

The **LUTHERAN** **CLARION**



Lutheran Concerns Association
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Mission v Confession: A False Dichotomy in the LCMS

The presentation below was given by South Wisconsin District President John Wille at the LCA Conference on January 17, 2022.

Introduction:

If you have ever been present for the closing of a Lutheran congregation, you are aware that it is a bitter-sweet event. As the words of decommissioning of the church building are spoken, my mind is often filled with images of baptisms and confirmations, weddings and funerals, Christmas and Easter services, as well as regular Sunday services where the Word of God was proclaimed and the Sacrament administered in that place for many years. Pulpit and altar are sacred places. With the closing of the congregation those precious blessings will no longer be shared or received by God's people in that place.

To complicate the matter, in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) these days we are closing more congregations than we are planting. Listening to a recorded interview with Dr. Larry Rast on *Issues Etc.* regarding "A Statement of the Forty-Four," Rast commented that in our heyday the LCMS was planting a new church every three days. These days new church plants are measured by much smaller numbers. In our time the number of congregations closing far outpaces the planting of new congregations. That can be easily seen as the LCMS Council of Presidents reports at their four meetings each year. Mission starts lag woefully behind church closings. Over the course of the last twelve months, there were 47 congregations closed and 15 new congregations planted.

And yet the population around us, in our cities, in most of our counties, is less than 50% Christian. Wisconsin has 72 counties; not one of them is above 50% churched. The "fields are white unto harvest."

What is the solution? That depends on who provides the answer. Do we merely throw up our hands in surrender, citing Luther's passing shower of the Gospel, or do we actively engage in church planting? Studies have consistently shown through the years that the unchurched are more willing to visit a "new church" than they are to walk through the doors of an established congregation.

Church planting would seem to be the answer, but at what price? There are those in our fellowship that would like to prioritize church plants and outreach at the expense of everything else that happens in the church, dividing mission from doctrine. You have heard the hue and cry: Mission! Mission! Mission! Mission first at all cost. Mission

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Marriage and the Family in the Post-Covid World

Mary Eberstadt, senior research fellow at the Faith and Reason Institute in Washington, D.C. wrote several years ago, "The new wealth in America is familial wealth, and the new poverty, familial poverty." I was reminded of those words as I studied a new report by W. Bradford Wilcox and the Institute for Family Studies looking at the state of marriage and family in America as we reach (hopefully) the last stages of the COVID pandemic.

In September 2021, Wilcox and his team surveyed men and women between the ages of 18-55 about family formation. What they discovered is that the pandemic has widened the marriage/family gap between the rich and the poor, the religious and the non-religious, and conservative and the liberal.

The study found that since the pandemic started in March 2020, the desire to marry among higher-income Americans (those making more than \$100,000 per year) has increased 9 percent and the desire to have children increased by 1 percent.

But the converse is true among middle-to-lower income Americans. While the desire to get married (the good news) has increased at a lower rate—4 percent for the middle-class and 2 percent for lower-income Americans—the desire to have children decreased 6 percent for the middle class, and an alarming 11 percent for the lower class.

When Wilcox's team looked at the differences between religious and non-religious, they found that the desire to marry among unmarried adults increased by 8 percent among those who regularly attend worship services but had not increased at all among the non-religious. The desire to have children fell by 1 percent—not a cause for alarm—among the religious, but by a net of 11 percent among the non-religious.

Also the study found that Republicans were more interested in getting married than Democrats or Independents, and while the desire to have children rose by 1 percentage point for Republicans, it dropped dramatically for independents (11 percent) and Democrats (12 per-

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The *Lutheran Clarion*—We Need Your Help!

The *Lutheran Clarion* is in year 14. We have NO paid staff or writers. We unabashedly strive to present and uphold God's inerrant word. Inflation has now taken hold. **Your continued and enhanced help is needed.** We urge you to help with the costs of preserving Confessional Lutheranism. Use the enclosed envelope. Mail your tax-deductible gift to Lutheran Concerns Association, 149 Glenview Drive, New Kensington, PA 15068-4921. Do it now. **Thank you!!**



Marriage & Family in Post-Covid World

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cent).

As the study notes, "...in a pandemic-haunted world ... three ingredients have emerged as signally important for family formation in the United States: money, hope, and a deep dedication to family. And the rich, religious, and the Republicans are generally more likely to possess one or more of these ingredients, compared to their lower-income, secular, and Democrat/Independent-affiliated fellow citizens."

For those of us with a religious and conservative bent, on the surface, this is intriguing news, i.e., a coming generation of more religious/conservative adults. But on the other hand, as Wilcox points out, these numbers will also continue to accelerate the deepening divide in each of these areas.

Why? Because if marriage rates continue to dip among the middle and lower classes and non-religious, there will still be children born out of wedlock (even if the number of children may be going down) with the associated issues of poverty, societal alienation, and identity issues that come with it.

Meanwhile, those children whose parents are married and have raised them with financial and parental security, are more likely to thrive.

While the latter situation is the ideal, there are some alarming signs that come with it, particularly clashes between the so-called "haves" and "have-nots" - children born into stable homes having built-in advantages over those who were not and accelerating the helplessness and alienation of children who are not born and raised in beneficial circumstances.

The study concludes, "As the pandemic lifts, the nation is likely to see a deepening divide between the affluent and everybody else, between the religious and the secular, and between Republicans and Democrats in their propensity to marry and have children."

As noted by the Heritage Foundation's Robert Rector over a decade ago, the result becomes a caste society that only perpetuates the cycle, which has greatly increased with the breakdown of marriage and family among the middle and lower classes, of helplessness

and the corresponding dependences among the poor as they see those raised in stable families continue to thrive.

My hope for a post-pandemic America is one where every American—regardless of class—sees the value of getting married, having children, and raising those children in a stable, loving home, regardless of material comfort or lack of material comfort. That is a scenario that will bring Americans together rather than further drive us apart. This major new study confirms that the state and fate of the American family and marriage continues to be the most important bellwether and predictor of national weakness or strength.

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The above article was reprinted from https://www.theepochtimes.com/marriage-and-family-in-the-post-covid-world_4092500.html

Confessional Lutherans in Latvia: Contending for the Faith since the 13th Century

Latvia plays a unique and irreplaceable role in God's narrative for the spread of Christianity and Lutheranism. It has an interesting history and beautiful future. Jānis Vanags, the Archbishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia (ELCL) shared the history of the Lutheran Church in Latvia, his personal experience and his hopes for the future of the Church at a Fireside Chat on January 18, 2022, at the Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, IN.

The ELCL is the largest Christian denomination in Latvia. It was one of the last areas of Europe to be Christianized. The church was established in the region during the 13th century by conquerors through sword and fire. As such, Christianity was viewed as a religion of oppression. The Latvian people continued to practice paganistic rituals as part of their cultural and spiritual life as late as the 19th century. It was an intensely difficult mission field.

This year marks the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in Latvia. In 1652, the Reformation started in Riga when the Council of Riga fired approximately thirty Catholic priests and appointed Lutheran pastors to replace them. Two and half centuries later, in 1918, Latvia became an independent state after the breakdown of the Russian Empire.

A once strong relationship with the German Lutherans deteriorated after World War I which led to the adoption of the Swedish governance model. In keeping with the desire to retain the canonical church structure with a presiding bishop, the Lutheran Church of Latvia appointed her first bishop in 1922. Lutheranism was the dominant church in the region between 1918 and 1940. This marked the first time of real independence for the Latvian people since they were conquered during the crusades. Unfortunately, liberal theology gained much ground before World War II. Two Lutheran theological institutions

emerged. One more conservative than the other. Both institutions were closed by the Nazi's and were not reopened under the Soviets.

Soviet rule of the region had a devastating effect on the Church. It cut off generations from the Church. The Church could not properly form pastors, train teachers or catechize the people. In the 1960's, pastoral conferences were allowed, but they were heavily monitored by the KGB. Many pastors were sent to work camps or jailed for sharing the Gospel. Others became operatives and shared information with the KGB. As a result, churches and pews were empty. The people of God were not regularly fed with the Word, nor did they receive the sustaining gifts of the Sacraments.

By the 1980's, there was little theological training for pastors. A man desiring to study theology was only allowed to study theological books for three days a month. Yet the Lord in His gracious mercy still called men through the Gospel to preserve His Church in Latvia. A young chemistry teacher, Jānis Vanags, who had converted to Christianity and was baptized in the ELCL, began to read theology books. Eventually, he was fired from his teaching position when his superiors learned of his interest in theology.

Thereafter, Vanags and some friends organized a dissident group called "Rebirth and Renewal" with the goal of achieving independence of the church from the government. They met in a forest to sign the founding documents. Unbeknownst to them, they had been betrayed and were greeted by the KGB. The documents were secreted away and no arrests were made. Vanags and his colleagues lived under a constant threat of imprisonment. He was visited in his home by the KGB on no less than five occasions.

In 1987, the independence movement of Perestroika was in full swing in Latvia. The Church gained in popularity because it was countercultural and had access to humanitarian aid. Many heard the Gospel for the first

Latvia becomes Member of the International Lutheran Council

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia voted to apply for membership in the International Lutheran Council at its 28th synod on August 6, 2021. Earlier the synod voted to withdraw from membership in the Communion of Protestant Churches in Europe formerly known as the *Leuenberg Church Fellowship* which consisted of altar and pulpit fellowship between Lutherans and Reformed churches. Remarkably the vote consisted of 198 delegates voting in favor of leaving the communion, with ten against and eleven abstaining.

On January 28, 2022, the Board of Directors of the International Lutheran Council voted unanimously to grant Latvia Observer Membership. This opens the door to voting membership which is decided by a vote of existing ILC members.

time when they received aid from the Church. At that time, the Lutheran Confessions had yet to be translated into Latvian. A state funded Lutheran theological institution was reopened. Gradually, the theological faculty were governed by the state instead of the Church.

Jānis Vanags was elected and consecrated the Archbishop of Riga in 1993. Vanags knew the liberal theology of the day was not what men before him were willing to die for or be sentenced to prison. His goals were twofold. First, he knew the Church must take back theological education. This led to the establishment of the Lutheran Theological Academy of Riga (LTAR). Secondly, he worked for legislative reform to ensure that Lutherans could exercise their faith without state interference and yet partner with the state to assist with social welfare programs.

Initially, the LTAR was funded by the Lutheran World Federation. Their monetary support was withdrawn because of the ELCL's opposition to the ordination of women. What could have been devastating to the future of the Church provided a wonderful opportunity for confessional Lutheranism in Latvia. The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) invited Latvian men to our seminaries and provided financial support and faculty to LTAR. It is the only Lutheran educational institution in Latvia and provides a rich theological, liturgical and musical education.

Fostering confessional fellowship with the LCMS has been a key objective for Vanags. The ELCL is dedicated to the true teaching of the Scriptures, faithfully explicated in the Lutheran Confessions. The ELCL is in full fellowship with the LCMS and has applied for membership with the International Lutheran Council (ILC). The ELCL desires to fully participate in this external union of Lutheran Churches around the world that share an internal unity of faith, doctrine and confession. The opportunities for joint study of contemporary theological issues, planning for mission outreach, mutual support and encouragement, as well as the strengthening of theological education that membership in the ILC provides would be invaluable to the ELCL.

According to Vanags, the biggest challenges the ELCL faces as a church body is post-modern neo-marxism, rampant secularization and materialism. Although the people of Latvia are fairly conservative, Latvian journalists are hostile to religion and a liberal court of six judges often render decisions that are relativistic and contrary to a biblical world view. Christian traditions and values were destroyed by many years of Soviet occupation. The Church is a truly a Church of neophytes. Confessional Lutheran education for future church workers is critical. The ELCL must work diligently to catechize her people so that the faith may once again be handed down from generation to generation.

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The Gathering Together

After the day of Pentecost, the twelve apostles and the four thousand or so Christians met daily in Jerusalem. What did they do? Four things. According to Acts 2:42, they devoted themselves to

- 1) the apostles' doctrine;
- 2) the gathering together;
- 3) the breaking of the bread, i.e., the Lord's Supper; and
- 4) the prayers.

Acts 2:46 clarifies that a bit, by letting us know that the "gathering together" was in the temple, and the breaking of bread was done in homes. Lest someone think that the breaking of bread was a "private family affair," Luke lets us know that after the apostles' arrest and release, they continued teaching and preaching in the temple and from house to house (Acts 5:42). That means that the apostles led the celebration of the Lord's Supper when they visited the houses. These services were normally conducted in the central atria of the Roman-style houses to accommodate the large numbers in these smaller gatherings.

These passages in the Book of Acts indicate that the apostolic church included both "public church" and "house church" meetings, all under the authority of the apostles. What is most interesting, however, is the regular gathering together in the "public church" setting on a weekly basis. For a while, it was held on the Sabbath, but eventually the church settled on every Sunday for the "public church" gathering, just as we do today.

These weekly, public gatherings on Sabbaths or Sundays were different than the festival gatherings. Ancient religions, including Judaism, had religious festivals attended by huge crowds of devotees. A local example is the Chinese New Year parade in San Francisco, which was originally a religious festival. Other examples are the huge gatherings annually at Mecca for Muslims or at the Ganges River for Hindus. Most ancient religions combined these huge, seasonal gatherings with private temple worship, in which individuals went to offer prayers or sacrifices AS INDIVIDUALS. Christianity was and is different, because Christians offer prayers and receive the divine service TOGETHER on a weekly basis.

The origin of the Christian practice of the weekly "public church" gathering is the Jewish synagogue, which met on the Sabbath during Jesus' day, and still does. It became something different in the Christian church because Jews were born into their faith. Judaism was, and is still, a "family faith." Christians were NOT born into their faith but re-born through baptism. Therefore, the weekly "public church" gathering became the dominant mode of religious exercise in the Christian church, and it still is today, though we always encourage family devotions, especially if there are children in the house.

Can you be a Christian without participating in the weekly "public church" gathering, e.g., the in-person

gathering of my congregation every Sunday at 9:00 AM? Yes, in some cases! Some people are unable to join the gathering due to illness, disability, or advanced age. For them, I am always happy to visit privately, to offer prayers, and to give them the Lord's Supper. Some people are in circumstances that prevent regular worship attendance, such as the military, overseas travel for business, mandatory work schedules that conflict with worship services, etc. But for everyone else, regular gathering with the congregation is expected by our church and by our God.

Luther writes about attending the gathering that is our Divine Service: "Since so much depends on God's Word that no holy day is sanctified without it, we must realize that God insists upon a strict observance of this [Third] commandment and will punish all who despise his Word and refuse to hear and learn it, especially at the times appointed" (Large Catechism, 1st Part, 3rd commandment, 95; Tappert, p. 378).

Speaking of Confession and Absolution, which we offer at the beginning of the Divine Service, Luther writes: "We teach what a wonderful, precious, and comforting thing confession is. . . . If you are a Christian, you need neither my compulsion nor the pope's command at any point, but you will compel yourself and beg me for the privilege in sharing in it [i.e., Confession and Absolution]. However, if you despise it and proudly stay away from confession, then we must come to the conclusion that you are no Christian and that you ought not receive the Sacrament [of the Altar]" (Large Catechism, Brief Exhortation, 28-29; Tappert, p. 460).

Speaking of the Lord's Supper, Luther writes: "We are not granted liberty to despise the Sacrament [of the Altar]. When a person, with nothing to hinder him, lets a long period of time elapse without ever desiring the sacrament, I call that despising it. If you want such liberty, you may just as well take the further liberty not to be a Christian; then you need not believe or pray, for the one is just as much Christ's commandment as the other. But if you wish to be a Christian, you must from time to time satisfy and obey this commandment" (Large Catechism, 5th Part, 49; Tappert, p. 452).

This is not just Luther. The Holy Scriptures admonishes every Christian: "Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good works. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching" (Hebrews 10:24-25). The writer to the Hebrews here explains one of the purposes of the gathering, i.e., encouraging our fellow Christians in every way, including "toward love and good works." This encouragement occurs between and among the members of the church and is NOT exclusively the job of the pastor caring for his flock.

The Covid pandemic and the advent of video-broadcasting-via-Internet by normal-size congregations has caused confusion among many people regarding the matter of "gathering together." Many people think that they are "going to church" when they watch their pastor

conduct divine services on YouTube or Facebook. Some people talk that way, as if they are “going to church” when they watch divine services remotely. Some Lutheran congregations have approved of “online communion” without any thought of the theological implications of such a travesty.

“Going to church” is precisely what you are NOT doing when you watch a pastor conduct divine services remotely. The word “church” means an “assembly of Christians.” If you want to be a member of that “church,” you must assemble or gather with them on a regular basis. Failure to attend for a period will result in being considered a “delinquent member,” and after futile admonition, a “non-member.” This is hardly “rocket science.” Christians have understood this for two millennia. Why only now is this basic idea changing?

Of course, if during the pandemic, your national, state, or local government says that you cannot gather in church due to the health risk to yourself and others, then you may have to stay home for a time. That is known in Lutheran theology as a “case of necessity” or “emergency situation,” where the normal rules do not apply. Then you do the best that you can under the circumstances. Prior to the Internet, in such cases, you could listen to The Lutheran Hour. Prior to radio, the head of the household could read Portals of Prayer or Stark’s Prayer Book, along with Bible readings. But devotions at home or listening to The Lutheran Hour was not “going to church.” Nobody ever said that it was.

I said that “online communion” was a travesty, and it is, at least for Lutherans. Martin Luther spoke to the “emergency situation” in Bohemia in his 1523 treatise “Concerning the Ministry.” Since the Bohemian Lutherans could not at that time obtain pastors who would celebrate the Lord’s Supper according to Jesus’ institution, Luther said: “It would be safer and more wholesome for the father of the household to read the gospel and, since the universal custom and use allows it to the laity, to baptize those who are born in his home, and so to govern himself and his according to the doctrine of Christ, even if throughout life they did not dare or could not receive the Eucharist. For the Eucharist is not so necessary that salvation depends on it. The gospel and baptism are sufficient, since faith alone justifies and love alone lives rightly” (*Luther’s Works* 40:9). Therefore, there is no “emergency situation” for Lutherans that allows for the altering of the proper way of celebrating the Sacrament.

What is the “proper way” of celebrating the Sacrament according to Scripture and the Confessions?

- 1) In the context of the in-person gathering of the believers;
- 2) Admitting to the altar only those who have been catechized, examined, and absolved;
- 3) Under the direct in-person supervision of the pastor of that congregation or his properly ordered

**Student Aid Endowment Fund
Concordia Theological Foundation, Inc.**

In early 2018, in honor of Mrs. Ginny Valleau’s contributions to the publication of the *Lutheran Clarion*, a Concordia Theological Seminary Student Aid Endowment Fund was established at Concordia Theological Foundation, Inc., a 501(c)(3) organization. Contributions are tax deductible. As of January 31, 2021, the fund assets were \$24,569.



The Board of Directors of the Lutheran Concerns Association invites *Lutheran Clarion* readers to contribute to the Fund which can be done by sending your check marked Valleau Endowment Fund to:

Concordia Theological Foundation, Inc., Box 15810, Fort Wayne, IN 46885

or to: **Lutheran Concerns Association**, 149 Glenview Drive, New Kensington, PA 15068-4921. Donors will receive receipts for their gifts.

assistant; and

- 4) With bread, wine, and the Words of Institution. If you remove one of these four elements, you endanger the “proper administration of the sacraments” (Augsburg Confession VII) to which our pastors and congregations have pledged themselves. At the very least, such removal and negligence calls into question the validity and efficacy of the sacrament when it is administered in that way. This has been the Lutheran understanding since the sixteenth century (see Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, VII, 73-108; Kolb-Wengert, 606-612).

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Mission v Confession...

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above Confession. Mission above Doctrine. Too much doctrine may offend the new visitors. There is even a group wanting to start a new movement in the LCMS. It is tagged “Lutheran Mission Matters.” The suggestion has been made that we divide the LCMS into two groups: one which is “missional” and the other which is not missional.

But is that the solution? By no means. Such suggestions are schismatic and sectarian at best.

Rev. Dr. Al Barry speaks of this false dichotomy when he writes in an article titled: Doctrine and Evangelism:

I do not like to be negative, or to begin with a minus point. But a terrible idea has been afoot in Christian circles for a long time. It has taken many different forms. If our Synod is to carry out its resolve to tell the good news about Jesus, we must face this idea head-on and correct it. The terrible idea is that doctrine and evangelism do not mix, that they are related to one another like water is related to fire. Perhaps you have heard it said, “Are we con-

cerned about doctrine, or are we concerned about people?" (emphasis added)

Concern about doctrine has at times suffered in the name of evangelism.¹

There is a better way forward. That begins with a proper understanding of the intimate connection between doctrine and mission. Properly understood doctrine and mission are inseparable. That is a matter of Confession and non-negotiable. We are Confessional Lutheran Christians who, like our Lord, are "not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance." (2 Peter 3:9)

We stand firmly on the Confessions for good reason. The Augsburg Confession explains why we ought not sacrifice doctrine.

Article V: Of the Ministry.

1] That we may obtain this faith, *the Ministry of Teaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments was instituted.* For through the Word and Sacraments, as through instruments, 2] the Holy Ghost is given, who works faith; where and when it pleases God, in them that hear 3] the Gospel, to wit, that God, not for our own merits, but for Christ's sake, justifies those who believe that they are received into grace for Christ's sake.²

LCMS Mission and Outreach:

Mission and outreach have been an essential part of the New Testament Church since the early days of Acts 2 and following. Barry comments:

Sometimes we are prone to say, "If only we were more like the first century church." But we are like the first-century church.³

Mission has long been a priority in the LCMS. It has been that way since the days of C.F.W. Walther and Wilhelm Loehe. Countless numbers of quotations could be added here from each of them about the importance and the priority of sharing the Gospel with the lost. The LCMS would not be the church it is today without the Loehe's dedication to send missionaries to the new world, and/or without Walther's organizational skills which provided purpose and direction to the fledgling LCMS.

Though we have travelled far since 1847, mission is still a primary concern of the LCMS as is evidenced by the Constitution of the LCMS, as well as by countless resolutions from district and synod conventions. The Constitution under Article III Objectives states, "The Synod, under Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions, shall ... 2. Strengthen congregations and their members in giving bold witness by word and deed to the love and work of God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and extend that Gospel witness into all the world."

Most recently, 2019 Resolution 1-02 passed the convention by an overwhelming vote of 900-6. The resolution properly encourages every congregation to partner in planting new congregations and schools. The resolution states:

Preamble

From its inception The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod has been a church planting body. Church planting arises out of God's desire that "all people be saved and come to a

knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4). It rests on the promise that God will accomplish His will through His people as He empowers and strengthens them through His gifts of Word and Sacrament.

WHEREAS, Our Lord, Jesus Christ, has promised that wherever two or three are gathered in His name, He is in their midst (Matt. 18:20); and

WHEREAS, The Church is the congregation of saints in which the Gospel is purely taught and the Sacraments are correctly administered (Augsburg Confession VII); and

WHEREAS, The 2016 Synod convention passed Resolution 1-02, "To Encourage Church Planting throughout the Synod and Supporting the 'Mission Field: USA' Initiative"; and

WHEREAS, The support of existing churches in the immediate geographical area helps new church plants take root and grow; and

WHEREAS, The Office of National Mission (ONM) has produced training resources to assist congregations, circuits, and districts in the planting of new churches; and

WHEREAS, ONM has worked with Lutheran Church Extension Fund in establishing the Merle Freitag Church Planting Revolving Loan to assist in providing resources for new mission starts; therefore be it

Resolved, that the Synod in convention reaffirms its first mission priority to "plant, sustain, and revitalize Lutheran churches" (2013 Res. 3-06A); and be it further

Resolved, that congregations and circuits be encouraged and supported by their respective districts to investigate and identify new mission plants; and be it further

Resolved, that congregations, circuits, and district leaders be encouraged to think strategically and plan collaboratively when establishing these new mission plants; and be it further

Resolved, that congregations and circuits be encouraged to make use of [Office of National Mission

LCA Membership Fee

While planning the 2022 LCA conference, the Board of Directors found that the LCA membership fee does not begin to cover the expenses; therefore, we have increased the fee to \$60 per year.



We recently had new return envelopes printed with the updated price; however, we still had about 2,000 old envelopes and we did not want to waste them, so if you are receiving an old envelope and you want to renew your membership, please note the annual fee is now \$60.

This is still a bargain! The annual conferences feature top-notch speakers from many areas of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. The membership fees also help fund bi-monthly issues of the *Clarion*, which features faithful confessional articles that support the issues and causes of the LCMS.

(ONM)] resources in the establishment of these new mission plants; and be it further

Resolved, that the ONM, in partnership with the districts, issue a report telling the stories of new mission plants prior to the 2022 Synod convention; and be it finally

Resolved, that the congregations and workers of the Synod regularly pray that the Lord of the Harvest would bless these efforts and enlarge His Kingdom. ⁴

Simply put, LCMS Christians love missions. Consider the millions of dollars raised each year in support of missionaries overseas. Oftentimes, however, new plants here at home are much more difficult to fund and actually plant. That said, it is time for the LCMS to renew its efforts once again to planting new congregations and schools, for the right reason.

A Proper Confessional Tension between Doctrine and Mission:

In recent years mission and outreach have come to be seen as a way to revitalize the church, as if a congregation's health is measured by the number of congregations it plants or by the number of new Christians that are "won" for Christ. That is a rational business model. However, being a confessional church is not a matter of numbers. Being a confessional church is not a business proposition. Rather it is a matter of foundation and priorities. That begins with one of Luther's tenants: *Sola Scriptura*. By way of example, Rev. Dr. Friedrich Pfotenhauer writes the following in addressing the decline in membership in the Great Depression:

We who are gathered here today are intimately familiar with the life of our Synod. We know her weaknesses and failings. Indeed, we sigh and lament that we ourselves have contributed to this situation. But one purpose of this meeting is that we discuss how we, for our part, can elevate the spiritual life of the Synod. Since I now have the honorable task of directing a few words on this matter to you who occupy positions of responsibility in our Synod, I will limit myself to the answer to the question: What can we do in order to elevate the spiritual life of our Synod? Of course, I can't really bring anything new to this question, but only remind you of that which you already know.

First, we must guard against trying to elevate this spiritual life with means that cannot accomplish what we seek. An attempt has been made to elevate spiritual life in the home congregation by rousing the Church to missions and directing her sight to the misery of the churchless and especially the poor non-Christians. To be sure, the work of mission is a glorious and invaluable thing. But to speak and act as though it were through participation in the work of mission that the Word of God must be made living and powerful is simply wrong. To forsake at home the confession of the external Word and the heavenly doctrine while rambling afar in the opinion that the Church must be saved and enlivened with mission is Schwarmgeisterei. Another confusion was that of the Pietists. In order to elevate spiritual life, they taught that spirit and life flowed out of our personal life of sanctification. The more holy a person, the more spirit. But we can't produce spiritual life. We live from that which God gives. When spirit and life are

made dependent upon our work, from this false doctrine all of God's Word and action are devoured and nullified. It is a wretched experience that the pietistic compulsion to works and to a method of sanctification devalued God's Word, pure doctrine, truth, and the Gospel, and opened door after door to an indifference to doctrine. ^{5,6}

A flourishing church is not measured by the number of new missions planted. Rather, a flourishing church is one where the Word of God is faithfully proclaimed and where the Sacraments are rightly administered according to Christ's institution, and where God's people gather to receive those blessed gifts. A flourishing church is one that boldly confesses Christ's name before the world. And...AND a flourishing church is one that views mission as an essential part of its identity and purpose.

C.F.W. Walther writes this in a paper titled: "Duties of an Evangelical Lutheran Synod, First Iowa District Convention, St. Paul's Church, Fort Dodge, Iowa, Beginning August 20, 1879."

Thesis VI

A sixth major duty is that it not seek its own glory but only the glory of God, being intent not so much on its own growth but rather on the growth of Christ's kingdom and the salvation of souls, and therefore

- a) not employ dishonest means, but above all, be intent on using the Gospel in all its purity and fullness to win souls and keep them;
- b) seek to produce in its members not so much zeal for its particular community, but rather living faith, unfeigned love, and genuine godliness;
- c) take an enthusiastic and, as much as possible, active part in all God-pleasing organizations dedicated to the spread of Christ's Kingdom in the world. ⁷

Rev. Wille's presentation will continue in a future issue of the Clarion; he will discuss the Gospel's role in mission and outreach and the fact that evangelism and mission are a consequence of that Gospel.

- 1 Concordia Theological Quarterly, Volume 65:1, January 2001, page 3, "Doctrine and Evangelism" by Rev. Dr. Al Barry.
- 2 *Concordia Triglotta—English: The Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*. (1996). (electronic ed., p. 45). Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House.
- 3 Concordia Theological Quarterly, Volume 65:1, January 2001, page 7, "Doctrine and Evangelism" by Rev. Dr. Al Barry.
- 4 *Today's Business*, Resolution 1-02, 1st ed. (2019), "LCMS 2019 Convention Proceedings," page 48.
- 5 Friedrich Pfotenhauer, "Revitalization of the Synod Shall Come from Neither Missions nor More Synodical Power: The Word Is the Only Remedy Address to the Fiscal and Visitors' Conference" in River Forest, Illinois September 3, 1936, Harrison, Matthew C., *At Home in the House of My Fathers*, page 795-799.
- 6 Following the pattern of Walther, there is extensive use of our church fathers in this paper. Walther's reasoning is: "*Patres fuerunt lumina, non numina, indices, non iudices, ministri, non magistri*" (the fathers were lights and not gods, teachers and not judges, servants and not masters). Walther's Works: *Church Fellowship*, Concordia Publishing House, page 131.
- 7 CFW Walther: "Duties of an Evangelical Lutheran Synod First Iowa District Convention, St. Paul's Church, Fort Dodge, Iowa, Beginning August 20, 1879, CPH, Harrison, Matthew C., *At Home in the House of My Fathers*, page 240.

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