The third largest Lutheran body is the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS), with about 400,000 members. The WELS is the most conservative of the three major Lutheran churches in the United States. The WELS does not ordain women and does not allow women to office. The full authority of the Bible as the inerrant and infallible Word of God; The Lutheran Confessions as a true interpretation of Scripture; A purpose focused on the Great Commission with priority for Evangelism and World Missions; The authority of the local congregation as the basic unit of the church. Website: http://www.taalc.org/. The ELS is another smaller Lutheran body and is very conservative. This church has about 21,000 members and was originally known as the "Norweigan Synod". The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) is a mainline Protestant denomination that is headquartered in Chicago, Illinois. It was formed in 1988 by the merging of three churches and currently has about 4.70 million baptized members. It is the largest of all the Lutheran denominations in the United States and also the fourth-largest Protestant denomination. The next two largest denominations are the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod (approximately 2.41 million members) and the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) is an American Confessional Lutheran denomination of Christianity. Characterized as theologically conservative, it was founded in 1850 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. As of 2017, it had a baptized membership of 363,997 in 1,275 congregations, with churches in... The early churches in the Wisconsin Synod had a strong German background; services and church business were conducted in German. Many of the pastors and congregations brought with them a tolerance towards forming joint congregations with the Reformed, similar to the Union Churches they left behind in Germany.[15] In 1864, the German Evangelical Lutheran synod of Wisconsin was incorporated by an act of the state legislature.[16].