

BECAUSE I CARE

This information was written by someone else, but I have adopted it as my own. I believe that it is a useful tool to help me keep things straight, and I pass it on to you with the prayer that it will help. And so, although I did not personally write what follows, please accept it as if I have. What you will read here is in short what I believe and confess.

I have given you this information because I care about you and want you to know the reasons as to why I have left the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod. There is much that I want to say and sometimes when dealing with an issue of this size it is better to simply write some things down in an orderly way. I want you to be able to sit down when you want, read, and ponder the issues that weigh heavily on my mind. The last thing that I would ever desire is for you to feel as if I am attacking you or trying to pressure you to immediately respond to what I have to say, and that is why I have chosen to give you this information instead of engaging you in conversation. I also realize that it is impossible for me to cover every detail in a brief statement such as this, but at least I pray that this can be a beginning so that you may know exactly where I am coming from, whether you agree or not.

Leaving the Missouri Synod was not an easy decision, but it was one that had to be made. After careful examination, it has become apparent that the teachings and practices of the Missouri Synod are no longer in keeping with God's Word and the Lutheran Confessions. At one time, it was solid as a rock and unified in its witness, but now it does not make the proper distinction between what is false and what is true. Now, when I say these things I know that some might think that I have gone off the deep end, others might think that I am judgmental, and still others may conclude that my pastors have poisoned my thinking.

In the book of Acts (17:11), it says that the Christians in Berea "received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true." This is the example that I have tried to follow. My pastors are sinful human beings just like any of us, and so while I listen to them as God commands, I examine the Scriptures to see if what they are saying is true. And the apostle Paul tells me in I Corinthians 5:12-13 that it is my obligation to judge what I see and hear inside the church. These truths keep me from going off the deep end.

While it would be much easier and safer for me to ignore what is going on in the Missouri Synod, I know that I have an obligation to stand before God, and not only that, but my care for you compels me to confess. The Missouri Synod has undergone many ill-chosen changes that I cannot accept or simply live with according to God's Word. Dr. Robert T. Kuhn, former president of the Central Illinois District, former president of the Missouri Synod, and now chairman of the Board of Directors sternly warned us in the 2001 convention when he said in his report:

Brothers and sisters in Christ, it truly hurts me that in our Synod, in the past several years, there have arisen groups that claim to be putting Jesus first, or that they are trying to shine like stars, when it is obvious they are attempting to advance an old

liberal theology and practice, an agenda that has haunted this church body since the days of Seminex and even before. Delegates, my fraternal and heartfelt encouragement to you as President of our Synod is to beware of this agenda and how they are suggesting to carry it out. It would be detrimental to head in this direction. This is not the path we should follow. There is a much better way.

Unfortunately, these “groups” that Dr. Kuhn was talking about in 2001 successfully elected one of their own to the presidency. They have grown in number since then and are now clearly in control of the Synod and are doing exactly what Dr. Kuhn warned. They are advancing their “agenda” which is far from the well-worn path marked out by God’s Word and made clear by the Lutheran Confessions. While much can be said about the issues that plague the Synod, I will try to be as brief as possible so that you may know. At the same time, let me add that if you desire more information, I will be more than glad to provide it for you.

THE SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR

First of all, there is the issue surrounding the Sacrament of the Altar. *Luther’s Small Catechism* states that “the Sacrament must not be given to the following: . . . C. Those of a different confession of faith, since the Lord’s Supper is a testimony of the unity of faith.” Following this statement it quotes Acts 2:42 where Luke writes about the early Christians and how “they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.” Furthermore, the words of Paul in I Corinthians 10:17 are recorded: “Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.” This is what I was taught and this is what I believe.

Today, there are many who simply do not believe or practice closed communion. Instead, a growing number of Missouri Synod pastors and congregations have opened their altars to those who do not believe the same things that we believe. Can you imagine that people who do not, for example, believe in infant baptism, or do not believe in the real presence of Christ’s body and blood, or who deny the resurrection of Jesus at your altar communing? Here I think about what Paul says in I Cor. 11:27-28, “Whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup.” At one time, like the early church, open communion was out of the question in the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod.

Today, there are those who simply ignore what has been handed down to us from the apostles about our participation in the body and blood of Christ. In our Synod, there are many congregations which have bulletins where they welcome guests to communion if they agree with a few brief statements, as if that will cover it. This is open communion. Secondly, there have been many overtures to various conventions that demonstrate how pastors and people have changed their position on this important issue. A powerful case in point is that of the Florida-Georgia District of the Missouri Synod. This district adopted a document called *A Declaration of Eucharistic Understanding and Practice*. This document states that communion should be given to those who

repent of their sins, believe in the real presence, and sincerely intend to amend their lives. What is lost in all of this is the truth that the Lord's Supper is a testimony of unity in doctrine as Acts 2:42 reminds us. Furthermore, the document states that "Scripture imposes no denominational requirement on baptized Christians who desire to receive the body and blood of Christ offered in the Lord's Supper." It says in 1 Timothy 4:1, "The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons." And Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10:21, "You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you cannot have part in both the Lord's table and the table of demons."

A PRAYER FOR AMERICA AT YANKEE STADIUM

Secondly, there is the issue of what happened at Yankee Stadium. You may or may not have heard of this. I will give you a brief description of what took place there in a moment. For now, it is important for you to know what the synodical constitution says. **Article VI Conditions of Membership** reads, "Conditions for acquiring and holding membership in the Synod are the following: . . . 2. Renunciation of unionism and syncretism of every description . . ." When I first read this, I really did not know exactly what these terms meant, so I hope it will help if I define them.

"Unionism" is a word that describes what happens when various Christian groups assemble together in joint worship even though they are not united in truth. "Syncretism" refers to a service where Christians worship with other religions such as Buddhists, Hindus, and Muslims. Once again, the synodical constitution requires that to be a member of the Synod means that pastors and congregations are to abandon these practices. This provision in the constitution is based on many passages of Scripture. For example, the command of God to avoid syncretism is based on what the apostle Paul says in 2 Corinthians 6:14-18,

Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people." "Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you." "I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."

In the Missouri Synod today, there are pastors and congregations who have no problem with doing exactly what the Bible and synodical constitution forbids, and so they violate their obligation and participate "in the services and sacramental rites of heterodox congregations or of congregations of mixed confession." What was once forbidden in the Synod has now become common practice. A good example of this is what happened at Yankee Stadium.

On September 23, 2001, a Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod District President by the name of Dr. David Benke participated in a unionistic and sycretistic prayer service. *A Prayer for America* was broadcasted nationally on C-SPAN and included homilies (short sermons), prayers, and readings by Muslim, Hindu, Jewish, and Christian clergy. This was not the very first time that Dr. Benke had done something like this. The last time, he was on the verge of being disciplined by the Synod in a convention. However, a few last minute maneuvers avoided such action. Anyway, at Yankee Stadium he clearly violated the Scriptures and synodical constitution with the approval and blessing of the synodical president, Dr. Gerald Kieschnick. How in the world can synodical officials actually endorse an event where Jesus Christ is reduced to one among many other gods? How does this fair with God who is a jealous God? Our Lord and Savior says in John 14:6, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

You would have thought that the 2004 synodical convention would have dealt with this issue in light of the Scriptures and synodical constitution. Instead, the convention re-elected the synodical president and deposed many who were publically against what Dr. Benke had done. To this day, the synodical president along with Dr. Benke defend what took place at Yankee Stadium even though the synodical constitution is clear. Once again, Paul says in 2 Corinthians 6:14, "Do not be yoked together with unbelievers." Hindus, Buddhists, and Muslims do not believe that Jesus is the Way, Truth, and Life. What weighs heavily on my conscience is that the majority of the Synod wishes to look the other way and sweep the whole thing under the rug.

THE CHURCH GROWTH MOVEMENT

Another ongoing issue is that of the Church Growth Movement. In 2001, the Church Growth Study Committee of the Missouri Synod submitted its official report titled: *For the Sake of Christ's Commission*. In the preface it says, "In this generation, the unity of the Synod is threatened by diversity of doctrine and practice originating from influences that have their sources in Evangelicalism and the Church Growth Movement. Here the content of the Gospel itself is at stake." Those are strong words, and it seems to me that anyone who hears them ought to understand what the Church Growth Movement is and why it is wrong.

The official report also stated that the pastors and people of the Church Growth Movement define their understanding of mission work by saying that in order to save people one must "combine the eternal principles of God's Word with the best insights of contemporary social and behavioral sciences, employing as its initial frame of reference the foundational work done by Donald McGavran and his colleagues." Over the years I was taught in *Luther's Small Catechism* that "The Gospel is the means by which the Holy Spirit offers us all the blessings of Christ and creates faith in us. *Note*: The written and spoken Word of the Gospel and the sacraments are the means of Grace." Besides that, Jesus himself says in Matthew 28: 19-20 that the way in which disciples are made is by baptizing them and teaching them everything that he has commanded. It is no wonder then why the Church Growth Study Committee of the Missouri Synod said:

The goal of many Church Growth proponents, to win souls for Christ through the Gospel, is a worthy one. Ironically, many of the Church growth techniques work instead to undermine the Gospel. Church Growth principles have roots in American revivalism, which suggests that people have within them the free will to “make a decision for Jesus.” This implies that gaining new Christians is a human work - a matter of rhetorical and emotional manipulation, applying the correct techniques, and following the right principles - rather than the work of God.

ALTERNATIVE WORSHIP

Since there are pastors and congregations who believe that making disciples is mostly a human work and a matter of rhetorical and emotional manipulation, they depend upon alternative worship styles to make their churches grow. By their actions, they often lead people to conclude that it is not enough to preach and teach the Word of the Gospel in its truth and purity and administer the Sacraments rightly to make disciples of all nations. Instead, something else must either help or do the work of God’s Spirit. Many conclude that they need to either get rid of or change the historic liturgy in order to attract people into the church. Out of one side of the mouth they say that the Bible is the Word of God and the power of salvation. Out of the other side they say that human efforts are necessary in order to make the Gospel palatable to people. So which is it? If the Word is sufficient then why is human innovation necessary? I was taught and I believe that people should join a church because of the Word of the Gospel and not because it is clever or cool. The Word and Sacraments are the testimony as it says in I John 5:7-8, 10a, “For there are three that testify: the Spirit, the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement . . . Anyone who believes in the Son of God has this testimony in his heart.”

Having said that, I know that not everything in alternative worship is necessarily wrong, but it is also true to say that most alternative styles are not in keeping with our Lutheran understanding of worship since most of these styles have been borrowed from Baptist, Pentecostal, and non-denominational churches. There is nothing wrong with strengthening or even changing what we have as long as it is in agreement with God’s Word and done in unison. Unfortunately, many pastors and congregations are doing their own thing and causing deep and lasting division in our church body. The ancient church believed and taught that the way one worships influences the way in which one believes, and the way a person believes influences the way in which they worship.

The synodical constitution says in **Article VI** that “conditions for acquiring and holding membership in the Synod are the following: . . . 4. Exclusive use of doctrinally pure agenda, hymnbooks, and catechisms in church and school.” The reason why our forefathers added this to the constitution was because they knew that if the Missouri Synod was united in worship, then it would be united in teaching and would powerfully bear witness to the world. As unity in worship has fallen apart, the division has grown and our witness has faded. Not only is the Synod deeply divided when it comes to worship, but this is influencing what is believed, taught, and confessed among pastors and people. It says in Ecclesiastes 5:1-2, “Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. Go near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools, who do not know that they do

wrong. Do not be quick with your mouth, do not be hasty in your heart to utter anything before God. God is in heaven and you are on earth, so let your words be few.”

The former President of the Missouri Synod, Dr. A. L. Barry put it this way in a pamphlet designed to help lay people understand what worship is all about:

Lutheran worship puts the focus squarely on Jesus Christ, who is present for us and with us through His Word and Sacraments. Lutheran worship is, therefore, Christ-centered, not man-centered. When we are gathered for worship, we are not contemplating some far-off Christ or meditating on abstract concepts, or pondering various principles for living. Neither are we in church to be amused or entertained. Christ is living and active among us, right where He has promised to be in His Word and Sacraments. Jesus said, “Lo, I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matt. 18:20). When He gathers us around His Word and Sacraments, He fulfills this promise to us once again.

To me, the real heart of worship is found in the fact that Jesus Christ comes to us in the means of grace and gives the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. And to me, the heart is not found in romantic music, praise bands, hip pastors, the size of the church, or whether or not I feel it was all a good show. When I die or when the trumpet sounds, I am convinced that the only thing that is going help me make it through that moment is to know and believe that Christ is with me every step of the way in the Word of the Gospel, Baptism, and the Sacrament of the Altar. My sinful flesh is bored with the means of grace and often seeks something else, but the new creation within me knows and believes that in the means of grace Christ is to be found, and in Christ there is the forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

RENEWAL IN MISSOURI

A fifth issue that has divided our synod is that of Renewal in Missouri (RIM). This charismatic organization began in the late 1980s and is still with us. They claim to have spiritual gifts as they are listed in 1 Corinthians 12:7-11. Many of them claim to be prophets, receiving revelations from God. On the basis of these revelations, they enhance their interpretation of the Scriptures and conduct their work accordingly. There are those in the Synod who are willing to accept these things and much more, and there are those who do not. Who is to determine whether or not these revelations are really from God since the apostles of Christ are no longer with us?

In RIM’s most recent publication for example (July 2004, Issue #57), there is an article that affirms what is often known as the Vineyard Movement. It was written by James Bredeson and is titled, *The Toronto Blessing, After 10 Years. . .* The article states: “This revival was marked by strange phenomena or ‘manifestations’ such as jerking, laughter, and being ‘slain in the Spirit’ (falling down in the presence of God). But more than that, it was clear that the manifest presence of God was in the place.” Please understand that the leaders of the Vineyard movement are far, far

away from embracing Lutheran teaching. And this is only a minuscule sample of what RIM is all about.

Kurt Marquart is a Missouri Synod Professor at the Fort Wayne Seminary. In his book *"Church Growth" as Mission Paradigm*, he makes this observation: "Although the evangelist St. Philip could work miracles (Acts 8:6), he evidently could not impart the visible manifestation of the Holy Spirit: the apostles had to do that by their prayer and the laying on of their hands (vv. 14-19)." In the same book, he also refers to other passages such as Acts 5:12-16; 19:11-12; 2 Cor. 12:12; Eph. 2:20-22; Hebrews 1:1-4; 2:1-4. The bottom line is that none of these issues have really been ironed out in the Synod, and yet there was a resolution in the last convention declaring that agreement had been reached with RIM, and that it was time for the Synod to move on. The *Smalcald Articles* state, "Accordingly, we should and must constantly maintain that God will not deal with us except through His external Word and sacrament. Whatever is attributed to the Spirit apart from such Word and sacrament is of the devil (313;10, Tappert)."

THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

A sixth issue is that of Missouri Synod's relationship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). To make a long story short, there are those in the Missouri Synod who want to pursue a closer relationship with the ELCA. There are also those who want full altar and pulpit fellowship so that their pastors and our pastors can preach in each other's churches, and we can commune with each other. None of this really takes into consideration the vast theological differences between these two, large church bodies. In the *2001 Convention Workbook*, in his report to the Missouri Synod, Dr. A. L. Barry said that "church fellowship between our two churches is simply impossible."

The reason why it is impossible is partially because the ELCA communes with church bodies that deny that the body and blood of Christ is present in the Lord's Supper. Furthermore, the ELCA does not believe that the Bible is without error. Our churches disagree about the ordination of women, homosexuality, abortion, and the authority of the Lutheran Confessions. The Missouri Synod officially believes that there must be unity in doctrine before there is altar and pulpit fellowship, while the ELCA is unconcerned with complete doctrinal agreement. There are those in the ELCA who deny that Jesus died for our sins and reject the resurrection of Christ. All of this is documented in a book titled: *What's Going on Among the Lutherans?* written by Patsy A. Leppien and J. Kincaid Smith, Northwestern Publishing House.

With all of these issues in view, the previous convention of the Missouri Synod began the process of shutting down communication with the ELCA. With the adoption of Resolution 3-07 of the 2004 convention, the Missouri Synod is still continuing "discussions" with the ELCA. This is appalling. To this day, there are pastors and congregations in the Missouri Synod who have no problem with communing with those who are in the ELCA. There are schools in our Synod that are a joint venture with the ELCA. Recently, at the Missouri Synod National Youth Gathering in Orlando, the Lutheran Student Movement (LSM) of the ELCA had an official booth. The LSM

actively endorses the gay/lesbian agenda of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. When Missouri Synod officials were confronted about this, they apologized. But one wonders how such a thing happened in the first place.

And finally, in the 2004 synodical convention, the Missouri Synod formally declared Altar and Pulpit Fellowship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya (ELCK). The problem with this is that the ELCK is a member of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), an organization that is unable to agree on the doctrine by which the church stands or falls, namely, Justification by Grace through Faith. Since the ELCK is a member of the LWF, they are automatically in fellowship with the ELCA. The Missouri Synod is neither a member of the LWF or in fellowship with the ELCA, and yet we are in fellowship with the ELCK which is in fellowship with both. Not only that, but there are other church bodies with which we are in fellowship that are a part of the Lutheran World Federation, and this is entirely unacceptable. It says in 2 John 9-11, "Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not take him into your house or welcome him. Anyone who welcomes him shares in his wicked work."

THE SERVICE OF WOMEN

A seventh issue that has torn our Synod apart is our understanding of the Service of Women. **Resolution 3-08** was titled, "**To Adopt the Conclusions of the 1994 CTCR Report: *The Service of Women in Congregational and Synodical Offices.***" It was adopted by the 2004 Synodical Convention 570 to 520. Up until this time, women were not allowed to serve in positions that might violate the order of creation, such as elder, chairman, and vice-chairman of the congregation. The order of creation is established in 1 Timothy 2:12-13 where Paul states, "I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve."

The **1994 CTCR Report** reverses everything and concludes that women may now serve as an elder (as long as this does not infringe upon the functions of the pastoral ministry), chairman, vice-chairman, and as members of synodical dispute resolution panels. In the "*Dissenting opinion on women in congregational offices,*" five synodical professors on the CTCR in 1994 made this correct observation about the **1994 CTCR Report**: "... characteristic of the Report is its refusal to include the order of creation as a guiding concept in its argument." All of this was disregarded, and the Synod in Convention adopted the **1994 CTCR Report** as its official position. With the adoption of this document, one truly begins to wonder when the doors will be opened for the ordination of women. All it will take is a report, a resolution, and a vote in a synodical convention.

In the Synodical National Youth Gathering that was held this last summer in Orlando, Fl., President Kieschnick preached. During the sermon, he invited his wife to stand before those gathered together and say a few words, and then he finished his sermon. One Missouri Synod pastor who attended said that this was a clear violation of 1 Corinthians 14:33-34 where Paul states, "For God is not a God of disorder but of peace. As in all the congregations of the saints, women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law

says.” After mounting pressure, President Kieschnick wrote, “I sincerely regret any and all miscommunication on my part in this matter and ask forgiveness from anyone who was confused or disturbed by what I said or did.” He also said that it had nothing to do with the passing of the **1994 CTCR Report**. Be that as it may, all of this demonstrates the kind of thinking that has become typical in the Synod - a type of thinking that is unacceptable.

POWER, ECCLESIASTICAL SUPERVISION, AND DISPUTE RESOLUTION

An eighth issue that has divided our Synod is the toleration of conflicting and unbiblical views regarding the priesthood of all believers and the office of the ministry. Those who support the Church Growth Movement are taking power away from the people and investing it typically in a chosen few to run the local church. They also say that everyone is a minister as if there is no distinction between the flock and the divinely called shepherd. On the other side, there are those who consider themselves confessional Lutherans and proceed to disenfranchise the laity and exercise complete power over them. And finally, there are those among the laity who abuse their power as evidenced by the way in which they treat their pastor(s). In all cases, the Lutheran understanding of the keys is called into question, the willingness to sacrifice for one another is lost, and great turmoil results. These things have been going on for some time unchecked.

A most disturbing example of this has come from the 2004 convention. An enormous amount of power has been given to the district presidents of the Synod by the adoption of Resolution 8-01. In this resolution, the bylaws on Ecclesiastical Supervision and Dispute Resolution were dramatically amended. It is no exaggeration to say that district presidents have become the police, judge, and jury in the Missouri Synod. The entire process of dispute resolution and the removal of error is entirely dependent upon whether or not the district president(s) believe that there is a dispute to be heard or error to be removed. *The Smalcald Articles, Of the Power and Primacy of the Pope (Concordia Triglotta, pg. 507, V.)* boldly states:

In 1 Cor. 3, 6, Paul makes ministers equal, and teaches that the Church is above the ministers. Hence superiority or lordship over the Church or the rest of the ministers is not ascribed to Peter [in preference to other apostles]. For he says thus: *All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, I, e.,* let neither the other ministers nor Peter assume for themselves lordship or superiority over the Church; let them not burden the Church with traditions; let not the authority of any avail more than the Word [of God];

Most of the District Presidents are supportive of the new changes that have been taking place in the Missouri Synod. This makes it all the more difficult, if not impossible, for those who want the Synod to return to her roots. In fact, it is reasonable to say, that with Resolution 8-01, the necessary framework has been established to further an agenda that is far from Lutheran Christianity. This is almost exactly what the majority did in the ELCA did to further its liberal agenda.

THE ONLY THING LEFT TO DO

There are many in the Missouri Synod who would see all of this as progress; I, however, do not. I believe that our once faithful church body is now tolerating truth with error, and the error is devouring the truth. The Scriptures clearly warn us of this when it says in 1 Corinthians 5:6-8,

Your boasting is no good. Don't you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough? Get rid of the old yeast that you may be new batch without yeast - as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth.

Those who do not get rid of the old yeast in order to be a new batch without yeast are in constant danger of losing the Word of God entirely. I do not want to lose my precious treasure, nor do I want you or others to forfeit the truth for what is clearly false.

The *Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod* was adopted in 1932. It says that "The orthodox character of a church is established not by its mere name nor by its outward acceptance of, and subscription to, an orthodox creed, but by the doctrine which is actually taught in its pulpits, in its theological seminaries, and in its publications." An orthodox church-body is one that preaches and teaches the entire counsel of God in its truth and purity and administers the sacraments rightly. A heterodox church-body is one that tolerates error with truth. I refuse to accept or be associated with those who stick fast to false teaching. The Scripture clearly forbids spiritual association with those who depart from the truth handed down to us by the prophets and the apostles.

Romans 16:17, "I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them."

II John 10-11, "If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not take him into your house or welcome him. Anyone who welcomes him shares in his wicked work."

II Thess. 3:6, "In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers, to keep away from every brother who is idle and does not live according to the teaching you received from us."

I Cor. 5:6-7, "Your boasting is not good. Don't you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough? Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast - as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed."

Titus 3:10, "Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him."

There are many more passages that could be looked at. Nevertheless, these are short and to the point. These words of the Holy Spirit mean that we are to refuse church fellowship with those

who depart from the truth and do not continue in the words of Christ. Luther once said that you “cannot remain in the same stall with others who propagate false doctrine.”

Some will no doubt argue that others and I should continue to fight and eventually remove the errors. This position fails to appreciate the fight that has already been going on for some time. This position also fails to grasp that the process of dispute resolution and the removal of error is entirely dependent upon those officials who are charting and/or supporting the new course for the Synod, namely, the majority of the district presidents and the synodical president. And finally, this position fails to acknowledge what took place in the last convention. The majority of the Synod is clearly opposed to what my congregation believes, teaches, and confesses; and that number has grown since the last convention. The differing sides are adamant about their positions.

In good conscience, I believe that the truth has been clearly and definitely set forth repeatedly for many years in the Missouri Synod. I have examined the history to determine whether the truth has been accepted. From all the evidence, and there is much more that could be said, I am convinced that the truth has not been accepted. In fact, things have only grown worse. To remain in such a situation is a danger to my soul. The Word of God is being treated with irreverence, and under those conditions it is necessary to part company with the Missouri Synod. Consequently, I have sadly left the Synod. Recognizing my own sin, I have asked God to spare me from ever falling into ignorance or ever actively affirming what is false.

OUR RELATIONSHIP

Having said all of this, I hope that you understand that I do not think that every pastor and member of the Synod is non-Christian or an unfaithful Christian. I believe that some have rejected the truth knowingly, and others have done so in complete ignorance or as the result of being deceived. Some detect that there is something wrong, but really do not want to investigate or even know where to start. I also am convinced that there are many who do not even know that there has been a problem for so many years. And finally, I believe that there are still many who are in the Missouri Synod who continue to strive to be faithful and are struggling with the same issues with which I have struggled. Some of them will stay and some of them will eventually leave. I sincerely pray for all.

With that thought, the last thing that I would ever want to do is destroy our relationship. If you find that you are on the other side of things and are convinced that the Synod is finally progressing in the right direction, then it would probably be best that we maintain our relationship, but avoid any detailed discussion about religion. If you find that you are startled about these things, confused, or have a multitude of questions, then I would be more than glad to provide you with more information that might help you wade through the issues. Regardless of the position you take, you are always invited to attend my church or any Bible class that might be offered there and I would be honored to have you with me. However, if you desire to take communion, you will need to talk to one of the pastors, giving him enough time before the service to talk with you and work through whatever needs to be worked through.

I hope that this information has done what I intended it to do. I want you to know and believe that I care and I want you to know why I had to leave the Missouri Synod. Nothing is more important to me than the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. I believe firmly that I am a sinful human being and deserve nothing but death and hell. Thanks be to God that he sent his Son to live a perfect life for me and die so that I might have eternal life. Because of his great love for me, I earnestly desire to conform to his Gospel. I do not want a little yeast to destroy my eternal treasure. I take to heart, and I hope you do to, the words of Jesus when he says in John 8:31-32, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."