

Statement of Confession with Documentation

For

Trinity Lutheran Church

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The Scriptural Basis for making a Statement of Confession:

Romans 16:17, "Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them."

1 Timothy 6:3-16, "If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness.. 5 From such withdraw yourself.... 11 But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. 12 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."

All Christians are commanded to avoid those who teach or tolerate falsehood in their midst. With great sadness, it has become increasingly apparent that our own beloved Missouri Synod (LCMS) -- has allowed her "official" teachings to become corrupted by Synodical resolutions which approve falsehood. And furthermore, --the LCMS has negated her "official" doctrine by the actual false teachings and practices of her members. However, before breaking fellowship, love calls on us to call the erring back even as Paul called Peter (Galatians 2) and Paul admonishes Pastor Titus (Titus 3:10) to warn an erring brother two times before breaking fellowship with him. A Statement of Confession is an extended call to repent, an urgent warning, which if unheeded will result in breaking altar and pulpit fellowship.

The Historical Basis for Being in a State of Confession:

The Synod's Commission on Theology and Church Relations defined this as follows in April 1970, "The commission is of the opinion that the term is quite generally employed in the current usage of our church to declare that an individual or congregation is in a state of protest because it holds that a particular teaching, practice, or action of the church against which the protest is lodged is contrary to the Word of God or endangers the Gospel. Used in this sense, the declaration that one is in statu confessionis [in a state of confession] is not tantamount to the breaking of fellowship. If however, the circumstances which called forth the protest are not corrected in due time, the implication is that the protest will lead to the severance of fellowship relations."

In 1971 the Synod in convention passed a resolution which said, "Resolved, that congregations and individuals who are in a 'state of protest' remain entitled to all benefits and privileges of synodical membership..."

We have identified six points in which the LCMS is teaching and/or tolerating falsehood.

1. Although the LCMS officially professes the historic and Scriptural teaching of closed communion, many congregations within the LCMS practice some form of open communion without being disciplined. In our Synodical President's convention reports he minimizes the present false practices as being only differing practical applications. ["At the same time significant disagreement exists in the Synod regarding the policies of admission to the Holy Communion, namely, who should be allowed or even encouraged to receive the Sacrament at the altars of our LCMS congregations. Some believe that all baptized Christians who believe in Jesus Christ, who are penitent, who accept the Real Presence of our Lord's body and blood, and who desire to amend their sinful lives should be welcome at our altars. Others believe that only members of LCMS congregations and congregations of other church bodies with whom the LCMS is in altar and pulpit fellowship should be communed at our altars, with no exceptions....This disagreement in practice has resulted in dissension and disharmony between pastors and congregations of the LCMS.."] ("The President's Report" Convention Workbook, pp. 4-5).]

2. Although the LCMS Constitution and bylaws requires the "exclusive use of doctrinally pure agendas, hymnbooks, and catechisms," many congregations are being encouraged to follow the false revivalistic worship of the Reformed without being disciplined. Our Synodical President has been heavily promoting Contemporary Worship from within his Synodically approved Ablaze! Program. His convention reports consider Contemporary Worship to be acceptable practical applications. ["In the past few decades, numerous congregations of the LCMS have introduced 'contemporary' worship forms and music in addition to and, in some instances, even in place of traditional liturgies and hymnody...May such God-pleasing worship flourish in the congregations of our Synod"] ("The President's Report, Convention Workbook, p. 5)!) The 2004 Convention Resolution 2-04 has directed the Commission on Worship toward "the development of diverse worship." ["Resolved, that the Commission on Worship initiate a process leading toward the development of diverse worship resources for use in The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod"] (Convention Proceedings, 2004, p. 124).]

3. Although the LCMS Constitution requires the "renunciation of unionism and syncretism of every description," our Synodical President approved of the participation of District President Benke in a unionistic and syncretistic service at Yankee Stadium. Since that time, as well as in his sermon and reports to the 2004 Convention, he continues to maintain publicly that his decision was correct, and furthermore, that his decision is the "position of the LCMS." The 2004 Convention passed Resolution 3-06A, "To Commend the CTCR Document Guidelines for Participation in Civic Events" (GPCE) which effectively denies the existence of syncretism by claiming that Christian and non-Christian clergy could "take turns" offering prayers without it being joint worship. ["Resolved, that we commend the CTCR's report, 'Guidelines for participation in Civic Events' for study to help pastors, teachers and church workers make decisions about participation in civic events"] (Convention Proceedings, 2004, p. 131).]

4. At the Synodical Convention in Wichita (1989), the unscriptural office of "lay minister" was created in direct violation of Augsburg Confession XIV. Instead of putting an end to the practice as was recommended by 2001 Resolution 3-08 (and endorsed by our seminaries) [That resolution reads in part: "Resolved, That this convention rescinds the 1989 convention Res. 3-05B (establishment of licensed lay deacons to provide pastoral services) and the 1995 St. Louis convention Res. 3-07A (requiring such licensed laymen to complete a seminary program for ordination); and be it further Resolved, That after the last day of this convention no new or renewal licenses to serve as a lay deacon shall be offered; and be it further Resolved, That the Synod instruct its Districts to terminate any programs they may have for the training of men for Word and Sacrament ministries by September 2002" (Today's Business, 2001, p. 74).] a substitute resolution 3-08B endorsed and continued this practice. [That resolution reads in part: "Resolved, That the Synod authorize its districts to continue training lay deacons...Resolved, That this convention rescind 1995 St. Louis convention Res. 3-07A (requiring such licensed laymen to complete a seminary program for ordination)..(Convention Proceedings, 2001, 139).] With the passage of 2004 Resolution 5-09, the Convention directs that "the Synod in convention recognize, affirm, and encourage the work of the Districts in developing ministry-equipping programs for laity." Therefore, those who publicly teach in the Church or administer the sacraments are no longer required to be called and ordained clergymen.

5. With the passage of 2004 Convention Resolution 3-08A, "To Affirm the Conclusions of the 1994 CTCR Report: The Service of Women in Congregational and Synodical Offices," our Synod has changed its official teaching on the "order of creation" (that a woman is not "to have authority over a man," 1 Timothy 2:12), and thereby approved women to serve in every humanly established office, including elder and congregational chairman. ["Resolved,...that women may serve in humanly established offices in the church as long as the functions of these offices do not make them eligible to carry out 'official functions [that] would involve public accountability for the function of the pastoral office';" The official Proceedings go on to say, "During extended discussion, an amendment was offered to strike all words in the second resolve after the word church [in bold above] and replace with except congregation elders, congregation presidents, and communion assistants...[T]he motion failed [Yes: 472; No: 605]" (Convention Proceedings, 2004, pp. 132, 133.) The CTCR report adopted in 2004 failed to be adopted at the 1995 convention. "Resolved, that the Synod in convention urge that the report of the CTCR on The Service of Women in Congregational and Synodical Offices together with the "Dissenting Opinion [written by 5 members of the CTCR], be studied by the members of Synod....Resolved, that the members of Synod continue to uphold its position on women serving in congregational offices and to abide by the position as stated in the 1970 opinion of the Commission on Constitutional Matters (CCM) that congregations may allow women to hold all congregational offices except those of chairman, vice chairman, elder, and any other board or policy-making committee 'whose chairmanship the congregation might wish to restrict to men.' (Convention Proceedings, 1995, p. 120).]

6. With the passage of 2004 Resolution 8-01A, "Ecclesiastical Supervision and Dispute Resolution," widespread changes in the process removed a congregation's and pastor's right to initiate formal proceedings so that each member of Synod is held to the Word of God. Now that power lies solely in the discretion of the District Presidents and Synodical President. ["The action to

commence expulsion of a District President or an officer of the Synod from membership in the Synod is the sole responsibility of the synodical President who has the ecclesiastical supervision of such member..." "The action to commence expulsion of a synodical President from membership in the Synod is the responsibility of the District Presidents of the Council of Presidents, who collectively comprise the ecclesiastical supervisors of all the respective Districts of the Synod." "The action to commence expulsion of an individual from membership in the Synod is the sole responsibility of the District President or the synodical President who has the ecclesiastical supervision of such member." (Convention Proceedings, 2004, p. 169-170, 172, 175).] Furthermore, the ruling of the Committee on Constitutional Matters, i.e. that the prior approval of an ecclesiastical supervisor precludes the possibility of a member being disciplined for wrongdoing, was approved by the Synodical Convention. [" May a District President who has acted in a matter after receiving the advice of an authorization of the synodical President be charged under Bylaw 2.27 for such an act, which charge could result in his removal from his position as District President as well as from the roster of the Synod?" (The same question was then asked about ordained or commissioned ministers or member congregations.) The answer "Having promised supervision and counsel, the Synod is precluded from taking any action to terminate the membership of its member who, when performing his/her official duties, follows the advice and counsel of the ecclesiastical supervisor designated by the Synod" (Commission on Constitutional Matters, January 20-21, 2003).] The Word of God is no longer the "only rule and norm of faith and life" in the LCMS.

In order to retain our membership in the Missouri Synod with a clear conscience, we must plainly state that we do not agree with nor do we tolerate these false teachings. The above six points are not occasional errors that are in the process of being corrected. Either these false doctrines have been approved by our Synod in Convention and become the new "official teaching," or the widespread practice of false doctrine and corresponding lack of discipline means they are the de facto teaching of our Synod. Those who desire to continue to have fellowship with us need to disavow these new false teachings. In keeping with God's Word, that we not participate (share) with those who do not continue to hold to the Apostolic teaching, we hereby declare that from June 28, 2005 we are in a state of confession against these errors. If these errors are not addressed "in due time", we will refuse altar and pulpit fellowship with those who err in these six points or with those who practice fellowship with those who err in these six points.

Those who teach, practice and support false teachings include not only those who actively announce their acceptance of falsehood, but also those who by refusing to take a stand show that they either agree with the falsehood or show by their toleration that they do not consider the false teaching to be important.

This is NOT a decision to leave the LCMS! This is a godly decision to stay and confess the truth while bearing, for a time, those caught up in falsehood. During this "state of protest," Trinity Lutheran Church retains "all benefits and privileges of Synodical membership" as the 1971 Resolution 5-01 says.

Out of love for our neighbor, we do not want to proceed too quickly, lest the Lord not be able to use us as a witness to other congregations, pastors and members. As a result of pastors shielding their members from the Synod's problems and Synodical publications only giving one side of the story,

there are many who do not know of the present false practices and approved false teachings. Many have not been taught for years and thus are not able to distinguish the intentionally vague and changing terminology that seeks to hide the new falsehood under the guise of truth.

Over the next three years, we pledge to take advantage of every opportunity to speak the truth in love in order to call back our Synod to her former doctrine and practice. Furthermore, we willingly offer our service to those who have questions regarding this statement of confession.

Our Prayer:

O Lord, give our people the wisdom to discern the false teachings that were approved at our last Synodical Convention, and the false practices that are openly tolerated. Through our neglect in teaching the Word of God and the lack of discipline among our pastors, You have given us over to our own desires. Do not abandon us now, but use this crisis to awaken Your pastors and people to the importance of the true faith in Jesus Christ. Bring healing to our Synod so that we repent of our lack of attention, and trust in the Word. Grant our Synod a peace and concord based on a common confession of the truth, for the sake of Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Dr. Bart Goddard, President Dr. Lynne Inman, Secretary

Rev. Paul R. Harris, Pastor

State of Confession Explanation

Two requirements for orthodoxy (being a correct teaching church)

- (1) **Public Profession** -- "official" statements from convention, etc.
- (2) **Actual Practice** -- actual teaching and practice from pulpits, publication, etc.

Note: The casual intrusion of error into an orthodox church is not a reason to withdraw, provided that error is being combated and eventually removed.

Why name the false teachings

We list six, so that others know what we are calling our Synod to repent of.

Possible responses to falsehood

1. Approve of falsehood and promote it.
2. Tolerate falsehood and thus permit it to have an equal footing with truth.
3. Protest it, fight it (State of Confession) in an effort to persuade the Church at large, and eventually separate from falsehood. This includes not just those who follow #1, but also #2.

Reasons for a State of Confession

1. Follow God's Word which commands us to confess against departures from true teaching (faith toward God).
2. Warn others of the dangers of tolerating or approving falsehood (fervent love of our neighbor).

Outcome Desired

With clear consciences we can remain members of the Missouri Synod and use the opportunities we have to make others aware of the false teaching within our Synod. We can encourage our brothers to confess against the falsehood, so that our beloved Synod is not changed, but returned to her former pure confession.