

Grace Evangelical And Reformed Church

307 North Plymouth Street

Culver, Indiana

MEREDITH J. SPRUNGER, Ph.D., Minister

Saturday - Feb. 22, 1958

To the Elders of Grace Church

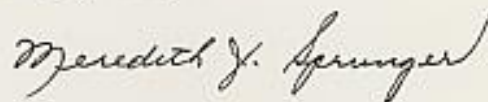
Dear Friends:

After thinking it over, it seems to me that publishing the action of our Wednesday Consistory meeting in Grace Notes is not a loving thing to do. It would unnecessarily humiliate certain people.

Some people living at the competitive level of life, I know, will regard this decision as foolish. But I make it because I refuse to contaminate my mind with negative, low-level thinking and blight my soul by stooping to the procedures of political expediency.

I would rather be defeated and remain loyal to the Way of Love and the Way of Truth than to win by these low-level tactics. I invite you to join me in dedication to the Way of Love and pray that we may be strong enough and big enough to follow this way regardless of consequences. If you do so, you will always have an inner radiance and joy that nothing can take from you.

Cordially yours,



Meredith J. Sprunger

Grace Evangelical And Reformed Church

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MEREDITH J. SPRUNGER, Ph.D., Minister

February 25, 1958

To the Michiana Pastor's Study Group

Dear Friends:

We have had some interesting happenings here recently. The enclosed letters will bring you up to date on it. The decisions made, I think, are best for both our church activities and the local study group. The attitude and atmosphere of our local people is excellent.

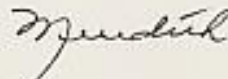
I was somewhat surprised, however, to learn at our pastor's social meeting in South Bend Monday that one of our pastors is going around telling some of you that you are in danger of being thrown out of the denomination if you continue attending our Urantia Study Group meetings. Of course you know there is absolutely no grounds for such a statement.

To make doubly sure of this, David Schlundt and I talked with President Henry Kroehler, who was at the meeting, and he agreed that we had a right to study any book we so desired in our study group and were doing nothing contrary to the rules of the Evangelical and Reformed Church. Further, he assured us that at any time he or the Synodical Council thought we might be doing something contrary to the polity or doctrine of the church he would let us know and we need fear no secret action against any of us.

I'm sure the agitating pastor means well but it is difficult to understand any fellow minister who tries to tell any of us what we may read or discuss, using subtle threats to make us conform! For the record, may I caution each of us again: Let us read and evaluate the Urantia Book not as revelation but as any other book. Let us use as the norm of our evaluation the doctrinal statements of the Constitution of the Evangelical and Reformed Church (Sections 3 and 4). You Congregational brethren can just ignore the forgoing suggestions which apply to us E & R folks. I know that none of you plan to even mention the book to your congregation.

Herb Meussling will no doubt be sending out the assignment for discussion next Monday at Paul Santa's Church. See you at that time. In the mean time, be assured that you have nothing to fear.

Cordially yours,



Meredith J. Sprunger

February 25, 1958

Dear President Kroehler and members of the Synodical Council:

Two weeks ago you brought to our attention a letter which had been written by one of our Elders to the President of our Denomination complaining of our study, with Dr. Sprunger, of the Urantia Book, and intimating that some measure of censure by the higher echelon of our church should be applied to us.

At a special meeting of the Consistory on February 19th the matter was presented and discussed fully. The identity of the Elder was not disclosed so that there would be as little cause for personal emotion as possible. From the discussion which followed, may I summarize the feelings of our Consistory: The action of the Elder, although sincere, was ill advised and certainly in direct contradiction of the Constitution of the Evangelical and Reformed Church; furthermore, it was an undemocratic request calling for an authoritarian action not only unwarranted but also inimical to the principles of our democratic processes, both state and church.

As a result of the discussion, the following actions were taken:

1. Motion made and seconded: "It is understood that every member of Grace Church shall recognize the lawful authority and procedures of the Evangelical and Reformed Church. Any complaint shall be brought first to our local Consistory. If the decision of the local Consistory does not satisfy the person or persons carrying the complaint they may appeal to the Synodical Council. If the decision of the Synodical Council is not satisfactory an appeal may be made to the President of the Denomination.

"If any member desires to bring a charge against the minister, this charge shall be made in writing to the Synodical Council of the Michigan-Indiana Synod. Any member not following this lawful procedure shall be liable to the judicatory action of the Spiritual Council of Grace Church."

Supported 13 to 1 (Ballot vote.)

2. Resolution offered and supported: "It is understood that Dr. Sprunger will refrain from mentioning or teaching from the Urantia Book in any of his pastoral duties. As a private citizen of this community, however, we have no objection to his conducting a study group on the Urantia Book in his home, the parsonage, at 215 N. Slate Street, Culver, Indiana."

Supported 11 to 1 with two abstaining. (Ballot vote.)

Dr. Sprunger announced that since he considered this a controversial matter and not necessary to the welfare of the church, he would not conduct a study group in the parsonage even though there was only one vote against it.

Following these motions, the Consistory members expressed their individual confidence in the efforts which Dr. Sprunger has made to bring us a larger and more meaningful vision of the truths in our Bible and a way in which to apply these truths to our daily lives. We reject any suggestion or pressure which would limit a minister or layman in respect to what he may or may not read or study in an honest search for truth, feeling that though a strong progressive approach to Christian thinking may step on some toes, such an approach is more desirable than that of preserving the "status quo" in which one progresses rapidly backwards.

Assuring you that we are not headed in that direction under our present leadership, and hoping that this satisfactorily explains our disposition of the problem, I am,

Sincerely yours,

Donald B. Hand
Donald B. Hand

President of the Consistory of Grace Church

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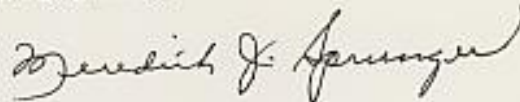
February 25, 1958

Dear Friends:

It is almost certain that you will hear about a situation which came up in our Church and in our Michiana Pastor's Study Group. In addition to the Michiana Study Group and the Synodical Council, I am sending about a dozen of you men in the Synod whose judgment I highly respect copies of a few letters which, I think, will be self-explanatory.

I want you to have first hand information in the matter because it raises a fundamental issue of freedom of thought and discussion. No one of our pastor's study group is remotely thinking of differing with the doctrinal standards of of the Evangelical and Reformed Church. But neither do we think any individual, regardless of high office in the denomination, should be permitted to threaten our right to free discussion. In case you should hear about it, we want you to know the facts in the matter.

Cordially yours,



Meredith J. Sprunger