

LCMS president calls for excommunicating White nationalists

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Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod President Matthew Harrison (Photo courtesy of LCMS.org)

The president of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod has called for the excommunication of unrepentant White supremacists in the church's ranks, rebuking an extremist effort to exert influence within the conservative Lutheran denomination.

In a [letter](#) dated February 21, LCMS President Matthew Harrison said he was "shocked to learn recently that a few members of LCMS congregations have been propagating radical and unchristian 'alt-right' views via Twitter and other social media." He noted far-right members were causing "local disruption" for congregations and alleged that LCMS leadership and deaconesses had fallen victim to online threats, some of which he described as "serious."

"This is evil. We condemn it in the name of Christ," Harrison wrote.

Harrison went on to rebuke the "horrible and racist teachings of the so-called 'alt-right,'" listing ideologies such as "white supremacy, Nazism, pro-slavery, anti-interracial marriage, women as property, fascism, death for homosexuals, even

genocide.”

He noted that while the LCMS is “not a top-down institution,” he would work with local pastors and district presidents “to address this matter wherever it arises among us and reject it.” Citing scripture, he called on those spewing hateful ideologies to repent.

“Where that call to repentance is not heeded, there must be excommunication,” he wrote.

The letter comes in the wake of an [article](#) published this month by antifascist group Machaira Action alleging the “rise of a white supremacist faction within the Lutheran faith.” The post singled out Corey Mahler, who has [reportedly](#) been [active](#) in far-right circles for years and has posted about Whiteness and “white genocide” on Twitter. Mahler also identifies as a Christian nationalist.

Asked whether Mahler would be excommunicated, a representative for the church he allegedly attends in Tennessee said the matter was being handled internally but declined to comment further.

In his letter, Harrison said extremists’ efforts were also the “genesis” of a recent controversy over a new edition of Luther’s Large Catechism.

Earlier this year, the president asked Concordia Publishing House, the denomination’s publishing partner, to pause distribution of the new *Luther’s Large Catechism with Annotations and Contemporary Applications* citing an “online disturbance.”

The move came out of an “abundance of caution” over concerns expressed about the content of 50 new essays included in the volume to contextualize the catechism written by Martin Luther, according to [an update](#) from Harrison published by the *Reporter*, the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod’s newspaper.

The Large Catechism includes Luther’s explanations of the Ten Commandments, the Apostles’ Creed, the Lord’s Prayer, and other foundational Christian beliefs and is used by clergy in Lutheran denominations to help explain the faith to their congregants.

[A one-star review](#) on Amazon complains, “Women, forbidden from teaching according to Scripture, are afforded extensive opportunities to do just that in this

sorry compilation.”

Others slam the accompanying essays as “woke” and accuse them of promoting pedophilia.

In particular, a popular Twitter thread by Ryan Turnipseed takes issue with essays acknowledging “economic and societal privilege” and same-sex attraction, as well as suggesting a Lutheran approach to social justice.

“I have had time to re-evaluate the controverted sentences and found that while some things might have been expressed more clearly, nevertheless, there is nothing in the content of the volume promoting critical race theory (CRT), confusion of sexuality issues, or any theological position at odds with biblical and confessional Lutheranism,” Harrison wrote in his update.

The effort has stoked responses throughout the denomination, including some vying for the denomination’s leadership. In an interview with Lutherans for Racial Justice earlier this month, Pat Ferry, who is seeking nomination to be president of the denomination, was asked about allegations regarding the LCMS and white nationalists—some of whom also publicly identify as Christian nationalists—listed in Machaira Action’s article.

Ferry called on Harrison to launch an investigation.

“He should feel compelled to investigate this,” said Ferry, a former college president. He added: “This should be a time for pretty intense self-reflection among us.” —Religion News Service

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