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The Faith of Christian Church Under the Pressure of Secularism;

Let the Church be an Authentic Church!

Ten theses on preserving the good and changing only when needed

1. The faith of the church and its foundation need not and cannot be changed
2. The Bible, the word of God, must be preserved as the foundation of the Confession, as the supreme authority. The Confessionals constitute supportive advice
3. Any compromise over the foundations of faith causes confusion and makes parishioners inquire about the credibility of the Church and her shepherds
4. Abandonment of the authority of the Bible and of the foundations of faith leads to disunion which we are responsible for. With the help of the holy triune God we can do penance and mend our church boat in order to prevent it from breaking
5. The liberating message of the Gospel must be preached with full competence. The Law of God must not be overshadowed by disparaging human sin and guilt that can be abolished through the mercy of Christ only.
6. The future vision of the Church must be kept clear. We should not forget the reality of the transcendence or hereafter at the expense of the immanence or present existence
7. The Word of God and the sacraments must be taken seriously. Baptism gives us a guarantee of the gift of righteousness, reinforced by confirmation and Eucharist on the short life journey from cradle to grave.
8. The voice of the Church must not be simplified to a word play; instead, the Word and deeds must walk hand in hand and support our neighbour. The Church must be a co-bearer of responsibility for working life. Ethical questions pertaining to individuals must be put right without delay. Equality is a self-evident right for all employees. We must look at the Church's mission and the serious world-wide problems with the intention to mend them instead of settling unceasing internal disputes.
9. The local parish is the central core of the life and work of the Church. All baptised Christians, layman as well as clergy, must be given the willingness and readiness to act as messengers of Christ's joy in urban communities as well as in countryside, in all the fields of cultural and social life.
10. During the past weeks and months, we have lost great numbers of members from our Church. Membership in and commitment to the Church of Finland seem to be very shallow and sensitive to different trends in the society.

Faith, Lutheranism, and ecumenicalism of the Church

Our Church is in a storm. Joint efforts are needed in a threatening situation in order to avoid the risk of sinking the church boat in order that it can be steered to the opposite coast. We must wait for a calm for a long long time in this visible worldly existence.

The ecumenical safekeeping of the faith and basic instruction of our Evangelical-Lutheran Church have to be taken into full use. The anticipated, and for that matter real, attitudes of people are a reflective basis to be reckoned with, but they cannot become a source of dogma. If occasional emphasis on ethics penetrate the sphere of dogma, the church boat will sway dangerously. This happens when some of the overseers of the dogma take a stand on moral questions before the Synod have made decisions

An advice by the deceased Lauri Haikola, professor of theological ethics and religion philosophy at the University of Helsinki, is a very apt course of action: Faith forgives nothing, love forgives everything.

Independent views have the value of single statements, no more and no less. Analogically, they belong to the same category as the daring manifestations by the Luther- foundation. Last winter when I took part in a discussion connected with the archbishop's election in the crypt of the cathedral of Helsinki, I said that these manifestations are a phenomenon that break the unity of our Evangelical-Lutheran Church.

“Our Church is a confessional Lutheran church which, true to its tradition and confession, strives for consensus with all Christians on the basic truths of faith. It is only where the churches take seriously their doctrine and confession that they can genuinely meet representatives of other traditions.” LUTHERAN AND ECUMENICAL, The Finnish Evangelical-Lutheran Church and its relationships with other churches”

During the past few decades, the ecumenical relationships of our Church have been dealt with in an exemplary manner. Individualistic moral attitudes under the pressure of public opinion and media are, however, likely to break and put asunder ecumenical ties and can drive us into a corner where we try to warm our hands on an oil lamp.

The proclamation LUTHERAN AND ECUMENICAL obliges the teachers of the Church to listen to and look at all directions: the Orthodox world, the Catholic Church, and the free churches, and other evangelical communities.

Classical Christianity and its dogmatic formation – the Apostolic creed, the Nicean creed, and the Confessionals of the Evangelical-Lutheran church are and will remain the foundation of our church and life. Temporary storm winds and the roar of the world need not displace or overthrow them, because the saving gospel that Christ brought and that redeems us from sin, guilt and death shall be our guiding star now and for ever. In whirling wind and tranquil calm, we have to adhere to Christ even to the boundary of eternity. As our great reformer Martin Luther said at the Diet of Worms in 1521, “I stand here and cannot do otherwise.”