

CONTENTS

Volume Twenty-Six, Number One



FEATURES

4 “A Strong Constitution”

Lawrence R. Rast Jr.

When 12 pastors and 14 congregations representing some 3,500 to 4,000 members came together in Chicago, Illinois, and signed a constitution establishing *Die Deutsche Evangelisch-Lutherische Synode von Missouri, Ohio und anderen Staaten* (“The German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States”), they were men individually of strong constitutions. And the constitution that they approved was robust as well.

7 The Clear Confession of the LCMS

Roland F. Ziegler

All confession is an unfolding of the basic confession: Jesus is Lord (1 Cor. 12:3). The preaching of the Gospel, of man’s redemption through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, creates faith in Christ. The believers answer to that Gospel by confessing Jesus as their Savior and Lord. There is only one Lord, and thus there is only one confession.

10 Is the LCMS Still Zealous for Missions?

Robert Zagore

After two years of COVID, many congregations in the LCMS face a challenging future. Before the pandemic, membership was down, and attendance declined. Half of our congregations experienced worship attendance of 100 or less. No one can even try to guess what attendance will be post COVID. Why the losses?

For the Life of the World

PUBLISHER

Dr. Lawrence R. Rast Jr.
President

PUBLISHER ASSISTANT

Carrie M. O’Donnell

PRODUCTION MANAGER

Colleen M. Bartzsch

EDITOR

Rebecca S. Ahlersmeyer

COPY EDITOR

Trudy E. Behning

ART DIRECTOR

Steve J. Blakey

For the Life of the World is published by Concordia Theological Seminary Press, 6600 N. Clinton St., Fort Wayne, Indiana 46825. No portion of this publication may be reproduced without the consent of the Editor of *For the Life of the World* by email at SeminaryRelations@ctsfw.edu or (260) 452-2150. Copyright 2022. Printed in the United States. Postage paid at Berne, Indiana.

For the Life of the World is mailed to all pastors and congregations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in the United States and Canada and to anyone interested in the work of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana.

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture verses are from the English Standard Version (ESV).

Also in this Issue:

What Does This Mean?	13
175 Years of the LCMS	14
CTSFW Events	16
Alumni Reunion	17
Called to Serve: DMin Students	18
The Founding Churches of the LCMS	22
Admission	24
Faculty Notes	26
Continuing Education 2022	27
“Make Known His Deeds!”	28
In the Word Bible Study.....	30

The Clear Confession of the LCMS

Roland F. Ziegler



Photo: Erik M. Lunsford/The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

All confession is an unfolding of the basic confession: Jesus is Lord (1 Cor. 12:3). The preaching of the Gospel, of man's redemption through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, creates faith in Christ. The believers answer to that Gospel by confessing Jesus as their Savior and Lord. A confession is personal: *I* believe that Jesus Christ, true God and man, is *my* Lord. A confession is communal: all Christians confess the same, for it is our one Lord who makes them Christian. There is only one Lord, and thus there is only one confession.



When somebody asks what Lutherans believe, we can point to Holy Scripture. Lutherans believe what the Bible says, not more, not less. Today, as in history, what the Bible teaches is controversial. Many churches claim to teach what Scripture says, but they confess conflicting things. It is therefore necessary to state what the Bible says. This is the purpose of the documents collected in the Lutheran Confessions. They are a summary of the teaching of Scripture, often pointing out in the context of controversies what is the scriptural doctrine and rejecting other teachings.

A confession is thus an answer to the Word of God as it is given to us in Holy Scripture. When Christians confess, they speak back to God what He has done and said. We know if a confession is true if it is scriptural.

A true confession is thus personal, it is centered on Christ, and it is scriptural. In church history, confessions were, early on, not only a spontaneous matter, but also they were written down. Such confessions were used to summarize the content of the Christian faith. When controversies arose about what Scriptures said, confessions were enlarged to explicitly state the true faith against error.

Confession is not only for individuals; churches also confess. The church is not simply an organization, but the community of believers. The church's confession is thus an extension of "we believe." The Lutheran Confessions often use the phrase "we believe, teach, and confess."

Thus, when somebody asks what Lutherans believe, we can point to Holy Scripture. Lutherans believe what the Bible says, not more, not less. Today, as in history, what the Bible teaches is controversial. Many churches claim to teach what Scripture says, but they confess conflicting things. It is therefore necessary to state what the Bible says. This is the purpose of the documents collected in the Lutheran Confessions. They are a summary of the teaching of Scripture, often pointing out in the context of controversies what is the scriptural doctrine and rejecting other teachings.

Since the Word of God is always the same, the faith that receives and confesses this Word of God is always the same. St. Jude admonishes us to contend for the faith that was once delivered to the saints (Jude 3). The church listens to her Lord Jesus Christ and to her Lord alone. Where there are contradictory confessions, somebody is not listening

to Christ alone. Unity in confession is a sign that all listen to Christ. Disunity in confession is, therefore, a spiritual problem that cannot be ignored lest people go astray because they no longer listen to the voice of the Good Shepherd.

“We believe, teach, and confess”—these belong together. The one Word of God, which is received in the one faith, is to be taught in the church. It is, therefore, especially necessary for those who teach in the church—pastors, teachers, and other church workers—that they confess this one faith and are faithful in their teaching. For when they do not teach this one faith, they mislead the hearers. Hence, the LCMS makes it a condition of membership that all members of Synod (congregations, pastors, teachers, and church workers) not only accept “Scriptures of the Old and the New Testament as the written Word of God and the only rule and norm of faith and of practice,” but also that they accept all the “Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as a true and unadulterated statement and exposition of the Word of God” (the “Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church” means the *Book of Concord*, the collection of confessions published in 1580). The Holy Scriptures are the supreme and final authority in the church. These are under Scripture, but, because they are a true exposition of the Word of God, we can and ought to accept them if we accept what Scripture says. A person who rejects the Lutheran Confessions may claim to confess the Bible, but he has a wrong understanding of what the Bible says and thus is mixing God’s Word with his own ideas.

Because pastors, teachers, and other church workers are called to teach publicly the Word of God, they have a special responsibility to preach the Word of God purely. Therefore, they are asked, when they are ordained or commissioned and every time they are installed, to confess their faith in what Scripture teaches and that the Lutheran Confessions are a true exposition of

Scripture. They promise that they in their teaching will not deviate from this faith. By that, they promise that they will be faithful in their teaching to the voice of Christ, that they will not preach human opinions in the stead of the Word of God. They promise “not to teach any different doctrine” (1 Tim. 1:3).

This emphasis on unity in confession and, thus, unity in faith and in teaching is an expression of the commitment of the LCMS to be faithful to Christ. He and He alone is to govern and sustain His church through His Holy Word. Some churches limit the unity of confession, faith, and teaching to certain teachings they deem central. But *all* Scripture is God-breathed (2 Tim. 3:16). Other churches emphasize life over doctrine. What is most important to them is faith that is active in good works to the neighbor and in outreach. Surely this is very important. However, first comes the preaching of the Word of God, which creates faith, and believers listening. Then the believers will serve their neighbor, then the church will bring this Good News to all nations. Only God’s Word creates and sustains the life of the believer that will result in good works. Without a clear confession, without preaching and teaching the Word of God alone, not only will there be no true good works, but also false works will be put before us as good works. A clear confession is the result of faithful listening to God’s Word. A clear confession serves the faithful teaching and preaching of God’s Word. A clear confession serves to distinguish truth and error, helps to gather Christians in the truth, and thus serves the unity of the church. 🏰

The Rev. Dr. Roland F. Ziegler (Roland.Ziegler@ctsfw.edu) serves as The Robert D. Preus Professor of Systematic Theology and Confessional Lutheran Studies and the Chairman of Systematic Theology at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne.



Confessional Standard

The Synod, and every member of the Synod, accepts without reservation:

1. The Scriptures of the Old and the New Testament as the written Word of God and the only rule and norm of faith and of practice.
2. All the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as a true and unadulterated statement and exposition of the Word of God, to wit: the three Ecumenical Creeds (the Apostles’ Creed, the Nicene Creed, the Athanasian Creed), the Unaltered Augsburg Confession, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles, the Large Catechism of Luther, the Small Catechism of Luther, and the Formula of Concord.

Guidelines: For Constitutions and Bylaws of Lutheran Congregations, pg. 5

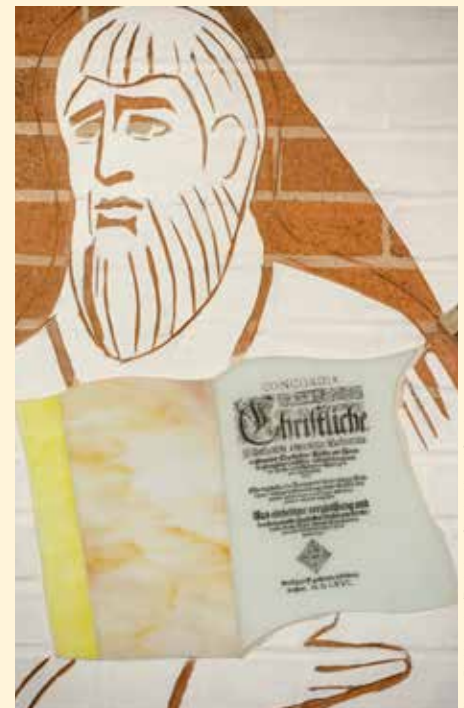


Photo: Erik M. Lunsford/The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod