



# Faithful Reconciliation: Justification of the Self

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**Michigan District**  
The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod

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# FAITHFUL RECONCILIATION: JUSTIFICATION OF THE SELF

An exploration of reconciliation through the lens of faith.

**“THE SON IS THE IMAGE OF THE INVISIBLE GOD, THE FIRSTBORN  
OVER ALL CREATION. FOR IN HIM ALL THINGS WERE CREATED...  
ALL THINGS HAVE BEEN CREATED THROUGH HIM AND FOR HIM.  
HE IS BEFORE ALL THINGS, AND IN HIM ALL THINGS HOLD  
TOGETHER... FOR GOD WAS PLEASED TO HAVE ALL HIS FULLNESS  
DWELL IN HIM, AND THROUGH HIM TO RECONCILE TO HIMSELF  
ALL THINGS, WHETHER THINGS ON EARTH OR THINGS IN HEAVEN,  
BY MAKING PEACE THROUGH HIS BLOOD, SHED ON THE CROSS.”**

COLOSSIANS 1:15-20

# FAITHFUL RECONCILIATION



**Belief**



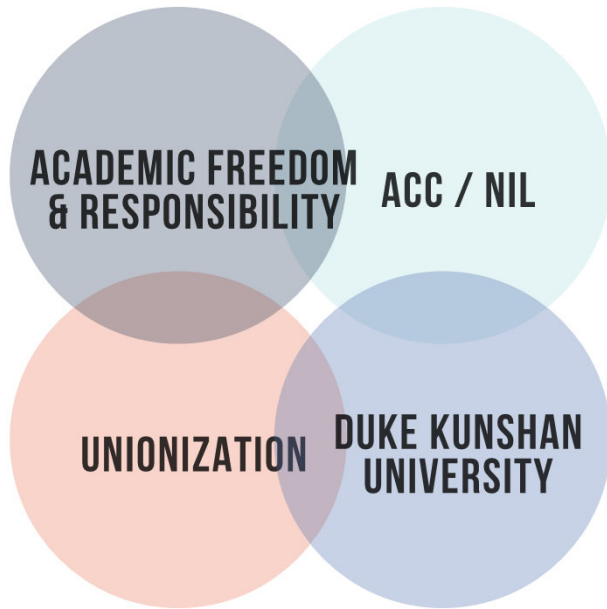
**Tradition**



**Trust**

I am using 'faith' in three ways. First as belief (both *fides qua* and *fides quae*). Second, as tradition ("the faith of our ancestors"). Third, as trust (turn inward vs. trust outward (Kolb)).

# FAITHFUL STEWARDSHIP: BOARD OF TRUSTEES



"What's the *Duke Statement*?" "As stewards of Duke's trust, we are accountable."  
Duke Values: Respect, Trust, Inclusion, Discovery, and Excellence.

"After many heated debates over matters of theology, doctrine, and church carpet color, Lutherans have all finally agreed to split and form his or her own individual synod. 'When you think about it, this was inevitable,' said Randy Hühner, President of the newly formed Get-The-Drums-Off-The-Chancel Synod. 'The Great Martin Luther instilled in us a love for protest and reformation. I hope everyone will join me next Sunday in the one true Lutheran Church where there will never be rock n' roll drums allowed on the chancel, as God intended.'"



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**“FAREWELL TO THOSE WHO WANT  
AN ENTIRELY PURE AND PURIFIED  
CHURCH. THIS IS PLAINLY  
WANTING NO CHURCH AT ALL.”**

MARTIN LUTHER, "TABLE TALKS: DECEMBER 12, 1538"



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"It's about time this happened," said Sandy Muller, founder of the new Stop-Cutting-The-Donuts-Into-Quarters-During-The-9 o'clock-Fellowship-Hour Synod. "All God's Children must have the opportunity to enjoy good donuts and decent coffee in the morning. ***This is what Luther would have wanted.***"

**“...GOD, WHO THROUGH CHRIST RECONCILED US TO HIMSELF AND GAVE US THE MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION; THAT IS, IN CHRIST GOD WAS RECONCILING THE WORLD TO HIMSELF, NOT COUNTING THEIR TRESPASSES AGAINST THEM, AND ENTRUSTING TO US THE MESSAGE OF RECONCILIATION. THEREFORE, WE ARE AMBASSADORS FOR CHRIST, GOD MAKING HIS APPEAL THROUGH US. WE IMPLORE YOU ON BEHALF OF CHRIST, BE RECONCILED TO GOD.”**

2 CORINTHIANS 5:17-20

# JUSTIFICATION OF THE SELF: TWO KINDS OF RECONCILIATION

- **Vertical Reconciliation**

Christ's work on the cross restores our broken relationship with God. This reconciliation is initiated by God alone and is a gift of grace.

- **Horizontal Reconciliation**

Having been reconciled to God, we are now entrusted with the “ministry of reconciliation” to extend that peace and restoration to others.

Horizontal reconciliation is about active reconciliation (*coram mundo*). It involves reconciling with others—healing divisions, forgiving, and restoring relationships—and participating in the reconciliation of all creation, caring for the earth as stewards of God's creation.

# TWO KINDS OF RECONCILIATION: CONFUSION OF THE SPHERES

- **Pastor 1**

"I confess that, in the past,  
I did something to upset you.  
I ask for your forgiveness.  
Can we move on now?"

- **Pastor 2**

"No."

- **Pastor 1**

"What do you mean, no?  
I have confessed my sins.  
What more do you want?"

With respect to horizontal reconciliation, what's missing?

**“...PROBLEMATIC QUESTIONS ALSO MAY ARISE WHERE A PASTOR FEELS THAT THE PENITENT IS NOT TRULY 'PENITENT' BUT RATHER IS 'USING' THE PASTOR IN ORDER TO GET SOMETHING OFF HIS CHEST, WITH EVERY INTENTION TO CONTINUE HIS ERRING WAYS. A PERSON IS NOT FREE TO 'TAKE UNFAIR ADVANTAGE' OF THE PASTORAL OFFICE THROUGH HYPOCRITICAL MEANS...”**

**CTCR: "THE PASTOR-PENITENT RELATIONSHIP: PRIVILEGED COMMUNICATIONS"**

"Example: ...member... embezzled funds from the church and, after suspecting that the pastor may be on to him, hurriedly 'confessed' his sin before restoring the loss through monies stolen elsewhere. The pastor has every right to institute church discipline in accordance with Matthew 18:15-18."

# CONFUSION OF THE SPHERES: JUSTIFICATION OF THE SELF

- **Pastor 1**

"I confess that, in the past,  
I did something to upset you.  
I ask for your forgiveness.  
Can we move on now?"

- **Pastor 2**

"No."

- **Pastor 1**

"What do you mean, no?  
I have confessed my sins.  
What more do you want?"

**Lack of Specificity:** Avoids Responsibility.

**Lack of Empathy:** Ignores Impact.

**Rush to Closure:** No Space for Healing or Lament.

**Lack of Genuine Repentance:** No Commitment to Change.

# FAITHFUL MODELS/FRAMEWORKS: LCMS APPROACHES

## Informal Approaches (LCMS Handbook)

"The parties... must meet together, face-to-face, in a **good-faith** attempt to settle their dispute in the manner described in Matthew 18:15." "The reputation of all parties to a dispute is to be protected as commanded in the Eighth Commandment. The goal throughout is always one of **reconciliation, of repentance and forgiveness...**"

## Formal Approaches (LCMS Handbook)

1. **Formal Meeting:** Present Cases. Bring Witnesses.
2. **Reconciler Mediates:** Christian love and forgiveness.
3. **Creation of Report:** Outlining actions taken, issues resolved and/or unresolved, and whether reconciliation was achieved
4. **Confidentiality:** No formal record be made of meeting.

## Ambassadors of Reconciliation

1. **Repent Before God**
2. **Receive God's Forgiveness**
3. **Confess to the Other Person**
4. **Forgive as God Forgave You**
5. **Restore with Gentleness**

## The Koinonia Project

Goal: "Help our people... perceive more clearly our unity in Christ and to express with greater unanimity the concord (the oneness in doctrine and practice) Christ desires.... We pray that this will *also* help us toward a greater sense of harmony in our life together as a Synod."

**BUT WHAT HAPPENS WHEN  
'TRUST' BREAKS DOWN?**

# WHEN TRUST BREAKS DOWN, 'FAITH' ITSELF IS CALLED INTO QUESTION.

"The parties... must meet together, face-to-face, in a *good-faith* attempt to settle their dispute"

# WHEN TRUST BREAKS DOWN



## Declining Trust in Institutions

Eroding public confidence in governments, corporations, and other major institutions due to perceived corruption, lack of transparency, and failure to address issues.



## Erosion of Personal Relationships

Breakdown of trust among family, friends, and fellow pastors due to dishonesty, betrayal, or failure to uphold commitments.



## Motive Attribution Asymmetry

Cognitive bias where each party in a conflict believes their actions are driven by love or moral righteousness while perceiving the opposing person is motivated by hate.

When trust breaks down in both institutional and personal realms, it can negatively impact social cohesion, personal well-being, and the overall functioning of a church body.

# WHEN TRUST ERODES: DAMAGED BRIDGES

## Fractured Foundation

Damaged bridges can have fractured foundations, which create uncertainty and instability.

## Severed Connections

Closed bridges sever connections, making it difficult for people to cross the divide and restore trust.

## Dangerous Crossing

Damaged bridges pose many risks. Attempting to cross one before it is repaired can create further damage.

## Rebuilding the Bridge

Repairing the damaged bridge can require time, effort, and a commitment to rebuild, piece by piece.

## Cautious Approach

Navigating a treacherous landscape to repair a damaged bridge requires a cautious and deliberate approach, with careful steps taken to ensure stability and safety.

# THOUGHTS? Questions?

Open the floor to feedback and discussion.

