

Statement of the CTCR Executive Committee
Re: CTCR Response to Matthew Becker Dissent of 6/29/11

The CTCR Executive Committee respectfully rejects Dr. Becker's claim that the CTCR has not responded adequately to his dissent because the Commission (in his words) "avoided responding directly to the exegetical and theological points I have made in my essays" (correspondence received 1/12/12). The CTCR responded very directly to the crucial and foundational point made in Dr. Becker's essays (confirmed in his subsequent correspondence), namely, that in his essays he is operating on the basis of an understanding of the nature of the authority and interpretation of Scripture that is "clearly incompatible" with that of the doctrinal position of the Synod. In the Executive Committee's view, attempting to respond to the myriad of specific arguments by Dr. Becker that are based on this different view of and approach to Scripture would be (to use the words of St. Paul) "unprofitable and useless" and *should* be "avoided" (Titus 1:9). Readers of Dr. Becker's dissent and of the CTCR's response can judge for themselves the merits of both, as well as the validity of this conclusion of the CTCR Executive Committee.

The Synod's process for responding to dissent seeks to respect the conscience of the dissenter, but it also seeks to respect "the consciences of others, as well as the collective will of the Synod" (Bylaw 1.8.2). Its ultimate goal is that our "'life together within the fellowship of the Synod' is preserved with as great a degree of peace and unity as possible" (CTCR Response to Expressions of Dissent (2001-2006), p. 8).

The CTCR's policy for responding to expressions of dissent (which Dr. Becker received within thirty days after formally submitting his dissent) operates on the basis of the same principles and goals. For this reason, it seeks to ensure that the CTCR, in responding to dissent (only one of its many responsibilities), is not drawn into interminable debates in which there is little or no hope of resolution—or even meaningful conversation—because of foundational theological disagreements (e.g., disagreements about the nature of the authority of Scripture itself). Such debates do not serve to edify the church or the dissenter.

Immediately after St. Paul warns against engaging in "unprofitable and useless" arguments, he gives sober instructions for dealing with what he describes a "divisive person" in the church (see Titus 3:10). His words are stern, but they are also words of love. In the spirit of these words, yet without presuming to judge anyone's heart (as only God can do), the CTCR Executive Committee earnestly repeats the plea made by the CTCR to Dr. Becker in its response to his dissent:

The CTCR therefore appeals to Dr. Matthew Becker, by the mercies of God, to reconsider his dissent and to reexamine, on the basis of Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions, his positions on the authority of Scripture and the two issues concerning which he has expressed dissent, even as the Synod expects him to honor and uphold the doctrinal positions of the Synod. [cf. Bylaw 1.8.1]

In keeping with what is said above, any future correspondence from Dr. Becker related to his dissent will be forwarded without comment to his ecclesiastical supervisor (his district president) and to the President of the Synod, who has the responsibility "to advise, admonish, and reprove" and to "use all means at his command to promote and maintain unity of doctrine and practice" in the Synod (LCMS *Constitution*, Article XI.B.3).

Adopted
February 9, 2012