

2379

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From: ClergyTalk@aol.com
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From: sekarp@telusplanet.net
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To: ClergyTalk@aol.com

Dear Friends,

For your information, I am appending my letter of resignation from St. John's Lutheran in Barrhead. It follows up my letter which I shared with the church council on Wednesday. I was going to hand this in to the pastor today; however, I realized that he was not in the office this morning since he had a service at one of the nursing homes in Barrhead. So I'll be handing it in tomorrow (20 November). I think that it is only courteous that I speak with him in person about this.

In our talk at council, Pastor Aechtner mentioned the CLC by name, as well as Horst Gutsche and John Cobb, as examples of sect-like behaviour. I did not respond to this since I knew that most of the members of council did not know what he was talking about. I felt that it would serve no good purpose to raise that issue that would serve to deflect the discussion away from the main point: the apostasy and false doctrine that is tolerated within the ELCIC. However, my references in my letter to "sects" refers to Aechtner's comments.

I should point out that it was the chairman who commented that if we really did not wish to support the ELCIC then that would mean that we would become independent. As it is, I asked the chair of the stewardship committee how many social action projects this congregation has supported during his six years on council; he said none. None of the people on the stewardship- evangelism committee contributes to the "mission" portion of our offering envelopes since none of them support the mission projects of the ELCIC. I think that is a powerful message for those on council who have ears to hear.

As I mentioned, this is a difficult decision for us. The difficulty does not come in leaving the ELCIC but in leaving good, God-fearing Christians with whom we have become friends. For example, my wife plays the organ for the German service and accompanies the German choir. As it stands, there is no one to take her place. She also accompanies the English choir, but there is one other person who could do that. During the summer I've taken the German service during the pastor's holidays. But I realize that many of you have gone through the same process. Even though God's word is clear on separating, it does not make things any easier.

I'm currently speaking with Pastor Bertram Naumann about entering the colloquy programme of the CLC. By the way, just to clear up a misunderstanding, I used to be a Missouri Synod pastor and resigned for personal reasons. I've never been a pastor in the ELCIC.

For those who are interested, I'd be happy to FAX you the articles from the "Canada Lutheran."

God's blessings,

2379

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19 November 1998

The Rev. Horst Aechtner, Pastor
Church Council
St. John's Lutheran Church
Barrhead, Alberta

Dear Pastor Aechtner and Council Members,

At yesterday's church council meeting I explained that I could not see myself supporting the work of the ELCIC. Though its general offering, St. John's supplements the "mission" offering it pledges to the ELCIC since donations to missions falls considerably short of what its pledge is. At Council, Pastor Aechtner said that were the congregation to support my solution, he would feel bound by conscience to resign. I stated that I would not put forth a resolution that would bind his conscience. As a result, Elizabeth and I ask for a peaceful release from St. John's.

This is a painful decision for us. We have made friends at St. John's and realize that no one that we know of in the congregation tolerates the doctrinal deviations that are tolerated in the ELCIC and that, for example, are set forth in the October 1998 issue of its official publication, the "Canada Lutheran." An article in that issue clearly indicates that the World Council of Churches supports "Christless" gatherings; the ELCIC supports the World Council of Churches and sent an official delegation to that gathering. Pastor Aechtner remarked that not to support the World Council of Churches would make the church a sect. He also remarked that were St. John's to be independent of the ELCIC that too would be sect-like. I disagree and feel that this is a false distinction. St. Paul had no trouble in breaking fellowship with those whose positions are set forth in the "Canada Lutheran" and which I highlighted in my letter to council; Paul wrote: "Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers" (2 Corinthians 6:12).

I guess that while I knew in my head that the ELCIC tolerated divergencies of opinion, I did not realize that they tolerated what amounts to apostasy; for example, Pastor Cowles's article is nothing less than a call for Baal worship. As I pointed out in my letter, that toleration stems from a false interpretation of the Scriptures that is taught in the seminaries of the ELCIC. From a human standpoint, no amount of letter writing to the bishop or anyone else will correct this situation. While all things are possible with God to correct the situation, it would appear from the October issue of the "Canada Lutheran" that this is beyond correction. I have been the editor of a secular journal of history; we had standards and did not hesitate to reject articles that did not meet those standards. It would appear that the "Canada Lutheran" has standards other than what God has set forth in His Word.

Actually, it is probably just as well that the "Canada Lutheran" has no standards, for then everyone in the church can see for themselves the depths to which the ELCIC has sunk (or is sinking, for it is certain that while this is a minority point of view today it is difficult to say for how long it will remain such a minority point of view given the

false teaching promoted at Waterloo and Saskatoon). I would say that the ELCIC has faithful pastors in spite of what is taught in its seminaries. Unfortunately, it also has faithless ones because of what is taught.

Pastor Aechnert stated that he is proud to be a pastor in the ELCIC. I cannot share that pride in the ELCIC. I have never been one to say: "my synod right or wrong." All organizations formed by people are imperfect; no denomination is perfect. According to the Lutheran Confessions, however, the marks of the church are "that the Gospel be preached in conformity with a pure understanding of it and the sacraments be administered in accordance with the divine word" (Augsburg Confession, VII.2). From what has been discussed above, in the ELCIC it appears that the Gospel is no longer preached in conformity with a pure understanding of it.

False doctrine, however, can also be found in what is left out, by not preaching or proclaiming or teaching the whole counsel of God. When I wrote my letter to council, I had not looked at the catechetical material published by Augsburg Fortress and which this congregation uses. The book in question is: "A Companion for Your Way: The Small Catechism—New Journeys in Confirmation Series" (Augsburg Fortress, 1990). This book is used by our confirmands. I urge council members to look at it. Try to find a chapter on either Christ's resurrection or "the resurrection of the body"; apart from two references on Christ's resurrection (around page 100), the subject does not appear to be mentioned. There is no chapter or treatment on "the life everlasting." There is no chapter on judgement. These are doctrines that give us comfort in this life and at times can give us a "why" to live in the face of suffering. Why are they omitted? Pastor, two weeks ago you preached an excellent sermon on the resurrection of the body. Why are we using confirmation material that by omission denies the whole counsel of God? In our communion liturgy we sing of this as being a "foretaste of the feast to come." No mention of any "feast to come" in this catechism. We are robbing our young people of the whole counsel of God. I know that Pastor Aechnert is an excellent teacher and perhaps makes up the gaps in this catechism; however, the fact remains that if we can sin by acts of commission or omission, the Augsburg Fortress material sins by omission.

All of this is a tragedy for the ELCIC and for St. John's. To break with the ELCIC, or in the case of Elizabeth and I, to come to the painful conclusion that it is a synod which we can no longer support, is not to embrace the sects but to embrace Christ.

Both Elizabeth and I wish all at St. John's the very best and pray that the Holy Spirit guide you as you wrestle with these problems.

Sincerely yours,

Steven Karp

