

MANIFESTO FOR OUR NATION'S THIRD CENTURY

A commentary on the "American Dream" in the light of the Gospel

(Adopted by the Eighth General Convention of The American Lutheran Church, October 12, 1976, by action GC76.12.152.)

The American Lutheran Church joins in celebrating the Bicentennial of the American Revolution. We thank God for our nation where we are free to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ; for the principles of liberty and justice under law; for the gift of productive lands and abundant resources; and for a heritage of creative leaders and industrious people.

I

We declare that our loyalty to Jesus Christ takes precedence over all other loyalties. Through allegiance to Christ and his vision for the human community we can exercise our privilege of United States citizenship most responsibly.

II

We repent for the ways we stray from this first loyalty:

- By faltering in the struggle for justice, liberation, and peace;
- By tolerating the abuse of economic, social, political, and religious power;
- By consuming extravagantly while others in the human family suffer hunger and need.

We acknowledge that God's wrath is real. He has judged us and will continue to judge us. God's love is real. We believe that his ultimate will for all people is unity and peace in Jesus Christ.

III

As we begin our nation's Third Century, *we declare anew our intent to live as people who are free in Christ:*

- Free to receive God's forgiving grace as we confess our sins and mistakes;
- Free to face and deal with the tragic consequences of our national errors because God is ever involved with us;
- Free to embrace the future in hope because we trust in the promises of God.

IV

Out of this freedom, we dream of a nation whose policies and acts will declare to all that:

- We celebrate our interdependence, because the life and destiny of each person and each nation are tied to the whole of God's universe.
- We cherish all of nature as God's created handiwork, entrusted to the care and keeping of all people.
- We affirm the family as it unites persons in bonds of mutual love and service.

- We respect the unique qualities of each person and recognize the infinite worth of every human being as a child of God.
- We rejoice in the diversity of culture and tradition which enriches and strengthens our national life.
- We condemn racism, sexism, and other forms of exploitation which fragment the human community.
- We seek peaceable means for settling disputes among nations, groups, and individuals, and condemn actions and policies which provoke violence.
- We strive to relieve world hunger and deal with its causes.
- We welcome the continued separation of church and state but deny the separation of religious faith from public life.
- We require that all social institutions—economic, governmental, educational, scientific, technological—be shaped to serve human needs.

V

Accepting this vision for the nation, we commit ourselves to help shape and to share the American Dream. We will struggle to combine:

- Individual initiative and social conscience
- Ambition and compassion
- Pride and humility
- Private enterprise and public duty
- Competition and cooperation
- Human knowledge and spiritual wisdom
- National self-interest and service to the world.

And so, mindful of the risks, The American Lutheran Church pledges itself, and encourages its member congregations and the individual members of those congregations, to involvement in the social systems and structures, so that these become more responsive to God's will for the world.

VI

Thus we seize with joy the challenge to fulfill the objectives set forth in the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution and our vision for the nation. We will be our Lord's advocates for the powerless, the poor, the lonely, the exploited, the deprived, the rejected. We will resist any governmental, social, economic, or ideological force which would blunt justice or demean persons. We will work with those who will help us to respect all, care for all, and aim at freedom for all.

Thus committed, we look to Almighty God for direction. In Jesus Christ and through the Prophets, God gives us the vision of a world made new for a life of social justice and mercy, or reconciliation and peace, of promise and fulfillment. We rely on the Spirit to give us the power to do that which a faith active in love demands of us. Our hope is in God.

And so, as pilgrim people of God we step boldly and firmly into the Third Century.