

“Walking Together” Open Forum

Pilgrim Lutheran Church, Kilgore, TX
2026 February 08

Article III of Pilgrim’s Constitution regarding Pilgrim’s Confessional Standard:

This congregation, as a body, and all of its members, as individuals, accept the following without reservation:

- A. The Scriptures of the Old and the New Testament as the inspired and inerrant Word of God and the only infallible rule and norm of faith and practice.
- B. All the Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church contained in *The Book of Concord of 1580*, as faithful testimonies to and in agreement with that Word of God, and so a normed-norm of faith and practice.

This congregation insists that all doctrine preached, taught, or practiced in its midst must be in accord with this confessional standard. All doctrinal disputes that may arise shall be judged and decided according to this confessional standard.

Article IV of Pilgrim’s Constitution regarding Pilgrim’s Synodical Membership:

This congregation shall hold membership in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod as long as this Synod remains true in doctrine and practice to the Word of God and the Lutheran Confessions.

Seven “topics” where we in our church body do not appear to be “Walking Together”:

From April of 2023 to February of 2025, each of the following five topics was treated in a Special Congregational Study that considered the relevant teaching of Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions, applied that teaching to seven groupings of contemporary related errors, and asked whether we at Pilgrim are walking together with Circuit #14, the Texas District, and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. (The handout, audio, and video files for those Studies are available at <http://www.pilgrimlc.org/bible-studies/walking-together>).

- **Church Usages/Liturgy & Hymns**
For example, shifting the focus from God’s serving us, using unapproved liturgies and hymns, emphasizing not uniformity in worship but diversity, and abusing Christian liberty offending the weak.
- **Law and Gospel**
For example, preaching Law and Gospel without the correct distinction, failing to supervise preaching and act to address preaching that fails to correctly distinguish Law and Gospel, failing to make use of individual Confession and Absolution, and completely failing to exercise the binding key.
- **The Sacrament of the Altar**
For example, practicing anything but closed communion, minimizing the basis for fellowship from agreement in the Gospel and all its articles, delegating completely to the communicant the decision as to whether or not he or she should commune, and failing to follow the institution of the Lord’s Supper.
- **Unity and Fellowship**
For example, considering the true unity of the Church to be unity of administration and structure, not keeping vows subscribing unconditionally to the Lutheran Confessions, not disciplining and so tolerating those who teach or practice in a heterodox fashion, and even promoting heterodoxy.
- **Ministry**
For example: blurring the distinction between the callings of all the baptized and of pastors, effectively ignoring the “qualifications” for the Office of the Holy Ministry, “dumbing down” the ministerium, and indecently and irregularly or privately calling pastors to serve congregations.

- **Public Condemnation of Public Sin**

For example, denying any and every public condemnation of public sin, insisting on following Matthew 18's steps even in cases of public sin, deceiving treating leading a sinner to repent and warning others as mutually exclusive, and rejecting the mutual accountability of those walking together in the Synod.

- **Ecclesiastical Supervision/Dispute Resolution**

For example, holding that individual Christians are not accountable for their own confession or denial of the faith; letting a church body's Constitution, Bylaws, and such be used over Scripture and the Confessions; ecclesiastical supervisors' failing to act; and wrongly accusing faithful pastors of meddling in others' calls when the faithful pastors voice concern over false teaching and practice.

In each Special Study, we asked the following questions:

- Is the Synod, District, and Circuit remaining true to Scripture and the Confessions in regards to these matters, both abstractly and concretely, in both teaching and practice?
- Does evidence suggest that there is a “casual intrusion” of error (for example, *Brief Statement*, paragraph 29)?
- Are the false teachings and false teachers clearly renounced and abandoned?
- Or, are the errors and errorists harbored and acknowledged as legitimate, making the church body heterodox (of a different glory, praise, or worship) instead of orthodox (of right glory, praise, or worship)?
- Is heterodoxy given equal standing with orthodoxy, or does heterodoxy reign over orthodoxy? (Confer the Rev. Kurt E. Marquart, *Confessional Lutheran Dogmatics IX:27, 59-61.*)

Five Options from which Pilgrims Voters might select one or more as a course of action:

Primary concerns both about (1) Pilgrim's confession of faith in the form of continued membership in the District and Synod and about (2) the consciences of Pilgrim's members troubled by what appear to be errors in the District and Synod, led Pilgrim's Pastor and Board of Elders to present the following five options in the September 26, 2025, “Options” mailing, which also noted that there may be other options.

- A. Take No External Action at this Time
- B. Pursue Dissension/Dispute-Resolution Processes
- C. Enter into a “State of Confession”
- D. Transfer to the non-geographical English District
- E. Leave the Synod/Become independent

As noted in the November 23, 2025, “FAQ” mailing from Pastor Galler and Pilgrim's Board of Elders, a Special Voters Meeting is presently scheduled for Sunday, April 12, 2026, after the Divine Service, in order for the Voters' Assembly to take adopt one or more options.

Prayer:

Almighty God, for the propagation of the Gospel You establish Your Church, gather Your believing children into congregations, and nourish them with the life that is in Christ Jesus through Your holy Word and Sacraments. Bless the union into which this congregation and the Synod have entered for our mutual encouragement. Strengthen us in the Holy Spirit that, walking together, we may bring glory to Your holy name; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. (Adapted from *Lutheran Service Book Collect #670*, accessed via Lutheran Service Builder; confer #661, *LSB:Agenda*, p.346.)