

**Statement on “The True God”**  
**Office of the President**  
**The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod**

Concerns have been brought to my attention about various discussions taking place in the Synod regarding the question, “Do Christians and non-Christians (e.g., Muslims, Hindus, Jews) worship the same God?”

In response to these concerns, it seems appropriate (and perhaps even necessary) to reiterate statements that I have made in the past concerning this issue, particularly the following statements from memos distributed to LCMS congregations on February 11, 2002 and January 22, 2004:

**There is one God. He is not the god of the Muslims, but the one God who reveals Himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is also why every baptized believer in Jesus is called to bear witness to Jesus Christ and the fact that there is salvation in no one else. We want as many people as possible to know Him and to have life in Him. “For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:3-4). The truth is that Scripture reveals no other way to eternal life than through faith in Jesus.**

**Jesus said: “I am the way, the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6). Peter confessed the name of Jesus saying, “There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). John states the same confession in very clear terms, “This is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who has not the Son of God has not life” (1 John 5:11-12). On the basis of these and other passages of Scripture, we are clear and correct in holding that the beliefs of Islam, Hinduism, etc., are false.**

**In summary, we in the LCMS believe that:**

- There is only one true God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.**
- The Scriptures clearly teach that there is forgiveness, life and salvation solely through faith in Jesus Christ, the only Savior of the world.**
- Christians can therefore never pray to or worship another god under any circumstances, at any event.**

In its recently adopted report *Guidelines for Participation in Civic Events*, the Commission on Theology and Church Relations includes a number of statements that are pertinent to this issue.

In the first part of its report, the CTCR reaffirms the historic teaching of confessional Lutheranism regarding “the natural knowledge of God.” It says:

**Lutherans thank God for, and have long affirmed, the blessing of “civil righteousness” (“the righteousness of reason” or “the righteousness of works”) that exists also among unbelievers in the left-hand kingdom on the basis of the natural knowledge of God through conscience and creation. Lutherans observe with gratitude that this “righteousness of reason” manifested even in the lives of unbelievers “can talk about God and offer God acts of worship with external works; it can obey rulers and parents...it can keep back the hand from murder, adultery and theft.” “In this way outward discipline is preserved, because all people alike know that God requires civil righteousness and that to some extent we are able to achieve it” (Ap XVIII, 4-8; cf. Ap IV, 22-25). (pp. 8-9).**

The Commission goes on to say, however:

- **“The *identity* of the true God can be known only by those who first know Jesus and through him know God” (p. 22; emphasis added). Therefore,**
- **“Christians may not join together with non-Christians in common prayer and worship to an ‘unnamed’ God, or to a “God” that is identified or perceived as a ‘composite’ of many different ‘gods.’ Nor should Christians give the impression that people can pray to the Triune God apart from genuine repentance and faith in Jesus Christ (Prov. 15:8; Is. 1:10-15; Heb. 4:14-16).” (p. 17).**
- **“It is understood that LCMS pastors who participate in civic events of any kind will take care to ensure that their prayers clearly and faithfully reflect Scripture’s teaching regarding the nature of the true God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit and the exclusivity of access to God through faith in Christ alone” (p. 13).**

As the CTCR makes clear, therefore, the identity of the one true God can be known only by those who first know Jesus as he is revealed in Holy Scripture, and only those who trust in Christ can worship the one true God in a way that is acceptable to him. “No one knows . . . who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.” (ESV) (Luke 10:22; cf. Matt. 11:27, John 5:23; 14:6-9; Luke 10:16)

It is my hope that these statements contained in previous memos from the President’s office, together with the clear statements cited above from the CTCR’s report on “civic events,” will help to bring clarity to discussions in the Synod about “the identity and worship of the true God” and will help to promote the unity and harmony that is so essential to our “walking together” as a church body.

