

February 21, 2023

Dear Friends in Christ,

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, its president, vice-presidents and all 35 district presidents, along with its ministerium and congregations, categorically reject the horrible and racist teachings of the so-called “alt-right” *in toto* (including white supremacy, Nazism, pro-slavery, anti-interracial marriage, women as property, fascism, death for homosexuals, even genocide).

The Synodical explanation of Luther’s Small Catechism teaches that the Fifth Commandment, “You shall not murder,” includes the prohibition of “hating, despising, or slandering other groups of people (prejudice, racism, and so forth).” The Scriptures agree: “Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him” (1 John 3:15). Every human being is precious to God and as valuable as the very blood of Jesus Christ shed for all, “for God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son” (John 3:16).

We were shocked to learn recently that a few members of LCMS congregations have been propagating radical and unchristian “alt-right” views via Twitter and other social media. They are causing local disruption and consternation for their pastors, congregations and district presidents. They have publicly stated that they seek the destruction of the LCMS leadership. They have made serious online threats to individuals and scandalously attacked several faithful LCMS members. Through these social media posts, even our wonderful deaconesses have been threatened and attacked.

This is evil. We condemn it in the name of Christ.

These “alt-right” individuals were at the genesis of a recent controversy surrounding essays accompanying a new publication of Luther’s Large Catechism. This group used that opportunity to produce not only scandalous attacks and widespread falsehoods, but also to promote their own absolutist ideologies.

Anyone trying to sully the reputation of the LCMS based on comments from a small number of online provocateurs does not know the loving, faithful, generous, kind and welcoming Synod that I have met all across the nation. Our people are delighted to gather with sinners of every stripe to receive full and free forgiveness from our crucified Savior and are not represented by these few men with their sinful agenda.

I am not speaking about the individuals who may have expressed theological concerns about the essays published alongside the Catechism. I’m talking about a small number of men who based their opposition upon racist and supremacist ideologies. The former we welcome. The latter we condemn.

The LCMS is a robust Christian community under the absolute authority of the inerrant Scriptures as the very Word of God and bound together in subscription to our Lutheran Confessions. Theological dialogue is good. We have clear processes for registering concerns over published materials, and we encourage such theological critique. The biblical confession of the LCMS on doctrine and life is true and unchangeable.

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LCMS congregations agree to uphold our biblical standards. We are not a top-down institution. That said, I will work together with our pastors and district presidents to address this matter wherever it arises among us and reject it. We issue the cry of Jesus: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt. 3:2). We are confident that the same Law and Gospel that broke the hard heart of St. Paul, himself a murderer and blasphemer, can and will do the same today. We are all called to repentance daily. “The blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 1:7). Where that call to repentance is not heeded, there must be excommunication.

Of all the things I’ve seen as LCMS president, this is the most bizarre. I am informed that other conservative denominations are experiencing similar challenges. This horrid attack of the devil drives us to be firm in our confession. Our message of Christ the Savior for all, our local and global mission that serves the entire human race with forgiveness and joy stands firmly opposed to Satan and all evil. Our steadfast message of love and biblical fidelity on the cultural issues of marriage, sexuality, race, and life is an assault on the devil and his minions to no end. Our steadfast witness and assistance to our global Lutheran friends has the devil fuming.

Do not be discouraged! Stand firm! Speak of Christ and His Gospel! “We preach Christ crucified” (1 Cor. 1:23). And if Jesus so carried our sins and the sins of the world, though He never sinned, shall we expect not to bear a few splinters of the cross in this age?

“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, ‘For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.’ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8:31–39).

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

Pastor Matthew C. Harrison
President, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod