



Michele Bachmann is practically synonymous with political controversy, and if the 2008 presidential election is any guide, the conservative Lutheran church she belonged to for many years is likely to add another chapter due to the nature of its beliefs--such as its assertion, explained and footnoted on this website, that the Roman Catholic Pope is the Antichrist.

Bachmann was a longtime member of the Salem Evangelical Lutheran Church in Stillwater, Minn., which belongs to the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS), a council of churches founded in 1850 that today comprises about 400,000 people.

WELS is the most conservative of the major Lutheran church organizations, known for its strict adherence to the writings of Martin Luther, the German theologian who broke with the Catholic Church and launched the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century. This includes endorsing Luther's statements about the papacy. From the WELS "Doctrinal Statement on the Antichrist":

Since Scripture teaches that the Antichrist would be revealed and gives the marks by which the Antichrist is to be recognized, and since this prophecy has been clearly fulfilled in the history and development of the Roman Papacy, it is Scripture which reveals that the Papacy is the Antichrist.

During the 2008 presidential campaign, Barack Obama's relationship with the Rev. Jeremiah Wright nearly derailed his quest for the Democratic nomination after video surfaced of Wright's extreme pronouncements. Similarly, the views of Bachmann's church toward the papacy--which are well outside the mainstream of modern political discourse--could pose a problem as she pursues the Republican nomination.

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