

May 9, 2017

To the faithful pastors and laity of the the India Evangelical Lutheran Church:

Grace, mercy, and peace to you through God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Suffering and Resurrected Savior!

In accord with the Constitution elections will soon be conducted in the IELC. As Christian fathers and mothers strive to teach their children to live in a manner pleasing to the heavenly Father, so the LCMS as the spiritual mother of the IELC should strive to pass on to her dear child all that is God-pleasing. In this letter we want to remind you of how things should be done “decently and in good order” (1 Corinthians 14:40) in this up-coming election. It is crucial that those be elected to office who will adorn their offices with all that is good.

In the Acts 8:17-24 we read about a man named Simon. Simon saw Peter and John laying hands upon new Christians in order that they might receive the Holy Spirit. Simon was hungry for power and honor, so he offered the apostles money, saying, “Give me this power also, so that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit.” Peter responded immediately,

May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! You have neither part nor lot in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. Repent, therefore, of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.

You see from this that it is a great sin for a man to try to use money or influence to gain authority in the Church. This sin is called “simony” after this Simon of Acts 8, who tried to purchase God’s gifts. You see that Peter immediately excommunicates Simon for his ungodly ambition.

The charge of simony belongs not only to the one offering money or favors in order to gain an office in the church, but those who receive money or favors in order to put another into office are also guilty of this damnable sin. You can tell from the response of the Apostle Peter that this is no joke: “May your silver perish with you!... Your heart is not right before God. Repent.”

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, for many years the IELC has succumbed to the sin of simony. Those desiring an office in the church have promised money or positions or favors in order to be elected or appointed. This is how things are done in worldly politics, but it must not be so in the church. Those who would buy a position with favors and promises and those who will be bought are both endangering their souls. They are shaming our blessed Savior Jesus Christ; they are shaming the missionaries who brought them the Gospel of Christ. They cannot prosper.

We see this in the IELC. A church that once prospered when leaders conducted their offices decently, now has fallen into utter confusion, corruption, and distrust. No one trusts a man who gives or receives a bribe. Christ says, “Whoever is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much. If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth (mammon), who will entrust to you the true riches?” (St. Luke 16:10-11). If a person cannot contest for office with integrity, then how can he possibly lead with integrity?

Dear faithful brothers in the IELC, your course is clear. In fear and love for God, you must refuse to elect those who strive after office by promising money or other favors.

In the same way you must elect men and women of integrity who will look to the best interests of the whole church. You must not elect officers with the thought that they will favor the Ambur Synod or the Trivandrum Synod or the Nagercoil Synod. If you elect officers of integrity, they will strive to bless all the synods and the entire church. They will strive to be fair to one and all.

But how do you find such men and women of integrity?

It is clear from the sad experience of the IELC that seniority is NOT a way of finding those most qualified to hold office. Nor does the Holy Christian Church appoint her leaders on the basis of age and seniority. A few examples make this clear. Consider Moses. He was the younger brother, but the Lord chose him, not Aaron, to lead the Children of Israel (Exodus 7:7). Consider David. He was the youngest of eight brothers. When God told Samuel to anoint a son of Jesse to be king, Samuel immediately assumed it would be the oldest, but the Lord said, "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature.... For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7). So Samuel passed over the seven elder sons of Jesse. Finally, the youngest was the one chosen by God. Even our own dear Savior Jesus Christ was a young man, only thirty years old, when He began His ministry. John the Baptist was his senior, yet John says of Christ, "After me comes a man who ranks before me;" and later, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 1:30; 3:30). We could also give the example of the prophet Jeremiah who was a mere youth when the Lord called him (Jeremiah 1:6); or Timothy, chosen by Apostle Paul to be Bishop of the Church at Ephesus. Paul had to encourage Timothy, "Let no one despise your youth" (1 Timothy 4:12).

Certainly, age and experience are important. God's Word repeatedly calls for the elderly to be held in honor: "You shall stand up before the gray head and honor the face of an old man, and you shall fear your God: I am the Lord" (Lev. 19:32). However, to honor the elderly says nothing about how to select people for offices in God's Kingdom. A person should not be chosen for office solely on the basis of seniority or that it is now "his turn." This is the foolish way of human politics. In the church, the Holy Spirit selects His servants on the basis of their faithfulness and their ability to perform the offices entrusted to them. So, for instance, Paul gives Timothy and Titus instructions for choosing pastors and deacons in their cities (1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9). Paul does not tell them to choose the men who have been believers for the longest amount of time. Paul does not urge Timothy and Titus to act on the basis of seniority. Rather, Paul gives them a list of qualifications. Those who best suit those qualifications are the ones chosen to be pastors and deacons. Such wisdom should guide the church of all times in selecting those who serve in any office in the church. They must be qualified and faithful.

In the passage above when Samuel was supposed to anoint one of the sons of Jesse as king, the Lord says that He does not see as we see, but rather He looks at the heart (1 Samuel 16:7). No, we cannot see the heart of people, but we can tell something about their hearts from the way they conduct themselves. Consider again each of the people mentioned above who were chosen by God to serve as leaders in His church. One characteristic is common to them all. They did not personally pursue the office. We all remember from Sunday School the scene at the burning bush. Moses tries every way possible to not be the one to lead Israel (Exodus 4:13). David was tending the sheep when he was chosen. Later he humbly prays, "Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that you have brought me thus far! (2 Samuel 7:18). Jeremiah, Jonah, the Apostle Paul, all of these men were reluctant to assume the office God had chosen for them. They did not maneuver and bribe and slander and promise favors in order to get their esteemed appointments. But it seems that this has become the very common practice in the IELC: back room deals, offers of favors and position, defaming others aspiring to office. Such actions reveal the heart. Those who conduct themselves

in this manner are not fit to serve in God's church. Such rock-hearted people will use their offices for their own personal honor and benefit, but they will not work diligently for the blessing of the church. They will be active for their own interests, but they will be lazy and fearful of the hard work and suffering that comes with doing what is right.

Where is the David? Where is the Moses? Where is the Paul or John the Baptist of the IELC? Men old or young, men of integrity and skill, men dedicated to serving Christ and His church? Men who have not put themselves forward, but have faithfully served where they have been asked to serve. Men who have been diligent. Men who have spent their own money, their own time, their own sweat and tears to fight those who have deceived, robbed, and raped the IELC over these last years. Not men who see the offices of the church as an upward stepping stone for their own reputation. Not men who are constantly pushing themselves forward in back rooms or secret meetings. Not men who claim seniority as their primary qualification. Men who are hardworking, men who are humble. Real men who are willing to suffer for the sake of doing right. Men who have been faithful in a little and so can be entrusted with much. These are the leaders that you must elect.

What will happen in the IELC if you find such men of integrity and faith to serve—to work, fight, and pray? Five hundred years ago the church in Europe was mired in corruption and false teaching. One man was forced against his will to stand up for what is right. He spoke, he wrote, he suffered, he prayed. He expected that at any moment his enemies could come and arrest him and literally burn him alive as a heretic. This man was Martin Luther. Through him and those who faithfully worked beside him, our Lutheran church came into existence. The pure Gospel of the forgiveness of sins by grace through faith in Christ was clearly proclaimed and confessed. The Holy Scriptures were restored to their rightful place as the only source, rule, and norm of Christian teaching. Baptism and the Lord's Supper were recognized, not at good works offered to God, but as God's gracious mercy bestowed upon us. To be sure, the problems of the church did not magically disappear at the time of the Reformation. The church will always have to battle against wickedness and false teaching within and without. But God used this humble man in a remote part of the German countryside to reform the church and to change the world. So also we can expect that if the godly, humble, faithful pastors and laity are elected in the IELC there can be a reformation and a renewal. But if the business goes on as usual, then corruption, unbiblical practice, and false teachings will only increase in the IELC.

Indeed, if this continues the support and cooperation between the IELC and LCMS will have to come to an end. The corrupt IELC is not the church founded by the missionaries. The true daughter church of the LCMS will have died, and some imposter has assumed her place.

But this need not be the case. There are those faithful, humble, diligent pastors among you, who have not put themselves forward or promised favors or made deals behind closed doors. Such are the men that need to be elected. There also are faithful lay men and women. These are the ones you should press into service.

And if this happens, perhaps God will be merciful and allow a reformation, a renewal, a transformation in the IELC, so that the IELC can be a beacon of the Gospel of Christ in India and Asia, even the whole world.

Knowing all of this, dear friends in Christ, it is now incumbent on you to decide how to behave and whom to elect. You are free to do as you please; the LCMS does not make your decisions for you.

The LCMS does, however, make decisions for itself, and you should understand that your elections may have consequences for your relationship with the LCMS. First, the LCMS will decide whether or not to recognize the results of your elections based on whether or not the election was conducted fairly and transparently in good order according to the valid constitution of the IELC.

If a legitimate administration is elected, then the LCMS must decide whether or not it can support the new administration. This decision of the LCMS will depend on character and integrity of the administration in question. If the administration can be counted on to be cooperative, professional, and supportive of theological and financial integrity, then the LCMS will support it. If, however, the LCMS cannot count on the administration to act with integrity or if the new administration is just a political façade or puppet, the LCMS will not support it, regardless of its legitimacy. It is entirely possible, therefore, to have LCMS recognition but not LCMS support; it is also entirely possible to have neither recognition nor support.

We share this with you in the interest of full transparency and to encourage you to choose your new leaders wisely. Once again, these decisions are **your** responsibility, not the LCMS's.

Lastly, we once again share a list of LCMS-funded projects, etc., for 2016 and 2017 (year-to-date) for your information in an appendix following this letter.

The IELC remains in our prayers during this extremely important time.

In Christ,

Mr. Darin Storkson



Rev. Roger B. James



LIST OF LCMS PROJECTS IN 2016

	AMOUNT (USD)	STATUS
1 Cow for Widows, KGF	7,500	Completed
2 Calvary Lutheran Church, Rajagopal Nagar	14,000	Completed
3 Deaf School Support, Hosur	1,000	Completed
4 Scholarships	8,240	Completed
5 Laptops for Seminary Faculty	3,200	Completed
6 Seminary Library Repair	3,000	Completed
7 Seminary Subsidy	4,935	Completed
8 Cassocks for Seminary Graduates	1,000	Completed
9 CRMs (Vicars) stipends	55,000	Completed
10 Trivandrum Synod Office Improvements	5,000	Completed
11 Scholarship to LCMS Seminary	40,000	Postponed
12 IELC Aided Elementary School, Vaniyambadi	26,716	Completed
13 St. Johns Lutheran Church, M.V. Kuppam	28,750	Completed
14 IELC Aided Elementary School, Bargur	17,108	Completed
15 Venkatasamudram	66,000	Completed
16 St. Johns Lutheran Church, Kaliyakkavilai	19,000	Completed
17 Lutheran Church Cherapalli, Trivandrum	8,000	Completed
18 Lutheran Lower Primary School, Anthiyoor	9,000	In progress
19 Lutheran Lower Primary School, Chenamkode	32,800	In progress
Seminary Compound Wall		
20 Repair/Improvement	11,200	Completed
21 Medical Grants	7,675	Completed
22 Seminary Roof Repair	3,317	Completed
TOTAL	332,441	

LIST OF LCMS PROJECTS IN 2017 (Y-T-D)

	AMOUNT (USD)	STATUS
1 Seminary Subsidy	9,000	Completed
2 Medical Grants	7,026	Completed
TOTAL	16,026	