

The LUTHERAN CLARION



Lutheran Concerns Association
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Missionals vs. Confessionals and Other Issues at the 2013 LCMS Convention

Rev. Dr. Martin Noland delivered the following paper at the January 21, 2013, LCA Conference in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

The generation of pastors that brought the crisis of Seminex to The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (hereafter LCMS) is retiring. If you don't believe me, just do the math. The Saint Louis seminary came under liberal control in the early 1950s¹, and came under conservative control only in 1974 after the walkout. Since the 1973 seminary graduation was the last cohort of liberal LCMS pastors, and their youngest graduates were 25 that year, those pastors are now 65 years of age.

All the older liberal pastors (i.e., graduated before 1973) have already retired and the youngest ones are beginning to do so now. Although a few of the youngest liberals may hang on for another decade, their presence and influence will be noticeably less at the 2013 national LCMS convention and thereafter. With the retirement of these pastors will come the retirement of issues that were near and dear to their hearts. This would seem to result

in a less divided synod and more harmonious conventions.

The seminaries have certainly been unified. For forty years now, i.e., from 1974 to the present, the LCMS seminaries in Saint Louis and Fort Wayne have been theologically very close together—as close as is possible, humanly speaking—since both seminaries have worked under the assumption that all of the canonical Scriptures are inspired and inerrant, and both have upheld the Lutheran Confessions as mandated doctrinal norms. The result has been, overall, a high level of orthodoxy and pastoral sensibility in pastoral candidates. This has served the LCMS well in a time when the general society has become increasingly less Christian.

Unfortunately the unity of our seminaries has not resulted in a real unification of the clergy, or congregations, in the LCMS. Due to the rising fortunes and celebrity of Evangelical churches, many pastors and congregations have been tempted by the siren songs of "success," "church-growth," "mega-church," and other Evangelical fads to leave parts of their Lutheran heritage behind. Although such pastors claim to be faithful to their Lutheran heritage, their claims rarely convince *(continued on page 2)*

Synodical President Matthew Harrison was Right

On December 14, 2012, twenty children and six adults were killed by a mad gunman at their school in Newtown, CT. Following this tragedy an interfaith service was held at the Newtown high school.

Representatives of Christian churches and non-Christian religions took part in the service. Rob Morris, pastor of Christ the King Lutheran Church in Newtown was the last participant.

Participation in interfaith services is opposed by The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. It is believed that participating along with Muslims and Bahai faith representatives who deny the deity and work of Jesus is improper. In II Corinthians 6: 14-15 the Apostle Paul warns, "Do not be yoked together with unbelievers...What fellowship has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever?" In verse 17 he adds, "Therefore come out from them and be separate."

As the last person in the interfaith service Rev. Morris read from the book of Revelation and blessed the crowd with a sign of the cross. He spoke a benediction: "May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all."

Despite Morris' attempt to Christianize the service, he could not change the fact that he had joined with a Jewish Rabbi who de-

nies that Christ is the Messiah. There also had been a reading from the Koran and a prayer by members of the Islamic faith. Their founder Mohammed denied that Christ was divine and that He had died on the cross for all sinners. In his book, **Two Wars We Must Not Lose** (Concordia Theological Seminary Press, 2012), Bill Hecht states at p. 210 followers of Mohammed waged war against Christians for fourteen centuries and Islamic terrorists still feel an obligation to attack America.

Also represented at the Newtown interfaith service were followers of the Bahai faith, another religion that denies the Trinity and the Deity of Christ.

It has been said that we are known by the company we keep. It is easy to understand why President Harrison and District President Yeadon asked Rev. Morris for an apology for participating in the Newtown prayer service. Morris refused to apologize for participating in the joint service, but he did express regret that offense was taken because of his actions.

President Harrison graciously accepted Morris' apology, wrote some very kind words regarding Morris *(continued on page 2)*

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Synodical President

and asked the Church to move on. District President Timothy Yeadon also wrote a pastoral letter in which he indicated his resolve to defend President Harrison "as one who spared the Synod grief and division."

Despite all this, a great controversy has erupted in the Synod. Liberals in the LCMS have used this as an excuse to indicate that President Harrison should not be re-elected at the Synod's convention this coming summer. Jerry Kieschnick in a self-serving news letter indicated his great willingness to once again be elected president.

President Harrison, in true Christian humility, rather than fighting has issued a letter offering an apology for not having handled the situation better. But he should NOT apologize. He did the right thing. He followed the principles of the LCMS.

The situation was summed up nicely in an open letter by Paul Faulkner who wrote as follows: "I thank Rev. Harrison for his pastoral response to this whole situation. Rev. Harrison did not sus-

pend Rev. Morris. He did not threaten Rev. Morris with expulsion. Rev. Harrison's letter was very humble. It was not rude, vindictive, or arrogant. In fact Rev. Harrison spoke very highly of much of the work which Rev. Morris has done in his community. Of course we cannot expect members of the public to understand this. Jesus Himself was not received in his home town. The Apostle Paul's preaching of the Gospel was so unpopular that he shook the dust off his sandals towards those gathered to hear."

I agree.

Rev. Dr. Paul A. Zimmerman
Traverse City, Michigan

Issues at 2013 Convention

critics or even some members of their own congregation.

The result of this shift in focus, or self-identity, for some in the LCMS is a continued division of the LCMS. I am concerned that this division will frustrate the work that needs to be done in July at the convention and the work of our elected officers thereafter. I have heard this division explained as a difference between "missionals" and "confessionals." Unlike the terms "liberal" and "conservative," these new terms are unequal in their history and intent. Let's look at that history and intent for a couple of minutes before drawing any conclusion about their referenced members.

"Confessional"

The use of the term "confessional" to describe a type of Lutheran goes back to the beginning of the nineteenth century in Germany. The idea of using creeds and confessions as mandated norms and as "symbols" of self-identity goes back to Martin Chemnitz and the Book of Concord.² That idea was not challenged within the Lutheran church until the rise of Pietism at the end of the seventeenth century.³

The challenges posed by the Prussian king's 1817 church union, i.e., the "Prussian Union," caused a reassertion of the idea of "confessional Lutheranism" in Germany.⁴ Leaders in that "confessional"

revival included Johann Scheibel of Breslau, Wilhelm Löhe of Bavaria, Theodore Kliefoth of Mecklenburg, Adolf Harless and other members of the University of Erlangen faculty, August Vilmar of Hesse, Andreas Rudelbach of Saxony, Heinrich Guericke at Halle, Ludwig Petri of Hanover, Claus Harms of Kiel, and Franz

Delitzsch of Erlangen. Confessional leaders who led emigration societies included Martin Stephan of Saxony, and the Prussian pastors Johann Grabau, Johann Kilian, and August Kavel.⁵ These were the leaders who created the LCMS and similar churches like it around the world in the nineteenth century.

In the later 1970s the LCMS was forced to, once again, deal with the issue of its confessional identity. At that time, Saint Louis seminary president Ralph Bohlmann stated:

"Were Luther, the Lutheran reformers, and the orthodox Lutherans concerned about missions and evangelism?"

[Official discussions within American Lutheranism have made it very clear that theologians of these church bodies [i.e., the ALC and LCA] are in fact free to disagree with doctrinal positions of the Lutheran Confessions. . . .The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is one of a very few major Lutheran bodies in the world who still confess and cling to the whole doctrinal content of the Lutheran confessional writings. Furthermore, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and its sister churches are in a distinct minority within world Christianity in sensing with disapproval that a major impact of the ecumenical movement of our times has been to diminish the significance of doctrinal disagreements while encouraging Christians to act and worship together whether agreed in doctrine or not.⁶

Since the late 1970s it has become common parlance to use the term "confessional Lutheran" to describe the LCMS and other churches that "confess and cling to the whole doctrinal content of the Lutheran confessional writings" and which discourage unionistic and syncretistic activity. The term "confessional Lutheran" was not intended to describe a division within **the LCMS**, but a division within **world Lutheranism**. That some people have used the name for self-identity simply means that they agree with the official position of the LCMS as found in its official confessions, constitution, and its many orthodox doctrinal resolutions and statements. The term "confessional Lutheran" has no narrower meaning.

"Missional"

The use of the term "missional" in official synodical circles can be found as early as LCMS President Gerald Kieschnick's report to the Council of Presidents in their meeting of October 2002.⁷ I first became aware of the term "missional" through an article published by Dr. Ken Schurb in 2009 in *LOGIA: A Journal of Lutheran Theology*.⁸ He was responding to a 1998 book edited by Darrell Guder with the title *Missional Church*, and to a similar book, published in 2005 with a Lutheran emphasis, edited by Richard Bliese and Craig Van Gelder.⁹ Dr. Schurb observed that the term "missional" is used in a variety of ways by different authors and speakers.¹⁰ Since the publication of Dr. Schurb's article, I have become more aware of LCMS pastors and laymen using the term "missional," often in contrast to the term "confessional."¹¹

I recently received an unsolicited e-mail from the "Pastoral Lead-

ership Institute" (hereafter PLI) asking me if I wanted to become a "PLI-Missional Leader."¹² That led me to investigate the PLI web-site which states that the purpose of PLI "is to provide advanced missional leadership training for pastors."¹³ Just to be fair to other contenders for the title, I looked up the website of "Transforming Churches Network," which has a regularly updated blog titled "Missional Moments."¹⁴

As far as I can tell from these sources, the term "missional" is the new term to describe someone who is dedicated to "church-growth." After all, the term "church-growth" doesn't work very well as an adjective. It may also tell us that the term "church growth" has passed the stage of being a fad. In any event, the use of a new term means that different definitions and principles may be involved. So, to be fair, we should not assume that any or all of the well-known errors of the "church growth movement"¹⁵ have been accepted by the "missional movement" or by its leaders.

This raises an important question: Were Luther, the Lutheran reformers, and the orthodox Lutherans concerned about missions and evangelism? F. Dean Lueking argued in his book *Mission in the Making* that the "scholastic confessionalism" of the 17th century, C.F.W. Walther, and the early Missouri Synod were more interested in correcting erroneous doctrine than reaching out to the unchurched.¹⁶ Lueking's book is useful for its historical details, but this particular thesis is severely flawed.

Recent works by Ingemar Öberg, Volker Stolle, and Klaus Detlev Schulz should put to rest the common slander that Luther and orthodox Lutherans haven't been concerned about missions.¹⁷ Older essays by Robert Preus and Werner Elert proved the same.¹⁸ In a lecture given in January 2008 to the "Institute for Mission Studies of Concordia Seminary," I demonstrated that the Wittenberg Faculty *Gutachten* of 1652—often cited to prove Lutheran indifference to missions—actually supported missions by urging the Lutheran princes and kings to send preachers to the colonies and lands which they had pacified.¹⁹

If Lutherans have always been concerned about missions and evangelism, what is new about being "missional" today? Using Dr. Bohlmann's description of "confessional Lutheran" quoted above, we can observe that **some** "missional" persons want to: 1) reject or reduce the requirement to "confess and cling to the whole doctrinal content of the Lutheran confessional writings"; 2) "diminish the significance of doctrinal disagreements"; and/or 3) encourage "Christians to act and worship together whether agreed in doctrine or not."

I think that you will find that **some** persons who use the term "missional" really do intend some reduction of confessional identity as described by these three attributes. It is obvious from his book that if F. Dean Lueking was in the Missouri Synod today, that is how he would use the term. Others are simply following a fad and use the term without knowing what they are saying. Others are sincerely concerned for the lost souls here in our country and abroad. In their case, "missional" is the only term they hear to describe how they feel.

When "missional" is used by someone to describe their **opposition** to "confessional," its intent is then contrary to the ordination vows of our LCMS pastors and a serious sign of schismatic tendencies. Any church can be "missional," but what distinguishes the LCMS from most other Lutheran churches in the world is that it is **also** "confessional." I would hope that everyone in the LCMS can be **both** "missional" and "confessional," and that we put this false dichotomy behind us.

We Need Your Help: The Lutheran Clarion to Publish Monthly March—July 2013



With the March 2013 issue, *The Lutheran Clarion* began monthly publication leading up to the 2013 LCMS Synodical convention. In order to address the wide range of issues and concerns facing the upcoming convention, it is necessary to increase the publication frequency from bi-monthly to monthly.

Whereas in a non-convention year we would have published four issues in the January to July time frame, in this convention year we will publish six issues. This means, of course, our costs of publication and mailing will increase proportionately. Accordingly, we would ask, you our readers, to increase your donations in support of this convention-year effort.

Please send checks to:
Lutheran Concerns Association
1320 Hartford Avenue
Saint Paul, MN 55116-1623

Other Issues

In the January 2013 issue of the *Lutheran Clarion*, I offered an article titled "Unfinished Business from 2010 for 2013." This is business that was started at the 2010 convention that should be taken up again at the 2013 convention.²⁰ Persons at the conference here today may be able to give us more insight as to the present stage of discussions and work on many of these issues.

With regard to 2010 convention resolutions 8-30B and 8-32B, which call for possible amendment to the LCMS Constitution Articles VI and VII, my advice is "Just say NO!" The English in the LCMS Constitution is clear enough as it stands and it needs no amendment. However those Constitutional articles could use some **explanation** in a document outside of the Handbook. The synod's CTCR, Commission on Handbook, or special committee could be asked to help clarify what these Constitutional articles mean in actual practice today.

With regard to 2010 convention resolution 4-04A, the financial state of our universities and seminaries is a very serious matter. The recent affiliation of Concordia University-Ann Arbor with Concordia University-Mequon was due to Ann Arbor's fiscal and enrollment failures. Ann Arbor may be the "tip of the iceberg." You should all carefully read the entire November 2012 report of the LCMS Treasurer, which states "When the Concordia University System (CUS) was formed, it was not specifically provided with any funding mechanism to allow it to accomplish the last of its goals (i.e., capitalizing the schools and the System)."²¹

Right now the burden of financing the education of church-workers falls on the church-workers themselves or their parents. Most of them have to rely on significant loans. But the overwhelming majority of congregations and parochial schools do not offer the type of salaries that make the repayment of significant college or seminary debt a realistic possibility.

At the same time, this year only 5.6% of CUS students are registered as church-worker students out of a total national CUS student body of 29,597.²² The tuition from church-worker students

is fiscally, a small portion of the CUS revenue. There has to be some way to reduce the debt load of all church worker students to negligible levels, to reduce the debt to zero for pre-seminary students, and to reduce the debt for seminarians to levels they can repay in their first five years at the lowest pastor's salary in the LCMS.

I am deeply concerned that our young church-workers are not able to attend our schools without incurring debt that will disable them financially for the rest of their lives. The LCMS needs to get its financial priorities straight in this matter before it forces most of its young church-workers into crippling debt or bankruptcy. That would not only be a disgrace, but it would cause many other problems with church-workers in local congregations and schools, such a deep-seated resentment toward the church, depression, conflict with congregational members, moonlighting, embezzlement, and abandonment of church careers.

Finally, we need to do something about the "licensed lay deacons" program. 2010 resolution 5-03A was referred to committee and never came back for action. In 2013 the synod should mandate that all "licensed lay deacons" are to be enrolled in the Specific Ministry Pastor program (hereafter SMP), so that they gain the competence needed to perform pastoral functions. This will also ensure a **standard** degree of training and competence across the synod for these men. The "licensed lay deacons" were trained and examined with various competencies at the district level, while the SMP candidates are trained and examined at the national level.

Although I believe that LCMS laymen deserve competent pastors, many people disagree. In a recent blog article at the *First Things* website blog "On the Square," James R. Rogers brags about how the LCMS Texas District has found a way to work toward its goal of two hundred new churches by 2014. "Many of these new church plants . . . begin with 'worker priests' serving as pastors. . . . This has dramatically decreased the net cost of new ministries."²³ People who believe that Lutheran laymen deserve competent pastors need to nip this trend in the bud, by doing something about "licensed lay deacons" at the 2013 convention.

Rev. Dr. Martin R. Noland

Pastor, Trinity Lutheran Church, Evansville, Indiana

- 1 The departure or deaths of the "old guard" on the seminary faculty around the year 1950 contributed to the loss of conservative control there: Theodore Engelder (retired 1946), Martin Sommer (retired 1946), Paul Kretzmann (departed 1946), Ludwig Fuerbringer (died 1947), Theodore Laetsch (retired 1947), William Polack (died 1950), Walter A. Maier Sr. (died 1950), and Theodore Graebner (died 1950), and John Fritz (died 1953). Many of the faculty that replaced these men in the early 1950s eventually proved to have different loyalties.
- 2 See Martin R. Noland, "Walther and the Revival of Confessional Lutheranism," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 75 #3-4 (July/October 2011): 197-198.
- 3 *Ibid.*, 200-202.
- 4 *Ibid.*, 204-207. See also the recent fine article by Stan M. Landry, *Lutheran Quarterly* 26 #4 (Winter 2012): 373-394.
- 5 Noland, 206 notes 40-42.
- 6 Ralph Bohlmann, "The Celebration of Concord," in *Theologian's Convocation: Formula for Concord* (St Louis: LCMS, 1977): 79 & 85.
- 7 See "Kieschnick calls for 'rededication of mission'," LCMS News No. 66, October 15, 2002, published by the News and Information Division, Board for Communication Services of the LCMS. Available online at: <http://archive.wfn.org/2002/10/msg00199.html>; accessed January 7, 2013.
- 8 Ken Schurb, "Missional? The Church in Luther's Large Catechism," *Logia* 18 #1 (Epiphany 2009): 15-22.
- 9 Darrell L. Guder, ed. *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998); Richard Bliese and Craig Van Gelder, eds., *The Evangelizing Church: A Lutheran Contribution* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2005).
- 10 Schurb, 15.

**Thank You
Balance-Concord, Inc.**



Balance-Concord, Inc., has been a most faithful contributor to *The Lutheran Clarion* in honor of the sainted **Rev. Raymond Mueller** and the sainted **Rev. Edgar Rehwaldt**, both of whom faithfully served the Synod and Balance-Concord, Inc., for many years.

The Clarion is most appreciative of such continued support from Balance-Concord, Inc., as well as the wonderful support of our readers. These contributions make it possible to bring you substantive articles by respected and qualified authors on issues affecting YOUR Synod. Please continue your support. It is both appreciated and needed.

- 11 I have overheard, and been involved in, discussions where the term "missional" was used in various ways and contexts at LCMS pastoral conferences, district conventions, occasional conferences, and also in online discussions.
- 12 E-mail received on December 17, 2012 from "Rita Wagner" at in-fo@plminstitute.org, subject "PLI-Missional Leader Update."
- 13 See <http://www.pastoral-leadership-institute.org/about-pli>; accessed January 7, 2013.
- 14 See <http://transformingchurchesnetwork.org/about>; accessed January 7, 2013.
- 15 The errors of the "church-growth movement" were analyzed and criticized in these official LCMS documents: *Evangelism and Church Growth, with Special Reference to the Church Growth Movement*. A Report of the Commission on Theology and Church-Relations of the LCMS, September 1987 (Saint Louis: LCMS, 1987); *For the Sake of Christ's Commission*. The Report of the Church Growth Study Committee (St Louis: LCMS, 2001).
- 16 F. Dean Lueking, *Mission in the Making: The Missionary Enterprise Among Missouri Synod Lutherans 1846-1963* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1964), 16-23.
- 17 Ingemar Öberg, *Luther and World Mission: A Historical and Systematic Study*, tr. Dean Apel (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2007); Volker Stolle, *The Church Comes From All Nations: Luther Texts on Mission*, tr. Klaus Detlev Schulz and Daniel Thies (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2003); and Klaus Detlev Schulz, *Mission from the Cross: The Lutheran Theology of Missions* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009).
- 18 Robert Preus, "The Confessions and the Mission of the Church," *The Springfielder* 39 #1 (June 1975): 20-39; article reprinted in Robert D. Preus, *Doctrine in Life: Essays on Justification and the Lutheran Confessions*, ed. Klemet Preus (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), 213-235; Werner Elert, chapter on "Missions," in *The Structure of Lutheranism*, tr. Walter Hansen (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1962), 385-402.
- 19 Unpublished essay by Martin R. Noland, "The Late 16th and 17th Century Lutheran Attitude toward Missions," a paper presented on January 31, 2008, to the Institute for Mission Studies of Concordia Seminary [Saint Louis] and its College of Fellows. The *Gutachten* may be found in *Consilia Theologica Wittenbergia* (Frankfurt am Main: B.C. Wusts, 1664), 180, 196-197. It is cited against Lutherans in Gustav Warneck, *Outline of a History of Protestant Missions* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1906), 25-27; original is *Abriss einer Geschichte der protestantische Missionen*, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Martin Warneck, 1910).
- 20 Martin R. Noland, "Unfinished Business from 2010 for 2013," *The Lutheran Clarion* 5 #3 (January 2013): 1-2.
- 21 See *Lutheran Witness* 131 #11 (Nov. 2012): 24; *Reporter* 38 #11 (Nov. 2012): 8; and online at: <http://reporter.lcms.org/pages/rpage.asp?NavID=20511>.
- 22 For academic year 2012-13, CUS reports 29,597 total enrolled students; out of this total, 1,654 are church-worker students; see "CUS enrollment climbs to record 29,597 students," *Reporter* 38 #11 (November 2012): 2.
- 23 James R. Rogers, "Lo How a (Yellow) Rose E'er Blooming," *First Things* blog, in section: *On the Square*, December 18, 2012; at <http://www.firstthings.com/print/onthesquare/2012/12/lo-how-a-yellow-rose-ersquoer-blooming>; accessed January 7, 2013.

Rev. Dr. Gard Nominated to Rear Admiral (lower half)

Concordia Theological Seminary recently announced that the **Rev. Dr. Daniel L. Gard**, professor of exegetical theology at CTS in Fort Wayne, has been nominated to serve as a Rear Admiral (lower half) while working as the U.S. Navy's deputy chief of chaplains for reserve matters. Rev. Gard, who must be confirmed by the U.S. Senate, would receive the highest rank available in the Navy Reserve. If approved, the appointment isn't expected to conflict with his teaching at the seminary. [*Fort Wayne News-Sentinel*, 02/15/2013]



SMP: Aerobatic Acronym?

Rev. Professor Richard T. Nuffer delivered the following paper at the January 21, 2013, LCA Conference in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

Many of you have been to an air show. Perhaps you have even been to one in which a rickety, smoke-spitting, bi-winged airplane climbs quickly into the sky, twists, turns, sputters, and heads on an equally steep course to earth. Will this stunt plane crash, or will it pull out of its dive at the last moment? And where will it go and what will it do next? Is the performing plane really air-worthy? Should it be retired from service? Can it be modified for future service? Should it ever have been flying to begin with?

This plane, by way of analogy, is the Specific Minister Pastor Program (SMP). The same questions asked of our hypothetical aerobatic plane, must also be asked of the SMP program. It is my intention to do so in this paper.

What Does this Aerobatic SMP Program Look Like?

The SMP program at both seminaries requires sixteen courses taken over a four year period. These courses are "distance education" in nature, making use of computer technology. These courses are ten weeks in length, the same as residential courses. Each class of SMP students is on campus one week per academic year, during which time one class is introduced in an intensive way. Eight of the classes occur before ordination, normally at the end of the second year of studies. The following eight courses are taken after ordination. Ordination is not at the end of a student's academic studies as in residential M.Divinity classes.

SMP students are admitted to the program after congregational, district, and seminary approval. There are no educational requirements or age limitations in Bylaw 2.13.3, the SMP bylaw of the Synod.

Each SMP student is sponsored by a congregation that has entered into a "Partnership Agreement" involving the student, the district, and the seminary. All tuition is paid by the congregation, the district, the student, or a combination of these partners. There is no seminary financial aid for SMP.

Each student must be engaged in a "specific ministry" while in the SMP program. The SMP bylaw does not identify what constitutes a "specific ministry." Hence, there has been a wide variety of specific ministries in the SMP Program.

A SMP student is a vicar during his two-year, pre-ordination period. After ordination, he becomes a "specific ministry pastor," as opposed to a "general ministry pastor" (formerly simply known as "pastor"). A general ministry pastor must supervise the SMP student not only during his four years of SMP education, but also until such time, if ever, that he becomes a general ministry pastor. A specific ministry pastor is able to take additional classes beyond those required during his four year SMP Program, to receive a Master of Divinity Degree or Alternate Routes certificate. He then becomes a general ministry pastor. Pastors who supervise an SMP student or SMP pastor are either referred to as SMP Supervisors or SMP Mentors.

SMP pastors are not limited to service in the congregation from which they come. They can be called by other congregations, provided that their specific ministry is the same in the calling congregation. The district president makes the determination about eligibility for such a call.

SMP pastors can't serve as a voting delegate at a national convention, but can do so at a district convention. An SMP pastor

can't hold office in the Synod, supervise vicars, or serve as circuit counselors.

The two seminaries' SMP curriculum differs slightly, but covers the same basic material in the same number of courses. No course in the Greek or Hebrew language is required of the SMP student. The program does require that applicants demonstrate entry level competence in Old Testament, New Testament, and Christian Doctrine.

What is the History of this Acrobatic Plane?

Resolution 5-01B, passed at the 2007 convention of the Synod, established the SMP Program. The vote was 908 in favor and 287 opposed (76% in favor). Interestingly, the resolution inserted the SMP Program into Bylaw Section 2.13, and titled the section with a new name, "Membership Status and Limitations." This is an unusual place for SMP, as the only two other topics discussed are "restricted status" and "suspended status," which concern ecclesiastical discipline. The SMP program does not concern that. The more logical place for SMP provisions is in the Constitution of the Synod, where Article IV deals directly with individual membership in the Synod, even listing the types of membership. Perhaps the bylaw location of the SMP material had something to do with bylaw changes requiring only a majority vote of the convention, whereas constitutional changes require a two-thirds approval of the convention, plus congregational approval!

The SMP resolution came to the convention floor with endorsement from the Distance Education Leading to Ordination (DELTO) Oversight Committee, the Board for Pastoral Education, the seminary faculties, the CTCR, the president of the Synod, the Praesidium, and the Council of Presidents. It is amazing that anyone voted against it, given those supporters. It is also interesting to note in the written material distributed in support of SMP that SMP was to replace DELTO. There was no indication that it would replace the district's lay training programs, of which there were about nineteen at the time of the convention. Eliminating those programs would have caused loss of support for SMP among the Council of Presidents.

Of course the history that is really relevant to SMP today is the action taken by the 1989 Wichita convention approving the use of laymen in Word and Sacrament ministry. (Res. 3-05B) The late Kurt Marquart, my teacher, characterized this action as the "Wichita Amendment to the Augsburg Confession." He was right. The 1989 action released a torrent of programs to train licensed lay ministers, licensed deacons, and lay deacons. It also gave birth to the DELTO Program, the SMP Program, ethnic ministries programs, and a host of mission work overseas whose object was not to prepare pastors but to train lay leaders. (Pastor Harrison and his administration have been working hard to correct this.) It also opened the possibility of vicars serving as celebrants during their vicarage year. Whatever happened to *rite vocatus* and Augsburg XIV?

No changes in SMP Bylaw 2.13.1 were made by the 2010 convention, nor were there any other actions taken by the convention on the topic of SMP. This year, however, there are several district memorials coming to the 2013 convention on SMP. They include memorials to "commend and affirm" SMP (Atlantic District), to rescind the Wichita Convention's 1989 Res. 3.05B

"...American culture in the new millennium is so fascinated with distance education, computer technology, and "choice" in so many areas, that SMP might be irreversible."

(Wyoming District), and to prohibit the SMP route to ordination if a congregation already has a pastor. (Southern Illinois District)

Is this SMP Plane Airworthy to Begin With?

Critics of SMP are off-base if their primary objection to SMP is that it does not provide residential education. There is no indication the apostles resided with Christ. There is no scriptural evidence that Timothy resided with Paul. In the early church, hearers simply gathered around the bishop and then went home. In the Middle Ages, monastery education was residential, but the residents were formed in Biblical and confessional error! It is not until the 1600's that there began to be anything close to our seminaries today.

However today, residential seminary education is the best thing we have going, and I am glad President Harrison so strongly supports it. However, the concern with SMP is much deeper. It is a matter of "aptness to teach" as described in the pastoral epistles. "Aptness to teach" means the ability to speak the true Gospel as it relates to all the other articles of the faith, and to rightly administer the sacraments. "Aptness" in Scripture is not concerned with educational methods, but the heart of the faith—Christ, the Gospel, and all Christian doctrine. Aptness to teach and preach the Gospel, and to administer the sacraments is best served today by residential education. Students and their families are formed in the Christian faith by interacting with each other. Conversation among students and with professors is very important to students' theological and personal growth. When students are in residence, the faculty gets to know them better, leading to more appropriate vicarage assignments, clearer faculty certification for the ministry, and better placement decisions. Since theological education involves not just the mind, but the body and soul, the many services at our seminary chapels are an irreplaceable part of seminary education, where students learn the best in worship practices.

Does this Aerobatic Plane Have Strengths?

Yes. First, SMP generally attracts men who are mature, hard-working, and dedicated to learning. They also tend to be vocationally certain. There are few men who simply want to "try out" seminary education to see if they could make a good pastor. They somehow are able to handle a secular job, family life, church work, and SMP studies.

The mentor pastors generally are hard-working, confessional Lutheran pastors. The pay they receive is minimal. They are not required to serve as SMP mentors, but volunteer for the position. They are supportive of the churches and ministries of their students.

The SMP Program is contextual in nature. That which SMP students learn in their SMP classes can be immediately applied in their church work. This immediate application reinforces their theological learning. My students frequently tell me of how something they have learned in class has benefitted them in their churches/ministries just a week later. Residential theological education provides contextual learning through fieldwork church assignment and vicarage, but not to the degree SMP does in the four years of the program.

SMP does seem to attract men who would not otherwise study for the pastoral ministry. In the March 2012 report of the Specific Minister Pastor Committee's "White Paper" on the SMP program, eighty percent (80%) of SMP students said that they would not have come to a seminary for a residential program if the SMP program did not exist. (The Specific Ministry Pastor Committee is essentially the successor of the DELTO Oversight Committee. Its 2012 report contains much data from SMP student surveys

but little evaluative material.) There is also a task force on the SMP program, appointed by President Harrison and chaired by the Secretary of the Synod, Rev. Dr. Ray Hartwig. It has produced an evaluation of SMP. As of the date of this paper, this report has remained confidential. I have no idea what it contains. Hopefully it will be released before the Synod's convention.

The SMP Program does provide pastors to small congregations that could not otherwise afford them. An SMP pastor is usually a bi-vocational worker/priest. Because of secular income, the SMP pastor requires a smaller salary that small congregations can afford.

Seminary faculties do the best job possible with their SMP classes. Even though a significant number of professors have serious concerns about the SMP Program, they are committed to giving SMP students the best theological education possible. The seminaries assist in those efforts by considering SMP classes equal to residential classes for the purpose of determining a professor's course load. Each seminary provides a large amount of technical support for the distance education involved in the program. The SMP Program is a program of the Synod, so the seminaries' professors try to do their best while teaching in it.

SMP students assess their own course learning and the program itself on a regular basis. The results have been overwhelmingly positive. Many students wish they were able to come to the seminary for residential studies. This is a compliment to the theological education the two LCMS seminaries provide.

District and congregational support of SMP vicars is generally very strong. Since SMP prospective students are identified as they work in the congregations and ministries of the district, both districts and congregations really want SMP students to succeed. There are few, if any, students who are sent off to the seminary and then forgotten.

Proposed Modifications to the SMP Plane if it is not Scrapped or Allowed to Crash

The SMP Program creates two classes of pastors, something contrary to the one Office of the Holy Ministry described in the Scriptures and Lutheran Confessions. It offers theological education that is inferior to residential education because of the loss of significant face-to-face contact. The SMP Program ordains students before they have completed their studies. It does not allow a student to have a single focus on theological education.

Perhaps SMP should be scrapped. However, this will be very difficult, given the support it has gained throughout the Synod. Recall efforts to reverse the 1969 action of the Synod allowing women's suffrage, and the many unsuccessful efforts to overturn it. Will SMP repeal efforts face the same fate? Just as the prevailing feminist movement of the 1960's in American culture made it almost impossible to reverse women's suffrage in the LCMS, American culture in the new millennium is so fascinated with distance education, computer technology, and "choice" in so many areas, that SMP might be irreversible.

If SMP can't be repealed, how can it be improved? Here are a few ideas.

1. Change the admission requirements for the program by requiring a college education, a certain minimum age, and a required minimum score on the graduate record examination. Two of the eight students in my September 2012 SMP class had no college credits. One of my nine students the year before was only twenty two and could easily have come to the seminary for residential education.
2. More closely examine men in terms of being "above re-

proach” as the Pastoral Epistles put it. Eliminate “special exceptions” advocated by the districts for applicants with multiple divorces, and other disqualifying histories.

3. Require Greek as a course required before enrollment. Any pastor who is going to serve a parish for decades should be able to study the riches of God’s word in that language. Otherwise, his exegesis of the Biblical text can easily become only knee-deep, resulting in stale teaching and sermons.
4. Identify by name the “specific ministries” required in the SMP Program. Serving as an “associate pastor” is not a specific ministry. Serving as a sole pastor in a congregation that can afford a residentially trained pastor is not a specific ministry. Certainly, a man’s specific ministry should not be that of becoming the senior pastor in a multiple pastor church. (That man is out of the SMP program.)
5. Require that the congregation/ministry of the SMP student could not continue without his presence, and would fail or close. This was a good requirement of the DELTO program.
6. Prohibit sacramental acts by an SMP student before ordination. Many SMP students have that authority now.
7. Require greater involvement of SMP mentors in their student’s learning. Two years ago I began requiring mentors to “sign off” on each of their student’s assignments. They had to send me an email saying they had discussed the assignment with their SMP student. I would not give a student a grade for an assignment until I had received the mentor’s email. Most mentors happily complied. A small number did not. They probably should not have been mentors to begin with. Sometimes the strong stick of the law is required for the sake of the Gospel.
8. Move ordination later in the program. The theological interviews of SMP men at our seminary before ordination, are generally not as strong as the performance of residential men who interview after four years of education, not two. Again, aptness to teach is involved.
9. Figure out how to reverse the trend of decreasing Alternate Routes residential education, caused in part by the SMP program. The Alternate Route program consists of two years of residential seminary education, followed by a year of vicarage. It is open to men age 35 or older with at least sixty hours of college, and who have at least ten years of church work experience closely related to Word and Sacrament ministry. It is also open to Commissioned Ministers with eight or more years of service. Most men in the program are older. When I began service as Director of Vicarage at CTS in 1997, there were ten or so Alternate Routes students in each class. When I ended my tenure in that role in 2011, there were just a couple.
10. Require more residential time in each course. At present, men are required to be on campus once per year for only one week of one ten-week course. That week is a wonderful week for me and for the men. There is a lot of “male bonding” in Christ that goes on. There is a thorough overview of the course material and, more importantly, the articles of the faith. However, one week for four courses taken during a year is not sufficient.
11. Consider how we address the question of why an abbreviated pastoral education is sufficient for some congregations/ ministries, but not for others. Are we discriminating against small congregations, ethnic ministries, and other specific ministries. Aren’t all of God’s sheep worthy of pastors with the

best possible training?

12. Come up with a plan for de-rostering SMP pastors who never finished the two years of post-ordination courses. It will be difficult to do this when a congregation and its SMP pastor love and care for each other, but if it is not done the integrity of the SMP program is severely compromised.
13. Step up each seminary’s efforts to promote residential theological education and recruit men who are specifically interested in it. Recruiting SMP students only weakens the desirability of residential education.
14. Increase the use of distance education courses within the residential curriculum. Pre-seminary and basic introductory courses can certainly be offered on line. These could be taken during the summer or during breaks, when other demands on students are fewer.
15. Consider adding a fourth, summer quarter to the residential program. Perhaps transfer vicarage to the final year, instead of third year. With these two changes, students could shorten their time on campus by one year. Perhaps those contemplating the SMP Program might find this compressed residential program attractive.

Who is Responsible for this Sputtering Plane? Where Do We Go from Here?

Each of us is responsible for SMP and its current condition. After all, delegates from our congregations and electoral circuits adopted the program in convention. It is our program! We have a convention coming up this year. It is not too late for overtures to the convention regarding SMP. Those overtures are due in the Synod’s Secretary’s Office in early March. So mobilize your congregation, board, or commission, and send in an overture. Whether you think the thing to do is to scrap the aerobatic plane, or to repair it, take some action. Talk is cheap. Action is dear. The apt preaching of the Gospel and condition of the flock is at stake.

Perhaps consider submitting two resolutions or one resolution with a preferred and secondary option, covering both topics, one for scrapping the plane and another repairing it. I do know that the floor committees at the convention are more likely to hand an SMP resolution to the convention floor if the interest in a topic is great.

Thanks for flying with me.

Rev. Professor Richard T. Nuffer

Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana

A Foreign Mission Effort Worthy of Your Support

Clarion readers are encouraged to provide financial support for a worthy endeavor. Rev. Jeffrey Horn, a CTS graduate who served Zion Lutheran Church in Garrett, Indiana, from 2003-2012, and his wife Lora, will serve the Lord in Papua, New Guinea, as missionaries. Rev. Horn will teach at Timothy Lutheran Seminary and will look for ways to strengthen the education there.



While the LCMS is willing to “send” him and his family, it is up to Rev. Horn himself to raise the \$164,000 that is needed. Pilgrim Evangelical Lutheran Church, West Bend, Wisconsin, through its Horizon Fund, will match the first \$500 received.

Clarion readers, please send checks payable to:

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Mark the memo line of your check “New Guinea Mission Project.” LCA will see to it the funds are mailed in and specifically earmarked for the mission of Rev. Jeffrey Horn.

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Editorial Board: Mr. Walter Dissen (Chairman)
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Faithful Lutheran individuals who are members of LCMS congregations are invited to submit articles of approximately 500 words for consideration. Inquiries are welcome. Manuscripts will be edited. Please send to: Mr. Walter Dissen

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