

In Nomine Jesu

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Brother Don,

Greetings in the name of the Lord of Righteousness.

Whom we serve and Who judges us for our service according to our abilities and obedience.

The video is in ways potentially misleading. My language is at times very intense, turning a viewer off so they do not actually hear the meaning. It is a personal presentation, so that the focus is one individual, one family. If this is seen as an isolated situation, it will be totally misunderstood.

When I came here DP Charlie Muller was excited about the great opportunity we had to continue the rapid growth in congregations and members the SED had been experiencing. We were at 90,000 and growing. We had large numbers of midwestern LCMS people moving here. The LCA was in theological quandary and seemed headed for worse. When the ALC joined, the worst fears of many were realized. In the SED were hopes many would be coming over. I know conservative ELCA pastors and members who would never consider SED because of that they have heard and seen of us.. We have fallen from over 90 to under 60 and heading down.

In the 40+ years I have been in the SED I have personally known a number of Pastors and Teachers cut down. This has affected, not just the families, but a number of congregations and schools. This is known to over 10,000 in this area. At the same time we have seen respected, successful men and women cut down, we have also seen others, notorious, with ministries marked by great loss of numbers, sheltered, moved on to work harm.

People talk, they try to understand what they see. They assume leadership has good reason for acting. But. When they realize with men and women they know, leadership acted inappropriately, they begin to think that happened to others. I have seen folks cut down surrounded by others who are rostered who were speaking words of encouragement and understanding. The one cut down did not act ashamed.

People talk to folks they feel safe to talk to and do not reveal to those they fear what they really think. SED leadership, congregational and school leadership are very much in the dark. Many who are hurt and know they have been very badly mistreated will not complain. If appeal is made to the Dispute Reconcilers and that continues the abuse, they will not complain.

You might think I am the exception since I complained but I am not. I was quiet and kept my head down for many years. I quietly, respectfully, tried to be sent to another place, (anything but the worst doghouse in SD). It was not until I saw this devastation wrecked on myself and my wife, extended to our children that I spoke up. I have broadcast my complaints widely, but only after those I contacted privately, refused to respond. Jesus did say, 'tell it to the church'.

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Soli Deo Gloria

He died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves,
but for him who died and was raised for them. 2 Cor. 5:15

Many things are better handled privately. There are scriptures against tale bearing and gossip. But if they are not handled properly, if injury, evil is perpetrated, then the rules change. Our Dispute Reconciliation Process is a foundation for massive abuse. There is no way to prevent or undo evils it creates. Everything is secret, unrecorded. Bribery, false statements have no limit. And by entering the process, legal action in the courts is forbidden. The results of the appeal I made to the three DPs was every bit as evil. The SED DP placed me on "restricted status" because he did not like what I said. His action is forbidden by the LCMS Handbook and by laws. The DPs, in secret unrecorded hearing, ruled he had done nothing wrong! Public punishment can not be made on secret trial with secret evidence is a uniform standard. The LCMS / SED are outside civilized / Christian practice.

I am convinced that the conduct of the SED has had a powerful impact on our numbers, even if we do not consider God's approval or blessing or punishment. Each instance of harm spreads ripples. They spread much better than the ripples from good actions. Do not think the SED is acting like everyone else or think we are even better. Once a lady in my church called the Maryland Synod to complain. I was notified that day. I was told that was the way all complaints were handled. The LCA acted according to doctrine and best practice. Their clergy feel safe and move to heal problems.

The Church Growth gurus all agree the key to growth is retention not new converts. I know congregations that have lost a large number of people, few of them to other LCMS churches. Doctrinal purity with unholy practice is hypocrisy. Telling people Jesus died for their sins, believe and be saved, they do not need to repent or in any actual way amend the evils they have done is NOT the gospel of Christ. Jesus did not say the scribes, Pharisees did not know the truth. He condemned them, said they were damned because they did not DO what they knew they were to do. "To whom much is given, much is expected! So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift." If the one hurting is wrong and the one at the altar correct, he still must go and seek reconciliation! Many SED rostered staff and members have cried out without comfort. Many others harm and ignore colleagues and members, because they adopted the conduct modeled of proper LCMS practice. Ripples and more ripples!

All through the OT God condemns false prophets and priests, His harshest judgments are on those who lead His own worship. Apparently they thought since they led worship before the altar of God, they could do anything they wanted. Nothing is a surer route to a fall than conceit, being confident, so confident one does not even need to open his ears, open his eyes, do what he is commanded.

Massive public injury cannot be healed by minor private acts of kindness. The SED needs to repent, change its conduct, admit it has done harm, ask God, our Lord for forgiveness, and ask the forgiveness of clergy, congregations and members. The Church is the agent of Christ to bring His grace, mercy and restoration to fallen humanity. If we cannot even do that for our own brothers, can God consider us His servant? This is nothing to be done lightly, without serious preparation, deliberation, prayer. Or we can continue to bring shame on the name of Christ, on Lutheranism, continue self destruction.

Do you think there is a chance? What odds would you give?

In the name of One crucified, Who called us to take His cross.

/S/

Stephen H. Funck