

Scripture and Moral Discernment:

Report on the consultation among representatives of Formula of Agreement churches

Background and Introduction

In the spring and summer of 2010, the Formula of Agreement churches experienced notable controversy and dissent over issues involving human sexuality and church order. Disagreement over these matters is not new and occurs within most Christian bodies. The character of this controversy, however, raised significant questions more generally about the viability, focus, and function of the Formula of Agreement itself as different partners took a range of approaches to these questions. As Formula partners reflected together on these issues, several expressed interest in initiating a conversation centered ecumenically and broadly on the use of Scripture in moral discernment. The need for this conversation involved not only issues of sexuality, but reached more broadly. The practice of scriptural interpretation in moral discernment stands at the heart of many of the controversies faced in Formula of Agreement churches, and that question had not been directly and comprehensively addressed in previous Formula of Agreement conversations.

In the summer of 2010, the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America voted to invite Formula partners to join in a conversation on these issues and all agreed: the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Reformed Church in America, and the United Church of Christ. These partners also invited three additional communions to participate and offer their insights on the topic due to close working relationships with members of the Formula of Agreement churches: the Christian Reformed Church in North America; the Moravian Church in North America, Northern and Southern Provinces; and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada. Each of the Formula of Agreement churches sent a specialist in Bible, one in Christian ethics, and an ecumenical officer to the consultation. Several experienced pastors contributed as well. Other communions sent one or more representatives who could bring their own distinctive perspectives and experiences to the table. The goal was not necessarily to produce a statement to which all denominations would subscribe, but rather to explore common ground that would

strengthen the capacity of churches to walk together in relationships of mutual affirmation and admonition around these issues and questions. This document is the result of these efforts.

As the conversation worked through a wide range of issues in three meetings (fall of 2011 to fall of 2012), those of us gathered in consultation discovered several things. First, we discovered that we had significant areas of substantial agreement, as well as areas where we used different language and took account of distinctive emphases and questions. We also discovered a deep resonance between debates inside our various communions and those among ecumenical partners. In engaging each other ecumenically, we also were engaging the variety of perspectives often found within our own communions.

Most importantly we discovered in greater depth and richness the bonds that unite us to each other. These discoveries are reflected in the major sections comprising the remainder of this document.

- The first section articulates our shared commitment as followers of Jesus.
- The second section explores our shared commitment to embrace the testimony and guidance of Scripture in our lives.
- The third section probes our shared commitment to shape our moral discernment, both individually and collectively, in ways informed by salutary practices under the guidance of the Spirit.

In the pages that follow, we bear witness to these discoveries. It is our hope and prayer that in offering these pages to our various communions, the unity of the church will increase and our capacity will grow in the use of Scripture for deepening our moral discernment.

“Jesus Is Lord” as the Starting Point for the Use of Scripture in Moral Discernment

As ecumenical partners discussing the use of Scripture in Christian life, we quickly identified a common theme that emerged in many of our denominations’ decision-making processes, particularly in areas of complex moral and ethical discernment. That common theme focuses on our shared reception of God’s gracious salvation in Jesus Christ, mediated through Word and sacrament, which awakens in all of us a recital of the core Christian confession, “Jesus is Lord” (Romans 10:9; 1 Corinthians 12:3). This confession is a central Christian response to the call of God’s grace, around which our unity is most clearly evident. This shared experience and confession also provides the common foundation for our various processes of moral discernment. We recognize each other as ecumenical partners, first and foremost,

because we are co-recipients of the same grace, and therefore follow the same Lord, witnessed in the same Scriptures, whose reign encompasses every arena of our lives.

Together we recognize and affirm that the confession “Jesus is Lord” occupies a central place in the core theological frameworks that shape our use of Scripture in moral discernment. As this confession functioned in the first century, so it functions today. It is both an expression of resistance against the powers that enslave human life (“Jesus—not Caesar—is Lord”) and an expression of an allegiance that transcends all others (“We must obey God rather than human beings” Acts 5:29).

This confession grounds our moral decision-making because it stands at the heart of the witness of Scripture itself. This confession also provides a broad context or disposition that shapes all our attempts to interpret Scripture in ways that can inform our moral lives. It becomes a critical point of orientation in the application of Scripture to complex contemporary questions. The authentic and deep recognition of the Lordship of Christ in every area of our lives constitutes the goal of all our attempts at moral living. These considerations shape, in important ways, how we read and apply Scripture to our lives. They provide a positive criterion to center our moral interpretation of Scripture, and a boundary marker that warns against any attempts to interpret Scripture in ways that conflict with this confession.

We also can be more specific about the ways in which this confession shapes the moral life of Christians. To say that Jesus the Savior is Lord is to say that human beings stand in need of salvation, that they are alienated from the love and justice of God. It is to say that the person and work of Jesus Christ is the means by which God intends to set both our lives and the whole world right again. To make this confession is to recognize that creation and human history do not proceed in random fashion. Rather, this confession looks in hope toward that time when Christ will be the judge and redeemer of the whole creation, restoring the cosmos to God’s intention.

To say that Jesus is Lord is to become his disciples, living by his example and teaching, and centering our moral vision in his dual command to love God and to love our neighbor as the fulfillment of the whole law. This confession leads us to trust continually in Christ’s gracious mercy when we fail to follow Christ as we should. For some of us, to say that Jesus is Lord is to acknowledge the place of both the gospel and the law, a recognition that transforms how we engage ethical and moral questions. Others of us are more cautious about differentiating gospel from law too sharply but agree that the lordship of Christ provides the proper context within which to address these questions.

For all of us, to embrace the confession “Jesus is Lord” is to embrace in hope an upside-down world in which the crucified one is exalted. It is to accept, in trust, that life is found by giving it away. It is to accept, in faith, that God is at work where the lowly are lifted up, the sick are healed, the outsiders are welcomed, and agents of oppression are brought low. To confess Jesus as Lord is to acknowledge him as the one through whom all things have come into being (John 1:3), the one by whom all things are reconciled (Colossians 1:20), and the one in whom all things find their fulfillment in God’s redemptive purpose (Ephesians 1:10). This is the grand narrative framework within which we seek to exercise moral discernment and the end toward which our moral effort is rightly oriented.

Indeed, the confession “Jesus is Lord” and the Christian commitment to Scripture are intimately interwoven with each other. We embrace the Hebrew Scriptures and the apostolic testimony of the New Testament because of their unique place in bearing witness to God’s purpose, culminating in Jesus as Lord and Savior. Together, we celebrate and affirm this testimony, and seek God’s grace to live into it more deeply. But as we remember why we embrace Scripture, we also are guided in how the Word of God comes to bear upon our lives in processes of moral discernment, never divorced from the context of following Jesus.

We share the common conviction that the confession “Jesus is Lord” needs to be heard and lived out in the context of a robust Trinitarian faith. To confess Jesus as Lord is the central and most important step toward the great confessions of Nicaea and Chalcedon, which recognize one God in three persons. As we seek to discern how our shared confession of the Lordship of Christ must inform our interpretation of Scripture in making moral decisions, we agree that we must be informed by the leading and experience of the Holy Spirit, who continues to guide us into all the implications of Christ’s embodiment of God’s mission to the world (cf. John 14:25 ff.). Moreover, these explorations must be informed also by the will and purpose of the Triune God, revealed in Scripture and discernible to the eyes of faith in the texture and fabric of the creation itself.

These profound areas of agreement do not always lead us to complete agreement on specific moral issues. Differing emphases and different perceptions, both of the Spirit’s leading and of the will of God as it is revealed in the created order to the eyes of faith, help to frame and interpret many of the differences in how we use Scripture in making moral decisions.

For example, disputes over the church’s response to committed, same-sex intimate relationships can be viewed through this lens. Some Christians point to what they believe is the work of the Spirit in disciplining and sanctifying these relationships. They believe the Spirit is

bringing them under the Lordship of Christ as we live toward the new creation to which Scripture bears witness, fulfilling the old creation in wonderful and surprising ways. Other Christians object that their understanding of the Creator's will and purpose manifested in the created order necessarily excludes such relationships from the Lordship of Christ. They point instead to the transforming power of the Spirit to bring lives into conformity with what they see as God's original created purpose for human life. Still other Christians view this disagreement through the lens of law and gospel, regarding the disagreement as arising outside of core gospel affirmations. In these disputes it is often difficult to sort out the boundaries between Scriptural interpretation, perceptions of the leading of the Spirit, and one's construal of God's self-revelation in the created order.

We see similar patterns of difference in ecumenical dialogue surrounding other areas involving the interpretation of Scripture in moral discernment. These areas include, for example, a Christian vision for economics, the interplay between justice and freedom, and the appropriate Christian use of the legal codes of the Hebrew Scriptures. Our common experience in conversation has demonstrated that deeply shared affirmations of Christ's Lordship and the foundational testimony of Scripture do not in themselves guarantee consensus on particular moral judgments. We are keenly aware of a divergence of opinion on contested issues among sincere Christians both within and between our various churches.

These disagreements are often real, substantive, and painful. They need not, however, prevent Christians from recognizing each other as authentic followers of Jesus. Those who acknowledge Jesus as Lord remember how Jesus prayed that his followers would be "perfected into one" (John 17:23). Jesus' prayer makes it clear that this visible unity of Christ's disciples is the central means "by which the world may know" that Jesus has been uniquely sent by God.

This unity among Christians is a reality we share as followers of one Lord and, at the same time, a goal toward which we strive in obedience to that one Lord. We are common recipients of God's mercy in Christ, and we therefore share the same confession, "Jesus is Lord." We share a common and ecumenically affirmed Trinitarian framework of understanding that shapes in profound ways our moral commitments even amidst our differences. We share a common Scripture that forms our imaginations, inspires our discipleship, and guides our lives and witness. These common frames of reference help to shape and inform our continued dialogue and engagement when we encounter differences in understanding of Scripture and its relationship to Christian moral living.

We are convinced that the more deeply we embrace the core confession, “Jesus is Lord,” in the context of a robust faith in the Creator and a deep reliance upon the leading of the Holy Spirit, the more deeply we shall find our common ground in the use of Scripture in moral discernment and move toward deeper insight and consensus. Our shared confession of Christ’s Lordship kindles the hope that a deeper moral understanding, a more profound obedience, and a richer unity still lie before us. Indeed, we believe that dialogue over our ecumenical differences in moral discernment can be, in God’s design, the occasion where the church is led more deeply into all the truth that God intends to reveal to us.

Interpreting Scripture in Moral Discernment

We receive Scripture as a gift from God, mediated to us by our forebears in the faith. The Holy Spirit, active in its writing and transmission, remains at work in the church that reads and hears Scripture. Our reading of Scripture has, as its primary subject, God and God’s gracious ways in the world, central to which are the life, death, resurrection, and saving grace of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Through it we come to know, love, and serve the God who has come to us in Jesus Christ.

Scripture invites us into the long and ongoing history of God’s creative, reconciling, and redemptive work with humanity and all of creation. We celebrate the manifold settings in which we encounter it, including personal devotions, group study, common worship, and theological discernment. Scripture’s authority and normative status reside in its Spirit-given capacity to form, instruct, and challenge the people of God, an authority demonstrated when the church encounters the living Word of God. The church encounters the words of life in Scripture, as the Holy Spirit calls, sustains, empowers, guides, reforms, admonishes, comforts, queries, critiques, and inspires the people of God.

We acknowledge that Scripture does not always shed direct light on contemporary questions, but it always illumines our Christian vocation. As individuals and in community, we confess that Scripture shapes and forms our identity, our imagination, our language, and our moral development.

Scripture is best read and understood in community, in conversation with other followers of Jesus across time and around the world. While disagreement in interpretation sometimes requires loving critique and dialogue as the church moves toward greater clarity, diversity in interpretation is often a gift from the Holy Spirit. As we read in community with each other, we gratefully claim its power to speak to us and to shape us in diverse times, places,

and cultural contexts. Just as we each have differing gifts of the Spirit, that Spirit graces our ecclesial traditions and individual lives with different gifts of interpretation. These different ways of hearing and understanding it do not diminish but often enrich our shared biblical heritage. This is not surprising because, as Scripture itself attests, God speaks to the community of faith in diverse times and ways (Hebrews 1:1). For instance, we cherish four Gospels, not one. When we read and understand Scripture in different ways, our common engagement with it nourishes our relationship of mutual affirmation and admonition, a commitment that demonstrates the Bible's authority in communities of flesh and blood. Scripture continues to speak to us in fresh ways, addressing unanticipated contexts and kindling ongoing and common reformation.

Scripture is always and necessarily interpreted. Whenever anyone reads the Bible, he or she always brings a framework of interpretation, whether recognized fully or not. While some want to believe that Scripture can be read at face value, more is always involved in discerning its truth. Sometimes these frameworks of interpretation are constructive and necessary, arising from original language research, confessional frameworks, historical reconstructions, Christian experience, and our location within broad Christian traditions. Sometimes they are unhelpful, springing from prejudice, limited experience, or narrowness of vision. No theory of inspiration, no method of interpretation, provides in itself unmediated access to divine wisdom.

The Spirit continues to lead us into all the truth of Scripture, but the fullness of this leading ordinarily comes to those who persistently seek to deepen their grasp of Scripture in conversation with all of God's people, over time, as the church continually reforms itself according to the Word of God. At the same time, to say that we all always interpret the Bible does not imply that all interpretations are equally valid. We therefore treasure relationships of mutual affirmation and critique. With humility, we rely on the Holy Spirit to work in and through us as we read it in community.

Moral discernment in the light of Scripture calls forth both devotion and art. We read the Bible with the understanding that every passage was written in a particular genre and for a specific audience, time, and place. Scripture's meaning for us is not limited to what it meant in its original contexts, nor can its meaning be entirely sundered from those contexts. The dynamics of Scripture as a word from God at particular times and places open our imaginations for discipleship in our particular time and place. Faithful interpretation includes attention to text and translation, to literary form and genre, to larger literary contexts and rhetorical aims,

and to social and historical contexts ancient and contemporary. We pray for humility, trusting God's grace to foster repentance, reconciliation, and life where we may err.

Rarely does a single verse, phrase, or passage from the Bible constitute an adequate guide for moral discernment. Even less often does Scripture directly dictate specific approaches to matters of public deliberation. Rather, every passage and phrase stands within the entire wisdom and arc of Scripture. In seeking to understand God's Word to us in Scripture, all of us acknowledge the church's ancient wisdom regarding the rule of faith and the rule of love toward God and neighbor. We also honor the distinctive criteria to which our respective traditions appeal. Whether these traditions begin with an appeal to law and gospel, salvation history, or the teachings of Jesus Christ in framing moral discernment, their wisdom guides response to Scripture and informs our ecumenical conversation.

We affirm that the sciences and other contemporary sources of wisdom can illuminate our reading of Scripture. We affirm that scriptural interpretation occurs in the flow of human experience. We acknowledge among our respective communions diverse heritages, practices, and traits regarding how we take account of science, experience, and other contemporary wisdom in the reading of Scripture. We agree that Scripture grants us wisdom for understanding, appreciating, and questioning contemporary assumptions and experience.

Turning to Scripture for moral vision and ethical guidance at once calls forth and nurtures Christian character and virtue. Discerning God's will among the pressing moral issues of the day requires the fruit of the Spirit. Through God's grace, those gifts come alive in our practice of mutual affirmation and admonition.

In the midst of diverse and sometimes conflicting interpretations of Scripture, we rejoice in Christ's promise that the Holy Spirit will continue to work in and through the church, drawing the community of Christ's followers into fuller appropriations of the truth (John 16:13).

Practicing Moral Discernment in Christian Community

Life in community is never easy and the Christian community is no exception. While we may say, "They will know we are Christians by our love," too often we fall short of that adage despite our best efforts. This is particularly true when one considers the process of moral discernment in the Christian community. Experience and time have taught us that successful moral discernment is as much about the process of discerning as it is about the outcome. The process needs to be intentional, thoughtful, grounded in trust, and guided by mutually agreed

upon guidelines and practices. The process of moral discernment must be rooted in the rule of love and in the call of all Christians to be “reconcilers in Christ” (Matthew 22:36-40 and 2 Corinthians 5:11-21).

The church’s unity in Christ is a gift of God that calls us forward to seek relationships of reconciliation and trust with one another. Such relationships are essential for any process of discernment. In moral discernment we rely upon the church’s unity in Christ because we all see through a mirror dimly and all of us rely on the Holy Spirit’s guidance.

Sometimes trust springs from hope rather than experience. At times the horizon of trust seems extremely distant, particularly when injustice and ill will have fractured the fellowship of Christ’s body. Differentials of power, particularly when they are not clearly identified, can subvert unity and trust. Together we commit ourselves to nurture repentance, unmask injustice, seek reconciliation, and build trust and mutual respect.

Building trust requires time and commitment to shared values, including the Lordship of Jesus Christ and Scripture’s foundational role for the life of the church. It also requires attention to practices that foster mutual respect, fairness, inclusion, and attentiveness to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

A number of common practices contribute to the building of trust and the enterprise of moral discernment. Specifically we would encourage the following practices: prayer and worship, articulating statements of common ground, negotiating ground rules and practices, and determining the exact nature and status of disagreement. These all can take on a different tone or character from one tradition to another. Despite the diversity among various communions, each provides structure and context to facilitate moral discernment in difficult and charged situations.

Prayer and Worship. A context of prayer and worship situates our moral discernment in relationship to God. God calls together the Christian community, and prayer and worship are primary contexts for Christian community. Authentic worship is not a means to an end; it keeps us ever mindful of God’s presence in and through us and our neighbors. Worship reminds us that we all stand as individuals accountable before God. Worship and prayer should permeate the process of moral discernment.

Articulating Statements of Common Ground. When we gather in conversation, we remind ourselves of the already-proclaimed beliefs and values that we hold in common. We remind ourselves that everyone present is a Christian who adheres to common beliefs and values that bind the community together. Chief among these beliefs and values is that everyone present takes the Scriptures seriously. In the heat of discussion, it is all too easy to accuse others of

being less than fully Christian. An agreed upon list of common beliefs and values, or community-forming practices, prominently displayed, serves to frame the conversation for everyone.

Negotiating Ground Rules and Practices. Christian moral discernment calls us to create a climate of civility. Establishing ground rules helps communities to move beyond the faulty assumption that everyone shares a common approach to conversations that involve strongly held beliefs and opinions. We cultivate a common understanding of what a climate of civility looks like and what behaviors foster healthy conversation. These understandings may vary from setting to setting and from context to context. Different types of conversations may call for different ground rules. A clear set of ground rules, tailored for the purpose and context of the discussion, promotes healthy and beneficial conversation. Ground rules may include processes for discernment, the use of silence, and the need for periodic prayer and reflection. Communities may further consider the roles some individuals may play in facilitation, calling the body to prayer, and other contributions to the process.

Determining the Exact Nature and Status of Disagreement. The body of Christ gathers for discernment at multiple levels, including small groups, local congregations and communities, regional, national, and global denominational assemblies, and ecumenical gatherings. When disagreement occurs, participants often hold divergent understandings concerning what exactly lies in dispute. Moreover, some discussions may lead to specific action, including legislative action, while others do not. In all settings we find it helpful to clarify the nature and status of the matter at hand.

Among the many approaches available to them, communities should seek those methods best suited to the purpose and context of the discussion. Discussions that may result in legislative action may require one set of methods and ground rules, while non-legislative discussions may call for another. In some instances we may conduct a non-legislative discussion prior to moving into legislative session to allow for types of conversation not usually found in a legislative setting, a process that may occur within one day or over a period of several years. When issues have grown contentious, communities will seek criteria for assessing whether an issue rises to the level at which participants regard faithfulness to the gospel to be at stake and how seriously the issue at hand jeopardizes Christian fellowship. We extend every effort to maintain visible unity in Christ and the bond of peace.

Conclusion

Since the advent of the Christian church, the use of Scripture in moral discernment has resulted both in joyful confessions of common faith and in painful struggles in areas of dissent. This is still the case today. Yet we have hope.

We have hope because by the grace of the Triune God we are made members of the body of Christ and thus of one another. While maintaining the wisdom of our various traditions as guided by the Holy Spirit through the Scriptures, we are empowered by this grace to enter into ecumenical dialogue that enriches each of our confessions.

We have hope because those of us who gathered in consultation quickly discovered that the Formula of Agreement churches and those other churches with whom we have consulted share significant points of consonance and commonalities in our ecumenical expression of Christian faith and practice. Together, we were able to articulate some of the affirmations that marked our common ground and guided our deliberations.

We affirm together that salvation is an unmerited gift of God's grace and favor, received by faith alone apart from any consideration of human righteousness.

We affirm together that so-called "cheap grace" falls short of God's intention for our new life in Christ. We understand cheap grace to be "the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, communion without confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ" (Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, chapter 1).

We affirm together that the church must be prepared to stand over against the values and mores of popular culture when those values conflict with the call of Christ.

We affirm together that God's call from Scripture rings through contemporary life with an invitation to work for justice and the rights of the oppressed.

We affirm together that God's claim upon human beings includes the call to honor God in the sphere of bodily life, including our sexuality. "You are not your own; you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body" (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

We affirm together that the claim of Christian love includes loving admonition and mutual up-building in faithfulness among the members of Christ's body.

We have hope because, in mutual discernment and admonition grounded in worship and prayer, Formula of Agreement churches have found that our diverse and sometimes conflicting interpretations of Scripture challenge and mutually enrich our ongoing communion. We bear witness that, in regular, broad-based, ecumenical conversation, we are given glimpses of that

day when we will all understand fully the will of God, even as we have been fully understood, that day when all of creation will be redeemed and reconciled to God through Christ Jesus our Lord (1 Corinthians 13; Romans 5:10).

In this hope we claim our shared confession, “Jesus is Lord.” This confession rests at the heart of Christian theology and shapes our use of Scripture for moral discernment. This confession calls us to live as citizens of heaven within the God-beloved world, knowing that this call will sometimes put us at odds with the ways of the world. Shared affirmations of Christ’s Lordship do not in themselves guarantee consensus on particular moral judgments; our disagreements can be real, substantive, and painful. Yet we believe that dialogue concerning our ecumenical differences in the context of our common confession and Scriptures can be an occasion for God to lead the whole church more deeply toward living into our radical confession of Christ’s Lordship.

In this hope, we embrace the witness of the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament as foundational to our understanding of God’s creative, reconciling, and redemptive work with humanity and all of creation and to our life together under the Lordship of Christ. We all strive to interpret Scripture faithfully, relying on the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Its interpretation requires attention to text and translation, to literary form and genre, to larger literary contexts and rhetorical aims, and to social and historical contexts ancient and contemporary. Faithful interpreters relying on the Holy Spirit may reach differing conclusions, and these differences may lead to conflict. Yet we celebrate the call to read Scripture in community and in conversation with followers of Christ around the world. We honor the distinctive criteria to which our respective traditions appeal, even as we wrestle with the different interpretations at which we may arrive. Through the leading of the Holy Spirit, God uses Scripture to strengthen the church’s moral vision, obedience, character, and its varied expressions of our common Christian vocation.

In this hope, we celebrate that the body of Christ enters into intentional times of moral discernment for the mutual affirmation and admonition of the believers (Romans 12:1-2). To be effective, this process of moral discernment must be intentional, thoughtful, grounded in trust, and guided by mutually agreed upon guidelines and practices.

Christian moral discernment is shaped by guidelines such as the affirmations above, the rule of love, and the call of all Christians to be “reconcilers in Christ” (Matthew 22:36-40; 2 Corinthians 5:11-21). It is strengthened by regular prayer and worship. It is guided by the intentional articulation of our common beliefs and honest, ongoing negotiation of rules for our

life together. It is bounded by a clear determination of the nature and status of our disagreement, remembering our common call to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:3). It is careful not to turn unexamined differences of power and privilege into an opportunity for injustice. In Christian moral discernment, God calls the church to nurture repentance, unmask injustice, seek reconciliation, and build trust and mutual respect.

In this hope, we commend this document for use in the wider Christian family, whether gathered as a handful of members of a local parish or in global, ecumenical assembly. We hope that it will contribute to the deepening of our shared communion, both within and beyond the Formula of Agreement churches. Under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, we hope that this document will strengthen the use of Scripture in moral discernment. We hope that the body of Christ may be nurtured in Christian practice and virtue, continue to live together in mutual affirmation and admonition, and press on to know, love, and serve our Triune God who has come to us in Jesus Christ.

Soli Deo Gloria
To God alone be glory

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