

**QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS -
ST. JAMES EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH, WEST ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA**

REGARDING CHURCH ORGANIZATION

1. What is the structure of your organization? Can you provide a diagram or flow chart ?

The acronym of our church body is the "CLC", which stands for "**Church Of The Lutheran Confession**". Our **synodical structure** closely **parallels** that of the WELS to which many of us trace our roots. The **ultimate authority** in our synod rests with the **Church in Convention**, represented by pastors, teachers, and laymen from all of our congregations. The President, Coordinating Council, Boards, and officers of the CLC all work together to implement the Convention policies and programs.

2. How independent are the individual congregations in your church organization ?

Although there are **many privileges and responsibilities that accompany membership** in the CLC, individual **congregations** nevertheless **maintain** their own **autonomy and independence**. Although we are united in fellowship by our common Scriptural confession and seek to help and encourage one another in the preservation and spread of the Gospel and God's Word, there is no hierarchal spirit or desire to exercise synodical control over the lives and activities of our congregation.

3. Does congregational property, including the buildings, belong to the congregation or to the larger church body ?

Each self-supporting congregation owns its own buildings and property with no legal or constitutional involvement by the church body. The only exceptions to this are our mission congregations, which because of financial subsidy they are receiving from the CLC, may not acquire title to their property until they become self-supporting.

4. What are the obligations of your church organization to its congregations?

To help, guide, and support our congregations in their Gospel ministry. Some of those ways, as outlined in our CLC Constitution, involve "aiding its members in doing things decently and in order", "providing additional opportunities for proclaiming the Gospel", "facilitating Christian fellowship and mutual strengthening", and "helping protect against the encroachment of error through united testimony and doctrinal discipline."

5. What are the obligations of the congregations to your church organization?

To help, guide, and support our church body in its Gospel ministry. While not specifically outlined in many of our congregational constitutions, the **prayers, commitment, and financial support** of our congregations **enable our church body to carry out the Lord's calling** in the area of mission work and Christian education **on a much broader scale**. Rather than speaking of them as "obligations", I would **prefer the expression "opportunities to serve"**, emphasizing the Gospel motivation and focus of all the activities of both our local congregations and the CLC.

6. How are disputes dealt with? Between pastors and congregations? Between your church Body and congregations? If factions develop within a congregation?

There is an **established orderly procedure in both our synodical and congregational constitutions** for the resolution of such disputes. While the synod (fellow congregations) will advise, encourage, or admonish a member congregation, it has **no authority to overrule a congregation's decisions** regarding its internal affairs. Should, however, a member congregation be guilty of unscriptural teaching or action, synodical disciplinary procedures would follow which could result in that congregation's membership termination in the synod. Regarding internal congregational disputes, the synod will offer its assistance (through conference visitors). However, synodical representatives cannot intervene in a congregation's internal affairs except by invitation of the congregation. It is our prayer that all members, pastors, congregations, and synodical officials involved in such disputes will appreciate and **in Christian love nurture** their precious (yet

sometimes fragile) Spirit-created **relationships in Christ** and thus will do everything in their power to preserve the unity of faith among them.

7. How are your pastors trained ? Do you have your own seminaries?

The **CLC** is comprised of about **70 churches** in 24 states with about **9,000 total souls**. We have two congregations in the Twin Cities area: Berea of Inver Grove Heights (Pastor David Schierenbeck) and Grace of Fridley (Pastor John Ude). While we have 22 Christian Day Schools and 1 high school operated by local congregations, The CLC itself operates **Immanuel Lutheran High School, College, and Seminary** on a 75 acre campus in **Eau Claire, WI**. Students preparing for the pastoral ministry receive a 4 year pre- theological training in college, a 3 year seminary program, and vicaring experience in our congregations. Currently the CLC also supports 10 mission congregations in the U.S. as well as groups in South India and Nigeria, where we have an expatriate missionary.

8. How do individual congregations get their pastors?

We follow the **traditional Lutheran calling process**. A list of qualified candidates and biographical information is provided the calling congregation by the Praesidium of the CLC. After prayerful consideration, the congregation may call from the CLC list or from the names of qualified candidates from our fellowship it has added. Congregations wishing to call a seminary graduate may submit their request to a synodically-prescribed Call Committee through whom their call would be extended.

9. Does your church organization produce its own educational/worship materials?

While **we produce some** of our own **worship and educational materials** (worship, SS, VBS, & Confirmation), we are limited by our own size and resources and do not operate our own publishing house. The use of Scripturally sound materials from other Lutheran publishing houses is helpful.

REGARDING DOCTRINAL ISSUES

1 & 2. What is the Bible? Is Scripture infallible? Is it inerrant? Is there a difference?

Our church constitution states: "**We accept the Holy Scriptures as the verbally inspired and inerrant Word of God...**". Yes, we believe Holy Scripture to be "infallible" (absolutely trustworthy and incapable of error) and "inerrant" (without error). Both are essential parts of the doctrine of Biblical inspiration (2 Timothy 3:16; John 10:35; John 17:17).

3. What is the source for doctrine?

Our church constitution continues: "..... and (the Bible is) therefore the **sole and infallible rule of doctrine and life.**"(Article 3, Par. 1). It is the exclusive foundation for all we believe and teach.

4 & 5. What is the status/role of the historical Lutheran Confessions? Which do you subscribe to?

From our church constitution (Art. 3, Par. 2): "**We subscribe to the historic Lutheran Confessions as found in the Book of Concord of 1580 as a correct presentation and true exposition of Christian doctrine, drawn from and in full agreement with the Holy Scripture.**"

6. What is Holy Communion? Do you have a policy regarding who may commune with you?

Holy Communion is a divine Sacrament instituted by Christ in which the believer receives the true body and blood of his Savior - "in, with, and under the bread and wine" (Luther) for the assurance of God's forgiveness and the strengthening of his faith. In accord with 1 Corinthians 10:17; 11:27-29 and other passages, we follow the confessional Lutheran practice of controlled participation {"**Close Communion**"}) and admit to the Lord's table only those whom we know to be properly prepared and of one faith and confession with us. We view this practice as **an expression of spiritual and confessional unity (not a judgment of the faith of others), and as a helpful prevention of an unworthy reception of the sacrament.**

7. What is baptism? What is your church's position regarding infant baptism?

According to Scripture, Baptism is a divine Sacrament instituted by Christ to be administered with water in the name of the Triune God. Through it, God offers the blessings of "forgiveness, eternal life and salvation" (Luther) in Christ. We believe that **infants are to be baptized** because they are part of "all nations" (Matthew 28:19), because they are sinful and need forgiveness (John 3:5), and because they too can believe (Matthew 18:6).

8. What is your church's position on charismatic gifts?

According to Scripture, **the Holy Spirit creates and preserves saving faith in Christ only through** the "means of grace" (the Gospel in Word and Sacrament). The "**Charismatic Movement**" with its position on the "gifts of the Spirit" (Speaking in tongues, Healing, etc.) as the mark of the "born again Christian", **misinterprets and misemphasizes both the nature and purpose of the "Apostolic gifts"**. In so doing, both the mediate work of the Holy Spirit through the "means of grace" and the real "fruit of the Spirit" (Galatians 5:22f) in Christian life are de-emphasized. Furthermore, this misplaced emphasis on "charismatic gifts" causes the Christian to place his hope for salvation on subjective experiences rather than on the objective words and promises of God.

9. What kind of fellowship does your church have with other Lutherans? Other Christians?

Since Holy Scripture presents **the expression of church "fellowship" (Koinonia) in any form** (worship, communion, prayer, church work) as **requiring a unity of faith and confession of God's Word** (1 Corinthians 1:10; John 8:31), **we do not exercise such fellowship with those who teach contrary to God's Word** (Romans 16:17; Matthew 7:15), even if they are "Christian" or even "Lutheran". Such a **Biblical fellowship principle is God's spiritual "immune system"** given in love to protect His children from dangerous and deadly error. **God's children**, in turn, **gladly follow this Word** of their God **as an expression of love and obedience to Him, as a safeguard for their own souls, and as a loving testimony to those caught up in error**. The failure to follow God's fellowship directives have opened the floodgates of ecumenism (agreeing to disagree agreeably in doctrinal matters) that has compromised and eroded the Scriptural confessions of many churches. **At the same time, we rejoice over the presence and power of the Gospel wherever and whenever it is proclaimed** and give thanks for the souls rescued by it from eternal death, even in false teaching churches.

The birth of the Church of The Lutheran Confession took place as a result of a difference in the doctrine of Church Fellowship with the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. In the late 1950's a group of pastors, professors, teachers, and laymen left former fellowships (primarily the WELS & ELS) over the failure of these synods to properly apply the Scripture doctrine of fellowship to their sister synod in the Synodical Conference, the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod. Beginning in the late 1930's and 1940's and continuing into the 1950's, the WELS had publicly and privately expressed concern to the LC-MS over some of its unscriptural practices (tolerance of lodges, scouting, chaplaincy as well as growing unionistic practices). When these admonitions bore no fruit, **the WELS in its 1955 Convention** properly followed the Scriptural directive of Romans 16:17 and **"marked" (identified) the LC-MS as being a "causer of divisions and offenses contrary to God's Word"** (A defender and promoter of false teaching, not a weak brother). At that point **God's Word required** that they follow through and **"avoid"** (sever fellowship with) **the LC-MS**. Such Scriptural action, however, **did not happen** and between 1955 and 1961, the WELS continued to practice and defend its "vigorously protesting fellowship" with the LC-MS. Even before the separation from the LC-MS in 1961, the **WELS in 1959 adopted the position that "termination of fellowship is called for when you have reached the conviction that admonition is of no further avail."** Subjective human judgment, rather than God's Word, became the criteria for separating from errorists. Over the years, both meetings and statements from representatives of both the WELS and the CLC have demonstrated the existence of this **doctrinal difference**, despite growing claims of CLC separatism and schismatics from a number of WELS leaders. In the latest 1991 CLC-WELS meeting, the WELS was not willing to make a clear statement rejecting the above fellowship position.

In dealing with the false teacher (not weak brother), the **summary below highlights the differing fellowship positions of the WELS and the CLC. Romans 16:17 states: "Now I urge you, brethren, mark those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you have learned, and avoid them."** (KJV)

CLC : Mark (When errorist identified) **and Avoid** (No delay)

WELS: Mark (When errorist identified), **then Admonish** (Not in passage),
then Avoid (When you are convinced admonishing isn't working)

The **CLC** has always recognized the importance of patiently and **lovingly admonishing** the **weak brother** (in distinction to the false teacher), but this occurs **before one "marks"** (identifies) him **as a false teacher** (defender & promoter of error). The **WELS** fellowship **position** involves **continuing in fellowship after identifying the false teacher** and thus disregards God's clear directive, dangerously exposes itself to error, and compromises its witness to the errorist.

In the 1970's, the CLC, after careful study of "**fraternal**" **life insurance companies** such as Aid Association For Lutherans and Lutheran Brotherhood, came to recognize them as "**unionistic**" semi-religious organizations. As non-profit, "fraternal" companies, the AAL and LB require policyholders to become members of their organizations. As members, policyholders participate in the activities of the organization, including support of various pan-Lutheran church and school activities and projects. Such membership and support would involve one in unionistic activity.

While the Scriptural **church fellowship doctrine** is a troublesome "hard saying" to some and an insignificant piece of Scripture to others, we recognize it as an important Word of our God given to us in love. As with every teaching of Scripture, it is a **vital part of God's protective and preserving plan for His Word**, His precious **Gospel**, and ultimately, **His children's faith**. The position of the CLC is clearly set forth in its **1961 confessional document, "Concerning Church Fellowship"**.

10. What is your understanding about election? Who is saved? Who is not?

Election or predestination is **God's act of grace in eternity** whereby, because of the merits of Jesus Christ, He foresaw and chose those whom He purposed to save. All of the elect come to faith as a result of His election and the hearing of the Gospel (Romans 8:29-30; Ephesians 1:4-5,11-12). Scripture nowhere teaches a fatalistic double predestination (God "electing" souls both to salvation and damnation. For God loves and wants every soul saved and Christ died for the sins of all (John 3:16; John 2:2). Yet, in unbelief man has the power to resist God's grace and in so doing will be condemned, while those who by the Spirit's power believe will be saved (Mark 16:16). Please reference paragraphs 35-40 of the "Brief Statement of the Missouri Synod" (1932).

11. What are your beliefs about social ministry? What is the church's role in influencing social change?

Our CLC Statement of Faith And Purpose (p. 3) states: "We disavow the position that the church as a body is to promote social and political causes and opinions of men. The individual Christian will indeed show the fruits of faith by his concern for social and political causes wherever they present themselves. Our right of existence as a church, however, is limited by our readiness to say with St. Paul that we are "determined to know nothing among you, except Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2).

12. What is a minister? Are there various types of "ministry" Or "ministers"?

A minister (servant) is anyone called by a group of believers to perform a specific function in their midst. Among these is the pastoral ministry, which differs only in scope and responsibility (Ephesians 4:11-12; Acts 20:28). The Holy Spirit through His church calls Scripturally qualified candidates to publicly administer the means of grace and to perform other related tasks, according to the needs of the congregation.

13. What is the church body's attitude toward worship and liturgy? Traditional? Contemporary?

Our Lord speaks of **God-pleasing Christian worship** as being done "**in spirit**" (from a heart of faith) and "**in truth**" (according to God's Word) in John 4:24. He also desires that it be done "**decently and in order**" and that it be "**edifying**" to the church (1 Corinthians 14). No specific forms of worship are commanded in Scripture. The type of liturgy that conforms to Scriptural directives remains the decision of the congregation. Our "traditional" Lutheran liturgy has its roots in Scripture and possesses all the ingredients for a Word-centered, God-pleasing and God-praising worship experience. While we do not oppose contemporary worship forms as a matter of Christian liberty, care must be exercised that offense not be given and that the

church not look to anything other than the Gospel to reach souls.

14. What is the church's position on homosexuality? On homosexual pastors?

Homosexuality is clearly a **sin against the Sixth Commandment** (Romans 1:26-27; Leviticus 20:13) and would therefore **prevent homosexual pastors from serving in our pastoral ministry.**

15. What is the church's position on abortion?

Since life begins at conception (Psalm 139:13-16; Psalm 51:5), the ending of human life by man at any stage, including life in the womb, **constitutes murder** (Fifth Commandment).

16. What is the church's position on women in church positions? As pastors?

The **Scriptural "headship" principle is a clear teaching of our God** (Ephesians 5:22f; 1 Timothy 2:11-14; 1 Corinthians 14:34). Our church constitution (Article 7, Par. 3) summarizes: "Our Christian families and churches have been richly blessed by the devoted service of faithful Christian men and women. And while there is no spiritual distinction between men and women who are 'one in Christ Jesus' (Galatians 3:28), our God in His loving wisdom established the differing roles for men and women at creation (Genesis 2:18), and reaffirmed them throughout Scripture. These are expressed by husbands and wives within the Christian family (Ephesians 5:22f) and by men and women within Christian churches." **While there are many areas of service in the church for our Christian women, we believe that for women to function in the pastoral ministry or as voters or officers in a Christian congregation, would place them in "teaching" or "authority" positions over men and would therefore be contrary to Scripture.**

17, 18, & 19: Are there current doctrinal disputes within your synod? What are they and what is currently happening? Are there current disputes at your seminaries? What are they? Are there changes taking place that we should know about?

While doctrinal questions and issues have arisen in our church body over the years, the Lord through a study of His Word has effected a Scriptural resolution and thus preserved the unity of faith among us - both within our church body as well as in our schools and seminaries. In these last days, we can only expect Satan's attacks on the orthodox to continue and increase - with the challenges and pitfalls of both liberalism and legalism bombarding the faithful on all sides.

OTHER QUESTIONS

1 & 3 : What does your church body have in common with other Christian denominations? How would you contrast your church body with other Christian denominations?

All who believe in the basic teachings of Scripture, including the saving Gospel of our Lord, will be saved. While this is not sufficient for the exercise of Christian fellowship (because of the doctrinal differences that separate us), we nonetheless pray that the Spirit work mightily through His Word and that precious souls be led to trust solely and simply in the saving merits of Jesus Christ.

At the same time, the doctrinal differences with the Roman Catholics which led to the birth of the Lutheran Church during the Reformation, and the differences with the Reformed churches (other Protestants), continue today. In addition, we have witnessed the erosion of Biblical authority within Christendom in recent generations. This has resulted in opening the floodgates of liberalism, which has only widened the doctrinal chasm that separates us.

2 & 4: What does your church body have in common with other Lutheran groups? How would you contrast your church body with other Lutheran groups?

We are thankful for any and all evidence of Biblical truth and of the Gospel among the various Lutheran denominations. While doctrinal differences still separate us from former Synodical Conference brethren, we give thanks for their testimony to Biblical inspiration and for their Gospel witness to the world (Philippians 1:14f). On the other hand, our nations largest Lutheran body, the ELCA, provides a sad commentary on the consequences of abandoning Biblical authority and confessional Lutheranism.

Humbly we of the CLC offer this petition: "It is our earnest desire, by the grace of God, to be faithful to the Word, as well as to be found faithful in service as ready instruments of God's ministering Grace in Christ Jesus, our Lord. We recognize that many temptations and snares confront the way of orthodoxy - legalism, arrogance, formalism, exclusivism - to name a few. We plead with the Spirit of God to defend us against anything and everything that would destroy our witness to the manifold grace of God. We also beg that he empower us to be faithful stewards of His Word, proclaiming the Gospel with boldness to all people as we are given opportunity."

Prepared Upon Request For St. James Evangelical Lutheran Church, West St. Paul, MN

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February 14, 1999**

