

Resolution of the Wyoming District Fall Pastors' Conference, Casper, WY, 2-4 October 2017

Concerning the recent Concordia Journal article, "The Age of the Earth and Confessional Lutheranism," by Dr. John Jurchen (Summer 2017, Volume 43, Number 3, pages 64-74).

WHEREAS the pastors of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod are bound to Scripture in order "to give instruction in sound doctrine, and also to rebuke those who contradict it" (Titus 1:0), as also articulated in Romans 16:17, Ephesians 4:11-16, Titus 2:1, and 1 Timothy 4:6; and

WHEREAS serious concern has arisen among the pastors of the Wyoming District following the recent publication of the Concordia Journal article, "The Age of the Earth and Confessional Lutheranism," by Dr. John Jurchen (Summer 2017, Volume 43, Number 3, pages 64-74), as published by Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, in conjunction with Concordia University Nebraska, Seward, Nebraska; and

WHEREAS the Scriptures do not allow for old-earth creationism, including interpreting the word "day" (yom) in Genesis, chapters 1 and 2, as an extended period of days or years or as anything but the twenty-four hour day as is experienced (Genesis 1:5, 14; Exodus 20:8); and

WHEREAS The Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod ("Of Creation," 5, 1932) rejects that the world came into being "in immense periods of time"; and

WHEREAS Dr. John Jurchen, associate professor of chemistry at Concordia University, Nebraska, asserts in Concordia Journal, Volume 43, Number 3, pages 70-71, "As long as parishioners are able to accept the historicity of Adam and Eve, the corrupting influence of sin, and the gospel of salvation, they can expand the days of the creation week to encompass unspecified periods," and page 71, "Adherents [of Old Earth Creationism] can accept the standard, secular interpretation of the geological record while still holding to an exegetically credible six-day (yom) creation, the fall of an historical Adam and Eve, and redemption through Jesus Christ." and page 73, "[W]e must not present the appearance that the age of the earth is a 'litmus test' for orthodoxy"; and

WHEREAS these words of Dr. Jurchen contradict the Holy Scriptures, deny their clarity, and are not to be tolerated in the Church of God, much less excused or defended; and

WHEREAS Concordia Journal, in which the aforementioned article was published, lists Dr. Dale Meyer, President of Concordia Seminary, as the Publisher, and Dr. Charles Arand as the Executive Editor and Dean of Theological Research and Publication; and

WHEREAS Dr. Dale Meyer, as president of Concordia Seminary, "shall serve as the spiritual, academic, and administrative head of the seminary" (Bylaw 3.10.5.6); and Dr. Brian Friedrich, as president of Concordia University, Nebraska, serves in a similar role; and

WHEREAS Dr. Matthew Harrison, President of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, according to Article XI.B.1-3, shall supervise, admonish, advise, and reprove in order to "promote and maintain unity of doctrine and practice in all the districts of Synod" (Article XI, B, 3); and, according to Bylaw 3.3.1.1, the President of Synod "shall supervise the doctrine taught and practiced in the Synod, including all synodwide corporate entities," which includes Concordia Seminary and Concordia University, Nebraska; and

WHEREAS Dr. R. Lee Hagen, President of the Missouri District, is the ecclesiastical supervisor of Concordia Seminary's faculty (Bylaw 2.12.1.5); and the Reverend Rich Snow, President of the Nebraska District, is the ecclesiastical supervisor of Concordia University, Nebraska; and

WHEREAS the Board of Regents of Concordia Seminary, as elected by Synod or variously appointed to the board, "shall consider as one of its primary duties the defining and fulfilling of the mission of the seminary within the broad assignment of the Synod" (Bylaw 3.10.5.1), and is "subject to general policies set by the Synod" (Bylaw 3.10.5), which include Article II, Confession, of the Constitution of Synod; and which also the Board of Regents of Concordia University, Nebraska, are subject to the same general policies of Synod, therefore be it

RESOLVED that the Wyoming District Pastors Conference condemn this article for its false teaching and for sowing discord among brethren, and be it further

RESOLVED that the Wyoming District Pastors Conference implore Dr. Matthew Harrison, President of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod; Dr. Dale Meyer, President of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MO, and Publisher of Concordia Journal; Dr. Charles Arand, the Executive Editor of Concordia Journal and Dean of Theological Research and Publication; Dr. Brian Friedrich, President of Concordia University, Nebraska; Dr. John Jurchen, Concordia University, Nebraska; Dr. R. Lee Hagen, President of the Missouri District; the Reverend Richard Snow, President of the Nebraska District; the Reverend Shawn Kumm, Chairman of the Board of Regents of Concordia Seminary; Mr. Paul Schudel, Chairman of the Board of Regents of Concordia University, Nebraska to issue the same condemnation, and be it further

RESOLVED that the aforementioned administer discipline in accordance with the Word of God (1 Tim. 1:3-4; 6:3-4; Tit. 1:13) and the bylaws of the LC-MS, and be it further

RESOLVED that the Wyoming District Pastors' Conference entreat Dr. Matthew Harrison, President of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, to convene a meeting with Dr. Dale Meyer, President of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MO, and Publisher of Concordia Journal; Dr. Charles Arand, the Executive Editor of Concordia Journal and Dean of Theological Research and Publication; Dr. Brian Friedrich, President of Concordia University, Nebraska; Dr. John Jurchen, Concordia University, Nebraska; Dr. R. Lee Hagen, President of the Missouri District; the Reverend Richard Snow, President of the Nebraska District; the Reverend Shawn Kumm, Chairman of the Board of Regents of Concordia Seminary; Mr. Paul Schudel, Chairman of the Board of Regents of Concordia University, Nebraska; and any other persons necessary for an amicable and informed discussion, and be it further

RESOLVED that the aforementioned persons embark upon a theological discussion concerning the referenced article by Dr. John Jurchen and published by Concordia Seminary, as to its faithfulness to Scripture, and the article's theological appropriateness, merit, and affect upon the faith of and witness to the pastors and members of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod and beyond; and be it further

RESOLVED that President Matthew Harrison propose and enact a course of action which is Scripturally faithful, and which edifies and strengthens the faith and witness of the members of the Synod concerning the creation of the world in six twenty-four hour days; and be it further

RESOLVED that President Matthew Harrison issue a final report of resolution, correction, and action to the Wyoming District Convention, to be held May 3-5, 2018, in Casper, Wyoming; and be it finally

RESOLVED that the pastors and the parishes of the Wyoming District and the aforementioned persons "continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving" (Colossians 4:2), especially praying for the LCMS; Concordia Seminary, St. Louis; Concordia University, Nebraska; the above mentioned individuals; and the pastors and parishes of the Wyoming District, with the result that all can exclaim with the psalmist, "Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!" (Psalm 133:1).

Adopted by the Wyoming District Fall Pastors' Conference
Casper, Wyoming
Wednesday, October 4, 2017