

# Lutheran Clarion



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## Lutheran Perspective on Revitalization

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“It’s easier to give birth than to raise the dead.” That adage, still popular in some church planting circles, is defective in two significant ways. First, it implies that a congregation in decline is either dead or dying – that it has no life. Second, it views both church planting and revitalization as human efforts. A Lutheran perspective of revitalization rejects both of these errors.

The ongoing decline of Christian congregations in the United States and Canada has made revitalization (also called “church renewal”) a topic of great interest among church leaders. The questions surrounding what we can do to strengthen existing congregations have become of greater interest and concern as the decline of congregations has accelerated during the past decade or so. With many different Christian traditions wrestling with the challenges of revitalization, it is not surprising that poor doctrine has fueled some very bad ideas about revitalization.

In contrast to the doctrinally flawed concepts, a Lutheran understanding of revitalization is centered in the work of the Holy Spirit – He who alone can “give birth” and “raise the dead.” 1 Corinthians 3:5-10 provides a solid foundation for understanding our role in revitalization. Paul explained to the church at Corinth that he had planted and Apollos had watered, but the growth was completely the work of the Lord. God gives the growth – whether we are planting a new congregation or revitalizing an existing one. As the Augsburg Confession puts things, “The Holy Spirit works faith when and where He wills in those who hear the Gospel” (AC V). In other words, He alone “gives birth” and “raises the dead.” Our role is to “plant and water.”

Where then should we be planting and watering? It is enticing to focus our planting and watering in new and fresh fields rather than soil that has been worked with little to show for our past efforts. But the fields where we currently labor are just as ripe for harvest as the new fields. The decline of the Church in North America may be problematic, but it has also created tremendous opportunities for the sharing of the Gospel. There is a great need for revitalization not only of our congregations but also of the communities in which we have a presence. For several reasons, many of those communities are unlikely locations for starting new congregations. Revitalization is the best avenue for ensuring (insofar as we can ensure) the continued presence of a local pulpit and altar for the care of those gathered into Christ’s Church and for reaching those who are lost and perishing.

There are good practical reasons for revitalizing existing congregations, but there is one overarching reason for doing so. It is found in the understanding that each congregation is an instance

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## Building a Culture of Church Work Formation and Recruitment

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Building a culture of church work formation and recruitment has been a primary focus of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) since its inception in 1847. In the original 1894 LCMS Articles of Incorporation, the fourth of seven objectives and purposes of Synod called for the Synod “to support the establishment and maintenance of theological seminaries, colleges, universities, and other institutions of learning to train ministers of religion—ordained, ministers of religion—commissioned, and laity for service in the Evangelical Lutheran Church.” In the revised 1920 LCMS Constitution, the third objective called for “the training of ministers and teachers for service in the Lutheran Church.” At present, the 2023 LCMS Constitution, in its third objective, calls for the Synod to “recruit and train pastors, teachers, and other professional church workers and provide opportunity for their continuing growth.”

For over 177 years, the LCMS has been focused on *building a culture* of church work formation and recruitment in our homes, congregations, schools, circuits, districts, Synod and entities. The purpose of this focus is to provide our congregations and schools with full-time workers who will preach, teach and proclaim the Word of Christ to God’s people — from conception to death — for saving faith and eternal salvation (Rom. 10:17).

We will begin with 1920 (over 100 years ago), when LCMS convention proceedings were first printed in English. Several conventions included “Juvenile Matters,” which reported on the care and activity of “young people.” The 1923 Juvenile Matters reported that “not enough work has been done among our confirmed youth ... The young people were not really familiarized with the Bible and were not systematically encouraged and educated to take an active part in the work of the Lord and to offer and give active service.” This may very well have been intended to describe the active service of youth in the congregation but not to exclude full-time church work service in the future.

A common theme throughout Synod’s history is captured in this 1926 convention report: “The General School Board urges Synod to continue faithfully and emphatically to further Christian education of the youth by establishing and maintaining Christian

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## Building a Culture of Church Work Formation and Recruitment

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day-schools.” Through research and surveys, *Set Apart to Serve* (SAS), the current LCMS church work recruitment initiative, has identified those adults who most influence our youth to consider full-time church work. These adults are pastors, Lutheran school teachers, Directors of Christian Education, other church workers, parents and laity. These same influential adults are named throughout LCMS history, as illustrated in this same 1926 report:

That wherever Christian day-schools are found, the congregations, pastors, teachers, and officers of the congregations be encouraged zealously and faithfully, throughout the year, to endeavor to bring even more children under the influence of the Christian training afforded by a Christian day school.

Immediately following this statement is the resolution “That constantly many pious and gifted boys be encouraged to enter our teachers’ colleges in order that a sufficient number of teachers may at all times be available.”

Several SAS themes appeared in the 1929 report concerning church work formation and recruitment. One SAS theme is the joyful sacrifice of those serving in church work vocations. It was resolved “That we heartily commend congregations, pastors, and teachers for the faithfulness with which they have labored and the *sacrifices* [emphasis added] which they have made on behalf of this cause.” The 1929 convention also reiterated the shortage and need of church workers, stating, “[W]e deplore the fact that during the last decades the growth of our school system has not kept pace with the growth of our Synod, that particularly in some sections of Synod our schools are not prospering, but are at a standstill or losing ground.”

The 1932 convention, in response to the Great Depression, resolved “That the matter of procuring positions for pastors and teachers now waiting for a call be referred to the President of the Synod for consultation with the District Presidents, mission boards, and other agencies of Synod, with a view to ameliorating as far as possible the existing conditions and hardships.”

By 1935, the LCMS was expressing themes similar to SAS, resolving that Synod continue to urge pastors, teachers, and parents to send an adequate number of boys to our teachers’ colleges, since our schools will suffer if teachers are not available for them and since a drop in the enrollment of our teachers’ colleges may cause a repetition of past experiences, when there was a serious shortage of teachers.

SAS themes include identifying influential adults who encourage youth to consider full-time church work: pastors, teachers, parents and laity. Encouraging and raising up a new generation of church workers from our youth is already identified in this 1935 resolution.

The second-career focus of SAS addresses the two most immediate church worker needs: Lutheran school teachers and pastors. Several conventions sounded this same call. The 1938 convention reported that “the teacher-candidate situation is not the same as that of the ministerial candidates. We have had no oversupply of teachers. Our teacher candidates are in regular positions, and, in addition, the demand for student teachers from both teachers’ colleges [River Forest and Seward] continues to be greater than the supply.”

The United States entered WWII in 1941. In his 1941 Synod convention speech, LCMS President Rev. John W. Behnken reported, “Synod has requested the College of Presidents to direct the preparation of a list of women teachers in our schools ... Because of our national emergency, on account of which young men have been summoned for military training, much additional work was assigned to our Army and Navy Commission.” From this report, Committee 1 wrote, “The increased pressure brought upon young men for serving the country in national defense will likely increase the demand for women teachers ... In view of this situation, Concordia Teachers’ College [River Forest] must face an increase in the enrollment of women for some time to come.”

The 1944 convention continued to sound the alarm of a teacher shortage. The Seminaries and Colleges report states, “The shortage of day schoolteachers to which attention was called by our representatives at the Synod in Fort Wayne [1941 Convention] has become alarming, and, if it is not relieved, will cause irreparable damage to some of our schools. In order to turn out trained teachers more rapidly, emergency measures were undertaken with the co-operation of Synod’s Boards.” Later, the report states:

For the past five years the total enrollment at Concordia Teachers College, River Forest, has stood between 364 and the present figure, 430 ... the growing shortage of Christian day school teachers in the field, which has necessitated an ever stronger recruitment of students in an effort to meet Synod’s need, has also contributed to the high enrollment.

In sum, the teacher shortage was met with a recruitment effort.

However, the “Elementary Education” report bears out another factor — pastors who also serve as teachers. The report states, “Unfortunately with the revival of the school spirit in 1941, a shortage of teachers made itself felt, and it has become more acute from year to year. Before this the shortage had been covered to a great extent by the *ministerial candidates* [emphasis added] teaching in schools, candidates who have now been absorbed by the ministry. Hence, the shortage of teachers was not due to a sudden numerical increase in teaching positions, for the number of instructors from 1939 to 1942 increased only by 14.”

Another SAS theme was already identified in this same 1944 report — worker wellness. The report states, “The shortage [of teachers] appears to be due to a deplorable loss in our teaching personnel, owing to low salaries and other conditions, especially to the practice of temporary employment of teacher graduates, which in turn, reduced the enrollment at our teachers’ colleges.” Today, SAS, the LCMS Council of Presidents and LCMS Concordia Plans Services is teaming up with the LCMS Office of National Mission’s Worker Wellness initiative to address ongoing issues concerning worker wellness, especially encouraging the laity in our congregations and schools to care for their church workers.

The 1944 convention continued to identify pastors, church workers, laity and districts as the most influential people in forming and recruiting youth and adults for full-time church work. The convention took the following action: “Whereas, our school system is confronted with real danger, due to the shortage of teachers; therefore be it resolved, that special efforts be put forth to gain consecrated and gifted students for our teachers’ college; and that we request District Boards of Christian Education to appeal immediately to every pastor and teacher in their respective Districts to supply the name of all men and women who might be able to

serve as emergency substitute teachers.”

The need for church workers was reiterated also by the Missions Committee. Urgent language is used, articulating that the shortage of “manpower” impedes the proclamation of the Gospel. Under the heading of “manpower,” this committee wrote, “Not so long ago we battled with the problem of having up to 400 candidates not permanently called. The war has changed this picture. About 240 of our pastors are serving as chaplains or as service center pastors. Hence we now have a shortage, and this shortage is acute. There is not a Mission Board which is not affected. Many of our Missions Boards have important vacancies. New and important mission developments are in dire need of pastors and teachers. At present there is a scramble to get missionaries at all cost. And at times it seems as if little thought is given to the question whether the removal of a given pastor or a missionary to another field means the breaking down of work which during many years of consecrated effort gradually developed.”

Once again, the 1944 convention called upon the responsibility of the districts, boards and congregations, stating, “Every District, every Mission Board, every congregation, is trying its utmost to fortify its front and get the necessary manpower ... Then, too, the qualification of the pastor or missionary and his leadership in his district and circuit dare not be overlooked.”

The 1944 convention even called upon the *retired pastors* by asking, “Will not some of the retired pastors still able to do part-time duty come to the assistance of the Church and help in this time of acute shortage of manpower? The King’s business demands haste. The Gospel shall be preached to all nations. Even now it is preached to the far corners of the earth. And then shall the end come.”

The urgent cry for church workers continued into the 1947 convention. The “Seminaries and Colleges” report states that “the net gain in [teacher] graduates was comparatively small, since so many of these students did a year of supply teaching, thus postponing their graduation.” The 1944 convention called upon Districts to provide names for “emergency teachers.” The 1947 convention reported, “Another measure used to alleviate the teacher shortage is the partial training of emergency teachers during the six week’s Summer Session ... It is not reasonable to expect that one or two summers of training, no matter how well done, will produce the kind of teachers which our average school needs, but the practice of emergency training will have to be continued as long as the extreme shortage lasts. Fortunately, some of the emergency teachers have been returning in successive summers, and a number of them have entered the regular teacher-training program during the school year.”

The report continues:

Meanwhile Concordia Teachers College students and graduates have done their share to alleviate the teacher shortage. During the past three years our school has supplied the following groups from its regular student body:

	Graduates	Student Teachers	Total
1944.....	45	62	107
1945.....	47	64	111
1946.....	36	84	120

The total number of regular and emergency teachers of all kinds noted above have been trained and supplied during the

three years was 148, 208 and 208 respectively.

The permanent solution of the teacher shortage does not lie in the training of emergency teachers, but in providing a complete and thorough training for larger numbers of men and women who will devote their professional lives to service in the Lord’s kingdom. The Lord Himself has made the hearts of many young people willing to prepare for His work ... only thus can we hope to meet permanently the ever-increasing demands for greater numbers of teachers and for better trained ones.

This report echoes the messaging of *Set Apart to Serve*. It communicates the church’s need for teachers and church workers and urges the church to raise up a new generation of church workers in the recruitment of her youth. The following is an excerpt from the 1947 “Teacher Shortage” resolution.

Whereas, There exists a great teacher shortage at present, to the detriment of our school system; and

Whereas, This shortage may be increased if efforts are made at school expansion; and

Whereas, A judicious recruiting of boys and girls for the teaching profession in our schools is a problem which is always with us; therefore be it

Resolved, That Synod be asked to provide for a standing committee for (a) the purpose of studying trends in school enrollments; ... (c) the purpose of proposing plans for the judicious recruiting of boys and girls for our Teachers Colleges...

Through research, SAS has learned that those who have the most significant influence on our youth to consider full-time church work are pastors, teachers and other commissioned workers, parents and laity. SAS advocates that Christians in general, and Christian youth in particular, be encouraged to consider full-time church work especially by formation and development in the home by Christian parents and family. The 1947 “Teacher Shortage” resolution also expresses that the “Christian home has always been the bulwark of the Church,” stating also that “the war and its aftermath have contributed to a further breakdown of the American home.” It therefore resolved “that every parish of the Synod be urged to plan a constructive program to strengthen the Christian home.” This resolution communicated to the church that Christian parents should teach the faith at home and be strong influences on their children, especially when it comes to consider full-time church work.

During this time, the Synod was experiencing a growing number of schools. The Synod had grown from a handful of European Lutherans in 1847 to 1,517,231 baptized members in 1946. 1946–1964 was the generation of the Baby Boomers. By 1950, the Synod had two seminaries and a Concordia College in Chicago, Bronxville, Wisconsin, Nebraska, Portland, Selma, St. Paul, and Texas.

And yet, the 1950 convention sounded the same alarms. The “Seminaries and Colleges” report brought a familiar-sounding resolution before the convention. The preamble of the resolution stated the 1947 convention in Chicago “resolved to do something toward providing an adequate supply of synodically trained teachers for our Christian day schools.” The 1950 resolution resolved:

1. That we encourage the teachers’ colleges to continue to give special attention to enrolling more male students;
2. That all Districts and all congregations in each District be urged to assist in providing an adequate and geographically



well-distributed supply of male students for our teachers' colleges;

3. That we study trends in school enrollments;
4. That we propose plans for the judicious recruiting of students for our teachers' colleges;

This resolution also stated that President Behnken had appointed a committee under the chairmanship of Rev. F. A. Schwertfeger to address the church worker shortage: "[The committee] met five times. It has consciously tried to carry out the duties assigned to it."

The committee began its report by asking these questions:

1. Admitting that there has been a serious teacher shortage in our school system, is there reason to believe that this shortage is of a permanent nature? Is there danger of an overproduction of teachers?
2. Assuming that there is at this time an urgent shortage of synodically trained teachers, particularly men, how can Synod most economically and most flexibly meet the present and probable future needs? To what extent and in what manner should additional faculties be provided in order to meet the need for more synodically trained teachers?
3. What steps should be taken to recruit more students, especially young men, for the teaching profession in our Church?

In addition, the committee studied trends in national birth rate, public school enrollment, infant Baptisms, and enrollment in our church schools. The report states, "The committee believes it has valid reasons for concluding that enrollment trends in Lutheran elementary and high schools will continue on their upward trend on the basis of statistics the committee studied in the teacher production, the teacher demand, and the teacher shortage over a long period of time in our Church." It then concluded "that our teacher shortage has existed for many years; that it is acute at the present time; and that it will continue, or grow worse, in the future."

Yet, the 1950 convention made the following recommendations:

1. That the recruitment program for future teachers be intensified through pre-teacher-training courses at our preparatory schools.
2. That the [Synod] President be asked to issue a call, in our periodicals, for students to prepare for the teaching profession in Lutheran schools.
3. That pastors and teachers be asked to be on the lookout for promising students and to direct them to River Forest or Seward, or, if they are of high school age, to the nearest preparatory college of our Church or to the nearest Lutheran high school.
4. That the names of all such students be sent at once to either River Forest or Seward.
5. That each District Board for Parish Education be asked to appoint a student recruiting officer for their District.
6. That Districts have full-time Superintendents of Education [that] will create an awareness in our congregations of their responsibility to provide expanded facilities for Christian elementary education.

At many previous conventions, most of the attention focused on the shortage of Lutheran school teachers. But at the 1950 convention, there were renewed rumblings of a pastor shortage as well. It was stated that "the growth studies which have been prepared by

the Board show that Synod will need approximately 200 seminary graduates annually after the next decade," yet expected graduates from both seminaries in June 1950 was only 125 graduates.

In the continued church work shortage discussion, the 1953 convention discussed the need to build and update facilities in which our church work students would be educated. The "Seminaries and Colleges" report stated that it "recommends that 65% of all 'Conquest for Christ' funds (over \$12,000,000) be appropriated for this purpose and, unless the convention provides other means of financing capital improvements and additions, that a minimum of \$500,000 annually be included in the regular budget for ministerial and teacher training." The report continued,

If Synod wishes to undertake the increased training program to relieve the critical shortage of women teachers and to assure itself that ministerial graduates from preparatory schools can be accommodated in the Senior College or in the St. Louis Seminary, it will be necessary to authorize the Board for Higher Education to deal with emergencies and the Board of Directors to furnish borrowed, or other, funds as required.

This report makes it incumbent upon the church to provide modernized buildings and equipment for the important mission of the church to form and educate her full-time church workers.

An extensive report was given to the 1956 convention concerning a church worker shortage. Several themes discussed at this mid-century mark of our Synod are also major themes of *Set Apart to Serve*.

The report cited several statistics concerning the shortage of pastors and teachers. The Seminaries and Colleges Committee reported that 8% of the Synod's parishes in North America were vacant. Furthermore, in the coming decade, there would be a need for 2,955 pastors for home missions, assistant pastors, pastors in special fields, replacement needs and covering the existing shortage of 342 pastors. The committee also reported that "a sharp decrease has taken place in the number of pastors who re-enter, presumably because of the pastor shortage has already brought back those who can be brought back." The re-entry number of pastors from 1948-1954 was 138. Concerning the teacher shortage, the committee noted that "although teachers enter the system in even larger numbers, Synod's supply is still inadequate ... Because the teacher need is great, quantitative considerations have priority at this time; but quality considerations cannot be dismissed from study."

In the ongoing discussion concerning the church worker shortage, the Synod recognized and encouraged the importance of *district and congregation* personnel to be integrally involved in church worker recruitment. The 1956 convention is not without exception: "the number of students for the ministry [should] be promoted more aggressively in numbers as well as in quality and that the Districts, congregations, and organizations within the Synod implement recruitment by expanding student and scholarship aid." It was also recommended that "All Districts maintain an Indigent Student Fund" and that "the annual amount of aid which students derive from this fund averages higher than the national average for an undergraduate scholarship." It was therefore resolved "that the recruitment of ministerial students and teacher training students be encouraged and promoted both in quantity and in quality, and that Districts, congregations, and the organizations within Synod be encouraged to implement the effort of expanding student and

scholarship aid.”

Through extensive research, *Set Apart to Serve* and the Office of National Mission continue to hear that the wellness of our current church workers affects the recruitment of new church workers. The 1956 convention spoke about this concern. The Seminaries and Colleges committee reported that “In the past five years, an annual average of 408 women teachers ‘resigned.’ Their number accounts for 82% of all resignations ... Marriage is undoubtedly the major cause. Economic reasons and ill health may also be assumed to be chief causes.” The convention adopted “That congregations be urged to hold their teachers by improving salary, living, and working conditions, by extending the tenure of women teachers, and by enabling teachers to secure additional training.”

A new Lutheran teacher theme is introduced at the 1956 convention concerning “rostered teachers.” The committee reported that “At one time Synod trained nearly all of its teachers; today it is training less than half of the teachers.” Also, “at one time Synod’s teachers were almost exclusively men; today woman teachers constitute 52% of the teaching force.” The report continued,

How does Synod obtain its teachers? The primary source is the teacher-training institutions which Synod maintains at River Forest and Seward. The 1955 enrollment at River Forest was 664; at Seward, 544. As the teacher need made itself felt, other colleges that were chiefly for the preparation of pastors were asked to introduce courses in teacher training. ... The second source of teachers is Lutheran men and women who have not been trained in Synod’s colleges. Some received their training at secular schools but chose to teach in Synod’s schools ... There was a time when Synod supplied all teachers, and congregations applied directly to Synod to procure all teachers they needed. Today the congregations are compelled to secure somewhat more than one half of the annual teacher need on their own initiative.”

The committee then recommended that

Regarding teachers who are not professionally trained at its institutions, Synod urges ‘that congregations engage only such men and women as teachers in their schools as have been trained in Synod’s teachers colleges or have the equivalent qualifications both with respect to character and professional training’ (*Handbook*, 7.05, c).

Synod is thus increasingly compelled to concern itself with a larger and more highly qualified supply of synodically trained teachers as well as with the supply that is not furnished by the annual assignment of graduate and undergraduate teachers.” This is an important situation which continues to the present, which begs the question of Lutheran identity and ethos in our Lutheran schools.

Research, projections and dashboards are not new with *Set Apart to Serve*. The 1956 convention reported on a wealth of research. One question that continues to be asked throughout the decades is “how many pastors and teachers do we need?” The 1956 convention report includes several tables of numbers, striving to calculate the number of church workers needed for the coming years. While the 1956 convention calculated numbers, it also began with the very need for pastors and teachers. It laid before the convention the proclamation and expansion of the Gospel to foreign missions, domestic ministry and specialized needs. The Synod’s focus on church work recruitment is more than worrying about

shortages and calculating needs — it is about the Gospel itself! The sustaining effort of a Synodwide church worker formation and recruitment effort begins with the Gospel, with the salvation of Christ preached and taught into the ears of God’s people through which the Holy Spirit creates, nourishes and sustains saving faith. Building and sustaining a culture of church work recruitment is vital because the very Gospel is vital for the faith, life and eternal salvation of God’s people.

Though the church worker shortage was ever increasing, less attention was given to this work of the church in the 1959 convention. Committee 1 did, however, bring forth Resolution 13, “Student Recruitment for the Church Professions.” There appears to be positive signs in the recruitment effort based in the first “whereas”: “There is growing evidence that the Lord has richly blessed our Synod’s recruitment program as is shown in the increase in the enrollment of students preparing for professional service in the church.” However, the second whereas states that there is still a “critical need of an inadequate supply of professional church workers.” Therefore, the 1959 convention resolved to commend those actively engaged in church work recruitment. It also urged districts to continue an active program of selective recruitment and that district recruitment committees furnish annual reports to the Board of Higher Education for evaluation and guidance of the program.

There was one resolution in the 1962 convention addressing the “Recruitment for the Parish Ministry [pastors].” Res. 1-01 reported to the Synod that the recruitment of pastors is not keeping pace with that of other church vocations and that there is a need for theological students and graduates.

*Set Apart to Serve* has concentrated the recruitment efforts of the church to be primarily at the congregational level among those most influential in having conversations with our youth to consider full-time church work. The 1962 convention continued, from previous conventions, to state this truth, adopting to:

1. Encourage all pastors, and congregations to be active in recruiting gifted and consecrated men for the parish ministry at the high school, junior college, and senior college level.
2. Encourage congregations to provide liberal scholarships, especially for those who are in training for the parish ministry.
3. Encourage District Recruitment Committees and District Student Aid Committees to continue to exercise leadership in recruitment activity.

The 1965 convention called to intensify recruitment efforts. Resolution 6-06 stated that there was a shortage of the church’s manpower and that there was an “increasingly urgent need for individuals and groups to apply themselves to the task of recruitment since a *professional ministry is fundamental to every aspect of the church’s work* [emphasis added].” The resolves are quite familiar:

1. *Influencers in church work recruitment*: “That the Synod urge every pastor, teacher, and other church workers to recognize the importance of his influence in recruitment and to assume actively [i.e., intentionally] his role as an expositor of the Christian doctrine of vocation and a counselor to individual young people [SAS Youth Focus] within his care.
2. *Formation and recruitment takes place at the congregational and school level*: “The Synod urges each congregation to foster recruitment by assigning to a committee the concern for

recruitment at the congregational level, which committee will make adequate use of the recruitment helps available to each congregation: the organized recruitment program of each synodical school; the District recruitment program of recruitment; the various recruitment aids available from the synodical schools, the Board for Higher Education, and other agencies. [Also] by assisting interested and qualified students who are in need of financial help.”

3. *The priority of church work recruitment at the district level:* “That the Synod urge each District recruitment committee to: provide maximum guidance and coordination by urging and helping congregations to apply themselves to the recruitment task and to sponsor intercongregational recruitment activities; and to supply and disseminate recruitment materials and helps.”
4. *Providing Synod-level manpower to coordinate and oversee Synod recruitment efforts:* “That the Synod authorize the Board for Higher Education to augment its professional staff so as to provide additional guidance, encouragement, and coordination to all existing efforts throughout the Synod and to initiate and supervise the production of adequate and effective recruitment materials.”

*Set Apart to Serve* has developed excellent recruitment resources for districts, congregations, influential adults and youth, all of which are housed on the SAS website. SAS is also piloting a youth focus and a second-career focus in coordination with several districts, district recruitment committees and circuit visitors. Some resources are already on the SAS website, with more to come (see SAS resources at [lcms.org/set-apart-to-serve](http://lcms.org/set-apart-to-serve)).

In the 1965 convention, the church worker recruitment call to action was to intensify efforts. In the 1967 convention, the call to action was to “be even more active.” Calling upon those most influential in encouraging our youth consider full-time church work, the 1967 resolution, “To Recruit for Church Vocations,” resolved “That the Synod urge all pastors, teachers, other church workers, congregations, and District recruitment committees to evaluate the effectiveness of their past recruitment efforts,” with the further resolve

That all individuals and agencies involved in recruitment be urged to assume an *even more active* role in the general recruitment task and to develop programs which seek, even more *specifically* than in the past, to recruit especially the highly talented (in the several senses of the word) and pastoral students [emphasis added].”

Similar language of past conventions was reiterated with even more urgency: “That the administrators and staff members at the community Lutheran high schools and Lutheran parochial schools be encouraged to *intensify efforts* [emphasis added] to recruit especially pastoral students.”

The 1967 call to action for an “increased emphasis to the recruitment of qualified men for training for the pastoral ministry” encouraged something that hadn’t been encouraged in past conventions — to recruit men “from among the college students now attending *non-synodical* schools.”

For the first time, the 1969 church work recruitment Res. 6-33, “To Encourage Recruitment of Professional Church Workers” cited our Lord’s words in the first whereas, “It is true that the fields are ripe and the laborers are few” (Matt. 9:37).

*Set Apart to Serve* messaging describes the vocation of full-time church work as “sacred and joyful.” The LCMS introduced the language of joy in this same 1969 resolution: “Whereas, the joy of serving the Lord in full-time church work should constantly be emphasized to our young people.” This resolution also focuses on the formation and recruitment of our youth.

The 1969 resolution also reiterates who is most influential in a young person’s consideration of full-time church work in its first resolve: “That recruitment be laid upon the hearts of all pastors, teachers, people, and faculties.”

As in previous conventions, the important role of the Concordia colleges and seminaries were included in this resolution: “That we commend those synodical schools which already have vigorous recruitment programs” and “That we encourage every synodical school to have among its personnel at least one person who shall give special attention to a continuous recruitment program.” *Set Apart to Serve* is currently collaborating with the Concordia universities and the two seminaries, working with their church work recruiters and admissions counselors in the recruitment of church work students.

For at least fifty years, Synod conventions, districts, Concordia colleges and seminaries, and congregations have been urging *intensified efforts* toward church worker recruitment. There is almost a sense of defeat in the 1973 resolution on church work recruitment. It states, “The total enrollment at our synodical schools has been declining” and “recruitment efforts to date have generally failed to reverse the trend.” Therefore, “such a continued decline will cause a serious shortage of church workers in the near future.”

A renewed effort to work with the district presidents and circuit counselors was adopted: “That the Board of Higher Education be asked to work through the District Presidents and circuit counselors to reach all congregations of the Synod, apprising them of these predicted shortages.” Pleading with the congregations, it continues: “That through this process every congregation be asked to search its membership for young people who might prepare for professional service in the Church” and “Every congregation be asked to encourage such young people, in every way possible, to enter one of Synod’s schools.” The ongoing plea was also reiterated in this 1973 resolution, “that in light of the financial obligation such education involves, every congregation be strongly urged to support such students financially where necessary through their schooling.”

The 1975 convention sounded the same message:

1. Recruitment efforts have not kept pace with the ever-growing needs for professional church workers.
2. The enrollments at our colleges and seminaries give evidence of a shortage of professional workers that will exist in the near future.
3. The Synod continues to make recommendations relative to recruitment and financial aid for potential students.

*Therefore, be it resolved*

4. That the Synod emphasize for all member congregations and for all their professional church workers that recruitment for church ministries is primarily their responsibility and therefore seriously urging them to: pray more fervently in public worship for more Christian boys and girls and men and women willing to enter the church ministries, seek out such gifted students, encourage them to study at one of our synodical in-

stitutions for professional church work, and seek ways to give them financial support.

5. That the Board of Parish Education together with the Board of Higher Education continue to assist congregations, the Districts, the synodical colleges, and the seminaries in expanding their recruitment effort by:
  - a. Providing promotional materials, addressing all age levels, beginning with age five through college [*Note that this is the first time church work recruitment has moved into an age range younger than high school. The focus of SAS is conception through high school, through college, and second-career adults*].
  - b. Arranging for sponsors of District or regional recruitment workshops.
  - c. Directing recruitment of students in public universities and junior colleges [*thus, SAS's collaboration with LCMS U*].
  - d. Aiding college and seminary recruitment and admissions officers in their present effort [*thus, SAS's collaboration with CUS church work directors and admissions counselors*].
6. That the Synod in convention urge each District to make recruitment for professional church workers a priority item on its next convention agenda.

What changed from 1975 to 1977? Very little. The 1977 convention brought forth Res. 6-01, "To Encourage Recruitment for the Parish Ministry." As in previous conventions, this resolution stated that

1. The need for pastors with the growing evidence of parish vacancies.
2. The parish pastors are the most effective recruiters for the parish ministry.
3. The future of the congregation is vitally affected by a shortage of qualified pastors.
4. The Synod Board of Education should give priority to a program of assisting parish pastors in developing a program of recruitment for the parish ministry.
5. The congregation recognize its responsibility to encourage young men to prepare for the pastoral ministry.
6. The congregation strongly consider providing substantial financial aid to each of its sons entering the pastoral ministry training program.

The 1979 convention added a new element to the church work recruitment discussion: "To Implement Training of Workers for Hispanic Pastoral Ministry." Resolution 6-10A stated that there is a "need for Hispanic ministries out in the field just as great as it ever was and is increasing." It was adopted that Synod leadership call "for the preparation and training of workers for Hispanic pastoral ministries." One of the four focus areas of SAS is "All Nations." God's people are from all nations, as Revelation 5 proclaims: "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth" (Rev. 5:9, emphasis added). To incorporate people of every tribe and language and nation, SAS is collaborating with LCMS leadership of all nations to form and recruit workers in God's harvest field that all may know Him and have eternal salvation.

The 1979 convention also adopted Res. 6-20, "To Intensify

Recruitment Efforts for Church Vocations." Res. 6-20 stated that the LCMS "is currently experiencing a serious shortage of candidates to render service" to "preach, teach, and in many other ways minister to people." Connecting with Resolution 6-10A, Res. 6-20 calls for the significant need for additional full-time professional church workers from among minority groups.

Several conventions mentioned the need for church workers because of population growth. In 1979, the message is changed, and the trends are reversed. Res. 6-20 states that "projections of the future indicate that expanding opportunities for ministry, coupled with declining population among young people [emphasis added] and increasing competition for those who are dedicated and capable will compound the shortfall." Res. 6-20 also recognizes that "the training of full-time professional church workers requires adequate synodical funding."

This resolution echoes solutions presented in several past conventions:

1. *Influential adults*: "That the Synod hereby implores each pastor, teacher, parish worker, and parishioner to pray for the success of such recruitment and to intensify personal efforts for enlisting capable, dedicated people into church vocations.
2. *Financial support*: "That the Synod hereby challenges each baptized member to increase his or her financial support of the Synod through congregations and Districts to underwrite the synodical share of training expense."
3. *Priority and resources*: "That the Synod hereby urges the Board for Higher Education to assign a higher priority to the continued provision of materials and programs to assist in such recruitment."

Res. 6-21 of the 1981 convention was "To Reaffirm Need to Revise and Enrich Programs for Training of Pastors and Teachers for Black Ministry." This resolution anticipated that several pastors over the next ten years would be serving urban Black and integrated parishes. It also called for curricula that would equip the individuals to serve effectively in such parishes. It therefore resolved to "instruct synodical institutions to confer with the Black Ministry Commission and representatives of ethnic minority groups to include courses and experiences reflecting the culture of Blacks and other ethnic groups." SAS is currently collaborating with several cross-cultural leaders in the LCMS to determine the best course of action to form and recruit youth of *all nations* — every tribe, language, people and nation.

The 1981 convention also adopted Res. 6-24, "To Increase Recruitment of Pastors and Male Teachers." This resolution reiterates the themes of past and future themes, including those of *Set Apart to Serve*. This resolution reported net loss of the 201 pastors from 1976–79. It also stated that resolutions passed in recent conventions relative to recruitment of professional church workers as "relatively ineffective." The following measures were adopted:

1. To instruct the Board for Higher Education to increase efforts in recruitment.
2. Increase and upgrade the materials available, that materials be multicultural in nature, and to allocate funds to make possible the production of these materials.
3. That Synod instruct Districts to require their recruitment personnel to participate fully in the training programs made available by the Board for Higher Education and to share what they gain from these programs with the congregations.



4. That Synod instruct Districts to require their recruitment personnel to use extensively materials supplied by the BHE and other agencies within the Synod, and to make maximum distribution of these materials a high priority.

The 1983 convention wrote resolutions much the same as in previous conventions. Res. 6-14 called for the Board for Professional Education Services, together with the Department of Personnel and Statistics, to develop projections regarding the need for church workers in all areas, to devise a recruitment plan, and to provide the 1986 convention with plans for a program for the substantial financial support of pastoral and teacher candidates. Res. 6-15B was “to intensify efforts re Hispanic Training.” It resolved that “the Board for Professional Education continue and intensify its efforts to develop Hispanic seminary extension programs as avenues for the preparation of men, in an on-site location, in order that they might be equipped for pastoral ministry among Hispanics.”

The 1986 convention continued to report on the decline of full-time church workers. Res. 6-15 reported that pre-seminary and teacher-training students continued to decrease in our synodical colleges. It also reported that enrollments at our U.S. seminaries have also declined in recent years and the number of traditional college-age students (18–22 year-olds) will continue on a downward trend until 1992. The shortage of Lutheran-trained teachers at our elementary and secondary classrooms, and projection of the increasing number of pastoral vacancies, was also reported. This resolution also proposed that projected new congregations and new mission outreach programs would require more theologically trained workers.

Res. 6-15 resolves sound very familiar:

1. That pastors and congregations be reminded of their crucial role in encouraging young men and women to study for church vocations, and that every congregation of the Synod be urged to establish an active church-worker recruitment committee.
2. That children and young people be encouraged to attend Lutheran elementary and high schools where they are available.
3. That the teachers and directors of Christian education be reminded of their crucial role in encouraging young men and women to study for church vocations.
4. That congregations annually submit names and addresses of potential future students for ministries to the nearest synodical college.
5. That district recruitment committees be directed to adopt specific and challenging recruitment goals, to communicate them to congregations, and to coordinate, support, and equip congregational recruitment committees for their mission.
6. That campus pastors be encouraged to use to the fullest extent their ministries to encourage church vocations to students on secular campuses.
7. That the recruitment committee and pastors advise students who intend to enter the pastoral ministry of the LCMS to enroll in one of the synodical colleges as early as possible in their professional preparation.
8. That congregations be encouraged to establish scholarships and grant-in-aid to assist young men and women in pursuing church vocations.

One must ask how many times the Synod can “intensify” the

recruitment of church workers, as this is a recurring plea in many conventions. Res. 6-12 of the 1989 convention was “*To Intensify Recruitment of All Students for Synodical Schools* [emphasis added]”. This resolution acknowledges that the 1986 convention encouraged “the intensified recruitment of students,” once again reminding pastors and congregations of their crucial role in encouraging young men and women to study for church vocations, and that every congregation in Synod be urged to establish an active church-worker recruitment committee. And so, the 1989 convention resolved that

1. Synod applauds the Board for Higher Education Services, the Districts who have appointed recruitment committees, and congregations who also established recruitment committees.
2. That every congregation of the Synod which does not have a student recruitment committee for synodical schools be encouraged to establish one.
3. That the Board for Higher Education be encouraged to continue to develop, update, and disseminate resource materials for the coordination and supervision of recruitment efforts by congregations, colleges, and Districts.

The 1992 convention sounds the same themes as in previous conventions in Res. 6-13. This resolution cited Matthew 28:18–20 in its first whereas: “Our Lord has commissioned His church to make disciples of all nations.” It also refers back to the 1986 convention, which adopted the following mission statement: “the colleges and seminaries of the [LCMS] exist to supply the higher education services needed to accomplish the mission of the church. Central to the system of synodical higher education is the preparation of those who are called to serve through preaching, teaching, and related vocations...” This resolution states that this mission statement “requires the recruitment of students for professional church vocations which was further supported by the resolve ‘that recruitment for church vocations be made the concern for our entire Synod (Res. 6-15, 1986).’”

The final whereas leading into the resolves states that the following resolves were the same concerns since 1986 (but, as previously noted, these are the same concerns the Synod held since the 1920s).

1. *Major influencers*: Calling upon pastors, teachers, and other church workers, in their crucial role, to model church vocations and encourage the youth to consider full-time church work.
2. *Support of congregations and the laity*: That congregations establish intentional recruitment programs, including financial support for those entering full-time church work. [SAS’s key message for today is that the church should be intentional about that which is vitally important — continually raising up church workers to preach, teach and witness the Gospel of Jesus Christ for the salvation of God’s people.]
3. *Collaborating with the Concordia universities*: That congregations share the names and contact information of youth with the Board for Higher Education for the recruitment work of our Concordia universities.
4. *Social media*: That the *Lutheran Witness* and District newsletters highlight recruitment strategies of congregations from which church work students consistently come.
5. *District focus*: That Districts train congregational recruitment committees to organize trips to our Concordia universities



for young people to observe a variety of professional church workers in action.

Little is said about the recruitment of church workers in the 1995 convention resolutions. One resolution, Res. 5-02A, speaks mainly of the financial burden of seminary students but does also mention that the LCMS “Needs an increasing number of seminary graduates for the primary work of the church, that of spreading the Gospel.” To alleviate this burden, this resolution calls for the Synod to renew its commitment to seminary education and increase the student aid endowment for seminarians.

The 1998 convention puts Res. 5-03 before the delegates: “To Encourage a Renewed Effort for Recruitment of Professional Church Workers.” It begins by reminding the delegates of the objectives of Synod as stated in the Constitution of the LCMS, Article III: to “recruit and train pastors, teachers, and other professional church workers and provide opportunity for their continuing growth,” and “Aid congregations to develop processes of thorough Christian education and nurture and to establish agencies of Christian education such as elementary and secondary schools and to support synodical colleges, universities, and seminaries.”

Res. 5-03 puts the onus for recruitment on the Board for Higher Education (BHE) and the Concordia University System (CUS). It reminds the BHE and CUS that its “central purpose is to train men and women for full-time church work and that this central purpose is to be clearly reflected in its public relations.” It also states that the Synod should “encourage and support the BHE and CUS in the area of recruitment and training of full-time church workers.” Further, it calls upon the BHE and CUS, along with the Board for Congregational Services and the Council of Presidents “to evaluate current curriculum processes and develop a broad-based (i.e., congregation, District, Synod, BHE/CUS) recruitment process.” It then instructs the BHE and CUS to present a report to the 2001 convention.

President-elect Rev. Dr. Gerald Kieschnick addressed the 2001 convention. In his address, he mentioned church worker recruitment several times. The convention report stated that Dr. Kieschnick “identified challenges faced by the Synod, including the fulfillment of the Great Commission with renewed vigor and passion and energy; the recruitment, training, and support of church workers...” Later in his report, Kieschnick stated, “In response to the growing need throughout the Synod to address in a very purposeful manner the growing shortage of pastors and other church workers, I appointed this [Church Worker Recruitment and Retention Action Group] and asked Dr. Karl Barth to serve as chairman...” In Kieschnick’s report, he listed “a number of matters of importance [that] face our Synod in the years ahead.” His second matter was “The recruitment, training, and support of pastors, educators, evangelists, musicians, and other professional church workers. In recent years our Synod has lost almost 1,500 more pastors and 3,000 more teachers than we have gained. We must aggressively seek to encourage the best of our young people and of our second-career people to respond affirmatively to God’s call for service and to support them in a way that results in the performance of faithful, effective, and productive ministry.”

This 2001 convention brought Res. 5-07 to the delegates, “To Increase Congregational and Individual Support for Full-Time Church Work Students.” This resolution began with Matthew 9:37–38, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the

Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest field.” The committee included this commentary: “[Jesus] indicated that His disciples were, and are now, to be active in supporting the recruitment and training of pastors and other full-time church workers.”

The committee also cited foundational information for church work recruitment: Objective 3 of the LCMS Constitution, stating the seminary’s programs of tuition assistance for church work students, and the Lord gifting His church with current church workers. Resolves voiced in previous conventions are here brought before this convention:

1. That each congregation and each pastor seek to identify, encourage, and recruit people within the church to be full-time workers.
2. That congregations and individuals support church work students through their financial gifts and by participating in adopt-a-student programs through our synodical schools.
3. That this is what the church does in carrying out “The Great Commission.”

At the 2004 convention, President Kieschnick reiterated his focus on church worker recruitment. In his report, he stated, “We are currently experiencing critical shortages of professional church workers, including both pastors and educators. Many of our workers are stressed. Some are depressed and on the verge of burnout. Others are contemplating resignation due to family and/or financial pressures.” He also reported on the “What a Way” initiative begun under President Rev. Dr. Alvin L. Barry in 2000, which focused on recruiting and retaining professional church workers in the LCMS in response to the critical need for such leaders for the future of the Synod. Kieschnick states, “The first-year class enrollment at both seminaries for the 2003–2004 academic year is the highest in 30 years! God be praised! Many challenges in this regard face our Synod in the years ahead, with 50 percent of the pastors of the LCMS currently within 10 years of retirement age.”

The Committee on Program and Finance brought forth Res. 4-02A, “To Provide Support for Seminaries.” Like previous conventions, this resolution reminded the delegates of Synod’s objective to support seminaries for the recruitment and training of pastors. It also states that “both seminaries have responded to the Synod’s call with increased attention to recruitment, financial aid, and development.” This resolution focuses on the cost of education as being the cause of low seminary enrollment, and therefore calls upon the seminaries and the Synod to support the seminaries and seminary education.

Res. 5-03A, “To Increase the Number of Synod Certified Teachers,” emphasized the value of educating our youth in the faith, the Synod’s objective of recruitment and training church workers, the Synod’s history of providing the church with pastors and teachers, the creation of Synod’s Teacher Colloquy Program, and the strength and blessing of our Concordia universities. Delegates adopted the following items in this resolution:

1. To affirm Synod’s historic commitment to full-time Lutheran education;
2. To require non-Synod-certified Lutheran school teachers to finish their Teacher Colloquy Program; and
3. To encourage Districts to adjust their salary guidelines to include incentives for completion of Lutheran Teacher Diploma, Teacher Colloquy Program, and continuing education.

In the 2007 convention, President Kieschnick calls out the efforts of “What a Way” and announces his appointment of a task force to address the issue of church worker debt and compensation. He also states, “I have articulated on many occasions that priority be given to recruitment, training, compensation, and retention of professional church workers. I am encouraging the COP to provide leadership in this very important matter in the years ahead.”

The 2007 convention provided no specific resolution on church work recruitment. However, one of the hallmark resolutions was Res. 5-01B, “To Establish Specific Ministry Pastor Program.” This resolution, in part, was intended to help relieve the pastoral shortage. The 2019 and 2023 conventions have tasked the Pastoral Formation Committee to address issues related to the SMP program.

The 2010 Synod Convention brought a robust resolution to the delegates, “To Recruit and Retain Full-Time Church Workers (Res. 5-01A). It began with the biblical foundation of Jesus’ words, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest field” (Matt. 9:37–38). It once again listed the objectives of Synod directly related to the recruitment and training of church workers. It named CUS and the two LCMS seminaries as providing church work programs and scholarships for church work students. It highlighted the “What a Way” initiative, described as “a positive and joyful approach both to rebuild active recruitment and retention of church workers as an integrated part of the LCMS culture and lifestyle at the local congregation.” It thanked God for our many church workers and prayed He continue to “bestow the gifts of full-time church workers on His church.”

The resolves sound very familiar.

1. That each congregation and district, and each pastor and church worker, identify, encourage, and recruit people within the church to be full-time workers in the Lord’s harvest field.
2. That congregations, districts, and individuals be encouraged to call, support, and provide adequately for pastors, teachers, and other church workers.
3. That congregations, districts, and individuals be urged to increase support for church work students.
4. That the LCMS in convention affirm, encourage, and support the “What a Way” initiative to foster active recruitment and retention of church workers.

And yet, the number of church workers continued to decline. Perhaps the message of taking an active, sanctified role in church work formation, recruitment and support will be heard at the next convention.

At the 2013 convention, Res. 5-12, “To Encourage, Promote, and Support Recruitment of Hispanic and Spanish-speaking Students and Faculty into Church Work Professions” was brought before the delegates. It was noted that “Hispanics accounted for much of the nation’s growth from 2000 to 2010” and that there was an “increasing and growing number of our LCMS congregations located in neighborhoods with a significant number of Hispanic residents.” Returning to the multi-ethnic, (or All Nations) focus, Res. 5-12 called for “congregations with Hispanic and Spanish-speaking members and LCMS high schools with Hispanic and Spanish-speaking students [to] be encouraged and assisted in recruiting their high school graduates to a CUS college or university.” It was also resolved that Hispanic and Spanish-speaking individuals in the LCMS pursue graduate and doctorate degrees and

be encouraged to apply for teaching positions in our CUS schools.

Res. 5-13A, “To Encourage Recruitment of High Caliber Candidates for Pastoral Ministry” was also adopted. It had one resolve: “That ministers of religion ordained and commissioned and lay people be strongly encouraged to identify, inform, and encourage appropriate candidates for service in the pastoral ministry, with special emphasis upon those who are regarded to be of high caliber among their peers.”

In September 2018, a Pastoral Education Summit was held with the Synod president, seminary presidents, three Concordia university presidents, the LCMS Chief Mission Officer and the Executive Director of LCMS Pastoral Education. The summit determined that the ordained and commissioned church worker shortage must be addressed with renewed vigor and commitment. This led to Res. 6-01 at the 2019 convention:

Whereas...

1. Jesus instituted and mandated the pastoral office (1 Cor. 4:1; Rom. 10:14–17; 1 Tim. 3:1–7; 2 Tim. 4:1–5; Titus 1:5–7; 1 Peter 10:14–17).
2. The Lutheran Church confesses the one pastoral office (AC V and XIV).
3. Walther’s statement in his *Church and Office*, “The preaching office is not an optional office, but one whose establishment has been commanded to the church and to which the Church is properly bound till the end of time” (Ministry Thesis III), and “The preaching office is the highest office in the Church, from which flow all other offices in the Church” (Ministry Thesis VIII).
4. That other offices in the church are good and salutary offices, “established in love by the Church to support the Office of the Holy Ministry and to assist the faithful in their God-given vocations” (LSB Agenda, 214).
5. Jesus declared, “The harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few. Therefore, pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”
6. Church work enrollment had decreased by 60% since 2004.

It was resolved that “all constituents of the LCMS be encouraged to commend, financially support, and directly participate in this comprehensive, multi-year church worker recruitment initiative” with the following objectives:

1. Identifying, catechizing, encouraging, and supporting young boys and girls for church work vocations.
2. Instilling church worker vocations as sacred and joyful, a “calling from God,” vocations of integrity and fulfillment, grounded in Christ and baptismal salvation.
3. Developing the “whole person” throughout this formation process: spiritually, in character, confessionally, physically, emotionally, synodically, and intellectually.
4. Supporting, encouraging, and caring for existing church workers for the welfare of the workers, for the proclamation and witness of the Gospel, and for workers to be healthy advocates of next-generation church workers.”

Even with the COVID-19 pandemic, the work of this resolution immediately began, building on the initial research that had already begun in preparation for the convention. This initial research solidified what convention resolutions communicated in the last century and provided many new gems as well.

1. Despite encouragements, intensifying efforts, and commu-

nicating the shortage of church workers, 50% of all church workers stated that they were not having conversations with the youth of their congregation about considering full-time church work.

2. Current church workers and laity stated that they were not being intentional about encouraging the youth of our congregations to consider a full-time church work vocation.
3. Current church workers stated that those who did encourage them to consider church work included, in this order: their pastor, other commissioned church workers, their parents, and the laity of their congregation. Secondary influencers included coaches, music teachers, lay youth workers, extended family and peers.
4. Current church workers stated that the time when they were most encouraged and considered a full-time church work vocation was in middle school, especially in confirmation instruction with their pastor.
5. Current church workers stated that the one thing that most influenced them to consider church work was weekly attendance in the Divine Service, receiving God's Word and Sacraments.

*Set Apart to Serve* went to work.

The comprehensive purpose of SAS is to develop an intentional culture of church worker formation and recruitment in every LCMS congregation, school, and entity with every LCMS pastor, commissioned church worker, and lay person.

The primary goals of SAS are:

1. To immediately increase fruitful conversations between influential adults with youth and with adults about full-time church work vocations. This engagement takes place in homes, congregations and Lutheran schools.
2. To significantly increase the number of individuals enrolled in church worker formation/educational tracks at our Concordia University System institutions, LCMS seminaries and colloquy programs so that the Synod's congregations and schools are adequately served in the coming decades in their work to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Since 2019, *Set Apart to Serve*

1. Developed a full collaborative partnership with the LCMS seminaries and Concordia universities, Christ Academy, Vocatio, LCMS Board of Directors, Lutheran Church Extension Fund, Concordia Publishing House, district presidents and education executives, Lutheran Women's Missionary League, pilot congregations representing every district, Higher Things, LCMS Youth Ministry, LCMS School Ministry, LCMS Rosters Statistics and Research, LCMS U, Chinese Lutherans in Mission Building (CLIMB), the Hispanic Conference, Black Clergy Caucus, National Association of DCEs, Lutheran Educators Association, LCMS Worker Wellness, LCMS Concordia Plan Services, LCMS Colloquy, Lutheran camps and more.
2. Developed four areas of emphasis: Youth Focus (ages conception–12th grade), Young Adults and Second Career, All Nations (or multi-cultural/ethnic) and International.
3. Developed a strategy of donor engagement with LCMS Mission Advancement to support the work of SAS.
4. Became a partner in the Worker Wellness Alliance with the Office of National Mission, Concordia Plan Services and the COP, especially developing a communications plan of the la-

ity caring for their church workers as servants of the Gospel.

5. Develops quality and quantity online youth-focus resources, developed with pilot pastors, church workers, congregations, and schools, representing every district in the LCMS.
6. Developed, implemented and reviewed an ongoing awareness campaign with LCMS congregations, schools, church workers and entities.
7. Developed a circuit visitors pilot project for the development of resources for circuit visitors to present to congregations, schools and church workers concerning church work recruitment.
8. Developed (and currently implementing) an ongoing, major social media campaign, including a quality SAS website, weekly appearances on KFUEO Coffee Hour, monthly Reporter articles and updates, monthly Lutheran Witness articles in 2023 and frequent articles in 2024, as well as targeted social media posts.
9. Presented SAS at speaking engagements, including LWML, PALS and NLOMA events, Higher Things, COP meetings, education conferences, events at Concordia universities, the LCMS Youth Gathering and more.
10. Distributes a monthly SAS report to over 600 stakeholders.
11. Conducts quarterly research with LCMS congregations, youth, lay leaders and influential adults (pastors, church workers, commissioned workers and lay leaders). This research provides information for the ongoing strategy and resources of SAS.
12. Developed an Advisory Council of key stakeholders throughout the Synod, representing various entities and expertise to help evaluate the ongoing work of SAS.
13. Developed a second-career plan of action, including stakeholder mapping, journey mapping, district education executives' partnership and communication, collaboration with LCMS colloquy, the development of a content and awareness plan, second-career targeted ads for teachers, and the support of second-career wives and families.

Ongoing manpower and funding are absolutely necessary to execute these vital goals, goals which sit at the very heart of the church and the LCMS. For the first time in the history of the LCMS' conversation about church work recruitment, the LCMS is using communications and marketing expertise to carry out this task, enlisting the expertise of Standing Partnership, a St. Louis-based marketing and communications firm, as well as the expertise of two different research firms. And in addition to the executive director of LCMS Pastoral Education's role in overseeing SAS, the LCMS also called a second full-time person to assist with the initiative.

For nearly a century, the Synod called upon her pastors, church workers, congregations, laity, districts, seminaries, Concordia universities and others to form and recruit church workers among our youth and adults. It provided quality and quantity resources, initiatives, and statistics, giving aid to the church to do her work of forming and recruiting the next generation of church workers. Those involved in "What a Way" worked hard in accomplishing many great things, including awareness, the need to help with education and debt, and continuing the important messages of the intentionality of influential adults, districts, and congregation involvement.



All the church worker resolutions in LCMS history are excellent resolutions and all of them are further developed by and coordinated with *Set Apart to Serve*. The same solutions and resolutions were adopted for decades, yet the reality of the decreased number of church workers and the urgent cry for more never went away. Why are these solutions and resolutions not taking hold?

One might ask — after urging districts, congregations, pastors, church workers and congregations to be involved in church work recruitment, why do we continue to be in such a crisis? Despite *Set Apart to Serve's* promotion of church work formation and recruitment — with the very measures which convention after convention promoted — many respond in a way that seems unconcerned with the need to recruit church workers. Others look for shortcuts, which fall short of Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions. Still others are distracted by the world and focus on just getting through life one day at a time.

Jesus said, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest” (Matt. 9:37–38). When will the church have enough laborers? When can we stop praying? When will there no longer be a harvest of sinners in need of hearing the Gospel of Christ for their eternal salvation? Answer: when Christ returns. Until then, we will continue to pray to the Lord of the harvest to raise up church workers one generation after another.

Let us not become complacent. Let us throw off the old Adam and the sin that hinders us from valuing and holding the Gospel of Jesus Christ as our dearest treasure. Let us give our children an inheritance that neither rusts nor fades — Jesus Christ, and through Him, forgiveness of sin and eternal life.

*Set Apart to Serve* is our current strong commitment to do this very thing, but unless we intentionally bake it into our identity as a church body, the culture of our congregations and our sacred vocations, it will fade and pass away, leaving it to yet another generation to pick up the mantle once more. What must we then do as the baptized, redeemed and sanctified children of God in Christ Jesus?

1. *Parents*: Raise our children in the faith. Have them baptized, take them to the Lord's house for weekly Divine Service to receive Word and Sacrament, and immerse them in God's Word at home, keeping their eyes fixed on Jesus, the author and perfecter of their faith (Heb. 12:2).
2. *Pastors, Lutheran school teachers, all LCMS commissioned workers, parents, every layperson*: Intentionally form, recruit and encourage the youth and adults of their congregation and school, so that they may consider a full-time church work vocation.
3. *District presidents, education executives and circuit visitors*: Intentionally make church work formation and recruitment of utmost importance in your service to church workers, congregations, and schools.
4. *Congregations*: Form a Church Work Recruitment Committee, make use of the SAS resources, utilize Concordia Publishing House's *Set Apart to Serve* curriculum, take your youth to Vocatio, Christ Academy, Higher Things, and/or the LCMS Youth Gathering, support the church work students of your congregation through generous tuition grants, and love and respect your full-time church workers in word and deed.
5. *Church Workers*: Live your vocation in joyful sacrifice, immersing yourself in Christ and His Word, withstanding the

attacks of Satan through oratio, meditatio, tentatio, and faithfully living out your sacred office in thought, word and deed.

6. *All Lutherans*: Support the efforts of SAS in our life together through prayer, gifts and action.

*Set Apart to Serve*, while communicating to the Synod about the church work shortage, is more focused on the *necessity* of church workers — those who communicate, preach, proclaim, teach and witness the Gospel of Jesus Christ for eternal salvation in their full-time ordained and commissioned vocations. At stake is the eternal salvation of God's people who have saving faith through the preached Word of Christ. The urgency and priority of full-time church workers is the eternal salvation of our children, grandchildren, family, friends, neighbors and all God's people throughout the world.

Ludwig Helmbold, living in the 16th century, wrote in his hymn: “Yet even though I suffer the world's unpleasantness, and though the days grow rougher and bring me great distress, that day of bliss divine, which knows no end or measure, and Christ, who is my pleasure, forever shall be mine” (LSB 713:6).

Men and women who preach, teach and confess Jesus Christ in their full-time vocation deliver a treasure beyond measure. Only in Christ do we have eternal salvation. The call to be involved in church worker recruitment is more than gaining bodies on the Synodical roster — it is about more and more full-time servants of the Word delivering the Gospel of Jesus Christ to a dying world and people, that through Him, we all may have eternal life.

For more information on SAS, go to <https://www.lcms.org/set-apart-to-serve>.

### Corrigendum:

*In the second paragraph of the Concordia University article in the July 2024 Clarion, it was stated that the prospectus for the next president of Concordia Texas does not require the candidate to be “on a roster of the Synod nor a member of an LCMS congregation.” The current prospectus does in fact require the candidate to be a member of an LCMS congregation. As a clarification, the article did not mean to imply that roster membership of a candidate is a bylaw requirement, though roster membership has been common synod practice. Bylaw 3.10.6.8.1 (f) states that a president who is not on the roster of the Synod shall be a member of a member congregation of the Synod.*

### The Lutheran Clarion—We Need Your Help

The Lutheran Clarion is in its 16th year. We have NO paid staff or writers. We unabashedly strive to present and uphold God's inerrant word. Inflation has now taken hold. **Your continued and enhanced help is needed.** We urge you to help with the costs of preserving Confessional Lutheranism. Use the enclosed envelope. Mail your tax deductible gift to:

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## Lutheran Perspective on Revitalization

*Continued from page 1*

of the Body of Christ established in a place, at a time, and with the people of God's choosing. Where God's Word is proclaimed in purity and truth and Christ's Sacraments are rightly administered, this Body is alive – neither dead nor dying. Decline and decay may be apparent, but she lives just as her Savior lives – and she lives under the cross. We do well to remember that she is the Bride of Christ. We dare not write out a certificate of divorce and send her away because she has aged and weakened. No, she is worthy of our efforts to restore and strengthen her under our Lord's blessing.

We also do well to check our motives for revitalization. As fallen people enticed by the world, we are prone to undertake revitalization for the wrong reasons. We may see it as the solution for declining worship attendance and the corresponding decrease in financial support. In addition to looking to fill the pews (and fill the plates), we may also look at revitalization as the way to get more people involved – to “share the load” that is being carried by fewer and fewer committed members. Our motives may be even more desperate as we seek out any ways that promise to “keep the doors open.” While increased attendance, giving, and participation may result from revitalization, they are poor motives to undertake it.

The proper motives for revitalization take us back to 1 Corinthians 3:5-10. Revitalization provides us opportunities to continue and expand our “planting and watering.” The work that we undertake with the intent and desire to revitalize our congregation is undertaken with a view toward better serving our community with the Gospel. In other words, the proper motivation for revitalization is to maintain and increase our “planting and watering” in the place, at the time, and with the people the Lord has chosen for us. The proper motivation for revitalization speaks to the core of what revitalization is. In practical terms, revitalization is a process in which an established congregation is equipped to actively engage in God's Mission in the congregation's current context.

Briefly stated, revitalization is renewing our efforts to carry out our role in God's Mission. First and foremost, we need to recognize that revitalization is about vitality. It is not bringing life to a dead church, but it is amplifying the life of a living church. As our Lord Jesus made clear, wherever two or three are gathered in His name He is present with them. His presence is life, not death. While “two or three” may not be able to sustain a congregation, that is an issue of viability not vitality. While revitalization efforts do address both viability and vitality, they are essentially concerned with vitality with the expectation that viability will follow increased vitality. Once again it is important to remember that we cannot by our efforts increase vitality. We can increase the use of God's Word and Sacraments among ourselves, and we can increase the sharing of God's Word with those around us, but “God alone gives the growth.” Or as the Apology puts it “Christ renews, sanctifies, and governs [His Church] by His Spirit” (Apology VII:5).

This underscores that revitalization is not a work that we do using human methods, but a work that God does through us by His Word and Sacraments. There is a trend among promoters of revitalization programs to employ the best practices of organizational growth from the business world in congregations seeking to revitalize. Many of these ideas are little more than the repackaging of failed approaches to “church growth” that we've seen in the past.

While we do well to consider how we might make good use of our First Article gifts, such gifts should never be seen as the means of revitalizing. While guarding against their improper use, we don't want to disregard the proper use of secular tools and concepts.

The proper use of tools, processes, and best practices of the secular world in revitalization is always secondary to and supportive of the Means of Grace. Only when we can acknowledge that these resources are of no effect and of no value apart from the working of the Holy Spirit through the Means of Grace are we making proper use of them. We should see the use of any First Article gift as enabling us to increase our use of God's Word and Sacraments and to share them with the people around us. Placing these gifts above the Means of Grace – let alone replacing the Means with them – makes revitalization into a human work using human methods. Genuine revitalization is always the work of the Holy Spirit via the Means of Grace.

Some have argued that declining congregations need to do more than focus on Word and Sacrament ministry if they are to become stronger. They insist that we must change how we go about being the church in order to be relevant to our contemporary culture. But revitalization is not a “new way of being church.” Instead, it is being the church that we are in new ways. In other words, revitalization calls for us to continue to be Lutheran in our identity, doctrine, and practice as we engage our community in creative ways. There are two important principles to adhere to as we strive to be the church that we are in new ways. First, revitalization calls for us to engage the nonchurched people around us with innovation and integrity. That is, we can and should try new ways to engage our community. Redoubling our current efforts to connect with the nonchurched people in our neighborhood is not likely to have much of an impact – either in the community or in our congregation. We need to be innovative. Second, when trying new things we cannot allow our identity, doctrine, and practices to conform to the values and worldviews of our culture. We need to have integrity. Redefining ourselves to be more like the people we are seeking to reach with the Gospel is dishonest and deadly. As the observation attributed to Dean William Inge puts it, “The church that weds itself to the spirit of this age finds herself a widow in the next.”

Focusing on numbers is one of the ways that revitalization gets corrupted by the values of our culture. If the work of revitalization is being driven by declining numbers of members, attendees or dollars, or if we undertake revitalization with a focus on increasing one or all of these numbers, we've fallen into the trap of making revitalization about numbers and numerical results. Or, put another way, we view revitalization as something we do as the church in decline. But a proper understanding of revitalization is that it is a work we undertake because we are the Church, not because we are a congregation in decline.

Addressing revitalization as the work that we do because we are the Church helps us focus on strengthening the activities that make for a healthy congregation. These activities can be thought of as the enabling systems in the congregation that support and promote Word and Sacrament ministry. These underlying systems include evangelistic outreach, assimilation and incorporation, strategic ministry planning, and engaging inactive members. These systems are part of every congregation's work. The strength of these systems often drives the well-being of a congregation. For

example, if we neglect our inactive members the congregation is likely to lose them altogether. This not only impacts the congregation's numbers (the lesser issue), it may well result in a straying or strayed sheep of our Shepherd being cut off and put at grave risk in the world (the greater issue). It is this greater issue of providing spiritual care for inactive members, rather than the lesser issue of counting sheep, that drives revitalization.

Perhaps the most neglected system among our declining congregations (as hundreds of congregational self-assessments have identified) is evangelistic outreach. It seems that the most common response to congregational decline is to compound the problem by furthering an inward focus. Once a congregation turns its attention, energy, and resources to maintaining the congregation primarily (or, in many cases, solely) for the sake of the dwindling number of people already gathered, it has entered into a downward spiral of decline. In such cases, the mission of the congregation is, at best, maintaining what they have or, at worst, survival. It postures the congregation in a defensive mode in contrast to our Savior's call to be on the offensive against an enemy who is both defeated and powerless against the Church of Christ. Jesus reminds us of this by telling us that this enemy's gates (i.e., defensive measures) cannot withstand the Church that He builds when it is on the offensive (cf. Matthew 16:18). This includes the Church that He strengthens through revitalization.

Evangelistic outreach is the primary way in which a congregation takes the offensive. By engaging the nonchurched people in our community in ways that lead to sharing the Word of God with them, we've ventured into territory held by the enemy. We know that this territory belongs to our King and that this enemy has wrongfully laid claim to it. It is our mission to "plant and water" in ways that will, under God's blessing, retake what rightfully belongs to the Lord.

The chief benefit of initiating a formal revitalization effort is that it helps the congregation's members and leaders step back from the day-to-day dealings of maintaining the congregation with decreasing dollars and people in order to assess the mission for which God has crafted it. If revitalization were to be summed up in a single statement, it might well be said that revitalization is a congregation taking action to carry out God's Mission in its current context. The key here is that the congregation's members and leaders properly understand both God's Mission and their current context. While God's Mission remains constant, the congregation's context is fluid. In the changing landscape of the congregation's context, how it carries out God's Mission requires constant assessment and, very likely, meaningful adjustments.

An important part of that assessment is to take stock of what the Lord has provided to the congregation to make use of in carrying out its role in God's Mission. It's very tempting for congregations in decline to work from a perspective of scarcity when considering God's Mission. That perspective is often driven by comparing what a congregation has today to what it had in the past. But our part in God's Mission is not defined by what we do not have. God's provision, however less it may be in comparison to the past, is fully sufficient for our current context. Evaluating His provision is a crucial part of discerning what it means for us to carry out our part in His mission in our current circumstances. It's very likely that we may need to do some things differently than we have in the past in order to faithfully "plant and water" in our present context. When

we do, we need to remember the earlier key concept of revitalization from a Lutheran perspective: Revitalization is not a "new way of being church" but being the church we are in new ways.

We know God's Mission continues to be to "seek and save the lost" (Luke 19:10). We are immeasurably blessed to be included among those whom He has gathered into His Church. We are greatly privileged to have a part in His mission as the Church in this time, in this place, and with the people of His choosing. We may lose perspective at times, thinking that it would be better to have been the Church in another time or in another place or with different people especially because of the decline that we've observed and experienced – a decline that is likely to continue for the foreseeable future. But God is building His Church in accordance with His will and His purposes. Our role in revitalization – our role in God's Mission – is guided by an important question that many declining congregations have ceased to ask (or may have never asked): How do we actively and intentionally engage the people in our community with the love of Jesus Christ who both gives life and raises the dead?

*Postscript: The principles of revitalization in this article are incorporated into a suite of resources called re: Vitality. The LCMS Office of National Mission provides re: Vitality resources at no cost to LCMS congregations. Visit [www.lcms.org/revitalization](http://www.lcms.org/revitalization) or email [WOR@lcms.org](mailto:WOR@lcms.org) for more information.*

## IMPORTANT NOTICE WE ARE UPDATING OUR CLARION DISTRIBUTION LIST

Besides subscribers, the goal continues to be for each congregation to receive a printed copy of the Clarion.

Additionally, insofar as possible, we will continue to send the Clarion to individuals who enjoy the publication and are not yet paid LCA members. If you are in this category and wish to continue receiving the Clarion, please contact us at [LCAForwarding@gmail.com](mailto:LCAForwarding@gmail.com) and indicate whether you prefer the print form (provide name & US mailing address) or a pdf (provide name & email address).

It will be several months before our updated distribution list takes effect. However, if you wish to continue receiving the Clarion and are not an LCA member, please let us know now rather than later.

**We want you to get every issue!**

# LUTHERAN CONCERNS ASSOCIATION ANNUAL CONFERENCE

**Monday, January 20, 2025**

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

The Conference will be held on Monday, January 20, 2025, on the Concordia Theological Seminary campus at Fort Wayne, Indiana.

**Dine with the Speakers and the LCA Board of Directors!** On Sunday evening, January 19 at 5:30 pm, Luther Hall 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.

Forget about the cold winter and enjoy this warm and cheerful occasion with fellow Christians.

## CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

**Bldg: Loehe Hall**

**Room: Loehe 1**

### MORNING SESSION:

06:45 am: Registration Opens

07:30 am – 07:40 am: **LCA Opening Devotion**

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: **Textual Criticism: Influence and Application**

Speaker: Dr. E. Christian Kopff

08:35 am – 08:50 am: Questions and Answers

08:50 am – 09:35 am: **What is Narrative Criticism and How Is It Being Used Today?**

Pastor Philip Hale

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: **CUS Focus on Future Lutheran Pastors and Teachers** (proposed topic)

Speaker: To be announced

12:00 pm – 12:15 pm: Questions and Answers

12:15 pm – 01:30 pm: **\*\*\* LUNCH \*\*\***

### AFTERNOON SESSION:

01:30 pm – 02:15 pm: **Classical Education and Free Speech on Campus**

Dr. Scott Yenor

02:15 pm – 02:30 pm: Questions and Answers

02:30 pm – 03:15 pm: **Due Process and the Mission of the Church**

Pastor Edward Naumann

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:

**Dinner**

Pay at the line in the Dining Hall

08:00 pm:

**LCA Board Meeting**

*cut here*

## 2025 LCA Conference Registration Form

Concordia Theological Seminary – Fort Wayne, Indiana

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Annual LCA Membership Fee (\$60) enclosed \_\_\_\_\_

Paid LCA Member Conference registration fee (\$110) encl. \_\_\_\_\_

Paid LCA Member half-day registration fee (\$44) encl. \_\_\_\_\_

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 19, 5:30 pm (\$40) encl. \_\_\_\_\_

**Check box for Dinner on Sunday, January 19.**

Buffet (\$40): beef tenderloin and chicken marsala (price includes tax)

**Total Enclosed:** \_\_\_\_\_

*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**  
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## *In This Issue:*

***Building a Culture of Church  
Work Formation and Recruitment***

**Lutheran Perspective on Revitalization**

***Request for mailing list update***

Published regularly to support issues and causes in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod which build faithfulness to the 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. LCA consents to readers reproducing articles provided the entire article, plus footnotes, is included in the reproduction and full attribution given.

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Faithful Lutherans who are members of LCMS congregations are invited to submit articles for consideration. Inquires 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 John F. Lang (johnflang1000@gmail.com; 419.849.2610).

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