

Lutheran Identity and Mission Outcome Standards for the Concordia University System

The Reverend Dr. Jamison J. Hardy, President

August 25, 2024

Regarding the necessity of having a Lutheran Identity at our Concordia Universities and the LIMOS Standards that CUS is using in all visitation.

It is indisputable that we live in a world increasingly adrift in relativism, and the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod and its universities stand strong in their foundation anchored in the enduring truths of the Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions. The Book of Concord is a collection of confessional statements bound by the word of God and connected to the church's eternal confession in Jesus Christ as the son of God and the savior of the world. These documents, meticulously crafted during the Reformation, clarify and defend core Christian doctrines that the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod understands as enduring through time and culture. It is precisely in the reality that the church begins with a solid foundation of its biblical view and its confessional stance that we are able to have such a strong Lutheran identity in an anti-Christian world.

For the sake of the Church and its confession, the Book of Concord serves as a barricade against doctrinal erosion. It prevents modern culture from distorting the church's confession by way of old heresies dressed in new clothing. It ensures that LCMS universities don't get swept away by the currents of popular opinion or fleeting trends that have overtaken college campuses throughout the United States over the last six months. Imagine the church's confession of the biblical truths of the small catechism as a lighthouse, its beacon, the unchanging light of Scripture, guiding students towards a deeper understanding of their faith, like a lighthouse on the shores shining a spotlight into a foggy Oceanside, directing ships into the safe harbor protected from the buffeted winds and the howling storms that arise on the tumultuous ocean on a daily basis. This reality exists while the world around our Concordia universities does nothing but fall faster and deeper into relativism and self-satisfaction as a way to understand biblical norms.

Don't be lured into a false spirituality that talks about Jesus but forgets about a clear confession or clear distinctive worship practices. The modern contemporary Christian movement finds itself focusing solely on emotion, allistic feelings, and the experience of worship rather than the content of what is being professed and confessed. Take, for example, the debate and controversy of whether or not to baptize unbelieving students on our Concordia campuses. I don't believe that any faithful Lutheran would deny the importance of unbelieving students attending our Concordia as receiving holy baptism as it is connected to our chapels. The difficulty in this reality comes in Christ's own direct command from Matthew 28:19-20, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." It is simply not good enough to baptize an unbeliever without continual and ongoing catechetical instruction and pastoral care. It is evident in Matthew 28:20 that Jesus commanded baptism with the understanding that there

will be continued Catechetical instruction and teaching of all things Christ commands. This cannot simply happen without an intentional connection to a local congregation and a local pastor.

The LIMOS and the distinctively Lutheran identity of all of our Concordia Universities are derived from the church's eternal confession in the inerrant and infallible word of God as spoken by the Book of Concord. Each Concordia University has its own distinctive campus. Together, they share a bond and a unity in a confession that declares faith in a forgiving and loving God. I fully understand and acknowledge that going to each individual Concordia will give a different experience of one fashion or another period however, by utilizing the LIMOS standards we have already seen at two of our five Concordia a clear and decisive bond to our confessional Lutheran positions. There is absolutely no doubt that our Concordia has seek to be an incubator for Christian faith as well as a developing center for preparing civilians, stewards, and servants to the church and the world.

Rooted in Christ: The Centrality of Jesus

The LIMOS emphasize not just theological knowledge, but a vibrant relationship with Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Savior of the world. This is more than intellectual assent; it's a transformative encounter that shapes every aspect of a student's life. The CUS and its campuses have at their core worship of the triune God in a historic Christ-centered faction. It is in the chapel worship at each of our Concordia's where the deep and abiding relationship with the Savior is cultivated. This is the Christ-centered learning environment where students study the Bible and experience its power to bring hope, forgiveness, and purpose. This comes in many different forms but finds its centerpiece and core in the Chapel worship life and the spiritual life of the students on campuses in each of our CUS locations.

Living Out Biblical Standards in Campus life the Bible

The Bible, interpreted through the lens of the Lutheran Confessions, provides a clear moral compass for all students, whether they are members of the Lutheran Church Missouri Senate, new believers, or have come to faith while as a student. In a world where ethical boundaries are constantly blurred, the graduates of our CUS schools are equipped to navigate complex situations with unwavering faith and a firm commitment to a Christological approach to all issues in society and life. They understand concepts like the sanctity of life from the moment of conception, the importance of being good stewards of all that the Lord has provided us, and the call to love their neighbor as oneself. This allows for Concordia graduates to contribute in society as ethical leaders in their professions, making a positive impact that transcends mere career success but rather being a beacon of light in a Dark World of sinfulness, selfishness, and the denial of knowing God.

A Beacon of Hope

Concordia University graduates, receive a full and complete grounding in the Book of Concord and biblical principles that allow our graduates to participate as change agents of the gospel of Christ in all facets of church work, society, and the world. They become beacons of light in a

world desperately searching for meaning And blinded by the satanic temptations to please one's inner spirit above the commands and directives of our Lord Jesus Christ. As beacons of Light students are able to be equipped to offer not just intellectual arguments about difficult cultural problems, but they rather have the ability to articulate the Christological and confessional position of the gospel of Jesus Christ which is a transformative power for the world that lives in darkness. Because of a solid Lutheran identity grounded in the biblical standards and the confessional fidelity of the book of concord Concordia students are able to contribute in many in various ways such as, doctors who treat patients with compassion and remain committed to the original intention of the Hippocratic Oath and the sanctity of life, business leaders who act with integrity consistently focusing on being good stewards of the resources that God has provided all who serve in his name, and citizens who stand for what is right and who are not ashamed to call out the marks of evil and to defend the positions that Christ has set forth in his holy and precious word..

For many today it is difficult to grasp the necessity of the church to remain faithful in its confession to the inherent and infallible word of God and to articulate its confessional position as articulated in the book of concord. The Lutheran Church Missouri Senate at its 2023 convention in Milwaukee overwhelmingly supported the notion and the structure of the CUS and its emphasis on Lutheran identity. By producing the LIMOS and connecting all facets of university life to our specific Lutheran identity, our Concordia universities remain a place where parents can send their children to be loved and nurtured in the Christian faith and in care and love for the neighbor. Moreover, having a distinctive Lutheran identity allows our Concordia das to unashamedly confess Jesus Christ in all that they do in athletics, academics, and other curricular events that all point to the cross of Christ and the forgiveness we receive from Jesus's death and resurrection.

Simply put, the world is in desperate need for the church to take a direct stand and speak into the world the historic positions of the church. The Concordia universities are those places where the church collides with culture in a way that requires clarity of confession fidelity to the holy scriptures and integrity of the confession as found in the book of concord. These simple realities begin with things like are clear confession in God the father almighty who has made the heaven and the earth. Our faith in his son Jesus Christ, who was born of a Virgin Mary grew as a man, lived his life dedicated to caring and loving the neighbor which ended up in giving up his own life for the salvation of the world. Having this Lutheran identity calls for us to understand the clear confession that we believe in the Holy Spirit, the third person in the Trinity. As Luther says in his definition of the third article the apostle's creed, I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to him but the Holy Spirit calls me by the gospel and enlightens me with his gifts. These clear confessional principles are standards and statements that allow our Concordia has to stand out as a place who lives out our Lutheran Christian identity without fear or shame.

In conclusion, LCMS universities, guided by LIMOS and rooted in the Book of Concord and biblical standards, offer a unique education that prepares graduates to be more than just professionals – they become agents of positive change, offering a much-needed message of hope and purpose in a world increasingly adrift.