

The **LUTHERAN** **CLARION**



Lutheran Concerns Association

149 Glenview Drive, New Kensington, PA 15068-4921

May 2015

Volume 7, Issue 5

Doctrinal Supervision and the Becker Case

What is the real business of the synod? In Chapter IV of its 1854 Constitution, the Missouri Synod stated that the business of the synod is:

- 1) watching over the purity and unity of doctrine within the Synod;
- 2) supervision over the performance of the official duties on the part of pastors and teachers of Synod;
- 3) common defense and extension of the church;
- 4) giving theological opinions and judgments; also settling disputes between individuals or whole parties in congregations, but the latter only in cases in which all interested parties have applied to Synod [for arbitration], etc.¹

Although some folks may be unaware of them, these are still the most important duties of the synod and its officers today.

At its March 6-7, 2015, district convention, the Northern Illinois District (hereafter NID) of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (hereafter LCMS) adopted resolution 1-05,² which calls on some who “teach or publicly advocate for positions” contrary to the public doctrine of the LCMS to “repentance and to reform their actions immediately.” The same resolution listed the doctrines of the LCMS at issue, namely, concerning “women’s ordination, homosexuality, creation and evolution, the inerrancy and inspiration of Scripture, and proper methods for Biblical interpretation.” It also requested that the LCMS Commission on Handbook review the existing procedures for doctrinal dissent, for doctrinal discipline, and for “removing those who refuse to repent or who refuse to call others to repentance.”

Who is being talked about in NID resolution 1-05? The person who disagrees with the LCMS doctrines that are listed above is Dr. Matthew Becker, an LCMS pastor and an Associate Professor of Theology at Valparaiso University, formerly a professor of theology in Concordia University at Portland, Oregon. Dr. Becker has a blog called “Transverse Markings”³ which includes his public advocacy for positions contrary to the public doctrine of the LCMS. He is also the Managing Editor for the “Daystar Journal”⁴ and has frequently published articles at their website.⁵ The Daystar articles he publishes have been on a variety of

topics about theology, church practice, and church history. Such articles have included his criticism of the doctrinal authority of the LCMS,⁶ advocacy for women’s ordination,⁷ criticism of the traditional doctrine of creation held by the LCMS,⁸ and approval of homosexual unions.⁹ The person who has not exerted doctrinal discipline toward Dr. Becker is his present LCMS district president, the Rev. Paul Linnemann, District President (hereafter DP) of the LCMS Northwest District.

How did DP Linnemann fail to exert doctrinal discipline toward Dr. Becker? In a recent case in which doctrinal charges were brought against Dr. Becker, DP Linnemann formed a Referral Panel according to the procedures in Bylaw 2.14.5.¹⁰ This was really an abdication of responsibility. DP Linnemann should have brought forward charges himself (Bylaw 2.14.4) in such an obvious case of doctrinal error. The Referral Panel decided to terminate the case, even though Dr. Becker has expressed significant and manifold disagreements with the public doctrine of the LCMS, and continues to publicly advocate against that doctrine.

“...Many people have expressed frustration that this case gives evidence that doctrinal supervision is not functioning in the LCMS.”

Dr. Becker’s dissent from certain public doctrines of the LCMS, which doctrines are listed above, has been known for a long time. He recently expressed such dissent in 2011 to the LCMS Commission on Theology and Church Relations (hereafter CTCR). The responses of the CTCR to Becker are definitely worth reading in order to understand this case (see endnote).¹¹

Many people have expressed frustration that this case gives evidence that doctrinal supervision is not functioning in the LCMS. If doctrinal supervision fails to bring Dr. Becker to repentance, or to bring about his removal from the LCMS clergy roster, how can it be expected to work in lesser cases of dissent from the public doctrine of the LCMS?

In this Issue of **The Lutheran Clarion**

Doctrinal Supervision & the Becker Case.....	1
Open Letter to the LCMS.....	3
When District Conventions are Christian	5
A New Norm for the Northwest District?	6

The Becker case proves that there are faults in the doctrinal supervision system of the LCMS, but it does not prove that there is no doctrinal supervision at all. So there is a problem and it needs fixing. In order to fix the system, through revision of bylaws, we first need to ask about the nature of doctrinal supervision. What is the doctrine being supervised? Who does the supervising? And how does doctrinal discipline proceed?

What is the doctrine being supervised? It is the doctrine found originally in the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, and then later summarized and explained in the Lutheran *Book of Concord*. It is the same doctrine that has more recently been confessed by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod through its doctrinal resolutions and doctrinal statements. The LCMS cannot establish Scriptural doctrine, but only confess and explain it.

This was elucidated by the LCMS at its 1971 convention through Resolution 2-21 “To Uphold Synodical Doctrinal Resolutions.” The same resolution was recently reprinted as an appendix to the document *CTCR Response to Expressions of Dissent (2004-2006)*, during the administration of President Gerald Kieschnick. I highly recommend that you read Resolution 2-21 in order to understand the LCMS position about its own doctrine (see endnote).¹²

What are the doctrinal resolutions and statements of the LCMS? They can be found in a single collection on CD-ROM from the Concordia Historical Institute.¹³

All resolutions in the German language in that collection have been translated into English. Lutherans know, of course, that councils—and that includes synods—may err, so the LCMS provides for a process of correction of the synod’s position through Bylaw 1.8 and its procedures of dissent.

Who supervises doctrine? In the LCMS, the synodical president (Constitution Article XI, B. 1-B.3), the district presidents (Constitution Article XII.7-XII.9 (a)), and the circuit visitors (Bylaw 5.2.3 (a)) supervise doctrine. What if the doctrinal supervisors disagree about a contested doctrine or how to handle a particular case? If that happens, the synodical president must report such cases to the synod (Constitution XI.B.2), and may even do so while a case is being heard (Bylaw 2.14.7.8 (g)).

Which district president supervises Dr. Becker? Now here we have a real problem. The assignment of churchworkers to districts is explained in Bylaw section 12.12. Valparaiso University is not an agency of the LCMS, so Bylaw 2.12.1.5 does not apply. For some time now, at least since August 2008, Dr. Becker has been an inactive, non-candidate ordained minister, according to the *Lutheran Annual*. His district assignment was determined, apparently, through Bylaw 2.12.1.8, since no other bylaw in that section fits his situation. That means that doctrinal supervision was supposed to be carried out by his DP, who

DEAR FAITHFUL CLARION READER,



In some past years at about this time the LCA treasury has started running low on funds.

LCA can sure use your help!

Reflect on the content of Rev. Dr. Noland’s and Rev. Ball’s articles in the context of the LCMS today and you will see how **The Lutheran Clarion** continues to focus on presenting and upholding the truth of God’s Holy Word.

If you would like to help defray costs of publishing a solid, Confessional Lutheran periodical, 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!!**

lives in Portland, Oregon, while Dr. Becker lives and works in Valparaiso, Indiana.

Does the LCMS want to have some of its clergy in full-time vocations as professors in universities or colleges that are not part of the Concordia University System (hereafter CUS)? If so, it needs to fix this problem. I propose a solution here by inserting between present Bylaws 2.12.1.6 and 2.12.1.7 this new bylaw: *An individual member of the Synod who is a full-time professor at a university or college that is not part of the Concordia University System shall hold Synod membership in the geographical district*

in which the member resides or the non-geographical district in which he/she holds membership. You may put this bylaw revision in the form of an overture and send it to the 2016 convention. If this is passed at the 2016 convention, Dr. Becker will immediately become a member of the Indiana District. Finally, how should doctrinal discipline proceed? Here there are multiple problems that extend far beyond the case in question.¹⁴

Barring a wholesale revamping of the system, I recommend four sets of bylaw changes and one general recommendation that could bring some semblance of order to the Becker case and others like it.

First, the bylaw section on dissent (Bylaw 1.8) should not be used as a way of avoiding doctrinal discipline. I propose an addition to that section, labeled Bylaw 1.8.3: *Dissent from doctrinal resolutions and statements does not excuse or relieve a member of synod from doctrinal discipline under the Bylaws of Synod. If a member of synod has expressed doctrinal dissent in conjunction with complaints or accusations brought against him/her, when the matter has been concluded by the Commission on Theology and Church Relations the case will return immediately to the synodical official supervising the case, who will move forward with the case on the basis of the judgment of the CTCR.* You may put this bylaw revision in the form

“...the bylaw section on dissent (Bylaw 1.8) should not be used as a way of avoiding doctrinal discipline.”

Open Letter to The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

Dear *Clarion* Readers, Members of Synod and Members of Member Congregations,

Below is the wonderful confessional message from Synodical President Harrison relative to what a Synodically rostered teacher has advocated and is now being allowed to stand without consequence because of a decision made in a District of the Synod.

Regarding a recent decision of a panel not to proceed with charges regarding a public false teacher in the LCMS*

When a public teacher on the roster of Synod can without consequence publicly advocate the ordination of women (even participate vested in the installation of an ELCA clergy person), homosexuality, the errancy of the Bible, the historical-critical method, open communion, communion with the Reformed, evolution, and more, then the public confession of the Synod is meaningless. I am saying that if my Synod does not change its inability to call such a person to repentance and remove such a teacher where there is no repentance, then we are liars and our confession is meaningless. I do not want to belong to such a synod, much less lead it. I have no intention of walking away from my vocation. I shall rather use it and, by the grace of God, use all the energy I have to call this Synod to fidelity to correct this situation.

Matt Harrison

* Posted at the LCMS Witness, Mercy, Life Together web site (<http://wmltblog.org>) on January 26, 2015.

Simply put, the Synod is once again at a defining point as an "orthodox" church body. The Board of Directors of Lutheran Concerns Association calls upon the presidents of every District of Synod, of every Synodical institution of higher learning and every regent thereof as well as every member of every elected board/commission to publicly indicate their unqualified support for President Harrison in his statement above or resign their position forthwith. It is time to be as bold in the secular world of today as Luther was at the Diet of Worms: "Here I stand....." We are in GOD'S CHURCH, not a secular semi-religious philosophical organization or in a governmental legislative body where too often the accepted practice in actuality truly is flim-flamming constituents.

LCA Board of Directors,

Mr. Walter C. Dissen, President
Mr. Scott Diekmann, Vice President
Rev. Jerome Panzigrau, Secretary Treasurer
Rev. Dr. Kristian Kincaid
Mr. John Klinger
Mr. Scott Meyer, Esq.

Rev. Dr. Martin Noland
Rev. Andrew Preus
Rev. David Ramirez
Mr. Leon Rausch
Mr. Don Zehnder

14 "Now therefore fear the LORD and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. 15 And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."
Joshua 24:14-15 ESV

of an overture and send it to the 2016 convention.

Second, the district president supervising the case should not be allowed to terminate the case arbitrarily. In the pre-1992 bylaws of the synod, the district president had to “decide whether the information concerning the matters which could lead to termination of membership preliminarily appear to be able to be substantiated” (1989 Bylaw 2.27b).¹⁵ So under the 1989 bylaw, in the case of Dr. Becker, DP Linnemann would have had to investigate whether Dr. Becker was truly advocating for women’s ordination. If that was in fact true, and could be substantiated, then the case would have to proceed. If Dr. Becker was not advocating for women’s ordination, then that investigation would terminate the case.

I propose, then, an addition to the bylaws by inserting between present Bylaws 2.14.5.1 and 2.14.5.2 this new bylaw: *The determination by the district president to initiate formal proceedings shall be made solely on the basis of whether the information concerning the matters which could lead to termination of membership preliminarily appears to be able to be substantiated.* Analogous amendments should be made to Bylaw sections 2.15, 2.16, and 2.17. You may put this bylaw revision in the form of an overture and send it to the 2016 convention.

Third, although the Referral Panel may be useful in making recommendations, it should not be given the authority to determine whether to initiate formal proceedings, which should rest with the district president himself.

I propose, then, amendment to the bylaws in section 2.14.5 and 2.14.6. The phrase “*shall make the determination*” in Bylaw 2.14.5.1 should be changed to read “*shall make a recommendation.*” The phrase “*Whether made by the district president or the Referral Panel, if the determination is*” in Bylaw 2.14.5.2 should be changed to read “*If he determines.*” The phrase “*process of making its determination*” in Bylaw 2.14.5.3 should be changed to read “*process of making its recommendation.*” The phrase “*or the Referral Panel*” in Bylaw 2.14.6 should be deleted. Analogous amendments should be made to Bylaw sections 2.15, 2.16, and 2.17. You may put this bylaw revision in the form of an overture and send it to the 2016 convention.

Fourth, the Commission on Constitutional Matters (hereafter CCM) and the CTCR should not be allowed to

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.

make binding rulings that determine the final outcome of a case, either in the original hearing or in the appeal. In the pre-1992 bylaws of the synod, the adjudicating and appeal commissions could request an advisory opinion from the CCM or CTCR (e.g., 1989 Bylaw 8.51f). This was only advisory, not binding. The 1992 bylaw revisions of the adjudication chapters of the synod made the CCM and CTCR final and binding authorities (e.g., 1992 Bylaw 8.21i).¹⁶ An LCMS attorney once wrote to President Ralph Bohlmann: “CCM and CTCR rulings are rendered *ex parte*, without notice and hearing, and are thereby not in accord with the requirements of due process. . . . The civil courts may assume jurisdiction in church matters if they find the adjudicatory process of a church tribunal does not meet the requirements of due process.”¹⁷

“...the synod should discuss whether it really wants district presidents involved as judges in adjudicatory matters.”

I propose, then, revision to the following bylaws by changing the authority of the rulings of the CCM and CTCR from binding to advisory (e.g., from “must be followed” to “may be followed”): Bylaws 2.14.3 (a), 2.14.7.8 (l), 2.14.7.9 (c), 2.15.3(a), 2.15.7.9 (c), 2.16.3 (a), 2.16.8 (b), and 2.17.7.9 (c). You may put this bylaw revision in the form of an overture and send it to the 2016 convention.

Fifth, the synod should discuss whether it really wants district presidents involved as judges in adjudicatory matters. Since 1992, the LCMS district presidents have served not only as doctrinal supervisors, but also as judges who make the decision to expel church-workers from the synod for false doctrine, gross misconduct, and for other reasons. Prior to 1992, the decision to expel was made by either the Commissions on Adjudication or the Commission on Appeals. No officers of synod or district were allowed to serve on those commissions or influence their work. Only parish pastors, laymen, and lawyers were allowed to serve on those commissions.

At the 1992 convention, the district presidents used their influence to abolish the Commissions on Adjudication and Appeals, replacing them with Dispute Resolution Panels. At the 2004 convention, dispute resolution was separated from the expulsion process, with the latter process being administered and controlled by district presidents. Thus, since 2004, the district presidents are the judges who determine who is in and out of the synod—and they know that when they accept their job.

The case of DP Linnemann is actually a litmus test for all of the LCMS district presidents. If any defend his actions, they are actually saying that they do not intend to exert doctrinal discipline in their own districts, if that ever becomes necessary.

I am not saying that serving as a synodical judge is an easy or pleasant duty—but it is a role that the district pres-

idents have desired, and have used their influence to obtain in 1992 and 2004. If the district presidents no longer want the job of judge in the synod's adjudication system, then they should say so and use their influence to restore something like the independent judiciaries¹⁸ we once had in the LCMS—i.e., the Commissions on Adjudication and the Commission on Appeals.

Rev. Dr. Martin R. Noland

Pastor, Trinity Lutheran Church, Evansville, Indiana

Note: All web addresses were accessed and checked for validity on March 25, 2015 by the author.

- 1 See C. S. Meyer, ed., *Moving Frontiers: Readings in the History of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod* (St Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1964), 151. The original 1847 constitution of the synod, which has a nearly identical Chapter IV, can be found in: William Gustave Polack, "Our First Synodical Constitution," *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly* 16 #1 (April 1943): 1-18.
- 2 To obtain a copy of this NID resolution, go to page 17 here: http://www.ni.lcms.org/sites/default/files/Documents/2015_convention_proceedings_-_print_final.pdf. The original overture can be found on pages 32 to 36 here: http://ni.lcms.org/sites/default/files/Documents/section_5_-_overtures_rev_2-26-2015.pdf The Southern Illinois District Convention adopted a different resolution on the same subject on February 14, 2015, Resolution 2-05B, available here: <http://steadfastlutherans.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/RESOLUTION-2-05B-FINAL.pdf>
- 3 Go to: <http://www.matthewbecker.blogspot.com>
- 4 Go to: <http://thedaystarjournal.com>
- 5 For the online folder that contains all of Dr. Becker's articles on Daystar since 2013, see: <http://thedaystarjournal.com/category/article/author/matthew-becker>
- 6 See: <http://thedaystarjournal.com/talking-points-about-doctrinal-authority-in-the-lcms-2>
- 7 See: <http://thedaystarjournal.com/informal-reflections-on-women-pastors-and-theologians> and <http://thedaystarjournal.com/argument-for-women-pastors-and-theologians>
- 8 See: <http://thedaystarjournal.com/christian-theology-the-doctrine-of-creation-and-scientific-knowledge> and <http://thedaystarjournal.com/the-scandal-of-the-lcms-mind>
- 9 See: <http://thedaystarjournal.com/the-creators-tapestry-review-article>
- 10 See *2013 Handbook of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod* (St Louis: LCMS, 2013), 73. All references to the Handbook, Constitution, or Bylaws of the LCMS refer to this original 2013 printed edition, not to the later one available only in electronic form dated Nov. 19-20, 2014, unless noted otherwise.
- 11 The formal response of the CTCR to Dr. Becker's dissent can be found here: <http://www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcm&id=1676> After his reply of January 12, 2012, the CTCR issued the following letter indicating that the dissent process was finished and that future correspondence would be forwarded to his DP and the synodical president. That letter can be found here: <http://www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcm&id=1675>
- 12 See Commission on Theology and Church Relations, *CTCR Response to Expressions of Dissent (2004-2006)* (St Louis: LCMS, 2006), 34-37; available for free online at: <http://www.lcms.org/page.aspx?pid=726&DocID=404>
- 13 See Concordia Historical Institute, *The Doctrinal Resolutions of the National Conventions of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod 1847-2004*, CD-ROM format (St Louis: Concordia Historical Institute, 2006). ISBN-13: 978-0-9788523-0-6. \$15.00 plus s/h. Order here: <http://www.lutheranhistory.org/doctresorder.htm>
- 14 My concerns about the present dispute/expulsion system have been published in the essay "Problems with 2013 Dispute/Expulsion System" published by the The Brothers of John the Steadfast here: <http://steadfastlutherans.org/2014/10/problems-with-2013-disputeexpulsion-system>. It includes a flow chart that explains how the system is

supposed to work. My earlier essays that analyzed and criticized this system are: Martin R. Noland, "Law and Due Process in the Kingdom of the Left and the Kingdom of the Right," in *God and Caesar Revisited*, Luther Academy Conference Papers No. 1, papers presented at the Congress on the Lutheran Confessions, Skokie, Illinois, April 7-9, 1994, edited by John R. Stephenson (Shorewood, MN: The Luther Academy, 1995), 47-58; and Martin R. Noland, "District Presidents and their Council: Biblical and Confessional Limitations," in *Church Polity and Politics*, papers presented at the Congress on the Lutheran Confessions, Itasca, Illinois, April 3-5, 1997, edited by John Fehrmann and Daniel Preus (Crestwood, MO and Minneapolis, MN: Luther Academy and Association of Confessional Lutherans, 1997), 156-172. Both Luther Academy publications can be purchased for a minimal fee here: <http://www.logia.org/luther-academy-books>

- 15 *1989 Handbook of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod* (St Louis: LCMS, 1989), 30-31. Other references in the text to the 1989 bylaws refer to this edition.
- 16 *1992 Handbook of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod* (St Louis: LCMS, 1992), 130. For more analysis on the subject of the binding authority of the CCM and CTCR, see my blog post here: <http://steadfastlutherans.org/2013/07/whats-wrong-with-the-commission-on-constitutional-matters> and my article: Martin R. Noland, "Word of God Determines Doctrine, Not Commission on Constitutional Matters," *The Lutheran Clarion* 5 no. 9 (July 2013): 1-2; available for free here: <http://lutheranclarion.org/images/NewsletterJul2013.pdf>
- 17 Letter by an LCMS layman, an attorney who had served on the LCMS Board of Directors, to LCMS President Ralph Bohlmann, dated April 5, 1990.
- 18 On the matter of "independent judiciaries," see my essay "Law and Due Process in the Kingdom of the Left and the Kingdom of the Right," 54-55.

When District Conventions are Christian

All who subscribe to the *Book of Concord* confess, "All this has been said regarding secret sins. But where the sin is quite public so that the judge and everybody know it, you can without any sin avoid him and let him go, because he has brought himself into disgrace, and you may also publicly testify concerning him. For when a matter is public in the light of day, there can be no slandering or false judging or testifying; as, when we now reprove the Pope with his doctrine, which is publicly set forth in books and proclaimed in all the world. For where the sin is public, the reproof also must be public, that every one may learn to guard against it." (*The Large Catechism*, 8th Commandment, para. 284).

The Southern Illinois and Northern Illinois Districts have met in convention and followed the confessional subscription of Pastors and Congregations faithfully. Both districts called the Rev. Dr. Matthew Becker of Valparaiso University to repent of his false teaching, his teaching on many matters of Christian doctrine being manifestly false, so much that Synod President Harrison has famously taken to the internet to address it.

The Southern Illinois District resolved (Resolution 2-05B) to implore the Rev. Paul Linnemann, President of the



Watch for the **2015 LCA Conference Presentations** at our web site: <http://lutheranclarion.org/videos.html>

**Concordia Catechetical Academy
2015 Annual Symposium**



The 22nd Annual Symposium on Catechesis will be on "Pastoral Care for the Shepherd and His Sheep: Catechesis under the Office of the Keys and Confession." It will be held **June 17-19, 2015**, at County Springs Hotel, Waukesha, Wisconsin. For more information, call 262-246-3200, email deacon@peacesussex.org or online go to <http://lutherancatechesis.org/symposium/>

Northwest District

"to exercise ecclesiastical supervision of Dr. Becker, if he is not already doing so, seek Dr. Becker's repentance for false teaching, and lacking such repentance, begin the process of Dr. Becker's expulsion from the Synod in accordance with the Synod's Constitution and Bylaws,"

and the Northern Illinois District resolved (Resolution 1-05) to

"in faithfulness to God's Word and in Christian love the Northern Illinois District of the LCMS call the Rev. Dr. Matthew Becker to repentance of his false and divisive doctrines and that this be communicated to him by encouraging the District President to extend tender personal pastoral care and the NID President sending him this resolution."

Two districts gathered and **acted** as the people of God and spoke the Truth, that is, they acted as Christians. Our Lord Jesus Christ said,

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:19-20)

What Christians, and particularly Lutherans do, is teach and observe all that Jesus has entrusted to His Church. For those who confess the Scriptures as the inspired, infallible, inerrant Word of God, there are no unimportant doctrines for all the Scriptures testify to Him as He said,

"These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem." (Luke 24:44-47)

To attack and deny the doctrine of the Scriptures is to attack our Lord Jesus Christ and His Gospel. Two districts have called a sinner to repent. Pray that he hears, and

Want to Read *The Clarion* Online?



If you would rather receive a digital version of *The Clarion* in your electronic mailbox, please send your email address to Ginny Valleau at gzolson2000@yahoo.com. We will remove your name from the hard copy mail list and add it to the email list.

pray that those with authority over him in the Church act as Christians with the courage to speak and to act.

The Rev. Benjamin Ball, Senior Pastor
St. Paul Lutheran Church, Hamel, Illinois

A New Norm for the Northwest District: Let there be Darkness???

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form. And the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light, and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. (Gen. 1:1-4). Thy Word is truth. (Jn. 17:17).

This issue of the *Lutheran Clarion* repeats the Open Letter to our Missouri Synod which quoted Synodical President Harrison's statement of January 26, 2015, "Regarding a recent decision of a panel not to proceed with charges regarding a public false teacher in the LCMS." One unofficial organization in the Synod, in a public statement worthy [??] of enshrinement in Ripley's "Believe It or Not" has criticized President Harrison for commenting on the matter referencing man-made bylaws and even declared the rostered pastor involved not to be guilty of false doctrine.

The Southern Illinois District Convention in Resolution 2-05B quotes Rev. Dr. Matthew Becker:

"The matter of the case against my teaching was terminated by three LCMS circuit counselors from the Great Northwest (whose identities are unknown to me), who acted at the behest of the NW District President. After reviewing all the available evidence, they concluded that it is perfectly acceptable for an LCMS pastor to make a public argument in favor of the ordination of women to the pastoral office and that such public argument is not grounds for expulsion from the roster of pastors in the LCMS." [Editorial Note: The general statement of President Harrison that did not refer to any specific person followed his earlier response to a question raised to him at the North Dakota District Convention.]

Resolution 2-05B in pages 2 through 7 sets forth facts before commencing on line 13 stating:

"While Dr. Becker's public teaching, writing and dissent are publicly known, there is no public evidence that President Linnemann has exhorted Dr. Becker to repentance for his false doctrines. Dr. Becker, an ordained member of the Synod, has publicly advocated for the ordination of women to the Pastoral Ministry. He has participated in the installation of an ELCA clergy person. He has taught that committed homosexual relationships are not sinful. He rejects the inerrancy of the Bible. He does not affirm the creation account in the Scriptures as an historical event. President Linnemann as the ecclesiastical supervisor of Dr. Becker is to assist the Synod at large with fulfilling its first objective which is to 'Conserve and promote the unity of the true faith (Eph. 4:3-6; 1 Cor. 1:10.)'"

"WHEREAS: The Rev. Dr. Matthew Becker, an Ordained

member of the Synod, has publicly advocated for the ordination of women to the Pastoral Ministry. He has participated in the installation of an ELCA clergy person. He has taught that committed homosexual relationships are not sinful. He rejects the inerrancy of the Bible. He does not affirm the creation account in the Scriptures as an historical event, and"

"WHEREAS: Dr. Becker is a member of the Northwest District of the LCMS under the ecclesiastical supervision of the Rev. Paul Linnemann, and"

"WHEREAS: It is the President of the Synod's duty to see to it that all District Presidents 'act in accordance with the Synod's Constitution, to admonish all who in any way depart from it, and, if such admonition is not heeded, to report such cases to the Synod', (Article XI.B.2) and"

"WHEREAS: The President of the Synod 'has and always shall have the power to advise, admonish, and reprove. He shall conscientiously use all means at his command to promote and maintain unity of doctrine and practice in all the districts of the Synod', (Article XIB.3), and"

"WHEREAS: We confess, 'All this has been said regarding secret sins. But where the sin is quite public so that the judge and everybody know it, you can without any sin avoid him and let him go, because he has brought himself into disgrace, and you may also publicly testify concerning him. For when a matter is public in the light of day, there can be no slandering or false judging or testifying; as, when we now reprove the Pope with his doctrine, which is publicly set forth in books and proclaimed in all the world. For where the sin is public, the reproof also must be public, that everyone may learn to guard against it.' (*Large Catechism*, 8th Commandment, para. 284), and"

"WHEREAS: Our Lord Jesus Christ said, 'I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance' (St. Luke 5:32). Therefore, let it be"

"RESOLVED: That those with public knowledge of the Rev. Dr. Matthew Becker's false and divisive doctrines call him to repentance, and"

"RESOLVED: That in faithfulness to God's Word and in Christian love the Southern Illinois District of the LCMS in convention call the Rev. Dr. Matthew Becker to repentance of his false doctrine and divisive doctrines and that this be communicated to him through the Southern Illinois District Secretary, and let it be further"

"RESOLVED: That the Southern Illinois District implore the Rev. Paul Linnemann, President of the Northwest District, to exercise ecclesiastical supervision of Dr. Becker, if he is not already doing so, seek Dr. Becker's repentance for false teaching, and lacking such repentance, begin the process of Dr. Becker's expulsion from the Synod in accordance with the Synod's Constitution and Bylaws, and this be communicated to the Rev. Linnemann by the Southern Illinois District President, and let it be further"

"RESOLVED: That the Southern Illinois District encourage President Matthew Harrison to exhort President Linnemann to do his duty for the sake of our common confession of faith and our walking together as member of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, and be it further"

"RESOLVED: That the President of the Southern Illinois District, on behalf of the Southern Illinois District, thank President Matthew Harrison and commend him for his faithful leadership of the Synod, and give him such encouragement, and be it finally"

"RESOLVED: That the Convention Chaplain lead the Convention in prayer for a godly resolution to these matters." [79 Yea, 19 Nay]

The Northern Illinois District in Resolution 1-05 reaffirmed "the consistent positions on the issues of women's ordination, homosexuality, creation and evolution, the inerrancy and inspiration of Scripture, and proper methods for Biblical interpretation that the LCMS has held." It also further resolved, "that all who teach or publicly advocate for positions contrary to the well-established positions of the LCMS be called to repentance and to reform their actions immediately..."

As one great, respected radio broadcaster used to say: "Hats off America!" Hats off to President Harrison, the Southern Illinois and Northern Illinois District Conventions and the seemingly few faithful pastors in the Northwest District. The same radio commentator also used to say, "Stay tuned for the rest of the story." The **REST** of the story?? Yes, the **REST** of the story: Will we wind up "At Home in the House of My Fathers," which is founded on Scripture and our Lutheran Confessions **or** "At Home in the House of Interlopers to God's Inspired, Inerrant Word." **The time has long been overdue to follow Joshua 24:14-15.** See the box on page 3 of this issue.

Seemingly in the LCMS it appears a rostered church worker filing a dissenting opinion with the CTCR (Commission on Theology and Church Relations) produces a "Teflonized" and "Kevlar" jacketed church worker—nothing "sticks" and nothing affects a vital part of the One, True Christian faith. Not only exculpation but also such exculpation is to be kept secret. Do such procedures **really** fool an **omniscient** God? **Repenting in hell is not an option.**

Mr. Walter Dissen, Esq.

Chesapeake, Virginia

Member, Board of Regents, Concordia Seminary Saint Louis



*Please Add Your
Signature to Ours*

You are encouraged to add your name to the Open Letter (page 3). You can do this by emailing LCA Secretary Rev. Jerome Panzigrau at jpanzigrau@comcast.net or President Walter Dissen at wdissen@aol.com or using their U.S. mail address which appears in each issue. Your name, post office address, telephone number and congregation in which you hold LCMS membership is required. It is planned to list the signers in a future *Clarion* and providing your name also is considered permission to list it. It is noted that a New Year's Day 1973 *Crossroads* that addressed concerns re our beloved Synod reportedly had over 230,00 signatures.

The Lutheran Clarion

The official publication of the Lutheran Concerns Association, a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization.
Circulation: 5,400



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 address for all matters pertaining to the LCA is:

149 Glenview Drive
New Kensington, PA 15068-4921

Editorial Board: Mr. Walter Dissen (Chairman)
Mr. Scott Meyer
Rev. Jerome Panzigrau

Mrs. Ginny Valleau: Layout, Printing & Mailing

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

509 Las Gaviotas Blvd, Chesapeake, VA 23322
(757-436-2049; wdissen@aol.com)

The Board of Directors for the LCA:

Mr. Walter Dissen (President)
Mr. Scott L. Diekmann (Vice-President)
Rev. Jerome Panzigrau (Secretary-Treasurer)

Rev. Dr. Kristian Kincaid Rev. David Ramirez
Mr. John Klinger Mr. Leon L. Rausch
Mr. Scott Meyer Rev. Kevin Vogts
Rev. Dr. Martin Noland Mr. Donald Zehnder

<http://www.lutheranclarion.org>

Lutheran Concerns Association
May 2015



Lutheran Concerns Association
149 Glenview Drive
New Kensington, PA 15068-4921