

Trinity Te Deum

The official newsletter for Trinity Lutheran Church

*Rev. Paul R. Harris – 512-453-3835 Church; 512-251-4204 Home
Sunday School and Bible Study 9:15 AM – Divine Service 10:30 AM*

Austin, Texas December 1, 2013 Volume 15, Issue 6

December 2013 – January 2014

An Explanation of our Continued Dissent against Six Identified Errors in the LCMS

Our Statement of Confession, written by me and adopted by you, is really a copying of work done by others. This was a mistake. The virtue of our statement is that it is the only one I know of that contains documentation of the errors. However, by titling it Statement of Confession and citing the 1970 CTCR's definition and acceptance of the term, I have repeatedly been asked about a time frame.

Statement of Confession is a term that everyone knows what it means but no one knows exactly where it came from. The CTCR in 1970 thought it came from Article X of the Formula of Concord. Dr. Albert Collver, at present an assistant to the president of the LCMS, made light, if not fun of, the concept in a 2005 Easter-tide issue of *Logia*. He said declaring oneself to be in a State of Confession is not an option for those who take the Lutheran Confessions seriously. I responded in an April 23, 2005 letter to the editor which *Logia* did not publish but which I did in an August 30, 2010 blog post of mine.

I don't think we should use the term Statement of Confession any longer as it ties us to a CTCR definition of the term that is over 40 years old, and it interjects a time frame where Scripture does not have one. It seems to me

akin to taking Matthew 18 as "three strikes and you're out" rather than as a way to restore your brother. Also a time of confession lasts as long as the error does. While Formula of Concord Article X is about adiaphora a principle found there applies to our situation. "When a clear-cut confession of faith, is demanded of us, we dare not yield." I don't think I do this principle any injustice by leaving out the context, but I will quote it anyways. "We, believe, teach, and confess that in time of persecution, when a clear-cut confession of faith is demanded of us, we dare not yield to the enemies in such indifferents things, as the apostle Paul writes, 'For freedom Christ has set us free; stand fast therefore, and do not submit again to the yoke of slavery' (Gal. 5:11)." The next two passages cited by Formula X apply directly to our case: "Do not be mismatched with unbelievers, for what fellowship has light with darkness?" (II Cor. 6:14)." "To them we did not yield in submission even for a moment that the truth of the Gospel might be preserved for you' (Gal. 2:5)." We have taken our stand to show light does not have fellowship with darkness and have done so in order to preserve the truth of the Gospel for ourselves and others.

As I said in my 2007 letter to the CTCR, I continue to dissent against the following: 1) Synod's toleration of open Communion practices. 2) Synod's encouragement of diverse worship practices. 3) Synod's official acceptance

of a document that says Christian and non-Christian clergymen may take turns praying at a "civic event." 4) Synod's acceptance of people preaching, teaching, or administering the Sacraments without a regular Call. 5) Synod's resolution that the order of creation only applies in the church in regard to the pastoral office. 6) Synod robbing sheep of their right to judge shepherds.

The impression that we haven't done anything since making the original confession in June 2005 is erroneous. In September 2005, I made a public confession of our Statement at a meeting of three circuits of Austin area churches. There were over 20 pastors present. On the basis of our confession the three circuits studied most of our points. The presenter was Dr. Ray Martens, retired president of Concordia University, Austin. His conclusions definitely leaned our direction.

We submitted resolutions to the 2006 District and the 2007 Synodical conventions. This is after submitting like resolutions to the 2003 District and 2004 Synodical conventions. I spoke before a 2004 Synodical floor committee and a 2006 District floor committee. I sought to get five of our members on Synodical boards and committees to take our confession in person to the synodical level. I asked my circuit counselor to have the district president appoint me to a 2006 District floor committee and I asked to be the pastoral delegate from our circuit to the

2007 Synodical convention. None of these were successful but all were tried. In 2006 I wrote an article on civil religion for *Logia* supporting our position against praying with pagans. It was entitled *Civil Righteousness versus Civil Religion* and was published in their 2006 Holy Trinity issue.

In February 2007 the CTCR responded to our dissent. I led a lengthy study in Bible class of their response. (Before entering into a state of confession, we had a 12 week study of the issues.) In August 2007, I responded to the CTCR's *Response to Dissent* with a 2000 word letter concluding that I still dissented. The congregation in a separate letter that same month wholeheartedly supported my response. Both letters, as well as our original statement of confession, were published in our newsletter and have always been available on our website for all to read.

In June 2008, at the end of the three year time limit that I had unwisely put in the original Statement of Confession, I placed before the congregation in a newsletter article the choices before them. (This article too has always been on the website for all to read.) Quoting from that newsletter article the choices were as follows: "1) Repeal their Statement of Confession and appeal to my ecclesiastical supervisors to discipline me based on what I have written above. 2) Continue to affirm their Statement of Confession. 3) Break fellowship with the LCMS thereby leaving the Synod." I also pointed out that if they resolved to stay in the Synod our Communion policy would have to be changed to recognize that there were members of the LCMS who publicly embraced false teach-

ings that we are confessing against.

After two more years of preaching, teaching, and newsletter articles, in September 2010 we no longer automatically communed a person because they said they were a member of the LCMS. We started practicing fellowship by confession rather than fellowship by company or synod. It never has been true that by being a member of the LCMS we were automatically in fellowship with all in the LCMS. We were only in fellowship with those who accepted the confessional basis of the Synod found in Article II of the LCMS constitution. Those practicing open communion have always been outside that confession.

In this vein, it is very encouraging that the ACELC Board of Directors is bringing the following two resolutions to the 2014 ACELC conference. 1. To encourage the congregations of the ACELC and the Associate Members of the ACELC to seek out the true Marks of the Church when choosing to worship and receive the Lord's Supper within congregations of the LCMS. 2. To encourage pastors of ACELC congregations to exercise judgment and theological discernment when communing members of other LCMS congregations in order to retain the confessional integrity of the Lord's Supper. This is what we have been doing for over 3 years. These resolutions are particularly heartening since the impetus for them did not come from me or our lay delegate.

In March 2011 we joined the Association of Confessing Evangelical Lutheran Churches seeing them as a confessing movement, not a political one, in the LCMS. At this meeting the Second Vice-

president of the LCMS, Rev. Wohlrabe, strongly chastised the founders of the ACELC for not following the dissent process. In the question and answer period after his presentation, I pointed out that Trinity had been following the dissent process since 2003 and have yet to come to a resolution. He said, "If you will send me all the documentation, I will look into it." I did, and he never has so much as acknowledged receiving it.

I fail to see how the Synod's unwillingness, inability, or slowness to answer us, puts us under obligation to operate in a certain time frame. As I pointed out in my newsletter article 5 years ago, while the Synod says I am bound by my vows to preach and teach publicly according to what Synod says in her doctrinal resolutions and statements, I consider these not binding if they are contrary to Scripture. Article VII. C. of our Constitution says "All matters of doctrine and conscience shall be decided only by the Word of God." Therefore what has not been resolved or stated according to the Word of God can't bind anyone. So I continue to preach and teach in accordance with our public confession.

As I alluded in the September 2013 Voters Assembly, these are extraordinary times along the lines of what Luther faced in Germany and Walther faced in America. The LCMS is by far the largest Lutheran synod in America that has any hope of being orthodox. Our Synodical leaders are sounder than they have been in the past, but they are no faster at disciplining error. Because this is so, I continue to preach and teach the truth while remaining a member of the LCMS and protecting my flock by our Communion practice.

There is the danger that by not separating completely, we do not show clearly that we are not in fellowship with LCMS errors. However, our public confession makes it plain that we are not. Those whose conscience bothers them for continuing to stay in the LCMS are free to join either the ELS or WELS churches in our area. Those who want to be in full Communion with all in the LCMS can join St. Paul who is in Communion with all who are members of the LCMS. Those who want open Communion can join any of the more than a dozen LCMS churches in our area that practice open Communion.

Rev. Paul R. Harris
Trinity Lutheran Church,
Austin, Texas
November 5, 2013 A.D.

The Greatest Martyr on Earth

An Advent-Lent Sermon Series
on the Third Chief Part
Of Luther's Small Catechism
2013-2014

Luther called the Lord's Prayer the greatest martyr on earth because of all the ways Christians have abused this wonderful gift. You have those who dismiss it in favor of what they consider more noble prayers made up in their own hearts. There are others who use the Lord's Prayer repetitiously as if God does hear because of much speaking. Then there is us who don't think about what we are praying, might not know what we are asking for, or might not really care (?). In all these ways the Lord's Prayer is martyred.

In our 2013-2014 Advent – Lent sermon studies we will look at the Lord's Prayer and Luther's

explanation of it in a refreshing light. We will devote our Mid-week Advent and Lent services to this. These services are important for three reasons. 1) From my conversations with you, I'm convinced we could hardly be called a people of prayer. (N. B. I said "we" not "you.") 2) And this one is all on me. I give the Lord's Prayer short shrift in my catechetical classes. My only excuse is that I am following others in this practice, but I feel I am cheating you. 3) How often we say, "I'll pray for you," or ask someone to pray for us, yet St. Paul said of himself and us, "We do not know what we ought to pray for" (Romans 8:26). 4) Every public figure whether politician, sports announcer, or talk show hosts says that victims of a tragedy "are in our prayers." The inference that everybody has their prayers is disconcerting to me. It's like the adage that if everyone is responsible than really no one is. If everyone is indeed praying, then in point of fact probably no one is.

Service times are 7:30 PM. Usually, Ash Wednesday being a notable exception, we are "done" by 8:15. You can be out of here before 8:30 PM if you so choose.

Dec. 4 - The Address
"Father Always"

Dec. 11 - 1st Petition
"*Nomen Dei Est Deus Ipse*"

Dec. 18 - 2nd Petition
"A Breath of Fresh Air"

Mar. 5 - 3rd Petition
"To us and Through Us"

Mar. 12 - 4th Petition
"*Bramafam*"

Mar. 19 - 5th Petition
"As not Because"

Mar. 26 - 6th Petition
"Despair Rightly"

Apr. 2 - 7th Petition
"East does Meet West"

Apr. 9 - The Conclusion
"The Right Stuff"

Advent Vespers Begin Wednesday, December 4, 7:30 PM

Advent as a season of preparation for the Nativity originated in France. Its observance was general by the time of the second Council of Tours, 567. In some places six or seven Sundays were included. When Rome adopted Advent, she limited the period to four Sundays as we now have. It was probably not until the 13th century that Advent was universally recognized as the beginning of the Church Year which up until that time had begun with the Festival of the Annunciation, March 25, or in some places at Christmas. While Advent never attained the extreme penitential character of Lent, it has always been regarded as a season of repentance and of solemn anticipation and preparation for the coming of Christ. [Adapted from Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy*, 465-466.] Three comings of Christ are remembered in Advent: the first coming, the incarnation of the Second Person of the Trinity in the womb of the Virgin Mary; the Second Coming of Jesus at the end of the world to judge it; and His continual coming among us in Baptism, the Word, and Holy Communion. The Advent wreath is of relatively recent origin, the 19th century. Only

two candles have historically represented something specific, the pink one and the white one. Lit on the Third Sunday the pink one stands for joy. On this Sunday, the penitential theme is supposed to be lighter. Tinged with the white of the Christ candle, the purple of penitence shades to the pink of a joyous rose.

The Lutheran.

“God’s Word and Luther’s Doctrine pure shall to eternity endure.”

Published by the German Evangelical-Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio and other states. Edited by C.F.W. Walther Volume 4 St. Louis, Mo. 13. June, 1848. No. 21.

Something on the Custom of also Inviting Those who had not Done Penance to Take Part in the holy LORD’s Supper

C.F.W. Walther, June 1848, *Der Lutheraner*, Vol. 4, No. 21, pp.161-163

“I would rather lose my own body and life than allow the body of the LORD to be given to anyone unworthily and would sooner shed my own blood than sanction his most holy blood be given to one who is unworthy.” Chrysostom (*Hom. 83 in Matthew*)

No few preachers in this country, so often as they set out to celebrate the holy LORD’s Supper have the habit of first turning to all who have gathered to invite all to partake, and this even includes those present who are members of other confessions. This is especially employed by today’s German Methodist preachers as a means to find entrance amongst the dispersed German Protestants living here. The latter have often had to do

without the public preaching of the Word and receiving the holy LORD’s Supper for years. Now a Methodist preacher suddenly comes into their isolated area and he not only preaches to him but also doesn’t have any scruples at all about offering the LORD’s Supper to them, and to receive each one of them, no questions asked. He thereby very quickly wins the people over to himself. He uses the holy LORD’s Supper as his bait, that is, as an easy means of enticing souls into the net of his enthusiasm (*Schwaermeri*) and sectarianism. But there might even be many so-called “L u t h e r a n” preachers following the same Praxis (practice)! We have, unfortunately!, had it brought to our attention that no few preachers who call themselves Lutheran (thinking that this would be truly evangelical), once they have prepared the holy table for the administration of the Sacrament now beckon all who can to come to this deposit of grace, even without having their faith and lives examined. Yes, it is to be feared that many do this out of impure motives, in order to be seen by all the different parties as truly being men who are “loving and big hearted” and to be praised as such. It is to be feared that many therefore account everyone worthy of the holy Sacrament and even openly give it to those who are godless, since they even want to be thought well of by the godless and do not want to bear the burden of the world’s scorn and hatred and don’t want to do anything at all to lose their lucrative pastorate. For it is obviously true: In the whole care of souls there is practically nothing that a faithful servant of the church sees as a greater need than to be conscientious when it comes to admission

to the holy LORD’s Supper. When a rightly believing Lutheran preacher is given a new congregation, and he does not want to immediately allow any member of the same to the table of the LORD until he has spoken to each individual and has determined from each one’s own mouth that he knows what the holy LORD’s Supper is, that he acknowledges that he is a poor sinner, that he believes in his heart God’s Word, that he deeply longs for grace and the forgiveness of sins in Christ’s blood, that he also has an earnest intention to follow Christ in leading a holy life, unblemished by the world, and the like, in this he might immediately meet strong opposition that seldom then results in anything but an ensuing schism so that he often sees he might have not other option than to immediately hit the road as he’s being accused as if he had wanted to lord it over the congregation!

So then? Is it right for a preacher to rather suffer all those sorts of things, yes even to prefer to lose his office, than to have to allow everyone to the holy LORD’s Supper without examination? Is the liberality of many preachers in this country today in this regard really so worthy of blame? We answer: Yes! But to be able to judge rightly about this, it is first necessary to bear in mind how this actually relates to the holy Supper.

This requires a totally different consideration than how we treat the preaching of God’s Word. Namely, the Word is not only given to sustain a believer in his faith, but rather also to first awaken a sinner from his slumber of sin, to bring him to an awareness of his sins, to repentance and faith, and to convert him.

Surely without the Word all this would be impossible. So obviously no one can or should be turned away from the preaching of the Word, for that would be called barring to him the only door of grace. But that is not the case with the holy LORD's Supper. One is not first brought to repentance and faith by that, but is only thereby strengthened in it. Through this means one does not receive grace for the first time or become a Christian, but rather the grace that should be received through the Word is thereby sealed and he is sustained, defended and strengthened in his Christianity. This food must not first awaken a person to life from God, but rather when he has already become spiritually alive he must be fed and refreshed. Therefore whoever would receive the holy LORD's Supper worthily and for his salvation must have previously come to repentance and faith. He must have already received grace and become a true Christian, must already be previously awakened to life from God and born again.¹ Therefore the holy LORD's Supper should only be received by one who has already become a child of God through the water of rebirth, that is, through holy Baptism, just as in the OT only those were permitted to receive the Passover lamb who had been received into the divine covenant of grace by circumcision. Receiving the holy LORD's Supper in and of itself does one no good as it much rather depends on how one receives it.

It is not like a medicine that only needs to be ingested so that it works. It is much more like a treasure chest whose treasures are only able to be taken, grasped and held tightly by the hand of faith. Indeed, whoever has no

faith also receives the actual and whole sacrament, namely, he does not receive mere bread and wine with his mouth, but rather really and truly, in, with, and under these elements the body and blood of JESUS Christ as a precious pledge of grace and forgiveness. But he gets absolutely nothing of the blessing for the salvation of his soul that lies therein. For what good does even a precious and valuable pledge of a man do, and how can it serve to assure a man of something, if he does not believe it pledges anything precious and valuable? – So whoever receives the holy LORD's Supper without the legitimate faith and, therefore, unworthily, will not only not partake of the grace laid therein, but rather he will find instead of grace – wrath, instead of blessing – a curse; he will, as St. Paul writes, “be guilty of the body and blood of the LORD. He eats and drinks judgement upon himself thereby, since he does not discern the body of the LORD.” So the sins are terrible that they commit and the destruction fearful that those heap upon themselves who eat the holy LORD's Supper unworthily. And those who say: “Isn't it great that all those people came up for communion,” reveal thereby the sad state of their knowledge of this holy sacrament.

The other thing characteristic of the holy LORD's Supper, and most important in this sacrament, is that it is integrally bound to the character, to the field banner, to the seal of doctrine. In whatever church therefore a person takes part in the holy LORD's Supper, he is confessing that Church and her doctrine. No more intimate fraternal fellowship exists than in the fellowship one receives in the holy LORD's Supper. “For,” says

the holy Apostle, “as often as you eat of this bread and drink of this cup, you must proclaim the LORD's death ‘till he come,’” 1 Cor. 11.26, and : “It is one loaf so we are one body, since we are all partakers of the one loaf,” 1 Cor. 10.17. So there is a great distinction between one's hearing a sermon once in a foreign churchly fellowship and his partaking in the celebration of the holy LORD's Supper. Sermons can be heard at times, perhaps to become acquainted with the doctrine of some party, without thereby taking part in false worship. On the other hand, Communion is an act of confession. If one communes in a foreign Church, by his action he is joining the same, is standing up as a witness to her doctrine and declaring that the members of the same are his brothers and sisters in faith.

Now having explained all that, how is the custom to be regarded of inviting to the celebration of the holy LORD's Supper everyone who is present without distinction and without allowing for their being examined? When those preachers who themselves do not believe that the body and blood of the Son of God are present in the holy LORD's Supper and are received by all who commune do this, preachers who regard the holy LORD's Supper as a mere memorial meal, as a mere ceremony, as do the Reformed, the Methodists and most of the Unionist - Evangelicals; this is all quite natural. But when those who want to be Lutheran preachers do that, and who are convinced of the truth of the Lutheran doctrine of the holy LORD's Supper, this is most irresponsible.

Such preachers first act against the command of God:

“Do not become partakers in the sins of others.” 1 Tim. 5.22. For whoever can impede sins and not only does not do so, but himself promotes it, he makes himself a partaker of their sin. Now if those preachers could just as well often hinder that frightful sin of unworthily receiving the holy LORD’s Supper, but they rather promote those sins through their frivolous invitations so they even encourage them, oh, what great accountability will they bear for that someday! How terrified they will be someday when God will reckon to their own account all the guilt against the body and blood of Christ which those unrepentant and falsely believing people, admitted by them with no examination, have heaped upon themselves. Luther writes in his instructions for the church visitations: “No one should be admitted to the sacrament unless he is heard individually by his parson as to whether he is fit to go to the holy sacrament. For St. Paul says, 1 Cor. 11.27, that they are guilty of the body and blood of Christ who receive it unworthily. Now, not only is the sacrament dishonored by those receiving it unworthily, but rather also by those who negligently give it to the unworthy.”

To this we add that a preacher thereby sins especially severely since through this he makes himself an unfaithful, careless, unscrupulous care giver (Seelsorger) of souls. That Word of the LORD in the prophet Ezekiel 3.17,18 applies to every single preacher: “Son of Man, I have set you as a watchman over the house of Israel. You shall hear the Word from out of my mouth and be warned for my sake. When I tell the godless: You must die. And you do not remind him and don’t tell him this, so

that you defend the godless against his godless ways so he might live, then the godless will die for the sake of his sins, but I will require his blood from your hand.” Further, the Word of the LORD spoken to Peter in Mt. 16.10 applies to each and every preacher: “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Everything that you bind on earth shall also be bound in heaven. And everything that you will loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” The apostolic Word applies to all preachers: “Be diligent to show yourself before God as a rightly fashioned and blameless laborer who rightly divides the Word of truth. And rebuke the unruly if God would grant them repentance to acknowledge the truth and be taken again from the devil’s cords by which they are captive to his will.” (2 Tim. 2. 15, 25, 26) It says of all rightly fashioned preachers: “They watch over souls as those who must give account for them.” Heb. 13.17. Of all this that is obligatory for a preacher as a care taker of souls (Seelsorger), those who also allow everyone the holy LORD’s Supper without examination do the exact opposite. He should announce to the godless: “You must die,” but by allowing everyone to the table of grace he is saying to him, “You shall live.” He should bind the unrepentant but he looses them. He should rebuke the unruly so they come to repentance, but he says they are righteous, so they only become more hardened. He should keep watch over souls, and he proves that he is a “silent dog,” as Isaiah 56.10 says, “that won’t bark, is lazy, lies down and wants to sleep.” He should help souls out of sins and condemnation, but he strengthens them in their unrepentance, and only bur-

ies them deeper in their sins, God’s wrath, death, hell and damnation. Oh most certainly, even if a preacher is, apart from this, most diligent, if he does not protect souls, as much as it depends on him, so they do not receive the sacrament unworthily, then this one thing is enough to make him reprehensible and bring upon him the heavy judgment of being a hireling, an unfaithful care taker of souls, as one who destroys souls. Therefore Luther writes in his incomparable Admonition to the Parsons to Preach against Usury from the year 1540: “If such usurers want to rail at you because you do not absolve them nor administer the sacrament to them nor bury them. . . then say: It is forbidden me, primarily by God, to regard any usurer as a Christian. . . So also why should I put my soul on the line for you and to you, and condemn myself on account of your sin, for your being such a money grubber. . . It wouldn’t even do you any good, and would damn me, if I would thus absolve you. For God and the emperor still do not accept this in their justice. Therefore repent and do the right thing. If not, you can just as well simply go to the devil without me and my absolution than that you should doubly go to the devil with my absolution and take me along with you, without making me guilty along with you. No, sir, you go ahead, I’ll stay here. I am not a parson so that I can go along with everyone to the devil but rather to bring everyone with me to God.”

But certainly a preacher must also bear in mind that he has been placed by God as a “Steward of the mysteries of God.” 1 Cor. 4.1. But a steward cannot cause disorder or use what is entrusted him according to his

whims without a severe accountability. He must much rather use them according to the instructions he's received for carrying out his office. But we preachers have only one such direction, and, indeed, a most applicable instruction for the legitimate administration of the holy sacrament in the holy Scripture. Clear words therein prescribe for us who is to be admitted and who is not. Christ says, among other things: "You shall not throw holy things to the dogs, and you shall not cast pearls before swine lest they trample the same with their feet and turn and rip you to pieces." Mt. 7.6. Further, Christ says: "If he will not hear the church then regard him as a heathen and a tax collector." Further, St. Paul writes: "If anyone among you claims to be a brother and is a whore monger, or greedy, or an idolater, or a blasphemer, or a drunkard or a thief; with such a one do not even eat . Expel from among you the wicked. 1 Cor. 5.11,13. The same apostle writes further: "And if anyone is not obedient to our word, note that person and have nothing to do with him." 2 Thess. 3.14. Finally, John writes in his second letter: "So if anyone approaches you and does not bring this doctrine do not receive him in your home and don't even greet him. For whoever greets him makes himself a partaker in his evil deeds." (v. 10,11; cf. 2 Thess. 3.6; Rom. 16.17; 1 Tim. 6.3-5, 2 Tim. 3.1-5; Tit. 3.10,11; 2 Cor. 6.14-18) According to that Christians should not consort with any manifest sinner, with any one who despises the Christian congregation, with anyone who will not let himself be chastened, or with any unbelievers or those with false faith, as if they were standing with them in a fra-

ternal fellowship of faith. So then this gives every preacher a fitting instruction that gives him God's Word on the administration of the sacrament, for it is manifest according to God's Word that all those whom the Christians do not hold in fraternal fellowship in faith and whom they must exclude from amongst themselves should also not be allowed to receive the sacrament, by which the most intimate fraternal fellowship of faith is expressed and established. So what are those preachers doing who admit all without distinction? They prove themselves to be unfaithful, frivolous stewards over God's mysteries, they seize God in his office and promote themselves to be lords over his holy sacrament, when they are only his servants. Woe to them, if in time this does not occur to them, for ever and ever! A day will come when they will have to repent this in terror, that they have destroyed his goods and they have abused them for their own impure goals. Then the LORD will summon them before him and cry out to them: "What is this I've heard about you? Give an accounting of your stewardship, for you can no longer be my steward." Luke 16. But some might now be saying, what should a preacher do in order to satisfy his conscience? On this I will now let our Luther speak here. Namely, this man writes on this in his paper: A Christian Manner of Going to the LORD's Table from the year 1523: "In this one must employ his manner, or follow the order that applies to Baptism, namely, that first he present himself to the bishop or parson, whoever they are, if he wants to receive the sacrament so that he might learn their names, and might know what kind of life they lead. Then, if they request it,

he should not yet admit them until they have given an answer for their faith and especially the appropriate answers to the questions as to whether they understand what the sacrament is, what it gives and why it's needed, and for what use they employ it, namely, if they are able to say by heart the words of institution and their meaning, and show that they are going to the LORD's table for the sake of their sins, with a troubled conscience or a fear of death or plagued with other tribulations of the flesh, the world or the devil, so that they hunger and thirst to receive the Word of grace and salvation from the LORD himself through the office of the servant so they are comforted and strengthened; as Christ has given and instituted such things out of inexpressible love in the LORD's Supper with these Words: Take and eat, etc.

"But I would think it would be enough that one who desires the sacrament would be questioned and examined in this way once per year, yes he might have such good understanding that he might only need to be questioned once in his whole life, or not ever be questioned at all. For by this order we want to guard against the worthy and the unworthy running together to the table of the LORD, as we had previously seen in the papacy, where people didn't want anything but only to receive the sacrament. But of faith, comfort and the right use and need for the sacrament they had neither spoken nor heeded, yet, they even had expended every effort to bury the Words of the sacrament, namely, the bread of life. Yes, in the height of thoughtlessness in this they tried to by pass them altogether so those who received the sacrament were doing the work and that for

the sake of the work's own worthiness it would be good, and not that it preserved and strengthened faith through the wealth of Christ. But we want those who don't know how to answer about the matters mentioned above to, by all means, be excluded and kept away from the sacrament as those who are not wearing wedding garments.

"Then, when the parson or bishop sees they understand all this, he should also thereupon shift his attention to whether they prove their faith and knowledge by their life and their customs – for even Satan understands all these things and can also speak of them – that is, if he sees a whore monger, a divorced person, a drunk, a gambler, a usurer, a gossip or any others backsliding into some other public sin, those he must certainly exclude from the LORD's Supper, till he then prove with indisputable signs that he has changed and improved his life. But others who occasionally fall and return from their fall, saddened by the fact they have fallen, should not only not be denied the sacrament but they should be informed that it was instituted just for this purpose, that they be thereby refreshed and strengthened. For we all fail in many and various ways, James 3.2, and we rightfully bear each other's burdens, since one is burdensome to others, Gal. 6.2. But I am speaking here of blasphemers who sin unabashedly without shame and brag no less about how great is the Gospel.

"I still maintain on secret (private-) confession before Communion, as I have previously taught, that it is neither necessary nor should it be demanded, but is useful and in no way to be despised." (See Luther's Works Hal-le ed., X, 2764 – 67)

Besides what Luther declares here in private, we also find this in our public, confessional writings. For example it says in the 25th Article of the Augsburg Confession: "This custom is retained among us, that the sacrament is not to be given those who are not previously examined and absolved." Further, in the Apology in the 15th Article: "Among us the people use the holy sacrament every Sunday willingly, not by force, who are first examined if they've been instructed in Christian doctrine, if they know or are familiar with the Our Father, the Creed, the Ten Commandments."

¹Luther writes about his in his *Church Postls*: "As Christ had also acted as he sent preachers among all the people en masse and as also the apostles had later acted, so that all had heard it, both believers and unbelievers, so that whoever wanted it, wanted it, that's what we must also do. But the sacrament must not be cast so amongst the people en masse as the papists have done. Whenever I preach the Gospel I don't know whom it impacts. But he r e I mu t make sure that it is impacting the one who comes to the sacrament. There I must not be struck into doubt but rather be sure that the one whom I give the sacrament has grasped the Gospel and believes rightly, just as whenever I might baptize someone I must be sure the one who receives it should not doubt what he's receiving nor I have any doubts about the one being baptized there." (*On Easter: On the Reception of the holy Sacrament*)

First Things First

Since the ACELC began its work of encouraging our Synod to honestly address the theological and practical errors that sadly have divided our fellow-

ship, we've discovered that many have been more than willing to criticize our efforts. The one, overriding criticism that seems to surface most often is that the ACELC is "disturbing the peace" of our synodical institution by pointing out the problems we must resolve if our Synod is to be truly united.

It is odd, indeed, to be accused of causing divisions when we are, in fact, seeking only unity. It has been our experience that when issues such as closed communion, contemporary worship, or any of the other 10 areas identified by the ACELC as problematic are brought up, that a common response has been to call us "trouble-makers," "disturbers of the peace," or "divisive." It appears that the only acceptable kind of "peace" proposed by those who support variances of doctrine and practice in the Synod is that we in the ACELC simply leave well enough alone, and cease all criticism and any attempts to establish a meaningful dialog. This (in their estimation, I suspect) is the only way bring about peace to the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod. Of course, we do not believe this to be true at all, for the reality is that agreeing to disagree is no agreement at all.

Our Synod was roundly critical of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) when they used a model known as "Reconciled Diversity" to achieve "unity" between church bodies of widely divergent doctrine and practice. In its simplest form, "Reconciled Diversity" is a model for church fellowship that seeks to find what-

ever common doctrines may exist between those church bodies who are attempting to establish pulpit and altar fellowship with one another. It simply declares that those issues which cannot be reconciled to be "non-divisive." By using this model the ELCA is able to welcome with open arms both pastors and communicants to each church's communion rails and pulpits (including members and pastors of the United Methodist Church; Presbyterian Church, USA; United Church of Christ; Reformed Church of America; Moravian Church; and Episcopal Church, USA).

While our Synod was right in criticizing the ELCA for this method of "establishing" church fellowship, the truth of the matter is that we are doing the exact same thing in our own church body. We are also seeking the lowest common denominator in our doctrine and practice when we insist on agreeing to disagree on issues we are not able to agree on. In effect, the LCMS is

also practicing "Reconciled Diversity!" It would appear that now the greatest "sin" a person can commit in our Synod is "rocking the boat" and "disturbing the Synod" with the truth! Maintaining "peace" within the institution of the Synod now appears to be of paramount importance, rather than making sure our doctrine and practice conform to the Word of God and the Lutheran Confessions. May God forgive us for this!

The ACELC seeks to be a voice for the truth of God's Word and its correct exposition, namely, our Lutheran Confessions. We in the ACELC actually believe God's Word speaks clearly concerning each and every area of concern outlined in our original "Letter of Fraternal Admonition" (which was sent to every congregation of the Synod in July of 2010). We support all efforts to achieve a resolution to each and every one of the errors identified in this document, and we are foolish enough to think God can actual-

ly accomplish that among us! How can we have such confidence? Because we believe God's Word can and will change hearts and conform them to His truth.

So, "first things first" means that maintaining the peace of the institution called the Missouri Synod must take a back seat to the clear teaching of God's Word. "First things first" means that we must stick with what Holy Scripture says, and if doing that causes a disturbance in the Synod, then so be it! "First things first" means that the truth of God is more important than maintaining an illusion of peace which is no peace at all. If we in the Synod are willing to put "first things first," then (under God's grace), we are confident He will bring about a peace in our Synod that is acceptable in His sight.

Rev. Richard A. Bolland
Assistant Pastor - Emeritus
Gloria Christi Lutheran Church
Greeley, Colorado

Trinity Lutheran Church
1207 West 45th Street
Austin, TX 78756
512.453.3835
www.trinityaustin.com

Trinity Te Deum is published bi-monthly.
Deadline for all articles is the 15th of the odd months.
All articles must be approved by Rev. Paul R. Harris.
Articles with no author are written by him.

December 2013

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Noon Church Dinner	5:00 PM JR. Confirma- tion		Advent Vespers 7:30			
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
	5:00 PM JR. Confirma- tion		Advent Vespers 7:30			
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
	5:00 PM JR. Confirmation		Advent Vespers 7:30			
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
1-6 PM Charter Bus Caroling & Chili Supper	No JR. Confirmation	7:30 Christmas Eve	Christmas Communion 10 AM	PASTOR ON 		
29	30	31				
VACATION 						

January 2014

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
			1	2	3	4
			VACATION 			
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Epiphany Dinner	5:00 PM Confirmation		10 AM Bible Stories 6:30 PM Choir 7:15 PM Revelation II			
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
	5:00 PM Confirmation	7 PM Voters Meeting	10 AM Bible Stories 6:30 PM Choir 7:15 PM Revelation II			
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
	No Confirmation	6:30 PM Elders Meeting	10 AM Bible Stories 6:30 PM Choir 7:15 PM Revelation II			
26	27	28	29	30	31	
	5:00 PM Confirmation		Holy Commu- nion Thanksgiv- ing Service 7:30 PM Choir 6:30 PM			

