



January 2, 2011

Dear Members of St. James:

On Tuesday, December 28<sup>th</sup> I received a letter via e-mail from Bishop Gafkjen in response to our letter to him dated December 13, 2010. Council met on January 1<sup>st</sup> to discuss the Bishop's letter in detail.

The following will be done in response to his letter.

- Pastor Larry will directly respond to the Bishop to inform him that he is not resigning from his role as Pastor at St. James and from the roster of ordained ministers of the ELCA.
- We will invite the Bishop to come meet with Pastor Gember, Council, and Mutual Ministry together in a closed meeting to give the Bishop the opportunity to share more detail concerning his claims so that we can better understand his position.

The Bishop's response letter is attached for your review.

Yours in Christ,

Carl Kissell, St. James Council President

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# Indiana-Kentucky Synod

## Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

**The Reverend Dr. William O. Gafkjen**

Bishop

Email: [bishopbill@iksynod.org](mailto:bishopbill@iksynod.org)

Carl Kissell  
St. James Lutheran Church  
1741 S State Street  
Greenfield, IN 46140

Dear Carl and Members of St. James Lutheran Church,

Grace and peace be with you in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

I write in response to your letter to me dated December 13, 2010, regarding my request that Larry Gember resign from the roster of ordained ministers of the ELCA and, consequently, from his call to St. James Lutheran Church. I am aware that you have widely distributed among members and friends of St. James a copy of the letter I sent to Pastor Gember summarizing my request for this resignation. In fact, it appears that you have done so in connection with a call for another special congregational meeting on January 2, 2011 in order to engage a second first vote regarding the resolution to terminate the congregation's relationship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Consequently, I am sending you this letter both digitally (via email) and via postal mail with the request that you distribute this letter in its entirety as widely among the members and friends of St. James as you did my letter to Pastor Gember, and that you do so before and during the special meeting on January 2.

This venue is not appropriate for a detailed accounting of the evidence in support of the request for Pastor Gember's resignation from the roster of ordained ministers of the ELCA. Should you desire to discuss this evidence in detail, I am willing to do so at a meeting of the Congregation Council at which Pastor Gember is present and consents to such a discussion.

However, I do want to point out three things about my request of Pastor Gember:

- The accusations that have been made by members and former members of St. James about Pastor Gember's behavior are serious and, I believe, need to be addressed directly rather than dismissed or rationalized away. I am also aware that there is a pattern of conflict and disagreement with pastors and with one another at St. James that also needs to be addressed. The ways in which various parties used the conflict management process itself to deflect responsibility and avoid dealing directly with the issues is one indicator of the seriousness of this situation.
- A careful reading of my letter to Pastor Gember makes it clear that the concerns that led me to request his resignation from the roster of ordained ministers of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America move far beyond the arena of ministry among the people of St. James Lutheran Church, as serious as those concerns are. The collection of people who have lodged complaints and concerns about Pastor Gember's stewardship of his role as a pastor of the ELCA include several rostered leaders of the Indianapolis Conference, the conflict management team that worked with St. James beginning last spring, and leaders serving congregations in other parts of the synod. In other words, this is more than a congregational matter. My request that Pastor Gember resign from the roster of ordained ministers of the ELCA results from strong evidence that not only is he no longer committed to the ELCA or its confessions and mission, but rather has been working assertively within and beyond St. James to undermine the credibility of the

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ELCA and its leaders and to encourage and strategize with other congregations and their members to join another Lutheran body. Pastor Gember himself expresses no desire to remain a pastor of the ELCA. This was confirmed when I asked Pastor Gember why he wants to remain on the roster of ordained ministers of the ELCA. Todd Sturgeon and Terry Miller (as well as Assistant to the Bishop Rudy Mueller and Dean of the Indianapolis Conference, Pastor Bill Novak), who were present at that meeting, can attest that Pastor Gember could not answer the question in any clear or direct way. Rather, he suggested that he prefers the confessions of the NALC and that if St. James decided to remain an ELCA congregation, he would have to decide what to do. It is important to note that this conversation occurred after St. James's first vote to leave the ELCA failed to garner the required 2/3 majority, thus suggesting that St. James had, in fact, already decided to remain an ELCA congregation.

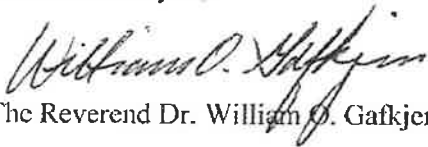
- I have requested and still await a response from Pastor Gember. Because this matter is about his relationship to the roster of ordained ministers of the ELCA, no one else can respond on his behalf, including the congregation council. Pastor Gember's apparent decision to not respond directly to the request for his resignation from the roster and the assertions and claims about the appropriateness of his remaining on the roster, but rather to turn the request into yet another referendum against the ELCA, to invite or tacitly support others lobbying me on his behalf and questioning the motives and character of those who have made the claims, and to use my request as part of the rationale for a second first vote on St. James's relationship with the ELCA is, in my estimation, inappropriate. The request for his resignation from the roster of ordained ministers of the ELCA still stands and I await reply from Pastor Gember himself.

Finally, as you move toward another first vote regarding the relationship between St. James and your sisters and brothers of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, please know that I pray for you daily and I know that your brothers and sisters around the Indiana-Kentucky Synod pray for you as well. And I ask you to continue to pray for me and for your other sisters and brothers in Christ around the I-K Synod and the ELCA. As I mentioned above, I also stand ready to meet with leadership of the congregation to address concerns directly with one another.

And to those who are in discernment about their relationship this denomination, I ask that you make that decision in the Spirit of Christ, with careful attention to essential things, keeping the long span of history past and future in mind, with humility, without rancor or malice, and for the sake of God's mission of healing and hope in Christ. Should you decide that it is time for you to part ways, as individuals or as a congregation, I will be profoundly disappointed and saddened, but will bless you as you go. Of course, along the way, synod leadership and I will remain committed to walking with and providing ministry for and among those who remain committed to the confessions and mission of the ELCA, including the commitments to love another, bear one another's burdens and to honor one another's bound conscience as we live with Christ as Lord and seek to proclaim together the Good News of Christ crucified and risen for the life of the world.

*I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all. [Ephesians 4-6]*

Peace be with you,



The Reverend Dr. William O. Gafkjen, Bishop

cc: Pastor Larry Gember  
Pastor Bill Novak, Dean, Indianapolis Conference