

Trinity Te Deum

The official newsletter for Trinity Lutheran Church

Rev. Paul R. Harris – 512-453-3835 Church; 512-251-4204 Home
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The Dummies Guide to Reality

A Nine Part Sermon Series on
the First Chief Part
Advent 2015 – Lent 2016

Could the fifth time be the charm? That isn't even a godly way to speak is it? But we are embarking on our 5th trek through Luther's Small Catechism keeping the Reformation tradition that Advent and Lent services be devoted to catechetical study.

The popularity of *dummy* books seems to be fading. At one time there was no end to those yellow covered books with scrawling black typeface saying, *The Dummies Guide* to everything from soup to nuts. I toyed with the theme "Ten Statements about Reality" or "How things Really Are," but since one of my statements is a question and "How things Really Are" seemed too blasé, I went with *The Dummies Guide to Reality*.

In one sense this is what the 10 Commandments are. They are statements of what God's people are like. We hear them as only commanding, but they can be heard, since they are in the indicative in the original, as statements of how things are. Of course when held up as a mirror they reveal how short of God's reality we are. This drives us to how Christ really did live and die according to them.

All services are on a Wednesday. They start at 7:30 PM. With the exception of Ash Wednesday, you can be out the door at 8:15.

December 2
First Things First
The 1st Commandment

December 9
What's in a Name?
The 2nd Commandment

December 16
A Bitter Feast Day
The 3rd Commandment

Ash Wednesday Feb 10
They *Are* the Boss of Me
The 4th Commandment

February 17
No Thoughtless Murder
The 5th Commandment

February 24
It's not really *All* about Sex
The 6th Commandment

March 2
A Limitless Commandment
The 7th Commandment

March 9
I *Can* Tell a Lie
The 8th Commandment

March 16
Hooked by a Feeling
The 9th & 10th Commandments

Making a Clear Confession in Muddy Waters

By Pastor Rolf David Preus
January 28, 2009

About a year ago I taught a Bible class on church fellowship

and closed Communion. I had prepared and taught the class several years earlier when I was a member of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod. The handout for the class was about six pages long. As I examined it to revise it if necessary I noticed that when I originally prepared it I had not referred to the Missouri Synod or to any other synod for that matter. I guess it never crossed my mind to do so.

One fellow who came to the class was a member of a nearby LCMS congregation whose pastor practices closed Communion. He had been arguing with his pastor about this practice. He was interested in knowing what I taught on the subject so he attended my class. After attending my class he told me that he agreed with what I taught. What he didn't agree with was the idea that only Missouri Synod people and all Missouri Synod people could commune at the altar of his congregation.

Now I suspect that his pastor would not have put it this way. But there is no doubt in my mind that this particular parishioner was persuaded that that's what closed Communion is. Closed Communion, by definition, appears to embrace two parts. The first part is that you must be a member of our synod or a synod with which our synod has officially declared fellowship if you want to commune at our congregation. The

second part is that if you are a member of our synod or a synod with which our synod has officially declared fellowship you may commune at our congregation.

This is very neat and tidy, to be sure. But I would submit to you that it is quite wrong. One cannot delegate to another the responsibility to confess. The Christian is called upon to confess. The Church confesses corporately. This is no option. This is essential. The Christian and the Church go together. We confess individually as Christians and we confess corporately as the Church. A synod is an adiaphoron. It is neither commanded nor forbidden by God. If closed Communion is divine doctrine it must be understood according to and with reference to divine institutions. Since God has not instituted a synod and has not commanded that we belong to a synod we distort the teaching of God's Word on closed Communion when we define it according to synodical membership.

It is sad to see that "synod" has replaced "church" in the thinking of people who are heirs to a theological tradition that once upon a time made a clear distinction between synod and church. Let us review why we practice closed Communion and move from there to the more general topic of making a clear confession of the true Christian faith in today's muddy waters.

When we commune at an altar we receive. We receive the body given for us and the blood shed for us for the forgiveness of sins. This is a holy mystery. It is the mystery of the

incarnation, the atonement, the sacramental union, justification by faith alone, the mystical union, the Communion of Saints, and several other topics of Christian teaching. We receive.

What we receive we confess. When we commune at an altar we confess. Nowhere do we confess more clearly. This has always been so. We read of the infant Church in the Acts of the Apostles:

Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. (Acts 2, 41-42)

The baptized participated in the "breaking of the bread" and the "apostles' doctrine." These are joined. They cannot be disjoined. As St. Paul asks, "Are not those who eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?" (1 Corinthians 10, 18) St. Paul says that when we commune we "proclaim the Lord's death till He comes." (1 Corinthians 11, 26)

It is not possible to make a clear confession of God's saving truth if we commune at heterodox altars. It is better not to commune at all than to commune at a heterodox altar. Faith and confession go together. We confess the true faith when we commune at orthodox altars. We may not commune at a heterodox altar without confessing that heterodox teaching as our own personal faith.

We confess Christ. All Christians confess Christ. Jesus says so. He says:

"Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 10, 32-33).

Jesus calls upon all preachers to confess the faith. St. Paul urges Timothy:

"But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. I urge you in the sight of God who gives life to all things, and before Christ Jesus who witnessed the good confession before Pontius Pilate, that you keep this commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ's appearing" (1 Timothy 6, 11-14).

We have no option but to confess the faith to which God has called us. We confess by communing. We eat and drink and so we confess. That is one kind of oral confession. We confess orally by what we say. We confess by reciting creeds. We confess by praying prayers. We confess by subscribing to written confessions of faith.

The confessions to which we subscribe must be in agreement with God's Word. We who call ourselves confessional Lutherans believe that the confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church are in agreement with God's written Word because they are drawn from God's Word as from the pure

and clear fountain of Israel. Our confessional subscription is unconditional because the Scriptures from which the written confessions of the Church are taken are clear. Since we trust God who inspired the Holy Scriptures we can trust that our confession of what God has clearly taught us is true and sound. Jesus said:

“If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8, 31-32).

We can know the truth. We can confess the truth. We do not need to be ignorant of what is true. We can know the truth and know we know it. Thus we confess with confidence.

I've been around long enough to know that the faithful confession of the faithful Word must be sharply distinguished from the actual teaching of any synod regardless of how orthodox it may appear to be or claim to be. It is one thing to say that the Evangelical Lutheran Church is the true visible Church of God on earth. It is quite another to say that this or that synod or group of synods is the true visible Church of God on earth. The Lutheran Churches of the Reformation may or may not be the Lutheran Churches of the Reformation. The Church of the Lutheran Confession may or may not be the Church of the Lutheran Confession. The Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Synod may or may not be the Evangelical Lutherans they purport to be. The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod may

or may not teach that old Missouriian doctrine of C. F. W. Walther to which the Synodical Conference was once devoted.

If I could form the perfect synod – call it, for lack of a better name: The Association of Confessional Lutheran Churches – it would surely be and remain genuinely confessional, evangelical, biblical, orthodox, and wholeheartedly Lutheran. If I were king of the forest. But I'm not. I'm not even duke or prince. And if I wanted to be king of the forest no genuine Lutheran would let me be.

I recall a conversation I had with a Polish Catholic Lawyer from Chicago that I met at a conference in Houston, Texas about twenty years ago. We were having a good theological conversation and he was impressed by my adherence to the catholic creeds and to the historic Christian faith. In a moment of spontaneous personal ecumenicity he shared with me what he considered to be a wonderful way to bridge the chasm that divides Lutherans and Roman Catholics. The next time there is a papal vacancy the Lutherans should get to choose the pope. We could take turns. What could be fairer than that?

I told him that we Lutherans did not want a pope. He was a bit perplexed by that. So I tried to explain to him what confessional subscription was. I don't think he got it. But then I'm not sure that most Lutherans get it either. I suspect that most Lutherans view ecclesiastical authority and fellowship in much the same way as that Roman Catholic lawyer from Chicago.

They simply replace the pope with whatever entity speaks on behalf of a synod, whether a CTCR or Doctrine Committee, a president or presidium, a convention, a district official, or whoever shouts the loudest at pastors' conferences. At any rate, Synod as Synod bears the authority.

And this is so by a neat trick of bait and switch. We are baited with a synod's confessional paragraph and then when we agree to it, it is replaced by the synod itself. The theoretical norm is the confessional paragraph – that is to say, an unconditional subscription to the Lutheran Confessions – but the norm in practice, that is, in fact, is the synod.

In the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary there abides among us a myth concerning synodical boundaries and confessional subscription. People define a congregation's doctrine as well as the doctrine of her pastor according to the synod to which they belong. On the surface and in theory it makes sense. When we actually examine this notion in the concrete specificity a faithful examination requires we learn that it is true only in theory.

It is one thing for congregations to form a synod, confess the faith together, and to require agreement with its doctrine as a condition of membership. It is quite another matter to determine the doctrine of a specific congregation or her pastor solely on the basis of their synodical membership. There are several reasons why this cannot be done.

First of all, it is quite possible that a congregation with heterodox doctrine and practice will belong to a synod that officially holds to orthodox doctrine and practice. Indeed, this is quite likely to occur. It is not possible, except perhaps in the case of a very small synod in which all the pastors are personally well acquainted with one another, to know what is being preached and taught throughout a particular synod.

Secondly, there will always be doctrinal issues that God's Word addresses but that are not addressed by a particular synod. Are we to wait to determine what God's word teaches on a topic that arises until some synod has come to a determination on the matter? May we express fellowship with a manifestly heterodox congregation simply because the errors it promotes have not specifically been condemned by the otherwise orthodox synod to which it belongs?

Third, God's Word says nothing about the formation of synods. God's Word clearly requires the faithful preaching of the Gospel and the right administration of the sacraments. This means that when we decide whether or not we may express fellowship with a particular congregation and her pastor we must base our decision on what that congregation actually teaches and practices. For a congregation or her pastor to decide with whom to express fellowship solely on the basis of synodical membership requires synodical membership as a prerequisite for recognizing a congregation as orthodox. This is

an unbiblical and legalistic requirement.

We are not at liberty to refuse the hand of fellowship to those who preach the pure gospel and administer the sacraments according to Christ's institution. We are not at liberty to extend the hand of fellowship to those who do not do so but teach falsely instead. Since the fellowship we enjoy is fellowship in the divine truth we always express fellowship with that truth and we never express fellowship with anything opposed to that truth.

Faith is agreement in the divine truth. To make a Christian confession is always to make a confession of faith. While it may be helpful to distinguish between the faith that believes and the faith that is believed and even to learn the appropriate Latin prepositions to make this distinction clear we may not separate the faith that believes from what that faith believes. The object of faith is God's Word. God speaks and faith says "Amen" to what God says. Faith receives what God says and agrees with it. This is faith's confession. First God's Word is proclaimed. Then faith receives what God's Word says. Then faith confesses what it has received. God's Word, faith, and faithful confession go together.

God's Word is proclaimed. Synods do not proclaim. Congregations do. That's because congregations have pastors and synods do not.

The clearest and most basic confession of faith that a Christian makes is made by going to Divine Service to continue

steadfast in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the reception of the Lord's Supper, and in the prayers. Faith is born and faith is confessed in the same place at the same time. What is beyond this place and time is not insignificant, but it surely must be placed into proper context.

Ordinarily a congregation and a pastor will find for themselves a synod that believes, teaches, and confesses as they do. By joining that synod they join with others in making a common confession. This is ordinarily what happens. I submit to you that these are not ordinary times.

Most confessional Lutherans in America today belong either to the Missouri Synod or to the Wisconsin Synod / ELS. I have a question for that tiny minority of Lutherans that holds to an unconditional confessional subscription, is heir to the theology of C. F. W. Walther and the confessional revival he led in America a century and a half ago, but is not affiliated with either the LCMS or Wisconsin / ELS. What do you do with your confessional brothers who are affiliated with them? Or what don't you do with them? And why?

One could argue that a pastor or a congregation is heterodox by virtue of belonging to one of these synods. If this is true the question of expressing fellowship with such people is settled. They are heterodox. We do not express fellowship with error. A clear Christian confession requires that we express fellowship only with the truth and never with error.

Let us concede for the moment that Wisconsin / ELS formally hold to error on the doctrine of church and ministry and that the Missouri Synod permits error in various areas pertaining to church and ministry, fellowship, the orders of creation, and a few other areas as well. Does this mean that one who belongs to one of these synods necessarily participates in those errors? Is it possible to belong to synods that formally hold to error or that permit error without thereby promoting error? I believe that it is possible. I base this belief on the plain fact that there are pastors and congregations within the LCMS and Wisconsin / ELS that do teach in accordance with God's Word and do administer the sacraments according to Christ's institution. They confess the truth and they condemn error, sometimes errors advanced or tolerated by their own synod. These churches and pastors are to be regarded as orthodox on account of their orthodox teaching and confession.

In saying that one may belong to a synod that is heterodox by the definition of the Brief Statement it would appear that I am taking issue with the Brief Statement. It says:

"All Christians are required by God to discriminate between orthodox and heterodox church-bodies, Matt. 7:15, to have church-fellowship only with orthodox church-bodies, and, in case they have strayed into heterodox church-bodies, to leave them, Rom. 16:17."

The Brief Statement goes on to define unionism as "church-fellowship with the adherents of

false doctrine" and repudiates it. As to how to determine whether or not a synod is orthodox, the Brief Statement says:

"The orthodox character of a church is established not by its mere name nor by its outward acceptance of, and subscription to, an orthodox creed, but by the doctrine which is actually taught in its pulpits, in its theological seminaries, and in its publications. On the other hand, a church does not forfeit its orthodox character through the casual intrusion of errors, provided these are combated and eventually removed by means of doctrinal discipline, Acts 20:30; 1 Tim. 1:3."

It is interesting to note that it refers to a synod as a church. Perhaps this is an instance of metonymy? Or is it synecdoche? At any rate, it defines whether or not such a church, that is, such a synod is orthodox on the basis of what is actually being taught in its churches. It mentions also theological seminaries and publications.

The Brief Statement appears to hold to the view that belonging to a heterodox synod makes one heterodox. But it does not actually say this. It says that we should leave a heterodox synod if we find ourselves in one. It says that we may not express fellowship with adherents of false doctrine. It presents a clear argument for an orthodox Christian to leave a heterodox church body. It does not advocate breaking fellowship with orthodox Christians and churches who belong to a heterodox church body. It advocates breaking fellowship with adherents of false doc-

trine. We mark and avoid according to the standard of what is actually being taught. We do not mark and avoid according to the standard of membership in a human institution, at least not on that basis alone.

During the fellowship discussions between Missouri and the American Lutheran Church during the 1940's, the ALC proposed the idea of selective fellowship, an idea also embraced by many in Missouri. Selective fellowship is a term to describe the practice of selecting the congregations and pastors with which one expresses fellowship on an individual basis, not on the basis of synodical affiliation. Of course, when this was proposed by the old ALC they were not proposing that fellowship be recognized only when there was full agreement in doctrine and all its articles. Selective fellowship was wed to a gospel reductionism. The conservatives in Missouri rightly rejected it.

More recently, a group within the ELCA known as Word Alone has publicly declared its advocacy of selective fellowship – using that term – in order to announce that they are not in fellowship with those within their church body who advocate homosexual marriage and related errors.

It would be impossible to use the term "selective fellowship" to describe one's position without raising concerns associated with the way the term has been used. Nevertheless, we who find ourselves outside of the synodical boundaries of the Missouri Synod and Wisconsin / ELS, belonging to tiny little

associations or synods with member congregations scattered across the country, do need to confront how we, in a responsible way, should relate to orthodox Lutheran pastors and congregations within Missouri and Wisconsin.

Recently I was made aware of a website of a “confessional” Missouri Synod pastor who posted a statement on closed Communion that was, for the most part, quite good. It grounded the practice in the Scriptures and in the nature of the Sacrament. It pointed out that communing is confessing the teaching of the church at which one communes. It also included the following (I have changed the name of the congregation):

“If you’re away from the area and are unable to commune here at Trinity, you should seek out a church which believes and teaches and practices what we do. The only churches in this country which have committed themselves to doing so are the congregations of the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod. . . . Therefore, you should not commune at a non-Missouri Synod Lutheran church. . . .”

How does he know that there are not many non-Missouri Synod congregations in America that are committed to teaching what his congregation teaches? He does not know. He cannot know. By what right does he claim that everyone who does not belong to the LCMS teaches a different doctrine than he teaches? He has no right. He simply asserts what he cannot know. If you

are outside of Missouri you are heterodox.

But we are not surprised when such a chauvinistic position is taken by a conservative Missouri Synod pastor. In fact, we expect it. We assume that synodical membership is the real test of orthodoxy regardless of how piously we all assert our confessional subscription and opposition to sectarian standards. And so we proceed to establish more and more synods of various shapes and sizes. None is in fellowship with any another. All lay claim to the same confessional standard of teaching.

The waters are indeed very muddy. The debates about church, ministry, fellowship, worship, the role of women in the church, and so forth do not merely continue; they mutate into new species of debates, providing for more and more excuses to form new and this time genuinely orthodox synods, smaller and smaller, purer and purer, until finally nobody is in fellowship with anybody at all.

Read Francis Pieper’s essay, “The Distinction Between Orthodox & Heterodox Churches.” What does he point to as examples of heterodoxy? He mentions the denial of baptismal regeneration and the real presence of Christ’s body and blood in the Lord’s Supper. He refers to the denial of the doctrine of grace alone. He specifically names Rome and the Reformed, and mentions the innumerable American sects as examples of heterodox churches. Francis Pieper would not have marked and avoided recep-

tionists. He was a receptionist. He did not mark and avoid the Wauwatosa theologians, despite their confusion on church, ministry, and related issues. He was right and his brother August was wrong, but he did not break fellowship with him.

Since the feminist explosion and sexual revolution of the nineteen sixties the Church has struggled with previously settled issues relating to men and women that pertain to marriage, the ministry of the Word, church polity, and so forth. It seems that issues of church polity are more important to conservatives than more fundamental family matters. Women’s suffrage takes center stage while the practice of planned barrenness is ignored or even encouraged as responsible stewardship. The ACLC has been hounded with respect to her position on women’s suffrage while no one expresses the slightest interest in what we think about contraception. Can you imagine anyone advocating that we should mark and avoid a church body because that church body does not set forth a biblical stance against birth control? But the ACLC is presently being marked and avoided precisely because she does not set forth a biblical argument against women’s suffrage even though every single pastor and congregation of the ACLC opposes women’s suffrage.

Must we mark and avoid those congregations saddled with corruptions common to our culture? Must we insist that until they purify themselves of these accretions we will refuse to acknowledge them as broth-

ers? And if we do, are we not confusing a biblically mandated orthodoxy with an unobtainable purity? How many members of our congregations have had unscriptural divorces and what are we doing about it? We muddle through the best we can. We confess the truth but we don't choose the context in which we confess it. We confess it.

How do we make a faithful confession in muddy waters? First, we must learn to distinguish between divine doctrine and human opinion. To do this we will find Luther's Small Catechism and the Augsburg Confession excellent standards to follow. It is true that some contemporary issues – women's ordination, homosexuality, abortion, and a few others – are not explicitly treated in our Confessions but such issues are clearly addressed in God's written Word, which is as accessible to a layman as it is to a pastor. If God says it in the Holy Scriptures then we confess it. If God does not say it we may not require anyone to confess it nor may it serve as a standard of orthodoxy to determine with whom we may express fellowship.

There are matters where God's Word is crystal clear but the application of it to specific issues is not as clear. Is the Bible clear on the orders of creation? Yes. Does the Bible clearly teach that a woman may not exercise authority over a man? Yes. Does the Bible speak of an entity such as a voters' assembly? No, it does not. May we apply what the Bible says about women not exercising authority over men to the

voters' assembly and come to the conclusion that women should not vote because the vote is an exercise of authority and God's Word forbids women to exercise authority over men in the church? Yes, we may.

What about those who affirm the orders of creation, that a woman may not exercise authority over a man in the church, and yet do not think that women voting in the voters' assembly violates Scripture because they do not regard the vote as an exercise of authority? Should such people be marked and avoided on account of their rejection of God's Word? But they do not reject God's Word. They reject the obvious and commonly understood meaning of the franchise. Is this sufficient reason to refuse them the hand of fellowship? The Bible does not address the issue of the authority exercised in casting a vote.

Must we mark and avoid a congregation solely on the grounds of permitting women's suffrage if her pastor publicly teaches the orders of creation and that a woman may not teach or exercise authority over a man? These are muddy waters. We live in the midst of much mud. Must we insist that a congregation rid herself of a flawed polity before we can recognize in that church the Gospel purely proclaimed and the sacraments rightly administered?

I oppose women's suffrage. Every argument in favor of it proceeds from the false notion that the Church is a democracy. It is not. It is a monarchy with Christ as her head. I am of the opinion that the vote constitutes

raw power and that those who argue in favor of women's suffrage while affirming the biblical teaching on the orders of creation are confused about what the vote is. I am also of the opinion that we should not mark and avoid those who hold to naïve opinions as long as they teach in accordance with God's written Word.

Second, we refuse, on principle, to express fellowship with false teaching regardless of the circumstances. Permit me to illustrate this by means of another issue involving the participation of women.

Several seminarians from Missouri Synod seminaries find themselves overseas for a year of study when they learn that the local congregation features lady lectors. This is a very occasional thing; not more than a few times a year. Other than this little piece of heterodoxy, the pastor's theology is quite sound. He preaches God's Word faithfully. All of the seminarians oppose the practice of having lady lectors. Two or three of them are willing to say that it is definitely contrary to the clear teaching of God's Word. Yet all but one of the seminarians regularly commune at the altar of that congregation. The one who does not commune does not commune because he does not want to be joined to false doctrine by communing at a heterodox altar. He points to the fact that the Bible clearly forbids women to teach the assembly and that the reading of the authoritative Word of God in the Divine Service constitutes teaching and that therefore this practice is in

violation of the Holy Scriptures. He may not commune with error.

A couple of the seminarians who commune at this church that features lady lectors think that they confess against this heterodox practice because they have spoken to the pastor and told him what they think of it. They believe that their private oral confession of the truth is sufficient.

They are wrong. Their confession is made at the altar. Confessing the faith is always joined to the altar and the pulpit. We may not commune at the altar of a church while simultaneously claiming that that church teaches falsely. There are many reasons cited in defense of communing at such an altar. I will spare listing them for you. None has any validity at all. Where we commune is what we confess period.

This is what our confessional brothers in the Missouri Synod need to understand. They need to learn to distinguish between Missouri Synod affiliated congregations that are orthodox and that are not. They may not presume to trump God's Word with synodical regulations and formal declarations of fellowship. The church must be identified by her pure marks. To argue that we may commune with error while the pastor screws up the nerve to bite the bullet and change unbiblical practices in his congregation – all in the name of some high sounding concept like pastoral discretion – is to argue against the clear Scriptures. If the synod to which you belong requires you to violate God's Word as a

condition of membership then leave it.

This brings us to the third thing we must remember when making a clear confession in muddy waters. We need to remember that our confession is always local and public. It is local. It is made where we live among the people with whom we associate. Where you commune, where you sit attentively listening to the sermon, where you sing hymns of praise to God and say "Amen" to the prayers of the church, there it is that you confess.

It is public. The whole world is watching. You know it and are not ashamed of it. You do not confess one thing in one circumstance and another thing in another. You always confess the same truth.

Fourth, the clear confession is always confession of Christ. Jesus said, "Whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven." We confess the truth. We confess doctrine. In so doing we are confessing Christ. It is his teaching. He is the truth. We are confessing the justification of the sinner by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith. We are confessing the love of God in Christ. We are always confessing this. We may not dissociate our confession of God's truth on any matter from our confession of Christ as the Savior of sinners. We may not fool ourselves into believing that we may set aside God's truth at any point for the sake of gaining a more open and accepting environment in which we may then confess the gospel.

Finally, making a clear confession in muddy waters means that we must reject sectarianism as fervently as we reject unionism. It just won't do to dismiss the many orthodox Christians, congregations, and pastors in the Missouri Synod as heterodox by virtue of their membership in the Missouri Synod. We must reject such a facile identification of confessional boundaries with synodical ones. It just isn't true. It is wrong to mark and avoid the faithful proclamation of God's truth in service to a synodical pattern of thought unknown to the prophets and apostles or to the fathers or to the confessors.

I am not talking here about cases of casuistry that arise in which a pastor may give the Lord's Supper to someone who technically holds no membership in any orthodox congregation but has become the de facto parishioner of the pastor nevertheless. To make it very specific and personal: I am talking about Christians who regularly attend the altar of an orthodox congregation of the Missouri Synod or perhaps the ELS and who come to the altar under my pastoral care. If such an individual is regularly communing at an orthodox Lutheran congregation, visits one of my churches and wants to commune, I see no biblical grounds for not inviting him to the Lord's Supper.

I will express fellowship with Missouri Synod pastors who faithfully teach God's Word in its truth and purity and I will do so without insisting that they first clean up whatever messes exist in their congrega-

tions. I haven't cleaned up every mess I've inherited. I may even have made some messes of my own. We should judge one another by which we teach because that's how the Lord of the Church feeds the Church. He teaches. He is the Good Pastor. He feeds them with the wholesome words of eternal life.

When we find those wholesome words faithfully proclaimed we have no right to mark and avoid those who proclaim them.

The clear confession cannot be bridled by synodical rules. We cannot clear up the muddy waters by appealing to any synodical covenant. We may not respect an authority that says we must, for the sake of synodical unity, refuse fellowship with manifestly orthodox brothers and sisters in Christ. We do not confess by the authority of a synod. We confess by the mandate of the Lord who calls us to confess him before men. We confess as Christians. Christians confess together. That's the way it's done. And so we will make a clear confession by setting God's clear truth above any other consideration and let the chips fall where they may. Let God pick up the pieces. He's really the only one who knows how to do it.

RESOLUTION ON THE SANCTITY OF MARRIAGE

Whereas God instituted marriage in the Garden of Eden as a union between one man and one woman, and;

Whereas the Church has, since then, held and taught the above doctrine and;

Whereas the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod and, in particular, Trinity Lutheran Church in Austin, Texas, continues to hold and teach that marriage is between one man and one woman, and;

Whereas the 4th and 6th Commandments show the importance of the family unit to the stability of society and;

Whereas society is greatly endangered when marriage and the family structure is threatened, and

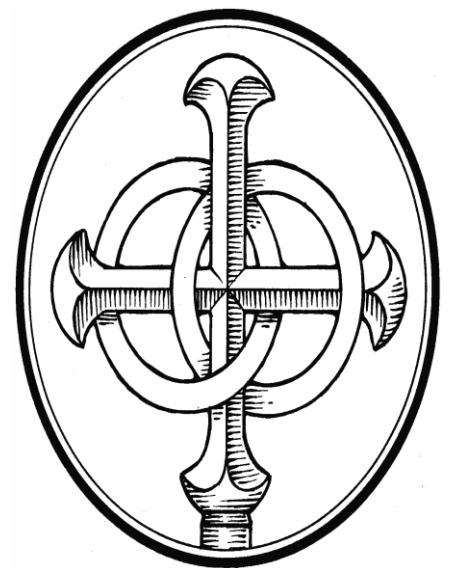
Whereas the denomination that Trinity Lutheran Church has been a member of since 1938, the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, passed a resolution in 1998 “To Affirm the Sanctity of Marriage and Reject Same-Sex Unions” (Res. 3-21);

Be it **RESOLVED**, that we, Trinity Lutheran Church, Austin, Texas, reaffirm our historic adherence to the Biblical doctrine that marriage is a holy and sacred union between one man and one woman, and;

Be it further **RESOLVED**, that our pastor will not officiate over any marriages inconsistent with these beliefs, and our church property may not be used for any marriage ceremony, reception, or other activity that would be inconsistent with our beliefs and this resolution;

And be it finally **RESOLVED**, that we encourage our members to help preserve this doctrine by living lives which model this commitment to the sanctity of marriage; in particular by neither participating in nor encouraging events contrary to the God ordained sanctity of marriage or this resolution.

Unanimously Adopted September 8, 2015 A.D.



October 2015

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
				1	2	3
				←Pastor	away	on
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Vaca-	tion	----→	10am Bible Class Choir 6:15 7:15 Colossians			
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
	5pm Confir- mation		10am Bible Class Choir 6:15 7:15 Colossians			
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
	5pm Confir- mation	6:30 Budget Meeting	10am Bible Stories Choir 6:15 7:15 Colossians			
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
Reformation Dinner	5pm Confir- mation		10am Bible Stories Choir 6:15 7:15 Colossians			

November 2015

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	5pm Confir- mation	7pm Voters Meeting	10am Bible Stories Choir 6:15 7:15 Colossians			
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
	5pm Confir- mation		10am Bible Stories Choir 6:15 7:15 Colossians			
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
	5pm Confir- mation		10am Bible Stories Choir 6:15 7:15 Colossians			
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
	5pm Confir- mation	6:30 Elders Meeting	Thanksgiving Eve Service 7:30 Commu- nion			
29	30					
	5pm Confir- mation					