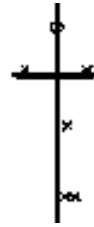


Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod



Emmanuel Lutheran Church

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Rev. President David Benke
Rev. President Dr. Gerald Kieschnick
Rev. Vice President Daniel Preus
Rev. Vice President Wallace Schulz
Rev. Vice President Robert King
Rev. Vice President Paul Maier
Rev. Vice President William Weinrich
Rev. President William Hoesman

Dear Sirs,

Greetings in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ!

I am writing to bring charges of unionism and syncretism and to rebuke the activity of you, Dr. David Benke, relative to your participation in a unionistic prayer service on September 23, 2001 at Yankee Stadium in New York. You have publicly broken the Second Commandment. I need not remind you that this is also a violation of one of the Constitutional purposes of Synod, to guard against unionism in all its forms. Prayer is an official church act and flows only from true faith in the Savior (*lex orandi lex credendi*). Joining a service of prayer in which Muslims, Christian errorists, Hindus and others used the words "God", "forgiveness," "salvation", apart from Christ invites those observing to believe that they are the same words as those connected with Christ in Christian prayer. This is subterfuge. Saying that those gathered were stronger than they were an hour ago without ever referencing that strength only to Christ and not at all to the various gods or false versions of christ addressed was subterfuge. Christ never called those who did not believe his Words brothers and sisters. He called them children of the devil (John 8: 42-44). He did not call the pharisees (errorists) of his time brothers and sisters nor did he say to join with them, but he said avoid their leaven (Matthew 16:12-specifically their false doctrine and again, *lex orandi lex credendi*). And although the apostle Paul bids us to pray for (and not with) all men (1 Timothy 2) this exhortation is to be followed not out in the world and the public (Matthew 6:5) but in secret, that is, between God and man alone. Thus prayer is not to be a spectacle as the 'pietist' thinks, in order to be heard by the world, but between God who hears and man who prays. Corporate prayer does this among the faithful who are able to pray to God not among the world who merely sees and observes prayer as a spectacle. They can only see it as such since they have no faith. They cannot pray or join in it so how can we invite them to join? Prayer is offered up to God alone, not to make an impression upon an audience. Public witness to Christ as is clearly directed by Scripture is a call to repentance. It is baptism and teaching; making dead to sin and alive to God. President Benke, you did not invite repentance to those embracing the lies of false doctrine. You called them brothers and sisters. In fact, in your prayer you asked that the innocent open their hearts to 'the Innocent One.' Who is innocent? I believe that you were using the term innocent for those who were suffering from the attack and if you were working for the government, which judges on the basis of civil righteousness, you could do that. But as a minister of

Christ, you could not call anyone suffering these things innocent. They are all sinners and need the Innocent One (and they cannot open their hearts to Him if you have a Lutheran understanding of conversion). Once again you use double talk instead of a clear call to repentance. (see Luke 24: 47).

In this connection I have searched the Scriptures and sought a reason in the Gospel for your participation in this service and have found only what argues against what you did. It leads me to wonder what Biblical guidance you were following by participating. Please consider the following:

1. In 1 Kings 18: 17f, Elijah holds a joint prayer service with 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of Asherah. These false prophets were supported by the government. However, while the false prophets were praying, Elijah was ridiculing them and making fun of their gods. He was in no way giving credence or giving the impression that he acknowledged their prayer with any respect since it was a lie. He prayed on the same mountain top but made it clear that he was not a part of their prayers because they were evil. Elijah clearly pleased God in that and acted according to God's desire for repentance and salvation for those that embraced evil (the followers of the lie). President Benke, you did not do this. This prayer service on Mount Carmel was also held during a time of national disaster. Yet Elijah witnessed to the true God against false gods. In this he led many to repentance. You did not do this. You affirmed the errors by your participating the way you did. You called the prophets of Baal (Islam) sisters and brothers. Your public ministry does not resemble the ministry of the OT prophets. Elijah and they pointed unambiguously away from false gods to the God who provides the sacrifice, Christ; you did not.

2. In Luke 13: 1f is recorded the collapse of the single tower (Siloam) in Jerusalem with the loss of life. The people were upset and had much questioning and confusion about what it could mean and if they were safe. What did Jesus do in this situation? He did not pray. He taught. This is what we are also called to do among the nations. We do not witness to Christ through praying, since that activity is directed not towards people who hear the prayer, but to God, unless, that is, that our prayer is some sort of public performance. We are to teach publicly as Jesus did, which you did not do in Yankee Stadium. In fact, had you told Oprah, or whoever had invited you, that you would be turning the people's hearts in your words of teaching/preaching, which was your duty according to Matthew 28, to repentance and to the only way of salvation, Jesus Christ, I think they would have found an excuse to exclude you. And I think if you are honest you would agree. Instead you were all so politically correct that they didn't have to ask and you didn't have to tell. And you didn't tell them or the crowd. Jesus uses this occasion as a reason to call them to their need for salvation which is only to be found in him - Jesus himself. He does not say to them to find their strength in his prayers, or in the prayers of errorists, but in his WORK and WORD. And he says to them, "unless you repent you will all likewise perish." Your public ministry does not resemble Jesus' or Elijah's in the light of Biblical witness and the national stage which you took. Your love seems to want to please men and leave them where they are instead of save them. That is not love that comes from God.

3. In Acts 16:16f, St. Paul in Philippi is doing what God called him to do. He is preaching and teaching the Gospel. One of the town's media darlings is following him around. She, no doubt, is seen as someone very spiritual since she consults with the spirits, just as Oprah is also seen in a popular sense as very spiritual among her following in America. In fact, she is the queen of new age if you examine her thoughts on things. She speaks for the devil in this as did this fortune teller following Paul. What is Paul's reaction to her? Certainly he could have used her endorsement. Certainly this ancient Oprah was even telling the truth when she was putting her own spotlight upon St. Paul saying, "These men are the servants of the most High God, telling us the way of salvation." But what does Paul do with her spotlight? He puts it out, because it is plainly of the devil. He exorcized the devil from her so she had no spotlight left. Paul put out the devil's spotlight and you basked in it. Your public ministry does not

seem to resemble St. Paul's in the light of the Biblical witness of Apostolic practice. You were not following Christ and casting out devils as Paul did. You basked in their limelight. It is a shame for both you and our Synod, whom you represent.

Because your act was public, I am sending this rebuke to you, but also to your ecclesiastical superior, President Kieschnick, my supervisor, President Hoesman, and the Synodical Vice-Presidents. I must also at this time rebuke President Kieschnick for his public support of your participation on the Synod's web site and for the inaccuracies and glosses that were reported on that web site which appeared in most cases to attempt to attenuate the force of the offenses you committed in your words.

I also want to assure you that it is out of a love for Jesus and His Word that I send this rebuke and not out of disrespect for your Offices or the church. There are some that would say that it is "legalism" that stands behind people who are offended by your action. And there are some that would say that you, President Benke, are a lawless man who has reduced the Bible to the Gospel so that the law which God states in the Bible is no longer valid or worthy to be heard. There are some that do not believe in the third use of the law. Where does all this find resolution? St. Paul says in Galatians 5:22-23: But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. Lutherans believe that the fruits of the Spirit and the freedom of the Christian is freedom from the curse of the Law, but it also is freedom to obey the Law. President Benke, your acts could not have been of the Spirit because they were a sin against the Second Commandment. Instead of keeping God's name sacred and separate from every other name, it was made common as it was dragged to the level of Allah, etc. Instead of doing what God commanded among the nations (the preaching of repentance) prayer to Jesus was mingled shamelessly with prayers to Allah. You represented our Lord as if he were one among many. He is One and Only. To give another impression is idolatry. What fellowship has light and darkness? Yet light and darkness took part in what all (and you) called "god's house of prayer." According to the first petition in the Catechism, "he that teaches and lives other than God's Word teaches profanes the Name of God among us. From this preserve us dear heavenly Father." You have profaned the Name of God among us and are evidently bent on doing it more. I beg you to repent of this and be reconciled to God.

I am sharing this letter with my elders. Since I am writing as an official act as a servant / Pastor of this Church and as a member of Synod, this reaction to your public acts should be shared with those I serve so that they be aware of it. If I am in error because of this rebuke I beg that you would show me from Scriptures and the Confessions my own error that I might repent of it and I will beg your forgiveness for my importunity and sinning in boldness (Matthew 7:1f). But my conscience is bound to God's Word and in your oath of Office you promised also to be bound to that same Word. I am convinced that you have shamed our Church and should be removed from office; especially in light of the apology and agreement you made with Synod in the immediate past. I call upon President Kieschnick to also respond and explain to me fraternally from Scriptures and the Confessions where I am wrong or to remove his endorsement and remove you from Office, to the end that you might return to the house of the merciful Father, not as a servant (pastor) any longer, but as a son. In love I pray that God might grant you repentance that He save you from your sin and error and that you be restored with joy to God's narrow Way (Matthew 7:13).

Your servant in Christ,

The Rev. Joel R. Baseley