

The LUTHERAN CLARION



Lutheran Concerns Association
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Circuit Realignment: What is there to Restore?

Recommendation #3 of the Blue Ribbon Task Force on Synodical Structure and Governance (BRTFSSG) is entitled "Restore Circuits to Their Primary Purpose." Such a title assumes that the current understanding and functioning of a circuit has deviated from its original definition and purpose.

What was the primary concern of the formation of a circuit? Quoting from the book, *Heritage in Motion*, edited by August Suelflow, page 163, we find a brief answer. "Historically, the Synod's greatest concern in establishing circuits was to reduce the number of voting delegates to a synodical convention."

"...it is the supervisory or visitation aspect [of circuits] dealing with doctrine and practice that has fallen into disrepair."

"Since about 1866, 'counselors' or 'administrative' circuits were employed to more effectively supervise doctrine and practice." "Two-way communication between Synod, District, and congregation could be improved if the link--the circuit--were strengthened."

From this we see that circuits served a dual purpose of providing supervision over doctrine and practice and an electoral process for delegates. This eventually led to a dual designation for circuits, namely an electoral circuit and a visitation circuit. Throughout the many years of studying structure changes, it was always encouraged that circuits maintain both electoral and visitation purposes which, except in rare occasions, were made up of the same congregations.

In discussions with pastors regarding the functioning of their circuits, it is noted that today the electoral aspect in most Districts functions well in electing Circuit Counselors and convention delegates, when the rules for doing so are respected. It is the supervisory or visitation aspect dealing with doctrine and practice that has

fallen into disrepair. It has become the exception that a full representation of pastors and commissioned workers faithfully attend circuit meetings. It is even more exceptional that significant theological discussion takes place at such meetings. Furthermore one is hard pressed to find circuits that hold convocations to discuss theology and practice or hold forums for any other purpose than to elect delegates to the synodical convention. Evidence of not addressing theology and practice is the multifaceted view of worship, communion, role of women, liturgy, etc., among congregations within circuits and districts and pastors unwilling to confront the issues at circuit meetings.

This makes the recommendation of the Blue Ribbon Task Force all the more disconcerting. Simply, it is **recommending that the electoral function of the circuits, the only functioning part of the circuit structure, be removed** and that their purpose is to be ecclesial only. "Circuits will no longer be used as 'electoral groupings: unless a district so chooses.' (p. 24)." Rather, the recommendation suggests that the district "consider not only geography as a criterion but also mission and demographic considerations to create these small ecclesial clusters." What does this all mean? Space limits me to offer only two difficulties resulting from recommendation #3.

First of all it brings into question how the congregation's voice and authority will ever be exercised in the proposed structure. There is an attempt to offer an alternative under **Recommendation #10 which in the end removes the individual congregation's franchise in electing delegates.**

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Secondly, how **will organizing circuits by mission interests or demographic interests serve the purpose of a synod?** My initial reaction at the Regional meetings remains the same after much deliberation – this will only further divide congregations rather than unite them in purpose. You may have congregations forming a circuit whose pastors all have gone through the Pastoral Leadership Institute excluding those who have not. You may have circuits whose congregations do not use a hymnal or liturgy. You may have those which all practice open communion or allow liberal roles for women. With such possibilities how can the BRTFSSG improve the much lacking unity in both doctrine and practice? All the congregations of the Synod should have the same doctrine and practice so to be able to offer assistance to any sister congregation. A true blessing in any circuit is when congregations from all different types of communities can work together in God's Word and share the blessings God gave to them for their mutual good.

The title of the proposal is actually opposite of what is being proposed by the BRTFSSG. Nothing is being restored but rather subtly changed. What is being changed is that the congregations which gather at the most intimate level of the Synod will not have supervision and preservation of doctrine and practice as their priority; rather these congregations may gather for political purposes only.

Rev. Thomas J. Queck, Pastor
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Board Member, Lutheran Concerns Association



President's Kieschnick's Task Force Recommendation #18: "But that is not what it does!!!"

This is the third of a multi-part series analyzing significant changes to the LCMS Constitution and Bylaws being proposed by President Kieschnick's Task Force on Structure.

In its Final Report and at its Regional Meetings, President Kieschnick's Task Force has reasoned that structural changes that would result from Recommendation #18 would enable the Synod to act more cost-effective-

ly and support grassroots participation of the congregations. These certainly are laudable goals. But the actual proposed changes to the Bylaws will not accomplish these goals. They will do the opposite, while also leading to confusion and conflict. The Task Force should be thanked for supporting proper goals. But for the good of the Synod, Recommendation #18 should not be adopted.

Recommendation #18 would abolish the program boards and replace them with officers and commissions under the direct supervision of the President. The program boards currently have significant decision-making responsibilities, spend millions of dollars necessary to fulfill the objectives of Synod, and have other important functions. This includes both national and world-wide mission and human care ministries. Recommendation #18 also would create new officer positions and new commissions to provide "advice and counsel" to the President. All ultimate authority and responsibility would be transferred to the President. One effect would be to increase the portion of the budget over which the President has responsibility from approximately \$1,000,000 to over \$50,000,000.

Giving such broad and far-reaching power to the President does not support efficiency. Is it truly possible for the President to manage more effectively the \$50,000,000 currently in the budget of Missions, Human Care, and other ministries? Obviously not.

By eliminating the Board for Pastoral Education, creating the position of Pastoral Education Coordinator supervised by the President, and transferring the authority of this Board to the President, Recommendation #18 also would transfer significant authority over seminary education to the President. This includes review of the "internal administrative organization of the Synod's seminaries," the "certification of theological and professional competency" of the seminary faculty, and many other administrative functions. Would it truly be better for our seminaries to take away from a Synod Board comprised of pastors and members of congregations and give that responsibility and accompanying power to the

Adopting Recommendation #18 would create a direct conflict by giving the President supervision over the same business affairs that the Constitution properly assign to the Board of Directors.

President? [Ed note: See the below article by Rev. Mark Grunst for more details on the impact of removing the Board for Pastoral Education.]

And how do any of these changes support grassroots involvement by congregations? This is not explained by President Kieschnick's Task Force. Greater involvement in Synod affairs by congregations is a good goal. But abolishing the program boards, which are comprised of pastors and members of congregations, and transferring all power and authority to the President, will not generate grassroots involvement. It will do the opposite.

Recommendation #18 also will cause confusion and ultimately conflict. The Constitution makes clear that the Board of Directors "shall exercise supervision over all the property and business affairs of the Synod" This basic principle, which is consistent with Missouri law, is repeated throughout the bylaws. Adopting Recommendation #18 would create a direct conflict by giving the President supervision over the same business affairs that the Constitution properly assigns to the Board of Directors. This is unworkable; it is a conflict waiting to happen.

The Task Force does state that if the elected leadership of the Synod does not carry out its responsibilities to the satisfaction of the members, the members "would have the right and responsibility to elect new leadership at the next convention of the Synod." Of course this option is always available to the convention delegates, and has been exercised on occasion in the past. Considering the tremendous additional power that would be given to the President under President Kieschnick's Task Force Recommendation #18, perhaps the delegates at the 2010 Convention should follow this advice instead of adopting Recommendation #18.

Christian A. Preus

LCMS Board of Directors (1995-2007)
Partner in Meagher & Geer Law Firm

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*The Lutheran Concerns Association wishes to acknowledge the gracious financial support it receives in support of the publication of **The Lutheran Clarion**, and urges other individuals and groups to join with Balance-Concord, Inc., and support our efforts to re-establish our Synod to its formerly faithful doctrine and practice.*

**Want to Reclaim our Synod...
You Can Help!**

The voice of **The Lutheran Clarion** has sounded the clear truth about the issues and events of life in the LCMS. This publication has helped many to understand and respond to some actions taken within our Synod which are either not in accord with Holy Scripture and our Lutheran Confessions or have been counter-productive to the true mission of Christ's Church, that is the pure teaching of God's Word and the right administration of our Lord's Sacraments.

If you believe it is time to reclaim the true mission of our church body and to stand up for the truth of Holy Scripture, then please consider sending your tax-deductible donation in support of the publication of *The Clarion* to:

The Lutheran Clarion
1320 Hartford Avenue
St. Paul, Minnesota 55116

The Need to Retain the Board for Pastoral Education

Structure and governance is designed to guide our corporate work as a synod. Thus it will have procedures, policies, boards, commissions, etc. Structure and governance procedures are set to assist the Synod in its collective work which individual congregations cannot accomplish on their own.

Structure and governance is also to be a safeguard against tyranny, dictatorship, nepotism, cronyism and the like. It is especially important to provide checks and balances between the governing entities within our Synod. Checks and balances were of great value to the Synod during the troubled years of 1970-75 at Concordia Seminary St. Louis for the Board of Higher Education acted with respect to professorial contracts for example. The Board for Pastoral Education and the Board for Higher Education, for example, must give its prior consent to calling a professor, granting tenure, etc.

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Consider the Board for Pastoral Education. This board is composed of nine voting members: three ordained ministers (at least two shall be parish pastors) elected by the Synod; one commissioned minister elected by the Synod; four laymen elected by the Synod, and the President of the Synod (also elected by the Synod) or his representative. Each of these positions is selected by the Synod to oversee the planning, policies, faculties, capital projects, etc. of our seminaries.

This Board for Pastoral Education has been set by the synod as a part of structure and governance to provide support, assistance, and promotion of pastoral education.

See *Handbook of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod 2007*, page 123.

There are also five non-voting advisory members of the Board for Pastoral Education: a district president appointed by the Council of Presidents; the Vice-President – Finance – Treasurer of the Synod; the Concordia University System executive director and the two seminary presidents.

This Board for Pastoral Education has been set by the Synod as a part of structure and governance to provide support, assistance, and promotion of pastoral education. The Board for Pastoral Education's responsibilities has not been given to one position/person such as a Board of Regents or the President of Synod. It is a safeguard so that no single entity can monopolize the selection of seminary faculty members; no one as a team of one can determine the viability of either seminary; and, it also prevents the seminary from disappearing into only a college or university offering, thus maintaining the high profile of Word and Sacrament ministry which is the pastoral office.

Dr. C.F.W. Walther wrote: "The ministry of the word or the pastoral office is not a human institution but an office that God Himself has established." "The ministry is not an arbitrary office but one whose establishment has been commanded to the church and to which the church is ordinarily bound till the end of time." And, "The pastoral ministry is the highest office in the church."

This high regard for the pastoral office by Dr. C.F.W. Walther is there because of Article V (The Ministry) of the Augsburg Confession: "In order that we may obtain this faith ("that we receive forgiveness of sin and become righteous before God by grace, for Christ's

sake, through faith, when we believe that Christ suffered for us and that for His sake our sin is forgiven and righteousness and eternal life are given to us." (Augsburg Confession Article IV (Justification)) the ministry of teaching the Gospel and administering the sacraments was instituted. For through the Word and the sacraments, as through instruments, the Holy Spirit is given, and the Holy Spirit produces faith, where and when it pleases God, in those who hear the Gospel."

This high regard for the pastoral office needs to be maintained and safeguarded in the Synod's structure and governance. Continuing and preserving the Board for Pastoral Education and the Board for Higher Education and having the Synodical Conventions continue to elect these Boards will be a very wise decision. Electing members to serve on this Board for Pastoral Education by Synod in convention needs to be preserved by the Synod members.

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Former Board Chairman, Board of Regents
Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, IN



Flawed Assumptions Produce Flawed Results

One gets the growing impression that the restructuring proposal of the Blue Ribbon Task Force on Synodical Structure and Governance is much like the Health Care reform proposal currently being promoted in our country. Many acknowledge the need for change, but most believe that what is being proposed is not the right solution. Yet those in leadership seem intent on pushing it through. It is being said (in both debates) that the cost of inaction is too great to do nothing; therefore we must move forward boldly and courageously. *But is this assertion true?* Or will haste not only make waste, but create unforeseen problems that leave us worse off than when we began?

Recommendation #4 of the Task Force Final Report is to "Study Future District Configuration." Now, you may ask, how can this proposal do any harm? How can a delegate vote against a proposal to simply study something and make recommendations?

Aside from the fact that one wonders why this wasn't already done by the task force and concrete recom-

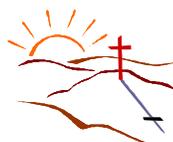
mendations made, and that the creation of yet another task force (and a rather large one at that!) will cost the Synod a great amount of money, to determine whether or not this is a good proposal one must look at the underlying assumptions that are being made to cause this recommendation. If the assumptions are wrong, are we studying the right problem?

The rationale given for any possible restructuring of districts is that "disparity in [sizes of the districts] creates inequality in both services provided to congregations and the support and care given to congregations and church workers." *But is this assertion true?* The assumption made here seems to be that some districts are too small and lack sufficient resources, and that some districts are too large and unwieldy to provide the best services and support to congregations and church workers. *But again, is this true?* Or are differences from district to district dependent not on size, but on other factors, such as different priorities, different stewardship decisions, and even different theology? If so, redistricting would change nothing - it would simply move these differences from one structure to another.

"Perhaps instead of working toward uniformity of size, we need to work toward unity of mind."

So perhaps the question is not one of district configuration at all, but rather in how our districts see themselves. Perhaps instead of working toward uniformity of size, we need to work toward unity of mind. And perhaps the *diversity* (not disparity!) of our districts is a good thing. Some are large in the number of congregations, some are large in geographical size, some are quite small, and some (two) are even non-geographical. Is this a problem? The task force has not convinced me that it is. Nor have they convinced me that the study they are proposing would address the right question. And so my vote for this proposal would be no. Coming up with the right answer to the wrong question will help nothing - it will simply cost a lot of money.

Rev. James A. Douthwaite, Pastor
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Vienna, VA



The Secret History of the Blue Ribbon Plan (Updated)

The following is an update of the article by Rev. Martin Noland, that was first published in the March 2009 issue of The Lutheran Clarion.

The LCMS President's "Blue Ribbon Task Force on Synod Structure and Governance" issued a report in October 2009 entitled "Congregations Walking Together in Mission - The Final Report of the Blue Ribbon Task Force on Synod Structure and Governance" (available at Synod's web-site: <http://www.lcms.org/pages/internal.asp?NavID=15930>). These proposals are to be considered by the Synod at its convention in 2010 in order to change its structure and governing powers. I have written critiques and evaluations elsewhere (see <http://steadfastlutherans.org/?p=7964> [this is the 5th part in a series; click on the links to go to parts 1-4]; and <http://crossfocusedleadership.org/2009/12/a-brief-analysis-of-congregations-walking-together-in-mission/>).

While organizing some of my files, I came across a copy of a document from seven years ago that proposed some of the same ideas found in the proposal of the "Blue Ribbon Task Force." The Coordinator of the "Jesus First" organization sent the document to his associates on January 30, 2003, in the form of sample overtures to the 2003 LCMS district conventions. The overture title was "To Provide More Equitable Representation and Voting Privileges at Conventions and Study Other Organizational Matters." The single "Resolved" in the overture stated:

RESOLVED that the Commission on Structure of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod study the voting and organizational structure of our Synod and bring recommendations for solving the following matters and other issues related to these structures to the entire Synod no later than ten months prior to the 2004 Synodical Convention:

- * Granting commissioned ministers fair representation, perhaps on a circuit basis, to district and national conventions;
- * Providing a more equitable representation based on size and number of congregations, circuits, and districts;
- * Reducing the size and number of Synodical boards and commissions, wherever possible, and determine the best method for se-

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lecting members;

- * Asking the Council of Presidents to participate more directly in the nomination and appointment of Board and Commission members;
- * Considering ways by which two or more districts may share the services of individual staff members;
- * Exploring options for choosing Synodical vice-presidents two through five on a regional basis.

We might note that **all** of these proposals from “Jesus First” have found their way into the final report of the “Blue Ribbon Task Force,” except that the Council of Presidents will not have more say in the selection of

“...the proposal on “delegate representation based on congregational size” needs to be defeated--again!”

program board members, since program boards are supposed to be eliminated.

The LCMS Commission on Structure responded to this request in a timely manner (see the 2004 LCMS Convention Workbook, pages 264-265). After weighing numerous factors with regard to del-

egate selection, the Commission on Structure concluded in 2004 that all congregations should elect two delegates each to district and synod conventions. The two delegates would be one rostered minister (clergy or commissioned) and one layman. Although this would mean larger synod conventions, the Commission reasoned that the National Youth Gathering has in recent years registered over twice the number of synodical congregations with no great logistical problems. The Commission reasoned that if congregations can afford to send their youth on a “fun and fellowship trip,” they could certainly afford to send their delegates to do the work of the church.

The response of “Jesus First” to the Commission on Structure’s report can be found in overtures 7-02 and 7-03, in the 2004 LCMS Convention Workbook. These overtures, sent by members of the “Jesus First” organization, clearly indicate that “Jesus First” disagreed with the LCMS Commission on Structure. In order to bypass the Commission, overtures 7-02 and 7-03 urged the appointment of a separate Task Force for the project. A whole series of overtures were also submitted asking for “delegate representation based on congregational size” (overtures 7-42, 7-43, 7-44, 7-45, 7-46, 7-47, 7-48, 7-50, 7-53, and 7-54 in 2004 LCMS Convention Workbook). These too were sent mostly from congregations associated with “Jesus First.”

The Resolution about “delegate representation based on congregational size” (Resolution 7-08), brought from the Floor Committee to the 2004 convention, was soundly declined by the convention. Subsequently, in March 2005, President Kieschnick appointed a “Blue Ribbon Task Force on Synodical Structure and Governance.” This task force brought back the same concept of “delegate representation based on congregational size” which the 2004 convention soundly declined and disapproved.

This is a “secret history,” because synodical commissions and task forces usually preface their work with a brief history of when and how the Synod considered its proposals. Why did the proponents of the “Blue Ribbon Task Force” not do this? The “Blue Ribbon Task Force” probably doesn’t want people to know that the same ideas they are presenting were soundly defeated at the 2004 convention. Since it is unlikely that the 2004 delegates will be present at the 2010 convention, they will most likely be ignorant of the “secret history” of the “delegate representation based on congregational size” proposal.

Why have the members of the “Jesus First” organization been so persistent in their demands for “delegate representation based on congregational size”? Perhaps most of them are simply ignorant that the Missouri Synod is constituted as a membership organization, whose members are **individual congregations**. Each of these members has **equal rights**, as is the case in most membership organizations. This is the fundamental principle of the synod’s structure and governance. If the principle of “delegate representation based on congregational size” would be adopted, then the members of the synod would be unequal and a principle of elitism would become the fundamental principle of synodical structure and governance.

Perhaps members of the “Jesus First” organization believe that bigger congregations are greater or more important than smaller ones. Do they not understand Jesus’ words, “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them . . . but it shall NOT be so among you! Whoever is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he who governs as he who serves!” (Luke 22:24-26).

The Synod’s traditional pattern of delegate selection is not perfect, but it has worked for over 160 years. Although other proposals from the “Blue Ribbon Task Force on Synodical Structure and Governance” may be beneficial, the proposal on “delegate representation based on congregational size” needs to be defeated—again!

Rev. Dr. Martin R. Noland, Pastor

We Need Your Help!

If you attended Lutheran Concern Association's (LCA) Annual Conference January 18, 2010, please help us. Your feedback will help us plan the conference for 2011.

LCA exists for the following reasons, as found in paras. (1), (2), (3) and (5) of Article II of the LCA Constitution: to be concerned with problems that face the church; to reveal such problems to all church members, be they doctrinal or administrative; to work for an open, ethical and truthful response to all concerns; and to support a practice of full financial disclosure. For further information, see the LCA Articles of Incorporation, VI (1).

Thus, we try to have top notch and well respected confessional leaders give presentations at our annual conferences. As a review, the following gave presentations this year:

- **Rev. Dr. Fritz Baue** "The Forgotten Article--Augustana XXVIII and How it Opposes the Structure Proposals"
- **Rev. Peter Bender** "What It's Like to be a Convention Delegate"
- **Mr. Joe Strieter** "Transforming Churches--Program and Prescription"
- **John Edson, CPA** "Community Chest or Corporation Overhead--the Truth about Synod Finances"
- **Walter Dissen, Esq., Rev. Dr. Timothy Rossow, Rev. Dr. James Voelz, Rev. Dr. William Weinrich** "The Need to Continue Residential Seminaries at Fort Wayne and Saint Louis"
- **Christian Preus, Esq., Rev. Jon Furgeson** "President Kieschnick's Blue Ribbon Task Force Report on Structure and Governance"

Please comment on how any or all of the presenters were relevant to LCA's purpose and to our time (seven months before the 2010 Synodical Convention). _____

To ALL Our Readers

Since LCA wants to expand participation at its annual conferences it would be helpful and appreciated if you give us your preferences for the 2011 LCA Conference. Please consider transportation, lodging and conference room costs, other events taking place at the same time, number of LCMS members residing near a site and the site most likely to maximize participation:

- Preferred City: Fort Wayne, IN (in the same timeframe as the 2011 Symposia*)
 Metro Chicago, IL
 Minneapolis, MN (in the same timeframe as the 2011 Association of Confessional Lutherans Conference*)
 Saint Louis, MO
 Other _____

Do you have suggestions for topics to be presented? _____

Preferred days of the week: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday

Would you participate in an early AM pre-conference (around 7:30am) Bible Study? Yes No

Other thoughts and suggestions: _____

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The principal place of business for all matters pertaining to the LCA is:

1320 Hartford Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55116

Other faithful Lutheran individuals who are members of LCMS congregations are invited to submit articles of approximately 500 words for consideration to:

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Articles should be approximately 500 words in length. Inquiries are welcome. Manuscripts will be edited.

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