Briar Siljander
[redacted]ive
[redacted]

August 3, 2022

Via Email Only

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West Barnstable Laestadian Lutheran Church	[redacted]
Williston Laestadian Lutheran Church	[redacted]

Dear Jim, Members of the LLC Board of Directors, Members of the LLC, and Delegates to the 2022 Annual Meeting:

I write with great sorrow after hearing of the events that transpired at the 2022 Annual Meeting of the Laestadian Lutheran Church (LLC) on July 2, 2022. There, as you note in your letter, "delegates voted to formally remove [the Minneapolis Laestadian Lutheran Church and Wolf Lake Laestadian Lutheran Church] as member congregations of the LLC." Outgoing chairman, Jim Frantti, and other board members encouraged the act. The act is wrong, both by man's law and by God's law.

The LLC is not the Kingdom of God. As you know, it is a nonprofit corporation created and governed by the laws of the State of Minnesota. It is, as such, subject to the State's laws – in particular, the Minnesota Nonprofit Corporation Act.[1] Part of that law states: "A member may not be expelled or suspended, and a membership may not be terminated or suspended except pursuant to a procedure that is fair and reasonable and is carried out in good faith."[2] The law further provides:

> A procedure is fair and reasonable when it is fair and reasonable taking into consideration all of the relevant facts and circumstances. In addition, a procedure is fair and reasonable if it provides:
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> (1) not less than 15 days' prior written notice of the expulsion, suspension, or termination, and the reasons for it; and
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> (2) an opportunity for the member to be heard, orally or in writing, not less than five days before the effective date of the expulsion, suspension, or termination by a person authorized to decide that the proposed expulsion, termination, or suspension not take place.[3]

As you know, no prior notice of expulsion was provided. Expulsion of the member congregations was not included on the meeting agenda or otherwise communicated to all member congregations, as Jim Frantti stated at the meeting (nevertheless encouraging the delegates that they "could freely make [the decision to expel member congregations] today"). Many delegates at the annual meeting did not have instruction from member congregations about how to vote on an expulsion of these congregations. Nor were the bases for expulsion provided to the expelled congregations, in writing or otherwise. Further, no opportunity was given to members to be heard at least five days before the expulsion.

Other irregularities also should give pause. No vote was recorded. The decision to expel these members was made by show of hands with no count or record as to who voted in favor and against the motion to expel, or whether, for example, non-delegates voted and were considered in the vote. Additionally, prior to the vote on the motion to expel, another motion was made, but was rejected by Mike Jurmu, the moderator.

More troubling is the alleged basis, or lack of basis, for expelling these members. The LLC Constitution, to which each member of the LLC agrees to adhere, states that the LLC:

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[1] Minn. Stat. 317A.001 *et seq.*
[2] *Id.* at 317A.411.
[3] *Id.*

> shall be composed of congregations in the United States and Canada who confess that living faith which is founded on the Holy Word of God in the books of the Old and New Testaments in which Jesus Christ is the chief cornerstone. This faith is also expressed in the oldest creeds of Christendom (Apostle's, Nicene, and Athanasian) which are consistent with the Holy Word of God and in the Unaltered Augsburg Confession and Small and Large Catechisms by Martin Luther. Said Corporation holds that the Holy Word of God is the highest authority and only measure according to which all doctrines and teachings in said Corporation are to be examined and judged. . . . [T]he members of said Corporation firmly believe that the instructions and teachings of the Holy Bible are the only authority and rule for deciding all matters.

Section 9 of the LLC Bylaws, to which all members agree to be bound, provides:

> If any member congregation in the LLC does not comply or act in accordance with the Constitution and the Bylaws and fails to comply and obey the decisions made by the LLC, such a congregation may be expelled from the LLC by a quorum of Delegates at the Annual Meeting or at a special meeting, upon the recommendation of the Board of Directors, or by action initiated by a quorum of Delegates at the Annual Meeting or a special meeting of the Delegates.

This means that any action by the LLC to expel a member may only be made if such member "does not comply or act in accordance with the Constitution and Bylaws" *and* "fails to comply and obey the decisions made by the LLC." At the annual meeting, it was not alleged that the Minneapolis congregation or Wolf Lake congregation failed to comply or act in accordance with the Constitution and Bylaws. The action, therefore, is in violation of Minnesota law.

Much more importantly, the basis for expelling the Minneapolis and Wolf Lake congregations is contrary to God's Word. While it is evident that private grudges have long fueled much of the push to divide, the LLC board and its officers, and many board members, speakers, and delegates from member congregations, have made clear by their words and conduct that they believe: 1) the LLC – the earthly organization – *is* God's Kingdom, 2) the LLC, being God's Kingdom, cannot err; and 3) the decisions of a majority, whatever they be, are inspired, made, and endorsed by the Holy Spirit. This is what the catholic church believed and taught and it is wrong.

1) The Kingdom of God is Not the LLC and is Not a Physical Kingdom

God's Kingdom – His church and congregation – is not an earthly, physical organization. It is not bound, as the papists believe, to a legal entity, physical building, or any other earthly organization. It is spiritual. As Luther says:

> "I believe that there is one holy Christian Church on earth, *i.e.* the community or number or assembly of all Christians in all the world, the one bride of Christ, and his spiritual body of which he is the only head. . . . This Christian Church exists not only in the realm of the Roman Church or pope, but in all the world, as the prophets foretold that the gospel of Christ would spread throughout the world, Psalm 2[:8]; Psalm 19[:4]. Thus this Christian Church is physically dispersed among pope, Turks,

> Persians, Tartars, but spiritually gathered in one gospel and faith, under one head, i.e. Jesus Christ.
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> * * * * *
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> [I]t is clear that the holy church is not bound to Rome; rather, it extends to the end of the earth, assembled in one faith, a spiritual and not a physical assembly. For what is believed is neither physical nor visible. All of us see the external Roman church. That is why it cannot be the true church, which is believed and which is a community or assembly of the saints in faith. But no one can see who is holy or who believes. . . . Not Rome or this or that place, but baptism, the sacrament, and the gospel are the signs by which the existence of the church in the world can be noticed externally. Wherever there is baptism and the gospel no one should doubt the presence of saints—even if they were only children in the cradle.[4]

Many at the Annual Meeting spoke of "God's Kingdom," and of how the Minneapolis and Wolf Lake congregations were "battling against God's Kingdom" as if the term were synonymous with "LLC." This is an alarming mantra, but one that has unfortunately been actively and passively reinforced by leadership at the LLC. The LLC's outgoing chairman, Jim Frantti, encapsulated this wrong understanding in his comments at the Annual Meeting when he said:

> It somehow seems to be a wrong understanding of some of these [people] of the doctrine of the congregation. And we've heard speaking, speeches that seem to separate the Word of God from the congregation and place the Word above the congregation in some way. But our understanding is that the Word and the congregation are inseparable.[5]

This subtle equivocation of Christ's congregation to the LLC, and the assertion that the Word of God is not above the congregation, *i.e.,* the LLC, is a false and dangerous teaching. It is the same teaching upon which the pope in the catholic church relied,[6] and, were it true, it would mean that God, Himself, is not above the congregation because the Word is inseparable from God. Indeed, the Word *is* God. As Apostle John writes: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God".[7] The Word of God, and not the LLC, is, as the LLC constitution professes, the "highest

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[4] LUTHER'S WORKS, Vol. 37: Word and Sacrament III, 367; LUTHER'S WORKS, Vol. 39: Church and Ministry I, 75.

[5] *2022 LLC Annual Meeting Recording* at 1:58.

[6] *See, e.g., Luther's Works, Vol. 36: Word and Sacrament II, 184–185* ("First, they throw up to us the secret mass, which they call the canon. In it there are the words: 'these gifts, holy and unspotted sacrifices,' and further on: 'a holy offering, a pure offering and an unspotted offering, etc.' But to bring that up is simply to cry: fathers, fathers, canon law, canon law, church, church—which is their customary procedure whenever they wish to lead us from the Word of God to human words and doctrine. But if in return one shoves the Word of God under their noses, they cry out with their ears plugged tight: You do not understand it correctly; one must believe the interpretation of the fathers. Thus under the name of the fathers they eradicate the Word of God. Therefore we also say and cry out just as steadfastly: gospel, gospel, Christ, Christ. Why should we not rely as much on Christ and his gospel as they rely on the fathers and the canon law and appeal to them?").

[7] *John 1:1*.

authority." Similarly, the LLC is not the Kingdom of God nor the congregation of God. That congregation, as Luther states, is found wherever baptism, the gospel, and sacraments are heard and believed.

2) The LLC Can Err and Has Erred

Many leaders, even those anointed by God, erred and sinned. King David, the man after God's own heart, did. Solomon did. Apostle Peter did.[8] Yet, based on the false equivocation of the LLC to the Kingdom of God, many preachers, board members, and others in the LLC assert that the LLC cannot err. Luther laments of this wrong understanding, writing:

> It is a shame that the devil should deceive and mislead the church of Christ with such childish foolishness. Yet by it he advances his own enterprise with such earnestness among the saints of God. He has succeeded to such an extent that the papists dare to say: The church cannot err; as if Christ were lying when he says that the elect (who alone are the church) are to be led astray [Matt. 24:24]; or as if the church were not the church because it happened to sin or err, when indeed Christ is daily cleansing it of its sins and errors, like the branches of the vine [John 15:2]; or as if the faithful and holy ones never sinned. O you hard-hearted, foolish, blind men! This mischievous devil had no other intent in this sham-fighting than that the works of love which are commanded by God should be suppressed and scorned, and human commandments and laws be held in high honor, awe, and repute.[9]

Luther continues:

> Even today many are misled by their claim that the church does not err. But you answer them thus: "Oh, yes, the church does err and can err and be mistaken. You cannot collect the church into one spot or into one compact group. The Christian Church is catholic, dispersed over all the world and often found in a place where one would least expect it. Therefore Christ alone is infallible. But the Christian Church is fallible."[10]

The wrong understanding that the LLC is unerring is at the root of the confusion and divide.

3) The Decisions of a Majority Are Often in Error and The Spirit Underlying Such Decisions is Not the Holy Spirit

The Bible cautions each believer: "[b]elieve not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world."[11] Luther teaches, in no uncertain terms, what this means:

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[8] *Gal. 2:11-14*.

[9] LUTHER'S WORKS, Vol. 36: Word and Sacrament II, 193–194.

[10] Martin Luther, Luther's Works, Vol. 22: Sermons on the Gospel of St. John: Chapters 1-4, 258.

[11] 1 John 4:1.

> O unhappy Christians that we are! We seize upon the legends and examples of the saints, without recognition of the spirit. We rely upon human doctrine and wandering spirits, putting God's Word last and scorning the advice of the Holy Spirit, who says through Paul [1 Thess. 5:21]: "Test everything; hold fast what is good." And Peter says [1 Pet. 4:11]: "Whoever speaks, let him speak it as the word of God. Whoever has an office, let him render service by the strength which God supplies." He wishes nothing to be said among Christians except that which we hold with certainty to be the Word of God. Nothing is to transpire or be done unless it is certain that God is the author and doer of it. This is what Paul intends in Rom. 12[:6]—"If any one has the gift of prophecy, let him prophesy in accordance with the faith"—that the words of all men are to be valued and judged according to faith. And in Rom. 15[:18], he ventures to speak nothing except what Christ has wrought in him.
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> Yet we poor creatures leave God's Word and follow our own opinion. We order, we institute, we bid and forbid, we do and omit whatever pleases us. Then we say: The church has done it, and the church cannot err, for it is ruled by the Holy Spirit. So in the name of the church we fill the whole world with mighty error and downright lies. Would to God that I had the time to cleanse the legends and examples, or that somebody else with a higher spirit would venture to do it; they are full, full of lies and deception.

Luther's Works, Vol. 36: Word and Sacrament II, 194–195.

In Luther's words are a prescient warning: do not go running about boasting that you hold this conviction or make that decision by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, for you may be sorely deceived. He writes:

> Christ does not want to give you the right to run to and fro in search of the Spirit, to lose yourself in reverie and say: "I have this by inspiration of the Holy Spirit." Actually, it may be the devil who inspired you! Thus they alleged in the edict issued at the Diet of Augsburg: "The church is holy; therefore it follows that its proclamations are holy and given by inspiration of the Holy Spirit." Christ does not recognize such inspiration. He binds us solely to His Word. He does not want to see the Holy Spirit divorced from His Word. Whenever you hear anyone boast that he has something by inspiration of the Holy Spirit and it has no basis in God's Word, no matter what it may be, tell him that this is the work of the devil. Christ does not bind you to anything but His mouth and His Word. He does not want to leave you wandering aimlessly about; He wants you to hear His Word. He declares: "The words which I speak are spiritual. Therefore if you want to obtain the Holy Spirit, you must adhere to My words; for they are spirit and life."
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> God has so ordered it that the Holy Spirit ordinarily comes through the Word. Christ Himself states this here. Therefore whenever you are faced by anything, even though it appears so attractive and holy that you imagine it to be an angelic being, take it, and hold it in the light of God's Word. Examine it to see whether it is founded on Holy Writ, whether or not God has commanded and ordered it. If it is a mere fancy, a token

> of particular zeal, or a pious thought, but lacks God's Word, spit on it. Unless it happens that God chooses to enlighten you particularly, as He did Moses, beware! Since God has confirmed the ministry of preaching, be on your guard against any such devotion or fancies as the devil may well suggest to you, even though they are sweet enough to induce you to weep large troughs full of tears.[12]

This is precisely what has happened at the LLC and it is at the crux of the division that you seek to cement. It is easily discerned, you say, that there are "two spirits," that there is unity with many but not with some and therefore those some do not have the Holy Spirit, that some criticize the LLC and therefore do not have the Holy Spirit, that some vote against selling a church building and are therefore in a wrong spirit, and that while they profess to believe the same Word of God that you do, they do not have the same spirit. You reach this conclusion only by asserting that you, together with the other member congregation delegates voting for expulsion, are the sole arbiters and possessors of the Holy Spirit and that the decision is made by the Holy Spirit and not by sin-corrupted men raising their hands to support a motion made by another sin-corrupted man.

Yet, despite all of the talk of these two spirits at the Annual Meeting and in previous meetings, there was not once a clear statement of how those whom you attempt to forcefully separate from your organization believe contrary to the Word of God. There is no desire to test the spirit that leaps to such conclusions. It must, then, be, no matter how well-intentioned, a spirit of the devil.

Look how successful the devil has been in fostering discord! By engendering within the LLC a confusion about what the Holy Spirit is and creating doubts that studying God's Word might cause one to lose faith, he has convinced a majority that they must sever ties with those who desire to hear and believe the Word of God. This is not the work of the Holy Spirit.

Apostle John describes the office of the Holy Spirit, writing that the Holy Spirit "shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that He shall speak." *John 16:12*. Luther expounds:

> Here Christ makes the Holy Spirit a Preacher. He does so to prevent one from gaping toward heaven in search of Him, as the fluttering spirits and enthusiasts do, and from divorcing Him from the oral Word or the ministry. One should know and learn that He will be in and with the Word, that it will guide us into all truth, in order that we may believe it, use it as a weapon, be preserved by it against all the lies and deception of the devil, and prevail in all trials and temptations. For there is, after all, no other way and no other means of perceiving the Holy Spirit's consolation and power, as I have often demonstrated from Holy Writ and have often experienced myself. For I, too, am a half-baked theologian. This I say lest I exalt myself over the great minds who have long ago ascended into the clouds beyond all Scripture and have nestled under the wings of the Holy Spirit. But experience has taught me all too often that whenever the devil catches me outside Scripture and sees that my thoughts are rambling and that I, too, am fluttering toward heaven, he brings me to the point of not knowing where God is or where I am. The Holy Spirit wants this truth which He is to impress into our hearts to be so firmly fixed that reason and all one's own thoughts and feelings are relegated to the background. He wants us to adhere solely to the Word and to regard

[12] *Luther's Works*, Vol. 23: Sermons on the Gospel of St. John: Chapters 6-8, 173.

> it as the only truth. And through this Word alone He governs the Christian Church to the end.
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> Here Christ defines the Holy Spirit's office and points out what and about what He is to teach. He constantly keeps in mind the false spirits and preachers who boastfully claim to have the Holy Spirit as well as others do and allege that what they say has emanated from the Holy Spirit. That is what the pope persuaded the entire world to believe. Thus the Holy Spirit establishes a wide difference among teachers and gives the right rule by which the spirits are to be tested. He wants to say that there are two kinds of teachers. There are some who speak on their own authority; that is, they evolve their message from their own reasoning or religious zeal and judgment. The Holy Spirit is not to be that kind of preacher; for He will not speak on His own authority, and His message will not be a human dream and thought like that of the preachers who speak on their own authority of things which they have neither seen nor experienced and, as St. Paul says in 1 Tim. 1:7, talk "without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make assertions." "No, His message will have substance; it will be the certain and absolute truth, for He will preach what He receives from the Father and from Me. And you will be able to recognize Him by the fact that He does not speak on His own authority—as the spirit of lies, the devil, and his mobs do—but will preach about what He will hear. Thus He will speak exclusively of Me and will glorify Me, so that the people will believe in Me."
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> In this way Christ sets bounds for the message of the Holy Spirit Himself. He is not to preach anything new or anything else than Christ and His Word. Thus we have a sure guide and touchstone for judging the false spirits. We can declare that it surely does not indicate the presence of the Holy Spirit when a person proclaims his own thoughts and notions and begins to teach in Christendom something apart from or in addition to what Christ taught. No, that betrays the presence of the loathesome spirit of lies, the devil, of whom Christ declares in John 8:44: "When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature," that is, what he himself has fabricated.[13]

I witnessed first-hand how the devil has worked. Prior to moderating a discussion between the LLC board and the Wolf Lake congregation in December 2019, I corresponded with the respective chairmen, Jim Frantti and Pat Lake. The LLC had voiced concerns over some comments made by members of the Wolf Lake congregation at a Board Members' Workshop in April 2019 and desired to meet. The Wolf Lake board asked on multiple occasions that the LLC board tell them in advance the topics of concern so that they might have time to understand and discuss the concerns with the congregation prior to meeting. Unfortunately, the LLC board never provided specifics.

In my correspondence with Jim Frantti and Pat Lake, I requested that the discussion focus on one doctrinal topic or concern at a time, and that each be discussed in full so that they could have an actual dialogue and not a series of speeches. My observation was (and still is) that it is difficult to have meaningful discussions when speaking turns are long and unrestricted in subject matter, with no opportunity for dialogue.[14] For reasons I still do not understand, Mr. Frantti instead proceeded to

[13] LUTHER'S WORKS, Vol. 24: Sermons on the Gospel of St. John: Chapters 14-16, 362–363.

[1414] *See* Emails re LLC – Wolf Lake Meeting, attached.

open the discussion by introducing a lengthy list of topics that he said had caused or were causing confusion and division, insisting that he set out his full list in one speaking turn instead of beginning a discussion on just one of those issues at a time, as requested. Still more confounding: if this full list of issues existed prior to the meeting, why refuse to share these topics with the Wolf Lake congregation so they might discuss and ponder them before the meeting? This approach unfortunately undermined the ability for any of those issues to be properly discussed.

At the same meeting, many members of the Wolf Lake congregation requested that members of the LLC board state whether they believed the Wolf Lake congregation's speakers, Darwin Lake and Phil Alajoki, preached wrong doctrine and why they had been disinvited from previously-scheduled speaking turns at other congregations. No one at the meeting stated he believed Darwin Lake or Phil Alajoki preached incorrectly – only that there was a cloud over them. While, for example, Jon Bloomquist stated he did not believe that either of the Wolf Lake congregation's ministers preached incorrect doctrine, he believed a cloud nonetheless hung over them because the Wolf Lake congregation's board was "adversarial" towards him and the LLC board. Keith Waaraniemi stated, too, that he felt the Wolf Lake board seemed to see itself as more enlightened than members of the LLC board and staff. No one stated that the Wolf Lake congregation believed incorrectly or that its preachers preached incorrect doctrine. Indeed, Jim Frantti affirmed that he believed the same way about birth control as Darwin Lake, seeming to put to rest the issue that seems to have begun the discord – a sermon given by Mr. Lake at summer services in 2015. Nonetheless, despite the LLC board maintaining they had concerns about the Wolf Lake congregation, the meeting concluded without discussion about actual doctrinal differences between the LLC board and Wolf Lake congregation and without discussion of how the members of the LLC board believed on any of those topics.

Through the date that the LLC excommunicated the Wolf Lake and Minneapolis congregations, no clear statement was ever provided as to how the faith of those congregations' members differed from the faith of any other member congregation's members. Being so sure that there are "two spirits" and proclaiming that expulsion of the Wolf Lake and Minneapolis congregations was the ultimate act of love, not one LLC board member or delegate who spoke or voted in favor of the expulsion tested the spirits to see if they were of God. "Mark Christ's word well," Luther says,

> "It is the Spirit that gives life," for these words leave us neither in doubt nor in error. Shortly after uttering these words He explains the meaning of the word "spirit." He says: "The words that I have spoken to you are spirit." This He does that we might beware of being misled by the treacherous preachers who come and boast about the Spirit, claiming to feel the compulsion of love and the spirit to preach. Indeed, they still say today: "I mean well with you; I am sincere when I say this; God in heaven knows that I would be willing to give my soul to save you." But tell them: "Go preach to the geese. You are a devil. Don't molest and confuse me with your spirit. Christ does not want me to listen to you." He declares: "It is the Spirit that gives life." Where do you and I come in? "The words that I have spoken to you," Christ says, "are spirit. If you take hold of My words, you have it."
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> Perhaps you are tempted to ask: "Where does the Spirit give life? Or by what means? Where will I find the Spirit?" The reply is: "Hold to My words and speech. If you do that, you have the Spirit." Thus the words are spirit in him who preaches and teaches, and also in him who hears and believes. A man is spirit in proportion to how much he

> adheres to the Word. On the other hand, he is flesh in proportion to his flesh and unbelief.[15]

The practice of removing and withholding ministers, and of ostracizing, excommunicating, and, finally, expelling member congregations on the basis of this vague, intangible "different spirit," is contrary to God's Word. Beware, lest you find yourself, as Saul of Tarsus or as the councils of the holy catholic church, persecuting children of God in full belief that you are doing God's work. Beware that you do not, in your zeal for peace and unity, banish the true, unadultered Word and Spirit from your buildings and your hearts. May God have mercy on us all.

God's Peace,
Briar Siljander

Enclosure(s)

[15] LUTHER'S WORKS, Vol. 23: Sermons on the Gospel of St. John: Chapters 6-8, 173–177.

From: Patrick Lake
To: Briar Siljander
Subject: RE: Re: LLC - Wolf Lake Meeting
Date: Thursday, December 5, 2019 8:02:21 AM

Briar, God's Peace.

I think your all suggestions are good, and will be helpful in our discussion. We can provide an official recording.

I also join in the prayer that God will bless our discussion.

God's Peace,
Patrick Lake

From: Briar Siljander
Sent: Wednesday, December 4, 2019 11:38 PM
To: Jim Frantti
Cc: [redacted]; rherrala@llchurch.org; Joe Wuollet
Subject: Re: LLC - Wolf Lake Meeting

Jim, God's Peace.

I understand the letter from April 23 to be from you and Randy on behalf of the LLC board - I was not under the impression that it came from you personally and my reference was to the letter you sent on behalf of the board.

As I indicated in my last email, I reviewed some of the correspondence between you (and when I say you, I do recognize you are communicating on behalf of the LLC board, just as Pat Lake is communicating on behalf of the Wolf Lake congregation) and the Wolf Lake congregation. In the April 13 letter, you state that many on the LLC board have asked what can or should be done. In the course of the correspondence, the Wolf Lake congregation requested on more than one occasion that you help them understand what the concerns of the LLC board were so that they might have time to reflect on your concerns and be prepared to discuss them more fully. They also expressed that they have both felt and sensed frustration because of a lack of progress from prior discussions. At the April 13 board members' workshop, one of the board members requested formally that believing brothers from Finland participate in a discussion between the LLC board and the Wolf Lake board or congregation. From the correspondence, it is apparent that the Wolf Lake congregation believes the disunity felt by the LLC board and the Wolf Lake congregation arises from a lack of direct discussion about the spiritual and doctrinal topics and, perhaps more specifically, about where the LLC board believes that speakers and/or board members of Wolf Lake err in doctrine.

It is for this reason, I believe, that the Wolf Lake congregation has asked that the discussion be focused so that further confusion can be avoided. They have not requested that any specific topic not be discussed - in fact, they have requested that any topics of concern be brought forward for discussion - they only asked that each of the topics be discussed one at a time so

that a full discussion could occur on each topic.

I do not think it is wrong that the Wolf Lake congregation asked someone from outside of their congregation and the LLC board to moderate the discussion. As you know, for several years now the boards of the LLC and Wolf Lake congregation have been meeting, with mutual feelings of an inability to resolve apparent differences or, for that matter, to specify with any clarity what the differences are. I appreciate that neither you nor the board has any reservation toward me. I intend, as I indicated, to try to encourage a direct and focused dialogue on one issue at a time so that the specific concerns of the LLC board can be conveyed to the Wolf Lake congregation and then be directly responded to by the Wolf Lake congregation. In this way, each can hear and understand the other and, if God wills, resolve the differences or perceived differences that afflict.

Regarding recording, while I certainly appreciate your sentiment for we are all weak in words, I view recording as a way of ensuring that words are accurately recounted and cannot be taken out of context. If one speaks incorrectly, that can be shown to him clearly and he can correct or clarify what he intended to say. The board members' workshop is such an example: concerns were raised about comments of the brothers from Wolf Lake. The opportunity to discuss the concerns about those comments is only now occurring, nearly eight months later. Fortunately, those comments were recorded and may be revisited with clarity. Concerns can be specified and corrections or clarifications can be made. I also believe that recording and making these discussions available, particularly when they relate to the doctrinal issues being discussed across Zion, convey a clear message that all are open and free in their discussion. This openness fosters trust. If some wish to use recordings for nefarious purposes, that is to their own detriment.

I join you in prayer that God will bless the discussion.

God's Peace,
Briar

On Sun, Dec 1, 2019 at 8:12 PM Jim Frantti <[redacted]> wrote:

> Hi, Briar.
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> I received your second email about the services in March. Saturday evening and Sunday morning should work fine for me. Thanks.
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> Then, regarding the meeting in Wolf Lake. The letter that was sent to Wolf Lake was not mine, as you cited. Rather it was from the LLC Board, More than one person participated in the writing of it, and all Board members reviewed it. The signatures on it were mine and Randy Herrala's only because we serve as the Board chairman and secretary.
>
> The suggestion of the LLC Board was that our visit in Wolf Lake would be a brotherly discussion of any questions or concerns that exist. The Board has never met with the Wolf Lake congregation and felt that we should offer to do that. It is also the feeling of the Board that this visit does not require any special mediation or moderation but that we could simply choose someone from the Wolf Lake board or congregation or from the LLC Board to moderate. In fact, I made the

suggestion to Pat Lake that he serve as the moderator. It feels unusual to me that you have been asked to come to moderate. That is not because of any reservation that I or the Board would have toward you. It just doesn't seem necessary.

The hope of the Board is that discussion would not be limited to any one or two topics but that all could freely speak. I agree with your concerns about the number of participants and length of speeches. I also agree that it would be good if priority could be given to those in the Wolf Lake congregation and the LLC Board. It is always a challenge to try to limit the length of speeches.

On the matter of recording, it is always my preference to not record. Words are often weak on anyone's part, and some people can feel intimidated by the fact that everything they say is being recorded and can be spread widely. It has been especially troubling when some have recorded discussions or even conversations without knowledge of the participants and then shared these recordings. If the discussion is recorded, my hope is that there will be an official recording and that others will be asked not to record. That too is difficult to control.

My prayer is that we can have a brotherly discussion and that people will freely speak. May God help us and open the ears and hearts of all.

God's Peace.
Jim

> On Dec 1, 2019, at 7:35 PM, Briar Siljander <[redacted]> wrote:
>
> God's Peace Jim and Pat,
>
> In prayer that God will guide, as He always does, I am reaching out to both of you prior to the discussion planned for December 7 to confirm some housekeeping matters.
>
> I have reviewed the agenda for the discussion as well as some of the letters you have exchanged. I also listened to the Monticello board meeting referenced in letters from both the LLC Board and the Wolf Lake congregation. It is clear that the devil has sowed seeds of confusion and, aided by the weak flesh of man, has created much frustration and weariness. As the Apostle James writes: "[W]here envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy."
>
> The first item on the agenda is the concern raised in Jim's letter of April 23 regarding the comments of Wolf Lake board members at the April 13 Board Members' Workshop at the Monticello church. I have attached to this email the transcripts of those comments and ask that you share them with the Wolf Lake congregation and the LLC Board, respectively. While all have had time, in subsequent months, to ponder and reflect on the workshop and the comments of the board members from Wolf Lake, it would be good if all could take the opportunity to review them so that concerns about them may be clearly voiced and discussed.

Even as God's children gather, the devil desires to confuse and embitter. To facilitate a fruitful dialogue, while I understand the meeting is open for all to attend, I will encourage members of the LLC board and Wolf Lake congregation to speak first, and will ask that others reserve their input until both the LLC board and Wolf Lake congregation have had an opportunity to fully discuss the concerns raised. Also, because even this smaller group numbers more than 60 people, I will suggest that everyone be mindful that 60 ten-minute turns would take us well into the evening, and that individual speaking turns should therefore be limited in time and to the subject matter being discussed. Many at the Board Members' Workshop acknowledged the challenge of several hours separating the time they requested to speak and the time they were able to speak - that often the discussion had moved to different points by the time they had the opportunity to speak. It is my hope that the discussion can take the form of a dialogue and not a series of speeches so that the issues can be discussed with clarity and directness.

It is also important that each of these topics be addressed fully and in turn. If discussion regarding the first agenda item lasts the entire day, the remaining topics and any new topics may be carried into future discussions. Similarly, if discussion on the first agenda item is not concluded by the end of the day, that discussion should continue as soon as you may gather again.

As noted in the initial letter, these spiritual questions have permeated North American Zion. Inconsistent recollections of some past meetings and discussions have engendered mutual mistrust. Therefore, I ask that the practice of recording meetings and discussions such as this be continued so that every word may be established and kept in context.

All in God's kingdom long for peace. God's Word teaches that this peace can come only through unity in His Word. May God, through his Spirit, open our hearts and minds to receive and believe His Word so that true unity of faith may be proclaimed and love and peace may be restored.

God's Peace,
Briar
<WL Speeches.pdf>

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