

May 1, 2008

Dear Pastor Peter and Council

It will come as no surprise to you that I am submitting my resignation from membership at Mount Olive, effective immediately. If I were to lay out all the reasons for my resignation it would take many pages to write out. My reasons will come as absolutely no surprise to most of you. I have openly and publicly expressed my concerns about the direction that the ELCIC has been heading these past few years. Three and a half years ago I could never have imagined what has transpired since then. This has been the most horrific experience of my life, bar none. Some of you who read the BC synod's forum called Grace Words (GW) are more than aware of my position as I have been a frequent contributor since I joined in June 07. This site has been the final straw. I can't fathom that there are debates about whether or not Mary was a virgin when she conceived Jesus, if Jesus is or isn't the only way to the Father, that hell may or may not exist, that everyone will go to heaven regardless of their beliefs or unbelief, etc., and many other debates about what I mistakenly thought were core beliefs. Everything has become iffy. We are left with the end result that the Bible can't be trusted, there is no Truth, and everything is relative. We've been given piles of reasons on Grace Words why much of the Bible is incorrect, or misinterpreted, or is not saying what it so very clearly states. And all of this is coming from pastors / theologians on GW! The material I have read on Grace Words makes the old debate about same sex blessings seem like the good old days in comparison. And then there are the emails that I get personally from those pastors on GW who really go after me off site.....I won't even go there.

I fear for the spiritual safety of the ELCIC. I believe that the church and the souls that are being lead by the church are in very dangerous waters. Many of the scripture verses that I and others have presented on GW have been ridiculed or scoffed at, or have been attacked, or have been downgraded to something that is supposedly untrue or misinterpreted in the translation of the Bible. I don't know what more to say and do. There is a wide gulf and I don't see a path across it. It is also a very ugly site and some pretty mean and awful things are said on there. There is no "grace" on Grace Words at times.

I just returned from the Holy Land a little over a week ago and was with a group lead by Dr David Jeremiah. I know that there are many Christian faiths and Christian leaders and Pastors like Dr Jeremiah who do not even have a toe in the water compared to where the ELCIC has dragged all of us. Many Christian religions adamantly believe in the inerrancy of the Bible. The ELCIC says it officially believes in this also, but unofficially those dusty old ideas of the Bible are no longer a reality anymore, for which I and others have been taken to task on. I stand behind the inerrancy of the Bible. It is the only spiritually safe place to be although many staunchly argue against my position. So be it.

I will continue to pray for all of the souls in the ELCIC. We have many good people both at Mt Olive and in the ELCIC. However I believe that many have been deceived or have grown immune to the lies of the evil one. As in Ephesians 6, this "*struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms*". We are told a few verses later that we are to take "*the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God*". Satan has to take the word of God in the Bible and somehow try to get people to lose trust in it, or to find fault with it, or disregard it.....thus taking away and dismantling the "*sword of the Spirit*". We are left with no sword, or a greatly reduced or dulled sword, no defense. That is what Satan wants. The Word is his biggest enemy and he needs to get rid of it or downgrade it any way he can. Satan is laying the trap and the ELCIC is walking right in to it. Doubting the truth about Jesus will be the final trap - If Jesus is not the only way to the Father then John 14 is a lie and there is absolutely no sword. Borg, Spong and others are teaching this lie and many are lapping this up. While still the National Bishop, Raymond Schultz posted in November on GW that Borg is a "pretty traditional Christian".

Nothing has changed since the Garden of Eden. I and others were taken to task on GW that this and the creation story may not exist and that we shouldn't go on about it as if it does exist. Satan's lies have not changed since the beginning where he introduced disbelief and doubt of God's Word....and we humans fell for it way back in Genesis with Adam and Eve, and we continue to fall for the same old recycled lies to the present day. Satan doesn't need to change how he does things because we fall for it time and time again. He wants us to get off of God's Word or doubt it or disregard it, or filter it, or change it and disbelieve that it has anything to do with us. God warns us over and over again to be discerning, and watch and be careful about Satan's lies. Matthew 7 tells us to *"watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them."* And then in I Timothy 6:20 we read, *"guard what has been entrusted to your care. Turn away from godless chatter and opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge, which some have professed and in so doing have wandered from the faith."* Who does the ELCIC think that these false prophets/teachers are who teach their "false knowledge"? Some other group? Somebody else? Why does the ELCIC think that they are immune to the lies of "false prophets" as described in Matthew 7, and think that by entertaining these teachings they can somehow be immune from any spiritual harm? Look at the fruits. Look at what is happening to the church here in the ELCIC and the ELCA? People are leaving in droves. That is the fruit. Why are we not guarding what has been entrusted to our care as I Timothy states. Instead it is given license to be attacked.

In John 12 we read *"Yet at the same time many even among the leaders believed in him. But because of the Pharisees they would not confess their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue; for they loved praise from men more than praise from God"*. I suspect that nothing has changed and that many leaders in the ELCIC are reenacting this same situation. They don't want to be put out of the ELCIC or take a stand because it is more important to be in the good books and get praise from men than praise from God. We are told over and over again in the Bible to be discerning, to be careful, to watch, to not be deceived.....it goes on and on. Somehow we are throwing those cautions to the wind and are walking right on into the danger and somehow feel that we are invincible. We aren't. No one is. There is a real hell, a real Satan, a real Judgment, a real accounting, and real consequence. I know that many have taken me to task for believing what the Bible says about hell and about its existence. I was even told that the hell referred to in the Bible is a "garbage dump" outside the walls of Jerusalem, amongst other comments that it may or may not even exist.

I love all of you and I know that all of you want to do the right thing and many of you strongly disagree with me. I know. I've heard it directly from some of you. From what I've read on Grace Words, what I've read from the "clergy day" workshops with D. Butler Bass (Borg follower), from what I've read on Lutherans Concerned, the various synod web sites, the ELCIC web site, the Anglican web sites, Kelly Fryer, workshops that Marcus Borg and related teachers are teaching to Lutherans, the Vancouver School of Theology courses promoted on Lutheran sites, etc. and many many many readings and materials and web sites, I see that we are surrounded and that there is no room for orthodox positions, or more importantly, a belief in them anymore.

At Mount Olive, we have not *"taken a stand against the devil's schemes"* (Ephesians 6:11). We have sat by and have accepted all that is going on around us without taking a formal stand. What kind of faith/religion are we in the ELCIC leaving for those who follow? Did not others who went before us defend the faith so that we could all have something precious and true? What are we doing with this precious faith while on our watch? We are not defending the faith and people's salvation is at stake. I have tried to do all that I can and it appears that I have upset a lot of people and am disliked by many for the first time in my life. I just can't believe, even now, that this is happening to my beloved church and to all the wonderful souls in our church. I love you all.

Prayerfully yours
Astrid Neumann

Original in the mail

