

Response to Trinity Lutheran Church, Austin
Rev. Michael W. Newman, President
Texas District, Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

INTRODUCTION

Dear leaders of Trinity Lutheran Church,

You have waited patiently for a response to Trinity’s objections from the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. What follows are points from the Scriptures and Confessions that address your objections. This response is not a review of the constitution and bylaws of the LCMS nor is it a summary of CTCR opinions over the years. It is also not a comprehensive theological treatise on each issue you raise. It simply addresses three areas:

1. Whether or not your objections are contrary to the Word of God
2. Whether or not your objections are contrary the Lutheran Confessions
3. If your objections endanger the Gospel.

The focus of your objections is summarized well by the following statements you provided in the materials you have formulated over the years:

Trinity Lutheran Church, Voters Assembly, November 05, 2013 A.D.:

“Resolved that Trinity remain in the Missouri Synod practicing responsible admission to the Lord’s Table for the sake of confessing the truth and preserving the Gospel in her midst and be it further resolved that An Explanation of our Continued Dissent against Six Identified Errors in the LCMS be regarded as a clarification of our position””

From Rev. Paul Harris’ letter to the CTCR:

“The Synod has officially accepted open communion as a different practice; encouraged diversity in worship; permitted prayer with pagans; allowed only certain clergymen to judge doctrine; decided the order of creation applies in the church only in regard to the pastoral office, and affirmed that laymen may preach and teach in some circumstances without being ordained. From all of these positions, I continue to dissent.”

The Goal of the congregation is expressed concisely in its 2017 letter to the CTCR:

“We were hoping to have you agree and reverse your course, or correct us by pointing out our errors that we might repent. Instead, we feel that we received a dissertation on the Synod’s political and bureaucratic processes that was at best unhelpful and at worst condescending. Therefore, we remain in this state of confession, and respectfully request that you respond to each of our specific areas of dissent, as outlined in our June 2005 Statement of Confession, in a point-by-point fashion with a focus on the Lutheran Confessions and the Holy Scripture. Until such time as you reverse your current position on these issues, or can show us where we are in error, we continue to dissent.”

Therefore, I will offer a response to each of the congregation's specific areas of dissent as outlined in your June 2005 Statement of Confession along with an overall response to Trinity Lutheran Church's request for either a change of course by the LCMS or a substantiated request that Trinity Lutheran Church repents.

DISSENT POINT NUMBER ONE

1. The Synod has officially accepted open communion as a different practice; "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."

Scripture:

1 Corinthians 10:1-33

Key Biblical points: Do not be idolaters; do not grumble; the bread and wine a participation in the body and blood of Christ; one loaf means one body; cannot drink the cup of demons and cup of the Lord—table likewise.

1 Corinthians 11:17-34

Key Biblical points: Words of institution; no eating and drinking in an unworthy manner; let a person examine himself; eating and drinking without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself; wait for one another.

Confessions:

Augsburg Confession: XXIV, 1-9, The Mass: None are admitted to the sacrament except those who are first examined; brings consolation to anxious consciences "that they may learn to believe God, and to expect and ask of Him all that is good."

XXV, 1-3, Confession: "1] Confession in the churches is not abolished among us; for it is not usual to give the body of the Lord, except to them that have been previously examined and absolved. And 2] the people are most carefully taught concerning faith in the absolution, about which formerly there 3] was profound silence.

The Large Catechism, Fifth Part: The Sacrament of the Altar, 43-45, 58-63

43] And, indeed, those who are true Christians and esteem the Sacrament precious and holy will urge and impel themselves unto it. Yet that the simple-minded and the weak who also would like to be Christians be the more incited to consider the cause and need which ought to impel them, we will treat somewhat of this point. **44]** For as in other matters pertaining to faith, love, and patience, it is not enough to teach and instruct only, but there is need also of daily exhortation, so here also there is need of continuing to preach that men may not become weary and disgusted, since we know and feel how the devil always opposes this and every Christian exercise, and drives and deters therefrom as much as he can.

45] And we have, in the first place, the clear text in the very words of Christ: *Do this in remembrance of Me*. These are bidding and commanding words by which all who would be Christians are enjoined to partake of this Sacrament. Therefore, whoever

would be a disciple of Christ, with whom He here speaks, must also consider and observe this, not from compulsion, as being forced by men, but in obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ, and to please Him.

58] We must, therefore, make a distinction here among men. For those who are wanton and dissolute must be told to stay away; for they are not prepared to receive forgiveness of sin, since they do not desire it and do not wish to be godly. **59]** But the others, who are not such callous and wicked people, and desire to be godly, must not absent themselves, even though otherwise they be feeble and full of infirmities, as St. Hilary also has said: *If any one have not committed sin for which he can rightly be put out of the congregation and esteemed as no Christian, he ought not stay away from the Sacrament, lest he may deprive himself of life.* **60]** For no one will make such progress that he will not retain many daily infirmities in flesh and blood.

61] Therefore such people must learn that it is the highest art to know that our Sacrament does not depend upon our worthiness. For we are not baptized because we are worthy and holy, nor do we go to confession because we are pure and without sin, but the contrary, because we are poor miserable men, and just because we are unworthy; unless it be some one who desires no grace and absolution nor intends to reform.

62] But whoever would gladly obtain grace and consolation should impel himself, and allow no one to frighten him away, but say: I, indeed, would like to be worthy; but I come, not upon any worthiness, but upon Thy Word, because Thou hast commanded it, as one who would gladly be Thy disciple, no matter what becomes of my worthiness.

63] But this is difficult; for we always have this obstacle and hindrance to encounter, that we look more upon ourselves than upon the Word and lips of Christ. For nature desires so to act that it can stand and rest firmly on itself, otherwise it refuses to make the approach. Let this suffice concerning the first point.

The Formula of Concord

Solid Declaration VII. The Holy Supper, 68-71

68] But it must [also] be carefully explained who are the unworthy guests of this Supper, namely, those who go to this Sacrament without true repentance and sorrow for their sins, and without true faith and the good intention of amending their lives, and by their unworthy oral eating of the body of Christ load themselves with damnation, that is, with temporal and eternal punishments, and become guilty of the body and blood of Christ.

69] For Christians who are of weak faith, diffident, troubled, and heartily terrified because of the greatness and number of their sins, and think that in this their great impurity they are not worthy of this precious treasure and the benefits of Christ, and who feel and lament their weakness of faith, and from their hearts desire that they may serve God with stronger, more joyful faith and pure obedience, they are the truly worthy guests for whom this highly venerable Sacrament [and sacred feast] has been especially instituted and appointed; **70]** as Christ says, Matt. 11, 28: Come unto Me, all

ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Also Matt. 9, 12: They that be whole need not a physician, but they that be sick. Also [2 Cor. 12, 9]: God's strength is made perfect in weakness. Also [Rom. 14, 1]: Him that is weak in the faith receive ye [14, 3], for God hath received him. For whosoever believeth in the Son of God, be it with a strong or with a weak faith, has eternal life [John 3, 15f.].

71] And worthiness does not depend upon great or small weakness or strength of faith, but upon the merit of Christ, which the distressed father of little faith [Mark 9, 24] enjoyed as well as Abraham, Paul, and others who have a joyful and strong faith.

Response: Close Communion and Weariness with Life Together

The Scriptures mandate self-examination for the reception of the Sacrament of the Altar, faith in Jesus, and the acknowledgement of His true body and blood in the Sacrament. The Confessions echo this proper stewardship. The Scriptures also indicate that the Sacrament of the Altar joins participants into one body. The Lutheran Church has practiced "close" communion, allowing local pastoral oversight and exceptional circumstances, as well as adhering to altar fellowship within the denomination.

When member churches are joined together, there will be weaker and stronger members and there will be erring members. Shepherding, teaching and exhorting these members to faithfulness is the goal of our life together and of ecclesiastical supervision.

The practice of the Lord's Supper among member congregations of the LCMS is not perfect. While many congregations administer the sacrament faithfully, there are some that err in being too open or being too closed. Both can endanger souls.

It may be that Trinity has become weary of member congregations that are in error, and has become wounded by congregations that have persisted in a practice of the Lord's Supper that causes offense. Because oversight of the administration of the Lord's Supper will be an ongoing area of teaching, exhortation and correction in the LCMS, Trinity has been asking itself, "Shall we stay in fellowship or shall we sever fellowship?" This question is justified and needs to be answered by the congregation.

The main reason for needing to answer this question is for the sake of the Gospel. The central point of the Scriptures and the central article of the Confessions are at stake. Trinity should not be distracted from proclaiming and sharing this central truth:

Ephesians 2:8-10

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Augsburg Confession, IV, Of Justification

1] Also they teach that men cannot be justified before God by their own strength, merits, or works, but are freely justified for 2] Christ's sake, through faith, when they believe that they are received into favor, and that their sins are forgiven for Christ's sake, who, by His death, has made satisfaction for our sins. 3] This faith God imputes for righteousness in His sight. Rom. 3 and 4.

DISSENT POINT NUMBER TWO

2. *The Synod has encouraged diversity in worship;*

“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.”

Scripture:

John 4:21-24

Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”

Romans 12:1

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

Colossians 3:12-17

Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Confessions:

The Augsburg Confession, VII, The Church, 2-4

2] And to the true unity of the Church it is enough to agree concerning the doctrine of the Gospel and 3] the administration of the Sacraments. Nor is it necessary that human traditions, that is, rites or ceremonies, instituted by men, should be everywhere alike. 4] As Paul says: One faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all, etc. Eph. 4, 5. 6.

XV, Ecclesiastical Rites, 1-2

1] Of Usages in the Church they teach that those ought to be observed which may be observed without sin, and which are profitable unto tranquillity and good order in the Church, as particular holy days, festivals, and the like.

2] Nevertheless, concerning such things men are admonished that consciences are not to be burdened, as though such observance was necessary to salvation.

XXIV, The Mass, 3

For ceremonies are needed to this end alone that the unlearned 4] be taught [what they need to know of Christ].

The Apology of the Augsburg Confession, XV, Human Traditions

For although the holy Fathers themselves had both rites and traditions, yet they did not hold that these matters are useful or necessary for justification; they did not obscure the glory and office of Christ, but taught that we are justified by faith for Christ's sake, and not for the sake of these human services. But they observed human rites for the sake of bodily advantage, that the people might know at what time they should assemble; that, for the sake of example all things in the churches might be done in order and becomingly; lastly, that the common people might receive a sort of training. For the distinctions of times and the variety of rites are of service in admonishing the common people. **21]** The Fathers had these reasons for maintaining the rites, and for these reasons we also judge it to be right that traditions [good customs] be maintained. And we are greatly surprised that the adversaries [contrary to the entire Scriptures of the Apostles, contrary to the Old and New Testaments] contend for another design of traditions, namely, that they may merit the remission of sins, grace, or justification.

49] This topic concerning traditions contains many and difficult questions of controversy, and we have actually experienced that traditions are truly snares of consciences. When they are exacted as necessary, they torture in wonderful ways the conscience omitting any observance [as godly hearts, indeed, experience when in the canonical hours they have omitted a compline, or offended against them in a similar way]. Again their abrogation has its own evils and its own **50]** questions. [On the other hand, to teach absolute freedom has also its doubts and questions, because the common people need outward discipline and instruction.] But we have an easy and plain case, because the adversaries condemn us for teaching that human traditions do not merit the remission of sins. Likewise they require universal traditions, as they call them, as necessary for justification [and place them in Christ's stead]. Here we have Paul as a constant champion, who everywhere contends that these observances neither justify nor are necessary in addition to the righteousness of faith. **51]** And nevertheless we teach that in these matters the use of liberty is to be so controlled that the inexperienced may not be offended, and, on account of the abuse of liberty, may not become more hostile to the true doctrine of the Gospel, or that without a reasonable cause nothing in customary rites be changed, but that, in order to cherish harmony, such old customs be observed as can be observed without sin or without great inconvenience. **52]** And in this very assembly we have shown sufficiently that for love's sake we do not refuse to observe adiaphora with others, even though they should have some disadvantage; but we have judged that such public harmony as could indeed be produced without offense to consciences ought to be preferred to all other advantages [all other less important matters].

The Large Catechism, The Third Commandment, 83-84

83] But to grasp a Christian meaning for the simple as to what God requires in this commandment, note that we keep holy days not for the sake of intelligent and learned Christians (for they have no need of it [holy days]), but first of all for bodily causes

and necessities, which nature teaches and requires; for the common people, manservants and maid-servants, who have been attending to their work and trade the whole week, that for a day they may retire in order to rest and be refreshed.

84] Secondly, and most especially, that on such day of rest (since we can get no other opportunity) freedom and time be taken to attend divine service, so that we come together to hear and treat of God's Word, and then to praise God, to sing and pray.

Formula of Concord, Epitome, Article X, Church Rites (The entire article is worthy of study and discussion)

3] 1. For settling also this controversy we unanimously believe, teach, and confess that the ceremonies or church rites which are neither commanded nor forbidden in God's Word, but have been instituted alone for the sake of propriety and good order, are in and of themselves no divine worship, nor even a part of it. Matt. 15, 9: In vain they do worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

4] 2. We believe, teach, and confess that the congregation of God of every place and every time has the power, according to its circumstances, to change such ceremonies in such manner as may be most useful and edifying to the congregation of God.

5] 3. Nevertheless, that herein all frivolity and offense should be avoided, and special care should be taken to exercise forbearance towards the weak in faith. 1 Cor. 8, 9; Rom. 14, 13.

7] 5. We believe, teach, and confess also that no Church should condemn another because one has less or more external ceremonies not commanded by God than the other, if otherwise there is agreement among them in doctrine and all its articles, as also in the right use of the holy Sacraments,

8] Accordingly, we reject and condemn as wrong and contrary to God's Word when it is taught:

9] 1. That human ordinances and institutions in the church should be regarded as in themselves a divine worship or part of it.

10] 2. When such ceremonies, ordinances, and institutions are violently forced upon the congregation of God as necessary, contrary to its Christian liberty which it has in external things.

Response: Worship and Weariness

The Scriptures do not mandate specific worship forms, nor do the Confessions. Both the Scriptures and Confessions focus on worshiping the true God in Spirit and in truth, centered in the Word of God, conducted with propriety and order, understanding that ceremonies do not merit salvation, not giving offense to others, and not overruling Christian liberty.

If the Reformed teachings of rationalism and legalism become part of Christian worship, that worship is no longer founded on the Word or based in Spirit and truth. Variety in hymnody, spiritual songs, and worship orders has increased. Teaching, shepherding and exhorting congregations to Biblical worship has become a more demanding task.

Trinity is concerned that Biblical worship prevails. It is weary with fellow member congregations that utilize non-LCMS resources. The courses of action for the congregation include either continuing to engage in ongoing brotherly conversation with fellow congregations or stepping away from membership in order not to become consumed by the dialog, thereby becoming distracted from its Gospel proclaiming purpose.

DISSENT POINT NUMBER THREE

3. permitted prayer with pagans;

“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.”

Scripture:

1 Kings 18:22-24

Then Elijah said to the people, “I, even I only, am left a prophet of the LORD, but Baal’s prophets are 450 men. Let two bulls be given to us, and let them choose one bull for themselves and cut it in pieces and lay it on the wood, but put no fire to it. And I will prepare the other bull and lay it on the wood and put no fire to it. And you call upon the name of your god, and I will call upon the name of the LORD, and the God who answers by fire, he is God.” And all the people answered, “It is well spoken.”

Matthew 5:14-16

“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”

2 Corinthians 6:14-18

Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? 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. Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you, and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty.”

Confessions:

The Large Catechism, First Commandment

16] Lo, here you have the meaning of the true honor and worship of God, which pleases God, and which He commands under penalty of eternal wrath, namely, that the heart know no other comfort or confidence than in Him, and do not suffer itself to be torn from Him, but, for Him, risk and disregard everything upon earth. **17]** On the other hand, you can easily see and judge how the world practises only false worship and idolatry. For no people has ever been so reprobate as not to institute and observe some divine worship; every one has set up as his special god whatever he looked to for blessings, help, and comfort.

Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, X, Church Rites

21] And in the treatise Concerning the Power and Primacy of the Pope, which is appended to the Smalcald Articles, and was also subscribed by the theologians then present with their own hands, are these words: No one is to burden the Church with his own traditions, but here the rule is to be that nobody's power or authority is to avail more than the Word of God. **22]** And shortly afterwards (517, 41): This being the case, all Christians ought most diligently to beware of becoming partakers of the godless doctrine, blasphemies, and unjust cruelties of the Pope; but ought to desert and execrate the Pope with his members, or adherents, as the kingdom of Antichrist, just as Christ has commanded (Matt. 7, 15): "Beware of false prophets." And Paul commands us to avoid false teachers and execrate them as an abomination. And in 2 Cor. 6, 14 he says: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what communion hath light with darkness?"

Response: Walking Together or Separating

The Scriptures and Confessions speak of both a witness to the world immersed in false worship and a separation from godless doctrine. The LCMS has decided that some actions in public gatherings constitute a witness to the world rather than a joining together in confessing godless doctrine.

Trinity disagrees with some of the decisions of the LCMS—and the congregation has every right to. It appears that the LCMS is not changing its perspective. This puts Trinity in the position of either walking with the synod or deciding to take another course of action based on conscience and its understanding of the Scriptures and Confessions.

DISSENT POINT NUMBER FOUR

4. affirmed that laymen may preach and teach in some circumstances without being ordained. "At the Synodical Convention in Wichita (1989), the unscriptural office of "lay minister" was created in direct violation of Augsburg Confession XIV... Therefore, those who publicly teach in the Church or administer the sacraments are no longer required to be called and ordained clergymen."

Scripture:

Acts 20:28

Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.

1 Timothy 3:1

The Saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task.

Confessions:

Augsburg Confession, XIV, Ecclesiastical Order

Of Ecclesiastical Order they teach that no one should publicly teach in the Church or administer the Sacraments unless he be regularly called.

The Apology of the Augsburg Confession, XIV, 28

Furthermore, we wish here again to testify that we will gladly maintain ecclesiastical and canonical government, provided the bishops only cease to rage against our Churches. This our desire will clear us both before God and among all nations to all posterity from the imputation against us that the authority of the bishops is being undermined, when men read and hear that, although protesting against the unrighteous cruelty of the bishops, we could not obtain justice.

Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope

67] For wherever the Church is, there is the authority [command] to administer the Gospel. Therefore it is necessary for the Church to retain the authority to call, elect, and ordain ministers. And this authority is a gift which in reality is given to the Church, which no human power can wrest from the Church, as Paul also testifies to the Ephesians when he says, Eph 4, 8: *He ascended, He gave gifts to men.* And he enumerates among the gifts specially belonging to the Church *pastors and teachers*, and adds that such are given for the ministry, *for the edifying of the body of Christ.* Hence, wherever there is a true church, the right to elect and ordain ministers necessarily exists. Just as in a case of necessity even a layman absolves, and becomes the minister and pastor of another; as Augustine narrates the story of two Christians in a ship, one of whom baptized the catechumen, who after Baptism then absolved the baptizer. **68]** Here belong the statements of Christ which testify that the keys have been given to the Church, and not merely to certain persons, Matt. 18, 20: *Where two or three are gathered together in My name*, etc.

69] Lastly, the statement of Peter also confirms this, 1 Pet. 2, 9: *Ye are a royal priesthood.* These words pertain to the true Church, which certainly has the right to elect and ordain ministers since it alone has the priesthood. **70]** And this also a most common custom of the Church testifies. For formerly the people elected pastors and bishops. Then came a bishop, either of that church or a neighboring one, who confirmed the one elected by the laying on of hands; and ordination was nothing else than such a ratification.

Response: The Orders of the Church

The Scriptures make clear that the Office of the Holy Ministry has been instituted by God. The Confessions make clear that no one should publicly teach in the church or administer the sacraments unless he is regularly called. The Confessions also emphasize that the reformers were diligent about maintaining ecclesiastical and canonical government.

In 1989, the LCMS agreed to establish the office of “lay deacon” as part of the order of the church in cases of necessity. The lay deacon, elected by the local congregation, could be permitted, under supervision, to publicly teach in the church and administer the sacraments.

Much debate continues about this matter, and some changes have been made, but it is still true that the LCMS has continued the office of lay deacon as a Word and Sacrament office in cases of necessity.

Trinity disagrees with this course of action. The LCMS believes it is adhering to the Scriptures and Confessions in this matter. This creates either ongoing conversation or an impasse.

DISSENT POINT NUMBER FIVE

5. decided the order of creation applies in the church only in regard to the pastoral office, “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.”

Scripture:

1 Corinthians 14:26

What then, brothers? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up.

1 Corinthians 14:33b-40

As in all the churches of the saints, ³⁴ the women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says. ³⁵ If there is anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church. ³⁶ Or was it from you that the word of God came? Or are you the only ones it has reached? ³⁷ If anyone thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord. ³⁸ If anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized. ³⁹ So, my brothers, earnestly desire to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues. ⁴⁰ But all things should be done decently and in order.

1 Timothy 2:8 - 3:7

1Tim. 2:8 I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling; ⁹ likewise also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, ¹⁰ but with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with good works. ¹¹ Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. ¹² I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. ¹³ For Adam was formed first, then Eve; ¹⁴ and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. ¹⁵ Yet she will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control.

1Tim. 3:1 The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. ² Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, ² sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, ³ not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. ⁴ He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, ⁵ for if someone does not know how to

manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? ⁶ He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. ⁷ Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.

Confessions:

Augsburg Confession, XXVIII, Ecclesiastical Power

5] But this is their opinion, that the power of the Keys, or the power of the bishops, according to the Gospel, is a power or commandment of God, to preach the Gospel, to remit and retain sins, and to administer Sacraments. 6] For with this commandment Christ sends forth His Apostles, John 20, 21 sqq.: As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you. Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained. 7] Mark 16, 15: Go preach the Gospel to every creature.

8] This power is exercised only by teaching or preaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments, according to their calling either to many or to individuals. For thereby are granted, not bodily, but eternal things, as eternal righteousness, the Holy Ghost, eternal life.

Response: Ecclesiastical Authority

The Scriptures make clear that not all people are permitted to serve in the office of public ministry. While men are set apart to serve in this office, representing the suffering servant, Jesus, and walking as undershepherds of the Chief Shepherd, not all men qualify for service as pastors. The ones who do receive the authority of the Gospel: to preach the Gospel, to remit and retain sins, and to administer Sacraments.

The LCMS has agreed that humanly instituted positions of congregational presidents and congregational elders may or may not include authority over the pastoral office. If those humanly instituted positions put a person in authority over the pastor, the occupants of those positions need to reflect God's design for pastoral ministry and be a qualified man.

DISSENT POINT NUMBER SIX

6. allowed only certain clergymen to judge doctrine;

"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."

Scripture:

Acts 15:1-2

But some men came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." And after Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and the elders about this question.

Confessions:

Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope

60] [In our Confession and the Apology we have in general recounted what we have had to say concerning ecclesiastical power. For] The Gospel assigns to those who preside over churches the command to teach the Gospel to remit sins, to administer the Sacraments and besides jurisdiction, namely, the command to excommunicate those whose crimes are known, and again to absolve those who repent.

61] And by the confession of all, even of the adversaries, it is clear that this power by divine right is common to all who preside over churches, whether they are called pastors, or elders, or bishops. **62]** And accordingly Jerome openly teaches in the apostolic letters that all who preside over churches are both bishops and elders, and cites from Titus 1, 5f : *For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest ordain elders in every city* [and afterwards calls these persons bishops]. Then he adds: *A bishop must be the husband of one wife.* Likewise Peter and John call themselves elders [or priests] 1 Pet. 5, 1; 2 John 1. And he then adds: *But that afterwards one was chosen to be placed over the rest, this was done as a remedy for schism, lest each one by attracting [a congregation here or there] to himself might rend the Church of Christ. For at Alexandria, from Mark the evangelist to the bishops Heracles and Dionysius, the elders always elected one from among themselves, and placed him in a higher station, whom they called bishop; just as an army would make a commander for itself. The deacons, moreover, may elect from among themselves one whom they know to be active, and name him archdeacon. For with the exception of ordination, what does the bishop that the elder does not?*

63] Jerome, therefore, teaches that it is by human authority that the grades of bishop and elder or pastor are distinct. And the subject itself declares this, because the power [the office and command] is the same, as he has said above. **64]** But one matter afterwards made a distinction between bishops and pastors namely, ordination, because it was [so] arranged that one bishop should ordain ministers in a number of churches.

Response: Church Structure

The Scriptures and Confessions note instances of orderly authority established in the church. The LCMS has instituted lines of authority and accountability. While each congregation continues to possess the most powerful gifts: Christian admonishment, exhortation, encouragement, reconciliation and forgiveness; the denominational structure of the LCMS has instituted a certain order for bringing grievances beyond local congregational interaction.

Trinity does not agree with the LCMS system of holding member congregations accountable to the Word of God.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUDING COMMENTS

This response is designed for engagement in discussion. As mentioned earlier, however, it seems that Trinity Lutheran Church may be weary of life together in the LCMS.

As Solomon noted: “For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is

planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up” (Ecclesiastes 3:1-3).

Prayerfully and deliberately, as Trinity has been doing, it is in the position of deciding its course of action during this season of its existence.

While I pray that Trinity can continue its membership in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, providing its witness to the Gospel and particular blessings to God’s people, I understand the congregation’s frustration.

At stake, as I mentioned earlier, is the very heart of the Gospel. The items of dissent should in no way distract Trinity from its core purpose as the church. The Lutheran Confessions make that purpose very clear in the preface to the Confessions.

The confessors found that what they had presented at the Diet of Augsburg in 1530 began to be circulated throughout the world. They noted:

“According to [God’s] unspeakable love, patience, and mercy, He willed that the light of His Gospel and Word—through which alone we receive true salvation—should arise and shine clearly and purely in Germany, our most beloved fatherland.” (Preface 2, Pocket Edition, p.3).

They went on to say:

“It was circulated publicly in the entire world among all people professing Christian doctrine. So it was spread everywhere and began to be found in the mouths and speech of all.” (2, pp.3-4).

The confessors zeroed in on their hopes and prayers for the confessions. In 1580 they said, “We are not introducing a new Confession. Nor are we introducing one different from that which was presented in 1530 to Charles V, of happy memory. But we wished to lead our churches and schools, first of all, to the fountains of the Holy Scripture, and to the Creeds, and then to the Augsburg Confession...We most earnestly encourage that young men be instructed in this faithfully and diligently, especially those who are being educated for the holy ministry of the churches and schools. Then the pure doctrine and profession of our faith may, by the Holy Spirit’s help, be **preserved and spread** also to our future generations, until the glorious advent of Jesus Christ, our only Redeemer and Savior.” (Preface 21, p.17)

An important word is used in this passage. “Be preserved and spread” is “erhalten und fortgepflanzt.” It means “received and planted forward.” (conservetur et propagetur)

The word is used again in the next paragraph (22):

“We should diligently care for the things that apply to this life and the life to come. We should take pains, with the greatest earnestness and our utmost ability, to attend to those matters that promote the extension of God’s name and glory (Bermehrung und ausbreitung - repatriation and spread); **the spread of His Word** from which alone we hope for salvation (Fortpflanzung, propagationem); the peace and tranquility of churches and schools; and the instruction and consolation of disturbed consciences. We must do this.” (Preface 22, p. 18)

Their goal was to prevent that “the light of heavenly truth should be placed under a bushel or table. Therefore we should in no way delay its publication.” (Preface 22, p.18)

Matthew 5 “light of the world” talk is referenced by the confessions. The word used twice for “spread” is the German: “Fortpflanzung.” Literally it means “planting forward.”

This what Trinity cannot be distracted from. It cannot be pulled away from “planting forward” the central article of the Lutheran Confessions: justification by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

The confessions reinforce this purpose over and over again.

The Formula of Concord quotes Martin Luther when it declares: “Faith is a divine work in us, that changes and regenerates us of God...Oh, it is a living, busy, active, powerful thing that we have in faith, so that it is impossible for it not to do good without ceasing” (FC IV, 10).

The Large Catechism notes: “This we ask [Thy Kingdom come), both in order that we who have accepted it may remain faithful and grow daily in it and in order that it may gain recognition and followers among other people and advance with power throughout the world. So we pray that, led by the Holy Spirit, many may come into the kingdom of grace and become partakers of salvation...” (LC 52).

Whatever Trinity decides as its course of action, may it always be focused on “the one thing needful”:

“That is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:19-21).