

The **LUTHERAN** **CLARION**



Lutheran Concerns Association
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The Blue Ribbon Plan #18* and the Spoils System

In 1870, Roman Catholic structure and governance was decisively altered by Pope Pius IX's promulgation of papal infallibility. In a letter to an English cleric, dated 1887, Sir John Dalberg-Acton (aka "Lord Acton") made this famous statement against papal power:

"I cannot accept your canon that we are to judge Pope and King unlike other men with a favourable presumption that they did no wrong. If there is any presumption, it is the other way, against the holders of power, increasing as the power increases. Historic responsibility has to make up for the want of legal responsibility. **Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.** Great men are almost always bad men, even when they exercise influence and not authority: still more when you superadd the tendency or certainty of corruption by full authority. There is no worse heresy than the fact that the office sanctifies the holder of it. "

The present global crisis facing the Roman Catholic church and its spiritual head once again proves the sagacity of Acton's dictum.

Since 1847, Missouri Synod Lutheran governance and structure has been based upon a similar skepticism toward power and those who wield it in the church. This skepticism was based on an extensive discussion in the Lutheran Confessions by the "Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope." The Treatise pointed especially to Luke 22:24-27; John 20:21; Galatians 2:2, 6; I Corinthians 3: 4-8, 21, 22; and I Peter 5:3 as scriptural proof of the principle of equality of ministers in the church. On these bases, the Missouri Synod has always given its officers only the powers necessary to perform the functions delegated. The synod has always avoided giving too many powers to one person, due to this principle of equality.

President Kieschnick's Blue Ribbon Task Force on Synodical Structure and Governance proposal gives many new powers to the synodical president. The proposal for the national offices, Recommendation #18, appears to some people to make the synodical president a CEO, i.e., a "Chief Executive Officer." But that is only an appearance, because real-life CEOs are directly accountable to their Board of Directors who keep tabs on them all the time. Such boards can make direct mandates for their

CEOs and fire them summarily at any meeting. **Recommendation #18 would not make the synodical president a CEO, but the "boss" of a political "machine."**

In the politics of the United States, a spoils system is an informal practice where a political party, after winning an election, gives government jobs to its members as a reward for working toward victory, and as an incentive to keep working for the party—as opposed to a system of awarding offices on the basis of some measure of merit independent of political activity (from Wikipedia, see "Spoils system"). If a high government official is also the "boss" of that political party, he can use his power over government employees to make sure that they support his re-election to office. Government employees thus become part of the political "machine."

» **As Senator William Marcy said of Andrew Jackson in 1828, "to the victor belongs the spoils."**

The spoils system was introduced to the United States by the victory of the Democrats with Andrew Jackson's presidency in 1828. The end of the spoils system at the federal level came with the passage of the Pendleton Act in 1883, which created the bipartisan Civil Service Commission. The principle of separating political activity and civil service was made stronger with the Hatch Act of 1939, which prohibited federal employees from engaging in many political activities. The spoils system survived much longer in states, counties, and municipalities. For example, the city of Chicago officially ended the practice as late as the Shakman Decrees of 1972 and 1983 (from Wikipedia, *ibid.*).

In the time-tested and traditional government of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, the spoils system is not
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* Realign the National Synod Ministries around Two Mission Commissions

practical, or at least greatly hindered, because the hiring and firing of national staff members is controlled either by the Board of Directors (over the administrative "service units") or by program boards.

Recommendation #18 would eliminate the program boards at the national offices, with the consequence that **the Synodical President would control all hiring and firing** of their personnel through his personally appointed Chief Mission Officer. **According to the Blue Ribbon Plan, this would include all missionaries, all seminary faculty, all seminary staff, all university theological faculty, all synodical fundraising staff, and all staff presently under the Board for Black Ministry Services, Board for Communication Services, Board for District and Congregational Services, Board for Pastoral Education, Board for University Education, Board for Human Care Ministries, and Board for Mission Services.** All these positions, which I am guessing is over 600 professional positions, would become rewards for those persons who worked with the president toward his political victory in the synod. Those who worked against his candidacy, or showed no loyalty either way, could expect to be terminated.

Is this a good system? It is certainly good for the man who "wins" the synodical presidency. As Senator William Marcy said of Andrew Jackson in 1828, "to the victor belong the spoils." But sixty years of the spoils system in the US government proved that it was corrupting of morals and good government. Political scientists and historians in the US know about the evils of the "spoils system." So why is the Blue Ribbon Task Force advocating this system for a CHURCH?

A leader of "Jesus First," the Rev. David S. Luecke, states that Recommendation #18 is the first priority on his "most important" list of Blue Ribbon Task Force proposals (see "Jesus First" newsletter for January 2010 at: <http://www.jesusfirst.net/2010Jan2.htm>). Pastor Luecke says that #18 has to be done for financial reasons, i.e., to reduce costs. But the most practical way to reduce costs is for the Board of Directors to strictly enforce a hiring and spending limit on all those with that authority. If the Board of Directors cannot do that job, nobody can.

President Kieschnick in his "Response of the President of the Synod," December 1, 2009 (at: http://www.lcms.org/graphics/assets/media/Office%20of%20the%20President/President_Response_to_Task_Force_Report.pdf) also cites financial concerns (points 1-5, page 6) as the chief reason for adopting Recommendation #18. Although President Kieschnick offers some minor revisions to Recommendation #18, these revisions do not affect the primary proposals that would result in a "spoils system." So one must conclude that, through his appointment of the Blue Ribbon Task Force members and his general support of their work, the synodical president approves of Recommendation #18.

We also noticed that Pastor Luecke's article, cited above, lists his second priority as being the Task Force Recommendation #4, the reconfiguration of districts. Although we do not object to that process, we are concerned about who is supposed to be appointed to it according to Recommendation #4. It mandates that eight members of the committee are to be appointed by the synodical president, three by the Board of Directors, three by the Council of Presidents, plus the synod's Chief Administrative Officer and Chief Financial Officer. This means that half of the committee is directly accountable to the synod president and will vote according to his wishes. Nothing will pass that committee without his approval. This is too important a committee to put in one man's hands. **Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.**

Do you really want a system of governance in the church that has been proved to be corrupting in American politics? If you don't want the "spoils system" in the Missouri Synod, call your synodical delegate today and tell him "Vote NO on Blue Ribbon Task Force Recommendation #18, the committee membership of Recommendation #4, and whatever other resolution may give more power to the synodical president."

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

Thank Youto Balance-Concord, Inc.

*The Lutheran Concerns Association sincerely thanks our brothers and sisters at Balance-Concord, Inc. for their continuing financial support in helping to fund the cost of publishing **The Lutheran Clarion**. Our sincere thanks also to the many, many individual donors who have supported our efforts! Such steadfast help not only assists us in getting the truth out, but helps us all to understand that we stand together for the cause of true Lutheranism!*

Leadership in the LCMS

Serving twelve years on the LCMS Board of Directors gives a great opportunity to see the leadership of the Synod. At each of its four annual meetings and during other occasions various LCMS leaders appear before the Board of Directors to provide reports or to request approval from the Board. There are many examples of excellent leadership that can be noted, but there are four in particular that I recall from 1995 to 2007.

Two such leaders came to the Board needing help: William Hoesman, then President of the Michigan District, and Mark Stuenkel, then President of The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod Foundation. Both came to the Board of Directors facing significant financial problems for which they were not responsible. President Hoesman requested funding in order to prevent what would likely

have been the ultimate closure of Concordia Ann Arbor. President Stuenkel was trying to find a way to save the Foundation after a class action lawsuit had crippled the ability of the Foundation to continue its operations. When appearing before the Board of Directors, both presented thoughtful, open, and honest descriptions of the problems they faced. Both also presented solutions. Both had honestly assessed the risks and explained those risks to the Board. Neither guaranteed success, but both gave their personal commitment and dedication to the Synod and to the particular agencies they were trying to help. Both delivered on their promises. And both respected the Board of Directors authority and judgment in these matters. Their honesty, openness, and commitment enabled the Board to make sound decisions that were good for Concordia Ann Arbor, the Foundation, and the Synod as a whole.

Two other examples of excellent leadership were provided by Matthew Harrison, Executive Director of Human Care Ministries (HCM), and Bruce Kintz, President of Concordia Publishing House (CPH). They came to the Board not with problems, but with success. Without question, two of the most successful agencies in the Synod over the past decade are HCM under the leadership of Matthew Harrison and CPH under the leadership of Bruce Kintz. Like other examples of fine leadership, both were completely open and honest in their reports to the Board. Both credited others for their success, and rightly so because both had created an environment in their agencies that promoted principles of service and dedication. When responding to unjust criticism – which even the most successful leaders in the Synod receive – they responded professionally and honestly. The only road for them is the high road. Both were particularly responsive to questions and requests from the Board, and if an immediate complete answer could not be given, there was no delay once they returned to their office to provide adequate information.

Other examples of good leadership include Merle Freitag, former President of LCEF; Tom Kuchta, Treasurer of the Synod; and Rev. Raymond Hartwig, Secretary of the Synod. While having very different styles and sometimes very different opinions, they have one thing in common – they tell it like it is. They are not afraid to express their opinion and remain open-minded to the opinions of others.

Contrast these examples of leadership with the approach of President Kieschnick. The open, candid, and informative approach of other leaders in the Synod never seems to be evident with President Kieschnick. A few examples illustrate this. First, on March 1, 2005, President Kieschnick announced to the entire Synod that he was appointing a Task Force on Structure, and gave it the assignment to propose comprehensive changes to the

“The Synod needs a President who fosters an environment of service and dedication...”

Where Will Our Synod Go in the Future?

The Lutheran Clarion (the official publication of the Lutheran Concerns Association) has been working hard to help the delegates to our Synodical convention and to our Synod at large become aware of the many very important issues which are facing us at the up-coming convention this July in Houston, TX. We have been most grateful for the help of all those who have donated to make our publication possible. Now we are coming up on the “home stretch” heading to Houston. Will you help us to get the word out to both our delegates and our Synod? With this issue *The Clarion* will be sent to each and every delegate to our Synodical convention in addition to those who have previously been receiving it. This is an expensive undertaking. Will you assist us with your tax-deductible donations? We pray that you will!

Please send your tax deductible contributions made payable to “Lutheran Concerns Association” to:

The Lutheran Concerns Association
1320 Hartford Avenue
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Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod, including changes that could have significantly affected the Board of Directors. President Kieschnick said nothing to the Board of Directors about his intent to form this task force, even though he had attended a Board of Directors meeting only four days before and gave a report that included discussion of several issues relating to structure and the authority of the Board of Directors. During its meeting, with President Kieschnick in attendance, the Board had discussed a variety of important issues regarding the authority of the Board of Directors and others under the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod. During this entire time, President Kieschnick was silent about his intent to appoint this task force. The Board of Directors was told nothing.

The Board received similar reporting from President Kieschnick on many other financial and legal issues about which the President had knowledge. While Treasurer Kuchta and Secretary Hartwig were always completely open and helpful, regardless of their opinion, President Kieschnick typically remained silent. And if Board members inquired further, as they had a right and obligation to do, it generally did not result in a more helpful or candid response.

The *Ablaze!* program and *Fan into Flame* fundraising effort are additional examples. While the financial reporting from the Treasurer’s office is always accurate and complete, the information from the President’s office is less than candid. The fact of the matter is that both *Ablaze!* and *Fan into Flame* have been ineffective, and perhaps even counterproductive. The sooner there is a complete

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reevaluation of the Synod's mission efforts, the better. But instead of an open and healthy environment that allows for a genuine assessment of the performance of critical programs, silence is the norm. The successful approaches of President Hoesman and President Stuenkel at solving the financial problems facing Concordia Ann Arbor and the Foundation, and the successes that resulted from the open, honest, and successful leadership styles of Matthew Harrison of Human Care Ministries (HCM) and President Kintz of Concordia Publishing House (CPH) are not prevalent with President Kieschnick.

The Kieschnick style of leadership has not been effective or successful. This is because President Kieschnick does not lead, he pushes. His Task Force on Structure illustrates this well. From the day he appointed this task force, without the Board of Directors knowledge, the members of the Synod have been left wondering what the undisclosed purposes of the recommendations are and what the consequences will be. Throughout the process, President Kieschnick's approach of non-disclosure has been evident. There has been no genuine input from the members of the Synod. At the Regional Conferences, the delegates were not asked neutral questions that would judge their opinions. Nor were they given information necessary to allow them to make the best decisions. Instead the presentations and survey questions were designed to influence the outcome. It is the responsibility of the President to equip the delegates to make the best decisions possible for the Synod. The President must respect the authority and judgment of the delegates, as President Hoesman and President Stuenkel did with the Board of Directors. When the President fails to do so, as President Kieschnick has done at the last two Synodical conventions, the Synod suffers.

The Synod needs a President who fosters an environment of service and dedication, as Matthew Harrison has done with HCM, and as President Kintz has done with CPH. The Synod needs a leader who leads. The Synod needs a leader who trusts and respects the authority and judgment of the delegates and the boards, commissions, and other officers of the Synod. It's time for a new Synodical President.

Christian A. Preus

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

Truth be Told! The LCMS and It's Future

Rev. Wallace Schulz, past Synodical Vice President and long time *Lutheran Hour* speaker has written an essay that evaluates the current direction of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, and calls for a decisive change in course. The purpose of the essay is to show that programs put in place in the LCMS for the past ten years have not only been totally ineffective numerically, but these programs, borrowed from other denominations, are undermining the Biblical foundation of the LCMS. Read the essay online at www.connectthedotslcms.com.

Synod Finances: Spending Beyond Our Means

Whether we are talking about our personal finances, businesses finances, the federal government finances or Synod finances, if we spend beyond our means, this will ultimately come back to haunt us. On a personal financial level we see people's homes foreclosed, mounting credit card debt, and no nest egg to fall back on in a crisis or at retirement. Businesses need to accumulate and retain profits in order to provide the working capital to sustain and grow the business. If a business continually overspends and depletes its resources, it will die. The Synod and similar organizations are no different. The following is a short and hopefully simple explanation of why the *Synod must change its financial ways or face financial disaster*.

The Basic Financial Formula

Every organization and family has assets or resources which it buys with the income it makes. For most families these are a home, cash in a savings account, a car, a retirement account, and maybe investments. For a business these resources are cash, accounts receivable, inventory and furniture, fixtures and equipment. The Synod has similar resources (assets) to a business. The Synod has cash, investments, donations receivable, investment in seminary and university campuses, and furniture and equipment.

We also have liabilities. For our families this might be a mortgage, and a car loan. For a business or the Synod liabilities are amounts owed to vendors, loans, mortgages, and payroll and taxes owed for employees.

Hopefully, our assets exceed our liabilities which gives us "equity in our assets" or net worth. This net worth is the reserve we have to provide financial stability for our family, business or the Synod. If our liabilities exceed our assets we are in a deficit situation which is where the federal government sits. In our Synod this situation restricts our ability to grow and to fulfill our mission. In this situation we are forced to borrow from others, pay interest and thereby threaten our financial stability.

The Synod Balance Sheet

If we look at the June 30, 2009 financial statements of the Synod we see there are assets of \$92 million, liabilities of \$33 million and net worth of \$59 million. On the surface this looks great but if we dissect the net worth we find that this net worth is broken down into several categories, not all of which are available for the general use of the Synod operations.

The net worth of the Synod is divided into the following broad categories. These are unrestricted, temporarily re-

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stricted and permanently restricted. Permanently restricted assets are restricted by the donor for investment into perpetuity. Only the income can be used to support the various Synod programs. Typically the donor designates for what program the income is to be used. Temporarily restricted assets are assets the donor has designated to be spent for a specific purpose. An example would be a donor making a contribution to the Board for Human Care and World Relief or for disaster relief. Both of these are specific programs of the Synod and therefore if the donor has designated funds for one of these, the funds can not be spent on any other program. Unrestricted funds are available to the Board of Directors at their discretion for general Synod support. These unrestricted funds are further broken down into undesignated, board designated (designated by the board for a specific purpose) and investment in buildings and equipment. The undesignated really represents the net assets available for the everyday operations of the Synod.

The Short Fall

As of June 30, 2009, the last fiscal year end of the Synod, the \$59 million net worth of the Synod was broken down as follows:

- Permanently restricted. \$23 million
- Temporarily restricted. \$33 million
- Unrestricted:
 - Board designated. \$ 9 million
 - Net investment in buildings. \$ 9 million
 - Undesignated. \$(14 million)

What do the above amounts mean? Since the undesignated balance is negative (deficit), *this means the Synod is borrowing funds from temporarily restricted assets to pay current bills for the general operations of the Synod.* An example: during the last six years, our members and congregations have made contributions for Tsunami, Katrina, and Haiti disaster relief. These are funds that are temporarily restricted and spent as the Board of Human Care and World Relief determines the need. At times these unspent funds totaled \$6 to \$10 million. *These funds were commingled with the other funds of the Synod and temporarily used to fund Synod operations.* Without these funds the Synod may have needed to use short term lines of credit to meet its operating needs.

In the past nine years the deficit has grown from \$3 million in 2001 to over \$14 million in 2009. This trend can not continue. Operating budgets need to be balanced and actually show a profit in order to restore the deficit to a positive net worth.

Why are we at this point?

Operating outside our means is the primary reason. *World Missions has reduced its missionary staff and at the same time accumulated a budget deficit of \$18 million.* Over the past 10 years Baptized membership has decreased by 7.7%. Over the past 10 years, Adult Confir-

mations have decreased by 53%. Support of the Synod has also decreased over that time period.

Decreased membership equals decreased funding. Decreased members connection to Synod equals decreased funding.

What should be done?

Obviously we should operate within our means. We need to evaluate all our resources and our liabilities and consolidate where necessary to protect the most important programs and institutions.

Since the majority of the Synod's "deficit" comes from World Missions and the costs associated with Ablaze and Fan into Flame, etc., a simple solution would be to cap World Missions budget 10% below the amount brought in the previous year. Such an approach would be difficult and require evaluating what is essential to proclaiming the Gospel.

Obviously we need to identify and communicate Synodical needs to our members. Increased funding will come with increased connection of the Synod to our members in the pews. Instead of members thinking the Synod is "corporate overhead," *the Synod needs to be seen as the Mercy and Mission arm of the church. The Synod needs to emphasize and support the seminaries and the universities to provide Christian training for pastors and church workers. I recently read the budget document for the Synod from 1929. That year 84% of what we would today call the Synod budget went to the seminaries and colleges. We aren't anywhere close to that today.*

For the sake of long term missions, for our ability to continue to proclaim the Gospel throughout the world, there may need to be reductions in the short term -- connected with a transparent presentation of the challenges our church faces as well as the proclamation of the Law --

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Six Interviews on the Blue Ribbon Task Force Proposals

Issues, Etc. interviewed Dr. Ken Schurb six times about the Blue Ribbon Task Force proposals. You can listen to the interviews at www.issuesetc.org. Click [Listen] then [On Demand / Archives]. In the search box on the right enter "Schurb" and you can find and listen to each of the six interviews. If you prefer to read the interviews they are at the same web site in PDF format. The interviews took place between August 2008 and November 2009.

If you have access to the Fall 2009 (Vol 82, No 3) issue of *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly*, you can also read Dr. Schurb's article "**The Service of Women in Congregational Offices 1969 to 2007**," page 147. Dr. Schurb states that his paper "...has a modest aim: to show that the Synod's theological position concerning women in the church actually changed in 2004, and to sketch the contours of this change..."

with the measure the Lord has given you, to return to Him for His use -- and comfort in the Gospel that the Lord will bless us through these challenges.

Mr. John Edson, CPA/ABV, CFF, CVA
Member, Board for Human Care Ministries (2004-2010)

On the Churchly Character of a Concordia University

Like many of our Synod's members, I support and love our Concordia Universities and treasure them as gifts of God. As a Synod, we owe much to their faithful formation of their students. Their graduates have served the Church not only in the Office of the Holy Ministry but also as Professional Church Workers, most numerous as teachers in our Lutheran schools.

What is it that makes these campuses so special? Is it academics? There are many other colleges and universities that also offer excellent academic programs – our Concordias are not alone in that. Is it spiritual? Many secular universities have strong LCMS campus ministries or local parishes where students can receive the grace of God through Word and Sacrament – again, our Concordias are not unique in this either. But, historically, they have been unique in one thing: a Concordia is a place where academic excellence and Lutheran theology come together – not as separate polarities but as an integrated whole, each informing the other.

The 2010 Convention will be asked to decide if this will continue to be the case. A Board for University Education (BUE) memorial, "To Update Bylaw 3.8.3.7, LCMS College/University Presidential Responsibilities", reportedly will find its way into the Convention Workbook. The delegates, along with restructuring, elections and a multitude of other business, will consider a fundamental change in the presidential leadership of our Concordia Universities.

The current Synodical bylaw defining the duties of a Concordia president will be replaced in its entirety. Some of the changes may actually be good since they recognize that, given the size and complexities of some campuses, a campus president can no longer perform the same duties as he once did when the colleges were small and comprised of Church work students. A campus with 3,000 students is very different than a campus with 300.

One profound new direction is found in the deletion of 3.8.3.7:

The president of the institution shall be the executive officer of the board of regents. He shall serve as the *spiritual*, academic, and administrative head of the institution. (Emphasis added)

Note that the president is first and foremost the *spiritual* head of the institution. The 2010 Convention will vote on a replacement bylaw 3.8.3.7:

The president shall be a member of an LCMS congregation and shall serve as the executive officer of the board of regents to operate the institution in an effective manner.

The only remnant left in the proposed bylaw changes is "(e) The president ensures that spiritual care is provided to the campus community." This is no small change! It has an interesting motivation behind it:

"The current Bylaw implies that the presidents of our colleges and universities must be male. However, it would not be contrary to our Synod's doctrinal position if a woman were to be elected to serve as a college or university president. The Bylaw needs to be updated to permit this possibility" (BUE Memorial).

Opinions of the Commission on Church Relations (CTCR) and Commission on Constitutional Matters (CCM) concur that it is permissible for a woman to serve as president "if the 'job description' for this office does not involve direct responsibility for carrying out the official functions of the pastoral office" (CTCR Response to Board for University Education/Concordia University System Request Regarding "Women as Presidents of LCMS Colleges and Universities," February 12, 2010).

So there is the choice that the delegates to the 2010 Convention must make. Will it separate the office of president from spiritual headship of the campus? Is the spiritual life of the campus less important than the academic and administrative? Historically, our college presidents have been ordained ministers and under their spiritual headship our Concordias have grown and flourished. While it is true that two campuses are now headed by commissioned teachers and one by a layman, these are anomalies in the bigger picture.

In the historic wisdom of the Synod, educational institutions are to be servants of the mission of the Synod and are to be led by men whose lives were bound to Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions. The BUE rationale states that the bylaw "needs to be brought into conformity with current best practices" but does not define what that "best practice" is or who has declared it to be so. Whatever those "current best practices" might be, do they trump the historic wisdom of the people of God?

For my part, I see the BUE's memorial as a good thing. It is good because it will force the Synod in convention to make a choice about where our Concordias are going. A possible amendment to the BUE's memorial might read:

3.8.3.7 The president shall be an ordained member of the Synod, the spiritual, academic and administrative head of the institution and shall serve as the executive

"In the historic wisdom of the Synod, educational institutions are to be...led by men whose lives were bound to Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confes-

officer of the board of regents to operate the institution in an effective manner.

The question is not a matter of the competency of laymen or laywomen to administer a Lutheran institution. Rather, it is a matter of whether our Concordias will continue to be institutions where Lutheran theology and academia meet. That will be decided in Houston.



Just Like It Always Was!

Recently, I was watching one of the shows on the Food Network. They were traveling around the country in search of the best mom and pop diners in the nation. They crisscrossed the nation from Philadelphia, PA, to Fresno, CA and from Kenosha, WI, to Memphis, TN. Over and over again, the customers of these popular little restaurants said things like, “This place hasn’t changed a bit since I came here as a child. **It is just like it always was!**” Or, “What other restaurants around here have the same décor and food they had 50 years ago?” Many of the owners would say, “We haven’t changed the recipe one bit since our grandfather first wrote it down. This sandwich had been our little secret of success for decades.” One thing that I noticed was that no one was looking for improvements. They all wanted to have a taste of what their predecessors had tasted and loved. They all wanted their grandfathers’ food. Why don’t we have the same sense when it comes to the liturgy and hymnody of our church?

Some companies have learned difficult lessons because they messed with the original recipe. Do you remember when they came up with the “NEW” Coke recipe? It was early 1985, and the news was slowly leaking out: The Coca-Cola Company was working on a new kind of Coke, a variation of a product that had been loved for years. Then on April 23, 1985, “NEW” Coke was launched with fanfare, including prime-time TV ads. The CEO of Coca-Cola proclaimed New Coke “smoother, rounder yet bolder,” speaking of it more like a fine wine than a carbonated treat. But public reaction was overwhelmingly negative; some people likened the change in Coke to trampling the American flag. On July 11, Coca-Cola yanked NEW Coke from store shelves. “We did not understand the deep emotions of so many of our customers for Coca-Cola,” said company President Donald R. Keough. New Coke thus joined rabbit jerky, clear beer and the eight-track tape in the pantheon of marketing goofs, products that seemed like good ideas at the time.

I am afraid that The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod is becoming more like the 1985 Coca-Cola Company that is interested in ‘re-packaging and marketing’ the church instead of being faithful to its doctrine and mission. The hymnal and catechisms that once were treasured books next to the Scripture as teachers of the faith, have now

fallen from their place of honor and use in many of our congregations. Too many want a “NEW” LCMS (whatever that means) without realizing the cost that it will have on confessional Lutheranism worldwide. It is time for all of us to repent and return to our confessional Lutheran doctrine and practice. It is time to become students again not only of the Sacred Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions but also of our Lutheran liturgy and hymns.

The founding fathers of our church knew the importance of uniformity of worship practices. Our synod’s constitution formulated by Dr. C. F. W. Walther points out that one of the expectations for the members of our synodical family is that they make “Exclusive use of doctrinally pure agenda, hymnbooks and catechisms in church and school.” (Article VI. 4). Our synod has considered uniformity in our worship practices to be a great strength, not a weakness. The Final Report of The Blue Ribbon Task Force on Synod Structure and Governance is now proposing that we change our constitution to read, “Use of worship and catechetical resources that are in harmony with the confessional basis of the Synod.” **The NEW proposals also “encourage congregations to ‘strive’ for uniformity in church practice, but also to develop an appreciation of a variety of responsible practices and customs which are in harmony with our common profession of faith.”** What does this mean? Do you see what is happening? **This NEW proposed constitutional change is asking us to throw out the ‘exclusive use of doctrinally approved agenda, hymnals and catechisms in church and school.’** They want us to loosen up to a variety of practices and customs that are in ‘harmony with our common profession of faith.’ What does this mean? This sounds great but do not be deceived!

“The founding fathers of our church knew the importance of uniformity of worship practices.”

God will not be mocked! This NEW proposed constitutional change is a repackaging of the old church growth model that says – ‘we are talking about style, not matters of substance.’ Can style and substance really be separated? C.F.W. Walther cried out, “The people cannot sing one thing and believe another.” Our synod-approved hymnal protects us from singing hymns and liturgies that compromise our doctrine. Our forefathers insisted on the **“exclusive use of doctrinally pure agenda, hymnals and catechisms in church and school”** to protect us from false doctrine and to keep us in the one true faith.

We need to seriously reconsider our attitudes which would tend to move toward everyone doing “their own thing” when it comes to liturgy and hymnody. It is time for pastors and teachers again to become students not only of Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions but also of the liturgy and hymnody of the Church. **It is time that we again learn why our forefathers insisted on “exclusive**

use of doctrinally approved agenda, hymnals and catechisms in church and school.” It is time that we learn again how to treat our hymnal and catechism as prayer books entrusted to us by our forefathers. It is time that we stand up in our congregations, circuits, and even our synod convention and gently say, “This NEW constitutional proposal is wrong! What has been handed down to us is of great worth: please do not throw it out, but instead join me in learning how to appreciate and use it again – **just like it always was!**”

Pastor John M. Berg, Associate Pastor
Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church and School
Sheboygan, WI

Lutheran Clarion readers should take note that a DVD of most of the superlative presentations at the Lutheran Concerns Association Conference held January 18, 2010, is in preparation. Look for an announcement in the June issue of *The Clarion*.

By The Word

The focus of this very brief article is to reflect on the mission and evangelism fervor that is being promoted in our Synod in these days. There is much being said, written, and promoted in regard to missions and evangelism, but some of the emphasis seems to be on things other than the Word and sacraments. There are also some things being written and said that seem to indicate confusion as to what the mission of the Church is. I do not doubt the good intentions of the promoters of this mission emphasis, but I am concerned about the focus.

I know of no one in the Synod who would deny that God creates and grows His Church by the Holy Spirit through the Word and sacraments. **At the same time, based on some practices in regard to mission and evangelism, it would appear that there is a lack of trust in the Word and sacraments and what we confess in their regard.**

There are many ideas, innovations, marketing techniques, and the like being suggested as ways to energize and carry out mission and evangelism. The practices of “fast growing” congregations are sited as models for other congregations to follow and emulate in order to “grow the church.” And though there may be some positive things to consider in these regards, **there appears to be a striking lack of emphasis on the Word of God and His sacraments.**

In fact, there appears at times to be an intentional minimizing of the Word and sacraments. In some instances we are moving away from liturgical worship, we are denying the Biblical doctrine of Close (Closed) Communion, and we are neglecting our hymnals and hymnody. We seem reluctant to preach Law as well as Gospel. **There are some of our congregations that are apparently embarrassed to be identified with the The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and what we believe, teach, and confess.**

And things such as these deny the power of God’s Word, and the fact that He grows His Church through Word and sacrament ministry. Luther, Chemnitz, Walther, and many of our more modern Lutheran theologians, consistently emphasized that it is through the Word that God creates, maintains, grows, and rules His Church. An example of this emphasis is in a sermon that Luther preached on Pentecost Sunday in 1544. A portion of that sermon follows and informs our discussion of mission, evangelism, and the church.

“There is no argument about whether there is on earth a Church which man should obey. The battle begins when we must decide which is the true church. As long as we judge according to human words and understanding we cannot settle this quarrel, nor can we find the true Church, but we can reach certainty in the matter if we hear how Christ our Lord Himself describes and portrays the Church. He christens and depicts her as the little company which loves Christ and keeps His Word. ‘My Word,’ He says, ‘Must remain and be kept, or there can be no Church.’ The Word of Christ is here the rule and test whereby one can find and know the true Church, and by which she must set her course, for there must be a rule and order according to which the Church shall preach and act. It is not right that any man speak and act as he likes, and claim that the Church has spoken, and acted, by the Holy Spirit. And that is why Christ binds His Church to His Word and gives it to her as a sign whereby men may enquire and test whether she possesses the Word, and teaches and preaches in accordance with it and does everything for the love of Christ.”^[1]

God bless us to be faithful in preaching and teaching His Word, and faithful as well in administering His sacraments. God bless us to make Christ and His Word the center and focus of our service in mission and evangelism.

Dr. Ron M. Garwood, Associate Pastor
Mount Hope Lutheran Church, Casper, WY
Former President, Wyoming District

^[1] (Weimar Edition, Vol. 21, p 461; also *Sermons of Martin Luther*, translated and edited by John N. Lenker, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, p 320; also *Day by Day We Magnify Thee*, daily devotional readings by Martin Luther, compiled and translated by Margarete Steiner and Percy Scott, Fortress Press, p 362)

Fort Wayne? Chicago? Minneapolis? Saint Louis? Your Town?

We Need Your Feedback!

In the March & April issues of *The Lutheran Clarion* we told you about the annual Lutheran Concerns Conference held in January 2010 in Fort Wayne, IN. We asked for your feedback on the conference and where you would like to see future conferences held. Please take the time to complete the form and mail it to us to let us know how we can make the 2011 conference even better!

Fort Wayne? Chicago? Minneapolis? Saint Louis? Your Town?

Official Notice
Nominations for President and Vice-Presidents

The nominations process for the offices of President, First Vice-President, and other vice-presidents of The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod has been completed.

Of those receiving the highest number of nominating votes for the office of President, the following have given their consent to serve if elected:

Matthew Harrison	1,332
Gerald Kieschnick	755
Herbert Mueller Jr.	503
Carl Fickenscher II	5
Daniel Gard	3

Of those receiving the highest number of nominating votes for the office of First Vice-President, the following have given their consent to serve if elected:

Herbert Mueller Jr.	809
Matthew Harrison	728
William Diekelman	244
Wallace Schulz	240
Jeffery Schrank	112

Of those receiving the highest number of nominating votes for the offices of vice-presidents two through five, the following have given their consent to serve if elected:

John Wohlrabe Jr.	800	Victor Belton	134
David Adams	682	Luther Brunette	74
Daniel Preus	488	Matthew Harrison	45
Paul Maier	481	Lawrence Rast	44
Scott Murray	436	Dean Wenthe	42
Dean Nadasdy	435	Harold Senkbeil	36
David Buegler	353	Clint Poppe	35
Herbert Mueller Jr.	195	John Pless	34
Carl Fickenscher II	161	Jacob Preus	32
Wallace Schulz	159	Daniel Gard	30

These names will constitute the ballots for the July 10-17 convention of the Synod. The convention will have the right to alter these slates by amendment. According to Bylaw 3.12.1.3 (a), "[t]he amendment procedure shall include merely a motion, a second, and a vote on the amendment." After all such amendments have been decided, the final slates of candidates will be ratified by the convention before voting takes place.

Delegates intending to make nominations from the floor for these offices must secure from the candidates whom they wish to nominate (1) prior written consent to serve if elected and (2) pertinent biographical information. Forms for this purpose may be requested from the Office of the Secretary of the Synod prior to the elections so that the required documentation will be available as needed.

Raymond L. Hartwig, Secretary

The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod

Posted April 7, 2010, <http://www.lcms.org/pages/rpage.asp?NavID=16795>

From *Reporter Online* (<http://www.lcms.org/reporter>), the newspaper of The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod.

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Published regularly to support issues and causes within The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod which build faithfulness to true Confessional Lutheranism and to be a clear voice of Christian concern against actions and causes which conflict with faithfulness to the One True Faith.

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

1320 Hartford Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55116

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

Rev. Richard A. Bolland
1608 NW 78th Street, Kansas City, MO 64118
(816-519-3780; richardbolland@gmail.com)

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

The Board of Directors for the LCA:

Mr. Walter Dissen (President)
Rev. Richard Bolland Mr. Robert Rodefeld
Rev. Joseph Fisher Rev. Thomas Queck
Rev. Daniel Jastram Dcs. Betty Mulholland
Mr. Scott Meyer Mr. Donald Zehnder

<http://www.lutheranclarion.org>

Lutheran Concerns Association
May 2010

