



# Connected to Christ – Why Membership Matters

Chapter Four – Trust but Verify



# Trust but Verify?

- ▶ How does the author of the book use this in the church setting?
- ▶ What examples from our lives are there where this is a good thing to practice?
- ▶ Are there times when we have to simply trust with little or no verification?



# The Congregation's Confession (doctrine) Unites Us.

- What is the Confession of Our Savior Lutheran Church of Cheyenne, Wyoming?

## **ARTICLE 3: CONFSSIONAL STANDARDS**

This Congregation acknowledges, accepts and confesses without reservation whatsoever:

3.1 The Holy Scriptures of all canonical books of the Old and New Testaments as the revealed and written Word of God, verbally inspired, as the only rule and norm of faith and practice.

3.2. All the Symbolical Books and the Confessional writings of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, contained in the Book of Concord, dated 1580, to be the true, unadulterated statement and genuine exposition of the Word of God. These Books and Confessional Writings are: the three Ecumenical Creeds (Apostles', Nicene and Athanasian); the Unaltered Augsburg Confession; the Apology of the Augsburg Confession; the Smalcald Articles; Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope; Luther's Small Catechism; Luther's Large Catechism; and both the Epitome and Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord.

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# Ordination/Installation – What should you hold your pastor to?

- ▶ Vows are made to believe and confess the Scriptures
- ▶ Vows are made to believe and confess the Lutheran Confessions
- ▶ **“Do you promise you will perform the duties of your office in accordance with these Confessions, and that all your preaching and teaching and your administration of the Sacraments will be in conformity with the Holy Scripture and with these Confessions?”**



# What do you do if the pastors fails to keep his vows?

- ▶ Fire him? Itching Ears Syndrome and the Divine Call  
Read Acts 20:28 - Who has placed this pastor over you?
- ▶ Remove him?
  - Willful, persistent teaching of false doctrine
  - Unholy life (public scandal; gross and public failure)
  - Inability to carry out his duties
  - What's not on the list?

Correct him? (how do we do this?)



# “Match the Furniture”

- The Pastor is a tool.
- Font – Baptism; Pulpit – Preaching; Altar – Communion - it's nice to have these be beautiful and to take joy in seeing them but it's not necessary to receive the good that God does from them. The same goes for pastors.
- “don't confuse the beauty of the altar with importance of what rests upon it, and don't confuse your friendship with the pastor with the importance of what he is there to give you.” (page 89)
- Read 1 Corinthians 4:1-2. Who are pastors servants of? What do they steward? How are stewards judged as faithful?



# Handling gossip, complaints, and members sins against one another...

- ▶ Read James 3:1-12
- ▶ 8<sup>th</sup> Commandment (God's gift of a reputation)
- ▶ Matthew 18
- ▶ Love covers a multitude of sins
- ▶ Reputations of pastors, parishioners, and congregation
- ▶ Refuse to listen and participate in the gossip. Defend reputations. Tell them to take their complaints to the person they are complaining about or to suffer all things in love.
- ▶ Anonymous complaints are not good in a congregation.



## James 3:1-12

Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. For we all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body. If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well. Look at the ships also: though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things.

How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell. For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so. Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water? Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water.



# Eighth Commandment

**You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.**

*What does this mean?* We should fear and love God so that we do not tell lies about our neighbor, betray him, slander him, or hurt his reputation, but defend him, speak well of him, and explain everything in the kindest way.

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## Matthew 18:15-17

*“If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.”*



# Anonymous Complaints and their Fruit...

## **Some fruit of anonymous complaints:**

- No reconciliation (opportunity for apology/confession and absolution is lost) – This is by far the worst aspect of the anonymous complaint.
- Violation of Matthew 18
- Violation of the 8<sup>th</sup> Commandment (no defense or best construction)
- No accountability (not responsible for your words/accusations)
- No pastoral care allowed (complaints often are symptoms of greater spiritual problems)
- No opportunity for instruction in God's Word (many complaints can be cleared up using God's Word for instruction)
- No opportunity to clarify the nature of the complaint
- Culture of suspicion and distrust (pastor, people, boards)
- Unnecessary or frivolous complaints (again, no one responsible for their words increases the number of complaints and also decreases their value)
- Exaggeration (anonymity almost needs company in order to preserve anonymity; this is lying)

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## Ephesians 4:29-32

*Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.*



## 1 Peter 4:8-11

*Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

