



## Our Church life

UEPAL gathers nearly 250,000 members of the Lutheran and Reformed Churches, divided into about 250 parishes in the three “départements” (Bas-Rhin, Haut-Rhin and Moselle).

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**The Church: a project  
to be shared**





## What does it mean to be a "protestant"?

### Do Protestants... protest or attest?

As the etymology of the word -pro ("for") and testari ("to testify") indicates, to be a Protestant, before being an act of protest (against the mass and the cult of the saints, for example), is first of all bearing witness, proclaiming...

### What do the Protestant churches declare?

For Protestants, faith affects human existence at the deepest level. The God that we discover in the Bible is a God whose power is revealed through his patience, his forgiveness and his boundless love for all people. A God who is not a distant and self-righteous ruler, but a close and compassionate God, who came to meet people through his son Jesus Christ.

### Three fundamentals mark this faith:

- We are saved by God's grace alone - by his love, not by our actions.
- God loves us unconditionally. It is up to us to accept with confidence his love, which is the gift of life, forgiveness and salvation in Jesus Christ, his son.
- The Bible alone is the standard for the faith and life of the believer - it alone is the measure of teachings and doctrines.

## A little bit of history...

The expression of the Protestant faith was born out of a powerful movement of church reformation in the 16th century. Originally, Martin Luther (1483-1546), John Calvin (1509-1564), Martin Bucer (1491-1551) and other religious and political leaders pleaded for a return to the sources of the Gospel and advocated the simplicity and radicalism of the "true" faith.

Since it was not possible at the time to find sufficient common ground with the Roman Catholic Church, Protestantism developed by relying on socio-political structures that were ready to receive it (kingdoms, principalities, free cities, etc.). Several "confessional" families emerged, including

- the Lutheran church (in reference to the reformer M. Luther)
- the Reformed or Presbyterian churches (in reference to the reformer J. Calvin)
- other "evangelical" churches (Baptists, Methodists, etc.) which also emerged from the Reformation, but a bit later.

At the regional level, the Lutheran and Reformed churches, working in close collaboration for many years, joined together in 2006 and formed the Union of Protestant Churches of Alsace and of Lorraine (UEPAL is the French abbreviation). Thus, each of the churches has delegated to the Union a large part of its competences to carry out common actions. To give an example, the pastors of the two churches, are now united in a single pastoral body. However, the two churches retain their own organization.

## A regional particularism

Two specific elements characterize Protestantism in Alsace and Lorraine: its relative density among the population (nearly 17% in Alsace, where Strasbourg remained entirely Protestant for a long time); and secondly, its particular religious status. Annexed by Germany in 1870, the three "départements" (Bas-Rhin, Haut-Rhin and Moselle) were not affected by the French law of separation between Church and State voted in 1905.

Therefore, in 1918, they returned to the «concordat» system they had before the annexation. As a result, pastors (like priests and rabbis) are still paid by the State and religious culture is taught as an option in schools. The visitor will have the chance to find in the three departments a rich ecclesiastical heritage where all architectural styles are represented.



## What do these churches do?

A church is not, as one might think, a small closed circle of initiates happy to meet exclusively with each other. A Church is above all a gathering of believers, whether it be during a service, where the Gospel is proclaimed and the sacraments celebrated, or in daily life. Thus, times of prayer, of listening of the Bible, reflection or debates on social issues, but also actions to help the smallest and the most deprived people of our society, are all ways of concretely expressing a living faith and service to others. These activities are often part of a parish life, but there are also many movements, works and institutions participating in this christian presence. Their activities are spread throughout the region on account to young people, people in difficulty, the sick, the elderly and the handicapped, and in the world of work.



To join one of our parishes or works, or simply to have more information, do not hesitate to contact us!