



A
Lutheran
Stance
Toward
Ecumenism

With Application for
The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod

A Report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations
The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod
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Preface

The Lutheran Confessions speak in plain and simple terms about the nature and mission of the church. “Thank God, a seven-year-old child knows what the church is, namely, holy believers and sheep who hear the voice of their Shepherd” (SA III, xii, 2). Through this community on earth, the Holy Spirit “speaks and does all his work” (LC II, 61). “It is the mother that begets and bears every Christian through the Word of God” (LC II, 42). In these words the Confessions describe the church’s mission in the world, namely, to make disciples of all nations through the teaching of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments, for “through these, as through means, he [God] gives the Holy Spirit, who works faith.” (AC V, 2)

In equally simple terms the Lutheran Confessions speak about the work which the Holy Spirit performs through the church among those whom He has called and gathered into the Christian community. He uses the church to preach and teach the Word and “by it he creates and increases sanctification, causing it daily to grow and become strong in the faith and in the fruits of the Spirit” (LC II, 53). Among the fruits of the Spirit for which Christians earnestly long and fervently pray is God-pleasing concord and harmony and an end to strife and divisions among Christ’s “afflicted and scattered churches.” (Ap Preface, 19)

Efforts to achieve such concord in Christendom and to remove the barriers that separate Christians into denominational groups have come to be known as ecumenical endeavors. These endeavors are carried on with a view to finding a basis on which all Christians might be able to worship and work together and on which they might possibly even become one fellowship without denominational distinctions.

As is evident from the Preface of the constitutive document of Lutheranism, the Augsburg Confession, the Lutheran Church from its inception has never regarded divisions in Christendom a desirable state of affairs which ought to be perpetuated. Recognizing that true believers everywhere are our brothers and sisters in God’s family, Lutherans have always assured fellow members of Christ’s body that to us nothing could happen that is more agreeable or that is more earnestly and prayerfully to be sought for than that Christians should live together in godly unanimity (Preface to the Christian Book of Concord, *Concordia Triglotta*, p. 9). Lutheranism shares in the ecumenical concern that has as its goal that “all of us embrace and adhere to a single, true religion and live together in unity and in one fellowship and church.” (AC Preface, 4)

Since opinions vary radically as to how such a goal can be accomplished and as to the conditions necessary for external unification in the church on earth, the Commission on Theology and Church Relations in this document offers to The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod some guiding principles for its participation in ecumenical endeavors.¹

Abbreviations

All citations of the Lutheran Confessions are taken from *The Book of Concord*, edited by T. G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), except when noted to the contrary. The following abbreviations have been used:

- AC - Augsburg Confession
- Ap - Apology of the Augsburg Confession
- Ep - Epitome of the Formula of Concord
- FC - Formula of Concord
- LC - Large Catechism
- SA - Smalcald Articles
- SC - Small Catechism
- SD - Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord

Scriptural quotations are taken from the Revised Standard Version.

A LUTHERAN STANCE TOWARD ECUMENISM

I. The Theological Basis for Ecumenism in the Sacred Scriptures and Lutheran Confessions

A. The Sacred Scriptures

1. *Ephesians 4*

The apostle Paul calls the oneness of Christians in the body of Christ “the unity of the Spirit” (4:3), that is, the unity which the Spirit creates when through one Baptism He calls us to one faith in one Lord. This unity is a gift of God and is bestowed with the faith which knits Christians together in the one body of which Christ is the only Head; it is not “first effected through their [Christian] conduct and behavior” and the practice of those virtues urged by the apostle in verse 2, namely, humility, gentleness, long-suffering, and patience.² It is through these virtues that the unity which *already exists* among all believers is to be given expression lest through divisions caused by pride and lovelessness their oneness be obscured.

The apostolic mandate for ecumenical endeavors among Christians presupposes the unity of the Spirit and is found in the admonition to hold fast “in the bond of peace” (4:3) to the unity which the Spirit has created. Christians are to pursue peace and concord because these constitute the bond that keeps them from flying apart into all sorts of factions which belie their unity in the Lord. By using all the gifts which the ascended Lord bestowed upon His church, Christians are to become mature so that they are no longer carried about with every wind of doctrine, but rather that by speaking the truth in love they grow together in every way in Christ. (4:7-15)

2. *1 Corinthians*

In his First Epistle to the Corinthians the apostle Paul expressly affirms the unity of the church when he addresses his readers as “called to be saints *together with all those who in every place* call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1:2; emphasis ours). This apostolic greeting recognizes and asserts the oneness of the Corinthian Christians with all who by the Holy Spirit’s power say that “Jesus is Lord” (12:3). The whole epistle then offers a model for those who are one in Christ to follow in their efforts to achieve peace and concord in the church and warns against teachings and behavior which violate their baptismal unity.

The apostle calls for an end to factions caused by false loyalties to human teachers (chapters 1-4); he rebukes disorder resulting from immorality and loveless legal redress against a brother (chapters 5-6); for the purpose of obviating disagreements he corrects misunderstandings about marriage, about the use of food offered to idols, and about the right of those who preach the Gospel to get their living by the Gospel (chapters 6-9); he warns against offensive practices in public worship and especially at the celebration of the Lord’s Supper which result from failure of the Corinthian Christians to recognize that they are one body (chapters 10-11); he gives instruction about the gifts of the Spirit in order to prevent divisive rivalries over whose gift is the most important, pointing out that all gifts are to be exercised out of love for others and for the

benefit of everyone (chapters 12-14); he sternly chides some who disturbed the fellowship by saying there is no resurrection of the dead (chapter 15); and he urges the Christians in Corinth to share in the poverty of the suffering Christians in Judea by making sacrificial gifts to a relief fund in order thereby to demonstrate their unity with them. (chapter 16)

From this summary of St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians it is evident that he opposes everything that constitutes a breach of the baptismal unity of Christians. Loveless attitudes and actions, practices in connection with worship that do not reflect awareness of our unity in Christ's body, the church, and false doctrine which creates dissension are singled out for apostolic reproof and correction. Particularly doctrinal aberrations are condemned as destructive not only of peace and good order in the church but also of the very foundation of our hope. St. Paul calls for a unanimity in doctrine and for an agreement in practice which exhibit the unity created by God's Spirit through our common Baptism into one body.

3. *Letters to Timothy*

While the apostle Paul's words in 1 Tim. 6:3-5 may have been directed primarily to slaves in the Christian community who attempted to exploit their new-found relation to masters as brothers in Christ in the interest of improving their social and economic status, these words nevertheless contain an admonition that applies to every aspect of our life together in the church. Anyone who teaches anything that "does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ" is "puffed up," and by his "morbid craving for controversy" he causes dissension and strife. Paul's injunction to Timothy, to pastors of all generations, and to the whole church is recorded in 2 Tim. 1:13-14: "Follow the pattern of the sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus; guard the truth that has been entrusted to you by the Holy Spirit who dwells within us."

Here is a Biblical model for ecumenical endeavors: Holding firmly to the unity of the Spirit, foster and promote the bond of peace (Eph. 4); recognizing our unity with all who in every place call on the name of the Lord, strive earnestly by mutual admonition and instruction to overcome every obstacle to peace and concord throughout Christendom, reproofing errors as injurious to faith and spiritual life and manifesting at the same time also a genuine concern for the physical well-being of all members of Christ's body everywhere. (1 Cor. 1-16)

B. The Lutheran Confessions

1. *The Sphere of Ecumenical Endeavors*

The proper sphere of ecumenical endeavors is the church in the narrow sense. According to the Lutheran Confessions, the church, strictly speaking, is the congregation of saints made up of true believers who have the Holy Spirit (Ap VII and VIII, 16, 20, 22). In order to allow for the fact that "in this life hypocrites and evil men are mingled with the church" (Ap VII and VIII, 3), the Symbols speak of "the church in the larger sense" (Ap VII and VIII, 10) as including in its *external* fellowship also wicked people and unbelievers.

In view of the fact that the kingdom of Christ has not yet been revealed (Ap VII and VIII, 17) and we are not able to determine the boundary between the church strictly speaking (*stricta dicta*) and broadly speaking (*large dicta*) it is, of course, within the "visible" structures and fellowship of the church as it is encountered in this world, with which also unbelievers are

mingled and externally associated, that ecumenical endeavors are carried on. Nevertheless, since “the wicked are part of the church only in name and not in fact” (Ap VII and VIII, 10), they remain the object of the church’s *evangelistic* endeavors. Strictly speaking, the church’s *ecumenical* endeavors involve only those who are part of the church in fact as well as in name, that is, those who are “the living body of Christ” (Ap VII and VIII, 12) and “in whom there is true knowledge and the confession of faith and truth.” (Ap VII and VIII, 22)

2. *The Goal of Ecumenical Endeavors*

Since the sphere of ecumenical endeavors is properly the *Una Sancta*, it is self-evident that the goal of such efforts is not to create the unity of the church (*unitas, Einigkeit der Kirche*).³ The *unitas* of the *Una Sancta* is given with the faith that joins all Christians to their one Head, Christ, and to each other in the little holy flock which is without sect or schism (LC II, 51). The unity of the church is the presupposition, not the goal, of ecumenical endeavors. (AC Preface, 10)

Ecumenical endeavors are directed toward achieving unity *in* the church. While *unitas* is a constant characteristic of the church, *concordia* is not. Instead of concord, agreement, and peace, there are dissensions (Ap XII, 90) and religious disputes (FC SD XI, 94) which cause “divisions.” (FC SD Rule and Norm, 19)

It is to these divisions which obscure and seem to belie the unity of the church that Lutheran ecumenism addresses itself in the spirit of the Augsburg Confession in order to bring about Christian concord.

3. *The Necessity of Ecumenical Endeavors*

The Lutheran Symbols express an earnest desire for peace and harmony in the church (AC Preface, 2-4, 13; Ap XV, 52; XXIII, 59; Preface to *The Book of Concord*, p. 4; FC SD XII) and voice their displeasure with dissensions and controversies (Ap Preface, 16; XII, 90). Dissensions are deplored as instigated by the foe of mankind to impede the course of the Gospel (Preface to *The Book of Concord*, pp. 3-4) and as the cause of offense for unbelievers and weak Christians (FC SD Preface, 7-8) and of anguish of heart for the faithful (Ap XII, 127-128). On that account it is urgent and necessary that every effort be made to settle disputes and bring about reconciliation and agreement. (Preface to *The Book of Concord*, p. 13; FC SD Preface, 10)

4. *The Scope of Ecumenical Endeavors*

Lutherans seek confessional agreement among *all Christians*. It is still the earnest desire of Lutherans “to have all of us embrace and adhere to a single, true religion and live together in unity and in one fellowship and church, even as we are all enlisted under one Christ” (AC Preface, 4). Lutherans, therefore, still say to all fellow Christians with whom we have doctrinal disagreements: “We are prepared . . . to discuss . . . in so far as this can honorably be done, such practical and equitable ways as may restore unity. Thus the matters at issue between us . . . may be discussed amicably and charitably, our differences may be reconciled, and we may be united in one, true religion, even as we are all under one Christ and should confess and contend for Christ” (AC Preface, 10). The scope of Lutheran ecumenical endeavors embraces all of Christendom.

“Churches will not condemn each other because of a difference in ceremonies, when in Christian liberty one uses fewer or more of them, as long as they are otherwise agreed in doctrine and in all its articles and are also agreed concerning the right use of the holy sacraments” (FC SD X, 31). The scope of ecumenical endeavors is nothing less than the attainment of full confessional unanimity throughout Christendom with respect to all the articles of faith. This is *not* to say that the Symbols require a prescribable amount of agreement for the mere sake of agreement itself, or even that they attempt by a legislative use of Scripture to *compel* agreement *only* on account of the *obedience* that Christians owe to the Word of God. But this *is* to say that for the Symbols all the articles of faith are so integrally related to the Gospel-in-the-narrow-sense (FC SD V, 27) that error in any article threatens a correct understanding of the Gospel (cf. Ap II, 44; IV, 3, 81, 110; XII, 77; XV, 4; XXI, 14; XXVII, 23, 34). It is in the interest of preserving the pure teaching of the *Gospel* that Lutherans seek by the light and power of the Gospel to reach full agreement in *all* the articles of faith.

5. *The Program for Ecumenical Endeavors*

The confessing fathers of Lutheranism sought for and achieved an agreement in doctrine that was no mere pretense, but one that would “help matters fundamentally” in a strife-torn church. (FC SD XII, 5)

Accordingly, they did not ignore controversial issues and simply agree to disagree. “They saw clearly that there was no better way to counteract . . . religious controversies . . . than, on the basis of God’s Word, carefully and accurately to *explain* and *decide* the differences that had arisen with reference to *all* the articles in controversy, to expose and to reject false doctrine, and clearly to confess the divine truth.” (Preface to *The Book of Concord*, p. 6; emphasis ours)

The confessors did not regard compromise as a God-pleasing way to adjust doctrinal disagreements. “We have no intention . . . to *yield* anything of the eternal and unchangeable truth of God for the sake of temporal peace, tranquillity, and outward harmony. . . . We desire such harmony . . . that will not give place to the smallest error” (FC SD XI, 94-96; emphasis ours). When the choice was between external harmony, on the one hand, and faithfulness to the teachings of God’s Word, on the other hand, Luther was adamant on the side of unwavering adherence to the Biblical doctrine. The Formula of Concord quotes him as saying to all who rejected the doctrine of the Real Presence of Christ’s body and blood in the Lord’s Supper: “Whoever, I say, will not believe this, will please let me alone and expect no fellowship from me. This is final.” (FC SD VII, 33)

Confess the truth and expose error—that is the way our forefathers hoped to promote concord in the church. “In order to preserve the pure doctrine and to maintain a thorough, lasting, and God-pleasing concord within the church, it is essential not only to present the true and wholesome doctrine correctly, but also to accuse the adversaries who teach otherwise” (FC SD Rule and Norm, 14). “The primary requirement for basic and permanent concord within the church is a summary formula and pattern, unanimously approved, in which the summarized doctrine commonly confessed by the churches of the pure Christian religion is *drawn together out of the Word of God.*” (FC SD Rule and Norm, 1; emphasis ours)

By reiterating in the Formula of Concord the truth once confessed at Augsburg, our fathers hoped that their repeated confession would move other people to commit themselves to it (Preface to *The Book of Concord*, p. 5). They hoped that with proper instruction and the Holy Spirit’s guidance others would unite with them and with their churches and schools (Preface to

The Book of Concord, p. 12) because they believed their confession to be truly catholic (AC Conclusion of the first part, 1; Conclusion, 5). “We shall never come to be a united Church unless we take our Confessions seriously. The way to church unity is never around them, but in them and through them.”⁴

The confessional program for ecumenical endeavors takes doctrine very seriously and includes two indispensable components: refute error no matter where it may be found; set forth and explain our confession clearly and distinctly, opposing the true doctrine to the false. (FC SD Rule and Norm, 19)

II. Principles for Lutheran Ecumenism

A. Lutherans recognize and rejoice in their oneness with all Christians in the *Una Sancta* and regard this unity as the presupposition for continuing ecumenical endeavors throughout Christendom.

B. Lutherans deplore doctrinal disagreements, religious disputes, and dissensions among Christians and will not omit doing anything, in so far as God and conscience allow, that may serve the cause of Christian concord. (AC Preface, 13; FC SD XI, 95)

C. The concord that Lutherans desire and seek is confessional agreement among *all* Christians that extends to *all* the articles of faith revealed in the Sacred Scriptures and comprised in the Lutheran Symbols.

D. Lutherans seek agreement in all the articles of faith not only for the sake of uniformity itself, or solely on account of the obedience we owe to God’s Word in all that it teaches, but by the light and the power of the Gospel they seek agreement in all the articles of faith chiefly in order that “the Gospel be preached in conformity with a pure understanding of it.” (AC VII, 2; German)

E. Lutherans hold that until such confessional agreement is actualized not only by formal acceptance of doctrinal formulations but by faithful adherence to the true doctrine in the preaching and teaching of the church the basis for God-pleasing concord and fellowship among Christians does not yet exist.

F. Lutherans maintain that the concord we seek cannot be attained by ignoring doctrinal disagreements or by negotiating a compromise, but by exposing and refuting error and by confessing the truth.

III. Priorities for Lutheran Ecumenical Endeavors

For the sake of preserving the preaching of the Gospel according to a pure understanding of it, the Lutheran Confessions have put the following item on the agenda of the Lutheran Church:

By faithful and perpetual confession of the truth seek to promote throughout Christendom full agreement in all the articles of faith so that peace and concord may prevail within the unity of the church.

A task of such magnitude as this calls for careful planning and deliberate action lest our efforts be dissipated for want of clearly defined objectives and direction. Since on the confessional spectrum there are church bodies on one end with whom we already enjoy a great deal of agreement and church bodies on the other end with whom we have larger areas of disagreement, out of regard for relationships that already exist we seek above all to strengthen our ties with those who are confessionally most akin to us. It is a basic principle that while we carry on ecumenical endeavors simultaneously with as many church bodies as our resources permit, those nearest to us in the faith merit our closest contact and most persistent ecumenical effort.

The preservation of confessional unanimity within our own church body ought by all means to head the list of priorities. Whenever fellowship in our own immediate community is threatened by disagreement and dissension, our efforts must be focused on pursuing peace and harmony within our own household. Unless we have agreement among ourselves it is difficult, if not impossible, to form any clear conception of the kind and degree of agreement we seek with other Christians outside our church body.

IV. The Implementation of Confessional Principles and Priorities for Ecumenical Endeavors on Every Level of Our Life Together in The Lutheran Church— Missouri Synod

A. On the Synodical Level

1. On the synodical level primary attention will be given to internal relationships. The Synod, through agencies authorized to perform such functions in its name, will, when differences occur, attempt by every means at its disposal to effect reconciliation. When disagreements involve a departure from teachings of God's Word and reflect unwillingness to bow to the authority of the Sacred Scriptures, evangelical discipline must be applied out of the concern we have for each other's spiritual welfare in the household of faith. Especially in cases where an individual or a group has entered a state of protest against the theological position of the Synod, serious efforts must be made to clarify the point of controversy, to adjust matters according to God's Word, and to bring about God-pleasing harmony, or, failing in this, to apply such disciplinary measures as will fulfill the Synod's obligation to warn and try to correct all who persist in disobedience to the Word of God.

2. Next in importance is the Synod's concern to preserve and strengthen its relationship specifically with sister churches abroad and with other Lutheran bodies with whom we are in fellowship. Through a regularized program of planned contacts and of continuing study of how church bodies who already are in fellowship can give the most effective witness to the Savior in the various political, social, and cultural situations in the world, we should endeavor to aid and encourage one another in carrying out the mission of the church. Especially will churches in fellowship be of service to each other by mutual admonition to remain faithful to God's Word and by helping one another to adopt such programs and structures as will further our purpose to become all things to all men that we might by all means save some. Particular attention will always be given to the concerns of sister churches who at any time may enter into a state of protest (*in statu confessionis*) over against the theological position of the Synod with a view to

removing their concerns and promoting harmony so that together we may continue to give a unanimous and unhindered testimony to the grace of God in Christ.

3. With genuine regret that church bodies with whom we were formerly in fellowship have severed their relationships with us, the Synod will endeavor by every means available to resolve the disagreements that separate us and to restore fellowship. Before God, who searches the heart, the Synod will reexamine its dealings with these church bodies, invite discussion of the issues that still form a barrier between us, and in true humility repent if it has been guilty of loveless disregard of the concerns of fellow Lutherans, beseeching God to grant us agreement in the truth of His Word so that once again we can with one voice witness to the faith that binds us together in one church and fellowship.

4. In initiating conversations and dialogue with other church bodies, the Synod will be careful to do so on terms that are consonant with sound Lutheran theology so as not to give occasion for offense and jeopardize fellowship relations that already exist. The Synod will avail itself of all opportunities to engage in conversation with other Christians so long as this can be done without compromising our confessional position, as would be the case, for instance, were the Synod to be invited to participate in dialogue on the condition that it recognize the legitimacy of a method of Biblical interpretation that is incompatible with the Lutheran view of the authority of the Holy Scriptures. Fruitful dialogue is difficult, if not impossible, unless participants share the same understanding of the authority of Scripture or unless conversations are held for the purpose of reaching agreement about Biblical authority as a first step toward discussion of other areas of doctrine.

It remains a basic principle for the Synod that the unity *in* the church which we seek is not an external unification imposed from without by the adoption of common polities and by organizational affiliation or by united endeavors in worthy causes, but the unity in the church which results from *confessional* unanimity, that is, genuine concord or agreement in *doctrine*. In relation to other church bodies and agencies the Synod will gladly cooperate in externals, that is, participate in projects which do not involve joint worship or the spiritual ministry of the church. In line with this principle the Synod will continually examine the propriety of present affiliations and will carefully weigh proposals to enter new alliances.

B. On the District and Circuit Levels

A synodical district is the Synod itself performing its functions in a given geographical area.⁵ The Synod is not a federation of autonomous districts, but rather districts are administrative units into which the Synod divides itself for the purpose of more effective performance and supervision of its work in different localities. It is self-evident that all synodical resolutions, policies, and principles relative to joint endeavors are binding upon districts. The districts can engage only in such joint efforts as have been approved by the Synod and then always through structures adopted by the Synod and in accordance with synodical regulations. Wherever programs of any kind are carried on jointly with other church bodies under the auspices of a district, the district is held to conduct such joint efforts strictly within the limits which the Synod has set for itself. In sponsoring campus ministries, for instance, or participating in programs operated by councils of churches within the boundaries of a synodical district, the district is responsible for regulating all participation in such endeavors in conformity with synodical policies.

Circuits are administrative units into which a district divides itself. As such, circuits and districts are subject to the same regulations.

C. On the Congregational Level

When congregations become members of the Synod they voluntarily accept certain limitations of their autonomy. For the sake of good order and the benefit of all, congregations consent to regulate the exercise of their rights according to a compact freely entered into and mutually accepted. Congregations, for instance, agree to be served only by such pastors as have been certified for placement by the Synod's seminary faculties and who are members of the Synod. Similarly, congregations agree that they will practice fellowship only with those congregations which belong to a church body with which the Synod is in fellowship. Once such an agreement has been made, confusion and disorder result when congregations act independently by practicing *selective* fellowship. The Synod has, therefore, on several occasions stated its position on selective fellowship. Key sentences from a resolution adopted in 1969 give the Synod's position:

WHEREAS, The members of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod have voluntarily united in a fraternal agreement to determine fellowship relations with other church bodies or congregations, not individually but through convention action (*Handbook* 1.21) . . .

Resolved, That the Synod urge all its members to honor their fraternal agreement with all members of the Synod by refraining from practicing altar and pulpit fellowship with congregations of church bodies with whom the Synod has not yet declared fellowship.⁶

D. On the Individual Level

1. In the exercise of their office pastors will follow synodical policy. Except in emergency situations and in such cases where their action cannot rightfully be construed as disregard for pure doctrine, for the responsibilities of their office, or for the concerns of their brethren in the ministry, pastors will ordinarily commune only those individuals who are members of the Synod or of a Lutheran church body with which the Synod is in fellowship. Pastors will not participate in joint worship services with pastors of denominations with which the Synod has not established fellowship relations. When pastors affiliate with ministerial alliances or associations, they will participate in such activities and service opportunities as do not imply ecclesiastical fellowship where it does not yet exist.

2. Lay people will ordinarily worship only with congregations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod or with congregations which belong to church bodies who are in fellowship with the LCMS. Where opportunities for dialogue or for *cooperation in externals* present themselves, lay people will join in such activities according to the policies and principles adopted by the Synod.

NOTES

1. For a discussion of the way the Christian church has dealt with the question of fellowship throughout its history, see the Commission on Theology and Church Relations report “Theology of Fellowship.” Available from Concordia Publishing House, this report was included in the 1967 *Convention Workbook*, pp. 365-392.
2. G[eorge] Stoeckhardt, *Commentary on St. Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians*, trans. Martin S. Sommer (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1952), p. 179.
3. “The unity of the church (*unitas ecclesiae*) is carefully differentiated from the organizational integrity of the church (*communis integritas ecclesiae*) and harmony in the church (*concordia, caritas, tranquillitas in ecclesia*). The use of *Einigkeit* in the German Book of Concord for both *unitas* and *concordia* has obscured this differentiation, although even here the genitive *der Kirche* is used where *Einigkeit* means *unitas* and the prepositional phrase *in der Kirche* is used where *Einigkeit* means *concordia* or its synonyms.” A. C. Piepkorn, “What the Symbols Have to Say About the Church,” *Concordia Theological Monthly*, XXVI (October 1955), 750.
4. E. George Pearce, “Factors in Lutheran Unity,” *Concordia Theological Monthly*, XXV (October 1954), 736.
5. *Handbook of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod*, Bylaw 3.07.
6. *Proceedings of the Forty-Eighth Regular Convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod*, Denver, 1969, Resolution 3-18, p. 101. See Appendix for additional resolutions of the Synod relative to selective fellowship.

APPENDIX

Resolutions on Fellowship

1965 Resolution 2-16

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod has a well-established policy on joint worship services on the basis of the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions (cf. *Proceedings*, 1941, p. 303); therefore be it

Resolved, That no joint worship services be held with those with whom we have not established pulpit and altar fellowship; and be it further

Resolved, That where a problem of casuistry exists in the area of pulpit and altar fellowship, no judgment be voiced against a pastor or congregation without personal, fraternal confrontation and without ascertaining all the facts involved. (*Proceedings of the Forty-Sixth Regular Convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod*, Detroit, 1965, pp. 97-98)

1967 Resolution 2-19

WHEREAS, Clarification regarding the administration and reception of Holy Communion has been requested, with particular reference to Lutherans of other synods not now in fellowship with us; and

WHEREAS, The principle of “close Communion” requires that only those who are in altar fellowship celebrate and partake of the Lord’s Supper with each other; and

WHEREAS, The celebration and reception of Holy Communion not only implies but is a confession of the unity of faith; therefore be it

Resolved, That pastors and congregations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, except in situations of emergency and in special cases of pastoral care, commune individuals of only those Lutheran synods which are now in fellowship with us. (*Proceedings of the Forty-Seventh Regular Convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod*, New York, 1967, p. 93)

1967 Resolution 2-18

A. WHEREAS, On the one hand, the congregations and members of the Synod join in renouncing unionism and syncretism of every description, such as:

a. Serving congregations of 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 confession. (*Constitution of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod*, Article VI, 2, a, b); therefore be it

Resolved, That we refrain from selective pulpit fellowship with “heterodox congregations or . . . congregations of mixed confession”; and

B. WHEREAS, On the other hand, all congregations and members of the Synod have voluntarily united for “the conservation and promotion of the unity of the true faith (Eph. 4:3-6; 1 Cor. 1:10) and a united defense against schism and sectarianism (Rom. 16:17)” (op. cit., Article III, 1); and

WHEREAS, Efforts are accordingly now being made within Lutheranism to enter into fellowship on the basis of Scripture and the Confessions, and this fellowship ought not be endangered by anticipating it; and

WHEREAS, The practice of selective pulpit fellowship would create problems and disharmony in the Synod; therefore be it

Resolved, That we respectfully urge members of the Synod to refrain from selective pulpit fellowship with Lutherans not in fellowship with us. (*Proceedings of the Forty-Seventh Regular Convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod*, New York, 1967, p. 92)

1969 Resolution 3-18

WHEREAS, The members of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod have voluntarily united in a fraternal agreement to determine fellowship relations with other church bodies or congregations, not individually but through convention action (*Handbook* 1.21); and

WHEREAS, The Synod has urged all its members to refrain from exercising local congregational option in regard to fellowship (cf. 1967 Convention *Proceedings*, Res. 2-18, p. 92); and

WHEREAS, The Commission on Theology and Church Relations is presently preparing a report of its study of all aspects of interchurch relations; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod urge all its members to honor their fraternal agreement with all members of the Synod by refraining from practicing altar and pulpit fellowship with congregations of church bodies with whom the Synod has not yet declared fellowship. (*Proceedings of the Forty-Eighth Regular Convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod*, Denver, 1969, p. 101)

1971 Resolution 3-11

WHEREAS, There is a continued concern in the matter of selective fellowship; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod request, through its President, the Commission on Theology and Church Relations, the Commission on Mission and Ministry, and the Commission on Constitutional Matters to make a thorough study of selective fellowship, that is, the possibilities of its member congregations practicing fellowship with such congregations as they find are in confessional agreement with them, and to make recommendations to the 1973 convention regarding such fellowship; and be it also

Resolved, That in the interim we reaffirm Resolution 3-18 of the Denver convention regarding selective fellowship (1969 *Proceedings*, p. 101). (*Proceedings of the Forty-Ninth Regular Convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod*, Milwaukee, 1971, pp. 132-133)



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