



## AZ-CA DISTRICT RIO GRANDE CIRCUIT



Rev. Paul A. Rydecki, Circuit Pastor

4675 Bataan Memorial W + Las Cruces, NM 88012 + (575) 636-4988 + revrydecki@gmail.com

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July 9, 2012

Dear pastors and congregations of the Rio Grande Circuit:

Greetings from Las Cruces! May the peace of Christ be yours in abundance.

It has been my privilege to serve as your circuit pastor for the past three years, and I appreciate the trust you have placed in me in also reelecting me to this office at the district convention in June. Nevertheless, with this letter I am announcing my decision to step down as circuit pastor of the Rio Grande Circuit, effective immediately.

While the decision is my own, I think you deserve to know that it comes at the request of the district president, who has called into question my public teaching that the sinner is justified before God by faith alone in Christ, and not apart from faith in Christ. These are his words that he gave me to share with you:

Since October of 2011 you have publicly called into question the doctrine of objective justification in print, in the blogosphere, and on the floor of the October pastors' conference. Your comments have placed you at the center of a firestorm of controversy regarding the doctrine of justification. Calls for continued study of the doctrine are surely appropriate. Legitimate criticism of careless and misleading statements that have created a caricature of the doctrine in our midst is certainly warranted. However, of late, your comments appear to have called into question the very core of the doctrine itself. As we together continue to study and grow in our understanding and articulation of this doctrine, it is best that you relinquish the office of circuit pastor, until we reach the point where we are clearly convinced that the doctrine you are publicly teaching is consistent with Scripture, the Lutheran Confessions, and the published doctrinal statements of the Wisconsin Synod.

Because one of the chief duties of the circuit pastor is to represent the district president to the pastors and congregations of the circuit, and for the sake of continued dialogue with the district, I have chosen to honor the district president's request. I want it to be clear to you that I am not stepping down as circuit pastor because I believe I have taught falsely. On the contrary, until I am shown differently from the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions, upon which I took my ordination vows, I will continue to teach that, while God wants all men to be saved and Jesus most certainly died for all people and made atonement or satisfaction for all sins with His holy, precious blood, only those who believe in Jesus are justified before God (Jn. 3:16-18, Rom. 3:23-26, Gal. 2:16), that is, "that the sinner, accused by the Law of God, convicted, and subjected to the sentence of eternal damnation, fleeing in faith to the throne of grace, is absolved for Christ's sake, reckoned and declared righteous, received into grace, and accepted to eternal life" (Martin Chemnitz, *Examination of the Council of Trent*, Vol. 1, p. 474).

If any of you would like to discuss this with me, I am more than happy to oblige. One of my comments "of late" referenced by the district president can be found in a paper I recently presented entitled, "Do We Want to Be Dresden Lutherans?" I'll be happy to provide a copy of that paper to anyone who asks.

May the Lord Jesus guard and protect His Church from error and schism.

Your servant in Christ,

Rev. Paul A. Rydecki, Pastor  
Emmanuel Lutheran Church

cc: Rev. Jon Buchholz, District President of the AZ-CA District of the WELS