also been some progress, although so far no official agreements have been made.

A major milestone in ecumenical work was reached with the Anglican Church. In 1996, Lutheran Churches in the world endorsed the so-called Porvoo Declaration. The Porvoo Common Statement virtually creates between churches a full ecclesiastical unity. Accordingly, a minister of our church can therefore work as a minister in the Anglican Church on the condition that he or she passes the necessary examinations and is qualified. The same applies for Anglican ministers in Finland. The church community, which signed the Porvoo Declaration, is trying to develop such different forms of activity. To coordinate this, a Porvoo Contact Group was established and meets annually.

Another major ecumenical achievement was the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ) signed in 1998. This is a cooperation document between the Lutherans and the Roman Catholics where the churches annul past condemnations on teachings issued 500 years earlier. The document expresses mutual understanding reached on the doctrine of justification. So far no conclusions have been drawn from the document, but the understanding reached in doctrinal discussions has been significant. Finnish theologians have greatly influenced the formulation of the document. Our Church has been maintaining contacts with the Roman Catholic

Church e.g. through the Finnish Ecumenical Council, through the Lutheran World Federation and through the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. There have also been various theme seminars and visits by Finnish bishops to Vatican. The Pope has visited Finland once.

5. Christian symbols

ΑΩ

Α Ο

Alpha and Omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. They stand for Jesus as the first and last one, in other words, eternal.

Alb

The white liturgical robe of a person dressed for baptism or confirmation is called an alb. The white robe illustrates the purity of Christ in which the baptized person is dressed. The Church Service is conducted wearing an alb.

Anchor

An anchor is a symbol of the hope for everlasting life.



IHS

IHS

These are the three initials of Jesus' Greek name, and they can also be superimposed (written one within each other). IHS is also an acronym in Latin for "*Iesus Hominum Salvator*", meaning Jesus the Savior of People.

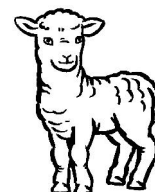
INRI

INRI

These letters form an acronym in Latin for the words written at the top of Jesus' cross, "*Iesus Nazarenus Rex Iudaeorum*", Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews.

Fish

During the persecution of the early Christians, the fish became a secret symbol by which the Christians recognized each other. The Greek word for 'fish' is *ichthus*. The letters form an acronym in Greek for "Jesus of Nazareth, Son of God, Savior".



Lamb

A lamb depicts Christ, who was offered for our sins. Jesus is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29). In the early history of Israel, a lamb was offered in the temple as an atoning sacrifice for the sins of the people.



Triangle

An equilateral triangle is used as a symbol of the Triune God. God is one divine being but he acts through three persons: Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. The figure of an eye within the triangle symbolizes the all-seeing God.

Crown

The crown represents reaching ones final destination, heaven. In addition to a crown, also the laurel wreath can also be used. Originally, it was a sign of victory at the Greek Olympics.



Candle

The candle stands for Christ as the light of the world. The number of candles on the altar varies according to the church year.



Dove

It is written in the Bible that at Jesus' baptism, the Holy Spirit descended upon him in the form of a dove. The Holy Spirit is therefore depicted as a dove.

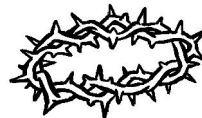


Ship

A ship portrays the church on its way through the storms of world history towards the eternal harbor.

Crown of Thorns

The crown of thorns describes suffering. Before his Crucifixion, Christ was mocked, and a crown of thorns was put upon his head.



Shepherd's staff

A shepherd's staff refers to Jesus, who is the Good Shepherd. A bishop's staff symbolizes how Jesus tends his flock.

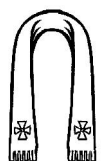


Cross

The cross is the most important symbol of the Christian faith. Originally, it was an instrument of execution used by the Romans to cause a slow, painful, and shameful death. The cross became a Christian symbol, because Jesus suffered death on a cross. A *crucifix* depicts Jesus on a cross. It especially tells of his sufferings. An empty cross stands for resurrection.

Stole

During ordination, the pastor is given a stole, a long scarf which symbolizes the yoke of Christ. The stole is part of a pastor's liturgical clothing, the color of which changes according to the season of the church year.



XP

The letters X and P superimposed (written one within each other, the Chi-Rho) are the first two letters of the Greek word for Christ. The abbreviation is also called the Christ monogram.



APPENDIX
Abbreviations

LBOW = Lutheran Book of Worship.

Prepared by the churches participating in the Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship.

Lutheran Church in America

The American Lutheran Church.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Canada.

The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod.

Published by

Augsburg Publishing House, Minneapolis *and* Board of Publication,
Lutheran Church in America, Philadelphia. 1999.

VK = Suomen evankelis-luterilaisen kirkon virsikirja. Hyväksytty kirkolliskokouksen ylimääräisessä istunnossa 13. helmikuuta 1986. ('The Hymnal of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. Approved in the extraordinary session of the General Synod on 13 February 1986.')

Bible Version

Scripture quoted is from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible.

Catechism

Catechism. Christian Doctrine of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland.

Approved in the General Synod. 1999.

Translation of Finnish Hymns

Jesus armon soi VK 265; translation by Ernest Edwin Ryden and Toivo Harjunpää

1. Jesus, God's own Son

Hath our victory won.

He, the Way, the Truth, the Life the Light from Heaven,
is our Righteousness,

Fount of Blessedness.

He, the gracious gift divine that God hath given

now shines upon our darkened sky,

the promised Daystar from on high;

saves from sin's dread stain,

makes us whole again,

brings us to eternal joys with Him to reign.

*2. Lo, the Morning Star,
shining from afar,
leads our souls from paths of darkness into light.
Turn, thou helpless one,
To God's holy Son;
He alone can set thee free from sin's dark blight.
His life He gave upon the tree,
In mercy He would welcome thee.
Yield Him now thy heart;
ne'er from him depart;
follow Him, though sore thy cross,
to mansions bright.*

*Johan August Gottlieb Hylander (1831 – 1896); Laudamus, Hymnal for the
Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation; Third edition, Helsinki 1963.*

Kosketa minua, Henki VK 125; translation by Matti Kilpiö

*1. Touch me, God's Spirit eternal,
touch me, resplendent Light.
Give my life new meaning,
show me the true and right.*

*2. Touch me, God's Spirit and soothe me
deep in my restless soul.
Give me trust in Jesus,
heal me and make me whole.*

*3. Spirit of God, give me courage,
banish my doubts and fears
Show me my vocation
through all my days and years.*

*4. Spirit of God, brightly shining,
open my eyes to see
those who need my friendship:
Join us in unity.*

*5. Touch me, God's Spirit eternal.
Teach me to thank and praise.
By your grace be near me,
guide me in all my ways.*