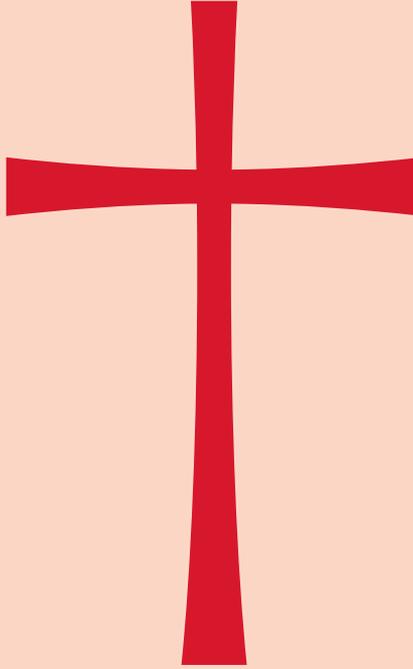


CLC STATEMENT OF FAITH AND PURPOSE



THE CHURCH OF THE LUTHERAN CONFESSION

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FOREWORD

The 1968 Convention of the Church of the Lutheran Confession asked that a statement be prepared and published that would supply a simple but definitive expression of our faith in the basic doctrines of Scripture.

The Statement of Faith and Purpose was published in 1969. It has served well as a public confession of the Church of the Lutheran Confession, and experience has shown that it has spoken to the hearts of readers in an inspirational rather than dogmatic fashion.

The Statement of Faith and Purpose was written to present what the Bible says and what we believe and teach regarding the issues of the day. While our confessional position remains unchanged, there was an effort in this 4th edition to speak simply and clearly to a world that desperately needs to hear the words of life from Jesus.

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I. OUR PURPOSE

It is our single purpose to be a Christian church that proclaims the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ as revealed in the Bible. This Gospel is the only way people can know the true God and the way to eternal life. Our purpose and commitment rest upon the following statements of the Bible:

Matthew 28:18-20: And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.

John 17:3: And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

Acts 4:12: Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

We reject the idea of some that the main work of the church is to promote political and social causes. Our right of existence as a church body has been established by our Lord's commission to "*preach the gospel to every creature*" (Mark 16:15). Therefore we are committed to say with the Apostle Paul: "*I am determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified*" (1 Corinthians 2:2). As individuals, Christians will show fruits of their faith by concern for social and political issues, letting their light shine before others to the glory of God.

1 Peter 2:9: But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

Matthew 5:13-16: You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out & trampled underfoot by men. You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lamp-stand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

II. OUR SOURCE OF TRUTH

In our teaching and preaching we rely entirely upon the Bible, the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments. We regard the Bible as the very Word of God, verbally inspired (every word “God-breathed”) and completely without error. Our mission is to faithfully communicate the words and message of the Bible. There is no other divine source of true doctrine and instruction in the way of salvation and in God-pleasing living.

We reject as ungodly and destructive every effort by which some would change, add to, or set aside a single inspired word of the Bible. God’s Word is clear and sufficient in all matters of faith and life. We deplore the widespread unfaithfulness — found even in some professing Christian churches — that reduces the Bible to a human document containing errors and myths.

2 Timothy 3:16-17: All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

John 10:35: . . . and the Scripture cannot be broken.

Luke 21:33: Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.

Jeremiah 23:28: The prophet who has a dream, let him tell a dream; And he who has My word, let him speak My word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? says the LORD.

Psalms 119:105: Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.

III. MAN: HIS CREATION AND FALL

We believe, as the Bible teaches, that mankind is a unique creation. People are not products of an evolutionary process of millions of years.

God created all things in heaven and earth during six twenty-four hour days by the power of His almighty Word. By that same Word He continues to uphold and sustain all things.

Exodus 20:11: For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.

Man was created in the image of God (holy and righteous), but he lost that image through the fall into sin. Since the fall, he is by nature and from conception without spiritual goodness. Man is spiritually blind and dead, an enemy of God, and doomed to eternal damnation. In his lost condition he can do nothing to save himself.

Genesis 1:27: So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

Genesis, Chapter 3. (Adam's Fall)

Genesis 8:21b: "... although the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth."

Psalms 14:2-3: The LORD looks down from heaven upon the children of men, To see if there are any who understand, who seek God. They have all turned aside, They have together become corrupt; There is none who does good, No, not one.

Psalms 51:5: Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me.

Ephesians 2:3: . . . *we all . . . were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.*

Romans 8:7: *Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.*

IV. THE TRIUNE GOD REVEALED IN HIS WORD

The creation of the world and the testimony of conscience (natural knowledge) make evident the existence of God. However, the saving knowledge of God is known only through His gracious revelation in Christ recorded in the Bible (revealed knowledge).

Romans 1:18-25: For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man – and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. . . and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

We confess and worship the Triune (three-in-one) God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. In this Triune God we find the source and promise of salvation.

Matthew 28:18: And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

Without exception, any other god is an idol that cannot hear, see, or save. This describes false gods worshipped by non-Christians. In the darkness of their wicked hearts, sinners left to themselves follow the errors of idolatry – false worship.

FATHER

God the Father is our Creator and Preserver. He loved the world, which was perishing in its sins, and from eternity planned the salvation of every sinner through God the Son.

Genesis 1:1: *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*

Psalms 145:14-15: *The eyes of all look expectantly to You, and You give them their food in due season. You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing.*

John 3:16: *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*

SON

God the Son is our Redeemer. He came to this world in the flesh, and became man to be our Savior. Jesus Christ, true God and true man, lived a life of perfect obedience to God's Law on behalf of every sinner. As the sinner's substitute, He suffered the full punishment of hell on the cross. He atoned for the sins of the whole world, completely removed all guilt, and reconciled everyone to God.

On the third day He rose from the dead in glorious victory over sin and death. We believe that God has justified (declared righteous) all sinners because of Jesus' perfect obedience and His sacrificial death.

Galatians 4:4-5: *But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.*

2 Corinthians 5:19-21: *God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*

Romans 5:8-10: *But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.*

HOLY SPIRIT

God the Holy Spirit is our Sanctifier (the One who sets us apart as believers in Christ). His function in our salvation is to enlighten our dark and sinful hearts. To accomplish this, He uses the Gospel (the good news of salvation through Jesus) to create saving faith and give the comfort of the forgiveness of sins. The Holy Spirit creates believers in Christ through His gracious working in the heart of the sinner. Scripture calls this change from unbeliever to believer *regeneration*, that is, a new birth (cf. John 3:1ff).

No one, by his own strength of mind or will, can do anything except resist and reject the life-giving Gospel. No one, by his own power, can choose to believe in Christ. The Apostle Paul told believers, in reviewing their former spiritual condition: “*You were dead in trespasses and sins*” (Ephesians 2:1). So we recognize that no one is able to “accept Christ” or “welcome Him into his heart” by his own reason or strength. The sinner receives and accepts the blessing of his justification only through the faith which the Holy Spirit creates.

The Holy Spirit dwells in the hearts of those in whom He has created faith, sanctifying them day by day. The Spirit empowers them to live before God as His children according to His revealed will and enables them to crucify the sinful urges that still cling to them in this life.

1 Corinthians 12:3: *No one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.*

Ephesians 2:4-5: *But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved).*

1 Corinthians 3:16: *Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?*

Ephesians 2:10: *For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*

Galatians 5:22-24: *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.*

Romans 10:17: *So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*

V. THE HOLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH

We teach that the Holy Spirit creates one Holy Christian Church, which consists of all believers in Christ who, by God's mercy, were from eternity appointed in Christ for eternal life. Faith in Christ makes one a member of the Holy Christian Church. Since we cannot see faith in the heart, it is impossible for us to determine which individuals are members of Christ's Church. Therefore we cannot identify this Church with a particular organization or church body. Only God, who has the ability to look into the heart, knows who the members of His Church are. For this reason we speak of the Holy Christian Church as "invisible."

The Holy Spirit promises to gather the members of His Church by the "Means of Grace" (the Gospel in the Word and Sacraments). We can be certain that believers will be present wherever the Gospel is in use.

Acts 13:48: Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.

2 Timothy 2:19: Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal : "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity."

Ephesians 1:3-6: Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved.

Isaiah 55:11: So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.

VI. RELIGIOUS FELLOWSHIP: ITS BASIS AND LIMITATIONS

We are confident that many people, though they may be members of other church bodies (visible churches) and do not openly share with us the profession of the true Bible teachings, nevertheless are Christians and children of God through faith in Christ.

However, in worshipping together with others, and in doing joint church work, God directs us in His Word to join in confessional fellowship with them based on complete agreement in all doctrines of Holy Scripture.

We are also aware that in any church there may be hypocrites who in spite of their outward confession are not true believers in Christ.

1 John 1:7: But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

1 Corinthians 1:10: Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

Romans 15:5-6: Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus, that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Matthew 15:8: These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me.

2 Corinthians 6:14-18: . . . what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? . . . Therefore "Come out from among them And be separate . . ."

Ephesians 5:6-7: *Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them.*

2 John 1:10-11: *If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds.*

Romans 16:17-18: *Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple.*

Romans 14:1: *Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things.*

In our practice therefore:

1. We hold that the name “Christian” is not properly applied to those who, in any way, reject the blood-bought salvation of Jesus Christ.
2. We follow Scripture which limits all forms of religious fellowship to Christians who express full agreement with the teachings of Scripture and do not by word or act reject any part of God’s Word.
3. While in our religious fellowship we avoid all who preach, teach, or advocate error, we gladly receive those who, though partly uninformed or weak in understanding, profess faith in their Savior, welcome instruction from the Word and are willing to bow to its authority.
4. We are encouraged and heartened by every testimony, written or spoken, that confesses and glorifies our Lord Jesus Christ. We reject and condemn the false ecumenism that would require us to make common cause in worship and church work with those who

claim the Christian name, or even the Lutheran name, but publicly adhere to that which contradicts any part of His Word.

5. We condemn separatism – the denial of fellowship with others for reasons not in harmony with God’s revealed will.
6. We joyfully acknowledge that the Lord knows His elect children even though some are members of false-teaching churches. However, by their membership they are identifying with and promoting error by which the salvation of souls is threatened.
7. We pray that all who believe in the Lord Jesus may be preserved in this faith to their end and finally receive, by His merits and mercy, the crown of eternal life.

VII. THE MINISTRY OF THE GOSPEL

Our Lord Jesus Christ has established the ministry of the Gospel so that sinners may be saved. Through the ministry of the Gospel the Holy Spirit calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. All those whom the Holy Spirit has called out of darkness into His light declare His praises and thus share in this ministry as priests of God. To accomplish the work of the Gospel, the Lord enables Christians to establish congregations as well as other groups (sometimes called synods or denominations).

The believers within congregations and church bodies have the privilege of providing the public proclamation and teaching of God's saving Word by calling pastors and teachers to whom God Himself has given the necessary gifts and abilities. These called servants are instruments of God, chosen and prepared by Him to act on His behalf as well as on behalf of the Christians who have called them. They are given the splendid privilege of publicly declaring the grace of God in Jesus Christ through the Word and Sacrament.

This service is called the "public ministry" which is carried out by those whom Christ gives to His Church and who are properly called by the Church for this work. These ministers of the Word are thus occupying a divinely instituted office. The specific area of the work of these public ministers is determined and defined in their respective calls by the assembly that has called them. There is no distinction in rank or power in the public ministry, even though there is a diversity of gifts and responsibilities. Eligibility for a call to the public ministry is determined by the directives of God's Word (cf. 1 Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:5-9).

We further believe that when called ministers of Christ, in accordance with their respective calls, deal with us by Christ's command, He works through them.

1 Timothy 2:11-14 teaches that women are not to be called to the pastoral ministry. This clear section also informs us that women are not to function in any position in the church in which they teach or have authority over men.

1 Peter 2:9-10: *But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.*

Ephesians 4:11-12: *And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.*

Acts 20:28: *Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.*

Luke 10:16: *Jesus said: "He who hears you hears Me, he who rejects you rejects Me, and he who rejects Me rejects Him who sent Me."*

Hebrews 13:7: *Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct.*

1 Timothy 2:11-14: *Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.*

VIII. THE SACRAMENTS OF BAPTISM AND OF THE ALTAR

BAPTISM

The Sacrament of Holy Baptism is administered among us as a part of the Gospel ministry. We learn from God's Word that Baptism is a washing of spiritual regeneration (new birth). The Holy Spirit works through the Word applied with the water of Baptism to create faith in the Savior and to give forgiveness of sins.

In this way Baptism imparts the blessings of Christ to young and old. We believe that infant Baptism is also taught by Scripture – both in the Savior's command to baptize all nations and in God's promise that Baptism has the power to save us and our children. The method of applying the water of Baptism is not prescribed in Scripture. We regard a Baptism as valid when it is performed in accordance with Christ's institution – namely, that it is done with water and in the name of the Triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

John 3:5: Jesus answered . . . "unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."

Titus 3:5-8: . . . not by works of righteousness which we have done , but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men.

Matthew 28:19: Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 2:38-39: *Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. “For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.”*

1 Peter 3:21: *There is also an antitype which now saves us, namely baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.*

THE SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR

The Sacrament of the Altar (Holy Communion/Lord’s Supper) is administered in our congregations as it was instituted by the Lord Jesus Christ. The body and blood of Christ are really and truly present in the eating and drinking of the bread and wine. We believe, according to Scripture, that this Sacrament – like Baptism – is a Means of Grace giving the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. This Sacrament is given to those for whom Christ intended it – namely, to penitent sinners who recognize the presence of the Lord’s body and blood and are able to examine themselves. We also believe that attendance at the Lord’s Table is an expression of unity of faith and confession among those who partake. The Sacrament is therefore properly administered when participants are united in the confession of their faith. This is the “closeness” of Christian fellowship described by the Apostle Paul (cf. 1 Corinthians 10:17). We practice “close” Communion out of obedience to Christ’s will for the proper use of this Sacrament and restrict participation out of love for souls, so that people do not partake of this Sacrament to their harm. This Holy Supper is a precious gift for our souls, worthy of frequent and sanctified use by all communicants.

1 Corinthians 11:23-29: *For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord, Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, “Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.” In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.” For as often as you eat this*

bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes. Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

1 Corinthians 10:15-19: I speak as to wise men; judge for yourselves what I say. The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread.

IX. THE FINAL JUDGMENT

We believe and teach that this world as it now exists will be destroyed. We have no illusions as to the final outcome of events and do not preach false millennialistic hopes. We reject the false teachings that there will be a mass conversion of the Jews and that Christ will return for a thousand-year rule on earth prior to or following a “rapture” of the elect. Rather, turning to and trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ, we point to the future city of God “...not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” (2 Corinthians 5:1). We encourage all to look forward to the glorious appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ in His Second Coming to judge the living and the dead. On that day the believers will hear Jesus say, “Come, you blessed of my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” (Matthew 25:34)

2 Peter 3:10: But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.

Mark 16:16: He who believes and is baptized will be saved, but he who does not believe will be condemned.

2 Timothy 3:13: But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.

John 18:36: Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here.”

Ephesians 5:6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

Matthew 25:31-46 (Christ’s glorious return)

X. CONCLUSION

We believe and desire to confess by word and deed before the Triune God and all mankind these truths together with all other truths of Holy Scripture as set forth also in the Lutheran confessional statements as found in the Book of Concord (1580 AD).

We earnestly desire to share the rich blessings of Christ and extend a welcome to:

ALL who are in distress of mind and heart because of their guilt and condemnation in the sight of Almighty God and who seek the pardon and comfort that only the Gospel of Jesus Christ can give;

ALL who are bewildered by the confusion of many voices offering the theories of human wisdom in the name of religion and who desire to hear the voice of the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ, Whom God raised from the dead;

ALL who, though members of Christian churches, have come to recognize that their churches have departed from the truth of Holy Scripture and therefore “ask for the old paths where the good way is . . .” (Jeremiah 6:16);

ALL who have strayed from the faith and desire to be restored to the Shepherd and Overseer of their souls (cf. 1 Peter 2:25).

*Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling,
And to present you faultless
Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy,
To God our Savior, Who alone is wise,
Be glory and majesty, Dominion and power,
Both now and forever. Amen.*
(Jude vv. 24-25)