

# The **LUTHERAN** **CLARION**



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## The Present and Future of our Lutheran Schools

*The presentation below was given by Dr. Chris Cody, Education Executive for the SWD, LCMS at the LCA conference on January 16, 2023.*

### Introduction

When assessing the present and making educated guesses about the future, it is also necessary to thoroughly examine the past. A study of the history of any concept, event, or structure grants an individual the opportunity to analyze and explain matters of great importance. We can learn from past events; we can study the successes and failures of individuals and systems. If we fail to acknowledge and study history, we do so at the peril of our present and our future. And yet, as a society, we are often quick to toss aside our history. Sometimes, this is done because the history is bloody, controversial, or it has been deemed too unseemly to even acknowledge in modern times. For example, we can tear down statues of Confederate generals, but that doesn't erase the fact that these men are a significant part of our nation's history. Our history informs our present and our future. A study of Lutheran schools is no different. Any discussion about the present and future of our Lutheran schools should be viewed through a historical lens. This paper does not seek to provide a comprehensive historical overview of Lutheran schools, but it will draw on some matters of historical significance to adequately assess the present state of our Lutheran schools and provide a vision for the future of Lutheran schools.

### History

As the father of the Reformation, Martin Luther is widely remembered for his reliance on Scripture and his rebuff of the Roman Catholic Church. Certainly, Sola scriptura, Sola fide, and Sola gratia are the core tenets and the backbone of our doctrine and have made a lasting impression on Christianity since the Reformation. Yet, Martin Luther was also an educator and his contributions to educational philosophy are significant as well. Lutheran churches and schools go hand in hand dating back to beginnings of our Synod. In the 1830's, the importance of a truly Lutheran education was a driving force behind the immigration of Saxon Lutherans to America. In his book, *Lutheran Education: From Wittenberg to the Future*, Korcock argued that "the desire for confessional freedom was indeed a primary motivation" behind immigrating to America and that "persecution was felt most acutely in the classroom instead of the parish."<sup>1</sup>

When the original Saxon settlers arrived in Missouri, the Lutheran education of the children remained of the utmost importance. The Saxons were determined to provide an education

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### In Memoriam

## Walter Dissen (1931 – 2023)

It is with sorrow that the LCA observes the passing of Walter Dissen, President of the LCA and defender of the Christian faith. Walter was the epitome of the engaged confessional layman in the LCMS. His influence was wide and deep.

He was 91 years old and passed away on August 2nd in Fort Wayne. Services for him were held on the Concordia Theological Seminary Fort Wayne campus on August 26th. His obituary, which may be found on the Seminary website, is a testament to the enduring legacy of his faith. [https://ctsfw.edu/PublicFiles/CTSFW\\_NEWS/2023\\_08\\_10\\_In\\_Memoriam\\_Dr\\_Walter\\_C\\_Dissen.html](https://ctsfw.edu/PublicFiles/CTSFW_NEWS/2023_08_10_In_Memoriam_Dr_Walter_C_Dissen.html)

The leadership of the LCA pledges to defend and support the Christian faith and Confessional Lutheranism to which he was devoted. We hope in that way to pay continuing tribute to his memory.

## Planting Confessional Lutheran Congregations:

### **A Matter of Confession and Divine Service, The Historic Liturgy, Blended Worship, or Contemporary Worship; Which is the Best Way Forward for a Confessional Lutheran Congregation?**

*The presentation below was given by Rev. Dr. John Wille, President of the SWD, LCMS at the LCA conference on January 16, 2023.*

As confessional Lutherans, we spend an immense amount of time studying and discussing theology. Holy Scripture. Systematics. Dogmatics. We have spent many hundreds of dollars and engaged in hour upon hour at seminary (and after) delving

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### The Present and Future of our Lutheran Schools

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where children were “free from the influences of rationalist doctrine.”<sup>2</sup> Another group of Lutherans settled in Pennsylvania, where there was a 3300% increase in Lutheran schools between 1748 and 1820.<sup>3</sup>

The founders of The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod so strongly believed in providing parochial schools that there was a provision in the original constitution that no congregation or parish could join Synod unless they provided a school for the congregation’s children.<sup>4</sup> In 1873, C.F.W. Walther wrote that “the continued utmost care of our parochial schools is and remains, next to the public office of preaching, the chief means of our preservation and progress.”<sup>5</sup> In 1921, Professor William Arndt noted that “Anyone who has acquainted himself in a measure with the history of The Lutheran Church will have to admit that incalculable blessings have been effected by the parish school and that our Synod to a large extent owes its truly Lutheran character to the teachers in the parish schools.” (A. Stellinghorn, *Schools of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod*, p. 475, 1963, CPH).

Forty years later, in the 1960 *Synodical Handbook*, the Synod stated that “The most effective educational agency available to the church for the Christian training of the young is the full-time parochial school, and that congregations of the Synod establish Lutheran elementary and Lutheran high schools where possible and that parochial school should be stressed in the mission program of the church as a vital factor for the up-building of Christ’s kingdom.” Lutheran schools have been and remain an essential part of The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod. From Martin Luther, to Walther, and onwards through the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century, Synod has repeatedly affirmed the great importance of Lutheran schools. The contribution of Lutheran schools to our Synod cannot be taken for granted or underestimated.

### Present

*Teacher Shortage* - Lutheran schools remain a central mission and ministry focus of our Synod. And even though Lutheran schools have a rich and storied history, they continue to face challenges, both old and new. The most discussed challenge our school system faces today is the lack of synodically trained teacher candidates. When a student graduates from a university in the Concordia University System with a Lutheran Teacher Diploma (LTD), they are eligible to be on the Commissioned Minister Roster of The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod. In 2021-2022, 88 teachers graduated from our Concordia University System with an LTD. Unfortunately, this number of graduates was well short of the 453 requests for these graduates.<sup>6</sup> The demand for LTD graduates has outpaced the supply for over a decade. Without an adequate supply of LTD graduates, schools are forced to fill vacant teacher positions with teachers who are not a product of our Concordia University System. As a result, in 2020-2021 only 26% of teachers in LCMS schools were on the active roster of the LCMS.<sup>7</sup> To be fair, our Synod has numerous Lutheran teachers who are lifelong committed members of the LCMS and are well-versed in Lutheran doctrine. Our schools are blessed to have these dedicated Lutheran teachers, rostered or otherwise. Many times, though, principals are forced to hire teachers who are not Lutheran. If they are lucky, perhaps they find a quality Christian teacher to lead a classroom. However, if our schools are to have a strong Luther-

an ethos, it is the teachers in the classrooms who will make that happen.

This is not a unique trend. While the teacher shortage that we presently face is dire and real, it is also not new. For example, between 1920 and 1927, the number of Calls outpaced the number of male teacher graduates every year. Much like today, when there are not enough Synodical teacher graduates to fill vacancies, churches and schools in previous times had to find other ways to staff a classroom. In the 1920’s, schools filled those classrooms with other (non-synodically trained) teachers (including women). So, Synod has adapted before and must do so now as well. There is no “silver bullet” to fill our Lutheran school classrooms with trained Lutheran teachers. Can changes be made to the teacher colloquy process to make it a more desirable option for Lutheran teachers? What role do our parish pastors play in this environment of non-Lutheran teachers? What can our Concordia University System do to actively encourage future Lutheran teachers? One thing is certain, this is multifaceted issue that will require the involvement of multiple stakeholders to remedy.

*Educational Choice, Dissatisfaction with Public Schools, and School Funding* – The educational reform and educational choice movements have been active for decades. The Milwaukee Parental Choice Program, the first of its kind in the country, began in 1989 as a result of parental dissatisfaction with public education in the city of Milwaukee. Since that time, the program has expanded to include the Racine Parental Choice Program, the Wisconsin Parental Choice Program, and the Special Needs Scholarship Program. Each of these programs allows families who meet residency and income requirements to enroll their child(ren) at participating private and parochial schools using taxpayer dollars. Some 30 years after its inception, these programs now enroll over 55,000 Wisconsin students.<sup>8</sup> The school choice movement continues to grow in other areas of the country as well. According to Edchoice.org, 32 states, including the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, offer some type of educational choice program.<sup>9</sup>

The demand for quality schools and dissatisfaction with public education continues to rise. In August 2022, a Gallup survey sought to gauge Americans’ satisfaction with public education.<sup>10</sup> Only 9% of parents surveyed responded that they are completely satisfied with public education in America. For those who were dissatisfied with public education, the primary concerns cited included outdated or poor curriculum (15%) and a lack of teaching the basics (11%). Other concerns included gender/sexual identity issues (4%) and critical race theory (3%). These data points align with much of the anecdotal evidence I hear from our LCMS principals when talking about families new to their schools. Given the general dissatisfaction with public schools in the United States, it is no surprise that families often inquire about enrollment at our LCMS schools.

Some of our schools are unable to or have chosen not to participate in a publicly funded voucher program. Those schools that have chosen to participate have seen significant financial benefits. In the city of Milwaukee, for example, if the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program were to be eliminated, it would not be hyperbole to say that most, if not all, of our LCMS elementary schools would close. This is most certainly a challenge moving forward. Any time government funds are involved, schools are at risk of the prevailing political winds. At this point, those political winds have not forced our schools to compromise our doctrinal beliefs. But we would be foolish to

think that we won't be faced with that dilemma in the future.

It should be no surprise that there are some within our LCMS that cringe at the thought of accepting public dollars to offset the cost of operating our schools. In an ideal world, there would be no obstacles, financial or otherwise, for families to enroll children in an LCMS school. The reality is that there are financial obstacles to attending our schools. Depending on what area of the country an elementary school is located in, tuition can sometimes exceed \$10,000. If publicly funded voucher programs are available, and a school chooses not to participate, how many children are missing out on a solid Lutheran Christian education? How many kids are not getting the opportunity to be in God's Word every day? It is worth noting that the earliest Reformers, including Luther and Melancthon, wanted to expand access to schools. They sought to eliminate obstacles that parents of "modest means" faced in sending their child(ren) to school. Additionally, they also sought to expand schooling options for female students.<sup>11</sup>

So, what is the alternative to public voucher systems? Is there an alternative? Funding our Lutheran Schools is critical to their survival. Many Lutheran churches continued to offer Lutheran day schools throughout the 1900's. These schools were primarily for the education of member children. As such, it was not uncommon to have a member tuition rate and a nonmember tuition rate. In some cases, the church charged no tuition for its member families. According to the 2021-22 LCMS School Statistical report,<sup>12</sup> only 20% of a LCMS school funding came from congregational support. 70% of the funding came via tuition and fees and the remaining 10% came from 3<sup>rd</sup> source funding (grants, etc.). The cost of educating a child only grows as they get older, making our LCMS high schools particularly difficult to maintain. If our LCMS high schools are going to survive, it is imperative that school leaders are actively seeking 3<sup>rd</sup> source funding.

## **Future – 2023 and Beyond**

### *Covid Enrollment Growth*

Despite the present challenges our Lutheran schools face, we have much to be hopeful about. The COVID-19 pandemic and the implementation of radical progressive thought in our public schools have led to an increase in many of our Lutheran schools. One case study here might be Trinity Lutheran School in Menasha, WI. Trinity Lutheran ended the 2019-2020 "COVID" school year with 40 students. By the start of the 2021-2022 school year, they had increased enrollment by 33%. These students came from the local public school district. The parents were unhappy with how the local district was handling Covid and chose to enroll their child(ren) at Trinity Lutheran. After one year at Trinity, all but one student returned. This school is tuition only – no vouchers, no state enrollment aid. When the parents experienced the Lutheran education that was imparted to their child(ren), they choose to remain. Stories like these are quite common in the South Wisconsin District, and I would assume throughout Synod as a whole.

### *Microschools*

The future of Lutheran schools, in my opinion, includes going "back to the future." Microschools are often described as present day one room schoolhouses. Others liken them to a variation of homeschooling. Typically, they have anywhere from 1-3 classrooms comprised of multiple age groups. Curriculum in microschools is often student-directed and project-based,

allowing for a more personalized and individualized learning experience. Microschools can be as small as 10 students or as large as 100, with many being around 50 total students. According to Synodical statistics, the average Lutheran school has just under 100 students, so in that regard many of our schools could already be described as "micro" based on enrollment. In Fall 2022, the South Wisconsin District approved funding for the creation of Lutheran Neighborhood Schools, a planned network of elementary microschools located in targeted neighborhoods in Milwaukee where a congregation is present, space is available, and the neighborhood has expressed a desire for a school. The Pacific Southwest District successfully launched a micro-high school as part of a broader network (LuTec) in the Fall of 2022. The purpose of LuTec is to provide "a cutting edge, technology based, Christian high school network, providing an individualized and flexible education to all learners, focusing on relevant knowledge and skills for work or advanced studies in preparation for a career and life in service to their communities." Especially coming out of the pandemic, microschools present a unique option for parents and it would be wise for some of our Lutheran schools to consider this option.

### *Classical Lutheran Education*

An interest in Classical Lutheran schools has also been noted. In the South Wisconsin District, Trinity Lutheran in West Allis, WI (an inner ring suburb of Milwaukee) under the leadership of Rev. Brandon Koble has been diligently planning the opening of a Classical Lutheran High School. The church operated a preschool that closed over a decade ago and saw an opportunity to provide another type of Lutheran education to the community. With the help of God, this school will open in Fall 2023. Just north of Milwaukee, in Port Washington, discussions have begun between three churches to open a Classical Lutheran elementary school. The renewed interest in a classical Lutheran school can be attributed to a variety of factors, including, but not limited to, concerns with curriculum changes in the public school and a more "traditional" mode of learning. Congregations who are interested in classical Lutheran education would do well to make use of the Consortium of Classical Lutheran Education.

### *Homeschools*

The growth of homeschools cannot be overlooked either. According to the National Home Education Research Institute, approximately 6% of school age children were homeschooled in 2021-2022. This represents nearly 3.1 million children. While it is true that the COVID pandemic accounted for some growth in the number of homeschooling families, the fact is that the homeschool population has grown between 2% and 8% per year even before the pandemic. While these families have opted to educate children outside of a traditional school environment, there are options for our traditional Lutheran schools to partner with these families in creative ways. Homeschool resource centers, tutoring, and extracurricular options are just a few ways in which traditional Lutheran schools can partner with our homeschooling community.

## **Conclusion**

Lutheran schools have a deep and meaningful legacy in the history of our church and our society. They are a treasure of our Synod. No relevant article on Lutheran schools would be complete without an acknowledgement that our Lutheran schools are on the front lines of the mission field. Parents send their children to our schools for a variety of reasons – safety, teach-

ing of good character or morals, smaller class sizes, etc. In my 8 years as a principal, I can only recall a handful of families who enrolled in our distinctly Lutheran school because of its doctrine. Across Synod, 27% of the students in our schools indicate that they have no church home. This is an opportunity not only for our schools, but for our congregations to reach out to students who are already in our buildings. In the 2021-2022 school year, Lutheran schools reported 1,794 baptisms. How many of these children would have been exposed to the Gospel without a Lutheran school? We don't know. But praise God that He used our schools to share the saving message of the Gospel with children! While the make-up of our students may have changed over the last 100 years, the opportunity and responsibility to educate our students in the grace and knowledge of Christ has never been greater or more important.

<sup>1</sup> Korcok, T., *Lutheran education: From Wittenberg to the Future*, 2011, St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p 142.

<sup>3</sup> Beck, *Lutheran Elementary Schools in the United States: A History of the Development of Parochial Schools and Synodical Educational Policies and Programs*, p. 48.

<sup>4</sup> August C. Stelhorn, *Schools of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod*, 1963, p. 67, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House.

<sup>5</sup> *Der Lutheraner*, XXIX (February 15, 1873), p. 76.

<sup>6</sup> Schranz, B., *Comparison of the Number of Candidates Requests for 2004-2022*.

<sup>7</sup> 2022 LCMS School Statistical Report (luthed.org).

<sup>8</sup> <https://schoolchoicewi.org/about/history/>

<sup>9</sup> Edchoice.org/123s

<sup>10</sup> <https://news.gallup.com/poll/399731/americans-satisfaction-education-low-side.aspx>

<sup>11</sup> Korcok, T., *Lutheran education: From Wittenberg to the Future*, 2011, St. Louis, MO: Concordia.

<sup>12</sup> 2022 LCMS School Statistical Report (luthed.org).

### Planting Confessional Lutheran Congregations

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into the depths of theology. Theology, however, is more than merely about books on our shelves or ink on a page. Our theology defines who we are and what we do.

To understand how liturgy fits into who we are as Confessional Lutheran Christians and how we practice liturgy, the basic question lies before us, "What is theology?" What follows is a quote from a paper written by Dr. Franz Pieper who, in turn, quotes an article from *Lehre und Wehre*, volume 14, entitled "What is theology?" written by C.F.W. Walther. Pieper writes:

We cannot describe Dr. Walther as a theologian without first showing in a general way what he understood by theology. In this matter he took decided issue with recent theology. (cf. the antitheses in *Lehre und Wehre* vol. 21, p. 162 ff.) Recent theology defines theology as the "ecclesiastical science of Christianity" or as the "scientific knowledge of faith" or even as the "scientific self-consciousness of the church." Recent theology says of the definition of the old Lutheran theologians, who conceived of theology in its proper sense and primary sense as a personal *habitus* of the theologian, namely as the sufficiency to lead the sinner to salvation by means of the Word of God, that it was indeed well meant but "scientifically" untenable.

Recent theology distinguishes between theology and the Church's proclamation of salvation. The latter is supposed

to present the Christian doctrines in so far as they are to be received by the Christian congregation through faith; theology on the other hand is said to have the function of "scientifically mediating" the congregation's faith to the thinking intellect. For this reason also recent theology abandons its "direct relation to salvation." The old Lutheran definition which consistently held to this relation is said to rest upon a confusion of "theology" with "the Church's proclamation of salvation."

Over against this Walther held with the old Lutheran theologians that theology is a *habitus practicus theosdotos*. In *Lehre und Wehre* vol. 14, p. 4 ff., he published a lengthy article entitled: "What is Theology? A contribution to the Prolegomena of Dogmatics," in which he begins with the following thesis: "Theology is the practical habitude, wrought by the Holy Ghost and drawn from the Word of God by means of prayer, study, and trial, vitally to know and to impart the truth revealed in the written Word of God unto salvation, to establish it therefrom, to expound, apply and defend it, in order to lead sinful man through faith in Christ unto eternal salvation."

Of this definition, Walther then proves that it is both Scriptural and also that given by most Lutheran teachers.

On the objective and subjective concepts of theology, or of theology conceived as *teaching* and as *habitus* of the theologian, Walther prefaces the following:

"Christian theology can be regarded in several ways, either subjectively, as something inhering in the soul of a man or objectively, as *teaching* which is presented orally or in writing. In the first case it is regarded absolutely, as it is in itself, apart from what may be done with it; in the other case it is regarded relatively, as it is in a certain respect, in accordance with a certain accidental characteristic with respect to a use which may be made of it. In the first case Christian theology is taken in its primary and proper, in the second case in its secondary and improper significance. Since theology must first be in the soul of a man before it can be taught by him or presented either orally or in writing, and since everything connected with theology must be judged in accordance with what it is in itself and in its essence, therefore in the thesis, according to the example of most dogmaticians in our church, the definition of theology regarded subjectively or concretely, i.e. as it inheres in a *concretum* or in a person, is given precedence." (*Lehre und Wehre*, vol. 14, p. 8 ff.)

Theology, subjectively regarded, is to Walther "not the sum total of certain intellectual acquisitions," but a habitude, a sufficiency or skill to perform certain functions. "The Holy Scripture," says he (*l.c.*, p.10), "although the word theology does not occur in it, itself specifies this as the category to which theology belongs. For since theology, subjectively considered, is what should be in those who are to administer the office of teachers in the church, we may therefore seek and recognize in the Biblical description of a *teacher* also a description of a true theologian."

Walther refers to Hebr. 5:12-14; II Cor. 3:5; II Tim 3:17. With regard to II Cor. 3:5 he remarks: "In this passage the Apostle, after he has exclaimed in 2:16 with regard to his teaching office: 'Who is sufficient for these things?' writes as follows: 'Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God.' So

that which in Heb. 5:14 is called a skill, (*habitus*, A.V.: 'use') is here called sufficiency. Now sufficiency implies not only a certain competence and skill by the observance of certain rules to produce a certain effect, but also at the same time a disposition of the soul, thus a *habitude*."

Walther lays special emphasis on the fact that theology is altogether practical, that it is not concerned with satisfying the thirst for knowledge but with leading sinners to salvation. Theology is for him not a "theoretical *habitude*," "which has knowledge itself for its goal and therewith rests content (*l.c.*, p. 73) but a "*practical habitude*."<sup>1</sup>

Rightly understood, our Confessional Lutheran theology is *habitus practicus*—a practical way of life and living.<sup>2</sup>

Considering *habitus practicus* in conjunction with the "historic liturgy," it is not difficult to see that there is both a confessional and a practical relationship between what we confess and what we practice in the Divine Service, and even beyond the Divine Service. To put it succinctly, our confession as Lutheran Christians can be seen in what we do as we gather for "divine service." (From my perspective "divine service" language is more fitting for Confessional Lutherans than merely the word "worship.")

Specifically, our Lutheran "divine service" is defined and explained by three Latin terms which we have all heard and perhaps debated previously: *lex orandi*, *lex credendi*, and *lex vivendi*. That is, "the rule of praying/worship is the rule of believing and also is the rule of living." Or one might flip the first two: "the rule of believing is the rule of praying/worship and is also the rule of living."

Regarding *lex orandi* there was a time in our circles when a person could attend any congregation of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and would immediately recognize the Lutheran liturgy. It was *The Lutheran Hymnal*, either page 5 or 15, with few variations from congregation to congregation. We celebrated that. We rejoiced in that. It was part of our confession and part of our Lutheran identity.

However, times have changed, and we have lost our liturgical consistency. Now in our "enlightenment" we have many congregations that still cling to the historic liturgy, as well as congregations that have blended services, and congregations that are completely contemporary. Blended being defined in multiple ways, usually with newer songs, but hopefully with a semblance of the *ORDO*. (*Ordo* being the basic outline or elements of Lutheran divine service.) Contemporary being defined by a freewheeling approach to worship; a band up front on a stage, more often than not with *no pulpit* and *no altar*. The pastor wears street clothes; no robe. Such a "worship" service bears little, if any, resemblance to the historic liturgy.

It is more than merely interesting to note that those who have wandered away from the historic divine service, have also, and perhaps necessarily so, often wandered into the neo-evangelical<sup>3</sup> world (or as it has been historically defined, into Crypto-Calvinism<sup>4</sup> which has always been a temptation for Lutheran Christians).<sup>5</sup> Contemporary worship congregations, often and unwittingly, become training grounds for the neo-evangelical world and all that it believes and practices. Such is the dark side of *lex orandi*, *lex credendi*, and *lex vivendi*.

Recently, and anecdotally, the pastor of a contemporary worship LCMS congregation voiced a frustration. He didn't

understand what was happening in his parish. His lament: they were teaching their people to be Lutheran, but many, as they moved along, were joining the near-by high-powered neo-evangelical congregation. He could not understand why.

My response: Could it be that with their contemporary worship format, such pastors are actually teaching the Lutheran Christians in their midst that there is essentially no difference between Lutherans and the neo-evangelicals??

Theology aside, what God's people saw was that the worship formats between their "Lutheran" church and the neo-evangelical church were identical. Completely contemporary. No altar. No pulpit. No baptismal font. A band on a stage. Entertainment oriented. The Sacrament was viewed as something we do for God, rather than the Sacrament it is. Those leaving felt at home in the neo-evangelical congregation because that is what they experienced in their "Lutheran" congregation. As they visited congregations which practiced the historic liturgy, they felt like outsiders, outliers. They were never taught the wonder or the beauty of what the historic liturgy actually is. How sad!

It is time for us as Confessional Lutheran Christians to view the historic liturgy as a matter of confession, and as a unifying blessing. After all, the historic liturgy defines who we are as Confessional Lutheran Christians. To repeat for emphasis, the historic liturgy is a matter of: *lex orandi*, *lex credendi*, and *lex vivendi*. That is, "the rule of praying/worship is the rule of believing and also is the rule of living." Or one might even flip the first two: "the rule of believing is the rule of praying/worship and is also the rule of living."

Consider the historic *ORDO* of our liturgy:

- Invocation: "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit"
- Confession of sins and Absolution for the repentant sinner
- The Collect, the prayer of the day which dovetails with the Scripture lessons
- Lessons from Holy Scripture based upon our liturgical calendar. Each year reviewing the life of Christ
- The sermon. Law and Gospel. Sin and Grace. Contrition and Repentance
- The Confession of Faith. Our historic, ecumenical Confessions
- Prayers of the Church, and for the Church
- The blessed Sacrament which many of our congregations now practice Sunday after Sunday. "Given and shed for you for the remission of sins."
- The blessing

Contemporary worship formats oftentimes move through their service with a general theme that resembles a Methodist approach to worship and proclamation, *viz.* living better lives.<sup>6</sup> Oh, Jesus is mentioned but rarely with the vicarious force of Augsburg IV:

1] Also they teach that men cannot be justified before God by their own strength, merits, or works, but are freely justified for 2] Christ's sake, through faith, when they believe that they are received into favor, and that their sins are forgiven for Christ's sake, who, by His death, has made

satisfaction for our sins. 3] This faith God imputes for righteousness in His sight. Rom. 3 and 4.<sup>7</sup>

From the viewpoint of the neo-evangelicals worship is something that the believer does for God. Therein lies the essence of the theology of glory. Luther defines the theology of glory this way in the Heidelberg Disputation:

*Thesis 21:*

*A theologian of glory calls evil good and good evil. A theologian of the cross calls the thing what it actually is.*

This is clear: He who does not know Christ does not know God hidden in suffering. Therefore he prefers works to suffering, glory to the cross, strength to weakness, wisdom to folly, and, in general, good to evil. These are the people whom the apostle calls “enemies of the cross of Christ” [Phil. 3:18], for they hate the cross and suffering and love works and the glory of works. Thus they call the good of the cross evil and the evil of a deed good. God can be found only in suffering and the cross, as has already been said. Therefore the friends of the cross say that the cross is good and works are evil, for through the cross works are destroyed and the old Adam, who is especially edified by works, is crucified. It is impossible for a person not to be puffed up by his good works unless he has first been deflated and destroyed by suffering and evil until he knows that he is worthless and that his works are not his but God’s.<sup>8</sup>

Over against the theology of glory, as confessional Lutherans we cling to the theology of the cross. Our Lutheran Divine Service brings us the gifts that our Lord has prepared for us by His life, by His suffering, by His dying and His resurrection. These are gifts that we do not and cannot earn; but which are shared with us by a loving God. In the Lutheran Divine Service our Lord Jesus comes to bless us with His presence as He comes to us *hidden* in Word and Sacrament. Our Lord tells the Old Testament Children of Israel: “In every place where I cause my name to be remembered I will come to you and bless you.” (Exodus 20:24)

The Introduction to the *Lutheran Service Book* explains:

Our Lord is the Lord who serves. Jesus Christ came into the flesh not to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many. On the cross He offered Himself as a spotless sacrifice for the sin of the whole world. Through His perfect life and death, He accomplished forgiveness and salvation for all before the Father in heaven. By His empty tomb and ascension into heaven, He declared His victory over sin and death to all the world. Seated now at the Father’s right hand, He graciously serves His Church with the gifts of salvation. On the Last Day, He will come again to gather His elect from every nation to celebrate the feast that will have no end.

Our Lord serves us today through His holy Word and Sacraments. Through these means, He comes among us to deliver His forgiveness and salvation, freeing us from our sins and strengthening us for service to one another and to the world. At Holy Baptism, He puts His name upon us, pours His Holy Spirit into our hearts, and rescues us from sin, death, and the devil. Through Holy Absolution, He pronounces His forgiveness again and again. With His holy Word, written in Scripture and preached into our ears, He daily proclaims His abiding love for us through all the joys

and sorrows of life in this world. In His Holy Supper, He gives us His own body and blood to eat and drink as a priceless gift to nourish and strengthen us in both body and soul.

The Lord’s service calls forth our service—in sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving to Him and in loving service to one another. Having been called, gathered, enlightened, and sanctified by the Holy Spirit, we receive His gifts with thankfulness and praise. With psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, we joyfully confess all that God has done for us, declaring the praises of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light. Our song joins with the song of every saint from every age, the new song of Christ’s holy people, declaring: “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!” (Rev. 5:12)<sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Franz Pieper - translated by W. H. McLaughlin, “Dr. C.F.W. Walther As Theologian” from the *Orthodox Lutheran Theologian*, vol. 1, no. 2, February 1953, p. 24ff.; *Lehre und Wehre*, 1888, pp. 97-10.

<sup>2</sup> WELS: “Preach the Word,” vol. 2, no. 2, 1998. “That dogmatics is a habitus practicus means that theology is as much a way of life as it is a theological system. Our dogmatics notes say, “Theology . . . is an aptitude rooted in the new life of faith.” Faith in turn is always a lived reality. Though your people are not likely to be familiar with the Latin term, they will have come to appreciate that our faith is a lived reality—especially when we are preaching.”

<sup>3</sup> Neo-evangelism is defined “as a philosophy which promotes tolerance choosing not to name or denounce false doctrine or false teachers due to a false view of tolerance and love.” In many denominations sin is no longer sin, grace is no longer grace (as we define it). Tolerance of the worst sins is accepted and condoned. Herman Sasse comments: “The lack of full understanding of the greatness of sin is the reason why the ancient Church and the Church of the East never reached a *theologia crucis*.” Sasse, Hermann. *Letters to Lutheran Pastors*: vol. 1, p. 389, Concordia Publishing House, Kindle Edition.

<sup>4</sup> Definition of Crypto-Calvinism: “Philip Melancthon was the father of Crypto-Calvinists (name derived from *Gk. krypto*, “hide”). His followers tried to suppress Luther’s views and replace them with Calvin’s views while professing loyalty to Lutheranism.” from the *Lutheran Cyclopedia*. It still happens today.

<sup>5</sup> Some who have fallen into this neo-evangelical snare have even commented how the Lord has spoken directly to them. Thereby these Lutherans deny our confessional subscription to the Smalcald Articles: “**10**] Therefore we ought and must constantly maintain this point, that God does not wish to deal with us otherwise than through the spoken Word and the Sacraments. **11**] It is the devil himself whatsoever is extolled as Spirit without the Word and Sacraments.” *Concordia Triglotta—English: The Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, (1996), p. 497. Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House.

<sup>6</sup> “Self-preoccupation is a curse of preaching. As the purpose of preaching is to call people out of self-centeredness into self-surrender and self-giving, so also the call of the Lord invites us to let go of ourselves and to preach with the abandon of self-forgetfulness.” Lowell Erdahl, *Preaching for the People*, p. 93

<sup>7</sup> *Concordia Triglotta—English: The Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, 1996, (electronic ed., p. 45), Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House.

<sup>8</sup> Luther, M. (1999). *Luther’s Works*, vol. 31: *Career of the Reformer I*, J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald, & H. T. Lehmann, Eds., vol. 31, p. 53, Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

<sup>9</sup> *LCMS Lutheran Service Book: Pew Edition*, Kindle Locations pp. 286-297, Concordia Publishing House, Kindle Edition.

*Part two of this presentation will appear in the November, 2023 issue of The Clarion*

# LUTHERAN CONCERNS ASSOCIATION ANNUAL CONFERENCE

## Monday, January 15, 2024

**“Do not be conformed to this world.” Romans 12:2 (NKJV)**

The Conference will be held on Monday, January 15, 2024, on the Concordia Theological Seminary campus at Fort Wayne, Indiana.

**Dine with the Speakers and the LCA Board of Directors!** On Sunday evening, January 14, at 5:30 pm the Dining Hall Mezzanine will be reserved for a private dinner for LCA Conference attendees. Be sure to reserve your place right away on the form below. LCA Dinners afford attendees the opportunity to relax and enjoy fellowship with other participants at the Conference. The Sunday night dinner will consist of Beef Tenderloin and Chicken Marsala served buffet style with salad, vegetable, potato, dessert, and beverage. A cafeteria lunch is included for full-day attendees. Half-day attendees may attend the cafeteria lunch by remitting \$10, as noted on the registration form below.

Monday night, January 15, a special Seminary Dinner to honor the late Walter C. Dissen will be held. Details are forthcoming.

### CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

**MORNING SESSION:**

06:45 am: Registration Opens  
 07:30 am – 07:40 am: **LCA Opening Devotion**  
 The Rev. Dr. William Weinrich  
 07:40 am – 07:50 am: **Welcome from the LCA** (Mr. Mark Franke) **and Greetings from the Indiana District**  
 -----  
 07:50 am – 08:35 am: **The Concordia University System: Opportunities and Challenges**  
 The Rev. Dr. Dean Wenthe  
 08:35 am – 08:50 am: Questions and Answers  
 -----  
 08:50 am – 09:35 am: **Luther Classical College: Why Now?**  
 The Rev. Dr. Christian Preus  
 09:35 am – 09:50 am: Questions and Answers  
 -----  
 09:50 am – 11:15 am: **Break for Chapel Service/Coffee with CTSFW Students & Faculty**  
 -----  
 11:15 am – 12:00 pm: **Evangelism in the LCMS**  
 The Rev. Dr. Ken Schurb  
 12:00 pm – 12:15 pm: Questions and Answers  
 -----  
 12:15 pm – 01:30 pm: **\*\*\* LUNCH \*\*\***

**AFTERNOON SESSION:**

01:30 pm – 02:15 pm: **Demographic Challenges and Faithful Responses for Lutheran Congregations**  
 The Rev. Heath Curtis  
 02:15 pm – 02:30 pm: Questions and Answers  
 -----  
 02:30 pm – 03:15 pm: **Recruiting Pastors and the Set Apart to Serve Program**  
 The Rev. Dr. James Banec  
 03:15 pm – 03:30 pm: Questions and Answers  
 -----  
 03:30 pm – 03:45 pm: **\*\*\* BREAK\*\*\***  
 -----  
 03:45 pm – 04:25 pm: **Panel Discussion** (All Speakers)  
 -----  
 04:25 pm – 04:30 pm: **Closing Remarks**  
 -----  
 04:45 pm – 5:45 pm: **Annual LCA Meeting** – for LCA Members  
 -----  
 06:00 pm: **Seminary Dinner to honor Walter C. Dissen**  
 Details to be announced  
 -----  
 08:00 pm: **LCA Board Meeting**

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*cut here*

### 2024 LCA Conference Registration Form

Concordia Theological Seminary – Fort Wayne, Indiana

Name _____	Annual LCA Membership Fee (\$60) enclosed _____
Address _____	Paid LCA Member Conference registration fee (\$110) encl. _____
Phone _____	Paid LCA Member half-day registration fee (\$44) encl. _____
Email _____	Non-Member Conference registration fee (\$120) encl. _____
	Non-Member half-day registration fee (\$49) encl. _____
	Seminary Students & Personnel registration fees waived _____
	Cafeteria lunch for half-day attendees if desired (\$10) encl. _____
	Dinner, Sunday, January 14, 5:30 pm (\$55) encl. _____
	<b>Total Enclosed:</b> _____

**Check box for Dinner on Sunday, January 14.**  
 Buffet (\$55): beef tenderloin and chicken marsala (price includes tax)

*Even if you pay at the door, please send in your registration form.*  
 Please indicate any dietary restrictions. If your plans change, email [jpanzigrau@comcast.net](mailto:jpanzigrau@comcast.net) as soon as possible.

Make check payable to the Lutheran Concerns Association. Please detach this registration form and mail to The Lutheran Concerns Association, 149 Glenview Drive, New Kensington, PA 15068-4921

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Lutheran Concerns Association  
September 2023

### ***The Lutheran Clarion***

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Rev. Jerome Panzigrau  
Dr. John F. Lang

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Faithful Lutherans who are members of LCMS congregations are invited to submit articles of approximately 500 words for consideration. Inquiries are welcome. Manuscripts will be edited. Views and judgments expressed in articles are the author's own and do not necessarily represent those of LCA. Please email articles to Dr. John F. Lang ([johnflang1000@gmail.com](mailto:johnflang1000@gmail.com); 419.849.2610).

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