

This paper was prepared by Pastor Guntars Baikovs in response to the Underdale-Glandore Church Council unanimous decision from 27th of February, 2024:

“That the working group examine the theological and practical implications of

- a) remaining with the LCA, and**
- b) leaving the LCA.”**

Way Forward: to walk or not to walk?

Theological implications of remaining with the LCA, or leaving the LCA.

[Version 2024-04.]

Prayer: May the Lord Jesus Christ help us that our attitudes are grace filled, may our judgments be accurate and our suggestions be acceptable in God's sight! Amen.

Content:

In this paper we will answer the following questions:

[1] Why does the LCA exist?

[2] Does the LCA live according to her Confession and Objects?

[3] How can we remain faithful to our Confession and to our Objects?

[a] How does the Bible instruct us for situations like this?

[b] How does the Book of Concord instruct us for situations like this?

[c] How does the Thesis of Agreement instruct us for situations like this?

[4] What are theological implications if a congregation keeps “walking together” with the LCA?

[a] For her Confession.

[b] For her Objects.

[5] What are theological implications if a congregation remains faithful to her Confession and Object and doesn't follow the LCA?

[a] For her Confession.

[b] For her Objects.

[6] How can we use God given gifts and opportunities most fruitfully in service to others?

[a] Serving the world.

[b] Serving brothers and sisters in the LCA.

[c] Serving Confessional Lutheranism worldwide and the Church Universal.

[7] What now?

References to the Holy Scripture

[1] Why does the LCA exist?

During the dialogue between the UELCA and the ELCA in 1949 it was agreed:

“That for church fellowship the uniting Churches must be one in the acceptance of the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as the inspired Word of God and as the only and true source, norm, rule, and standard of all teaching and practice in the Christian Church.”
(TA I. Principles governing church fellowship).

Later this agreement was included in the LCA Constitution as Article 2:

ARTICLE 2. CONFESSION

2.1 The Church accepts without reservation the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as a whole and in all their parts, as the divinely inspired, written and inerrant Word of God, and as the only infallible source and norm for all matters of faith, doctrine and life.

2.2 The Church acknowledges and accepts as true expositions of the Word of God and as its own confession all the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church contained in the Book of Concord of 1580, namely, the three Ecumenical Creeds: the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed and the Athanasian Creed; the Unaltered Augsburg Confession; the Apology of the Augsburg Confession; the Smalcald Articles; the Small Catechism of Luther; the Large Catechism of Luther; and the Formula of Concord.

Further the LCA Constitution also defines the Objects/Purposes of the LCA as they are spelled out in Article 3 beginning with:

“3.1.1 [The Objects of the Church are] to fulfil the mission of the Christian Church in the world by proclaiming the Word of God and administering the Sacraments in accordance with the Confession of the Church laid down in the preceding Article 2.”

[We will read and examine other Objects later in this paper.]

A former president of the LCA Dr Mike Semmler used to remind that the LCA is a synod, which means “**walking together**”.

As such the LCA consists of member-congregations that have voluntarily decided to “walk together” united by common Confession (Article 2) and shared understanding of our Objects (Article 3), and who likewise are free to decide to walk separately if the synod abandons its Confession or neglects its Objects.¹

¹ The LCA Constitution 4.1.4., 4.2., 6.2.

[2] Does the LCA live according to her Confession and Objects?

Do we still “walk together”? Do we still have the same common Confession as the foundation for our unity, do we still work for the same Objects?

Recent developments in the LCA are very concerning.²

We have rejected Biblical authority.

For decades future pastors of the LCA were taught the so called “historical-critical method” of Biblical interpretation, which approaches the Bible as any other book, not as we confess in the Article 2 as “the divinely inspired, written and inerrant Word of God, and as the only infallible source and norm for all matters of faith, doctrine and life.” The same “critical” attitude towards the Scripture has been popularized via LCA publications.³

As a result, some pastors have gone as far as advising faithful members of their congregations not to take the Bible that seriously. How many times in recent synodical debates Biblical teaching have been called unjust, unfair, discriminatory, not fitting for our times, as pastors and laypeople alike declared that they are ashamed of Biblical teaching.

We have replaced the Word of God with other authorities. For decades the teaching of theistic evolution has been tolerated in the LCA. Recently another aspect of the doctrine of creation has been challenged in the LCA. Many people and institution within the LCA have rejected Biblical teaching about human beings, about God’s design and ordering for marriage and family, about sexuality, and instead embraced worldly ideologies endorsing things like *de facto* marriage, same-sex marriage, gender fluidity, and easy divorce.

We doubt Biblical clarity.

For years the LCA Bishops and pastors have advanced the idea that the Bible is not clear enough. Recently writing to the NSW and ACT District Convention Bishop Paul Smith chose to begin one of his papers with a reference to the Theses of Agreement I, 4c. He emphasized that “in our Lutheran Church, we *teach* that some things in the Scriptures are “hard to understand” or that they are not “clear”.⁴

This is not a new idea, during the 16th century Reformation debates the Roman Church emphasised that “the Bible is not clear” and there are things that are “hard to understand”. Lutheran Reformers, trusting the Word of God, took a different position:

“We have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention **as to a lamp shining in a dark place**, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.” (2 Pet 1:19)

“We confess our adherence to the prophetic and apostolic writings of the Old and New Testaments, as to the pure, clear fountain of Israel, which alone is the one true guiding principle, according to which all teachers and teachings are to be judged and evaluated” (SD, Rule and Guiding Principle, 3).

² Read here: <https://pastorsblog.com.au/2023/10/29/the-lca-where-are-we-and-where-are-we-going/>

³ E.g., Andrew Jaensch with his article on critical approach to the Bible in “The Lutheran” 2014.

⁴ https://drive.google.com/file/d/1txYS_ECi6mUkK6AiCL_-6yw7uPAdkVNq/view?usp=drive_link (see page 5.) Please, read TA I in its entirety to see what they do emphasize about the Scripture and what is the role of TA I, 4c.

It appears we are back to square one. But how can then the Bible be the only infallible source and norm for all matters of faith, doctrine and life if it is not clear?

We have abandoned the Word of God as the foundation for our doctrine and life.

If the Bible is not clear, it cannot be the source and norm for anything. Thus, Bishop John Henderson stated before the synod in 2021 that we cannot decide the question of ordination by studying the Scriptures (p 55, Synodical Book of Reports). When 5 times we did not change the Church's teaching after looking in the Scriptures, our leaders decided to ignore the Scriptures and to introduce the ordination of women by administrative means (as has every other church that has done this).

When the ALC published its strategic vision "Towards 2028, it didn't even mention words like "Bible" or "Scripture" or "pastors", but set to "promoting and developing ... Indigenous theologies, gender and theology, changing culture (responding to the royal commission), climate change and sustainability," (ALC Towards 2028, p 11).⁵

Last year Lutheran Education SA, NT & WA prepared a policy for respecting and valuing gender diversity, but refused to include in that policy any reference to Biblical teaching on marriage and sexuality. Lutheran Care also goes with times and encourages adoption by same sex couples: "Couples living together or married, including same sex couples, can all apply to become carers."⁶

The LCA motto "Where Love Comes to Life" is used to promote another gospel of inclusivity and acceptance, with no recognition of our sinfulness, with no need for repentance and no need for forgiveness. The list goes on and on.⁷

Our leaders lead us astray.

One of the main responsibilities of Bishops is to "exercise oversight over the doctrine and practice of all pastors and congregations of the Church", so that it is in accordance with our Confession. However, it is our Bishops and members of the General Church Board who are in the forefront of advocating and working to change our church's doctrine and practice.

For example, the LCA national Bishop Rev Paul Smith announced to the Synod in Melbourne that his wife very much wants to be a Lutheran pastor and studies towards that end, and was wondering whether that would be a conflict of interest for him. A congregation, where first assisting Bishop Rev Neville Otto serves as pastor, put forward a proposal to change the founding document of the LCA, The Theses of Agreement, so that only we could introduce women's ordination. Another Bishop Rev Mark Vainikka promoted a proposal from QLD District to introduce women's ordination without any scriptural foundation. A member of the General Church Board Mr Mel Zerner stated before the Synod that the LCA cannot keep waiting for pastors to come up with a Scriptural solution to the ordination question, so it is time for laypeople to take the lead.

Disheartening evidence of our departure from our Confession goes on and on.

⁵ <https://alc.edu.au/assets/about/ALC-Towards-2028.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.lutherancare.org.au/who-can-foster-faq/>

⁷ Read: <https://pastorsblog.com.au/2023/10/29/the-lca-where-are-we-and-where-are-we-going/>

But, perhaps, we are still working together for the same Objects?⁸

Let's examine them briefly.

The Objects of the Church:	What really is happening?
3.1.1 fulfil the mission of the Christian Church in the world by proclaiming the Word of God and administering the Sacraments in accordance with the Confession of the Church laid down in the preceding Article 2;	<p>As noted above, many among our Bishops, pastors and members of congregations hold to and even openly confess different Confessions.</p> <p>If we confess different Confessions, we cannot be working on the same Objects, for we will understand them differently.</p>
3.1.2 unite in one body Evangelical Lutheran congregations in Australia and New Zealand for the more effective work of the Church;	<p>We are legally united in one institution, the LCA. Unfortunately, many of our Objects will differ because our Confessions differ.</p>
3.1.3 promote and maintain true Christian unity in the bond of peace;	<p>True Christian unity is found in shared Confession, when we trust the Bible as the Word of God, and the teachings of the Book of Concord as true exposition of the Word of God, not in trying to keep everyone under one institution, regardless of what they believe or practice. That is what the Roman Catholic Church tried in 16th century.</p> <p>Without striving for true Christian unity all the rhetoric about unity exposes either ignorance or manipulation.</p>
3.1.4 ensure that preaching, teaching and practice in the Church are in conformity with the Confession of the Church;	<p>Primarily this would be done through pastoral training in the ALC; however, those faculty members who were teaching in conformity with the Confession of the Church had their calls suddenly terminated in 2022.</p> <p>Bishops should exercise oversight so that everything happens in conformity with the Confession of the Church. Unfortunately, they are actively working to undermine the LCA Confession.</p> <p>How many cases are known, when false teachers have been disciplined? Instead, we have false teachers from other churches speaking to our members, while pastors spend their time in Pastors' Conferences literally playing games.</p>
3.1.5 provide pastors and teachers and other church workers for service in the Church and its congregations, and for this purpose to establish and maintain institutions for their training;	<p>As it was mentioned, the ALC strategic vision does not even contain words like "pastors" or "Bible". Those faculty members faithful to the LCA Confession have been either pushed out or marginalized.</p>
3.1.6 encourage every congregation to carry out its mission to its local community;	<p>Different Confessions determine how we understand God's work in the world and our mission as Christian congregations.</p>

⁸ The question is not about whether we are successful in achieving our Objects, but whether we still share the same Objects as defined in the LCA Constitution.

3.1.7 establish, develop and support new congregations where it is not possible for individual congregations to do so;	Different Confessions determine how we understand the Great Commission, means of the Holy Spirit and our mission, and whether we will try to establish new Lutheran Congregations, or coffee shop style support groups. This is why we have “evangelism” methods that focus on human methods of persuasion and attraction, rather than on the power of the Holy Spirit to change hearts and minds through God’s Word.
3.1.8 support and cooperate with selected churches in other lands as they seek to carry out their mission;	Our Confession will determine where we seek fellowship and partnership. The last two national Bishops have favoured the culture-following LWF over the biblically faithful ILC.
3.1.9 dialogue with other Christian church bodies;	Again, our preferred Confession will determine the choice of dialogue partners.
3.1.10 establish and maintain schools and other institutions and to foster all other means whereby the members of the congregations receive Christian education;	Lutheran schools offer good education. They do not provide Lutheran catechetical teaching, they reject Lutheran liturgical tradition, and they reject foundational Biblical teachings. Instead, they embrace worldly ideologies, the latest being rejection of Biblical teaching on humanity, marriage and sexuality.
3.1.11 cultivate uniformity in worship, ecclesiastical practice and customs in accord with the principles laid down in Article X. of the Formula of Concord;	This is not just about external uniformity. Since the first centuries the liturgy was understood as “sung dogma”, meaning that theology and liturgy are like two sides of the same coin. If our theology changes, we will want to change our liturgy, and if our liturgy is changed, that will lead to changes in how we understand the Biblical message. If we observe how different the liturgical practices that we have embraced across the LCA are, it will reveal how different our Confessions really are, as “everyone does what is right in his own eyes.”
3.1.12 publish, procure, and distribute literature compatible with the Confession and principles of the Church;	As with every other aspect of our church life, the publications of our church also reflect different Confessions and different directions. How many have cancelled their subscriptions because they did not want to read “bad theology”?
3.1.13 minister to human need in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord in the spirit of Christian love and service, and to provide institutions and agencies for this purpose; and	Much good has been done in this respect, thanks be to God, even if sometimes at the cost of sacrificing the greatest gift and the highest responsibility that we have, preaching the Good News of Jesus Christ.
3.1.14 maintain and promote a culture of care in all areas of the Church and its activities, so that all people, especially the vulnerable such as children and the	Of course, we want to ensure that the vulnerable are not abused at church. Unfortunately, the whole PSD enterprise has been mostly initiated and designed

aged, are protected against any form of spiritual, emotional, physical and sexual abuse...	<p>following secular authorities rather than building on Biblical wisdom as Article 2 would suggest.</p> <p>It has been used to seriously hurt pastors and members of the LCA, as heated and emotional debates in Synodical Convention 2018 revealed it, not to mention that it effectively “retired” many volunteers because of often unreasonable requirements.</p>
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What story does this tell? A tragic story of falling away. If we have different Confessions, we will inevitably have different Objects. While we still limp together under one banner, in reality different parts of the LCA want to walk in different directions.

Many life-long Lutherans have wonderful and cherished memories of what the LCA used to be, how much good was done in Australia and abroad, so much to be thankful for. Sadly, the reality is that the LCA of their memories is long gone.

One of the main reasons for “walking together” is to cooperate in training future pastors, however, as we already mentioned it above, the institution that could prepare pastors faithful to the LCA Confession doesn’t exist anymore. It is a confronting reality that there are more than dozen young men who would like to study to become Lutheran pastors, but not in the ALC, while the ALC has zero new students this year.

How did we fall this far? Gradually. As little leaven leavens the whole lump; for pastors and bishops have failed to care for the Church of God, we have not rejected false teachings and have not rebuked false teachers among us. They seemed so innocent:

“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in **sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves**. You will recognize them by their fruits.” (Matt 7:15-16)

In this section we just listed some, by no means all, of those fruits.

Who has ears, let them hear!

[3] How can we remain faithful to the LCA Confession and Objects?

We are yoked together in one synodical institution called the LCA while trying to walk into different directions, holding to different Confessions and having different Objects.

Therefore, every member, every congregation, every pastor and every Bishop has to decide, what foundation they want to build on:

“Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.” (Matt 7:24-27)

Everyone needs to decide whether they want to continue to uphold the LCA formal Confession (Article 2) and work of her Objects, or to choose another Confession and Objects. If we want to uphold what we have promised and vowed to uphold at our Confirmations and Ordinations, the next step would be to inquire on how the Scriptures, the Book of Concord and the Theses of Agreement guide and instruct us in situations where false teachers and false teachings are not only tolerated but justified, endorsed and promoted by the highest level of leadership in the church, namely, our Bishops, the General Church Board, the Board of the ALC, etc.⁹

[a] How does the Bible instruct us for situations like this?

It teaches us to strive for unity. Jesus prays to the Father for the unity of the Church “that they may be one, even as we are one” (John 17:11). Paul the apostle instructs us to strive for “the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” and to do it “with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love” (Eph 4:2-3, Phil 2:1-2, 1 Cor 1:10, etc).

It teaches true Christian unity. The Holy Spirit teaches how to attain true unity by remaining in the Word, by listening to our Good Shepherd Jesus, by striving for healthy teaching (John 8:31-32, 10:27-28, 1 Tim 4:13, 16; 2 Tim 3:14-17, etc) so that we are not “tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes” (Eph 4:14).

It praises faithfulness. The apostles give thanks to God for those churches that remain faithful to the teachings of the Lord. They pray for them, and they encourage them to remain steadfast in the truth (Eph 1:15-23; Phil 1:3-6; Col 1:3-9, etc).

It encourages discipline. The apostles also admonish churches to discipline those in their midst who go contrary to the Word and will of God so that they may recognize their error and repent (Rom 16:17; Gal 1:6-9; 3:1-3; 6:1, etc).

It warns against false teachers. Jesus and the apostles repeatedly warn us against the dangers of false teachers and teachings (Matt 7:15-23, 24:24, Acts 20:28-31, 2 Pet 2:1-3, 1 Tim 1:3-7, 1 Tim 6:3-5, 2 Tim 4:1-3, 1 John 4:1-6, etc).

⁹ Read “Annotated Reader on Church Fellowship” here:

<https://pastorsblog.com.au/2024/03/15/annotated-reader-on-church-fellowship/>

It explains the dangers of false teachings. Why is so much attention given to false teachings and false teachers? Because of the spiritual danger they present (2 Thes 2:1–12). Jesus and the apostles compare false teaching with leaven and gangrene that take over and destroy the true faith (Matt 16:5–12, Lk 12:1, Gal 5:7–9, 2 Tim 2:15–19).

It instructs pastors to keep guard. The Spirit instructs pastors to guard the flock of Christ from such danger by rebuking and silencing those who teach otherwise (1 Tim 1:4–5, 2 Tim 2:24, 4:2, Tit 1:9, 11, 13, 2:15, 3:10, etc).

It instructs to avoid false teachers and separate. However, if those who persist in their errors and false teachings do not want to repent and return to the healthy doctrine – even if we are to still regard them as fellow brothers and sisters in Christ – we need to avoid them, have nothing to do with them, do not associate with such, purge them from our midst and stop being unequally yoked (Rom 16:17–18, 1 Cor 5:6–13, 2 Cor 6:14–18, 2 Thes 3:14–15, Tit 3:10–11, etc).

It is also worth noting what the Holy Spirit **never instructs** us to do.

He never instructs us **not to worry** when false teachings and false teachers are not only tolerated but also promoted in our churches. He never instructs us **to keep walking together** and strive for external unity with those who bring in and advocate for false teachings. He never instructs us **to wait** until the “leaven of false teachings” pushes out “the good flour”, or until the “gangrene of false teachings” forces “the healthy members” to leave the body.

[b] How does the Book of Concord instruct us for situations like this?

At the very conclusion of the Book of Concord we find these words, which sum up the instructions and the spirit of the Book of Concord well:

“From this our explanation, friend and foe may clearly deduce that we have no intention of giving up anything of the eternal, unchangeable truth of God (which we also do not have the power to do) for the sake of temporal peace, tranquillity, and outward unity. Such peace and unity, which is intended to contradict the truth and suppress it, would not last. It makes even less sense to whitewash and cover up falsifications of pure teaching and publicly condemned errors. Rather we have a deep yearning and desire for true unity and on our part have set our hearts and desires on promoting this kind of unity to our utmost ability. This unity keeps God’s honour intact, does not abandon the divine truth of the holy gospel, and concedes nothing to the slightest error. Instead, it leads poor sinners to true, proper repentance, raises them up through faith, strengthens them in new obedience, and thus justifies and saves them eternally, solely through the merit of Christ.” (FC SD XI, 95– 96)

[c] How do the Theses of Agreement instruct us for situations like this?

The Theses of Agreement of the LCA instruct us in harmony with the Bible and the Book of Concord.

What do they say about true unity?

“**The outward unity of the Church** as “the fellowship of outward ties and rites” **must rest upon** the same basis on which the spiritual unity of true believers rests and depends, viz. upon the marks of the One Church: **the pure teaching of the Gospel and the right administration of the Sacraments.** **Where there is truth, there is unity.**” (TA, V, 21).

“According to the Word of God and our Lutheran Confessions, **church fellowship**, that is, mutual recognition as brethren, altar and pulpit fellowship and resultant cooperation in the preaching of the Gospel and in the right administration of the Sacraments **presupposes unanimity in the pure doctrine of the Gospel and in the right administration of the Sacraments.**” (TA, V, 26-28)

“With these theses **we reject** the following errors: **to base church union on human thoughts and formulas of compromise and not on the unity in the true doctrine of the Gospel.**” (TA, V, 24, iv)

How are we instructed to act?

“We believe that it is a solemn obligation of the Church to teach the whole counsel of God, rightly dividing the Word of Truth, feeding milk or meat as the case may demand, but never compromising the truth of Scripture, **never permitting reason or feeling to undermine the authority of the Word, or substituting for it any form of subjectivism.**” (TA, I, 6).

“According to the revealed will and command of God, all believers are directed to that visible Church, which teaches the Word of God in its truth and purity and administers the Sacraments according to the institution of their Founder. Conversely, **they are directed to avoid all erring and heterodox churches.**” (TA, Joint Prayer and Worship No. 4). (TA, V, 15)

“We believe that where differences in teaching and practice exist or arise between Churches uniting, these differences are to be removed by willingly submitting to the authority of the Word of God. Where a difference in teaching or practice is a departure from the doctrine of the Bible, such difference cannot be tolerated, but must be pointed out as an error, on the basis of clear passages of Holy Writ; **and if the error is persisted in, in spite of instruction, warning, and earnest witness, it must at last lead to a separation.**” (Theses of Agreement, I, 4a)

It is advisable to read Theses I, II and V in their entirety, not only these excerpts to see how carefully and clearly articulated they are.¹⁰

Summarizing.

We are to strive for true unity. We are to treat even those who err as our fellow saints, we are to pray for them, to correct and rebuke them, to call them to repentance, pastors are to guard Christ's flock from such influences, but if those who err and bring in false teachings persist, we have to avoid them and eventually that needs to lead to separation.

¹⁰ You can find all the Theses of Agreement here: <https://www.lca.org.au/departments/commissions/cticr/>

[4] What are theological implications if a congregation keeps “walking together” with the LCA?

[a] For her Confession.

If we choose to continue walking together with those who want to hold to different Confession and to work for different Objects, then:

- We ignore Biblical warnings and instructions. How could we claim that we uphold true confession and, more seriously, how could we hope for God’s blessings?
- We ignore warnings and instructions from the Book of Concord and the Theses of Agreement.
- Voluntarily remaining associated with the LCA we keep supporting and endorsing – directly and indirectly – different Confession and Objects.
- We send an unspoken message to others outside the LCA that we are supportive of the direction where the LCA leadership is taking us.

At the same time, we **DO NOT**:

- Live out and practice what we say we believe.
- Support the continuation of the LCA formal Confession. Instead with our passivity we will be contributing to its gradual subversion and change.

[b] For her Objects.

Let’s briefly examine what it would mean for the Objects of any LCA congregation.

The Objects of the Congregation are	How would it work?
4.1.1 glorify the Triune God in its worship and in its work;	How can we do this if we do not listen to God’s warnings and instructions, closing our eyes to what is happening in the LCA, walking together with others who hold and promote different Confession and work for different Objects?
4.1.2 bear witness to the Lord Jesus Christ through the proclamation of the Gospel in accordance with the Confession and practice of the Church;	How can we bear witness through the proclamation of the Gospel in accordance with the Confession and practice of the Church, if we keep walking together with others who proclaim different Gospel and tolerate and endorse practices that are contrary to the Word of God? It sounds like we are saying: “Listen to my words, do not look at my works!”
4.1.3 gather into the Congregation such persons as are, or desire to become, members of the Church for their edification through the Word and the Sacraments;	May God bless these efforts! But how are we going to explain and justify our divided allegiances, our walking together for the sake of convenience with those who believe and practice differently?
4.1.4 help the members to dedicate their God-given spiritual, material and physical gifts to the service of their Lord;	Would this still include dedicating those gifts to the work of the LCA, where they at least partly

	will be used to advance further departure from our Confession and work against our Objects?
4.1.5 enable the members to reach out into the community in their daily lives and in their congregational activities as bearers of the Gospel;	May the Lord help us with this!
4.1.6 exercise discipline over the members in conformity with the Scriptures and the Confession of the Congregation;	How difficult it is to exercise discipline when there is no conformity with the Scriptures across the church. "Yes, but others do this. Yes, but others allow that!"
4.1.7 join with the Church and the District in building and extending the Kingdom of God; and	How would that happen? How will we join? Which activities will we support, and which not? How will we determine that?
4.1.8 acquire, dispose of or otherwise deal with real and personal property in the interest of the work of the Church and the Congregation.	What is the work of the Church? The one written in the LCA Constitution, or the one we witnessed carried out in reality?

It would be challenging, to say the least, to strive to faithfully uphold the Confession and Objects of any LCA congregation if we keep walking together with the LCA in her current direction. How will pastors and congregational leaders work with church leaders who undermine our Confession and actively work for different objects?

Moreover, what about future pastors? The ALC faculty members faithful to the LCA Confession have been pushed out or marginalized, the ALC strategic vision emphasises secular ideologies, and even the ALC buildings in North Adelaide are up for sale. What Christian friends will we have here in Australia and abroad? Those Lutheran churches that belong to the International Lutheran Council already have been vocal that they are very concerned seeing the LCA walk the direction she does.

Please, consider this situation from another perspective!

Would we agree to walk together with a group of Christians who do not want to uphold Biblical authority, or uphold it selectively, who tolerate or even promote teachings and practices that are contrary to the Biblical teaching? If the answer is "no", then why would we remain members of such an organization?

We need to remember that following Jesus faithfully always involves taking up our crosses:

"If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me... And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me... For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?" (Matt 16:24-26, Matt 10:38)

[5] What are theological implications if a congregation remains faithful to her Confession and Objects and doesn't follow the LCA?

[a] For her Confession.

We remain faithful to our Confession. It is not possible to completely eliminate false teachings from the Church and we will continue to battle against them until Christ returns. Nevertheless, we will be free from the “leaven and gangrene” of false teachings and practices which are tolerated, endorsed or even institutionalized in the LCA, we will not be under the leaderships and direct influence of those who have chosen different Confessions and actively pursue different Objects. We will be free to choose to “walk together” with Christians, congregation, churches, who share the same Confession.

“For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.” (Gal 5:1)

[b] For her Objects.

We can work on the Objects of our congregation with good conscience, giving clear witness about what we truly believe and what is important for us. We won't need to worry how our resources are used. We won't be funding or participating in activities that are questionable to say the least. We will also be able to choose to “walk together” with other Christians, congregations and churches, who share the same Confession, with the goal to work together for the Objects of our congregation.

[6] How can we use God given gifts and opportunities most fruitfully in service to others?

Every congregation needs to ask this question as we strive to remain faithful to our Confession and to be good stewards of God's gifts.

[a] Serving the world.

In the midst of comfortable and lukewarm cultural Christianity we could bear witness that we value the Gospel of Jesus Christ higher than our comfort or external peace, just as our forebearers did both in 16th and in 19th centuries.

We would send a message that there are Lutheran congregations that strives to remain faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ, even if that means paying the price for their faithfulness. What can be more attractive than Christians who take their faith seriously and confess it boldly in words and actions.

[b] Serving our brothers and sisters in the LCA.

Example. Such example may awaken our fellow saints, those whom we love, to the seriousness of our situation, their faith may be purified, their resolve strengthened, their souls may be saved from the spell of false teachings (James 5:19-20).

Encouragement. Similarly, such congregation would serve as an encouragement to others in the LCA that the spirit that values the faithfulness to the Triune God and our Confession higher than external peace and material comfort and security is still alive in the Lutheran Church in Australia.

Refuge. Furthermore, such congregation may offer a refuge to those brothers and sisters who already have left the LCA keeping with Biblical instructions, and to those who are marginalized in their LCA congregations for wanting to remain faithful to the formal Confession of the LCA, and to those who will become increasingly aware of where the LCA is heading under her current leadership as time goes.

Pioneers. Such faithful congregation may also pioneer very practically what actions and steps may be taken by those who want to remain faithful to our current formal Confession and Objects. And sometimes all we need is an encouraging example to remind us to stand steadfast for what is good and true and beautiful.

[c] Serving Confessional Lutheranism worldwide and the Church Universal.

Brothers and sisters in confessional Lutheran churches around the world pray for us, member-churches of the International Lutheran Council pray for us, people we have never met pray for us. For they recognize the value of the beautiful Gospel that Lutheran Reformation gave to the Church, and they are saddened to watch the tragic downward trajectory of the LCA and are praying for God's grace that the Confessional Lutheran teaching could continue to bless Australia.

They want to encourage us, they want to support us, they want to partner with us in glorifying the Triune God through the proclamation of the Gospel in conformity with our Confession in Australia and surrounding regions.

Christians and congregations who will remain faithful to the LCA formal Confession and Objects may be the stump, the holy seed (Is 6:13) that the Lord of the Church preserves to continue to bless Australia.

They may be a humble beginning for a new group of faithful Lutherans “walking together” rejoicing in the same Confession, working for the same Objects, labouring to establish a new Seminary, committing themselves to the grace of the Lord and trusting in His provision and guidance. For the Lord sees differently, He does not value the numbers, He values faithfulness (Deut. 7:7, Judges 7). As the saying goes: “Big things have small beginnings.”

[7] What now?

The Holy Spirit warns us that “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?” (Jer 17:9) This is true more than we realize. Psychologists have long observed that there are many biases that we are unaware of. These biases distort our perception and our decision-making.

For example, “Emotional Bias” makes us reluctant to accept hard facts that are unpleasant and place us before tough decisions. “Status Quo Bias” tells that we tend to cling to our current state of affairs, whatever hopeless it may be, preferring what is familiar and fearing the unknown. “Group Think Bias” explains how our desire to avoid real or imaginary confrontations leads us to quietly conform to what others think.

Which simply means that according to our fallen nature, we struggle to listen and do what the Word of God and our confessional documents instruct us, instead, we tend to close our eyes to difficult situations, we don’t lean towards the most faithful and rational decisions, but rather towards those that help us to retain status quo and to avoid being perceived as differing from our group. We all are subject to these biases and many others. In many ways we are like “the sheep” and “the wolves” count on it and use it for their purposes.

Now, we may feel guilty reading this paper for not having done more earlier. We may feel upset for being forced to face such a challenging choice. We may feel anxious as our imagination draws scary pictures of what may happen if we strive to live out our Confession. We may worry what others may think or say. We may be fearful about what crosses we may need to pick up, if we want to remain faithful.

The author of this paper certainly can relate to all of these and more. Whatever happens, it probably won’t change much in the life of church members, but there is everything at stake for pastors. It is not easy to listen to the Lord’s voice, when you are scared about the future of your family. But what is the alternative?

The Good News is that our Lord Jesus Christ knows all of this, this is why He speaks to us:

“I know exactly how you feel, blessed are you when others speak all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Cast all your anxieties on me, and all the pressures and guilt and shame and concerns, for I do care for you. Come to me and I will give you rest! Do not worry too much, I will remain faithful even when you fail me. I will never leave you nor forsake you. I am with you till the end of this age. I will walk with you, I will shelter you, I will bless you as I have blessed every one of my servants, and I will make you a blessing to many. Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”¹¹

What now?

There are defining moments in the life of every Christians. This is one of those. When you consider which direction to go, choose wisely where to place your trust:

“Put not your trust in princes [or pastors or Bishops or institutions] in whom there is no salvation. Blessed is he whose hope is in the Lord his God, who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, who keeps faith forever.” (Psalm 146:3-6)

¹¹ Mt 5:11, 1 Pet 5:7, Lk 12:32, Mt 28:20, Heb 13:5-6, Mt 11:28, Gen 12:1-3, 2 Tim 2:13.

Do you want to remain faithful to your faithful Lord Jesus? Do you want to keep your congregation as it is with your current Confession and Objects, instead of being transformed in the likeness of the world? Do you want to pray and work for and support the future of the Confessional Lutheran Church in Australia? Do you want to help raise a new generation of faithful Lutheran pastors? Do you want your giving to support the Gospel of grace and not some worldly ideologies? Do you like to partner with confessional Lutheran brothers and sisters in Australia and abroad in true Christian unity?

I pray that the answer is “yes, by God’s grace”.

Then, let’s pray for God’s guidance.

“Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.” (James 1:22)

First, know that you are not alone.

There are many faithful Lutheran Christians just like you. Perhaps more than we hope for.

Discuss these matters with like-minded brothers and sisters in Christ, with like-minded pastors, discuss this with your members, discuss this with your pastors, discuss this in your congregations, do not let other intimidate you into silence. “Indeed, none who wait for you shall be put to shame; they shall be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous.” (Psalm 25:3)

Liaise with other congregations who want to remain faithful to the Confession and the Objects of the LCA, and see what our Lord Jesus Christ can do through us if we want to remain faithful. And let’s remember the words which we have heard so many times:

“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.” (Psalm 23:4)

Soli Deo Gloria!

References to the Holy Scriptures

Genesis 12:1-3 “Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. ² And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

Deuteronomy. 7:7 “It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples.”

Isaiah 6:13 “And though a tenth remain in it, it will be burned again, like a terebinth or an oak, whose stump remains when it is felled.” The holy seed is its stump.”

Jeremiah 17:9 “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?”

Matt 5:11 “Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.”

Matt 7:15-23 “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. ¹⁶ You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷ So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ Thus you will recognize them by their fruits. ²¹ “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²² On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ ²³ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.”

Matt 7:24-27 “Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵ And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. ²⁶ And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. ²⁷ And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.”

Matt 10:38 “And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.”

Mt 11:28 “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

Matt 16:5–12 “When the disciples reached the other side, they had forgotten to bring any bread. ⁶ Jesus said to them, “Watch and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” ⁷ And they began discussing it among themselves, saying, “We brought no bread.” ⁸ But Jesus, aware of this, said, “O you of little faith, why are you discussing among yourselves the fact that you have no bread? ⁹ Do you not yet perceive? Do you not remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many baskets you gathered? ¹⁰ Or the seven loaves for the four thousand, and how many baskets you gathered? ¹¹ How is it that you fail to understand that I did not speak about bread? Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” ¹² Then they understood that he did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”

Matt 16:24-26 “Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ²⁵ For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. ²⁶ For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?”

Matt 24:24 “For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect.”

Mt 28:20 “And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Lk 12:1 “In the meantime, when so many thousands of the people had gathered together that they were trampling one another, he began to say to his disciples first, “Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.”

Lk 12:32 “Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”

John 8:31-32 “So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, ³² and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

John 10:27-28 “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.”

Acts 18:9-10 “And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, “Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people.”

Acts 20:28-31 “Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. ²⁹ I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; ³⁰ and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. ³¹ Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears.”

Rom 16:17–18 “I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them. ¹⁸ For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naïve.”

1 Cor 5:6–13 “Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? ⁷ Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. ⁸ Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. ⁹ I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people— ¹⁰ not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. ¹¹ But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one. ¹² For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? ¹³ God judges those outside. “Purge the evil person from among you.”

2 Cor 6:14–18 “Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? ¹⁵ What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? ¹⁶ What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, “I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you, ¹⁸ and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty.” 1 Cor 1:10: “I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment.”

Gal 1:6-9 “I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— ⁷ not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. ⁸ But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. ⁹ As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.”

Gal 3:1-3 “O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified. ² Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? ³ Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?”

Gal 5:1 “For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.”

Gal 5:7-9 “You were running well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? ⁸ This persuasion is not from him who calls you. ⁹ A little leaven leavens the whole lump.”

Gal 6:1 “Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.”

Eph 1:15-23 “For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, ¹⁶ I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, ¹⁷ that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, ¹⁸ having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹ and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might ²⁰ that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹ far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. ²² And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.”

Eph 4:2-3 “With all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³ eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

Eph 4:14 “So that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.”

Phil 1:3-6 “I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, ⁴ always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, ⁵ because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. ⁶ And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.”

Phil 2:1-2 “So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, ² complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.”

Col 1:3-9 “We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, ⁴ since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, ⁵ because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel, ⁶ which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing—as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth, ⁷ just as you learned it from Epaphras our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf ⁸ and has made known to us your love in the Spirit. ⁹ And so, from the day we heard, we have not

ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding.”

2 Thes 2:1–12 “Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we ask you, brothers, ² not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. ³ Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, ⁴ who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God. ⁵ Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? ⁶ And you know what is restraining him now so that he may be revealed in his time. ⁷ For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. Only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way. ⁸ And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming. ⁹ The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, ¹⁰ and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. ¹¹ Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false, ¹² in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”

2 Thes 3:14–15 “As for you, brothers, do not grow weary in doing good. ¹⁴ If anyone does not obey what we say in this letter, take note of that person, and have nothing to do with him, that he may be ashamed. ¹⁵ Do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother.”

1 Tim 1:3–7 “As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, ⁴ nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith. ⁵ The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. ⁶ Certain persons, by swerving from these, have wandered away into vain discussion, ⁷ desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make confident assertions.”

1 Tim 4:13, 16 “Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching. Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.”

1 Tim 6:3–5 “If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, ⁴ he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, ⁵ and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain.”

2 Tim 2:15–19 “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth. ¹⁶ But avoid irreverent babble, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness, ¹⁷ and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, ¹⁸ who have swerved from the truth, saying that the resurrection has already happened. They are upsetting the faith of some. ¹⁹ But God’s firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: “The Lord knows those who are his,” and, “Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity.”

2 Tim 2:13 “If we are faithless, he remains faithful.”

2 Tim 2:24 “And the Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil.”

2 Tim 3:14-17 “But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it ¹⁵ and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”

2 Tim 4:1-3 “I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: ² preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. ³ For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions.”

Tit 1:9, 11, 13 “He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it. ¹¹ They must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach. ¹³ This testimony is true. Therefore, rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith.”

Tit 2:15 “Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you.”

Tit 3:10-11 “As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him, ¹¹ knowing that such a person is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.”

Heb 13:5-6 “Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” ⁶ So we can confidently say, “The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?”

1 Pet 5:7 “Casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.”

2 Pet 1:19 “We have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.”

2 Pet 2:1-3 “But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. ² And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed. ³ And in their greed they will exploit you with false words. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.”

James 5:19-20 “My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, ²⁰ let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.”

1 John 4:1-6 “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. ² By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, ³ and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already. ⁴ Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. ⁵ They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. ⁶ We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.”

