

DECLARATION of FAITH

and

Policy and Position Statements

of

The American Association of Lutheran Churches



(All policies in this manual were approved and accepted at the National AALC Constituting Convention, November 7, 1987)

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I.
A DECLARATION OF FAITH AND INTENTION
of Biblical and Evangelical Lutheran Who Covenant Together to Form
The American Association of Lutheran Churches

We covenant together in the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in order to form an association of Biblical and evangelical Lutheran congregations. As laity and pastors it is our desire to make clear testimony of our faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior as revealed in the Bible – the divinely inspired, inerrant Word of God and the only infallible authority for Christian faith and life. (II Peter 1:19-21, II Timothy 3:14-17) ALC Constitution 3.10)

Furthermore, we declare that we desire to be guided in our interpretation of the Word of God by the ecumenical creeds and the confessions of the Lutheran Church.

We also declare our intention to form the American Association of Lutheran Churches in which the authority of the congregation in all matters pertaining to its life and mission is not abrogated or diminished by any hierarchical church structure.

It is our intent to make a clear testimony to the Biblical emphasis that the new life in Christ is the life lived in thankful response to the grace of God in keeping with the moral imperatives which God declares in His Word (e.g. Galatians 5, Ephesians 5).

Our intention is to utilize the 1960 Constitution of the ALC as the format for the constitution of this American Association of Lutheran Churches.

It is, furthermore, our intention that this American Association of Lutheran Churches rejects the modernist practice of placing the method of science as an authority above Scripture. Furthermore, we acknowledge that there are “open questions” in theology and church practice.

Inasmuch, as it is the primary mission of the church to win and hold people in a saving relationship with Jesus Christ, as mandated in the “Great Commission,” the emphasis of this Association shall be to enable congregations in their evangelism, home and world mission outreach.

II.
CONFESSION OF FAITH

The American Association of Lutheran Churches accepts all the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments as a whole and in all their parts as the divinely inspired, revealed, and inerrant Word of God, and submits to this as the only infallible authority in all matters of faith and life.

As brief and true statements of the doctrines of the Word of God, this Church accepts and confesses the following Symbols, subscription to which shall be required of all its members, both congregations and individuals:

- a. The ancient ecumenical Creeds: the Apostolic, the Nicene, and the Athanasian.
- b. The unaltered Augsburg Confession and Luther’s Small Catechism.

As further elaboration of and in accord with these Lutheran Symbols, this Church also receives the other documents in the Book of Concord of 1580: the Apology, Luther’s Large Catechism, the Smalcald Articles, and the Formula of Concord; and recognizes them as normative for its theology.

The American Association of Lutheran Churches accepts without reservation the symbolical books of the evangelical Lutheran church, not insofar as but because they are the presentation and explanation of the pure doctrine of the Word of God and a summary of the faith of the evangelical Lutheran Church.

III.

THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

The primary mission of the Church is Christ's Great Commission (Matthew 28:19)...to go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing and teaching them to observe all that God has commanded...This task is a never ending one, not only in terms of reaching the unevangelized peoples of the world with the Gospel, but also in terms of evangelizing every generation. Until such time as the Association sends out missionaries, every congregation is encouraged to investigate possibilities of supporting missionaries through a variety of groups such as LAMP, World Mission Prayer League, World Confessional Lutheran Association, etc.

IV.

EVANGELISM

We are called to be witnesses (Acts 1:8). This implies encouragement of and training for the members of each congregation in evangelism. This is not an option for Christians, but is part and parcel of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19). There are several good training programs available. To be witnesses also implies starting new congregations in our own country. To this end we encourage congregations to be aware of possibilities in their own areas and with other congregations jointly to explore possible ways of starting mission congregations. Every congregation is encouraged to give prayer, personnel and monetary support for the starting of new congregations.

We are also concerned with renewal in our congregations. To this end we need to take seriously passages such as Ephesians 4:7-16 and Article VII of the Augsburg Confession. The goal of the word of God (taught and preached) is to bring people into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ and to nurture that relationship that it may grow and bear fruit to God's glory. Care must be exercised that local and national structures truly reflect this goal, for when this takes place then witnessing, evangelism and world mission will flourish.

V.

RESOLUTION CONCERNING ORDINATION

WHEREAS the American Association of Lutheran Churches submits to Scriptures as the only infallible authority in all matters of faith and life, and

WHEREAS both who favor and those who oppose the ordination of women base their positions on their interpretation of Scripture, and

WHEREAS the position of those who oppose the ordination of women also find support in history, tradition, and majority opinion, and

WHEREAS Scripture indicates that God calls and uses both men and women in different areas of ministry; therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED that the American Association of Lutheran Churches ordain men into the ministry of Word and Sacrament and encourage women to seek and consider God's call into all other areas of ministry;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the American Association of Lutheran Churches continue to study the role of men and women in the Church in the light of the Scriptures and with the enlightening of the Holy Spirit.

VI.

STATEMENT ON CHRISTIAN / PARISH EDUCATION

One of the primary ministries of the Church is nurturing or Christian/Parish education. The Apostle Paul included the gift of teaching in his listing of the gifts of the Spirit (I Corinthians 12). Luther says this is an urgent task and hence wrote his large and small catechisms (see also his introductions to these two documents in the *Book of Concord*). A number of Jesus' parables dealt with the need for growth (e.g. Matt. 13, Mark 4 and Luke 13) which implies nurturing and feeding the Christian life.

In thinking of Christian education, we want to affirm that the Bible is to remain the primary textbook at all levels-nursery school, Sunday School, confirmation and adult classes. Our goal should always be that every Christian will have a growing and working knowledge of the Bible (see Ephesians 4:8-16). All literature used for any study group should be judged on the basis of its use of and faithfulness to the Bible as set out in our Statement of Faith. We do not push any particular supply source, but will be responsible as a Church to share concerns and warnings about literature we know about that is not faithful to the Word of God.

Our Lutheran Confessions (as found in the *Book of Concord*) also need to receive attention in our Christian Education programs. These, along with the Word of God, are to be seen as a benchmark in evaluating all our teaching materials. We would encourage every congregation to have an overall Christian education plan; to emphasize adult education; and to share information with other congregations as to good Biblical materials that are faithful to our Lutheran heritage.

In our Christian/Parish education programs we need to remember and to teach accordingly, that education is not only "head knowledge," or in educational terms, must include the cognitive (knowledge) area, the affective (beliefs, attitudes, values, feelings) area, and the doing or skill (application to life) area. The Scriptures note favorably that Jesus "increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man" (Luke 2:52). James emphasizes the idea that true faith (as opposed to simply claimed faith) expresses itself in action. Further, we need to recognize levels of growth in these areas. The saying is applicable here, that when we stop growing, we start dying. If our spiritual life is not growing in these three areas all of our life, then our spiritual life is in danger of dying.

VII.

STATEMENT ON GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT

We recognize that Scripturally and historically every congregation will have unique aspects of ministry within the larger body of Christ, as the Holy Spirit wills and gives, just as individuals receive and manifest various gifts of ministry and service within the congregation, as the Holy Spirit wills and gives.

The AALC receives with joy this diversity of individuals and congregations. We urge upon congregations and their leadership (both clergy and lay) to also rejoice in this diversity and be diligent in exercising faithful and sound teaching (as we confess in our Statement of Faith), guidance and correction as needed in all areas, always subject to the Scriptures, letting all things be done decently and in order, always governed by love.

We will attempt to provide study materials, guides and bibliographies to cover the Scriptures and various perspectives. As a beginning we suggest the following Scriptures:

Mark 16:14-17; Romans 12:4-13; I Corinthians 12:13-14; Ephesians 4:11-16; I Peter 4:10-11

VIII.

BIBLICAL STEWARDSHIP

We encourage Biblical Stewardship as an undergirding for the primary mission of the church (see such passages as I Peter 4:9-11, Luke 12:35-48 and II Corinthians 9). We need to refrain from constant haranguing about money and concentrate on solid teaching. When true and real Biblical needs are there, God's people will respond with their stewardship of time, talent and money. To this end The AALC will recommend solid Biblical teaching approaches and material, incorporated into the church's teaching ministry.

IX.

POLICY STATEMENT REGARDING THE SANCTITY OF LIFE AND ABORTION

In dependence upon God, with love for those who are fearful of bearing children and with charity toward those who hold differing opinions, regarding the sanctity of life and abortion, we of AALC:

1. Affirm that human life from conception is created in the image of God and is always sacred. Galatians 1:15, Jeremiah 1:5.
2. Understand that an induced abortion is a sin before God against mankind because it ends a unique human life for which God has a plan that would bring glory to Him and benefit to fellow humans beings. Psalm 139:1, 7, 13.
3. Advocate the exercise of sexual and procreative acts only within the framework of marriage in accordance with the teaching of God's Word so as to diminish the temptation to turn to abortion.
4. Deplore the legal permissiveness that denies protection to the weakest and most defenseless of the human family, the unborn. We view this as an irresponsible and morally reprehensible neglect of God's gift of human life.
5. Reject the practice of induced abortion.
6. Acknowledge that there may be rare cases in which the mother's physical life is clearly and directly threatened and where all other possible alternatives to saving the lives of both mother and child have been exhausted, that abortion may be a tragic option.
7. Recognize that civil law is a significant factor in shaping the judgment of citizens concerning that which is right and wrong. The current legal climate of total permissiveness regarding abortion teaches that human life has diminished significance or value.
8. Urge that pastors, counselors and others dealing with the "other victim," the mother herself, as well as fathers and others responsible for and involved in the practice of abortion, be knowledgeable and sensitive about the profound guilt, remorse and shame that accompanies abortion and be diligent in ministering the Gospel of forgiveness and new life through Christ Jesus to them.
9. Urge pastors to lovingly counsel women with problem pregnancies to avail themselves of options in dealing with the child other than abortion and that we strive to provide loving care, guidance and means to facilitate such options for the mother.
10. Urge Christians everywhere to patiently strive through prayer, proclamation of God's Word regarding the sanctity of human life and all Christian and legal means to effect the changes in law necessary to provide full protection for all unborn and born children.

X.
AALC POSITION ON HOMOSEXUALITY

The AALC regards homosexual desires and behavior as sinful and contrary to God's intent for His children. It rejects the contention that homosexual desires, behavior and/or lifestyle are simply another form of sexuality equally valid with the God-given male-female pattern. We urge Pastors and Congregations to initiate Scriptural teaching in appropriate situations so as to counter the growing social/cultural approval of homosexual attitudes and mindset.

X.
STATEMENT ON DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

Divorced pastors who apply for membership on The AALC clergy roster may be received who have expressed and demonstrated a sincere repentance over the sin of divorce and this repentance has been as publicly declared as is appropriate.

The Clergy Commission and the Board of Trustees may exercise gracious judgment to uphold the integrity of the Gospel and The AALC.

XII.
INTER-CHURCH COOPERATION

L.C.U.S.A.

That The AALC seeks cooperation with Lutheran Council U.S.A. wherever it feels it is not compromising its stand.

- A. Military Chaplaincy which already includes Lutheran Church Missouri Synod
- B. Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS)
- C. Lutheran world Relief

ALTAR FELLOWSHIP

We have officially inquired into pulpit and altar fellowship with the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, Wisconsin, Association of Free Lutheran Congregations, Conservative Lutheran Association and the Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

National Council of Churches and World Council of Churches

This association will not become a member of the above organizations and will not support by representation, money, or service, the above organizations.

LUTHERAN INDEPENDENT MINISTRIES

The AALC acknowledges and is supportive of the L.B.I. (Lutheran Bible Institute) movement.

The AALC acknowledges and is supportive of the World Mission Prayer League.

The AALC acknowledges and is supportive of the Lutheran Evangelistic Movement

The AALC acknowledges and is supportive of other conservative-Evangelical Lutheran independent organizations.

INTER-CHURCH COOPERATION

We do affirm the Lutheran position of "Lutheran pulpits for Lutheran Pastors." We also recognize that while we use sound judgment with regard to Scriptural and doctrinal integrity, it will be appropriate at times to allow the witness of others in our pulpits.

We will cooperate with reformed Pastors in community events such as ministerial meetings, graduations and other celebrations.