

# 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,

May the Heavenly Father be glorified by our faithful witness about the Love He has poured upon us through His Son, our Lord Jesus the Christ. In Him we have received Divine Mercy and Grace. He has saved us from all the forces of darkness, death and Satan. United with God in Christ, we are in Him united with all the redeemed of every place and time. He has poured out His Spirit upon us, transform-ing us to reflect His Light and Truth, His saving Love, to those around still lost in darkness.

We are called to love with the Love of Jesus. Loving people is the most fun, the most fulfilling expression of our lives. How can that get so messed up. Jesus made plain we are to love as His Father loves. Mt. 5:43-48. We love all equally, friend and enemy, all without distinction. Christ is the Head of the Church. Earthly leaders are servants of His, responsible to find the best place for each member so each one can use the gifts God has given him for the up building, edification, of the whole Church.

"Concord" means "Harmony", it is the name of the Book of Concord. It established concord among the early Lutherans. It also was a declaration that they were in concord with the historic orthodox, correct, teachings of the Christian Church. They were in harmony with all the redeemed of the Lord. God calls us to be solders of the Cross against those on the side of darkness not against erring brothers.

It can be confusing just what side who is on. We proclaim the Truth of God with Love for all. Jesus and the rest of the Bible makes clear we will attract opposition from those who love lies and darkness. It is those who fight against Love and Truth, who attack the brother, that we recognize as opponents of Christ, even though they may look and sound pious and religious.

There is so much suspicion and conflict. Forces pulling Churches and leaders various ways. We seem to have forgotten who we are and why we exist. Those with agendas gather funds and supporters for their sides. It is easy to be against some one who does not use our style of language and manner since it is hard to recognize the hidden spiritual unity. It is hard to oppose some one who uses our style of language and manner since it is easy to not recognize the hidden spiritual disunity. In other words: people are normally friends with people like themselves, even though they are enemies to all they stand for, while they are not friends to strangers who are actually on their side. May God give us Spiritual sight and insight.

It is well know that there are issues, individuals and parties troubling our Denomination. In one sense that is truly distressing and evil, the Church - the Bride of Christ - is being attacked by Satan. However as the Scripture itself says - it is to be expected and enables us to see clearly those who work for evil and those who work for Peace. It can be very difficult to tell them apart, since the worst evil hides behind soft pious words and the light of God's righteousness destroys darkness. Jesus even said in Mt 10 "I came not to bring peace but a sword".

When evil and discord surround us we are troubled and confused. What should we do? How should we respond? We are solders of the cross called to do battle against evil. But every evil constantly? We are to overcome evil by good. But then Jesus said to "shake the dust off our feet and depart" Mt 10.

Looking through the Scripture, there are examples of many different ways God calls His people to act. How must we act in this situation at this time? Scripture says we are to be loving to all, obedient to God's Spirit, shining as His light in the darkness, with courage, boldness, firm in the Faith. He calls forth the best from us according to the ability and personality, He has given to each one. The correct action may be different for each person and still be completely in His will.

I am sorry but this letter will add to your distress. I pray that the Lord of the Church will use it to help you understand a situation that will affect you and your congregation for years to come. A reported 2000 congregations are without Pastors. This letter is being sent to the smaller number listed vacant in the Annual, to Synod and District leaders and selected others. I ask that you would pass it on to all you think might benefit, especially to any who left positions in pain. I would like to put their names on this mailing list. I pray to comfort and strengthen them. They are not alone, forgotten, despised.

The LCMS Council of District Presidents officially reported by the end of 1997, 29% of all congregations were vacant and they projected by 2007 that 51% would be. In addition there were 3500 requests for teachers and DCEs, while the colleges had a total of 350 graduates for those positions. The BHE commissioned Dr. Klaas to do a research study about the causes for the shortage. He reported 11/11/99 that the situation in the LCMS was not like that in other denominations. Our shortage is much worse than others. He reported the primary cause of distress is the evil ways pastors, officials and congregations treat one another. Some of that is normal in all denominations, however, we are way above the rest. We may claim to have "pure Doctrine" but we do not act like Christians to each other. Our LCMS speaks excellent words of the true Faith. We officially hold to the highest doctrine. "To whose whom much is given, much is expected."

Some will say this letter is an indication of those evil ways. The question for you and your Congregation is not: How evil is this author, but what should you do? The reality is that if you are looking for a Pastor you may be looking for many years to come. If you have a Pastor, he may be leaving at anytime. Worse since there is such a severe shortage, called workers have little human incentive to do well, since they know they can not be replaced. Also those who may be suggested to you as workers may have serious problems. They might be just being passed on to a new place. (Actually I am in favor of giving people a second chance when they are repentant and willing to amend their ways.)

A reported 2000 pastors, not counting the teachers, left LCMS Congregations in the last 10 years. For some I am sure, it was proper for them to leave. But for most I personally know, it was tragic. In my position I have become familiar with many clergy in many denominations and been at worship services in various places. From that I can say we have no reason to think, from the pew, we appear more doctrinally correct, more Christian, more Scriptural, with a truer expression of the Spirit than others. That is perfectly reasonable, all large groups contain within them a wide range of individuals. There always will be hypocrites in the church, corrupt cops, innocents in jail, etc. There will be some Roman Catholic Popes in Heaven and some Lutheran Theologians in Hell. No one is saved or lost by their label.

If you are looking for a Pastor or Teacher where can you go? In the LCMS you may find one. They may be excellent. They may stay a long time. The 2000 who left are the largest source of trained Lutheran staff. Some might be excellent candidates, some may not. Some for good reason, may not be willing to come to a Congregation that remains in an LCMS District. There is also a reported 300+ on CRM Status seeking positions but not being offered to places for unknown reasons.

I have come to the opinion that our self confidence in our excellence has become a trap. We have turned from being the denomination most diligent for the true Gospel to one who thought it had attained the true Gospel. From pride in being made the Chosen of God to pride in being the Chosen of God.

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 up building." Rom. 14.



*In Nomine Jesu*  
Rev. Stephen H. Funck  
3:16ff



***Soli Deo Gloria***  
Ezk. 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