

# The Letter of Concord

Concord Church - LCMS Project

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Congregations of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, the precious Body of Christ,  
selected brothers and sisters in the Faith

Beloved of the Lord,

The Lord of the Church, Our Savior, has entrusted to us all a splendid task. "God reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation. . . So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God." 2 Cor. 5 It is not by angels that God calls us to know His Love and Salvation. He calls us through people who already are His. We are the channels of His grace. Jesus calls us His Body, hands, feet and tongue under His direction. In His Body on earth, the Church, He provides all we need for our equipment for His service through His powerful presence in Word, Sacrament and Spirit.

In the Church are wonderful joys, worship, scripture, prayer, fellowship, men and women filled with His Spirit, by which we are nourished and edified. Jesus also said there would be trials and temptations, even false prophets bringing pain and sorrow. His intention is not to harm us or bring disaster upon His Body the Church. The world, even the Church on Earth, is a place of Spiritual warfare and we are soldiers of the cross. He directs us to the places where the battle is being waged and for which He has prepared us. In battle people are hurt and errors occur. It has been said that the Army of the Church is the only army that shoots its own wounded. In so far as that might be true it is not the will of the Commander. St Paul's words are still true 1 Cor 3:3 "For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?"

It is because of those wounded, the damage that is being done to our denomination, this is written. Our Lord's word in Mt. 13:29 is for our guidance: "The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn." We need no additional injury among us, rather we need a return to Concord. Concord, "Concordia", is the name of the Lutheran Book of Doctrine, harmony with God and man, peace. It is sadly lacking among us. It does not matter if we acknowledge Orthodox Doctrine, if we do not live it in reality.

This has cost staff, families, members the wreckage of human lives. Congregations and Schools share the pain. As a Body, The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, our eyes are closed, ears deaf, hearts cold. We are in denial. There are "Other Issues" that matter, but this destruction is ignored. A reported 2000 staff have left in the last 10 years. A reported 2000 congregations are without Pastors, a number that is expected to increase to 3000. There are "official reports" of the great pain caused by people "beating up on one another". The Reports note our problem is more severe than in other denominations that have had more press coverage.

"By this all men will know that you are my disciples, by the Love you have for one another. Bind up the broken hearted, the bruised reed do not break, do not extinguish the smoldering wick. Your sins are forgiven." Jesus said we are to love our enemies while the heathen love their brothers. We are not even doing as well as the heathen.

Where will your congregation obtain new staff? Will you be pleased with what you find? If Pastors and Teachers, Leaders can not see the pain of brothers, sisters and their families, how well do you think they will really care for the souls of members?

You might think we have an excellent way to bring peace in our Dispute Resolution Process. It does not work the way it is supposed to. Instead it provides excellent cover for evil, everything is secret, without standards, impossible to evaluate. It may work sometimes. There is a very long resolution in the Convention Workbook that details some of its failures.

That coming Convention is one reason this is written now. It is not endorsing any one or any resolution. Conventions and Resolutions are good and God pleasing. It is the tone, the "Party Spirit" among us that is evil. Parties of the Right and Parties of the Left vie for power and control over others. That is not love. That is not the Spirit of Peace, That is not the Way of Reconciliation in Christ. The Right does not take seriously the Words of the Bible about loving compassion. The Left is close minded, heartless, to those they seek to destroy. Who stands for "Concord". We are in a heathen power struggle, seeking to win at any cost. We see a cycle of loveless actions leading to more in response. There are "Theological Issues" that need to be discussed and settled. The Book of Concord came out of deep controversy and ended it because those involved acted like Christians by the Spirit of Love for the Glory of God. "We see through a glass dimly" the fullness of the Divine. At best "we know in part".

Blame is being placed on the way congregations treat staff, however reading the reports shows much of the problems lie at the District and circuit level. District Presidents and their assistants directly affect pastors, congregations, teachers and schools. Those hurt receive no sympathy or support from colleagues and feel doubly betrayed. Too many seek power and bow to power. Servant leadership, the loving Gospel of forgiveness, even correction by God's Law do not create such conflict.

This is a call to Corporate Repentance, confession of corporate guilt, resolution to apologize, to reach out to those hurt with healing. The Enemy is not the erring brother to be forced to submission or driven away. The Enemy is our self. If we are not one of those seeking domination, we are looking the other way. "Good folks" walking by on the other side of the road past the injured lying there, heartless. We act like rabbits on a field of fighting elephants, trying to avoid being stepped on. We are not rabbits and they are not elephants. We are Heralds of God to announce His Victory over Sin, Evil, Destruction and the forces of Satan. We are Soldiers of God to fight the good fight with the weapons of Truth and Love. We are the hands of Love comforting, supporting, caring for the injured and broken hearted. If we really are a Gospel centered Church and forgiveness is the heart of the Gospel, it is not possible for us to have a very large number of hurting people and congregations. Our old concept of Pastor was the one who cared for souls. Pastor means "shepherd" of God's flock. Have we forgotten what we are about?

The Spirit has driven me to write and I expect to continue perhaps for years. Perhaps there could be a Web site to connect interested people and churches? Someone might be willing to edit this "Letter" or have something to include. If you want send a tax deductible gift to "Concord Church - LCMS Project". Please pass this on to all you think might be interested. Send the names of any you think should be included on the mailing list, especially those who have been hurt.

I delight in my work as Chaplain at Baltimore City Detention Center, was a Maryland State Employee of the Year in 2000. I am constantly interacting with the neatest Christians and am deeply fulfilled supporting them in their Faith walk. Other ministries heavily consume my interest and time. I delight in my family. Oldest daughter is going to Bethany College for Missions in Fall. We have missionaries, pastors, teachers, synodical and district officials on both sides of our family tree. Mine date to the "log cabin sem" before the LCMS was founded and have buildings on campuses named for them. I expect the Left would call me "Right" and the Right would call me "Left".

The question remains for you and your congregation: Where are you going to get a Pastor or Teacher? The question for the LCMS is: What are we doing in God's Name? I suspect He is not pleased with us. I don't think we are going to hear "well done good and faithful servant" as often as we expect.

May the Lord of the Church pour out upon us His Spirit of Wisdom, discernment of spirits, courage, compassion for the hurt and lost, obedience and zeal. May our lives bring Him glory. "We will all stand

before the judgment seat of God. Let us . . . resolve instead never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of another. Let us then pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding.” Rom. 14.

*In Nomine Jesu*

Rev. Stephen H. Funck



Ezk. 3:16ff

***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