

January 20, 2011 A.D.

WELS Conference of Presidents (COP)  
Synod President Schroeder  
cc: District President Engelbrecht  
Current Circuit Pastor Raasch  
Former Circuit Pastor Suhr  
Pastor Glende  
Pastor Skorzewski  
Pastor Sievert  
Pastor Frey (five concerned area pastors)  
Mr. Gary Thoma (Church President)

c/o Synod President Mark Schroeder  
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RE: [St. Peter Evangelical Lutheran Church](#); Appleton/Freedom, WI

Dear WELS and WELS Conference of Presidents:

I write this letter because I continue to be concerned about what has been happening at my congregation, St. Peter Evangelical Lutheran Church in Freedom, WI, and continue to be unable to resolve my doctrinal differences with Pastor Glende. A little over a year ago, I sent a 29-page letter dated November 1, 2009 to all my pastors and my Church Council expressing some of my concerns. However, during our attempts to resolve the doctrinal differences reiterated by that letter, it became apparent that I disagree doctrinally not only with Pastor Glende and my Church Council, but also District President Engelbrecht, and other leaders in the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS).

This letter is an update and a continuation, therefore, one should read the November 1, 2009 "[Letter to Council and Pastors](#)" before this letter.<sup>1</sup>

The first part of this letter is a procedural history since November 2009. The purpose of this history is to show that I have exhausted all the procedural steps that I was required to follow, thereby justifying this letter. After years of effort, these issues have not been appropriately addressed, therefore, I believe that this letter is the only current remaining option. The second part of this letter deals with the doctrinal issues. The purpose of this doctrinal section is to

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<sup>1</sup> The November 2009 letter is 29 pages in length. Here is a link to a copy of the Nov. 2009 letter: <http://vdma.files.wordpress.com/2011/01/letter-to-council-and-pastors.pdf>

outline the issues and to explain briefly why I disagree doctrinally with my pastors. The third part of this letter is about fellowship doctrine and practice.

### **Part I: Procedural History** **(since November 2009)**

After only seven months, on November 1, 2009, Pastor Chris Christenson preached his last sermon at St. Peter Congregation. On November 4, I e-mailed the 29-page letter to my pastors, Church Council, and District President Engelbrecht. On December 1, 2009, my family and I met with Pastor Christenson to inquire why he was leaving after only a few months at St. Peter. It is not normal practice for a pastor to be placed on a call list after only a few months at a new congregation, but Pastor Christenson did express good reasons to leave.<sup>2</sup>

### **Call Meeting**

On December 14, 2009, St. Peter Congregation held a voters' meeting to amend Pastor Glende's job description to read "lead pastor," and call an "associate pastor" to replace Pastor Christenson. I moved to table the call because I believed that there were important issues that the congregation needed to address before ratifying Pastor Glende as "lead pastor" and extending an "associate call." I respectfully noted my November 2009 letter, but did not cite any specifics from that letter. Nonetheless, Pastor Glende, Pastor Skorzewski, the Church Council, and District President Engelbrecht had received this letter, and were all present at the meeting.

Another layman asked whether there were additional actions or steps that needed to be taken before we issued a new call, and Pastor Glende replied, "If we had to do things, if there was anything that needed to take place before we could call again, then District President Engelbrecht wouldn't allow us to issue a call." District President Engelbrecht did provide our congregation with a call list of five candidates that he believed were suitable to be an associate pastor.

The argument against the motion was that neither Pastor Glende, nor our Church Council, nor District President Engelbrecht believed that any additional steps needed to be taken. District President Engelbrecht did attend and participate in our call meeting. When he was not speaking, he sat in the back, and chatted with

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<sup>2</sup> Pastor Christenson has a duty to speak. (Ezekiel 33:1-9, Jonah, and Acts 20:25-31).

Pastor Skorzewski.<sup>3</sup>

All of my previous motions at St. Peter had also faced considerable opposition from Pastor Glende and others, and as a result they received no support. Thus, it is worth noting that this motion (to table the associate call and study the issues at St. Peter Congregation) did receive a hesitant second and a smattering of timid ayes. It would seem that the loss of Pastor Christenson after only a few months was enough to make some people consider it worthwhile to pause and question.<sup>4</sup>

Would my motion to table the associate call and study these issues have passed if District President Engelbrecht had not lent his presence, name, and the considerable authority of his office to the effort to defeat my motion? Only God knows, but I do know that this was the best opportunity to convince our congregation to look into these issues, and District President Engelbrecht helped quash it.

### **December 17, 2009 Meeting with Pastor Glende**

Before this meeting, I had said that I would like to invite Circuit Pastor Suhr. Pastor Glende responded, that it would be inappropriate for Pastor Suhr to attend this meeting, and Pastor Suhr would "be invited to a meeting any the time [sic] when the circuit pastor would be asked."<sup>5</sup> (Circuit Pastor Suhr had previously contacted Pastor Glende about plagiarism. Soon after that conversation, Pastor Glende had informed Circuit Pastor Suhr that he could no longer be his circuit pastor).

On December 17, 2009, I met with Pastor Glende and our head elder. I asked Pastor Glende why Circuit Pastor Suhr was not his Circuit Pastor. Pastor Glende explained that Pastor Suhr has a "different philosophy of ministry," is "not objective," and is unable to "have an open honest opinion" of Pastor Glende's ministry at St. Peter. Therefore, Pastor Suhr could not be Pastor Glende's circuit pastor. Pastor Glende said that District Secretary Szep was his circuit pastor, and that District President Engelbrecht approved this arrangement.

Regarding our recent call meeting, Pastor Glende told me that my motion to table the calling of

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<sup>3</sup> "[December 14, 2009 Call Meeting](#)," 12/21/09, *Light from Light*. (A side note: Pastor Glende had strongly requested that he and the Church Council leaders be allowed to review my blog posts about St. Peter before publication, and this post went through that review process).

<sup>4</sup> "Another layman estimated that the motion to table received about a third of the votes present. I thought it probably received less than that, but there was no official count." ([December 14, 2009 Call Meeting](#), 12/21/09, *Light from Light*).

<sup>5</sup> E-mail from Pastor Glende, December 13, 2009. Circuit Pastor Suhr was never invited to any meetings at St. Peter.

an "associate pastor" and to study the issues at St. Peter was disrespectful and a violation of God's word. During the call meeting, President Denny had told me, I was not allowed to move to table the call, and that that meeting was only about *who* we were going to call, not *whether* we were going to call, or any other issues. Pastor Glende said that I violated God's word by not withdrawing my motion. God's word says: "Respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord." (1 Thessalonians 5:12). "Show proper respect to everyone." (1 Peter 2:17). "The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor." (1 Timothy 5:17). Pastor Glende emphasized that those are God's words; and if I disagree, then I am disagreeing with God.

It is my position that people can be respectful, and still be allowed an opportunity to voice disagreement. Besides, when can one move to table a call, if not at the call meeting?

I asked Pastor Glende if we could again discuss the doctrinal issues, but Pastor Glende said that he rejected that there is any false doctrine at St. Peter, and if there were false doctrine, then St. Peter's other called workers would say so. (Pastor Glende cited our use of strange creeds as an example of mere *adiaphora*). He also said again, if I am not being fed at St. Peter, then I should respectfully consider joining another WELS congregation. Pastor Glende gave me the Church Council's unanimous response to my letter, and told me to read it after our meeting. We did not discuss this official response at the December 17, 2009 meeting.

In its letter, the Church Council asserted that my November 1, 2009 letter reflected "a gross misstatement about and misunderstanding of the ministry of St. Peter."<sup>6</sup>

### **Meeting with St. Peter Church Council**

On January 31, 2010, I met with the Church Council of St. Peter. They immediately chastised me for bringing my father, and not coming alone. They did not allow me to record the proceedings. I did not know who half the men in the room were. No one introduced themselves.

President Denny went through the Church Council's letter point by point. After each point, I was then prompted to agree with the Church Council's position that there is nothing wrong at St. Peter. The Church Council's letter lists eleven points which they used to assert that there was nothing wrong with the doctrine and practice at St. Peter. For example, on "the matter of plagiarism" the Church Council said "that Pastor Glende and all pastors, at St. Peter and other WELS congregations, have every right to use outside resources in the preparation and preaching

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<sup>6</sup> The entire text of the Church Council's letter can be found at this link:  
<http://vdma.files.wordpress.com/2011/01/st-peter-church-council-response-to-nov-1-2009-letter.pdf>.

of their sermons."<sup>7</sup>

When we came to this point, I agreed with the bare words of that statement. President Denny thanked me for my agreement, and moved on to the next point. I had to interject, and assert that just because pastors can "use outside resources" does not mean they can plagiarize.<sup>8</sup> Another member of the Church Council asserted that Pastor Glende did not plagiarize, and that my example of plagiarism was bogus because Pastor Glende did not copy everything exactly-word-for-word from beginning-to-end. Neither Pastor Glende nor anyone on the council objected to this false definition of plagiarism. In fact, Pastor Glende noted his agreement with all of the Council's positions.

Pastor Glende also claimed that it was ok to plagiarize because Craig Groeschel, a false teacher, gave him permission.

Regarding the issue of whether from our perspective God needs our service, and St. Peter Congregation's heavy use of the lyrics "show me Lord, the service you will *need*," I was told that my complaint was procedurally out of order.<sup>9</sup> This song was published in *Let All the People Praise You* by Northwestern Publishing House, therefore, I had no right to complain to St. Peter Congregation about its heavy use at St. Peter Congregation. Rather, I should complain to the Synod. No one openly agreed with my position that God does not *need* our service.

After I cited Acts 20:28-31, one member of the council did come to express reservation about our use of strange and novel creeds. (While the council continued to maintain that the "use of such creeds is an adiaphoran"; since this meeting, I have observed that we have used only the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds along with the Lutheran explanations as our public confessions. This has been an improvement).

Another member of the council expressed reservation about Pastor Glende's doctrinal assertion that Christians can choose to believe God's Word. Therefore, Pastor Glende agreed to contact a seminary professor in order to verify this doctrine.

This meeting lasted almost three hours, and no outward agreement was reached on any point between me and the Council. At the end of the meeting, I asked President Denny what the next step was, and he said that I needed to follow the procedure he gave me:

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<sup>7</sup> The entire text of the Church Council's letter can be found at this link:  
<http://vdma.files.wordpress.com/2011/01/st-peter-church-council-response-to-nov-1-2009-letter.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> In the context of the evidence that was presented about what was happening at St. Peter, the Church Council's letter defends the sin of plagiarism.

<sup>9</sup> These lyrics are from the song "Ready Lord," a song published in *Let All the People Praise You* by Northwestern Publishing House. Emphasis added.

[The next] meeting could be held involving Pastor Glende, yourself, and St. Peter Church Council, and also any outside parties the church would invite to listen to both sides of this issues. They might include but, not limited to, our congregation's circuit pastor, *Pastor Glende's circuit pastor*, District President Engelbrecht, Pastor Ash, and Pastor Ski.<sup>10</sup>

I would not be allowed to bring anyone to this meeting that the Church Council did not invite.

### **Meeting with the District Presidium and Other Communications**

On March 5, 2010, I and five concerned area WELS pastors<sup>11</sup> met with the District Presidium of the Northern Wisconsin District. At this meeting, I pleaded with the Presidium to restore Circuit Pastor Suhr as Circuit Pastor for both Pastor Glende and St. Peter congregation so that someone with theological training could help resolve the doctrinal issues at St. Peter. This was Circuit Pastor Suhr's calling. I informed them that Pastor Glende had chosen District Secretary Szep as his personal Circuit Pastor, that the Church Council was also referring to Secretary Szep as "Pastor Glende's circuit pastor,"<sup>12</sup> and that Pastor Glende told Circuit Pastor Suhr that he was no longer his Circuit Pastor. Circuit Pastor Suhr was also at this meeting with the Presidium.

Regarding this issue, as far as I know, the District President did nothing to help Pastor Suhr in fulfilling his calling as St. Peter's and Pastor Glende's Circuit Pastor. Pastor Suhr has also informed me that he believes District President Engelbrecht and the Presidium did nothing.

On April 5, 2010, Church Council president Denny sent me the following e-mail:

Dear Rick,

On March 15th, The Church Council discussed your e-mail and has made their decision regarding your request for the next meeting. As laid out in my e-mail to you dated 12/17/2009, after you met with the council, "A meeting **could be** held involving Pastor Glende, yourself, and St. Peter Church Council, and also any outside parties the church would invite to listen to both sides of this issues."

Your paper dated November 1st, 2009 and distributed to numerous people and synod officials on November 4th via e-mail has been viewed and discussed at

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<sup>10</sup> December 17, 2009 e-mail from President Denny. Emphasis added.

<sup>11</sup> The five pastors were Pastor Frey, Pastor Jenkins, Pastor Luebke, Pastor Berg, and Circuit Pastor Suhr.

<sup>12</sup> For example: December 17, 2009 e-mail from President Denny. (This is just one of a number of examples).

numerous times over the past 4 months. You met with Pastor Glende and Dave Dalke on December 17th at which time the Council response to your concerns was presented to you. This document was also shared with everyone you sent your letter to. Over the last few months, we have had the chance to discuss our response with several of the people on the list and no one, not one, has responded that our answers to your requests were in error. The discussion of your paper and the Council's response on January 31st, centered around the fact that the your request was based on personal preference and opinion, not on scriptural proof of false doctrine. At no time, have we been given scriptural proof that false doctrine is being taught at St. Peter. In light of these facts, we have concluded and unanimously voted [that there is not need for any further meeting](#)

In regards to your question regarding decision theology, Pastor Glende spoke with one of the professors who teaches Dogmatics at the Seminary (Doctrine class) for clarification and insight. He said, "in light of faith, I as a child of God express faith that is God given **by choosing to listen and believe.**" Some of the passages discussed as proof passages of this fact are: Psalm 56:3-4,11; Joshua 24:15; and James 1:22-25 (Note: A member of the council also has followed up with the professor to verify this information.)

[The Church Council realizes that you are](#) entitled to your personal opinion and preferences. Rick, we thank you for sharing them with us and for expressing your concerns. Thank you also for listening to us share our response on the matter. But, now that the Church Council has discussed your concerns, addressed them with a response from the leaders of your church, and has reached a final decision in this case and on these points, we ask that you recognize that this is the decision of the church. [We prayerfully ask that you consider these matters in an attitude of Christian love and fellowship.](#)

Sincerely,  
Tom Denney  
Chairman St. Peter Lutheran Church and School<sup>13</sup>

Please note that Mr. Denny says that the leaders of St. Peter have "reached a final decision in this case and on these points."

I then wrote to Mr. Denny requesting the name of the seminary professor of dogmatics so that I too could follow up to discuss this doctrine with the professor. I made this request because if I am wrong about whether Christians can choose to believe God's Word, then I would like to understand why. On April 19, 2010, President Denny responded:

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<sup>13</sup> All emphases (blue color and bold) in the original. April 5, 2010 e-mail from Church President Denny.

Rick,

I am only reading your e-mail today, as I was out of town until today. Excuse me, for not responding quicker.

In the March 15 Council meeting the decision was made by the Council that the member of the Council would also make the contact with the professor at Seminary. That has been done with the same conclusion that was made when Pastor Glende made the initial contact.

You will not receive the name of the professor out of respect for him.

It was the Council's decision that any further contact with him could very easily put his responses in a negative light. We have seen this done in the past. We will not be a party to that.

I have been very patient regarding this entire matter since its beginning. You have exhausted that. I encouraged our Called Workers and the Church Council to deal with this entire matter in Christian love, with one of our brothers.

You have all the information you need to make the decision to become an involved member of your congregation, and accept the decisions made by the church body, as we have always asked. Or, make a decision to become involved and have your membership at another WELS congregation.

Rick, whatever decision you make, please know that the membership and Called Workers of St. Peter will always support you in that decision.

Tom Denney  
Chairman St. Peter Lutheran Church and School<sup>14</sup>

Please note, that based on what I believe to be doctrinal disagreement, I am again refused an opportunity to discuss the doctrine, but instead am again told to consider joining another WELS congregation.

Then in May 2010, I received a letter written by District President Engelbrecht in response to my letter and the March 5, 2010 meeting involving the District Presidium, the five concerned area WELS pastors, and me.

District President Engelbrecht's letter excused plagiarism because lots of pastors do it, defended

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<sup>14</sup> April 19, 2010 e-mail from Church President Denny.

as orthodox the assertion that in the light of faith Christians can choose to believe God's word, made no mention of my plea to support Pastor Suhr's calling as Circuit Pastor, and concluded by saying that I needed to solve the problems at St. Peter without the Presidium's involvement because they were internal congregational matters.<sup>15</sup>

### **2010 Northern Wisconsin District Convention**

I received District President Engelbrecht's undated letter in May 2010. The Northern Wisconsin District Convention would convene on June 13, 2010, and would choose a District President and other District Officers.

Therefore, on June 11, 2010, I published an article entitled "WELS Northern WI District Doctrinal Issues." This article identified four doctrinal issues in the Northern Wisconsin District:

1. Exceptionalism
2. Lack of trust in the means of grace
3. Post conversion decision theology, and
4. Unionism<sup>16</sup>

For example in this article, I stated that the false doctrine that Christians (after conversion) can choose to believe God's Word

causes at least four problems: First, sermons to Christians become motivational speeches instead of proclamations of the life-giving Word of God. Second, it creates two "gospels," one for believers and one for unbelievers. Third, it causes us to view God's Word as a tool we use to improve ourselves, instead of as a life-line that we cling to in desperation and faith. And fourth, it causes people to base their faith and salvation on their daily choices instead of on the firm promise of God.<sup>17</sup>

This article was also published in full on other popular blogs, including the [Intrepid Lutherans](#). Unfortunately, District President Engelbrecht and the entire Presidium were reelected without any discussion on the floor of the June 2010 convention.

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<sup>15</sup> District President Engelbrecht's undated letter received in the first half of May 2010. (The theological details of this letter will be dealt with in the section about doctrine).

<sup>16</sup> "WELS Northern WI District Doctrinal Issues," *Light from Light*.  
<http://vdma.wordpress.com/2010/06/11/wels-northern-wi-district-doctrinal-issues/>

<sup>17</sup> "WELS Northern WI District Doctrinal Issues," *Light from Light*.  
<http://vdma.wordpress.com/2010/06/11/wels-northern-wi-district-doctrinal-issues/>

After the district elections, the June 2010 Convention also redistricted the local congregational circuits. Even though St. John (Circuit Pastor Suhr's congregation) and St. Peter (Pastor Glende's congregation) are only a few miles apart, they are no longer in the same circuit. Instead, St. Peter (Freedom) is now in a circuit with Mt. Olive (Appleton) and Immanuel (Greenville). Also included in this circuit is Fox Valley Lutheran High School (Appleton).<sup>18</sup>

Since the average WELS circuit is currently nine congregations, three congregations in one circuit seems unusually small.<sup>19</sup> Also, the geography of some Fox River Valley circuits does seem a bit jumbled.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, I think, this was a gerrymander.<sup>21</sup> As a result of this redistricting, Pastor Suhr is no longer St. Peter Congregation's Circuit Pastor.

### **Two Last Attempts to Meet**

In July of 2010, the five concerned area WELS pastors scheduled a meeting for August 2, 2010, and invited my pastors, the District Presidium, and me. However, the meeting was cancelled because District President Engelbrecht refused to attend for the following reasons:

1. Some members of the Presidium could not be present on August 2.
2. Pastors must receive permission from the District President before inviting the District President to a meeting.
3. The issues raised were previously raised, and further discussion would lead to mere frustration.
4. The Presidium was concerned about the format and choosing of participants.<sup>22</sup>

Instead, a meeting among the five concerned area pastors and only the District Presidium was then scheduled for September 23, 2010. The five concerned area pastors invited me to attend. However, District President Engelbrecht strongly requested that I not attend because he did not want to give me the impression that I would be allowed to raise issues with the Presidium.

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<sup>18</sup> Northern Wisconsin District Convention, Floor Committee Reports, "Membership Realignment Attendance," Resolution #1. Adopted.

<sup>19</sup> "On average, each circuit is made up of about nine congregations ..." ("Helping Pastors Help Pastors," <http://www.wels.net/news-events/helping-pastors-help-pastors>).

<sup>20</sup> For example, St. John (Center) is now in a circuit with churches in Menasha, Wrightstown, Black Creek, Woodville, Little Chute, and Kaukauna.

<sup>21</sup> A gerrymander is "the process of dividing a ... territory into the authorized ... divisions, but with such a geographical arrangement as to accomplish an ulterior or unlawful purpose, as, for instance, to secure a majority for a given political party in districts where the result would be otherwise if they were divided according to obvious natural lines." (*Black's Law Dictionary*, Sixth Edition, 687).

<sup>22</sup> Undated letter from District President Engelbrecht sent to Pastor Suhr the week of July 20-27, 2010.

According to the District President, it would be "disorderly" for me to raise the plagiarism issue with the Presidium.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, I did not attend that meeting.

### **Stuck**

Thus, at the local level there is no one left who is willing and able to help. My pastor will not talk. My Church Council will not talk. If the congregation's circuit pastor tries to intervene, then Pastor Glende gets his own circuit pastor. And the District President will not do anything about that, and further says if I try to raise certain issues with him or the Presidium, then I am being disorderly.

Furthermore, there is very little chance that I am going to convince my congregation of the correct doctrine without some authoritative theological assistance.<sup>24</sup> Why should the congregation believe me instead of its called Pastor, its elected Church Council, its District President, and an anonymous seminary professor? Further, if I am wrong about the doctrine, then how am I supposed to be corrected if I cannot attend any meetings where these issues are being discussed?

I do disagree with my pastors and Church Council over doctrine. Because of this disagreement, they have said that I should consider transferring to another WELS congregation, and they have

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<sup>23</sup> September 21, 2010 e-mail from District President Engelbrecht to Pastor Kenneth Frey, pastor of St. Paul in Appleton, WI. Here is the full text of that e-mail:

Ken,

Although Mr. Techlin would like to join us, I would request that he not be included, but rather that we talk as brother pastors about the doctrinal matters you wish to discuss. Though he may be an educated layman, I think the things we want to talk about are matters for pastors to discuss. I believe that his concerns are still a matter between him and his congregation, and even though he might be interested in some of the things we discuss, I do not want to give him the impression that he can pursue his concerns with the "plagiarism" issue with Pastors Glende and Skorzewski through the district officers. That is disorderly.

Some of the concerns we would like to discuss center around:

- Hebrews 13:17 and how it applies to our synod/district constitution and the divine Call
- issues with the 8th commandment
- concerns about the confessional statements made by Interpid Lutherans
- trusting blogs such as Ichabod as a reliable source of information
- legalism and phariseism in the WELS?

In Him,  
DOUG

<sup>24</sup> That is not a doctrinal statement. The Word of God is always effective.

refused to further discuss these issues.<sup>25</sup> However, former Circuit Pastor Suhr (the senior pastor at the next closest WELS congregation) has informed me that it is improper to transfer between WELS congregations because of doctrinal disagreement: All WELS congregations are supposed to agree 100% on doctrine.

Thus, I have found myself in a position where I cannot go, I cannot stay, and no matter what I do, I am said to be disorderly and a sinner.

## **Part II: The Doctrinal Issues**

This section explains why I have taken these doctrinal stands. It is not meant to be a comprehensive doctrinal treatise, but rather a clear description of the issues.

I believe that false doctrine is being persistently adhered to and publically taught by WELS pastors, and privately defended by Synod officials. Therefore, my conscience requires me to speak out. False doctrine leads souls to eternal death. It would be better if a pastor physically murdered his parishioners, than if he spiritually murdered them eternally with false doctrine.

### **Public versus Private Reproof of False Doctrine**

In May 2010, District President Engelbrecht sent out an undated letter responding to my November 1, 2009 letter and the March 5, 2010 meeting with me and the five concerned area pastors. On every page of his letter, District President Engelbrecht stamped in large red letters: "CONFIDENTIAL." I will let most of this letter remain confidential, but not the aspects that touch doctrine. This is because the doctrine of a district president is not confidential. A district president's doctrine is not confidential when he communicates it to others. A district president's doctrine is not confidential when he doctrinally instructs laymen and other pastors. A district president's doctrine is especially not confidential when his defense of false doctrine is used as justification for other pastors to continue shaping a public ministry around that false doctrine.

If someone wants to keep their doctrine confidential, then they should keep it to themselves, and they should not teach. But when a pastor teaches others, then his doctrine must be tested. James says: "Not many of you should presume to be teachers . . . because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly." (James 3:1). Likewise, Luke commended the Bereans because they "examined the Scriptures every day to see if what [the Apostle] Paul said was true." (Acts 17:11). And when Paul instructed the Colossians, he did not say, "keep this letter confidential because my doctrine is a secret," but rather he said, "After this letter has been read to you, see that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans and that you in turn read the letter from

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<sup>25</sup> April 5 & 19, 2009 e-mails from Church Council President Denny.

Laodicea." (Colossians 4:16). Paul proclaimed the mystery of Christ because no doctrine given to the Church is a secret. (John 18:20).

Further, the doctrines of St. Peter congregation are not private. They are not confidential. There can be no false judging as to what these doctrines are because they have been sung in songs, reflected in the sermons, communicated in verbal meetings, typed up in e-mails, and defended in written letters on paper.<sup>26</sup>

Where there are many witnesses and records of false doctrine because it is being taught publically, God says that it should also "be rebuked publicly, so that the others may take warning." (1 Timothy 5:19-20. See also Galatians 2:14). Luther also taught in the *Large Catechism* that where the false doctrine "is public, the reproof must also be public, that everyone may learn to guard against it."<sup>27</sup> He does not say that the reproof *may* be public, but rather he says that the reproof *must* be public. This is because eternal souls are at stake.

"But if they say that one should beware of rebelling against spiritual authority, I answer: Should God's word be dispensed with and the whole world perish?"<sup>28</sup>

Nonetheless, so far, all reproofs have been private. This may have been a mistake. If a spiritual murderer refuses to repent, refuses to stop teaching others false doctrine, refuses to publically admit error so that all the people "may take warning" and also repent; then someone else must step forward to warn the people. Spiritual murder must be exposed and stopped.

Moreover, because all the avenues of communication have been slowly choked, private reproof is

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<sup>26</sup> *Large Catechism*, Part I. The Ten Commandments, paragraphs 279-284. Paragraph 284 states:

For when a matter is public in the daylight, there can be no slandering or false judging or testifying. It is like when we now rebuke the pope with his doctrine, which is publically set forth in books and proclaimed in all the world. Where the sin is public, the rebuke also must be public, that everyone may learn to guard against it.

<sup>27</sup> *Large Catechism*, Part I. The Ten Commandments, paragraphs 279-284.

<sup>28</sup> *Luther's Works*, volume 39, "Against the Spiritual Estate of the Pope and the Bishops Falsely So Called." Here is an extended quote from this section of Luther's writing:

... worldly rule, even though it commits violence and injustice, hurts only the body and property. But spiritual dominion, whenever it is unholy and does not support God's word, is like a wolf and murderer of the soul, and it is just as though the devil himself were ruling there. That is why one should beware as much of the bishop who does not teach God's word as of the devil himself. For wherever God's word is missing, there we certainly find only the devil's teaching and the murder of souls. For without God's word the soul can neither live nor be delivered from the devil.

But if they say that one should beware of rebelling against spiritual authority, I answer: Should God's word be dispensed with and the whole world perish? Is it right that all souls should be killed eternally so that the temporal show of these masks is left in peace?

no longer allowed.

Thus, the spiritual false doctrine of St. Peter Congregation as defended by District President Engelbrecht *must* be dealt with publically so that all those who have been exposed to this false doctrine "may take warning." (1 Timothy 5:19-20). The truth of God's word is not a secret, and must be defended publically because eternal souls are at stake.

### **False Doctrine: Can Christians choose to believe God's Word?**

With regard to the position that Christians can choose to believe God's Word, District President Engelbrecht wrote:

I talked at length with Pastor Glende about the quote that Mr. Techlin has on page 24 of his document and is repeated in the document presented to the District Praesidium, viz "*In the light of faith we can choose to believe God's Word.*" I wanted to determine whether or not by making that statement, Pastor Glende accepted/promoted "decision theology." ¶

Pastor Glende stated that he firmly believes what Luther says in the catechism, that we cannot by our own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ our Lord, nor come to Him. He stated that he believes, as we believe and as Scripture teaches, that no one can, on his/her own, come to faith in Christ or choose to believe God's Word. The unregenerate man is dead in trespasses and sins. He does, however believe, and as Scripture also teaches, that in the light of faith, in other words, in the context of the Holy Spirit already dwelling in a person's heart and having produced faith in that heart, an individual can choose to believe the Word of God. It is a decision that is enabled only by the power of the Holy Spirit in a person's heart. ¶

In that connection we discussed Joshua 24:15 where Joshua, a believer in God by the power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him, said "*But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.*" The option to serve (and therefore believe or accept the Word and promise of God, for what else would that decision be based on) the Lord, as opposed to rejecting God and His promises, was made as a result of the Holy Spirit giving Joshua the power to understand and accept the words and promises of God. One might also consider Deuteronomy 30:19 where God says to the children of Israel "*This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice...*" God places before the children of Israel two options. They can

either accept His word and promise, i.e. life and all the blessings that God had told them about, or they could choose death and the curses that go with it. God then tells them to choose life, i.e. to accept His Word and His way as opposed to the way of death through unbelief. We know from the rest of Holy Scripture and from the Lutheran Confessions, which accurately present the truth of Scripture, that the Israelites could only make that decision through the power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in their hearts. In both of the passages cited above the "choosing" is made in the context of faith, not conversion.

That is also the context in which the song "The Voice Of Truth" makes the statement: "*I will choose to listen and believe the Word of truth.*" i.e. the context of a Christian in whose heart the Holy Spirit has already done His work of conversion.<sup>29</sup> Pastor Glende and Skorzewski said that they ran those lyrics past professors at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary to make sure that the words could be understood in the proper context and would be in harmony with the Lutheran Confessions, and they were told that the lyrics of the song were acceptable the way it was being used and understood.<sup>30</sup>

District President Engelbrecht then concluded by further emphasizing that pastors who teach that Christians can choose to believe God's Word "do not accept or teach a 'decision theology' or a form of synergism . . ."<sup>31</sup>

Pastor Glende, my entire Church Council, an anonymous seminary professor, and District President Engelbrecht all agree that in the light of faith, Christians can choose to believe God's Word. However, their interpretation of Scripture is flawed. For example, they all cited Joshua 24:15 as proof. However, Joshua said to the people: if you think serving the Lord is undesirable (in other words, if you do not believe), then your choice is between worthless idols. The choice he offered was not between God's Word and false gods, but rather between "the gods . . . beyond

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<sup>29</sup> Pastor Glende's original defense of those lyrics was that they were being used "*to reach out* in a different setting" at The CORE, an *outreach* ministry. (April 23, 2009 e-mail. Emphasis added).

<sup>30</sup> All emphasis in the original. Also, paragraph breaks ¶ were added to make the text more readable. (Undated letter from District President Engelbrecht, printed on district stationary, and received in May 2010).

<sup>31</sup> Emphasis in the original. (Undated letter from District President Engelbrecht, printed on district stationary, and received in early May 2010). This is the quote in a larger context:

... the bottom line is that Pastors Glende and Skorzewski do not accept or teach a "decision theology" or a form of synergism, but believe and teach what the Scriptures teach and the Lutheran Confessions present, namely that we cannot do anything to come to faith or to accept the words and promises of God, without the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. Post conversion, however, we are enabled by the power of the Holy Spirit to believe and accept the words and promises of God as well as do that which is pleasing to God.

the River" and "the gods of the Amorites." (Joshua 24:15).

In context, Joshua also says to the Israelites, "You are not able to serve the Lord," and "You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen to serve the Lord." (Joshua 24:19, 22). When Joshua says that the people "are not able," and that they "are witnesses against" themselves, he is not expressing confidence in their ability to choose to believe.

In contradistinction to the false doctrine that Christians can choose to believe God's Word, Paul told the early *believers*:

I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead . . . For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this [faith & grace is] not from yourselves, it is the gift of God [Ephesians 1:17-20, 2:8].

There is not a more beautiful and clear passage of Scripture. Jesus is the author and *perfecter* of our faith. (Hebrews 12:2). The *work of God* is to believe in the one he has sent. (John 6:29). "The apostles said to the Lord, 'Increase our faith!'" (Luke 17:5). From beginning to end, life and faith are not of our choosing, but rather they are the pure gift of God. The Small Catechism says:

I believe that *I cannot by my own thinking or choosing believe* in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him. But the Holy Spirit has called me by the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, sanctified *and kept* me in the true faith. In the same way he calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, *and keeps* it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith.<sup>32</sup>

Where does that say anything about our cooperation or choosing?<sup>33</sup> It is the Holy Spirit who gives faith and keeps us in the one true faith. At Augsburg, the Reformers Confessed:

So that we may obtain this faith, the ministry of teaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments was instituted. Through the Word and Sacraments,

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<sup>32</sup> *Luther's Small Catechism: a contemporary translation*, published by Northwestern Publishing House, Fifteenth printing, 2009. Emphasis added.

<sup>33</sup> *Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration*, Article II, Free Will, paragraph 42.

as through instruments, the Holy Spirit is given. [John 20:22]. *He works faith, when and where it pleases God* [John 3:8], in those who hear the good news that God justifies those who believe that they are received into grace for Christ's sake. This happens not through our own merits, but for Christ's sake.<sup>34</sup>

The *Augsburg Confession* is clear that the Holy Ghost "works faith, where and when it pleases" Him. The *Apology of the Augsburg Confession* declares that faith "is a divine power" and "a new life."<sup>35</sup>

District President Engelbrecht emphasized that pastors who teach Christians they can choose to believe God's Word "do not accept or teach a 'decision theology' or a form of synergism . . ."<sup>36</sup> However, the *Formula of Concord* censures and rejects

the teaching of the Synergists, who pretend that . . . *The will can apply itself to grace, can grasp and accept it, and can believe the Gospel. It can also cooperate, by its own powers, with the Holy Spirit, in the continuation of this work.*

Against this teaching, it has been shown at length above that the power known to qualify one's self for grace naturally does not come from our own natural powers, but only from the Holy Spirit's work.<sup>37</sup>

The *Formula of Concord* says that our wills cannot apply themselves to grace, cannot grasp or accept it, cannot believe the Gospel, and cannot cooperate with the Holy Spirit in the continuation of this work.<sup>38</sup> It condemns this teaching.

True belief in Christ is life itself. No one who is alive chooses to be alive. Just as we do not choose to be born, so also we do not choose to live. Life is a condition, not a choice. (John 1:13 & John 3:6). When God tells a dead man like Lazarus to rise or a paralytic to get up and walk, that is the same as telling someone to believe. Yes, it is a call to action, but the calling word of

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<sup>34</sup> *Augsburg Confession*, Article V, The Ministry. Emphasis added. (All quotations of the Lutheran Confessions are to this edition, unless otherwise noted: *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions*. Edited by Paul Timothy McCain. St. Louis, MO : Concordia Publishing House, 2005).

<sup>35</sup> *Apology of the Augsburg Confession*, Article V (III), paragraph 129 (250).

<sup>36</sup> Emphasis in the original. Undated letter from District President Engelbrecht, printed on district stationary, and received in early May 2010.

<sup>37</sup> *Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration*, Article II, Free Will, paragraphs 77-78. Emphasis added.

<sup>38</sup> Please note that the words "this work" are in the singular.

God is the power of the action both for believer and unbeliever. Lazarus came out of the tomb, not because he chose to be alive or stay alive, but rather because he heard Christ's call to come out.

In the light of faith do we choose to believe God's word? No. The truth is that in the light of God's word we see and believe. Faith and the fruit of faith (good choices are the fruit of faith) should not be confused. The fruit does not bring forth the tree, but rather the tree brings forth the fruit. Faith produces works and choices, not the other way around. Those who teach that Christian choices produce faith confound the doctrine of justification by grace alone through faith alone. They confound the central teaching of Christianity by basing faith partly on works instead of on Christ alone. All belief in God's Word is the gift of God, and is not by our reason or strength, or thinking or choosing, or any other work. (Ephesians 2:9).<sup>39</sup>

The effects of this horrible false doctrine (of post conversion decision theology) are not just theoretical. They are very real, very serious, and very dangerous. They change the entire focus of a ministry. "If coming to faith is a work of the Spirit, but continuing to believe is a work of our thinking and choosing, then Christians do not need the Gospel. What Christians then need are moral encouragements to make the right choices, and that is what we get."<sup>40</sup>

Therefore, as stated before:

This theology causes at least four problems: First, sermons to Christians become motivational speeches instead of proclamations of the life-giving Word of God. Second, it creates two "gospels," one for believers and one for unbelievers. Third, it causes us to view God's Word as a tool we use to improve ourselves, instead of as a life-line that we cling to in desperation and faith. And fourth, it causes people to base their faith and salvation on their daily choices instead of on the firm promise of God.

Consider the case of the Christian who has allowed sin to rule in their lives, who has grieved the Holy Spirit, and therefore must be converted again.<sup>41</sup> Now also consider the fact that all Christians still struggle with sin. (Romans 7). Thus, how could a sinner know for sure whether

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<sup>39</sup> We are completely and always at God's mercy.

Infants cannot choose. Therefore, if Christians can choose to believe, then adults can have more faith than infants. But Christ said, "unless you change and become like *little* children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 18:3). Emphasis added.

<sup>40</sup> November 1, 2009 "[Letter to Council and Pastors](#)," page 24 of 29.

<sup>41</sup> *Formula of Concord*, Solid Declaration, Article II, free will, paragraph 69.

they must be converted again, or whether they can still choose to believe?

Do they choose to believe God's Word, or do they trust God's Word? Which "gospel" is for them? The one true gospel preaches faith as a pure gift of grace. "And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace." (Romans 11:6). This other "gospel" preaches faith as the result of grace and works because choosing to believe is a work.

There is one true gospel for all men for all time, and that is the gospel message of faith apart from works. (Romans 4:5-6). The gospel message of faith does not change after conversion from trust into choice. Emphasizing that the gospel message does not change, Paul said, "if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned!" (Galatians 1:7).

This error turns Christians completely inward, and causes us to focus on our own choices instead of on God's objective promises in word and sacrament. It is the Pietistic error, and it is diametrically opposed to true Lutheranism, the true Word of God: the one true Christian faith. Unfortunately, the entire ministry of St. Peter, Appleton/Freedom, WI is built on this false doctrine because the entire leadership of St. Peter actually believes this false doctrine.

The question of whether Christians can choose to believe God's Word also touches upon the effectiveness of God's Word. Is God's Word the very power of life and salvation both for the believer and unbeliever? (Romans 1:16). Or does a Christian need to add something to God's Word to make it effective? Is the effective Word of God our very life? Or is the Bible our tool, and the Word of God just information?

### **False Doctrine: Does God *need* our service?**

This long running doctrinal dispute has revolved around a song entitled "Ready Lord" that appears in the Northwestern Publishing House book *Let All the People Praise You*, and has continued to be heavily utilized at St. Peter Congregation over the last few years. The November 2009 letter did not deal extensively with this doctrinal issue because I (mistakenly) believed that the Church Council and Synod officials would agree that God does not need our service, and force Pastor Glende to recant.

The problem here is not that a congregation would constantly sing a song containing false doctrine. That happens. Words are overlooked because we do not pay careful attention. We are men, and we make mistakes. Only the Scriptures are infallible.

The problem is when a pastor persistently adheres to false doctrine by privately defending error, and publically teaching that same error even after correction. If at any point over the last two years, Pastor Glende had said, "I was wrong. God does not need our service," and changed those false lyrics, this issue would be moot. But Pastor Glende has not done that. Instead, he had our congregation sing "show me Lord, the service you will need" an average of once per month for

the next two years. At one point, those lyrics were even added to our liturgy. Those are not the actions of a pastor who believes that God does not need our service.

Pastor Glende's position is that from our perspective God does need our service. During this dispute, Pastor Glende did concede that, "From God's perspective he needs nothing from us," but then he negated that by saying that from our perspective God does need our service, and "I can sing *Lord show me the service* I need to do *that you need from me* to serve you in my life and share you with the world."<sup>42</sup>

Further, the ministry of St. Peter and The CORE is built around this belief that God needs us to "be all things to all people," and that God needs us to find culturally relevant ways to reach out to the world. (1 Corinthians 9:22). If we do not become "relevant," the church will die. It is yet another doctrinal denial of the efficacy of the means of grace.<sup>43</sup>

Whether God *needs* our service strikes at the very heart of the doctrine that God's word alone is effective. (Genesis 1:3). This false doctrine says that God's word and sacraments are not enough to grow the Church.

However, John the Baptist said, God can make Christians out of the stones. It is God who builds his Church. (Matthew 3:9 and 16:18). The Evangelist also wrote that the

God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. . . In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. [Acts 17:24-25, 30].

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<sup>42</sup> E-mail from Pastor Glende, September 1, 2008; cc: Rev. Ron Ash. Emphasis added. Here are those quotes from Pastor Glende within context:

From God's perspective he needs nothing from us, that is true. But when it comes to his Christian people he expects that they respond with fruits of faith. God wants, commands, and expects service - in other words there are things that we need to do because God has given us the responsibility to do them. Take for example the words of Romans 10 - How can they here if no one is sent? etc. God uses us to preach his word, and from the human perspective that is something I need to do. As a husband I need to love my wife as God says I should, that is me serving God in my Christian life. I need to raise my children to know the Lord, that is a command. So I can sing *Lord show me the service* I need to do *that you need from me* to serve you in my life and share you with the world. WE are sinners so in some respects singing these words also admits we need you to show us what is expected and needed by us from the Word so we can carry it out.

<sup>43</sup> The means of grace are God's word and the sacraments.

The Scriptures are clear: God is almighty and does not have needs.<sup>44</sup> Also, Luther wrote in his *Church Postil* about the Lord Jesus:

For this reason he said while eating the evening meal: "This is my commandment that you love each other as I have loved you" [John 13:34]. You see here that he has loved us and that he has done all his works for us. The purpose is that we, in turn, do likewise, not to him—he is not in need of it—but to our neighbor.<sup>45</sup>

It is not the Lord who needs our service, but only our neighbor. How easy it would have been to change the words:

"Lord, show us the service *you* will need" to  
"Lord, show us the service *we* will need."

This suggested change would have not only removed the blasphemy, it would have still rhymed! Yet, this solution is rejected.<sup>46</sup> One would expect such brassy blasphemy from only the apostate church. (Revelation 17:6).

"We should not consider the slightest error against the Word of God unimportant."<sup>47</sup> If even a slight error against the Word of God is important, then how should we consider an error so grave so large and so obvious that against which even the enemies of Christ (Muslims and Jews) would recoil in horror? Not even the Muslims say that God *needs* our service. Nonetheless, we have the unmitigated gall to sing to God's face about his need for our service every month. It is blasphemy. Anyone with even a smidgen of zeal for the Lord would condemn this blasphemy. Even worse that a Lutheran pastor would defend, perpetuate, and base a ministry around this false teaching.

Back in 2008, after our first disagreement over whether from our perspective God needs our service, Pastor Glende told me that I was no longer allowed to question him on this issue, and he was not going to discuss it any further. Continued use of false lyrics along with the steadfast refusal to even discuss the doctrinal issue is the very definition of persistent error.

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<sup>44</sup> See also Psalm 50:8-17, 19, 21.

<sup>45</sup> Luther, Martin; Pelikan, Jaroslav Jan (Hrsg.) ; Oswald, Hilton C. (Hrsg.) ; Lehmann, Helmut T. (Hrsg.): *Luther's Works*, Vol. 52 : Sermons II. Philadelphia : Fortress Press, 1999, c1974 (Luther's Works 52), S. 52:iii-17.

<sup>46</sup> When changing the lyrics to this song, there would be copyright hurdles to overcome. However, overcoming copyright hurdles is much easier (in the long run) than blaspheming God.

<sup>47</sup> *What Luther Says: An Anthology*, 3 vols., ed., compiled by Ewald Plass; Concordia Publishing House; St. Louis, MO; 1959, Vol. II, p. 637.

## False Doctrine & Practice: Pietistic Plagiarism

Plagiarizing the sermons of our theological enemies is a doctrinal issue for three reasons: First, the sermons of our theological enemies do not have the true doctrine. Second, failure to struggle with the Word by doing one's own work shows a lack of understanding of the gospel, "at the center of which is a cross."<sup>48</sup> (Genesis 32:24-30). Third, plagiarism is deceit and a sin. Those who defend sin and call wrong right, also commit doctrinal error. "Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter." (Isaiah 5:20).

In 2008 I started to suspect sermon plagiarism. The sermons did not seem Lutheran, so occasionally I would Google a sermon title to see if anything turned up. I could not find anything.

When St. Peter began the "Fearless" sermon series, other sermons began turning up. Almost every nondenominational, Baptist, and Methodist congregation in the country seemed to have a "Fearless" sermon series. I found some by a Baptist preacher in Florida that were close to Pastor Glende's sermons, and wrote to that preacher asking if he was the author of those sermons. He claimed that he was, and he sent me some of his "Fearless" sermon outlines. His outlines were similar to Pastor Glende's. The sermons of that Baptist worked toward the conclusion that his listeners needed to do something for God, and that was to respond to an altar call.<sup>49</sup>

I was concerned that the same basic sermon outlines that were being used to motivate altar calls, were also being used in a Lutheran congregation. However, I did not trust this Baptist preacher, and considered the possibility that he had copied from Pastor Glende.

In 2009, I finally discovered at least one source of Pastor Glende's sermons: Craig Groeschel at LifeChurch.tv. My parents also attend St. Peter, so sometimes I would invite them to listen to Craig Groeschel's internet sermons after church. Sometimes, Pastor Glende would change the order of Groeschel's outline. Sometimes, he would paraphrase an outline, and sometimes he would use the same words as Groeschel. These are all forms of plagiarism.

I mention these facts because Pietistic plagiarism is not just about the sins of fraud and

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<sup>48</sup> "[Be a Gospel Man](#)," a sermon by WELS Pastor Jonathan Hein:

"... Then there's the pastor who doesn't have the time to write his own sermon. He preaches that of others, regardless of Gospel quality, believing that he's a good enough actor to convince his people he's excited about a message which cost him no blood or sweat or tears. He justifies this by saying, 'But I'm surrounded by so many lost. There's so much outreach to do!' In conducting their ministry in ways that are entirely comfortable to them—ways that fit their own personal preferences—such pastors prove they don't really understand the Gospel very well, at the center of which is a cross."

<sup>49</sup> An altar call is a method used by people who believe in the heresy of Decision Theology to motivate people to make a decision for God and choose to believe God's word.

deception, it is also about false doctrine. It would still be a sin for a pastor to pass off Martin Luther's sermons as his own, but there would not be the same concern for doctrine.<sup>50</sup> A pastor could deceive and sin against his congregation in many ways, but if he still preached the pure word of God, the Word would still save spiritual lives.

But when a pastor deceives his congregation about the source of heterodox sermons, then the sin of deceit and the sin of false doctrine magnify each other. All false teachers in the visible Christian Church are wolves in sheep's clothing, but some are more effective at hiding their fangs than others. Being up front and honest about the fact that a sermon outline was written by our theological enemies would not effectively hide that sermon's fangs. On the other hand, plagiarism keeps the sermon source a secret, and is less likely to raise alarm.

I contacted Circuit Pastor Suhr with my concerns.<sup>51</sup> According to Circuit Pastor Suhr, he contacted Pastor Glende who denied any plagiarism. It was very soon after this that Pastor Glende told Circuit Pastor Suhr that he could no longer be his circuit pastor.

Because Pastor Glende had denied plagiarism to the Circuit Pastor, I picked out a sermon to transcribe concrete examples of plagiarism that could not be denied. Specifically, I chose the

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<sup>50</sup> Lutheran pastors would not be ashamed to be forthright and honest about preaching a sermon by Luther. They would gladly let the light shine on such a practice. It is when a pastor preaches a sermon from our theological enemies that he would want to hide such a practice.

<sup>51</sup> When I first confirmed that there was plagiarism at St. Peter, I did not immediately go to Pastor Glende. I did not know what to do, so I let it go on for awhile, and then sat down with Circuit Pastor Suhr for the very first time. The reason I proceeded in that order was because at about the same time, Pastor Glende was accusing me of sin for saying that Church and Change was a controversial organization, that The CORE was only one block from St. Paul in Appleton, that Pastor Glende was aka "Pastor Tim," and that St. Peter was calling an "assistant pastor."

These statements were part of a blog post entitled "[Lent and The CORE Location](#)." When I refused to remove the entire post from the internet, Pastor Glende sent me two e-mails indicating which parts of the post needed to be removed. These e-mails conflicted with each other as to what parts Pastor Glende wanted removed. When I refused to change the post, Pastor Glende informed me that all the leadership of St. Peter agreed that my post was divisive, that he was going to publically accuse me of sin, and that I needed to appear before our head elder to give an accounting of my behavior.

At this meeting, Pastor Glende did agree that I have a right to relate truthful information and to have an opinion about matters at church. However, he then proceeded to have me explain all my motivations because he suspected that I had bad motives for saying things like The CORE was only one block from St. Paul. I told him that my motive was the truth, and that if there was anything untrue in the post, I would gladly change it. Pastor Glende then said that St. Peter was calling an "associate" pastor, not an "assistant" pastor; and that my information about the parsonage and the amount of money spent on The CORE was incorrect, however, he would not give me the correct amount of money or information about the parsonage. In the end, I did not make any changes because if I was going to face an excommunication hearing in front of the entire congregation, then I wanted the evidence of my innocence to remain intact.

After all that, a friend advised me that if I contacted Pastor Glende directly about plagiarism, the reaction from Pastor Glende might be very bad.

"You Don't Have What It Takes: You Can't Handle It All" sermon because in this sermon Pastor Glende did not even change the order of Groeschel's outline, and I could just follow along without having to jump back and forth in the recordings.

I (mistakenly) believed that if Pastor Glende, the Church Council, and the Synod officials were presented with undeniable evidence of plagiarism, then Pastor Glende would repent, and there would be forgiveness in Christ. The problem would be solved. Unfortunately, obfuscation and denials of plagiarism turned into defenses of plagiarism.

In his May 2009 letter District President Engelbrecht made false excuses for and defended the sin of plagiarism by saying:

I also spoke with Pastor Glende about using outlines and even "word for word" quotes from sources such as Lifechurch.tv as Mr. Techlin seems to clearly indicate happened at least on one occasion (the sermon dated 01/25/09 cited in Mr. Techlin's document).<sup>52</sup> While we agreed there they may be nothing wrong with adapting an outline or even the framework of a series that someone else has originated, even if they are not of our fellowship is not sinful, we did agree that using someone else's material is generally no substitute for doing your own work and should not be standard procedure. We have been trained to do our own text study, outlining, and sermon writing at the seminary. Pastor Glende assured me that he faithfully does his study as we were taught in preparation for his sermons.

I am not enough of a lawyer to determine whether or not quoting from someone else's sermon can be considered plagiarism in the strictest or legal sense of the word and prosecutable, but if so we probably have quite a few men down through the decades who would be considered guilty of plagiarism by preaching word for word (or nearly so) sermons out of the old Concordia Pulpit, a Missouri Synod volume. Many WELS pastors, of course, use someone else's series, outlines, and even entire sermons during Lent or as part of special programs developed and promoted by the synod (such as stewardship sermons, Walking Together, Year of Jubilee, etc.). I don't think any of them (self included) believes that they are guilty of plagiarism in doing so.

Of greater concern than whether or not quoting from someone else's work or outline without giving proper credit to the author is plagiarism as defined by law,

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<sup>52</sup> District President Engelbrecht should ask Pastor Glende about the extent of the plagiarism. Pastor Glende does not have the right to remain silent on this issue, he needs to be honest and forthright.

Further, District President Engelbrecht should demonstrate some curiosity as to the extent of the plagiarism, not only at St. Peter and The CORE, but also in the Northern Wisconsin District. In the month of May 2010, the Intrepid Lutherans exposed other pastors in the Northern Wisconsin District of plagiarism. The Intrepid Lutherans threatened those pastors with a public confrontation, and those pastors then repented and apologized.

is whether or not the actual material used is Scriptural and theologically sound. When our men are using outlines, sermon series, or sermons that have been produced by our synod, we can be fairly confident that anything we quote or use is Scripturally sound and accurate. That, of course, cannot always be said of material that may be used from an author that does not share our confession or theology. Though Mr. Techlin showed in his document that at least one sermon that Pastor Glende preached was extremely close in phraseology to one preached by Craig Groeschel, few, if any, of the phrases and thoughts appear to have any theological content. Those that do (e.g. "my soul finds rest in God alone") do not appear to contain false teaching.<sup>53</sup>

Of equal concern is that is by listening to sermons and theological material from sources outside our fellowship on a regular basis, one may gradually find himself taking on the theology of the author, even though we are trained to filter out the heterodox theology in anything we read or hear. There is also the danger in using the material of heterodox authors so completely and so often, even if adapted and filtered through our WELS theology, that people identify us with the heterodox, whether we like it or not.

All of these cautions were discussed fully with Pastors Glende and Skorzewski to make sure that they understand the dangers involved. They were in agreement with the cautions that were stressed and expressed a desire and a willingness to heed those cautions.<sup>54</sup>

If the District President really did not know what the legal definition of plagiarism was, and he did not trust the definitions I included in the November 2009 letter, then he should have asked someone or looked it up himself. This is because before someone judges a case, he should know both the rules and the facts. Then he will be properly prepared to judge whether the facts are a violation of the rules.

District President Engelbrecht also wrote to the five concerned area pastors saying:

Of some interest is the question that I posed to Mr. Techlin at the end of our

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<sup>53</sup> Apparently, District President Engelbrecht thinks the belief that Christ came to earth to give us earthly rest, is not false teaching. This false doctrine causes every Christian who is not experiencing earthly rest to question their faith and God. However, the truth is that the Son of Man had no earthly place to rest his head, and his servants should not be deceived into believing false promises that they will live better than their master. (Luke 9:58. See also Acts 9:16 and Hebrews 11:13-16 & 11:36-40).

<sup>54</sup> Emphasis in the original. District President Engelbrecht's Letter to a Group of Five Pastors and Two Laymen Who Met with the District Presidium on March 5, 2010; undated, but received in early May 2010. Pages 11-12.

discussions on March 5<sup>th</sup> and after some personal discussion with him. The question I posed was: since he brought forth the concerns about the lack of emphasis on the cross and justification by faith in the sermons at St. Peter, has there been any change. He stated that he had noticed that in the past few months a greater emphasis on the cross and the doctrine of justification in the sermons, which we can assume was the purpose in bringing the concerns to Pastor Glende's attention. Based on the response of the Church Council to Mr. Techlin's concerns, it likely that for some reason or other Mr. Techlin simply failed to see the emphasis on the cross and the doctrine of justification previously, because he may have been looking for something else in Pastor Glende's sermons. The leadership of St. Peter, in their letter of response to Mr. Techlin, indicate that Pastor Glende has been preaching both sound Lutheran doctrine and a proper mix of both Law and Gospel, which would include a proper emphasis on justification by faith and Christ crucified for sinners.<sup>55</sup>

No. It is not likely that I "failed to see the emphasis on the cross and the doctrine of justification" because I was "looking for something else." Here is the truth: I began to really listen to sermons in 2006. In 2007, I started to listen with more discernment, and began to ask questions such as: "What is the problem identified by this sermon?" Is the problem sin? Or, for example, is the problem a lack of good time management? Also, what is the sermon's solution to the problem? Is the solution Christ crucified? Or is the solution for us to make a "to-don't list" or to be "loud" and have the "right attitude"? I also began to consider the number of times Christ and his cross were mentioned, and to ask, "What is Christ doing in this sermon?" For example, "In this sermon, does Christ raise us from the dead and save us from eternal death? Or is Christ cited as mere example and motivation for us to emulate?" In other words, is Christ the main subject in the sermon, or are we?

It was not that I failed to see Christ crucified because I was looking for something else; but rather, I failed to see Christ crucified at the very point I started to look for him.

I have been observing the doctrine and practices at St. Peter for years, and yes, I did notice improvement in the one month of February 2010. However, at the end of the March 5, 2010 meeting, District President Engelbrecht did not tell me that he was going to assume my listening skills were deficient, but rather he told me that he was going to listen to the sermons for himself.

### **Repentance is Required**

The issue has become larger than just plagiarism and false doctrine. The larger issue has been

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<sup>55</sup> District President Engelbrecht's letter to a group of five area concerned pastors and two laymen who met with the District Presidium on March 5, 2010; undated, but received in early May 2010.

the ongoing defense and protection of false doctrine and sin.

How many years should we wait for repentance? After all this time, what would genuine repentance look like? First, there would need to be an admission of wrongdoing and wrong doctrine.

Second, there needs to be a turning away from sin, and a setting right. (Acts 26:20). (In the case of taught false doctrine, a "setting right" would be a very loud admission of previous error and proclamation of the truth so that all the people can learn and take warning). There must be a setting right. For example, when Zacchaeus repented, he gave half his possessions to the poor, and said, "if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount." Jesus said, "Today salvation has come to this house . . . For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost." (Luke 19:8-10). John the Baptist also preached that we should produce "fruit in keeping with repentance." (Luke 3:8). But it is not a choice to pay back four times that produces repentance or saves, rather it is Christ who seeks and saves. Zacchaeus' choice was a fruit of repentance, not the cause of repentance. Like faith, genuine repentance is the pure gift of God. (Acts 11:18).

No one had to badger Zacchaeus into openly confessing and repaying. What he did he did out of joy at the newfound gift of faith & repentance given him by Christ.

After much of this letter was written, the five concerned area pastors shared the results of their last meeting with the Presidium. In an undated letter received near the end of December 2010, District President Engelbrecht reiterated the Presidium's position that Christians can choose to believe, but did finally concede that plagiarism is unethical, and that plagiarism of the materials of our theological enemies is not only unethical but also dangerous. However, his letter contained no word on whether the District President also agrees that his year-long defense of the sin of plagiarism was itself a sin or just gross incompetence. The District President then hinted that his newfound discovery that plagiarism is a sin might result in private reproof.

Genuine repentance is not merely a confession of wrongdoing or wrong doctrine. Just as true faith always produces works, so also genuine repentance always produces fruit. King Saul confessed his sin to Samuel, but he showed that his repentance was not genuine because he still wanted to be honored before Israel. (1 Samuel 15. At least Saul acknowledged that he had sinned).

Will there ever be an acknowledgment of sin and genuine repentance? Only God knows the answer. But when a ministry is based in part on the abilities and personality of the pastor, and the pastor believes that one of his primary duties is maintaining a good public relations image of that ministry, then it can be very difficult to face up to real problems in that ministry. Nonetheless, God's standards are not our standards: he does not judge the numbers, or the money, or the outward image; he judges hearts. In the short term, it may seem easier to defend sin, but defending sin is another sin, and God is not absent. This is a serious warning that should be taken to heart.

If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know him who said, "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," and again, "The Lord will judge his people." It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. [Hebrews 10:26-31].

As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, O house of Israel?' [Ezekiel 33:11].

### **Part III: Fellowship Doctrine & Practice**

Even though it is my opinion that some WELS officials are more concerned with procedure than doctrine, and that certain WELS leaders have a bad habit of making up procedure as they go along to suit themselves; nonetheless, I have put up with it. This is because the people of God should willingly suffer all manner of abuse from their religious leaders.<sup>56</sup> Jesus said, "The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. So you must obey them and do everything they tell you." (Matthew 23:2-3). But when those religious leaders attack the true doctrine, then they are attacking the Word of God who is Jesus, and the laymen need to draw a line. The religious leaders can attack me all they want, but they must not be allowed to again smite or crucify the Word of God. (Exodus 17:5-7 & Numbers 20:1-13, 20:22-29, 27:12-14 and Hebrews 10:11-14).

Never again should a religious leader lay a harsh hand on the Word of God. (John 18:22-23). When the religious leaders attack the doctrine, which is the word, they are again attacking Jesus who is the Word of God. When they attack the Word of God, they attack the gospel message that it is finished. (John 19:30). When the religious leaders continue to smite the Word with false doctrine, they say it is not finished. And when they attack the gospel message that it is finished, they set up additional sacrifices to take the place of Christ's one effective sacrifice.

Christ said, "I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself." (John 12:32). What Christ said is true. But today's religious leaders have better ways to draw all men. They have a decision theology, marketing, entertainments, and other earthly wisdom. Because they

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<sup>56</sup> I think this sentence might be a quote from Martin Luther, however, I am unable to find its source.

practice these false doctrines in the name of Christ, they call Christ a liar, and smite the Word all over again. The religious leaders do not believe Christ crucified alone will draw or keep anyone: according to them additional sacrifices are needed: sacrifices of entertainments and methods and works and choices.

Nonetheless, their efforts are futile because they build on a foundation of spiritual sand. (Matthew 7:26-27). When Christ returns, he will destroy their earthly kingdoms, and establish, on his Word alone, his own eternal kingdom. (Daniel 2:44-45).

Doctrine and practice are intimately related. They are not the same, but if faith is doctrine, then works are practice. James says: "Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do." (James 2:18).

My doctrinal differences with my congregation have been known by me for well over two years. These doctrinal positions are buttressed by the unanimous opinions of Pastor Glende, our Church Council, an anonymous seminary professor, and the District President. And I believe these false doctrines strike at the very heart of the Gospel.<sup>57</sup>

When the Synodical Conference broke up over fellowship issues, the break took a long time.<sup>58</sup> However, errors in the doctrine of fellowship do not strike immediately at the core doctrine of justification. Breaking fellowship with others over fellowship issues could take time, however, breaking fellowship with false teachers over the core doctrines of faith should not take so long. These false doctrines put souls in immediate danger, so the alarm must be raised as soon as possible.

Therefore, as of November 2010 (one year after my twenty-nine page letter), I have ceased attending St. Peter congregation as a public testimony against the false doctrine of Pastor Glende, its Church Council, and District President Engelbrecht. This is in accord with the Apostle Paul who wrote:

Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, *contrary to the doctrine* which you learned, and avoid them. For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and

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<sup>57</sup> See also Article VII of the *Augsburg Confession*:

Our churches teach that one holy Church is to remain forever. The Church is the congregation of saints [Psalm 149:1] in which the Gospel is purely taught and the Sacraments are correctly administered. For the true unity of the Church it is enough to agree about the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments. It is not necessary that human traditions, that is, rites or ceremonies instituted by men, should be the same everywhere.

<sup>58</sup> What would the WELS men who broke with LCMS over fellowship issues have thought about future WELS pastors plagiarizing the sermons of avowed anti-Lutheran Pietists. Is that not also a fellowship issue?

flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple. [Romans 16:17-18 NKJV. Emphasis added].<sup>59</sup>

This public act of no longer attending the church where I was baptized and where I have my membership demands a public explanation, and this letter and the letter dated November 1, 2009 should serve as that explanation.

Because this error is persistent, the watchmen<sup>60</sup> must blow the trumpet to warn the people. I have not been chosen to be a watchman, but I am saying to the watchmen: "Look. I think you need to sound the warning trumpet." (Ezekiel 33:1-9 and Matthew 18:17). The danger is too great for the warning horn to get bogged down in procedure for years.

Too many assume that WELS pastors will never teach false doctrine. We often assume that God's warnings to the Church in the New Testament do not apply to the WELS, and so we fall asleep, we do not watch, we are not on guard. (Acts 20:28-31). Instead of assuming everything is ok, we need to watch and pray. (Luke 21:36).<sup>61</sup>

I believe these false doctrines are spreading through the WELS like a cancer. Pastor Glende has repeatedly suggested that I should consider transferring to another WELS congregation.<sup>62</sup> However, it is improper to transfer between WELS congregations, if the only reason to transfer is because of doctrinal disagreement. Furthermore, it is not my intention to just leave the WELS because of the false teaching of some of its pastors. Therefore, since God baptized me as an infant in St. Peter congregation, this congregation is as good as any for me to make either a last stop or a last stand. I would rather make a last stand, and be excommunicated from the WELS on doctrinal issues; than stand and retreat, and stand and retreat, from congregation to congregation for the rest of my life.

For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline. So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God, who has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. [2 Timothy 1:7-9].

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<sup>59</sup> Emphasis added.

<sup>60</sup> *Augsburg Confession*, Article XIV. See also Ezekiel 33:1-9.

<sup>61</sup> "Innumerable preachers imagined that they were preaching Christ and proclaiming His doctrine until their eyes were opened and they saw that they had concealed Christ from the eyes of poor sinners and had directed men away from Him rather than to Him." (C.F.W. Walther, *Law and Gospel*, Concordia Publishing House, 1986. Page 362).

<sup>62</sup> I could transfer to a congregation that is opposed to these false doctrines.

## Should I be a member of the WELS?

Should I be in fellowship with church leaders whose doctrine of salvation is by grace alone through faith and works (human choices)? Should I continue in fellowship with those whose very ministry is based around a lack of faith in the means of grace, and who are so bold in this lack of faith as to regularly teach that God *needs* our service?<sup>63</sup> Should I continue in fellowship with synod officials who not only protect and defend false teachers and plagiarists, but also promote them as examples to follow? Pastor Skorzewski is not only a leader at St. Peter, he is also regularly called upon to teach other leaders in the WELS. And he is popular.<sup>64</sup>

District President Engelbrecht says that many WELS pastors use other people's work without giving proper credit. If so, then should I continue in fellowship with many religious leaders who deceive? If this is not true, then should I continue in fellowship with a District President who says such things about a whole category of pastors?

Should I continue in fellowship with synod leaders who counsel laymen not to pray with other non-WELS Christians, but then defend WELS pastors who plagiarize the sermons of our theological enemies?

The answer is no. I should not continue in fellowship with the theological blackguards of the WELS, and I am ready to be excommunicated from the WELS over doctrine. However, I am not willing to depart on the terms as set by the St. Peter Church Council: that I have just a different perspective or opinion.

Disregard of important doctrinal issues is another one of the hallmark errors of Pietism. Therefore, I am sending this letter to the WELS Conference of Presidents (COP) in the hope that maybe I do not have to leave the WELS over doctrine. These are important issues, and if I am wrong, then I should be properly instructed so that I can be convinced by God's Word. I cannot continue on year after year believing that my pastors are false teachers.

My strongest desire is not to leave the WELS, rather I more strongly desire that these doctrinal conflicts would be resolved with unanimous agreement. To that end, there needs to be discussion, and that is one of the primary purposes of these letters. (Papering over important doctrinal disagreements is unionism, another false doctrine).

1. Is it the WELS doctrine that Christians can choose to believe God's Word?

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<sup>63</sup> The means of grace are God's word and the Sacraments.

<sup>64</sup> In March 2010, I attempted to attend Pastor Skorzewski's seminar, "Be Relevant," at the Northern Wisconsin District Workshop for Congregations, but was turned away because there was not enough overflow capacity. In 2009, Pastor Skorzewski made the same presentation at Fox Valley Lutheran High School. (Workshop for Congregations Northern Wisconsin District).

2. Is it the WELS doctrine that from our perspective God needs our service?
3. Is it the WELS doctrine that the sin of plagiarism is not a sin?

If the answer to any of the above questions is "no," then would the Conference of Presidents be able to offer any guidance to the people involved? If I am not wrong, then my pastors need someone who can show them the light, and help them to avoid the stricter judgment reserved for false teachers. (James 3:1, Luke 17:1-5, and 1 Corinthians 3:10-21).

If the WELS Conference of Presidents answers "yes" to any of these questions, please have some kind person explain the doctrine to me in a way that I can understand. If I am wrong, then I will be wrong. I have no personal stake in being infallible, and neither should any other Christian.<sup>65</sup> Further, it is not my desire to leave the WELS without serious effort to at least understand these positions, even if I am unable to agree.

I cannot simply choose to believe that which I actually believe is false. I must be shown the truth in the light of plain reason or the Scriptures. This points to the fifth consequence of post conversion Decision Theology: There has been very little (virtually no) effort put into showing me the "light." I have been simply expected to choose to believe the St. Peter & The CORE doctrine. And if praise songs, popcorn, and big screen TVs are not enough positive motivation, then other negative motivators are applied. The goal is not to reveal the light of truth, but to motivate a choice.

As I told the Church Council, we can choose our opinions, but we cannot choose our facts. Therefore, we cannot choose our beliefs about facts, and Christianity is a fact-based religion. Whether Jesus rose from the dead, is a factual question. Whether faith is 100% the gift of God, is a factual question. What God's Word says, is a factual question.<sup>66</sup>

Nonetheless, the Church Council continued to maintain that it was all a matter of opinion. However, I do not care what anyone thinks the truth should be, but rather I care what the truth is.

Finally, this pretense within the WELS that we all agree on doctrine must end. It is a lie. It is the worst sort of lie because it is a betrayal of the Word of God. When Judas opposed the Word of God, he pretended that all was well with a kiss. This lie that we all agree on doctrine is a "Judas kiss" because it simultaneously betrays the clear Word of God and pretends that all is well. (Luke 22:48).

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<sup>65</sup> God expects us to struggle with his Word. (See Genesis 32:24-30).

<sup>66</sup> Reality is not subject to choice, therefore, belief in facts is also not subject to choice. Since we don't choose reality, we also don't choose our beliefs about reality (unless we are self-deceivers and delusional). If we are self-deceivers, then we can choose a factual belief because lies can be manufactured, however, the truth is outside ourselves and is not subject to any choice. Therefore, belief in the truth must come from only outside ourselves.

Should we forget our doctrinal differences, and pretend that it is just a matter of opinion? No. Jesus Christ is the Word of God factually incarnate: He is the true doctrine, and we must be faithful to him. (John 1:1). At the end of the November 2009 letter, I asked Circuit Pastor Suhr, District President Engelbrecht, and Synod President Schroeder for help and protection. That was not the best request because what happens to me is unimportant. What really matters is the true gospel of Jesus Christ.

Thank you.

Sincerely,  
Frederick 'Rick' Techlin Jr.  
x22sun-church@yahoo.com

"Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord." (Psalm 130).  
*Kyrie elesion!*  
*Christe elesion!*  
*Kyrie eleison!*