

The **LUTHERAN** **CLARION**



Lutheran Concerns Association
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This is the Missouri Synod?

"We should know what to expect in the Missouri Synod." This comment was made to me by one of my members who had traveled and located a sister congregation of our Synod. Much to her chagrin and dismay, that which she rightly expected was not to be found. No hymnal, but screens. No hymns, but theologically void praise songs. No vestments, but collared shirt and khaki pants. No liturgy, no Law and Gospel, no lectern, no pulpit, no historic Creed, no Christ, no order of worship but disorder. Those gathered in that particular sanctuary heard a "how to" sermon that could only lead to pride or pessimism. A rare occurrence? Sadly, no. As she left the service my member pondered, "This is the Missouri Synod?"

We have come to expect the unexpected in our Missouri Synod. This should not be. You enter a McDonald's fully knowing what to expect. How much more so the House of God! We are not walking as one in doctrine and practice. I

"There is a dangerous timidity in our Synod that mirrors the deadly political correctness of the wicked world."

challenge you to visit various congregations in the Synod. A plethora of worship styles and practices will be readily evident. We are fragmented. "What works" is the end all in far too many parishes, instead of "what is right." Open communion, "how to" sermons devoid of Christ, clips of movies shown in sanctuaries, meaningless

ditties, and entertainment driven anthropocentric services among others leads me to lament also... "This is the Missouri Synod?"

This IS the state of our Missouri Synod. While on vacation, my family and I have witnessed these things first hand. One of my sons, after a "drama service" said to me, "Dad, why? Why would they do that?" "We heard nothing of Jesus." We are told that "successful congregations" are growing. They have a mixed bag approach that draws people in. Stagnant congregations are encouraged to adopt similar strategies so that they will increase numerically too. Why would they do that? Far too many Pastors do whatever is right in their own eyes, acquiescing to societal norms and various strategies. Why would they do that? Pastors are called to be faithful, not successful. The

right proclamation of the Word and administration of the Holy sacraments may mean fewer members, not more. Faithful Pastors suffer for rightly scorning the acclamation of men and leaving canned programs in their shiny wrappers. The right doctrine leads to the right practice; the right practice reflects the right doctrine.

The truth be told: our Synod has problems. We must dismiss the glowing propaganda of the *Reporter*. Laxity and dishonesty only deepens problems. District Presidents should visit their congregations as should Circuit Visitors to encourage faithfulness. Our convention should call for the faithfulness of each Pastor and congregation, each District President, each Circuit Visitor. There is a dangerous timidity in our Synod that mirrors the deadly political correctness of the wicked world. The unwritten rule wafting through Synodical air: do not be critical of any other congregation or Pastor you might be sued. You dare not say anything. How dare we not!

I have heard of the desire to have a harmonious Synodical convention in Milwaukee. Why would they do that? I pray for contention. May unabashed honesty mark our Synod's convention and not disingenuous harmony. One thing is certain: if we fail to address these issues the days of knowing what to expect in the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod are forever gone. We stood silently while chaos reigned. Why would they do that?

Rev. Dr. Kristian Kincaid
Senior Pastor, Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
Dubuque, IA

Update—2016 LCA Conference

The 2016 LCA Conference in Fort Wayne was a great success as we heard first-rate lectures from some great speakers.

In the near future, look on the Lutheran Concern's web site for videos of each of the speaker's presentations: <http://lutheranclarion.org>

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The Secularization of Worship in the LCMS

In the early 1970s, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod resisted and overcame the process of the *secularization of its beliefs*, most notably by the rejection of the use of the “higher critical” method of biblical exegesis at its seminaries and colleges. In the 1980s, in many congregations, our synod began to see the *secularization of its religious practices* in the realm of corporate worship. This process of secularization was heavily debated, contested, and defended.¹ The process and its effects are still with us today, as anyone knows who visits a variety of LCMS suburban congregations in major metropolitan areas.

“The abandonment of the worship materials found in synodical Lutheran hymnals is not adiaphora if it is replaced with non-Lutheran worship practices and texts.”

Many folks will disagree with my use of the term “secularization” to describe this process. I am using the term as it is found in *The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions*, i.e.: “[The] process whereby people, losing confidence in otherworldly or supernatural accounts of the cosmos and its destiny, abandon religious beliefs and practices, or whereby religion loses its influence on society.”²

Some will argue that the process is not “abandonment” of religious practices, but “change” of such practices. But isn’t “change” the abandonment of some thing for something else? So what has been abandoned?

The most obvious abandonment is the refusal to use synodically-approved Lutheran hymnals and/or the materials found in them. Some congregations have abandoned church buildings. Many of their pastors have abandoned all liturgical clothing during worship. Others have abandoned use of the pulpit, altar, candles, cross, etc., etc.

Those who defend such abandonment argue that these things are all adiaphora. It is true that pulpit, altar, crosses, vestments, religious art and statuary, traditional church architecture, pipe organs, etc., etc., are all adiaphora. New congregations have their first services without almost all of these things. They are no less of a Christian or Lutheran congregation for lacking them.

BUT - The abandonment of the worship materials found in synodical Lutheran hymnals is not adiaphora if it is replaced with *non-Lutheran* worship practices and texts. Then it falls under the condemnation of the Formula of Concord (e.g, FC SD X, 5-7; Tappert, 611) and is cause for removal from synod membership (LCMS Constitution,

Article VI.4).

My congregation has addressed this issue with two overtures to the synod.³ The first “To Provide for Doctrinal Review of Non-Synodically Approved Worship and Catechetical Materials” addresses the problem of non-Lutheran worship practices and texts, by offering a process for doctrinal review of such materials when and where they are contested. The second “To Preserve the Use of the Historic Lutheran Liturgy and Hymns in Synod Congregations” addresses the problem of the wholesale abandonment of the Lutheran tradition of worship. These overtures need the support of your delegate to pass at convention and of your congregation if they pass the convention.

Rev. Dr. Martin R. Noland
Pastor, Trinity Lutheran Church, Evansville, Indiana

- 1 The most influential defense of the new worship practices came from Dr. David S. Luecke; see his *Evangelical Style and Lutheran Substance* (St Louis: CPH, 1988); *The Other Story of Lutherans at Worship* (Tempe, AZ: Fellowship Ministries, 1995); and *Apostolic Style and Lutheran Substance* (Lima, OH: Fairway Press, 1999). New worship practices were also commonly associated with the “Church Growth Movement.”
- 2 John Bowker, ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 871.
- 3 For the full texts, see Overtures Three and Four here: <http://steadfastlutherans.org/2015/01/four-overtures-for-the-2016-convention> They will be published in the 2016 Convention Workbook.



Extra *Clarion* Issues for 2016 Convention—Please Help!

With the 66th Convention of the LCMS coming up July 9-14, 2016, in Milwaukee, WI, the *Clarion* editors plan to publish two extra issues (April and June). We want to keep everyone, particularly the delegates, informed on the matters that will be brought before the convention.

**66th National
LCMS Convention**

We sure could use your help with the expense of this as we urge delegates to uphold God’s Word and doctrine during the convention.

If you can help with the costs, there’s an enclosed envelope so you can mail your check to Lutheran Concerns Association, 149 Glenview Drive, New Kensington PA 15068-4921. Do it now. **Thank you!!**

Repentance, Correction or Mere Incremental Improvement?

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther in the first of his Ninety-Five Theses wrote, "1. Our Lord and Master Jesus Christ, when He said *Poenitentiam agite*, willed that the whole life of believers should be repentance." Echoing that sentiment President Matthew Harrison has frequently invoked the Great Reformer by saying repentance is the first task of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. He's right.

Repentance is sorrow over sin, and a rejection of that sin together with a willingness to disengage from that sin with the help of God. Repentance calls sin a sin without equivocation, rationalization, or excuse. The embracing of error, the practice of error, or toleration of error offends God. That requires correction, and when appropriate, repentance.

Repentance recognizes and rejects doctrinal error and errors in biblical practice even by a church body. However, the LCMS has rarely engaged in true repentance respecting her errors. For example, in the matter of the 1989 Synodical Res. 3-05B,¹ which authorized laymen to provide Word and Sacrament ministry in certain settings in our Synod we violated both Scripture and Article XIV² of the Augsburg Confession which insists that those who publicly teach and administer the Sacraments must be regularly called to their task. This action by our church body was an

"...There is a difference between just starting to do the right thing and actually correcting or repenting of real false teaching, unbiblical practice, and the toleration of error within the LCMS ..."

institutional sin, and the institution needs to correct it and admit that it was wrong. In 2013 our Synod established a "2013 Resolution 4-06A Task Force" which was given the task to pen a response to concerns that have emanated from the errors of 1989 Resolution 3-05B. Much of what they have

produced is to be commended, but nowhere in the 32 page report³ is there a hint of admitting that what we did was wrong! If our Synod has for 27 years been guilty of doctrinal error, or errors of unbiblical practice, then perhaps we should offer a sincere statement of correction and sorrow over our institutional sin!

As has been our Synod's practice we rarely take Luther's or Harrison's advice respecting our theological errors and actually admit our wrong-doing. For 71 years we have never corrected or expressed sorrow for failing to identify and correct the errors in theology expressed in the 1945 "Statement of the 44." Public correction of public error includes not only the correction of error but also dealing with

those who accept those errors. The reality is that we have not removed those who still hold to those errors in our Synod. Neither have we publicly corrected the false teachings inherent in the theology of glory approach to missions and evangelism that are still embraced in many quarters of our Synod. The list could easily go on, but you get the gist.

There is a difference between just starting to do the right thing and actually correcting or repenting of real false teaching, unbiblical practice, and the toleration of error within the LCMS. This results in our inability to move forward as a Synod toward being a true manifestation of Christ's Church where the Word of God is taught in all its truth and purity and the Sacraments are administered in accord with Christ's institution, rather than a mere Christian sect.

Public repentance or correction must precede reform.

Rev. Richard A. Bolland, Emeritus
Pagosa Springs, Colorado

- 1 Resolution 3-05B is in the *Convention Proceedings of 1989* and may be available in your church's library or pastor's office; it is too long to reproduce here.
- 2 "Of Ecclesiastical Order they teach us that no one should publicly teach in the Church or administer the Sacraments unless he be regularly called." The Book of Concord can be downloaded at www.bookofconcord.org. Thanks to Brothers of John the Steadfast.
- 3 The 32 page 2013 Resolution 4-06A Task Force report is at <http://www.lcms.org/convention/task-force-updates/resolution-4-06A>. A two page executive summary is also at that location.

The below article is from *Canadian Lutheran.ca*, the online magazine of the Lutheran Church—Canada.
<http://www.canadianlutheran.ca>

Concordia University of Edmonton no longer a Christian Institution

February 1, 2016

EDMONTON — Concordia University of Edmonton (CUE) no longer identifies itself as a Christian institution. The university's Board of Governors made the decision on November 27, 2015, when it decided to remove all references to Lutheranism and the Christian faith from its mission and vision statements.

Prior to the action, Concordia's Mission statement identified the institution as a "community of learning grounded in scholarship, freedom, and the Christian faith." Among its Values Statements, it identified itself as an "excellent smaller Christian university true to its mission and vision," that "maintains its mission as a Christian university serving the public." Guiding Directional Statements professed that "Concordia will honour its Lutheran heritage" and "will provide a foundation of faith and intellectual integrity that supports a scholarly community."

All references to faith have now been deleted.

Previously, the introduction to Concordia's previous Mission/Vision/Values Framework read: "Throughout its history, Concordia has remained grounded in the belief that the Christian faith gives purpose to life and that success depends upon spiritual maturity. The entire educational experience at Concordia is built on a foundation of the Christian faith and intellectual integrity characteristic of a Lutheran university, where people of various beliefs and backgrounds are in dialogue in a common pursuit of understanding and truth that ultimately leads to wisdom. That is what is meant by our motto: *Initium Sapientiae Timor Domini* – The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."

Read Concordia's original Mission/Vision/Values statement here (<http://www.canadianlutheran.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/CUCA-mission-vision-values.pdf>)

LCC responds

Lutheran Church–Canada (LCC) was given no advance notice that such action was being contemplated. As late as the end of August 2015, church officials had been assured in a letter from CUE's Board of Governors that "all of the Board remains committed to Concordia's Missions, Vision and Values."

LCC President Robert Bugbee has communicated his dismay to CUE President Gerald S. Krispin over the recent action of CUE's board, asking for clarity as to why the action was taken without consulting synod. He noted multiple assurances over the past years from Concordia's leaders that such action was not being considered.

"Concordia was founded in 1921 as an educational ministry of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod," President Bugbee reflected. "It is with incredible grief that we see Concordia now silence any reference to the Christian mission for which it was originally founded."

Concordia's recent decision has put LCC in a difficult situation: a number of professors (including the University president) are ordained ministers of LCC and hold calls from the church body to serve as ministers at the institution. As Concordia no longer claims to be a Christian institution in its mission statement, it is doubtful whether service at the institution can continue to be considered a call in the church's understanding, thereby jeopardizing the place of these colleagues on the Synod's roster.

The relationship between LCC and Concordia

CUE leadership held a town hall December 15, 2015, to answer serious concerns from faculty regarding the abrupt change in the college's mission and values statements. LCC was not invited to or informed of the meeting. At the time, CUE President Krispin assured those present that the change in wording would not alter the deeper identity of Concordia, and that the college and synod could remain in cooperation despite these changes.

Concordia has taken a number of actions in recent years that have further separated it from the church. In 2010, Concordia notified LCC that it planned to alter its bylaws regarding the requirements for sitting on its Board of Governors. Previously

all board members had been elected by Lutheran Church–Canada meeting in convention.

While synod raised concerns at the time, Concordia understood itself as able to make the decision with or without synod's approval, arguing the 1978 Act of Incorporation that instituted Concordia as an independent organization failed to make provision for synod's continuing legal authority over the college. The college, however, continued to operate under bylaws relying on LCC in convention to appoint its Board of Governors. But in 2010, as noted above, Concordia informed LCC it planned to change its bylaws regarding governance.

Even so, President Krispin assured LCC leaders that any decisions the college made would "not only maintain, but

strengthen the shared ecclesiastical bond" with Lutheran Church–Canada. At the time, President Krispin further explained that Concordia's Mission, Vision, and Values Framework would ensure the college's identity as a Christian institution would be maintained. "It is this distinction that gives us our *raison d'être*," he wrote.

The actual change to a self-appointed (rather than LCC-appointed) board occurred in recent years. Consequently, LCC at its 2014 convention updated its own bylaws to recognize the alteration that had already

occurred. Despite the changes, President Krispin assured the convention that "every member who signs onto the board has a charter to uphold the mission, vision, and values of this institution." Concordia had also taken steps to ensure representation of at least three members of Lutheran Church–Canada: the President of the Alberta-British Columbia [ABC, Editor] District, as well as two members from the general public.

In 2015, Concordia's Board of Governors suspended the ABC District President's *ex officio* position on the Board of Governors, citing uncertainty regarding the District's corporate future and confusion over whom the appropriate representative should be (given the current division of labour between the ABC District President and LCC's Interim Pastoral Leader). Despite this move, church leaders were assured by Concordia's Board of Governors that "all of the Board remains committed to Concordia's Mission, Vision and Values." President Bugbee is arranging consultation with Concordia's leadership in determining what relationship the church body might have with the university going forward.

Concordia Edmonton no longer a Christian Institution... Could it happen here?

This past year, the Nebraska District met in convention, as did all the districts of the LCMS. There was very little of great theological substance, in my humble opinion, that came to the convention floor in Kearney, NE, last June, with one exception. A proposal was brought forth to allow the Board of Directors from the Nebraska District to add

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*Lutheran Church—Canada
President Robert Bugbee*

members to the Board, as they saw fit, in case the make-up of the Board was perceived to be lacking in some area, such as an attorney, financial expert, etc. Several people spoke in favor of the proposal, including members of the Board. A major selling point for this proposal was that it was in line with Resolution 5-04, approved at the 2007 LCMS Convention, allowing between four and eight voting members of a Concordia Board of Regents to be appointed by that Board. Resolution 5-03A did much the same for Seminary Boards of Regents.

“Years ago... Concordia Edmonton moved to a self-selecting board. With board members having little or no accountability to the church at large...”

I attended the district convention as an advisory delegate, and as a former member of the District Board of Directors, spoke out strongly in opposition to this proposal. The Board already has the power to appoint as many non-voting advisors as they feel they need, but to add full voting members to the Board, by the

Board, simply takes the voice and control away from the church at large (not to mention what it implies about the intelligence of nomination committees and voting delegates!). After lengthy and passionate discussion, the proposal was narrowly defeated. I expect it will be back before the next Convention to consider.

So what, you ask? News has been received of the action recently taken by Concordia in Edmonton, Canada, in which the University has removed all references to Lutheranism and Christianity from its governing documents. Shock and outrage has been the response from many in Canada and here in the U.S. We have seen over the years many colleges and universities that once had a strong religious foundation become more and more secular, but to see it happen to a Concordia, a college (now University) founded with strong LCMS ties like Concordia Edmonton, seems unthinkable. Seriously, could it happen here?

The situation in Canada is in many ways different from what we face here in the U.S, but what is happening at Concordia in Edmonton should serve as a wake-up call for all of us in the LCMS. Years ago, instead of the church body electing board members, Concordia Edmonton moved to a self-selecting board. With board members having little or no accountability to the church at large, it is just a matter of time before financial or other pressures become paramount. Decisions are made with little or no theological input. The church at large is helpless.

While it is very common for various boards of hospitals, charities, and other non-profit organizations to “reward” certain benefactors with a voting position, we must be very careful not to fall into the trap of allowing our church schools to do the same. Such additions, with vote, can drastically change what an institution stands for and upholds. If we take our commitment to providing a training

ground for professional church workers and our commitment to Lutheran doctrine and theology seriously, we must safeguard our institutions from this temptation. Perhaps it is time to rethink or rescind 2007 Convention Resolutions 5-03A and 5-04. How differently might the Seminex battle have looked if Concordia Seminary in St. Louis had some or several self-appointed Board members? Control of our individual Concordias and the system as a whole must be retained by the church so that what is happening in Canada doesn’t happen here.

Rev. Clint K. Poppe

Pastor, Good Shepherd Lutheran Church
Lincoln, Nebraska

Admission to the Lord’s Supper

The chief statement in the Augsburg Confession regarding church unity is the following: “For the true unity of the church it is enough to agree concerning the teaching of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments” (Augsburg Confession VII, Latin; Tappert, 32). It is evident that some members of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (hereafter LCMS) *do not* agree concerning the administration of the sacraments, with respect to admission to the Lord’s Supper. The evidence is seen in those LCMS congregations and pastors that still practice “open communion.” This is probably the most serious source of division in the LCMS today.

In November 1999, the LCMS Commission on Theology and Church Relations (hereafter CTCR) issued an excellent document titled “Admission to the Lord’s Supper: Basics of Biblical and Confessional Teaching.”¹ At the 2007 national convention, this document was “commended [to the synod] . . . for study and guidance” and all pastors and congregations who had contrary practice were “encouraged . . . to immediately cease such practice.”² At the 2013 national convention, the same document was set forth as the synod’s position to be used in the visitation of congregations by district presidents or their representative.³ More recently the CTCR issued “Guidelines for Congregational, District, and Synodical Communion Statements,” which applied the 1999 document to the issue of communion statements.⁴

Members of the synod have had sixteen years to study the CTCR document “Admission to the Lord’s Supper.” No reasoned rebuttal of its statements has been issued by any party. It is time that the synod comes together and finds unity⁵ in actual practice. Toward that purpose, my congregation has submitted to the 2016 convention an overture titled “To Standardize Admission to the Lord’s Supper.”⁶ It sets forth the orthodox Lutheran rule of admission to the Lord’s Supper, with exceptions to that rule taken directly out of the 1999 CTCR document.⁷ This overture needs the support of your delegate to pass at the convention.

Rev. Dr. Martin R. Noland

Pastor, Trinity Lutheran Church, Evansville, Indiana

1 A PDF version of this document is available for free here: <http://>

www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcm&id=411 ; a printed version is available for a reasonable fee here: <http://www.cph.org/p-158-admission-to-the-lords-supper-basics-of-biblical-and-confessional-teachings-ctcr.aspx> .

- 2 See *Convention Proceedings 2007, 63rd Regular Convention, The LCMS, Houston, TX, July 14-19, 2007* (St Louis: LCMS, 2007), 123 (Res. 3-09).
- 3 See *Convention Proceedings 2013, 65th Regular Convention, The LCMS, Saint Louis, MO, July 20-25, 2013* (St Louis: LCMS, 2013), 134 (Res. 4-11).
- 4 A PDF version of this document is available for free here: <http://www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcm&id=3285> .
- 5 On the matter of “synodical unity,” the Scriptures are very clear: “Make EVERY effort to keep the UNITY of the Spirit through the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:3); “I appeal to you brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ALL OF YOU agree with another, so that there may be NO DIVISIONS among you and that you may be PERFECTLY UNITED in mind and thought” (1 Corinthians 1:10). The LCMS Constitution and bylaws have a number of statements which express the synod’s intention that it is to be united in doctrine and practice. For example, in Constitution Article II, “the Synod, and EVERY MEMBER of the Synod, accepts WITHOUT RESERVATION” the Scriptures as God’s Word and the Lutheran Confessions as a true and unadulterated exposition of the same. In Constitution Article III, the first, and thus primary, objective of the synod is to “conserve and promote the UNITY of the faith (Eph. 4:3-6; 1 Cor. 1:10) . . . and provide a UNITED DEFENSE against schism, sectarianism (Rom. 16:17), and heresy.” The sixth objective of the synod, in Constitution Article III, is to assist congregations in “recognizing, promoting, expressing, conserving, and defending their CONFSSIONAL UNITY in the true faith.” Constitution Article VI.1 requires acceptance of Article II in order to acquire and maintain membership in the synod. Constitution Article VI.2 requires that synod’s members renounce “syncretism and unionism,” which are situations where pastors or church leaders pretend that there is unity, but in reality there is disunity in the preaching of the Gospel or administration of the sacraments. Such pretense is a type of hypocrisy. Constitution Article VI.4 mandates “EXCLUSIVE USE of doctrinally pure agenda, hymnbooks, and catechisms in church and school.” LCMS Bylaws that expand on these statements include: “Committed to a COMMON CONFSSION and mission, congregations of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod join with one another in the Synod to . . . work together in carrying out their COMMONLY ADOPTED OBJECTIVES” (LC-MS bylaw 1.1.1), such objectives being stated in Constitution Article III; and “Members [of the synod] agree to uphold the confessional position of the Synod (Constitution Art. II) and to assist in carrying out the objectives of the Synod (Constitution Art. III), which are OBJECTIVES OF THE MEMBERS THEMSELVES”(LCMS bylaw 1.3.4.1).
- 6 The overture may be found here: <http://steadfastlutherans.org/2015/01/four-overtures-for-the-2016-convention> It is Overture Two in this group. It should appear soon in the *2016 Convention Workbook*.
- 7 See CTCR, “Admission to the Lord’s Supper,” 47.

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.

The below two-part article, by Kansas District President, Rev. Peter K. Lange, is extracted from *Toward a Vision of the Kansas District*. The complete document is at <http://kspresidentsoffice.yolasite.com/>

The Big Picture: from Jesus to Us

It’s all about Jesus—the eternally begotten Son of the Father, sent in the fullness of time to take on human flesh in the womb of the Virgin Mary, in order to redeem God’s fallen creation from sin and everlasting death by His own holy life and innocent suffering and death.

It’s all about Jesus—who, together with the Father sends forth His Spirit to call, gather, enlighten, and sanctify His Holy Christian Church, and to keep it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith, until He comes again in glory to take us to heaven, where we will once again enjoy full and unhindered communion with our Lord as it was in the beginning.

It’s all about Jesus—whose forgiveness I need to hear anew, each week, through the mouth of His minister. Jesus—whose gracious and forgiving presence we all, like Peter and the Emmaus disciples, are blessed to experience each time the Lord meets us in the breaking of bread. Jesus—whom many in our own communities so desperately need to hear about and trust for the forgiveness of sins and eternal salvation.

It’s all about Jesus!

But who *is* Jesus? “*What do you think about the Christ?*” Jesus asked His disciples.¹ “*Who do people say the Son of Man is?*”²

Is Jesus the Savior who came to seek and to save all people, or only some, as fits with a logical understanding of predestination? Is Jesus’ atoning death alone that which justifies men before God, or do our works or our decision play a part in that? Are all humans truly lost and condemned creatures—enemies of God from conception—or is there a remnant of goodness in us that Jesus only supplements? Is Jesus truly present in the waters of Holy Baptism to create faith in the baptized *ex nihilo*? Is Jesus truly present, in the bread and wine of Holy Communion, with the very body and blood that He gave into death on the cross for our sins, or are the bread and wine merely symbols of His body and blood? Did Jesus’ sending of His disciples mean that it is the Lord of the Church who today continues to send laborers into His vineyard, by His divine call, through the congregation, and that the public ministry of God’s Word and Sacraments isn’t merely a human thing or self-appointed work?

It’s all about Jesus. But who is Jesus?

These questions, and others like them, take us from the Holy Trinity, and the Holy Christian faith that we confess in the creeds in unison with the Holy Christian Church, and they bring us to the Evangelical Lutheran Church—the Church of the Lutheran Confessions—which answers these questions in a unique way. And these questions bring us to The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, of which the Kansas District has been “the synod in this place” known as Kansas, since 1888—or really since Pastor F. W. Lange preached his first sermon in rural Junction City, on August 17, 1861.

The LCMS Kansas District, as we are officially designated by the synod—along with 34 other districts of our church body—was organized by the synod, and is given its place in relation

to the synod in the Constitution and Bylaws of the LCMS. Those bylaws state, for example, that:

“A district is the Synod itself performing the functions of the Synod. [And that] Resolutions of the Synod are binding upon the districts.” (LCMS Bylaw 4.1.1.1)

They state that:

“The Synod is not merely an advisory body in relation to a district, but establishes districts in order more effectively to achieve its objectives and carry on its activities.” (LCMS Bylaw 4.1.1)

Regarding District officers those bylaws state that:

“Officers of the district shall have primary responsibility for district implementation of decisions of the Synod at the national level as they apply at the district level...”³ (LCMS Bylaw 4.1.7) and that,

“Communications between national and district levels shall be maintained in order to carry out the most effective and coordinated program possible.” (LCMS Bylaw 4.1.7.1)

And, finally, with regard to the District President, those bylaws state that:

“The district president shall see to it that all resolutions of the Synod which concern the district are made known to the district and are carried out by them.” (LCMS Constitution Art. XII, 9.a)

[And again] “The district president...shall cause the resolutions of the Synod to be implemented in the district...” (LCMS Bylaw 4.4.2)

The Kind of District President I'd Like to Be

There are at least eight things that I hope will characterize my presidency of the Kansas District.

+ First, I pray that I will be faithful to the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions. That's a tall order! And it includes faithfulness to the missional themes of Scripture that are summarized by the words, “*making disciples of all nations.*” But it also includes the phrase from that same Great Commission which says, “*teaching them to observe all things I have commanded you.*” And so I pray for a faithfulness that is indeed mission-minded, but also comprehensive in its understanding of mission and ministry, and unabashedly Lutheran in its confession of the teachings of Scripture.

+ Second, I want to be, and be known as, one who is conciliatory, and a bridge builder. As I said in my first impromptu remarks at the convention, “I want to be a president to all the workers of the District.” That means continuing the *status quo* where that is possible. But it also means adopting new ideas and new strategies, alongside of the current ones, so that there's something for everyone. There's more than one way of doing things! And as we continue the *status quo* wherever possible, and adopt new strategies, I want to foster, encourage, and facilitate respectful theological conversation about the issues that have caused tension in our district over the years.

+ Third, I want to be a pastoral district president. I'd like to begin each day with a significant time of daily, ordered, prayer for the district. I'd like to make pastoral phone calls and contacts to district workers a high priority. I'd like to keep reading and studying theology in a regular, disciplined way, then make theological education a part of what I do in my visits with congregations, and whenever I have the occasion. And, if the opportunity presents itself, I'd like to talk with the Board of Directors about my possibly accepting a call to be a pastoral assistant at some area congregation, where—for just a few hours per month—I could keep my hand in hospital or homebound visitation, or occasionally help out with services or preaching.

+ Fourth, I want to encourage increased transparency in governance and administration because I believe that this

will lead to an increased appreciation of how the district staff and elected leaders serve our district. And it will lead to increased ownership and support of the district office. As examples of this, I'd like to discuss ways to make as much of our budget, as is reasonable, easily available to whomever would like to see or have it (which is also in keeping with Resolution 15-04-02 that was adopted at our district convention). And I'd like to discuss whether it's reasonable and feasible to make as many of our agendas and minutes as possible, promptly available to anyone who would like to see what our service boards and sub-committees are doing, as well as what our district Board of Directors is accomplishing.

+ Fifth, I'd like to lead our District in nurturing close cooperation with LCMS leaders and staff at the International Center in St. Louis because, as I noted before, the Synod is nothing less than the entity that established the Kansas District for its purposes. And we are “the Synod in this place.” Furthermore, I'd like to approach these efforts toward closer cooperation in a way that might be termed “trans-administrational,” meaning that I'd like to foster an increased cooperation that is based on the constitutional relationship between the Synod and districts, and thus would continue even should administrations change.

+ Sixth, I would like good communication to be a hallmark of my administration—good communication in all kinds of directions, and on all kinds of levels: between me and the workers of the district, between me and the congregations and lay leaders I'm working with, and between the entire district office staff and the workers and congregations of the district. And I'd like to look for ways to gather broad input from throughout the district on how best to go about improving our communication and responsiveness.

+ Seventh, I'd like to make increased, intentional visitation a priority—not only when Sunday opportunities present themselves, but also during the week. I'd like to get around to all of the circuit conferences or “Winkels” each year, because I see this as one of the most time-efficient ways to visit with many pastors. My purpose would be to share my thoughts, and to listen, as well as to address questions as best as I can. But I'd also like to work with the executive staff to do the same, on a regular basis, with both the workers and the laity of the district. I'd like to take seriously my constitutional responsibility to make “official visits” to each congregation, yet work together with our pastors, circuit visitors, and vice presidents—not only to manage the large number of such visits—but to go about them in a way that is welcomed as positive, beneficial, and edifying, and is not at all viewed as negative or threatening. And finally, in this regard, I'd also like to work with my staff to schedule school visits as time allows.

+ Lastly, I want to do much listening and learning. I know that I have a lot to learn—not only about being a district president, but also about the history of various aspects of our district administration, and about what our workers and laity are thinking. And because the thoughts of our workers and congregations will be evolving with the times and changing issues, I'd like this emphasis on listening also to be ongoing throughout my time in office. And I'd like to seek the input of others on how best to accomplish such listening on many different levels.

Rev. Peter K. Lange
District President, Kansas

1 Matthew 22:42.

2 Matthew 16:13

3 District officers include the president, vice-presidents, secretary, circuit visitors, and treasurer. (LCMS Bylaw 4.3)

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