

**Evidence of Errors in  
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod**



**Association of Confessing Evangelical  
Lutheran Congregations**

# **IV. Unionism & Syncretism**

October 04, 2010

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Note: This document is one of several ACELC documents on evidence of errors in the LCMS. As the documents are completed they will be posted to the ACELC web site at <http://www.acelc.net/>. Topics include:

- Pure Doctrine
- Holy Communion
- The Divine Service and Liturgical Offices
- Unionism and Syncretism
- Service of Women in the Church
- The Office of the Holy Ministry
- The Unbiblical Removal of Pastors from their Calls
- The Church’s Mission and Her Evangelistic Task
- Ecclesiastical Supervision
- Dispute Resolution

Additional topics may be added as needed. If you have a comment, question, or concern, please contact the ACELC (<http://www.acelc.net/>). Your input will be seriously considered.

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The references from the Lutheran Confessions include some words or passages from the German 1580 or Latin 1584 edition, these are set apart with < >.

### Record of Document Updates

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## A Fraternal Admonition to Correct the Errors of Our Beloved Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

### Preamble

"And they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship in the breaking of bread and in the prayers." Acts 2:42

C.F.W. Walther, (first President of the LCMS), wrote:

"A fellowship in which the Word of God is fundamentally falsified, or in which a fundamental falsification of it is tolerated, is not a true orthodox church, but a false, heterodox church or sect."

*(Essays For the Church Vol I, "Communion Fellowship," Concordia Publishing House, 1992, p.207)*

Presented in this document are concerns over variant teachings and practices by some pastors, congregations, and institutions of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod. These errors have largely been ignored and even tolerated by those elected for the supervision of doctrine and practice in our fellowship. Even the Synod itself in convention has adopted resolutions that violate our fidelity as a synod to Holy Scripture and our Lutheran Confessions.

Many attempts have been made to address and correct these errors. Numerous pastors, laity, congregations, respected doctors of the Church, circuits, district pastoral conferences, even sister synods and their pastoral conferences have taken public issue with these errors and the recent "positions" the LCMS has taken in its past conventions, but to no avail. Districts also have sought redress of these errors through resolutions and overtures to the Synod in Convention only to have them never come to the convention floor for consideration.

In addition, various publications and organizations have attempted to address the adoption of worship forms, texts, and ceremonies that come from alien and errant confessions - as to whether this may be done without also adopting their error. Church history and the inseparable correlation between doctrine and practice teach us that how we pray and worship is in fact our faith, our belief, and our confession (*Lex orandi, lex credendi*).

At stake is the very doctrine upon which the Church stands or falls - the genuine confession of justification by grace alone through faith alone for the sake of Christ's death and resurrection alone. As the Lutheran Confessions state, "this article of justification by faith is the chief article of the entire Christian doctrine." [SD III, 6] When this chief article is at stake so also is the evangelical mission of the Church in our midst, and likewise the ongoing presence of the marks of the Church, and thus the LCMS as a light of the true Gospel of Christ.

Therefore we are compelled out of faithfulness to Holy Scripture and our Lutheran Confessions (to which The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod claims fidelity) to seek Biblical reproof and correction of these errors. Our cause is to offer a fraternal critique of our teaching and practice, and to call our much loved Missouri Synod, her pastors, congregations, and institutions to repentance and back to what she has previously claimed as her source and norm of faith and life – Holy Scripture and its correct exposition, the Book of Concord of 1580.

In this process we seek not to contend over the trivial, nor matters merely of denominational custom or tradition, but over those matters that challenge our very fidelity to the changeless faith that was once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3). It is our intent to hold the LCMS to the Scripturally faithful teaching of the Book of Concord as catholic teaching and not simply something that we, as Lutherans, believe. Thus, when we speak of theological "positions" and the "position of synod," this should be understood as nothing less than what the Athanasian Creed calls "the catholic (or universally held) faith."

It is our sincere prayer that the LCMS would give serious and fraternal consideration to the words here given according to their benevolent intention. Our mission/purpose is to restore what has been compromised – that is a fellowship of unabashed confessional Lutheran congregations in North America and throughout the world for the sake of our children and grandchildren – and yes, for the life of the world. *May God the Holy Spirit, through the Word of Law and Gospel, call, gather, enlighten and sanctify the Church gathered within the Missouri Synod!*

***(Please note: All evidence for the existence of error is only illustrative, not exhaustive.)***

#### IV. Unionism and Syncretism:

**Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions condemn every expression of unionistic worship (that is, joint worship with other Christians with whom we are not in doctrinal agreement), or syncretistic worship (that is, joint worship with those who are not Christian). Yet in our day there are some LCMS officers, pastors and congregations who, with impunity, have joined in worship services with those with whom we are not in doctrinal agreement, and even with those of non-Christian, false religions. We reject this error.**

**A. Original Position** - Pure doctrine cannot exist or be presented side-by-side with false doctrine without comprising the truth of God and the Gospel which pure doctrine reveals for the salvation of man. Therefore, it is sinful for clergy to participate in leading joint worship between orthodox and heterodox fellowships.

##### 1. The Witness of Holy Scripture:

###### **Exodus 20:3**

You shall have no other gods before me.

###### **Deuteronomy 13:3-5:**

<sup>3</sup> you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams. For the LORD your God is testing you, to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. <sup>4</sup> You shall walk after the LORD your God and fear him and keep his commandments and obey his voice, and you shall serve him and hold fast to him. <sup>5</sup> But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has taught rebellion against the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you out of the house of slavery, to make you leave the way in which the LORD your God commanded you to walk. So you shall purge the evil from your midst.

###### **John 1:9-11**

<sup>9</sup> The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. <sup>10</sup> He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. <sup>11</sup> He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.

###### **John 17:20-26:**

<sup>20</sup> "I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, <sup>21</sup> that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. <sup>22</sup> The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, <sup>23</sup> I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. <sup>24</sup> Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. <sup>25</sup> O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. <sup>26</sup> I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them."

###### **I Corinthians 1:10**

<sup>10</sup> I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment.

**I Corinthians 11:19**

<sup>19</sup> ...for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized.

**II Corinthians 6:14-17**

<sup>14</sup> Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? <sup>15</sup> What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? <sup>16</sup> What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said,

"I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

<sup>17</sup> Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you,

**II Corinthians 11:13-15**

<sup>13</sup> For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. <sup>14</sup> And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. <sup>15</sup> So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds.

**Romans 14:23b**

For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.

**Romans 16:17-18**

<sup>17</sup> I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them. <sup>18</sup> For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive.

**Galatians 1:6-8**

<sup>6</sup> I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— <sup>7</sup> not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. <sup>8</sup> But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed.

**I Timothy 6:3-5, 11**

<sup>3</sup> If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, <sup>4</sup> he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, <sup>5</sup> and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain...

<sup>11</sup> But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness.

**II Timothy 3:1-17**

<sup>1</sup> But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. <sup>2</sup> For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, <sup>3</sup> heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, <sup>4</sup> treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure

rather than lovers of God,<sup>5</sup> having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people.<sup>6</sup> For among them are those who creep into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and led astray by various passions,<sup>7</sup> always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth.<sup>8</sup> Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men corrupted in mind and disqualified regarding the faith.<sup>9</sup> But they will not get very far, for their folly will be plain to all, as was that of those two men.

<sup>10</sup> You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness,<sup>11</sup> my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra—which persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,<sup>13</sup> while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.<sup>14</sup> But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it<sup>15</sup> and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.<sup>16</sup> All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,<sup>17</sup> that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.

### **II Peter 2:1-3**

<sup>1</sup> But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction.<sup>2</sup> And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed.<sup>3</sup> And in their greed they will exploit you with false words. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.

### **I John 1:3-7**

<sup>3</sup> ...that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.<sup>4</sup> And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

<sup>5</sup> This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.<sup>6</sup> If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.<sup>7</sup> But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

### **II John 7-11**

<sup>7</sup> For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist.<sup>8</sup> Watch yourselves, so that you may not lose what we have worked for, but may win a full reward.<sup>9</sup> Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son.<sup>10</sup> If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting,<sup>11</sup> for whoever greets him takes part in his wicked works.

### **Jude 3-4**

<sup>3</sup> Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.<sup>4</sup> For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were design-

nated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

## 2. The Witness of The Lutheran Confessions:

### **Preface (to Emperor Charles V) to the Augsburg Confession 4**

[4] Then we may embrace and maintain the future of one pure and true religion under one Christ, doing battle under Him [Psalm 24:8], living in unity and concord in the one Christian Church.

### **Augsburg Confession, Article XXVIII (Church Authority) 1-13**

[1] There has been great controversy about the power of the bishops, in which some have terribly confused the power of the Church with the power of the State. [2] This confusion has produced great war and riot. All the while the popes, claiming the Power of the Keys, have instituted new services and burdened consciences with Church discipline and excommunication. But they have also tried to transfer the kingdoms of this world to the Church by taking the Empire away from the emperor. [3] Learned and godly people have condemned these errors in the Church for a long time. [4] Therefore, our teachers, in order to comfort people's consciences, were constrained to show the difference between the authority of the Church and the authority of the State. They taught that both of them are to be held in reverence and honor, as God's chief blessings on earth, because they have God's command.

[5] Our teachers' position is this: the authority of the Keys [Matthew 16:19], or the authority of the bishops—according to the Gospel—is a power or commandment of God, to preach the Gospel, to forgive and retain sins, and to administer Sacraments. [6] Christ sends out His apostles with this command, "As the Father has sent Me, even so I am sending you . . . Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of anyone, they are forgiven; if you withhold forgiveness from anyone, it is withheld" (John 20:21-22). [7] And in Mark 16:15, Christ says, "Go . . . proclaim the Gospel to the whole creation."

[8] This authority is exercised only by teaching or preaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments, either to many or to individuals, according to their calling. In this way are given not only bodily, but also eternal things: eternal righteousness, the Holy Spirit, and eternal life. [9] These things cannot reach us except by the ministry of the Word and the Sacraments, as Paul says, "The Gospel. . . is the power of God for salvation to everyone that believes" (Romans 1:16). [10] Therefore, the Church has the authority to grant eternal things and exercises this authority only by the ministry of the Word. So it does not interfere with civil government anymore than the art of singing interferes with civil government. [11] For civil government deals with other things than the Gospel does. Civil rulers do not defend minds, but bodies and bodily things against obvious injuries. They restrain people with the sword and physical punishment in order to preserve civil justice and peace [Romans 13:1-7].

[12] Therefore, the Church's authority and the State's authority must not be confused. The Church's authority has its own commission to teach the Gospel and to administer the Sacraments [Matthew 28:19-20]. [13] Let it not break into the office of another. Let it not transfer the kingdoms of this world to itself. Let it not abolish the laws of civil rulers. Let it not abolish lawful obedience. Let it not interfere with judgments about civil ordinances or contracts. Let it not dictate laws to civil authorities about the form of society.

**Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Article IV (Justification) 33-35**

[33] These testimonies are so clear that, to use Augustine's words in this case, they do not need a keen understanding, but only an attentive hearer. If the carnal mind is hostile against God, the flesh certainly does not love God. If it cannot be subject to God's Law, it cannot love God. If the carnal mind is hostile against God, the flesh sins, even when we do outward civil works. If it cannot be subject to God's Law, it certainly sins even when it has deeds that are excellent and praiseworthy according to human judgment. [34] The adversaries consider only the teachings of the Second Table, which contain civil righteousness that reason understands. Content with this, they think that they fulfill God's Law. In the meantime, they do not see the First Table, which commands that we love God, that we declare God is certainly angry with sin, that we truly fear God, that we declare God certainly hears prayer. But the human heart without the Holy Spirit either feels secure and despises God's judgment, or in punishment flees from God and hates Him when He judges. [35] Therefore, it does not obey the First Table. So, contempt for God, doubt about God's Word, and doubt about the threats and promises dwell in human nature. People truly sin, even when—without the Holy Spirit—they do virtuous works. This is because they act with a wicked heart according to Romans 14:23: "Whatever does not proceed from faith is sin." For such people do their works with contempt for God, just as Epicurus does not believe that God cares for him or that he is regarded or heard by God. This contempt ruins works that seem virtuous because God judges the heart.

**Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Article VII (The Church) 48**

[48] Ungodly teachers are to be deserted because they no longer act in Christ's place, but are antichrists. Christ says, "Beware of false prophets" (Matthew 7:15). Paul says, "If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:9).

**Power and Primacy of the Pope (The Marks of the Antichrist) 58**

[58] The cruelty he exercises <against godly Christians> is also clear. God clearly commands us to flee idolatry [1 Corinthians 10:14], godless doctrine [1 Timothy 6:3-4], and unjust cruelty [Proverbs 11:17]. On this account, all the godly have great, compelling, and clear reasons for not obeying the pope. These compelling reasons comfort the godly against all of the reproaches usually cast against them about causing offenses, schism, and discord. [59] Those who agree with the pope and defend his doctrine and <>false> worship [*Gottesdienst*] defile themselves with idolatry and blasphemous opinions. They become guilty of the blood of the godly, whom the pope persecutes [see Acts 9:1, 4-5; 1 Corinthians 11:27]. They detract from God's glory and hinder the Church's welfare because they confirm errors and crimes through all generations.

**Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration (Summary, Rule and Norm) 14-20**

[14] It is not only necessary that the pure, wholesome doctrine be rightly presented for the preservation of pure doctrine and for thorough, permanent, godly unity in the Church, but it is also necessary that the opponents who teach otherwise be reprov'd (1 Timothy 3; [2 Timothy 3:16;] Titus 1:9). Faithful shepherds, as Luther says, should do both things: (a) feed or nourish the lambs and (b) resist the wolves. Then the sheep may flee from strange voices (John 10:5-12) and may separate the precious from the worthless (Jeremiah 15:19).

[15] Regarding these matters, we have thoroughly and clearly told one another the following: a distinction should and must by all means be kept between (a) unnecessary and useless wrangling (the Church should not allow itself to be disturbed by this, since it

destroys more than it builds up) and (b) when the kind of controversy arises that involves the articles of faith or the chief points of Christian doctrine. Then the false, opposite doctrine must be reprov'd for defense of the truth.

[16] The aforesaid writings offer the Christian reader—who delights in and has a love for the divine truth—clear and correct information about each and every disputed article of our Christian religion. They show what he should regard and receive as right and true according to God's Word of the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures. They also show what he should reject, shun, and avoid as false and wrong. The truth must be preserved distinctly and clearly and distinguished from all errors. Nothing must be hidden and concealed under common words. Therefore, we have clearly and directly declared ourselves to one another on the chief and most important articles taken one by one. At the present time these articles have come into controversy so that there might be a public, definite testimony, not only for those now living, but also for our descendants. We make known what is and should remain the unanimous understanding and judgment <decision> of our churches in reference to the articles in controversy:

[17] 1. First, we reject and condemn all heresies and errors that were rejected and condemned in the primitive, ancient, orthodox Church, on the true, firm ground of the holy, divine Scriptures.

[18] 2. Second, as just mentioned, we reject and condemn all sects and heresies that are rejected in the writings of the comprehensive summary of the Confession of our churches.

[19] 3. Third, within thirty years divisions arose among some theologians of the Augsburg Confession because of the *Interim* and for other reasons. Therefore, it has been our purpose to state and to declare plainly, purely, and clearly in thesis and antithesis our faith and confession about each and every one of these divisions. This means we state the true doctrine and the opposite doctrine, in order that the foundation of divine truth might be clear in all articles. In this way all unlawful, doubtful, suspicious, and condemned doctrines might be exposed <distinctly repudiated> (wherever and in whatever books they may be found, and whoever may have written them, or who even now may be ready to defend them). So everyone may be faithfully warned against the errors, which are spread here and there in some theologians' writings. No one should be misled in this matter by the reputation of any person. [20] From this declaration the Christian reader will inform himself in every emergency. He will compare it with the writings listed above, and he will find out exactly what was confessed in the beginning about each article in the comprehensive summary of our religion and faith. He will note what was later restated at different times and is repeated by us in this document. He will see that it is in no way contradictory, but is the simple, unchangeable, permanent truth. Therefore, we do not change from one doctrine to another, as our adversaries falsely assert. We eagerly desire to be found loyal to the once-delivered Augsburg Confession and its unanimously accepted Christian meaning. Through God's grace we desire to abide firmly and constantly by the Augsburg Confession in opposition to all corruptions that have entered.

**Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Article VII (The Holy Supper) 96**

[96] The third, that the Word of God is not false or deceitful.

**Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Article X (Church Practices) 5, 10, 16**

[5] Under the title and excuse of outward adiaphora, things are proposed that are in principle contrary to God's Word, although painted another color. These ceremonies are not to be regarded as adiaphora, in which one is free to do as he wants. They must be avoided as things prohibited by God. In a similar way in such a situation ceremonies should not be regarded as genuine free adiaphora, or matters of indifference. This is because they make a show or pretend that our religion and that of the papists are not far apart in order to avoid persecution, or they pretend that the papist's ceremonies are not at least highly offensive to us. When ceremonies are intended for this purpose, and are required and received (as though through them contrary religions are reconciled and become one body), we cannot regard them as adiaphora. When returning to the papacy and departing from the Gospel's pure doctrine and true religion should happen or gradually follow from such ceremonies, we cannot regard them as adiaphora.

[10] We also believe, teach, and confess that at a time of confession, when the enemies of God's Word want to suppress the pure doctrine of the Holy Gospel, God's entire church, indeed, every single Christian, but especially the ministers of the Word, as the directors of the community of God <God's church>, is bound by God's Word to confess the doctrine freely and openly. They are bound to confess every aspect of <pure> religion, not only in words, but also in works and actions. In this case, even in adiaphora, they must not yield to the adversaries or permit these adiaphora to be forced on them by their enemies, whether by violence or cunning, to the detriment of the true worship of God and the introduction and sanction of idolatry.

[16] Furthermore, idolaters are confirmed in their idolatry by such yielding and conforming in outward things, where there has not previously been Christian unity in doctrine. On the other hand, true believers are grieved, offended, and weakened in their faith. Every Christian, for the sake of his soul's welfare and salvation, is bound to avoid both of these, as it is written:

Woe to the world for temptations to sin! (Matthew 18:7) But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea. (Matthew 18:6)

**Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Article XI (Election) 95-96**

[95] From our explanation, friends and enemies and, therefore, everyone, may clearly see that we have no intention of yielding any part of God's eternal, immutable truth for the sake of temporal peace, tranquility, and unity (which is not in our power to do anyway). Such peace and unity would have no permanence, since it is devised against the truth and for its suppression. We are even less willing to adorn and conceal a corruption of the pure doctrine and clear, condemned errors. [96] We do yearn with heartfelt pleasure and love for unity. On our part, we are sincerely willing and anxious to advance that unity (according to our utmost power) by which God's glory remains unharmed. We willingly advance unity where nothing of the divine truth of the Holy Gospel is surrendered, no room is given to the least error, and poor sinners are brought to true, genuine repentance, raised up by faith, confirmed in new obedience, and justified and eternally saved alone through the sole merit of Christ.

**Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Article XII (Other Factions and Sects) 7-8**

[7] However, we do not want the condemned errors of the factions and sects we just mentioned to be silently ascribed to us. [8] For the most part these groups, as is the nature of such spirits, secretly stole in at certain places. They did this especially at a time when no place or room was given to the pure Word of the Holy Gospel, when all its sincere teachers and confessors were persecuted, and the deep darkness of the papacy still prevailed. Poor, simple people, in their simplicity (who could not help but feel the clear idolatry and false faith of the papacy), embraced whatever was called the Gospel and was not papistic. We cannot avoid testifying against these groups publicly, before all Christendom. We have no part or fellowship with their errors, be they many or few. We reject and condemn them one and all. They are wrong and heretical, and are contrary to the Scriptures of the prophets and apostles and to our Christian Augsburg Confession, which is well grounded in God's Word.

**(Erroneous Article of the Anabaptists) 9**

[9] For instance, the erroneous, heretical doctrines of the Anabaptists are not to be tolerated and allowed in the Church or in the commonwealth or in domestic life. For they teach the following:

**(Erroneous Articles of the New Arians) 36**

[36] The New Arians teach that Christ is not true, essential, natural God, of one eternal divine essence with God the Father. They say He is only adorned with divine majesty inferior to, and beside, God the Father.

**(Erroneous Articles of the New Anti-Trinitarians) 37**

[37] 1. Some Anti-Trinitarians reject and condemn the ancient, approved Nicene and Athanasian Creeds. They condemn both their sense and words. These people teach that there is not just one eternal divine essence of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. They teach that, just as there are three distinct persons (God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), so each person has also its essence distinct and separate from the other persons. They say that all three are either like three men—distinct and separate in their essence, of the same power, wisdom, majesty, and glory <as some imagine>—or are unequal in essence and properties <as some think>.

**[Conclusion] 39**

[39] These and similar articles, one and all, with what belongs to them and follows from them, we reject and condemn as wrong, false, heretical, and contrary to God's Word, the three Creeds, the Augsburg Confession and Apology, the Smalcald Articles, and Luther's Catechisms. All godly Christians should beware of these articles to the extent that the welfare and salvation of their souls is dear to them.

**Formula of Concord, Epitome, Article XII (Other Factions <Heresies> and Sects)**

[2] The Anabaptists are divided among themselves into many factions, because one fights for more errors, another for less. However, they all in common profess the sort of doctrine that cannot be tolerated or allowed in the Church, in the commonwealth and secular government, or in home life.

**3. The Witness of Martin Luther:**

**Galatians Commentary, Martin Luther**

“We are surely prepared to observe peace and love with all men, provided that they leave the doctrine of faith perfect and sound for us. If we cannot obtain this, it is useless for them to demand love from us. A curse on a love that is observed at the expense of the doctrine of

faith, to which everything must yield—love, an apostle, an angel from heaven, etc.! . . . ‘One dot’ of doctrine is worth more than ‘heaven and earth’ (Matt. 5:18); therefore we do not permit the slightest offense against it. But we can be lenient toward errors of life. For we, too, err daily in our life and conduct; so do all the saints, as they earnestly confess in the Lord’s Prayer and the Creed. But by the grace of God our doctrine is pure; we have all the articles of faith solidly established in Sacred Scripture.” [Luther’s Works, AE, vol. 27, pp. 38, 41]

“For the sectarians who deny the bodily presence of Christ in the Lord’s Supper accuse us today of being quarrelsome, harsh, and intractable, because, as they say, we shatter love and harmony among the churches on account of the single doctrine about the Sacrament. They say that we should not make so much of this little doctrine. . . This is especially so because they agree with us on other articles of Christian doctrine. . . To this argument of theirs we reply with Paul: ‘A little yeast leavens the whole lump.’ In philosophy a tiny error in the beginning is very great at the end. Thus in theology a tiny error overthrows the whole teaching. . . For doctrine is like a mathematical point. Therefore it cannot be divided; that is, it cannot stand either subtraction or addition. On the other hand, life is like a physical point. Therefore it can always be divided and can always yield something. . . Therefore doctrine must be one eternal and round golden circle, in which there is no crack; if even the tiniest crack appears then the circle is no longer perfect. . . If they believed that it is the Word of God, they would not play around with it in this way. . . **one doctrine is all doctrines and all are one, so that when one is lost all are eventually lost, because they belong together and are held together by a common bond. . . Therefore, if you deny God in one article of faith, you have denied Him in all; for God is not divided into many articles of faith but He is everything in each article, and He is one in all the articles of faith** (emphasis added).” [Luther’s Works, AE, vol. 27, pp. 36-39]

#### 4. **The Witness of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod:**

##### ***The Brief Statement of 1932***

28. *On Church-Fellowship.* - Since God ordained that His Word *only*, without the admixture of human doctrine, be taught and believed in the Christian Church, 1 Pet. 4:11; John 8:31, 32; 1 Tim. 6:3, 4, 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. We repudiate *unionism*, that is, church-fellowship with the adherents of false doctrine, as disobedience to God’s command, as causing divisions in the Church, Rom. 16:17; 2 John 9, 10, and as involving the constant danger of losing the Word of God entirely, 2 Tim. 2:17-21.

**Rev. Dr. Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics, Vol. III*, p. 423, 425-426**

“With regard to the orthodox character of a church body note well:

- (1) A church body is orthodox only if the true doctrine, as we have it in the Augsburg Confession and the other Lutheran Symbols, is actually taught in its pulpits and its publications and not merely ‘officially’ professed as its faith. Not the ‘official’ doctrine, but the actual teaching determines the character of a church body, because Christ enjoins that all things whatsoever He has commanded His disciples should actually be taught and not merely acknowledged in an ‘official document’ as the correct doctrine. It is patent that faith in Christ will be created and preserved through the pure Gospel only when that Gospel is really proclaimed.

(2) A church body does not forfeit its orthodox character by reason of the casual intrusion of false doctrine. The thing which the Apostle Paul told the elders of Ephesus: ‘Also of your own selves shall men arise speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them’ (Acts 20:30), came true not only in the Apostolic Church, but also in the Church of the Reformation and will occur in the Church to the Last Day. **A church body loses its orthodoxy only when it no longer applies Rom. 16:17, hence does not combat and eventually remove the false doctrine, but tolerates it without reproof and thus actually grants it equal right with the truth** [emphasis added]...He who loves Christ loves Christ’s Word, and Christ commands us to avoid all who teach anything that is contrary to His Word. And whoever really loves the brethren refuses to participate in their erring and sinning, seeking rather to deliver them from error and sin...The Christian Church can and should have patience with the erring and seek through instruction to remove the error. But never can or should the Church grant error equal right with the truth. If it does, it renounces the truth itself. It is the very nature of truth to antagonize error. Truth which no longer excludes error, but grants it domicile is *eo ipso* resigning as truth. Pertinently Luther remarks: ‘Whoever really regards his doctrine, faith, and confession as true, right, and certain cannot remain in the same stall with such as teach or adhere to false doctrine’ (St.L. XVII:1180). Unionism in principle abolishes the difference between truth and error, so that only through a ‘happy inconsistency’ can the erring retain their hold on the essential truth. For this reason unionism is a grave threat to the Christian Church.”

**Article VI of the Constitution of the LCMS, “Conditions of Membership”**

“Conditions for acquiring and holding membership in the Synod are the following:

1. Acceptance of the confessional basis of Article II.
2. Renunciation of unionism and syncretism of every description, such as:
  - a. serving congregations of a mixed confession, as such, by ministers of the church;
  - b. taking part in the services and sacramental rites of heterodox congregations or of congregations of mixed confessions;
  - c. participating in heterodox tract and missionary activities . . . .”

- B. **Position Advocated and/or Practiced Today:** While joining in worship with non-Christians and Christians with whom our Synod has not declared altar and pulpit fellowship is usually wrong, it can be done in response to a “once in a lifetime event” or if the worship setting is thought to be a “civic event.”

**Evidence of this Error:**

1. Christ Lutheran Church, Albany, NY (<http://www.christlutheran.cc/Announcements.html>)  
Printed December 31, 2009.

“Guilderland Ecumenical Advent Service: December 6<sup>th</sup> All are invited to attend this annual Advent service. Pastors, choirs and musicians from Guilderland churches celebrate the coming of Christ with a beautiful service of Scripture and carols. Our own CLC choir will sing with the combined choir. The service will be held at Christ the King Roman Catholic Church on Sunday, December 6<sup>th</sup> at 4:00 PM.”

2. Interfaith Worship Service, St. Patrick's Roman Catholic Church, New York City, NY, September 9, 1998:

On September 9, 1998, Rev. Dr. David Benke, President of the Atlantic District of The LCMS participated in an interfaith worship service at St. Patrick's Roman Catholic Cathedral, New York, NY. At that time the President of The LCMS, Rev. Dr. Alvin Barry, placed Dr. Benke under discipline and a public apology was demanded and given on the convention floor of the ensuing Synodical convention by saying:

"My participation in this service was a direct violation of the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions, and consequently, violation of the Constitution, Bylaws and doctrinal resolutions of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. I also recognize that my participation in this interfaith prayer service was a violation of my duties and responsibilities as an elected officer of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. While well-intended, what I did was wrong. I therefore sincerely and publicly apologize to the Synod for my actions in this connection. I assure the Synod that I will not repeat this error in the future by participating as an officiant in ecumenical services."

3. Holy Trinity Lutheran Church (ELCA), New York City, New York, September 19, 2001, from a photocopy of the pre-printed worship bulletin for the joint worship service involving Rev. Dr. Gerald Kieschnick, LCMS President, and Rev. Dr. David Benke, Atlantic District President (LCMS)

Participants in the service:

The Rev. Dr. Robert F. Scholz, Pastor, Holy Trinity, ELCA  
The Rev. H. George Anderson, Presiding Bishop, ELCA  
The Rev. Gerald Kieschnick, President, LCMS  
The Rev. Dr. David Benke, President, Atlantic District, LCMS  
The Rev. Dr. Stephen P. Bouman, Bishop, Metropolitan New York Synod, ELCA

This worship service included prayers, choir anthems, congregational hymns, versicles, Psalmody, Scripture readings, "Reflection" by Rev. Benke (LCMS), "Reflection" Rev. Stephen P. Bouman (ELCA), the Lord's Prayer, and a responsive blessing. It was clearly not an impromptu gathering as was later claimed.

4. A Prayer for America, Yankee Stadium, New York City, New York, September 23, 2001:

On September 23, 2001 (following the World Trade Center terrorist attacks), Rev. Dr. David Benke, President of the Atlantic District of The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod participated in a Memorial Service at Yankee Stadium in New York City. Clergy participating in this memorial service were:

His Eminence Edward Cardinal Egan, Archbishop of New York;  
Rabbi Joseph Potasnik;  
Rabbi Alvin Kass;  
Rabbi Haskel Lookstein;  
Rabbi Marc Gellman, President, NY Board of Rabbis;  
Rabbi Joy Levitt;  
Dr. Inberjit Singh, Sikh Temple, Richmond Hills;  
Brother Abdul Wali Y. Shaheed;  
Imam Muhammad Shamsi-Ali;  
Imam Izak-EL-M. Pasha;  
Bishop Ernest Lyght, Bishop Council of Churches of NYC;  
Rev. Carolyn Holloway;  
the Right Rev Mark Siak;  
the Rev. James Forbes;

His Eminence Archbishop Anania Arapajinn, Armenian Church in America;  
 Rev. Calvin Butts, President Council of Churches, NYC;  
 Rev. David Benke, President Atlantic District of the LCMS;  
 His Eminence Archbishop Demetrious, Greek Orthodox Archbishop of America;  
 Pandir Roop Sukhram, Hindu Sreeraam Temple, Brooklyn;  
 and others.

- a. The Constitution of The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod (2001 Synodical handbook, p. 8) says, “Conditions for acquiring and holding membership in the Synod are the following...2. Renunciation of unionism and syncretism of every description...”
- b. In a memo from Mayor Giuliani announcing this event it said: “Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani today announced “A Prayer for America,” **an interfaith service** for the families and colleagues of the victims of the World Trade Center tragedy (emphasis added).” It went on to say: “This event will give families of victims and those affected by the tragedy an opportunity to come together, **worship together**, and gain strength... (emphasis added).”
- c. In response to Dr. Benke’s participation in this interfaith worship service formal charges were brought against Dr. Benke by the following individuals and congregations of the Synod:

1. Rev. Joel R. Baseley, Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Dearborn, MI. (10/22/01)
2. Rev. Benjamin T. Ball, St. Luke’s Ev. Lutheran Church, Dedham, MA (11/12/01)
3. Rev. Charles E. Froh, Grace Lutheran Church, San Mateo, CA (11/12/01)
4. Rev. Walter D. Otten, St. Paul’s Lutheran Church, Brookfield, IL (11/12/01)
5. Rev. Joel A. Brondos, Zion Lutheran Church, Fort Wayne, IN (11/12/01)
6. Rev. Brent W. Kuhlman, Trinity Lutheran Church, Murdock, NE (11/12/01)
7. Rev. Todd A. Peperkorn, Messiah Lutheran Church, Kenosha, WI (11/12/01)
8. Rev. James D. Bauer, Trinity Lutheran Church, Denver, CO (11/28/01)
9. Rev. John M. Berg, Lamb of God Lutheran Church, Pleasant Prairie, WI (11/28/01)
10. Rev. Dennis E. Brech, Mt. Hope Lutheran Church, Boulder, CO (11/28/01)
11. Rev. Daniel G. Bremer, Grace Lutheran Church, Grand Island, NE (11/28/01)
12. Rev. Clark A. Brown, Trinity Lutheran Church, Center, MO (11/28/01)
13. Rev. Eric M. Christiansen, St. John Lutheran Church, Libby, MT (11/28/01)
14. Rev. James E. Dahlke, Trinity Lutheran Church, Hebron, NE (11/28/01)
15. Rev. Gene K. Holtorf, St. John Lutheran Church, Palmer, KS (11/28/01)
16. Rev. Donald R. Hunter, St. Paul Lutheran Church, Taylorsville, NC (11/28/01)
17. Rev. Dean C. Kavouras, FBI Chaplain, Parma, OH (11/28/01)
18. Rev. Michael McCoy, Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, Emmett, ID (11/28/01)
19. Rev. Robert Wurst, Jr., Our Saviour Lutheran Church, Evansville, IN (11/28/01)
20. Our Savior Lutheran Church, Pagosa Springs, CO – Rev. Richard A. Bolland, Pastor (12/16/01)
21. Lamb of God Lutheran Church, Pleasant Prairie, WI – Rev. John M. Berg, Pastor (1/28/02)
22. Christ Lutheran Church, Sioux Falls, SD – Rev. Michael W. Henrichs, Pastor (3/10/02)

**(Note: By way of comparison the number of clergy bringing charges against the faculty at the St. Louis seminary in the 1970’s was two.)**

- d. Dr. Benke twice contacted the President of the LCMS, Rev. Dr. Gerald Kieschnick, prior to his participation at the interfaith worship service, and twice received the President’s approval for his participation. This was later to serve as President Benke’s main defense and resulted in a Commission on Constitutional Matters (CCM) binding opinion being issued that substantiated (after the fact), that even if a member of Synod does something ethically, morally, or biblically wrong, that as long as he had his ecclesiastical supervisor’s approval, that he/she could not be held accountable for their own actions. (This binding opinion of the CCM is still in effect and is binding on

all members of the Synod today despite multiple efforts by multiple districts of the Synod in convention asking for the opinion to be overturned.)

Resolution 7-02 (To Affirm Ecclesiastical Supervision) was presented to the 2010 Convention. The Committee on Ecclesial Matters wrote an introduction that acknowledged that several overtures were submitted requesting "...the convention overrule CCM Opinion 02-2309 and other related opinions dealing with ecclesiastical supervision and expulsion of a member who, when performing his or her official duties, follows the advice and counsel of the ecclesiastical supervisor designated by the Synod" (*Today's Business Proposed Resolutions 2010*, p.117).

The Committee's conclusion to their introduction to 7-02: "CCM Opinions 02-2296, 02-2309 and 02-2320, issued over seven years ago, have been reviewed by two subsequent conventions of the Synod, but they continue to attract attention and misunderstanding as evidenced by the overture to this convention. Based upon the extensive review of these and related CCM opinions by previous conventions, as well as the CTCR, COP and COS, Floor Committee 7 [Ecclesiastical Supervision] recommends the adoption of Res 7.02." (*Today's Business Proposed Resolutions 2010*, p.119).

The final Resolve of 7-02 reads as follows: "...thereby be it

**Resolved**, That the Synod affirm that CCM Opinion 02-2309 and related opinions should not have been and shall never be understood to grant immunity to any member of the Synod, or to allow such member to act with immunity, or to give permission to act contrary to the Holy Scriptures, the Lutheran Confessions, the Constitution, or the Bylaws of our beloved Synod."

Not only did the 2010 Convention affirm the CCM ruling regarding the Yankee Stadium event (958/189), but they rejected consideration of a substitute resolution that would have overturned CCM Opinion 02-2309 (465/646). Here is the substitute motion that the convention voted not to consider:

**Whereas**, CCM Opinion 02-2309 and related opinions were rendered prior to the adoption of 2004 Res. 8-01A; and

**Whereas**, CCM Opinion 02-2309 and related opinions continue to cause consternation in some quarters of our Synod; therefore be it

**Resolved**, that the Synod in convention overturn CCM Opinion 02-2309 and related opinions."

While rightly but temporarily removed from his office by Synodical 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President Wallace Schulz, for clear biblical reasons, in the end Rev. Benke was exonerated by a Dispute Resolution Panel based on compliance with Synodical Bylaws without a single reference to either Holy Scripture or our Lutheran Confessions in their findings.

**(Note:** The seriousness of Rev. Benke's sin of unionism and syncretism in A Prayer for America cannot be overstated, and is exceeded only by his exoneration on the basis of human bylaw over divine revelation. Two important outcomes must be noted. First, that the Synod has not held Rev. Benke accountable for his "actual" sins as revealed by the Scriptural and Confessional witnesses and correctly adjudicated by the Rev. Wallace Schulz. In this the Synod has failed an erring brother by not speaking the Truth to him in love and showing true Christian care and concern for his eternal well-being and

restoration. Secondly, the Synod has also failed Christ and His Church in allowing the constitution and bylaws of the Synod to have and to hold the last word in this matter when God's Word so clearly speaks otherwise. How can we as a Synod, in clear conscience and confident countenance, stand before God and the world and confess full Scriptural subscription when we have so clearly denied it in our discipline and practice? Not only is our confession weakened by such contradictory practice, but neither can we say as a synod with any integrity and honesty that the Word of God is "the only rule and norm of faith and of practice" in our fellowship. Until we right this wrong in the Synod, we cannot but stand contrary to His Word and love and so profane His name in the Church and in the world.)

5. The case of unionism regarding Rev. Dr. Frederick Niedner who participated in a unionistic worship service held on July 12, 2001, Holy Trinity Cathedral (Episcopal), Kansas City, MO. To wit, the report of a meeting held at Valparaiso with Rev. Niedner and others with the LCMS being represented by Rev. Daniel Preus, First Vice President of the LCMS:

**Meeting with Fredrick Niedner Faith Memorial Church, Valparaiso, IN, April 29, 2004**

Present:

Dr. Fredrick Niedner;  
Rev. Daniel Preus, First Vice President;  
Reverend John Albers, Circuit Counselor, Valparaiso Circuit;  
Reverend Kenneth Mangelsdorf, witness requested by Fredrick Niedner;  
Reverend Charles Varsogea, original complainant;  
Reverend Chad Trouten, original complainant.

The meeting began with a prayer by Reverend Albers. Approximately two hours were then spent in discussion of the original charges and Dr. Niedner's explanation of his participation in the worship service that gave rise to the charges against him. This service took place on Thursday, July 12, 2001, at 3:00 p.m. at Grace and Holy Trinity Cathedral (Episcopal) Kansas City, MO. The service took place in connection with a meeting of the Association of Lutheran Church Musicians. Dr. Niedner preached. The celebrant was Reverend Susan R. Briehl, a clergy person on the roster of the ELCA. The Lord's Supper was given to all in attendance regardless of denominational affiliation. Dr. Niedner assisted in the distribution. These facts were affirmed by Dr. Niedner prior to our meeting by letter and again in person at our meeting.

The meeting began with a few remarks about how we would proceed and then with an observation by Reverend Preus that the parties should remember that since this matter is presently being adjudicated, neither party should give publicity to the matter. Most of the discussion dealt with the doctrine of fellowship and the fellowship practice of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Toward the beginning of our discussions, Dr. Niedner indicated his belief that the present "close(d) communion" practice of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is of relatively recent origin. Reverend Preus disagreed, pointing out that it had been the almost universal practice of all Christian church bodies since the Apostolic Age to close their altars to those with whom they did not share doctrinal agreement and that it was not until the 20<sup>th</sup> Century that many churches began practicing what we see today as "open communion."

In reference to the decision of the 2001 Convention to declare that the ELCA was not an "orthodox Lutheran church body," Dr. Niedner declared his disagreement and indicated his belief that the Convention's decision was purely political. He does not believe that his

participation in the service in which a female clergy person presided over the distribution of the Lord's Supper was wrong. He realizes that there are those who disagree but that when it comes to fellowship, agreement on the Gospel in the narrow sense should be all that matters. In regard to giving the Lord's Supper to those who are members of the ELCA he stated his belief that we are in agreement on paper with the ELCA and we cannot investigate Lutheran's hearts.

Dr. Niedner accepted the position that he should be held to Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions but does not believe that communing members of the ELCA or participating in a worship service with an ELCA clergy person is in violation of the Lutheran Confessions. When asked regarding the ELCA's declaration of fellowship with three Reformed church bodies, Dr. Niedner expressed his opinion that the declarations of fellowship by the ELCA with Reformed church bodies in no way implies that their (Reformed) understanding of the Lord's Supper is correct. He simply does not draw the lines in the same way that others do. He expressed his position that the current fellowship practice seems to be the result of a majority vote rather than the application of truly Lutheran theology.

Dr. Niedner expressed the same view on the matter of women's ordination. He does not see any reason why women cannot be pastors and views the Synod's position that women may not be ordained into the holy ministry as one that proceeds out of political considerations rather than out of biblical teaching.

When asked again if he recognized what he had done as wrong, he indicated that he did not believe it was, although he did understand the difficulties it created for those who disagreed with him. When asked if he intended to stop engaging in this kind of practice, Dr. Niedner indicated that he would do it again and that he did indeed participate in a similar service just recently. This service took place in connection with the Institute of Liturgical Studies at Valparaiso University. The opening of the Institute included a worship service that took place at the Chapel of the Resurrection in Valparaiso. The presiding minister was again a clergy person belonging to the ELCA named Barbara Berry-Bailey. Once again, Fredrick Niedner was the preacher and assisted with the distribution of the Lord's Supper.

All of the discussions that took place between the parties present were cordial, although in many ways sad. There is little question that Dr. Niedner has violated the fellowship practice of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod as outlined in Article VI of the LCMS Constitution. It also seems that he will continue to take a position in disagreement with that of his church body.

Daniel Preus  
May 26, 2004

**(Note:** Rev. Niedner remains on the clergy roster of the LCMS to this day.)

6. A joint worship service (LCMS/ELCA) at the conference of The Society of the Holy Trinity (STS), on August 23, 2007, held at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, IN. Following are excerpts from *De Trinitate*, the newsletter of the STS (Vol 10, No 4, Advent 2007) [<http://societyholyltrinity.org/newsletter/trin10-4.pdf>].

“For its part, STS had agreed to respect LCMS sensitivities. This is why we complied with President Wenthe's request that we not have a woman pastor preach in Kramer Chapel. We moved all non-LCMS preachers to Sihler Auditorium. Thinking that celebrating a Eucharist in Kramer Chapel authorized by the presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) might be offensive, I welcomed the sponsorship of Calvary Lutheran Church (LCMS) in

Phoenix, whose pastor, David Poedel, STS, was to be the preacher. Pr. Poedel invited all to the Lord's Table...

The most serious repercussion of what was otherwise one of the best general retreats in our history was that Pr. Poedel was charged with 'unionism.' Fortunately, that issue has been resolved through the proper processes involving his district president...

...In spite of difficulties in inter-Lutheran fellowship presented by LCMS guidelines (at least LCMS has guidelines!), I have not heard one of our LCMS members say that the Society should not continue doing what it has been doing in chapter and general retreats according to our Rule, including celebrating the Lord's Supper."

The Society of the Holy Trinity is an inter-Lutheran ministerium that includes pastors from ELCA (including women pastors), LCMS, and other Lutheran churches. According to their web site [<http://societyholyltrinity.org>], "The STS (*Societas Trinitatis Sanctae*) is open to all Lutheran pastors of any Lutheran denomination from any country. Currently our members are rostered in 7-8 different Lutheran bodies.'" As of late August 2010, there are at least five LCMS pastors who are members of STS.

**C. ACELC Response:**

The current state of affairs regarding LCMS clergymen participating in various interfaith services with non-Christians and intra-Christian services with those with whom we are not in declared altar and pulpit fellowship is one of confusion. Clergymen such as Rev. Dr. Niedner (and those like him) simply disregard the Scriptural and Confessional position of our church body whenever they please and without regard for the offense that such participation causes. The clear language of Scripture, our Lutheran Confessions, the LCMS Constitution and Article VI have virtually been overturned by the Commission on Constitutional Matters (CCM Opinions 02-2296 & 02-2309). In addition, attempts to address this error through the convention and resolution process have proven unfruitful.

Multiple 2010 overtures again sought to overturn these CCM binding opinions, but were replaced by floor committee formulated resolutions that allowed these unscriptural opinions to remain in place. This has created theological chaos where doctrinal clarity is sorely needed.