

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,

Some who receive this are getting No. 1, 2 and 3 at the same time. It took longer than I expected to get the entire mailing list together. Finally I also realized I could run address labels instead of doing a few envelopes at a time. I expect to do four letters a year. I pray these letters will serve several purposes.

First of all, I pray the Lord of the Church will lead our Denomination to repentance and amendment of our harmful ways. We see ourselves as the True Church. The one most faithful to True Doctrine and most obedient to the infallible Word of God. Unfortunately many have a very different opinion of us, based on personal experience with how we treat people.

I know something of the worst side of Missouri Synod Lutheranism because of the difficulties of friends who are, or have been, pastors in that group. It seems as though with many of these Lutheran orthodoxy becomes a cover under which much evil can be done by power adepts. I spoke recently to a Lutheran . . . who, although as theologically conservative as a man could be, described . . . the Missouri Synod . . . as something like a river of ice that under pretense of orthodoxy froze men's hearts.

I know the feeling of helplessness, for the most evil of evils always wears a mask of good that isolates its victim from the help of all but greater spiritual power than itself. One of its principal methods is to take advantage of ignorance of those who are disposed to help, but haven't the ability to judge between the accused and the accuser.

"Theologically Conservative - Orthodoxy" is not the problem. There is a world of difference between arguing and fighting about or just proclaiming true doctrine and practicing, following, doing true doctrine. The internationally respected author of the words above is "orthodox - theologically conservative". The objection is to the fact we do not practice what we preach. We act in non christian ways in opposition to the clear Word of God and our own Doctrine. The Lutheran Book of Concord quotes Luther.

FORMULA OF CONCORD, SD, ARTICLE III. RIGHTEOUSNESS #41 For Dr. Luther's excellent statement remains true: "There is a beautiful agreement between faith and good works: nevertheless, it is faith alone which apprehends the blessing without works. And yet faith is at no time ever alone."

#42 When, however, the question is asked, how a Christian can identify, either in his own case or in the case of others, a true living faith and distinguish it from a simulated and dead faith (since many lazy and secure Christians delude themselves into thinking that they have faith when they do not have true faith), the Apology gives the following answer: "James calls that faith dead where all kinds of good works and the fruits of the Spirit do not follow," and the Latin text of the Apology states, -James teaches correctly when he denies that we are justified by such a faith.

Second, I pray the Lord of the Church will use these letters to strengthen and comfort those who have been hurt. From Klass's Report and from personal observation and experience, I know how many have been hurt, individuals, whole congregations, Pastors and Teachers. I am Chaplain in a Jail for men awaiting trial. Most have done wrong and have hurt people. There is a basic difference between hurting a stranger (being hurt by one) or hurting family and friend. Being hurt by a stranger is bad enough, but to be harmed by someone you knew and trusted far worse. The first two of these letters have been ignored by National and District leaders. They have also ignored many others.

It is bad enough to be hurt by someone who calls themselves Christian, but to be hurt by a fellow member of your own congregation worse. One harmed by Pastor, Church Leader, District or Synodical official can find their faith in Jesus devastated. When Jesus told the parable about the Good Samaritan, the real villains were the religious leaders who passed by, not the robbers. How truly horrible it would have been, if those leaders had been in league with the robbers.

From the beginning to the end of Scripture, God is against sin of every variety, condemning the evildoer and encouraging and protecting the faithful. The faithful too are sinners but have been called to Salvation and given His Spirit. From beginning to end of Scripture, God has the harshest words not for the immoral and heathen, but for false leaders, false shepherds, misleading and abusing His people for their own gain and prestige.

The Scribes and Pharisees in Jesus' day were very zealous about proper obedience to and proper interpretation of the Word. It was their spiritual beliefs and standards that lead them to have Jesus crucified as a dangerous threat to the glory of God. They were angry at Jesus because He saw through their piety and impressive words to their self serving spirit. They crushed and burdened the people with God's words, extinguishing the flame of God's Spirit within the sheep they were to feed.

The following verses have been very influential among us. It has been in obedience to them that we have separated ourselves from those who do not hold to the true faith, confess the correct Doctrine of the Bible. "I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people." Rom. 16:17f

In Rom 14, we see that even serious disagreements were not to divide the faithful in Rome. The rest of Scripture makes plain that: it is those who harm the faithful by putting human obstacles in their way and create divisions according to their own judgments that are condemned. Such seek their own power and prestige.

The Lord Jesus calls us to a life of loving service. The eternal Son of God, He was born in weakness, humbly served and obediently suffered. He calls us to follow His example. Whoever would be leader must be servant. May the Spirit of the Lord open your eyes and hearts to see those who have been hurt among us and empower you to serve them by comforting and binding their wounds. There was a well known book a few years ago called "The Wounded Healer". Those who have been hurt and then healed by the grace of God and the loving community of the faithful are superbly equipped to serve the Church, Pastoring the sheep as they have been shepherded.

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.

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