



Dear Parish Family,

The Formula of Concord, issued in the 1570's, is the last of the confessional writings of the Book of Concord. It is divided into two sections, the Epitome and the Solid Declaration.

In the introduction to the Solid Declaration, as well as in the introduction to the Epitome, is a statement on the source of authority for the teachings of the Christian Church. The Solid Declaration makes several points.

1. The Scriptures are "...the one true guiding principle, according to which all teachers and teaching are to be judged and evaluated."
2. From ancient times true teaching has been summarized according to the Word of God in short articles against heretics (those who hold beliefs counter to the Christian confession). The Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds are orthodox summaries and confessions of the faith according to God's Word that refute the heresies of ancient times.
3. The Augsburg Confession refutes the heresies of the time of the Reformation. Subscription to the Augsburg Confession should not be based on the fact that it was produced by evangelical theologians, but because it is based on the Word of God.
4. The Apology of the Augsburg Confession, written by Philip Melanchthon, provides a more complete defense of the Augsburg Confession, which Melanchthon also wrote.
5. The Smalcald Articles, written by Luther, are subscribed to and conform to God's Word.
6. The Small and Large Catechisms, written by Luther for the people, are subscribed to and acknowledged as conforming to God's Word.

The creeds and confessions are all solidly based on the Holy Scriptures and teach faithfully according to them. With reference to Luther's own words in the preface to his works issued in 1545, the Solid Declaration comments, "There he (Luther) expressly made the distinction that God's Word alone ought to be and remain the only guiding principle and rule of all the teaching and that no person's writing can be put on a par with it, but that everything must be totally subject to God's Word."

The authority by which all teaching in the Church is judged is the Holy Scriptures. Creeds

and confessions are accepted as they conform to the teaching of Scriptures and are not competing authorities that contradict the Scriptures.

The creeds and confessions are not private interpretations of the Scriptures but public explanations of the Church and the Church's teaching. The Formula of Concord emphasizes that the confessions are the public interpretation of the Scriptures by the Church. In the introduction of the Solid Declaration, Luther is cited as stating that the shepherds of the Church are to defend and teach the true faith.

Today's controversies within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America are not primarily about sexual ethics, but about the authority of the Scriptures and their interpretation in the creeds and confessions. This authority has been pre-empted by new and strange methods of interpretation (e.g. Jesus Seminar) and by appeal to other sources of authority, especially contemporary experience.

A new confessing movement has come into being to work for Lutheran orthodoxy in our ELCA. (Orthodoxy means loyalty to the Church's teachings, literally "right praise"). Joining the movement does not mean leaving the ELCA. We as a congregation shall consider becoming a member at the annual meeting.

Several events are scheduled to provide an opportunity to talk in detail about the confessing movement. The schedule of these events is listed here on this page. Choose two Sunday classes or one of two events during the weekdays. On January 29 during the Sunday School hour, a final question and answer session will be held.

We hope that you will attend one of the classes provided. Much is at stake in our ELCA. We wish to be faithful to the Evangelical Lutheran Confession.

In Christ

In Christ,

Pastor Mike & Pastor Mandy