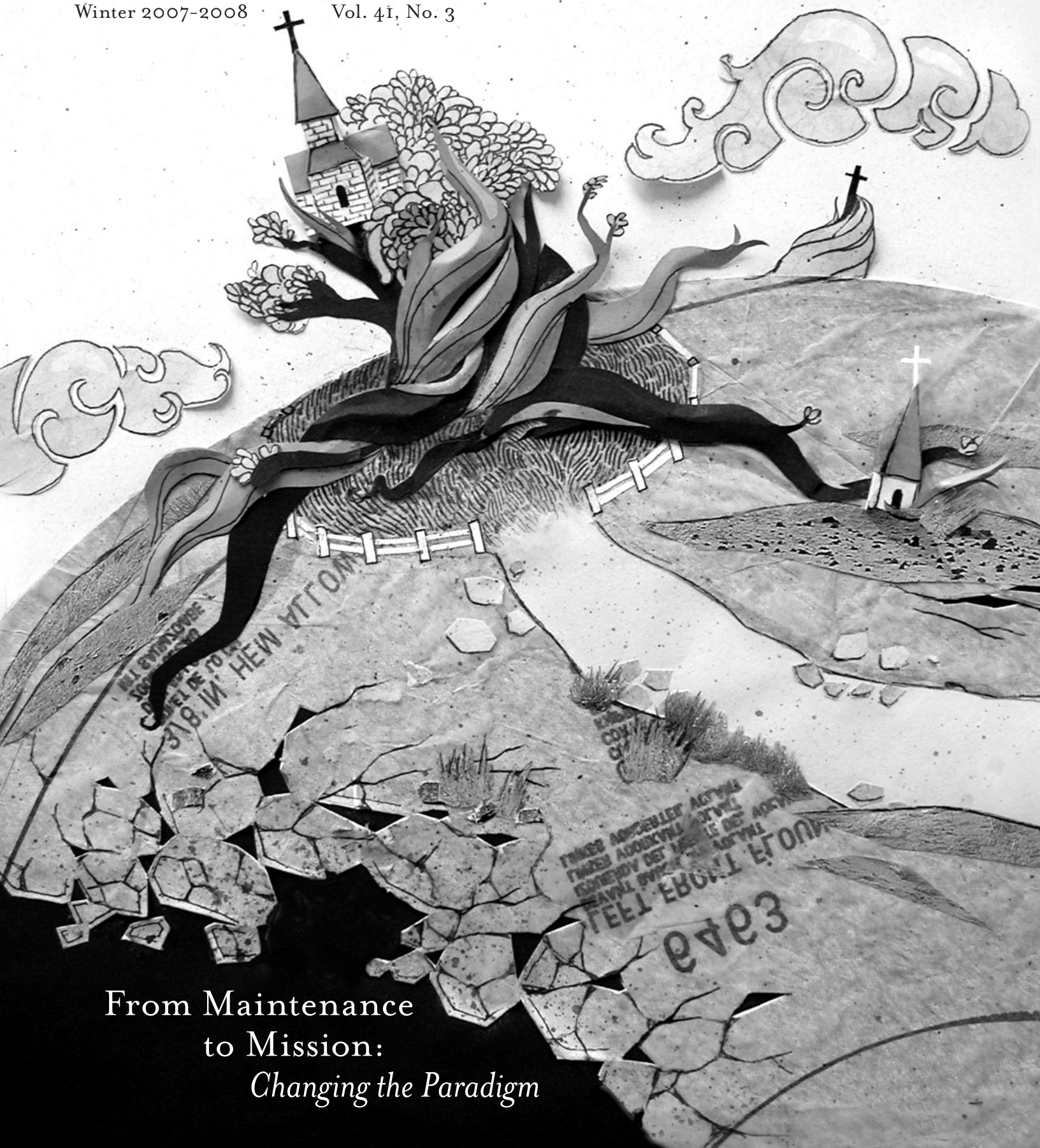


# ISSUES

IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Winter 2007-2008

Vol. 41, No. 3



From Maintenance  
to Mission:  
*Changing the Paradigm*

Winter 2007-2008  
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# ISSUES

## IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

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# reflections

"... And from morn to set of sun, through the **Church** the song goes on." (LSB 940, v. 3)

"Through the **Church**": that's the way it happens. That is the way the Gospel is proclaimed, the sacraments are administered, the forgiveness of sins is imparted and the promise of eternal life is extended. Through the **Church**, "the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints," God works in and through those He has called, gathered, enlightened and sanctified. That is His plan to save and sanctify all people.

The mission field is around, before and behind us like never before. There is so much Gospel work and ministry to do. The statistics Boring and Ruhl cite make one's mouth drop. The opportunities to re-envision the task of ministry at the congregational level that Schultz and Boring lift up stimulate and inspire. Oswald, Blanco, and Newton provide astute reminders that the work of the Church is the ministry of Jesus, and that it is Christ who sends the church lest we somehow forget "that it is God who saves." Huneke and Steinbronn suggest the outline of a helpful new paradigm to encourage us to balance "edification and evangelism, while fostering a healthy, vibrant organic body life centered in relationships."

It is my hope that this edition of *Issues* will inform and challenge each of us. But more importantly, that it will inspire, motivate and compel us to action and response. The authors ask significant questions. How through the **Church** can our congregations be more and more about *doing* the works our Heavenly Father has prepared in advance for us to do (Ephesians 2:10)? How can congregations be mission-minded in every aspect of their lives, yet do the very important and critical work of maintenance in the very best sense of the word?

Recent international travel to Indonesia, Jamaica and China and frequent domestic travel across the United States constantly remind me that the harvest is truly plentiful. Perhaps as never before, our congregations, our called and commissioned workers and our lay people need to be diligent and urgent in heeding our Lord's admonition to "work while it is day, before the night comes when no one can work" (John 9:4). Like Isaiah of old, might we respond to the Lord's call, "Here am I. Send me" (Isaiah 6:8), so that through us, God's **Church** today, the song goes on and on and on.

**Brian L. Friedrich, President**



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## Mission is the Ministry

The *Issues* editors have suggested for this editorial that I write a mission profile of Trinity Lutheran Church in Wausau, Wisconsin. Trinity will celebrate its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2008. A temptation at such an anniversary is merely to look back at how God has worked marvelous acts across the years. To resist that temptation, the lay leadership picked this anniversary theme: *Spring Forth in Mission*. They challenged the congregation to devote 30 percent of our anniversary offerings toward calling a mission developer to start a new mission here in the Wausau area. The aim is to help our members understand that our calling is to *proclaim* and *promote* the Gospel.

This mission-minded leadership among our lay people did not happen overnight. I believe some of the reason Trinity has been successful in outreach is our many modes of presenting to our members the Gospel's constant message to reach the lost. Whether it be the focus of the sermons, Bible studies, or even our logos and images, the aim of outreach has, by the power of the Holy Spirit, motivated our people to think beyond themselves. This has led to opening an early childhood center for university students down the street, "Meals and More" for the surrounding community, seven Katrina trips to Louisiana, two Thrivent Builds and Habitat for Humanity homes, the only Outreach to the Blind program in our community, and our signature ministry—an annual weekend of music called the "Rainbow Valley Music Festival" when we close our grounds for the weekend and offer at no charge 20 different bands with three different stages for Christian music, a children's tent, rides, and a food court. We have deliberately varied these opportunities for outreach in order to relate to many different personalities.

Along with the biblical message of outreach being regularly presented to the congregation, I believe that two events about eight years ago particularly helped move our people from maintenance to mission. First,

one of our associate pastors went to India for three weeks and came back with amazing stories of the church at work in the midst of persecution. Second, our parish nurse took a group of adults to Neah Bay, Washington, on an adult mission trip. When you have your people coming back and sharing the excitement and passion of reaching the lost in places far away, it also excites your people to be sharing God's grace in their daily lives. We all know people who are un-churched or de-churched. When a passion for the lost becomes personal, our understanding of outreach becomes ignited through the blessing of the Holy Spirit.

Congregations, I believe, need to focus on why they are there. It is not only to come together once a week and worship, but to make disciples of others by sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And, of course, both of these are connected. If that is not done, churches will die as soon as whatever else is holding them together gets broken, be it their pastor being called elsewhere, a breach in fellowship, or a change in times of worship. The congregation focused on itself will not grow. In fact, it will eventually die. That is not the call Jesus has put before us.

In October 2007 I traveled to Brazil to seek out opportunities for our members to go down for mission/servant events. In February 2008 we have 15 members going to Guatemala City for a short-term mission trip. While these members-in-mission are still down there, we hope to broadcast to our home members on Sunday mornings some of the work that they are doing. We, the lay and pastoral leadership, are constantly seeking ways to involve our members in sharing the Gospel here and abroad. Mission is the ministry we aim to maintain.

**Gary Schultz**

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• Illustration by Laura Knibbe •

## Our Greatest Challenge

"... and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man ... now write **what you see, what is and what is to take place hereafter** ..."

These words record the time when Jesus was walking among the lampstands of Asia Minor, commenting on what He saw and what was taking place. After describing these things, He offered correction, advice and promises. Each brief encounter closed with these words: **He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.**

Jesus continues to walk among the lampstands, and He invites us, those who have been taught of the Spirit and who possess the mind and love of Christ, to write **what we see, what is** taking place within the body of Christ in our specific context and **what is** taking place in the world as we, disciples of the missionary God, "seek and to save the lost."

There is not sufficient space in this editorial to present a comprehensive list of what Jesus might say to us, but from our perspective and vantage point one perspective is that our greatest challenge of moving from maintenance to mission is simply this: we are too much of the world and too little in the world. For many of our waking moments, we forget who we are and why we exist in the world.

We have built our fine homes, dine on the finest meats and drink good beer and wine, yet we do not grieve over the ruin of Joseph (that is, the steady decline of God's presence and activity in our lives and in the world). We have minimized the Lord's warning that a person's life does not consist in the abundance of his or her possessions but lies in being rich toward God and rich toward one's neighbor. We have often failed to act upon the reality that all of our talents and abilities have been entrusted into our care so that we might prosper the Master's business of making disciples of all nations. We have churches that are well ordered, with lots of rules, restrictions and traditions, but little mission. We spend a great deal of our time and energy defining who is "in" and who is "not in" and little time helping people "get in and stay in" and not perish eternally.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, what are we to do? As we reflect on moving from maintenance ministry to mission, Jesus challenges us with these words: **He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.** What is the Spirit of the Lord saying?

- 1 The Scriptures ascribe only one intention to God: to save humankind. Therefore, every task of the Church makes sense and has a purpose only as it leads to the mission of "making disciples of all peoples."
- 2 God is working out His saving plan in and through His chosen and redeemed people, and each believer has a responsibility for advancing the saving purposes of God in the world.
- 3 Each lampstand must realize that it is the Church, the body of Christ, in its locality, which must corporately fulfill its mission and ministry in that place. That is, it is to mediate the mind and Word of Christ and demonstrate His love and compassion for the world.
- 4 The process of Christianity is simple and involves three things: a) *bringing* large numbers of non-Christians to faith in Jesus Christ; b) *incorporating* believers of all ages, both children and adults, into the community so that they may grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ, *become mature* and no longer remain spiritual infants, and *use* their gifts and talents for the growth and strengthening of one another in love; and c) *equipping* each believer for his or her calling as a disciple, witness, priest, ambassador, and servant in the world.
- 5 The crisis situation is that we no longer live in a church culture but in an unchurched culture that challenges and invites God's people to become more missionary in their posture and orientation and to possess a proper balance between *edification* (building one another up in the Christian faith and becoming mature in Christ) and *evangelism* (proclaiming the Good News about Jesus), and fostering a *healthy, vibrant organic body life* centered in relationships (*coram Deo, coram hominibus, coram meipso, coram mundo*—translated: "in the presence of God, humankind, myself, and the world").

Anthropologist Anthony Wallace, in his classic definition of a revitalization movement, observed that it is a *deliberate, organized effort* by members of a society to construct a more satisfying culture, *centered in a sacred message, and enunciated by a prophet or maximum leader stating what is wrong now, what it*

*should be like in the future, and how to get from now to the future.* If we might serve as prophets in this editorial, the sacred message for your consideration comes from five theological perspectives:

- An apostolic perspective would ask, "What is the condition of the lampstand, and is it built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ being the cornerstone?"
- A prophetic perspective would help God's people remember who they are and why they are in the world, to keep themselves free from idols and to use their lives to prosper the Master's business of making disciples;
- An evangelistic perspective would encourage and equip God's people to reach out to others with the narratives of the Scriptures so that they can help those who do not know God's story to make sense of their story/narrative in light of His saving story;
- A pastoral perspective would focus on feeding and caring for the body of Christ, equipping the priesthood for their works of service and Gospel proclamation, overseeing the work of the Holy Spirit within and among the community of believers, and cultivating a biblical spirituality in God's people (Luther's understanding of spirituality: *oratio, meditatio, tentatio*);
- A teaching perspective would communicate His Word and His way of life so that it forms and shapes our entire existence through the daily, intentional, socialization of the Christian faith in our homes and in the ministries of the Church (Deuteronomy 6).

Your brothers in Christ and in His mission,

**The Rev. Paul Huneke**

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## Jesus' Ministry

Steve the Sheep Counter says, "Anyone not interested in maintenance ministry is an abortionist." Sam the Sheep Finder says, "Anyone not interested in growth ministry is suicidal."

Well, that's edifying! Either way, as Steve and Sam frame the argument, the result is death!

But he who is the Good Shepherd came that his creatures may have *life*—and have it abundantly. Workers in the church who don't want to do it Jesus' way should find another line of work. Or, and this is the preferred option, they [read: *we*] should daily return to the life-giving baptismal waters with repentant hearts. They [read: *we*] ought daily confess every obtuse corruption of the Savior's mission that seeks to make his work conform to what is easy or enticing to human sensibilities. They [read: *we*] can then daily come forth from those life-renewing waters with a pure heart set free to pray about ministry as Jesus prayed, "Not my will, but your will be done."

Relying upon a biblical theology of the body of Christ—confirmed by life-experience—it is not surprising to find that some workers in the church are more adept than others at beginning ministerial work in a new setting. Some are more adept at administering and sustaining ministerial activity. As well, for some, the church itself has established the contours of their ministry via the particulars of their call, directing certain workers more toward growth than maintenance activities, or vice versa (the difference between a call to serve in a rapidly growing population center vs. the call to serve in a rapidly declining or aging area). However, what the Scripture makes clear is that regardless of who plants and who waters, it is God who gives the growth, and thus both the grower and the maintainer are part of the same "collective."

If nothing is planted, there is nothing to water. If nothing is watered, the plant cannot grow. If planter and maintainer adopt an adversarial or hierarchical view of their work (rather than a symbiotic, complementary view under the one Lord of the church), then each one deceives himself in his "wisdom" and must heed the call to "become a fool that he may be wise" (1 Corinthians 3:18). One of my favorite parables is Mark 4:26–29, where the farmer does his part in planting the seed, but with regard to how the seed grows, "he knows not how." It is the Lord's field and the Lord's seed and the Lord's power to generate and sustain life.

Anyone doing *Jesus'* ministry will be about those things that generate new life and growth. Anyone doing *Jesus'* ministry will also be about sustaining the new life of faith once it is generated by the Spirit. *Jesus'* ministry is a ministry of proclaiming the Word and administering the Sacraments in the fullest sense of those terms, including preaching, evangelizing, teaching, calling, counseling, canvassing for new sheep, and reclaiming straying sheep. To do *Jesus'* ministry is to do growth ministry. To do *Jesus'* ministry is to do maintenance ministry. To do *Jesus'* ministry is ever to be about doing, supporting, and encouraging both, and never to neglect, deride, or diminish one or the other—or those engaged in tasks not identical to our own in the kingdom.

The question for anyone doing ministry, then, is, "Am I doing *Jesus'* ministry?" This is a question pregnant with implications for grounding church work in biblical wisdom, both in ministerial theory and method, driving us always to examine our latest ideas and our inherited traditions by the light and through the lens of Holy Scripture.

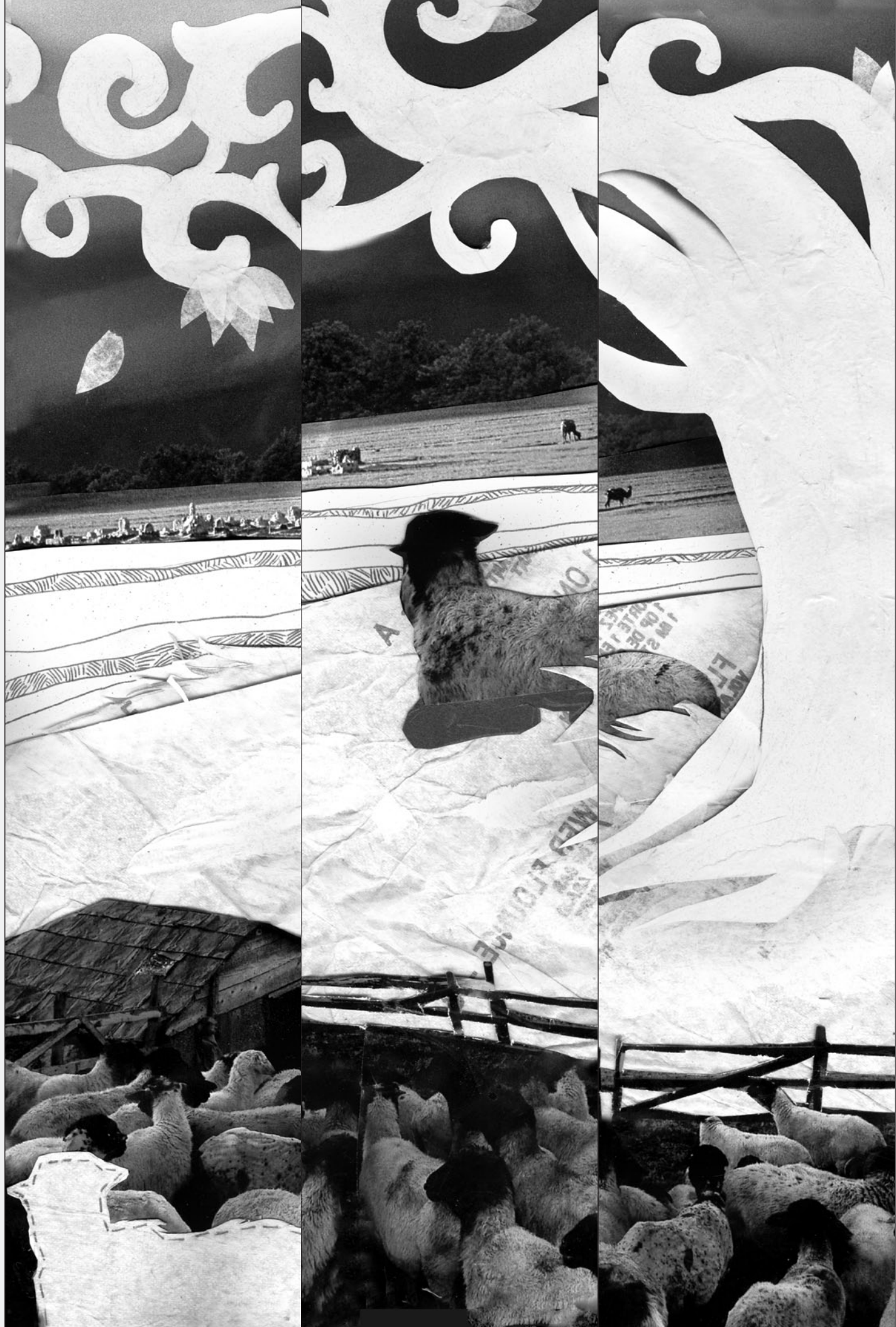
Writing this leads me to say, "Shame on me for all the times I am more about 'Chuck's ministry' than 'Jesus' ministry.'" 'Chuck's ministry' gets people nowhere (in a hurry), being at the same time both an abortive and a suicidal ministry. Thanks be to God that *Jesus'* ministry is to seek and to save the lost, including church workers who sometimes lose their way about whose ministry they are called to do.

The Good News is that *Jesus'* ministry has a Word of grace to remove my shame. The Good News is that *Jesus'* ministry sends me (how large is his grace!) out again to labor in *his* field. What a Savior! What a privilege! To work with *him*. To work *together* with others. Plowing. Planting. Watering. Tending. Some more adept at one or the other by the ministration of the Spirit's gifts, but all at work by the mercies of Christ for the glory of his name in the growth and maintenance of *his* kingdom.

Abortion? Suicide? *Jesus'* ministry means death to death. As *Jesus'* servants, we mediate life, newly engendered and grace-fully maintained. As *Jesus'* servants, we count it *all* joy.

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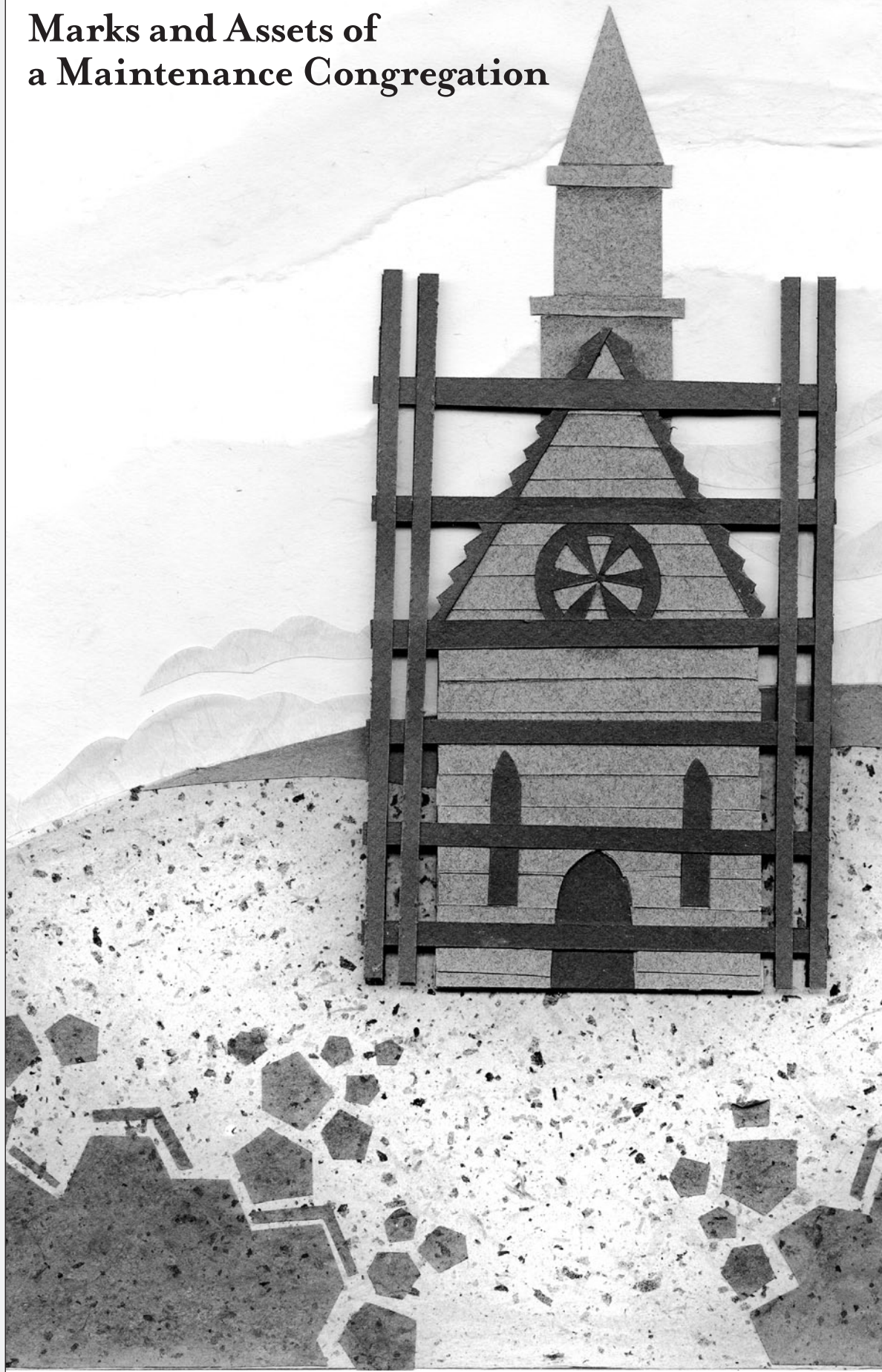






RICHARD BORING

## Marks and Assets of a Maintenance Congregation



• Illustration by Jacob Cooper •

ISSUES



A warning!!! You may find parts of this article offensive. It may shake the foundation you stand on. You may even find yourself in a maintenance church. Please read this article knowing that you and your church live under God's grace.

Today in the United States, 80 percent of Christian churches could be classified as maintenance congregations. Aubrey Malphus states in his book, *Advanced Strategic Planning*, "that in 1988 between 80-85 percent of churches in America had either plateaued or were in decline." He says that nothing has changed at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Malphus estimates that 70-80 percent of the people across America are unchurched. He quotes Penny Marler, "If the Gallup surveys over the past 30 years that estimate the unchurched to be only 57 percent of the population were accurate, then people would be flocking to our churches."

President Gerald Kieschnick of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod shows in the video, *With No Equivocation*, that 35 percent of LCMS churches did not baptize or confirm one adult in the most recent year; 47 percent of the churches baptized or confirmed one adult during the year; which means that 82 percent of our churches baptized or confirmed only one adult or less during the year.

One LCMS church closes every week. Only 900,000 of the 2.6 million members attend church each week. The LCMS is decreasing in membership by about 3.5 percent per year. The LCMS is 98 percent Anglo, who will be a minority in the United States by the year 2040.

## Maintenance and Missional

A warning!!! We need to be careful about judging churches and claiming that they are maintenance churches because of a pattern of worship attendance. There are churches that are mission minded whose attendance has been the same for ten years. These churches are usually in rural areas. They feel blessed

if they have as many baptisms as funerals. In these churches, if ten members graduate from high school, usually one or two of the students will stay in the community. The other eight leave for college or the city to find jobs and never return home to live. This means that every year a congregation needs to gain eight new members to replace the eight students who left the community. From the outside, this church may look like a maintenance church, but it is very missional. You will also find the same thing happening in urban churches in our large cities.

Most readers of this article will probably find themselves in a maintenance congregation. Our sinful nature will want us to blame our pastor, members of the church, or even the saints who went before us. Instead, we need to give thanks to God for our assets, and seek His wisdom to use His assets to make our churches missional.

*Encarta Dictionary* defines maintenance as:

**1** *Continuing repair work*: work that is done regularly to keep a machine, building, or piece of equipment in good condition and working order;

**2** *Upkeep*: the general condition of something with respect to repairs;

**3** *Continuation of something*: the continuation or preservation of something unchanged or unimpaired;

**4** *Provision of financial support*: the continuation or preservation of something unchanged or unimpaired;

**5** *Means of support*: the money that somebody has to pay to ensure a reasonable standard of living;

**6** *Interference in legal action*: unlawful interference in a lawsuit by an outsider who provides one party with the means to carry on the action.

One who has used farm or construction equipment or owned a vehicle knows how important maintenance is. We also need to understand as we look at maintenance churches moving to be missional that there are assets that we need to maintain.

---

THE REV. RICHARD BORING IS THE EXECUTIVE FOR DISTRICT MISSIONS AND OUTREACH OF THE NEBRASKA DISTRICT, THE LUTHERAN CHURCH—MISSOURI SYNOD. RICHB@NDLCMS.ORG

## Assets

The greatest asset maintenance churches have to move to be missional churches is God's Word and Sacraments and the Lutheran Confessions. The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is God's treasure to His church, and it should never be hidden inside the church. God, in His wisdom, has given us His Word and Sacraments to be the vehicles that bring God's grace to us, and it is our privilege to share it with the world.

An example of a failure to do this is hiding Baptismal grace inside the church. Today, people are trying to figure out which year, month, day, and time they decided to follow Jesus and wonder if they said the right words or did the right things for God to love them. As Lutherans, we need to be bold in telling how we were born into the world separated from God because of sin. As helpless babies, not capable of going to a refrigerator to get our own food, and so helpless that someone had to change our dirty, filthy diapers, God entered our lives through the power of the Holy Spirit in Baptism. Through Word and Sacraments, the Holy Spirit worked and continues to work faith in our lives. Paul reminds us in 2 Corinthians 10:17, "*But, 'Let him who boasts boast in the Lord.'*" The church needs to be out in the world boasting what God has done for all people to receive eternal life.

## Our History

The LCMS has had a strong history of gathering Lutherans. From 1850 to 1900, the church gathered immigrants from Germany—and especially German Lutherans. This is one of the reasons one finds several churches located in cornfields several miles from the nearest town.

From 1900 to 1950, the Lutheran Church was a reproducing church. The rural family was a large family. The father needed helpers on the farm. He may even have sent one or two children to Concordia College to become church workers.

From 1950 to 1980, congregations in rural areas were sending churches. The young people moved from the farm to the city to find jobs and enter higher education. We planted

churches in the cities to gather Lutherans who were living in the city. During these times there was mission activity, but the focus was gathering and taking care of Lutherans.

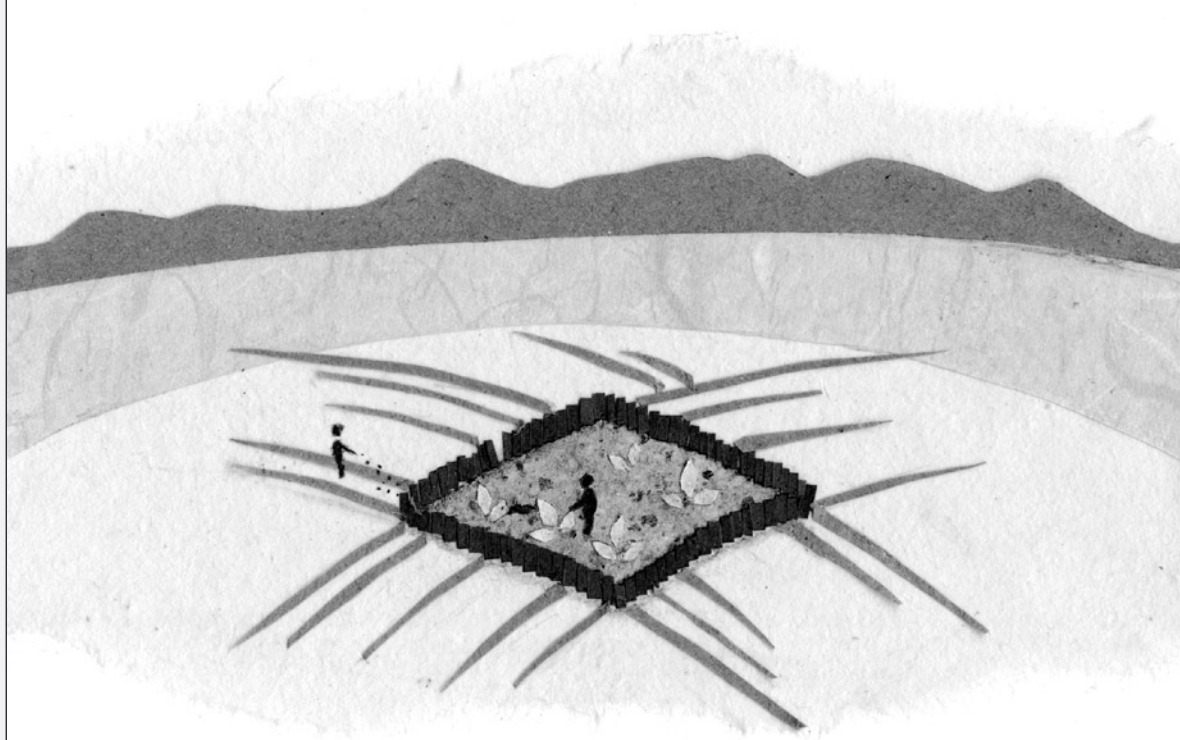
We need to give thanks and celebrate our past in which God used His Church to accomplish His plan. The assets of the past were teaching God's Word and celebrating the Sacraments as taught by the Lutheran Confessions. Christian education has been another strength for the LCMS. These assets were used by God to move the church into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## A New Day

The church is in a new day. There are people coming over on boats and planes, but they are not German Lutherans. The rural community is growing old, and new families who are moving into the rural areas usually have no relatives living in the community. The youth are still moving to the city, but most are disconnected from the church. Rural and urban areas are finding new immigrants moving into their area. Suburbs are finding young families building houses and moving into their area. While we live in a society that is mobile, many who move are not usually looking for a church home. This suggests that the church needs to move from maintaining the status quo inside the church walls and engage the mission field God has placed in the community.

The future of a maintenance church is dim according to Kennon Callahan. He states in his book, *Effective Church Leadership*, "The day of the local church is over. The day of the mission outpost has come. More precisely, the day of the church-culture local church is over ... What I am suggesting is that the way in which local churches have done business, conducted leadership, and developed administration, is no longer functional in our time. Churches that cling to the old ways that worked so well in the church-culture will survive for a number of years. Their people will grow old together, and many of those churches will eventually die ... the spirit of a mission outpost is one of mission,





whereas the spirit of a church-culture local church is one of maintenance." The future doesn't appear to be bright if we continue to just keep reaching Lutherans, especially German Lutherans.

Maintenance churches need to move out in their communities by God's grace and build relationships with their neighbors. They need to gather data from demographic studies to learn which social classes, age groups, marital status, and ethnic groups, are a congregation's neighbors. This information helps churches start looking beyond their own walls and see the beautiful mission field God has placed around their building.

### Questions: Maintenance and Mission Congregations

Harold Percy in his article, "Good News People," shares 12 questions maintenance and mission-minded churches ask. These questions will help maintenance churches think missionally and see the mission field God has placed in front of them.

- 1 In measuring the effectiveness, the maintenance congregation asks, "How many pastoral visits are being made?" The mission congregation asks, "How many disciples are being made?"
- 2 When contemplating some form of change, the maintenance congregation says, "If this proves upsetting to any of our members, we won't do it." The mission congregation says, "If this will help us reach someone on the outside, we will take the risk and do it."
- 3 When thinking about change, the majority of members in a maintenance congregation ask, "How will this affect me?" The majority of members in the mission congregation ask, "Will this increase our ability to reach those outside?"
- 4 When thinking of its vision for ministry, the maintenance congregation says, "We have to be faithful to our past." The mission congregation says, "We have to be faithful to our future."
- 5 The pastor in the maintenance congregation says to the newcomer, "I'd like to introduce you to some of our members." In the mission congregation the members say, "We'd like to introduce you to our pastor."
- 6 When confronted with a legitimate pastoral concern, the pastor in the maintenance congregation asks, "How can I meet this need?" The pastor in the mission congregation asks, "How can this need be met?"
- 7 The maintenance congregation seeks to avoid conflict at any cost (but rarely succeeds). The mission congregation understands that conflict is the price of progress, and is willing to pay the price. It understands that it cannot take everyone with it. This causes some grief, but it does not keep it from doing what needs to be done.

- 8 The leadership style in the maintenance congregation is primarily managerial, with leaders trying to keep everything in order and running smoothly. The leadership style in a mission congregation is primarily transformational, casting a vision of what can be, and marching off the map in order to bring the vision into reality.
  - 9 The maintenance congregation is concerned with its own members, its organizations and structure, its constitution, and committees. The mission congregation is concerned with the culture, understanding how secular people think, and what makes them tick. It tries to determine their needs and their points of accessibility to the Gospel.
  - 10 When thinking about growth, the maintenance congregation asks, "How many Lutherans live within a 20-minute drive of this church?" The mission congregation asks, "How many un-churched live within a two-minute drive of this church?"
  - 11 The maintenance congregation looks at the community and asks, "How can we get these people to support our congregation?" The mission congregation asks, "How can the church support these people?"
  - 12 The maintenance congregation thinks about how to save their congregation. The mission congregation thinks about how to reach the world.
- You will notice that maintenance-minded church questions are centered on what is going on inside the church walls, and a mission-minded church is focused on ministry outside the church walls.

## Maintenance and Missional Thinking

In maintenance churches that are focused on themselves, one will hear the following comments: "Why are we inviting the community to VBS?" "We are just a free babysitting service for their parents." "Why should we use the church's money to buy VBS materials for children who do not belong to the church?" "Everybody goes to church in this community—there is no need for

outreach." "The parents never go to church—the nerve of them to send their children to our Sunday school." "We need to get our inactive members back into worship so we can pay our bills." "We need to get new members so my church can survive." "I need a place for my children to get married, grandchildren baptized, and a special place to have my funeral." These comments are disturbing, but they are often heard in maintenance congregations.

God gives us an example of maintenance thinking in Matthew 25:41-45.

*Then he will say to those on his left, "Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me." They also will answer, "Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?" He will reply, "I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me."*

The mission-minded churches ask how God can use them to change the community. They ask, "What are the felt needs of the people? How can we use the felt needs to build relationships with people outside church so we can introduce them to our best friend, Jesus Christ?"

God gives us an example of being missional in Matthew 25:34-40.

*Then the King will say to those on his right, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me." Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you as a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?" The King will reply,*



*"I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me."*

I want to be clear that I am not saying maintenance churches will not receive eternal life. Eternal life is a gift from God given to those who have faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. Faith is given to maintenance and mission-minded churches. What the passages in Matthew show is that the mission field is right before our eyes and we might not even be aware of it.

## Seeing the Mission Field

Reggie McNeal, in his *The Present Future*, asks today's church to consider six statements and six tough questions that can help maintenance congregations to think missionally and see the mission field in their neighborhoods.

### 1. The collapse of the church culture.

- a. Wrong question: How do we do church better?
- b. Tough question: How do we reconvert from "churchianity" to Christianity?

### 2. The shift from church growth to kingdom growth.

- a. Wrong question: How do we grow this church?
- b. Tough question: How do we transform our community?

### 3. A new reformation: Releasing God's people.

- a. Wrong question: How do we turn members into ministers?
- b. Tough question: How do we turn members into missionaries?

### 4. The return to spiritual formation.

- a. Wrong question: How do we develop church members?
- b. Tough question: How do we develop followers of Jesus?

### 5. The shift from planning to preparation.

- a. Wrong question: How do we plan for the future?
- b. Tough question: How do we prepare for the future?

### 6. The rise of apostolic leadership.

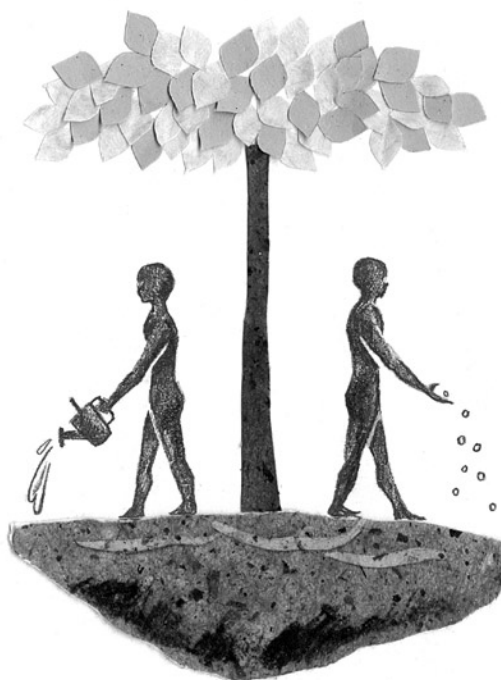
- a. Wrong question: How do we develop leaders for church work?
- b. Tough question: How do we develop leaders for the Christian movement?

McNeal's questions open our eyes to see how easy it is to worship the church instead of God. We forget that God is a sending God. He sent His Son to redeem us, and now He sends us into the world to plant seeds that produce faith. He alone is the one who works faith in unbelievers' hearts.

A warning!!! Your church is in a mission field. God has given you and your church great assets to reach people who do not know Him. The greatest asset is Jesus Christ. We need to go to Him and repent of being a maintenance church and trust that He is a forgiving God who changes lives. You and your church live under God's grace. Go and serve Him in joy and peace.

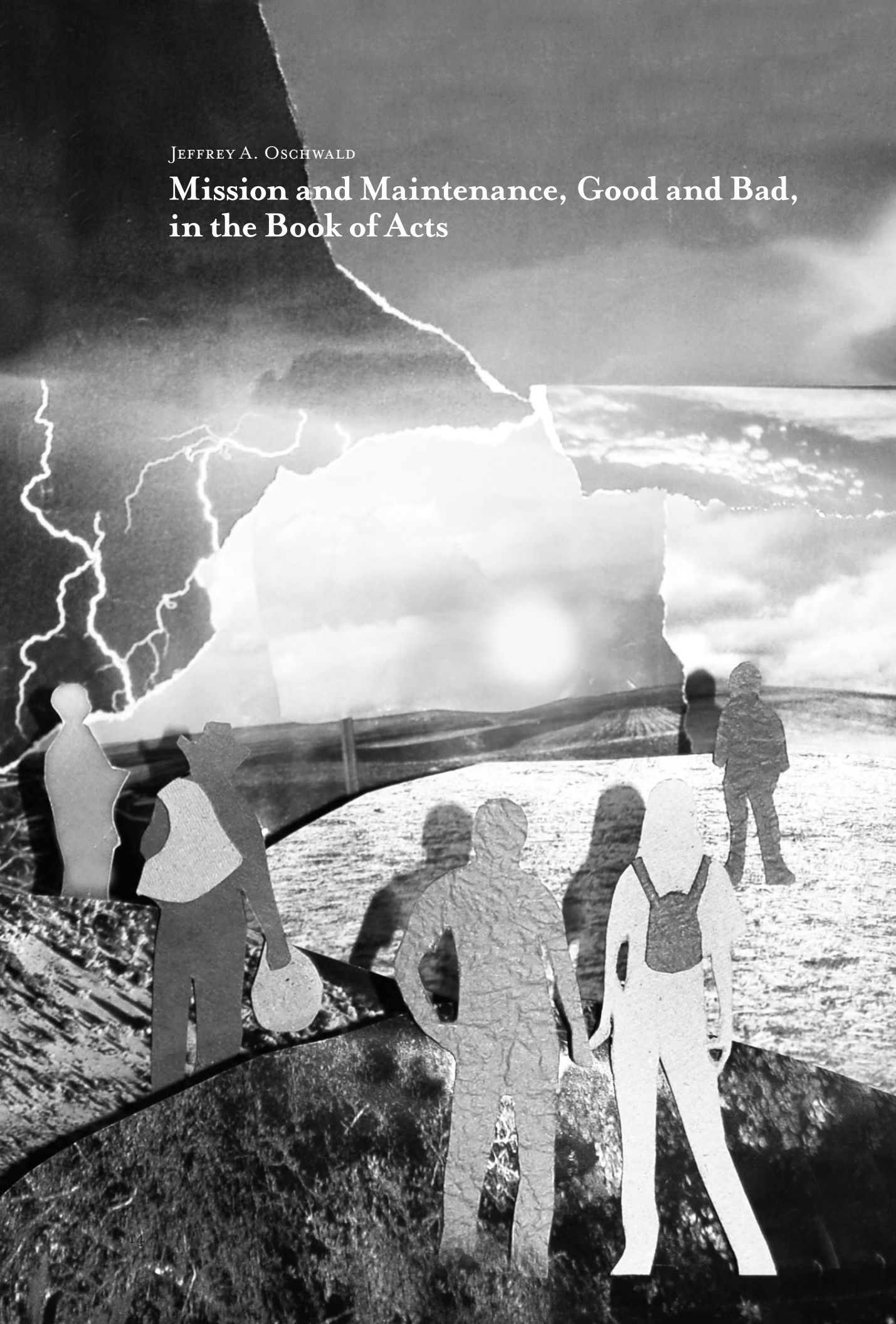
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JEFFREY A. OSCHWALD

## Mission and Maintenance, Good and Bad, in the Book of Acts



• Illustration by Tannon Osten •

ISSUES



"And they persisted with great determination in their study of the apostles' teachings" (Acts 2:42). If that description fits us as well as it did the early Christian community in Jerusalem that Luke was describing, it is only natural that we should turn to the apostolic word when changing times and situations, new challenges, and unprecedented opportunities compel us to look again at the way we are living out our calling as the people of God. But where should we begin?

Many would regard The Acts of the Apostles as the New Testament's sole "historical book" and would say that it provides a history of "the origin and growth of the early church."<sup>1</sup> Acts does, in fact, have much to offer for questioning congregations. Small, struggling congregations can read there how earlier small, struggling congregations survived the difficult days immediately following the Lord's ascension. Churches experiencing remarkable growth can read there of the life-and-death battles the church had to wage to preserve its identity and remain faithful to its calling when thousands at a time appealed for Baptism. And churches mired in purposelessness and inertia are in Acts warned of the consequences of opposing God's plans for His church and are in Acts also called to a renewed and living hope.

### Don't Lose Sight of Luke's Purpose

Before we get too far, however, we need to qualify the description of Acts given above. As Francois Bovon reminds his readers:

"The Book of Acts does not recount primarily the history of either the church or the Holy Spirit. It situates in the foreground the diffusion of the Word of God."<sup>2</sup>

Martin Franzmann made the point even more forcefully:

"The book does not pretend to be a history of the first church or even a

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history of early missions; it would be woefully incomplete as either of the two. It is the continuation of the story of the Christ, and can therefore be as selective in recording the facts of history as the Gospel itself ... Luke selects incidents and actions that illumine and bring out in clear outline the impact of that word upon men, the tensions and conflicts which ensue when the word of the Lord is heard, and the triumphant progress of that word despite tensions and conflicts.<sup>3</sup>

Although Luke provides us with invaluable historical information about the church in Acts, his purpose in writing it was to tell the story of the spread of the gospel of Jesus Christ from Jerusalem out into the world in general and to Rome in particular—not to write a history of the church or a handbook for the church. We must constantly remind ourselves, therefore, that, if Luke does not mention a particular feature of the life of the church, it may simply be because that feature would not have helped him tell the story he wants to tell. It does not necessarily mean that the feature was not a characteristic of the church. The ministries of most of the apostles provide a prime example. We cannot argue on the basis of Acts, for instance, that Matthew carried out no ministry whatsoever after the resurrection of Jesus simply because Matthew is nowhere mentioned by name in Acts after 1:13. It will be crucial for us to keep this principle in mind as we try to draw conclusions based on Acts about mission and maintenance in the church then and now.

Luke, of course, does not use our contemporary language of "mission" and "maintenance." You won't find the word *maintenance* occurring even once in the New International Version or in the English Standard Version of the Acts of the Apostles. Moreover, you won't be able to find the word *missionary* either; and the word *mission* occurs only once in the NIV of Acts and not at all in the ESV of Acts.<sup>4</sup> To speak about maintenance and mission in Acts, then, will require more than a simple concordance-style word study.

## A First Look at the Church in Acts

It might be wise to begin with something that does appear in the text: the church. “The Book of Acts is full of stories about the church, so it shouldn’t be too difficult to put together a pretty decent composite picture,” we might be tempted to think. Attempting the task convinces us otherwise. Although the church is regularly present, it is rarely the focus of a passage. The church seems more than happy to play a supporting role in the Book of Acts.

Even when it appears, the church is often not acting but being acted upon. Perhaps the easiest way to quickly review the material in Acts is to look at those passages where the word *ekklesia* occurs and refers to either the whole Christian community or a local congregation of it.

- 5:11 Great fear comes upon the whole church in reaction to the sudden deaths of Ananias and Sapphira.
- 8:1 A great persecution of the church in Jerusalem takes place following the execution of Stephen.
- 8:3 Saul seeks to do the church harm during this persecution.
- 9:31 With Saul as a new follower of Jesus Christ, the church has peace and is built up.
- 11:22 The church in Jerusalem hears a report of many people coming to faith at Antioch.
- 11:26 Barnabas and Saul teach for a year in the church at Antioch.
- 12:1 Herod seizes some members of the church in order to mistreat them.
- 12:5 The church prays earnestly for the imprisoned Peter.
- 13:1 In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers.
- 14:23 Paul and Barnabas appoint elders for the congregations along their way.
- 14:27 Paul and Barnabas gather the church for a report on all that God had been accomplishing.

15:3 Paul and Barnabas are sent by the church in Antioch to Jerusalem to clear up the matter of the relationship between circumcision and salvation.

15:4 Paul and Barnabas are welcomed by the church in Jerusalem.

15:22 It seemed best to the apostles, elders, and the whole church to send men from Jerusalem to accompany Paul and Barnabas.

15:41 Paul strengthens the churches throughout Syria and Cilicia.

16:5 In connection with the preaching and teaching of Paul and Timothy, the churches are strengthened in the faith and grow in numbers.

18:22 Paul greets the church at Caesarea as he returns from his travels.

20:17 Paul summons the elders of the Ephesian church so that he can say his farewell to them.

20:28 Paul charges the elders to care for the church as a shepherd does for his flock.

In 15 of these 19 explicit references to the church, the church is either being acted upon by someone else (persecuted, ministered to, built up, etc.) or experiencing something (great fear, the hearing of news, the presence of prophets and teachers, etc.). In the four passages where the church acts, we see the church praying (12:5), sending ambassadors to another church (15:3), welcoming ambassadors from another church (15:4), and sending representatives with Paul and Barnabas (15:22).

The survey is not truly complete, however, until we read the passages *around* the verses listed above. For instance, the announcement of the persecution of the Jerusalem church in 8:1 continues with the story of the scattering of its non-apostolic members throughout Judea and Samaria. In verse 4 we read that these scattered church members “went about from place to place preaching the word.” In fact, Luke picks up the story of these “scattered ones” again in 11:19, telling



us that some of them were scattered as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch. It is the response to their preaching that “reaches the ears of the church” in Jerusalem (11:22). The group that is created by this preaching is called “the church” in 11:26 and “the disciples” in 11:29. In the latter verse, the group itself takes action by sending relief to the Christians in Judea to help them in the coming famine. Chapter 15, with its references to the sending of and the welcoming of delegates from one community to another, proceeds to tell the story of the church in Jerusalem, members and leaders, gathering together with delegates from the church in Antioch to find biblical answers to the problems they face concerning the incorporation of believing Gentiles into a church that has so far been almost entirely Jewish in its makeup.

### The Disciples in Acts

Luke’s reference to “the disciples” in 11:29 arouses our curiosity about his use of that term. Is this another way that Luke speaks of “the church”? We can tell from 11:26 that, when Luke uses the term *disciple* without qualification to describe a person or group of persons, he almost always means the same thing as *believers* or *Christians*. It is no simple matter to explain why Luke sometimes uses “believers,” sometimes “disciples,” and sometimes simply “the church.” In several places, Luke’s preference for “disciples” over “the church” seems to come very naturally from the ability of the plural *disciples* to emphasize the individual members of the group. For example, in 6:7 we read that the number of the disciples multiplied. Later, in 11:29, the disciples, *each according to his/her own ability*, decide to send aid for the relief of the Judean brothers. In both of these cases, the emphasis on a plurality of members is clear. In other cases, Luke may use “disciples” to indicate that members of a local congregation were acting on their own or as representatives of the entire congregation. For example, 21:4 finds Paul and his companions en route to Jerusalem for Paul’s final visit to the city.



Having just landed at Tyre, Paul and the group “look up” the disciples there, who then serve as the hosts for Paul and his group until the travelers depart for Jerusalem. The group has no need to assemble the whole church—they simply need to find some individual members willing and able to house them for a week.

We do not need to solve all the problems of Luke’s usage (including what seems to be a reference to *Paul’s* disciples in 9:25) to answer the questions relating to our theme. It is enough to simply notice that the things that disciples do correspond rather closely to the things that the church does. Most often the term *disciples* is used to indicate simply that there were Christians or believers in a certain place. When they act, we see them sending men to the apostle Peter to request his help (9:38), sending a relief offering to the Judean believers (11:29), hosting Paul and other traveling Christians (9:19; 14:28; 18:27; 21:4), and looking out for Paul’s safety (9:25; 14:20; 19:30; 21:4).

### **The Believers in Acts**

In the case of the passages that mention “believers” (in the plural), we find fewer passages and a smaller range of activities. “Believers” form a community where the members “have everything in common” (2:44; 4:32). The community grows as more believers are added to it. They are devoted students of the apostles’ teaching. Their lives are made into a fellowship with each other. They participate in regular worship through Eucharist and prayer (2:42; cf. 4:33). These believers, too, are described as the objects of persecution—even at the hand of Paul himself (22:19). Quite obviously, the most important thing that “believers” do is simply believe.

### **The Faithful, Caring, Worshipping Church in Acts**

We may, in fact, let Luke’s summary in Acts 2:42ff serve as our summary of what we have seen thus far. The church is described first of all as a community of faith. Individual

believers are brought together by their devotion to the same teaching, namely, that of the apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ. In this apostolic community, members are willing to share their own possessions with other members of the community. Whether it takes the form of relief in the face of crises or the ordinary, daily care of each other, this fellowship is a prominent feature of the description of the community in Acts. It extends beyond matters of food and housing to issues of spiritual welfare. We several times see the community of one place working together with another community or with community leaders to solve theological problems. A third characteristic, and one that brings together many aspects of the first two, of this group is that it is a worshipping community. Gathering together in a variety of locations from God’s house to their own, we see the church regularly at prayer and celebrating the Lord’s Supper.<sup>5</sup> This is not only one of the chief expressions of their devotion to the message but also an additional expression of their care for one another.

### **The Significance of Paul’s Parting Instructions**

We have seen how care for each other and a devoted study of the apostles’ teaching build up and strengthen the church in Jerusalem. Paul and Barnabas do all they can to see that this happens in every place where a new congregation is formed. They appoint elders for every congregation to care for them (14:23), and the work of Paul and other traveling preachers is often described as “strengthening” the churches or the believers (14:22; 15:32, 41; 16:5; 18:23; cf. 18:27; recall also our Lord’s command to Peter to “strengthen” his brothers in Luke 22:32).

A passage that deserves special attention is Acts 20:17–38. At this point in the narrative, Paul is making his way to Jerusalem, with a very definite goal of reaching his destination by Pentecost (20:16). Apparently hoping to save time, he decides not to visit Ephesus on the way, but instead to ask the elders of the



church there to meet him at Miletus. Paul makes it clear that this meeting is to be his final farewell to them (20:25), and Luke provides a summary of his words of farewell in vv. 18-35. Paul's rehearsal of the history of his work among these people is not as directly relevant to our questions as is the last part of his speech in which he gives instructions to these elders. In v. 28, he turns his full attention to their ongoing ministry and charges them to "be careful" or "be on their guard" with regard to themselves and to their people. He reminds them that the Holy Spirit made them overseers in the church for a purpose: they are to "care—as shepherds would for their flocks—for the church of God." In the verses that follow, Paul emphasizes especially that this shepherding of the church will include the elders' defense of the church from false teachers as well as their own ongoing devotion to the word of God (20:29-32). Given the many parallels that are drawn between the experience of the apostles in Acts and of their Lord in the Gospel, we might expect here some sort of commission to ensure that the evangelization of the Gentiles continues after Paul's departure. We find none. We can suggest two possible reasons for that.

First of all, Paul's Lord had already declared before His ascension that the proclamation of the gospel was as determined a part of God's plan as was the death and resurrection of His Son. We will have more to say about Acts 1:8 and Luke 24:46-48 below, but we need to at least mention them here. The Lord's declaration that the gospel will be preached still stands. It never depended on Paul, so his departure will not affect it. There is no need to reissue a commission that is still being actively carried out, neither is it Paul's place to do so.

Secondly, and closely related to the first, is Paul's confidence that, if the gospel is being taught correctly, that is to say, if the good news about Jesus is what people are hearing in the proclamation of the church, the Word will continue to grow. When given the chance, the gospel will do its work. The most fundamental

failing of the church is to preach another gospel, which, as Paul declares elsewhere, is to preach no gospel at all (cf. Galatians 1:6-12).

### **Why Haven't We Yet Spoken about *Mission*?**

We have little difficulty understanding how important such mutual care was for the life of the church; we may even envy those early congregations' *koinonia*. What we may find difficult is the fact that a zeal for mission has not yet appeared in the description of these early congregations—we probably expected it to top the list. It is the case, however, that, in a thorough survey of the passages where Luke mentions groups of Christians working or acting together, we find no mention of the church sending out missionaries.

We must not forget Franzmann's warning given above that Luke is neither trying to provide us with a history of the church nor with a history of mission. The historical situation of the Christian congregations we see in Acts is vastly different from our own, so we should not expect them to do things the same way we do. At the same time, there are some "strong family resemblances" to notice.

Once again, Franzmann can help us see the point. What we regularly see in Acts, is the living expression of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. When he described discipleship in Matthew's Gospel, Franzmann wrote:

The disciples had been marked out as missionaries from the first. When Jesus called them, He told them, "I will make you fishers of men" (4:19). Jesus' call had put them into communion with one who "*went about*" Galilee teaching ... preaching ... healing" (4:23). It was from a Teacher whose life was one great mission of revelation and mercy that they heard words which pointed them, too, toward a missionary ministry. When Jesus put His disciples into the succession of the prophets, spokesmen for the God who acts (5:12), when He called them the salt of the earth and the

light of the world and bade them let their light shine before men in order that their Father in heaven might be glorified (5:13-16), when He prepared them for a life of conflict with Judaism by taking from them the right of judging and by giving them the power to pray and love (7:1-12), He was molding their wills for a life of mission activity.

But it was not only this or that aspect of Jesus' teaching which gave the disciples' life its missionary impetus; it was the whole Messianic impact of Jesus on the disciples, the impact of His words and deeds and person as one indissoluble unity.<sup>6</sup>

The disciple/missionary is not the exception; he or she is the rule. It is the "Messianic impact of Jesus" on the lives of the men and women in Acts that makes of them people who take the gospel with them wherever they go and proclaim it wherever they are. This is *Jesus' church* (Matthew 16:18), and these are *Jesus' disciples* (John 8:31); their relationship with Him molds "their wills for a life of mission activity."

### Don't Lose Sight of God's Purpose

If Luke nowhere speaks of the church as sending out missionaries, it may very well be because he has an even more important point to make. Let's turn back to Acts 13, where we may have expected to read the account of the church sending out the first missionaries to the Gentiles: Barnabas and Saul. The first verse of chapter 13 explicitly mentions the church, as we saw above, but the church only forms the remoter context for the story that unfolds. Immediately we move to a group of prophet/teachers within the church at Antioch. As the scene begins, these men are worshiping (or, perhaps a better translation would be "rendering service to") the Lord and fasting (13:2). The setting then is not a council of church leaders trying to solve a problem or devise a strategy, like the scene in chapter 15. If there was a special purpose for this time of service and fasting, Luke does not

tell us what that was. What is important for us to know is that, while these church leaders were together, the Holy Spirit made known to them that He had chosen Barnabas and Saul to be set apart for His work (13:2). Verse 3 mentions these leaders "releasing" Barnabas and Saul for this work with their blessing, but it is v. 4 that is important for us to note here. "Sent out by the Holy Spirit," Luke writes, Barnabas and Saul set out for Cyprus.

Luke emphasizes this point again and again. From the upper room in Jerusalem to Paul's apartment-prison in Rome, every step of the gospel's voyage has been divinely guided—if not divinely driven! The Spirit fills the disciples on the first Christian Pentecost, and they begin to proclaim the gospel to the world. The Lord Jesus chooses and calls and transforms His apostle to the Gentiles. God prepares Peter for his trip to Cornelius' house, just as He commands Cornelius to send for Peter.<sup>7</sup> Prison doors are opened, and roads are blocked. Ships sail and sink. Believers are driven out of one place to be welcomed in another. Preachers are thrown in dungeons only to appear before kings. And it all happens by the direction of the Lord of the church and by no other. This is truly and wholly a book about the things Jesus does through His Spirit for the sake of the Kingdom of God (cf. Acts 1:1-3).<sup>8</sup>

There is one passage that we haven't yet looked at that, by itself, should be able to either settle the case or send us back to the exegetical drawing board: Acts 1:8. Though the passage is commonly referred to as Jesus' "commission," recall Beverly Gaventa's description of Acts 1:8 in note 6 as "a promise fulfilled by events, not as a commandment the apostles set out to obey."<sup>9</sup> The first thing to notice is that these words—probably best seen as both promise *and* commission—are given by *the Lord* to His apostles; they do not originate with the church. Secondly, notice how they are fulfilled in the story that Luke tells. Tannehill gives a good summary:

Jesus is detailed in speaking of those areas where his present hearers will have important roles in the mission:



Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria. The rest of the mission is encompassed in a single, sweeping phrase. Jesus is speaking to Galileans (see 1:11) in the context of the Jewish homeland, and his language reflects the difference between what such people know from experience and the large, vaguely known world beyond. These Galileans will not fulfill the mission to the end of the earth by themselves. In spite of the commission now being given them, they will not even be in the forefront of some of the new developments in the mission in its early stages. Others will begin the work in Samaria and Antioch (see 8:5; 11:20). Even Gentiles in or near the Jewish homeland are not evangelized or accepted without additional prodding from God and argument in the church (see 10:1–11:18). Nevertheless, these Galileans will fulfill their commission within certain limits, and others will step in to help. The mission does not develop according to a clear plan worked out by the apostles. There are unexpected twists and turns, and the necessary work will be done by unexpected agents. When Paul and Barnabas announce their mission to the “end of the earth” in 13:47, they are claiming the mission originally given to the Galileans in 1:8. There is no hint of Paul’s role in 1:8, but the fact that Paul later makes a major contribution to fulfilling the mission authorized by Jesus is one of many indications of the importance of his work in God’s plan.<sup>10</sup>

On the list of “unexpected agents” we need to see also the name of our narrator, Luke. Luke was not present to hear Jesus speak those words of promise and commission. Notice how he even says those words were given to “them”—not to “us.” And yet, the bold speeches of Peter and Stephen and Paul would have traveled no farther than the ears of their original hearers had it not been for Luke also claiming as *his own* “the mission originally given to the Galileans.” There are

good reasons why the church’s part in God’s great saving mission should begin with a commission from her Lord, and there are good reasons why those particular Galileans needed to hear such words of commission and promise. They had, remember, just denied their Lord. But the picture we see in the rest of Acts is of men and women of every type and station who simply get carried away in the growth of the Word. They do not wait for the church to commission or send them. Whether traveler or homebody, whether professional or lay, when this good news claims them, they claim this mission.

### Mission, Good and Bad

Much more could be said about the church in Acts, but there are still a few things that must be said about mission and maintenance ministries in Acts. First, this careful look at Acts suggests that we in the church today need to keep in mind the possibility that there might be “bad mission” as well as “good mission.” The latter is easier to see, of course, but that makes an awareness of the former all the more important for us. “Good mission” in Acts is the sending out and the being sent that is directed by God and always for His purposes. It begins in Acts with the command to the apostles to wait for an event that Jesus Himself promises, that is to say it begins with a chain of events initiated and orchestrated by the Lord Himself. A more complete reading of Luke shows that this chain of events stretches back to the cross and the empty tomb: “It stands written in this way: the Messiah suffers and rises on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins is preached in His name to all nations” (Luke 24:46–47).

“Bad mission,” then, is what happens when the church forgets that it is God who saves. “Bad mission” is what happens when the church begins to think that both God and men can be outsmarted (Acts 5:1–11), that the gifts of God are for our use and our glory not His (Acts 8:9–24 and 19:13–17), that we know better than God what He wants (9:1–2), that we can decide on the shape and composition

of God's people (Acts 10 and 15), or that we can accurately judge when the mission is going well or not (emphases made throughout Acts).

### **Maintenance, Good and Bad**

In the same way, we need to acknowledge "good maintenance" and "bad maintenance" in the life of the church. The passages mentioned above have already introduced us to the idea of "good maintenance": devotion to the apostolic teaching, mutual care through works of mercy and compassion, regular gathering for the worship of God and the encouragement of the faithful. Such "good maintenance" is not static but dynamic; it is characterized by growth, multiplication, increase, the expansion of the proclamation and the deepening of faith. It's understandable if some think that this is too good to be "maintenance," but it is simply impossible to speak of the church in Acts without remarking on how much time and energy is devoted to this spiritual care.

To see what Acts has to teach us about "bad maintenance," we really need to step back and look at the "big picture." "Bad maintenance" is the denial in word and deed that God is able to do anything new. "Bad maintenance" loves to talk about God's great actions in the past, and it may even hold out some hope that He will act again in the future, but it cannot allow the possibility that God could be acting here and now among us. It is the insistence on maintaining old ways and customs and mindsets in a way that resists both humanity and God. The tragic examples here are all those who reject this good NEWS, both Jew and Gentile, and insist on trying to establish a relationship with God, to secure their own well-being in this world and in the next, through their own old and misguided ways. But there are stories with happy endings, too. The two primary witnesses for the Lord, Peter and Paul, both have to be and are converted by Him from their own versions of "bad maintenance." In fact, every human participant in the story of Acts begins in need of such a conversion.

### **Boldly and Without Hindrance**

Hopefully, some applications for us are already suggesting themselves. The reader of Acts is not handed a torch, or a baton, or even a yoke at the end of the book. We are nowhere commanded to "take over" for the apostles and carry on with their mission. What we find in Acts is a message of salvation in Jesus Christ and an account of the proclamation of that message throughout the empire. We find men and women who are so devoted to that Word that it shapes the very way they live, the things they do, the things they say. This message moves them to proclaim it in new places even though it was for proclaiming it that they were driven out of the old places. And yet, it is always the message that remains the main character. Messengers may be imprisoned, exiled, persecuted, yes, even killed, but the message does not stop.

Luke neither intends to nor actually does provide us with a manual for church and mission. The Book of Acts does not dictate synodical structures or congregational constitutions. It provides us with an opportunity to be witnesses of God at work in His Son and through His Spirit to save His world. He does this through a word, a word of repentance and forgiveness, a word proclaimed in the name of Jesus. It is that word that transforms forever the lives of people like Peter and Stephen and Paul—and Luke himself. And you and me. Acts not only tells us about the word, but, as we read Acts, that word speaks just as powerfully to us at the ends of the earth as it spoke to hearts in Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria. It saves us, and it changes us. It works in us the same devotion to itself and to one another that we see in the churches in Acts. Individually and communally we become visible proof that God is at work doing new things in our "here and now." And the Spirit still fills His people and still uses every means at His disposal—sometimes even those that surprise or shock us—to fulfill His purposes. And the gospel of God's grace is proclaimed. Boldly and without hindrance.



## Notes

1 Frank Charles Thompson, ed., "The New Comprehensive Bible Helps" in *The New Chain-Reference Bible* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.; Indianapolis: B. B. Kirkbridge Bible Co., 1964), 185.

2 Francois Bovon, *Luke the Theologian*, (2d ed.; Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2006), 457.

3 Martin H. Franzmann, *The Word of the Lord Grows* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1961), 207.

4 Acts 12:25 reports what Barnabas and Saul did after they had completed their diakoniva (*diakonia*). The NIV translators chose to use "mission," whereas the ESV translators use the more typical "service." Diakoniva in and of itself does not suggest the idea of sending out for service. Perhaps a better candidate for "mission" is *dromos* (dromos) in 13:25 and 20:24. NIV translates "work" and "race," respectively; ESV uses "course" in both places. *Dromos* includes the idea of travel, but it, too, lacks any strong suggestion of being sent.

5 Luke does not mention baptism in either 2:42ff or 4:32ff, even though there are numerous baptisms recorded in Acts. Whether these happen in/at "church" forces us to decide whether the group gathered in Jerusalem in Acts 2 or at the house of Cornelius in Acts 10 should be called "church." Luke does not use the word to describe these groups, though they are certainly gatherings of believers.

6 Martin H. Franzmann, *Follow Me: Discipleship According to Saint Matthew* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1961), 65.

7 Commenting on Acts 11:1-18, Beverly Gaventa writes: "In no sense would it be accurate to claim that Peter or the Jerusalem church *decides* to include Gentiles. The programmatic statement of the risen Jesus in 1:8 functions as a promise fulfilled by events, not as a commandment the apostles set out to obey." See Beverly Roberts Gaventa, *The Acts of The Apostles* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003), 175.

8 "The Book of Acts is to be thought of as the rectilinear continuation of Luke's Gospel, with the exalted Christ as its solely dominant figure." Martin H. Franzmann, *The Word of the Lord Grows* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1961), 204.

9 Beverly Roberts Gaventa, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003), 175.

10 Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke—Acts: A Literary Interpretation. Volume Two: The Acts of the Apostles* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 18.

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ROBERT D. NEWTON

## The Great Commissions: Given to Whom???



• Illustration by Michelle Roeber •

ISSUES



The *Ablaze!* movement in the LCMS has caused church leaders to ask “to whom were the Great Commissions<sup>1</sup> given,” but it is hardly a new question. It was debated among professors and students when I was teaching at Concordia Theological Seminary over a decade ago, and it has grown since that time to include pastors and people in every district of the Synod. Many argue for a view traditionally held in the LCMS that the church was commissioned by our Lord and, therefore, the ministry of preaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments is the right and duty of all Christians.<sup>2</sup> Others argue that He commissioned the eleven, who represent the “ordained” ministers of the Gospel. Therefore, pastors rather than all Christians were commissioned to preach the Gospel and administer the Sacraments. I commend the editorial committee of *Issues in Christian Education* for taking up the question at this time and doing so within the larger conversation of “From Maintenance to Mission: Changing the Paradigm.”<sup>3</sup>

## Two Perspectives

“Maintenance and Mission” offer two different, but not necessarily contradictory, perspectives on the question. Maintenance intends to keep or preserve something good or right from changing to something bad or wrong. Thus St. Paul commends the Corinthian Christians for “[maintaining] the traditions even as [he] delivered them” (1 Corinthians 11:2). We must always be vigilant in keeping our Gospel-centered doctrine right and true. The salvation of the world depends upon it. But it is especially critical in a time when society’s move away from all things godly puts extraordinary pressure on the church to accommodate herself to the world at the expense of the faith once delivered. Those arguing for a “pastor-centered” Great Commission often do so

from this real concern. They reason that in order to keep the true faith and to pass it on faithfully, it must be entrusted principally to well-prepared and properly called shepherds. They do not intend to ignore the mission side of the equation; they often fear, however, that the preservation of the faith will be sacrificed in the process.

Those arguing from the mission perspective have no intention of compromising the true faith or of depreciating the need to maintain it. However, they hold that preserving the true faith is not meant to be an end in itself, but is meant to serve faithfully God’s ultimate intention in sending His Son into the world: “to save it” (John 3:17). Their primary focus is not on those who can administer the Gospel, but rather on those who desperately need to receive it. They would challenge, on the basis of the Gospel, any practices of the church (even well-intended ones) that in the end frustrate or impede the proclamation of the pure Gospel to the dying, for God “would have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4).

For years, both as an evangelistic missionary and a professor of missions, I have approached the question from this latter perspective. I would attempt in this article, however, to add something more to the mix and that by asking a question different from the main. Rather than asking, “To whom did God give the Great Commission,” I suggest that we ask, “To whom did God grant repentance that leads to life” (Acts 11:18). That changes the business of the Great Commission from something that Christ commanded certain Christians (called pastors) or all Christians *to do*, to something that is intrinsic to the salvation *He won* for all. Participation in Christ’s mission, then, is understood as an essential component of our inheritance in the Gospel, something for us to receive and cherish, and in which to invest with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength. No Christian may exempt oneself or be excluded from it.

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## The Big Question: A Response

In this regard, it is necessary to answer the main question, "to whom was the Great Commission given" from the perspective of the Gospel itself, that is, from Christ Himself. The question, as it is generally discussed among us, tends to ignore this starting place. But it is precisely to and from this place that Christ speaks His Great Commissions. He begins in Matthew 28, "All authority in heaven and on earth is given to me."<sup>4</sup> That's the key. Commissioning has to do with the granting of authority in order to carry out a specific mission or responsibility. Jesus states that He was given divine authority to carry out His Father's evangelistic mandate to save the world. Thus, He claims to be the "Great Commissioned One of the Father." Jesus refers to Himself a number of times in John's Gospel as the "one sent (*avpe, steilen*) by His Father" to come into the world. The word *avpe, steilen* does not simply mean "send" but includes the commissioning, or granting of the authority necessary to complete the mission on which one is sent.<sup>5</sup> In John 3:17 the Father's commission to His Son is stated in both negative and positive terms. "For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him" (see also 10:36 and 17:18). Jesus is His Father's great apostle or missionary to the world and as such is given complete authority to forgive sins. It is from His personal, divine authority that the forgiveness of sins is administered to the world.

Our Lord's commission by His Father is the basis for the commissioning of everyone else in the ministry of the Gospel (John 20:21). The Great Commission begins and ends in Him. Jesus remains God's great Apostle, the Sent One, who will carry to completion His Father's will. Jesus did not hand over His Commission for someone else to complete. As our ascended Lord, He continues to rule personally until every enemy is put under His feet, the last being death itself (1 Corinthians 15). So King David prophesied, "The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies

your footstool'" (Psalm 110:1, see also Acts 2:34-35).

In His post resurrection appearance to His disciples (the eleven and those who were with them), as recorded in Luke 24, the Lord opened their minds to understand all that had been written in the Old Testament regarding Himself. He summarized that teaching as follows: "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance to forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem." Note that Jesus identifies three specific actions of the Christ: suffer (*paqei/n*), rise (*avnasth/nai*), and proclaim (*khruqh/nai*). These three infinitives state the substance of what was written about Him in the Old Testament (Luke 24:44).<sup>6</sup> The preaching of repentance and forgiveness to all the world stands alongside His death and resurrection as an essential action of His work of salvation.

St. Paul reflects this understanding in his confession before King Agrippa. "To this day I have had the help that comes from God, and so I stand here testifying both to small and great saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass: that the Christ must suffer and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles" (Acts 26). Paul's Gospel contained three essential acts of Christ: His suffering, His rising, and His proclaiming salvation to Jews and Gentiles. We need to understand Christ's salvific work in the same way, rather than seeing it primarily as two acts, his dying and rising, and assigning the third action, proclaiming the Gospel, to someone else, be it the apostles, the church or pastors. God's mission start-to-finish belongs to Christ and is intrinsic to His being the Christ.

## Baptism and Commission

Here's the point: all who are baptized into Christ belong to Christ and receive as their own all that belongs to Him, including His Commission from the Father. St. Paul writes

to the Corinthians: "For all things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death of the present or the future—all are yours, and you are Christ's and Christ is God's" (1 Corinthians 3:22-23). We were baptized into the mission His Father gave Christ when we were baptized into His death and raised with Him to newness of life. Being joined to His work of proclaiming salvation to all peoples is inseparable from being found in Christ, that is, having salvation in Him. Christ does not possess nor can He be possessed by one person or group within the church more than by another. That is St. Paul's point to the Corinthians who in their immaturity played a game of spiritual one-upmanship with each other, claiming that they possessed more of Christ or His Spirit than did other Christians. Paul instructs them that while the gifts of the Spirit vary from Christian to Christian (according to the grace of God), all of these gifts are empowered by one and the same Spirit. He explains, "For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:12-13).

Important to note regarding the Spirit of Christ is that He is specifically Christ's *missionary* Spirit, essential to the completing of the Commission Christ was given by the Father. God anointed our Lord with the Holy Spirit and with power, equipping Him for His mission (Acts 10:38). Likewise, in the Great Commission passage of Luke 24, our Lord promised to send (*avpostelw*) the Holy Spirit to His disciples, equipping them similarly to participate with Him in His mission.<sup>7</sup> The giving of the Spirit in these verses was not primarily for the imparting of saving faith to the disciples, but for equipping them to be Christ's witnesses in the world. "[You] will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). With whom

Christ shares His Commission, He shares His Spirit. The reverse is also true: with whom Christ shares His Spirit, He shares His Commission. It is possible, therefore, to determine the people whom Jesus includes in His Commission by following the trail of the Spirit's coming.

### Luke and Peter on Spirit Empowerment

St. Luke chronicles the spread of Messiah's Kingdom into the world (Acts 1:8), by tracking the giving of His Spirit. Beginning in Jerusalem, the coming of the Christ's Kingdom to Israel and its subsequent movement into Samaria and "to the ends of the earth" was specifically marked by the outpouring of the Spirit upon the saints in those locations (Acts 8:15-17; 10:44). Of significance was Peter's testimony of the Holy Spirit's coming to the Gentiles assembled in the house of Cornelius, the Roman Centurion: "And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, just as *He did* upon us at the beginning. And I remembered the word of the Lord, how He used to say, 'John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit'" (Acts 11:15-16). The Holy Spirit's coming testified to Peter and to his Jewish companions that these Gentiles were full heirs of the same "Promise" that the first disciples had received. They were granted "repentance unto life" (Acts 11:18) which included participation in proclaiming the Gospel to the world.

In the verses immediately following Peter's witness regarding the Gentiles, Luke returns to the ongoing narrative of the Gospel's movement to the "ends of the earth" (Acts 11:19ff). Here, believers "scattered (*diaspare, ntej*) because of the persecution that arose in connection with Stephen" made their way as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch speaking the Word (*lalou/ntej to.n lo,gon*) and "preaching (*euvaggelizo, menoi*) the Lord Jesus." There is no indication in the text that this ministry of the Word was carried out by a select group of clergy or the "ordained." A

careful reading of Acts 8:1b-4, (of which these verses in Acts 11 are a continuation), makes clear that those going around “preaching the Word” (*euaggelizo, menoi to.n lo,gon*) were the Christian men and women scattered by persecution (Acts 8:1b, 3). Luke notes that this scattering of the church did not include the apostles, as they, no doubt, had much ministry to provide to the ravaged church remaining in Jerusalem. In this case, the church (all Christians) in distinction from the apostles (called ministers of the Word) proclaimed Christ’s Kingdom to people in Judea, Samaria, and more distant places. Participation in Christ’s mission was shared by all who belong to Christ.

St. Peter makes this point at the conclusion of his Pentecost sermon when he announces to all present, “the promise is to you and your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself” (Acts 2:39). The “promise” (*h’ evpaggeli,a*), spoken of by Peter, was specifically the gift of the Holy Spirit who came to the disciples on Pentecost (note the origin and the purpose of the Father’s “promise” in Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4-8; and Acts 2:33-35). Again, the Spirit’s coming in this context was not primarily for personal faith, but for personal power to be Jesus’ witnesses in the world.

The Spirit not only empowered the disciples to be witnesses of the Messiah. He was, of Himself, God’s witness of the same. The outpouring of the “Promised One,” both visibly (tongues of fire) and audibly (telling the mighty works of God in several languages), testified that the Father had made Jesus of Nazareth Lord and Christ of all (Acts 2:33, 36). Those gathered that day in Jerusalem would have recognized that the coming of the Holy Spirit was one of the essential marks of Messiah’s reign.<sup>8</sup> The coming of the “Promise” announced the reign of the Messiah and empowered the disciples to herald its coming. It is this “Promise” that Peter stated is given to all the baptized (Acts 2:39). This “Promise” to all believers was the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy that “I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind; and your sons and daughters will prophesy ...” (Joel 2:28).



• Illustration by Meagan Zabel •



## Complimentarity: Pastors and Laity—Missionaries

In accord with Scripture, then, we should discuss the Great Commission question complementarily—"How do we, pastors and people, participate together in Christ's mission?"—rather than competitively—"Who participates in His mission?" The brevity of this essay permits me to offer only a few starting points for the conversation. The first is that we keep God's intention for giving the Commission at the forefront: to save the world. Second, understand what the change in paradigm from maintenance to mission is really all about. It is not changing our thinking about whether God wants all people to be saved. We Lutherans confess that He does (1 Timothy 2:4; Augsburg Confession, Articles III and IV). Nor is it a change in our thinking about how people are saved. People must hear the true Gospel in order to believe and be saved (Romans 10:17; Augsburg Confession, Article V). The change in paradigms comes in answering St. Paul's great question, "How will they hear?"

The so-called maintenance model, if the practice in many of our congregations is an indicator, answers his question by saying, "The unsaved need *to come* to church in order to hear the Gospel." That assumes that Gospel proclamation locates primarily in the church (the gathered assembly of believers) around the ministry of the called pastor. The so-called mission model answers Paul's question by saying, "The Gospel needs *to go* to the unsaved in order for them to hear." That assumes that Gospel proclamation locates primarily in the world around the ministry of the baptized in their everyday lives. The paradigm change is from a "coming or attraction" model of Gospel proclamation to a "going" model. This change in thinking is critical to understanding our Lord's Commissions. In Matthew 28 Jesus made "going" one of the accompanying actions of making disciples as important to the process as baptizing and teaching. In Acts 1 Jesus responded to the disciples' question, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" with the promise, "You will be my witnesses ... to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:6-8). Their question assumed the complete

restoration of David's Kingdom, which under David's son, Solomon, attracted the whole world (1 Kings 10:24). Such restoration made perfect sense, seeing that David's "greater Son," the Messiah, had come. Jesus' answer exploded their paradigm by promising to restore the Kingdom to a lot more than Israel—ultimately all of creation—and that the Kingdom would not be restored by all the world coming to Jerusalem to hear the Gospel, but that, through His witnesses, the Gospel would proceed from Jerusalem into all the world.

## Scattering and Calling/Sending

The "going" paradigm in the book of Acts includes both a scattering of the baptized in the world (Acts 8:1-4, 11:19) and the call and sending of missionaries by the Holy Spirit<sup>9</sup> (Acts 13:2-4). Both are intentional acts of the ascended Lord in the fulfillment of His Apostolic office, one related to the ministry of the baptized, the other to a specific missionary (apostolic) office. The scattering of the Christians in Acts 8 must not be understood as accidental or coincidental to the death of St. Stephen. The scattering referenced here is dynamic, like the scattering of seed on the soil.<sup>10</sup> It is reminiscent of our Lord's parable of "the wheat and the tares" where the Son of Man sows the children of the kingdom in the world (Matthew 14) and His words regarding true discipleship: "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit" (John 12:24). The baptized are scattered by Christ in the soil of the world for the purpose of many coming to faith and being saved.

Missionaries (apostles) go under the Spirit and preach the Gospel in different places. As a result, people heard the Word, believed it and were baptized into Christ. In their baptisms they were equipped by His Holy Spirit to proclaim the Gospel in their community. With the Word firmly rooted in the believers, the missionaries moved on to repeat the process in another town or city. While these missionaries moved on, their Gospel message (including its proclamation to those who had not yet heard) remained. To guarantee the

permanence of the Gospel in any given place, elders were appointed (Acts 14:23, Titus 1:5) and placed into the office of overseer (1 Timothy 3:1, Titus 1:7). This office was our Lord's assurance that His Body (the church) continued to carry the Gospel to the rest of the community.

Likewise, proclaiming the Gospel included both the witness of the baptized in their daily lives (Acts 8:4) and the official witness of the Apostles (Acts 5:32, 10:41-43). The former was built upon the latter, even as St. Luke records that all of the baptized "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching" (Acts 2:42). The office of overseer was God's assurance that the Apostles' doctrine would remain as both foundation for the church in that place (Acts 20:28, Ephesians 2:20) and fountain for its faithful witness to the world (Ephesians 3:8-11; 4:11-16). Thus, the Apostle Paul instructed Timothy to "guard, by the Holy Spirit, the good deposit entrusted to [him]" (2 Timothy 1:14) and to entrust the apostle's teaching "to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:2).

## A Summary

In summary, Christ calls both laity and pastors into His commission of "going" into the world to "proclaim" the Gospel to all creatures, with each group having specific responsibilities. In writing to the Ephesians, St. Paul brings these two groups into complimentary position: "And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:11-13). Paul identifies several "Great Commission" offices, given by Christ to equip and deploy "Great Commission" saints, in the Great Commission purpose of their Lord. The goal is that His Body grows, building itself up in love. It is accomplished when each member does its proper part in union with the head, the Commissioned One of the Father.

## Reference Notes

1 The title "Great Commission" is most often attributed to Jesus' words in Matthew 28:18-20. There are, however, several "Great Commissions" of our resurrected Lord recorded in the Gospels. Three are briefly considered in this essay: Matthew 28:18-20, Luke 24:44-49, and Acts 1:6-8.

2 The *Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod* adopted by the Synod in 1932 states " ... and Christ Himself commits to all believers the keys of the kingdom of heaven ... and commissions all believers to preach the Gospel and to administer the Sacraments, Matt. 28:19, 20; 1 Cor. 11:23-25." (14)

3 Portions of this article are adapted from a larger unpublished essay I presented to a tri-circuit pastors' conference in the Kansas District entitled "Laity and the proclamation of the Gospel."

4 Jesus' statement in Matthew 28 must be understood in light of His earlier statement recorded in Matthew 9:6, "But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." The issue in both cases is His personal authority to forgive sins, a right which belongs only to God (Mark 2:7).

5 For a thorough discussion of the use of *avpe, steilen* in John, see Calvin Mercer's article "APOSTELLEIN and PEMPEIN in John" in *New Testament Studies*, Vol. 36, 1990, pp. 619-624.

6 See R.C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Luke's Gospel*. Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961, 1205.

7 St. Luke records two post-resurrection statements of our Lord in which He promised to send His Spirit, "the promise of my Father," in Luke 24:49 and Acts 1:4-5. In the Acts passage Jesus connects the sending of His Spirit to His disciples with the fulfillment of John the Baptist's prophecy regarding the coming of the Messiah (Matthew 3:11-12, Luke 3:16-17). In both cases the Lord is the sender.

8 That is why John the Baptist responded to those who asked if he was the Christ, "No, ... but One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to untie the thong of His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire" (Luke 3:16). Likewise, in

John's Gospel, the Baptizer testified that the way he was able to recognize the Messiah was by the Holy Spirit descending upon and remaining with Him (John 1:32-34).

9 One might get the impression from reading the account of the call of Barnabas and Saul into missionary service that they were sent out by the church at Antioch, "Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and *sent them off*." More accurately, the church "released" (*avpe, lusan*) them from their ministry responsibilities in Antioch, and the Holy Spirit sent them out (*evkpemfqe, ntej*) to preach the Good News to those beyond the ordinary spheres of influence of the churches or the baptized.

10 This "scattering" (*diespa, rhsan*) here in Acts 8, must be understood in light of the "scatterings" referenced by Gamaliel in the advice he gave to the Sanhedrim (Acts 5:34-39). Gamaliel brings to light two different examples (witnesses) of men whose lives and deaths resembled that of Jesus. Like Jesus these men (1) rose up, claiming to be somebody, (2) gathered followers to their causes, (3) were killed as a result, and (4) their followers were scattered. The verbs for scattering in these two cases (*dielu, qhsan* and *dieskorpi, sqhsan*) are not dynamic but dead (disintegrate and dissipate, respectively): their movements came to nothing. The scattering of the baptized upon the death of Stephen (on account of his witness to the risen Christ) effected just the opposite. Rather than bringing Christ's movement to an end, it launched it into the world. The contrast turns on the question Gamaliel (a Pharisee) raised in his advice: "What if this movement is of God?" or more to the point, "What if this Jesus, as His followers claim, isn't dead but was raised to life? You cannot stop it."

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MICHAEL R. RUHL

## Moving From Maintenance to Mission: How Can This Happen?



• Illustration by Brenda Ard •

ISSUES

How many congregations can you name that have made the transition from “maintenance to mission”? Now define how many of those congregations have made that transition without changing the senior pastor. Can you name 20 such churches? Ten? Five? One?

If you are having some difficulty naming several such churches, you may be looking at a disturbing reality: while such a transition is possible by the Holy Spirit and through the Word, the times it actually happens are far outnumbered by the times it does not happen.

What some might call “maintenance addiction” appears to be rooted in both a theological and sociological disconnect.

Soon after I was moved by the Holy Spirit from serving as a parish pastor to a district mission executive, I became aware of an undocumented but intriguing observation: a very high percentage of congregations (perhaps 75-90 percent) halt their growth after reaching 20-25 years of age. As I almost nervously paged through the old Statistical Yearbook while comparing age of the congregation with maximum mission momentum, it became clearer and clearer that something had “snapped,” changed or “given ground” in the congregation life cycle. And while numbers (even worship attendance and conversion growth numbers) seldom tell the whole story of congregational journey in mission and ministry, the predictable pattern of precipitous decline was far too striking to be ignored. That observation served as an inaugural in-depth encounter with the reality that, all too often, mission yields to maintenance in many congregations. That investigative encounter continues to this very day.

While the central purpose of this reflection is to explore how congregations can break the maintenance paradigm and be restored to a mission paradigm, several observations about “maintenance” are important to consider.

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- 1 The word “maintenance” is not the same thing as *Seelsorgen*, or caring for the souls of the congregation. Soul-care and discipleship are valid and vital functions of every healthy congregation.
- 2 The word “maintenance” is not to be equated with “Word and Sacrament ministry,” for these are the very means of grace which connect people to Jesus Christ and empower the mission of the church.
- 3 The word “maintenance” suggests “inwardly focused activities and strategies for organizational survival, with no necessary linkage to the original mission of the organization.” Or as [www.dictionary.com](http://www.dictionary.com) suggests, maintenance is the work of keeping something in proper condition through upkeep.

All too often, conversational sparks begin to fly during discussion of “moving from maintenance to mission” because of an impression that Word and Sacrament ministry and soul-care are marginalized in congregations which are deliberately missional. This is most unfortunate because “missions” and “soul-care” are not mutually exclusive. The missional congregation will always care for the souls of the disciples in the congregation. In fact, Word and Sacrament ministry empowers both the missional and nurtural ministries of the congregation.

Recently, *Outreach Magazine* published a special report, “The American Church in Crisis.” Seven startling facts about church attendance in America were highlighted in that report:

- 1 Less than 20 percent of Americans regularly attend worship services;
- 2 American church attendance is steadily declining;
- 3 Only the state of Hawaii sees church attendance growing faster than its population;
- 4 Mid-sized churches are shrinking; the smallest and largest churches are growing;
- 5 Established churches—40 to 190 years old—are, on average, declining;
- 6 The increase in churches is only 1/4 of what is needed to keep up with population growth;



7 In 2050, the percentage of the U. S. population attending church will be almost half what it was in 1990.

Surely the struggle continues to lay hold of "hard data" which accurately assesses the mission of the church in the United States. Yet if these seven research observations even come close to predictable reliability, then contemporary prophets must decry and denounce the reality that the Church of Jesus Christ in these United States is indeed in a "maintenance mode."

It is a sad day (or season) when we Christians and our congregations are acting as though we are "content to go to heaven ... alone." Yet so few of us are "rending our garments" over this plight!

Prophets do more *forth-telling* than *fore-telling*. So you are invited to consider now a series of theological and sociological concepts which the Holy Spirit can use to stimulate movement from "maintenance to mission."

Note well, please, that there are no "magic pills" or "silo-solutions" to this looming paralysis of the American Christian Church, particularly among mainline denominations such as The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. But the Holy Spirit has revealed some significant concepts which support and stimulate this vital pilgrimage of Christian congregations which struggle with "mission fatigue."

### **Mission Is Indispensable ... Not Optional**

As long as reaching unbelievers in diverse people groups and seeing them connected (or reconnected) to Jesus Christ by means of the Holy Spirit converting them through the witness of the Word is considered to be an *optional aspect of congregational life*, there can be little hope of cracking the maintenance paradigm. God Himself is a *Missionary God*. And as precious people estranged themselves from His perfect love by their defiance and slavish addiction to sin, God took the initiative, moved out from his heavenly "comfort zone," tunneled and embedded into human culture and accomplished vicarious atonement ... all because the plight of the lost

was upon His heart. And now Almighty God creates, calls and summons His church to participate in His mission of reaching people who are lost and estranged from His perfect love. That mission, then, is not something nice. It is necessary. That mission is not something ancillary to the church's existence. It defines the very nature of the church.

### **Rediscover Missional DNA**

Missiologist Alan Hirsch [*The Forgotten Ways—Reactivating the Missional Church*] attended a missional church seminar and there made an amazing discovery of his own.

In AD 100, there were as few as 25,000 Christians

By AD 310 (pre Constantine) there were up to 20,000,000 Christians

Of course, the "haunting question" is: "How did they do this?" How did the early church grow from being a small movement ... to the most significant religious force in the Roman Empire in two centuries? Hirsch begs us to remember some realities about this mushrooming Christian movement:

- 1 They were an *illegal religion* throughout this period (tolerated at best, persecuted at worst);
- 2 They didn't have land or church buildings as we know them;
- 3 They did not have the Scriptures as we know them today;
- 4 They had no institution or professional leadership;
- 5 They had no seeker-services, youth groups, worship bands or seminaries;
- 6 They actually made it hard to join the church.

The answer lies in the *missional DNA* which the Holy Spirit imparts to every authentic Christian congregation. When God calls and gathers a church, that same *missional DNA* is imparted. Armed with Word, Spirit and the means of grace, all authentic congregations are endowed with the capacity to effectively engage culture in mission. Unfortunately the view and embrace of that *missional DNA* can be obstructed by second-level motivations and the natural process of "aging."



## Corporate Repentance

Jesus warned about the dangers of *straining out gnats and swallowing camels* (Matthew 23:24). “Majoring in the minors and minoring in the majors” is not only sad ... it is **s-i-n**. There are sins of commission (doing things against the will of God) **and** sins of omission (failing to do that which is the will of God). Deflecting the Great Commission to other people (even “overseas missionaries”) or declining to engage the community in organic evangelism in deference to “maintaining local traditions and organizational practices” is a sin of omission. Missiologist Thom Rainer (*Breakout Churches—Discover How to Make the Leap*) makes the observation that ... *it is a sin to be good if God has called us (the church) to be great*. Matthew 28:18-20 is the Great Commission, not the good. Matthew 22:37 and 39 are the Great Commandments, not the good. St. Paul lifted up agape-love as the *greatest*, not simply good. Therefore, breaking the maintenance paradigm and seeing mission restored must include a sincere repentance of the sin of forsaking its God-given mission. This includes the pastor(s), ministry staff, lay leaders and followers. For Psalm 51:17 gives assurance that ... *the sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise*.

## Confront the Brutal Realities

We have heard it said that ... *denial is not the name of a river in Egypt!* And certainly movement from the maintenance paradigm to restoration of the mission paradigm is accelerated by the painful, yet liberating impact of confronting our own dysfunctionality. An urban missionary made the comment that ... *you have to name the demon before it can be exorcized!* Jim Collins (*Good to Great*) speaks of the critical importance of *confronting the brutal facts (of dysfunction and decline) ... but never losing faith*. It is all too easy for churches that are “maintenance addicted” to insulate themselves from dysfunctional, death-hastening realities. Many church members have little awareness of the slow erosion of congregation vitality and missional impact. In fact, most church members would be shocked to discover that of the 400,000 Christian churches

in the United States, only approximately 40,000 can be viewed as experiencing kingdom growth (spiritual and numerical). Is it any wonder, then, that The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, through the *Ablaze!* Initiative, has set a goal of seeing 2,000 of its 6,100 congregations “revitalized in mission” by 2017, the 500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Reformation? Our synodical leaders have demonstrated great courage in confronting the brutal realities of congregation decline and dysfunction manifested by slavish addiction to the maintenance paradigm. That same courage for *naming the demon* of “abandoning our first love” reminds one of John’s rebuke of the ancient congregation at Ephesus (Revelation 2:4). That could require the saints to be lying face down on the floor of the sanctuary in penitential posture instead of sitting upright in comfortable pews or padded chairs.

## Consider an Intervention

Experience demonstrates that very few churches have the courage and stamina to face the brutal realities of their maintenance addiction by themselves, and to exit that journey with constructive hope for the restoration of mission. For this reason, the invitation to a *Barnabas*-type interventionist (*Son of Encouragement*) to facilitate that process is being observed in a significant percentage of those congregations who actually “finish the race” and move from maintenance to mission. The interventionist will have a solid balance of Law and Gospel, and will guide the congregation in seeing, interpreting and disengaging from the symptoms of maintenance addiction, navigating that process in such a way that hope for mission renewal is restored and missional vision is constituted. Trained and skilled interventionists can be engaged through the Synod, the District, the Center for United States Missions, and also through independent mission movement agencies.

## Ongoing Learning and Coaching

The congregation that is serious about moving from maintenance to mission will make a

renewed commitment to *lifelong learning*, always seeking to “sharpen the missional sword” as “iron sharpens iron” (Proverbs 27:17) through networking with other congregations engaged in a similar movement from maintenance to mission. Here is a “safe” setting for congregations to share their struggles, sorrows and stories, and to access new insights into keeping mission central, as well as fresh and effective through access to new mission strategy. Church consultant Bill Easum is more than perceptive when he observes that ... *following Jesus into the mission field is either impossible or extremely difficult for the vast majority of congregations in the Western world because of one thing: They have a systems theory that will not allow them to take the first step out of the institution into the mission field, even though the mission field is just outside the door of the congregation.*

It is most encouraging to observe that the process under development for revitalization of LCMS congregations includes both learning communities and post-intervention coaching for congregations desirous of moving from maintenance to mission.

### Close the Cultural Gap

Missiologist Ralph Winter has developed a useful conceptual tool called *cultural distance*. That tool was developed in order to assess how far a people group is from *meaningful* engagement with the gospel.

#### MAPPING CULTURAL DISTANCE



The cultural distance tool can be visualized by means of a continuum. People groups with “zero cultural distance” (Cdo) have some concept of Christianity, speak the same language, have similar interests, probably are of the same nationality, and are from a class grouping similar to one’s own, or to that which dominates one’s congregation. Many of our friends, neighbors and vocational associates fit into this category. Cd1-Cd2 people groups include typical non-Christians, with little real awareness of (or interest in) Christianity. Often suspicious of the organized church, these people may be

politically correct, socially aware, and open to Christianity, and many have been previously offended by a bad experience of church or Christians. Cd2-Cd3 people groups have absolutely no idea what the Christian faith is, and they may be part of an ethnic group with different religious impulses or even a “fringy sub-culture.” Many of these people are actively antagonistic toward Christianity *as they understand it*. Cd3-Cd4 people groups are populated by ethnic and religious groupings such as Muslims and Jews. Living in the West may close some of the distance, but almost everything else about that culture hinders meaningful dialogue, making many of them highly resistant to the Gospel.

Is the congregation effectively engaging the culture with the Gospel of Jesus Christ? Or has the witness to the Gospel from the congregation become *isolated from and irrelevant to* the community culture? Such questions will make *cultural exegesis* (mission field interpretation) through demographics, psychographics, generographics and affinity mapping an ongoing expression of missional focus.

### From Attractional to Incarnational Mission/Evangelism

Almighty God has pursued the pathway of *incarnation* in order to span the chasm between His perfect righteousness and wayward human culture which had distanced itself from His perfect love. *In the beginning was the Word [Christ] and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth [John 1:1, 14].* He did not attempt to *attract* people to His grace and reconciliation through glitz, glamour and gaudy productions. God is a *Missionary God* who took the agape-initiative to leave His comfort zone in heaven, pilgrimage to earth, embed Himself in that human culture in flesh, bone, teeth and hair, and to accomplish vicarious atonement.

Is this not the same pathway for the People of God as they gather in congregations? *Missio Dei* happens as the People of God penetrate marketplace culture by “seeping into the cracks and crevices of that culture” and “becoming Jesus” to the people in that culture. It is not about trying to lure and

attract unbelievers into the sacred spaces of our sanctuaries in an attempt to impress them with our productions. Closing the *cultural distance gap* between the culture and the congregation happens through *incarnation*... not attraction. Mission is organic... not theatrical. Congregations which are serious about moving from maintenance to mission will disengage from their dependence upon "attractional worship" to make Gospel connection with unchurched unbelievers. Instead the saints will incarnate and embed themselves in the community culture and "become Jesus" to those people. Therefore, authentic worship fuels mission in the marketplace.

Is your congregation in desperate need of moving from maintenance to mission? Is your congregation ready to "pay the necessary prices" associated with moving from maintenance to mission?

Appendix E in the book, *Breakout Churches*, by Thom S. Rainer contains a *Church Readiness Inventory* which helps congregations assess their readiness to initiate such a pilgrimage. The book also contains references to specific congregations which have acknowledged their unfaithfulness to the Great Commission and repented of missional apathy and decline. Empowered by the Word and Spirit, and graced with reclamation of God's vision for *reconciling the world unto Himself and having that message of reconciliation entrusted to the congregation* (2 Corinthians 5:19), numbers of such congregations have moved successfully from maintenance to mission.

In his classic work, *Mere Christianity*, C. S. Lewis writes: *There exists in every church something that sooner or later works against the very purpose for which it came into existence.* So we must strive very hard, by the grace of God, to keep the church focused on the mission that Christ originally gave.

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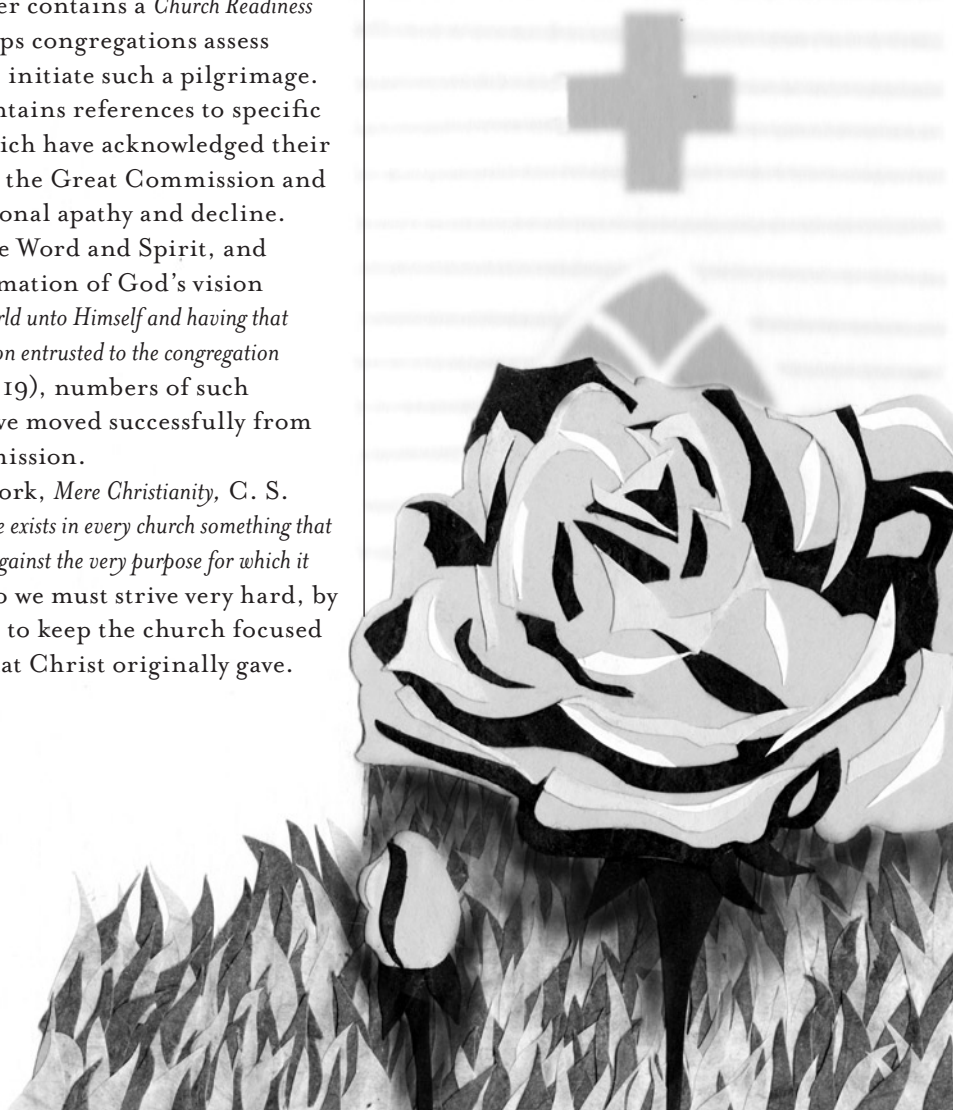
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## book reviews

### **Children's Ministry in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.**

Jutila, Craig; Wideman, Jim;  
Verbal, Pat. Loveland, Colorado  
Group Publishing, 2007.

In many LCMS circles, "children's ministry" most often encompasses one hour on Sunday and a week of summer immersed in Vacation Bible School. The contributors to this text seek to paint a broader picture of ministry with and to children of the 21<sup>st</sup> century who are growing up equally comfortable with a pencil, a mouse, or a Wii Nunchuk in their hands. The premise upon which the text is written is clear: this is the new world of the child, so this is the place where the church should meet them if they desire to be moving from maintenance to mission.

What greets one in this easily read volume is a hybrid cross of a call to re-vision children's ministry based on the changing culture and a sample "how-to" manual. The contributing authors, all children's ministers in various geographical and Protestant denominational settings, seek to provide the reader with a realistic look at the changes that are shaping children entering our church as infants.

Several chapters are devoted to addressing technological advances that have led the culture into a permanently wired state. While statements such as "Kids' relationship with others are being rewired" or "Technology and media have produced information overload" might appear to be overly simplistic, the authors immediately engage the reader with the question, "How can we effectively minister to them?" What follows is a vision for culturally sensitive children's ministry. For instance, the author suggests that we consider teaching fewer truths in more depth to counter information overload, and to make a strong commitment to personal face-to-face relationships which are being diminished by relating in a wired world. The second portion of each chapter, titled "Try This" then follows up with concrete suggestions of how that could be demonstrated in an activity, an event, a learning objective.

The increasing number of children with special needs that are present in congregations and communities is addressed in the chapter, "Tomorrow's Kids." Children's ministry workers, often volunteers, are urged to consider ways to meet needs of those who are obese, abused, in transition, and need special education services in the schools, inspiring novel ideas such as hosting a special VBS for children who have autism or sponsoring

health and fitness initiatives for children and families of the church.

At one point, the authors gently nudge the reader to consider the overall value of investing congregational time and energy in family ministry as a better outreach than children's ministry alone. Because this involves embracing new family structure, as 69 percent of American youth are living in nontraditional families, this poses an additional challenge to churches. Families need support as they seek to develop their child's spirituality, and often that falls under the purview of children's ministry. While the authors do not go into depth with this issue, they do encourage the church to consider enthusiastically rolling out the welcome mat to nontraditional families who have been underserved by churches and unsure of their place in the faith life of a congregation.

Because life in a postmodern, media-rich world is so foreign to most children's ministry volunteers, this guide might serve as a valuable handbook for discussion and evaluation of the existing outreach to children. While it does not explore any of the topics in depth, it provides a survey of the children's ministry landscape today, melding theory and practice together. *Children's Ministry in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* does not paint a comprehensive vision of how children's ministry should move from maintenance to mission, but it does urge the reader to consider the changing culture and how a congregation might be able to jump aboard that moving cultural train. Equally usable for those in a small church setting as well as mega-churches with full children's ministry staff, this volume exposes the reader to the tip of the iceberg of reaching children in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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### **Deep Ministry in a Shallow World.**

Clark, Chap and Powell, Kara.  
Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006.

Chap Clark and Kara Powell of Fuller Theological Seminary want you to know that unpacking the buzzword of the hour, "missional," and making it a reality for ministry is actually quite simple. In their team-authored book, they explore youth ministry as a well-beaten and maintained path, a path that continually needs to be re-focused on its mission: sending out Christ's

call to teenagers and helping them respond appropriately. Clark and Powell point out in their not-so-subtle subtitle, "Not-So-Secret Findings About Youth Ministry," that we already know how to move out of maintenance mode and into missional mode.

So why would they write a book regurgitating everything we've already heard and know? Because our youth ministries are still failing to reach the youth in our communities with God's redemptive love. Not only are we often struggling and flailing, but sometimes our ministries inadvertently work against our very mission.

I know, your youth ministry has its problems, but generally you are doing good work. Kids are getting into the Bible, they are praying for each other, you're planning an amazing retreat/servant event/mission trip experience. Maybe your programs are even growing.

But (there is always a *but* in there, isn't there?) you are tired. Your youth will come to your events and programs, but they complain incessantly about worship or are living a different darker life outside of the youth room. Or maybe you have good leaders, good youth, and good programs, but it stops there. Caring for the poor in your neighborhood is an afterthought on Thanksgiving. Or maybe it is a muddy puddle of all of these things combined that makes your ministry just feel shallow.

*Deep Ministry in a Shallow World* is a guide to refreshing your ministry. It isn't a book that starts from square one: no youth ministry. It starts at the status quo youth ministry, otherwise known as your maintenance youth ministry. They look at different important aspects of youth ministry (teaching, parents, missions, mentors, etc.) and analyze it according to their Deep Design.

The Deep Design asks four main questions: Now? New? Who? How? What are we doing now in our ministry? What new insights does Scripture, research, history bring? Who is already going deeper in this area, and what can I learn from them? And, how can I apply what I've learned? The model's visual companion actually holds a cross in its center. The authors explain that it serves as "a reminder that we want all of our personal and ministry reflections to revolve around the model and grace of Christ ..." When you are refreshing your ministry, the first place to start is by refreshing your heart by diving deeply into God's Word. Align your ministry hopes to the commissioning that God has sent us in Scripture. Align your practices to the life and deeds of Christ.

When Christ is the center, maintenance becomes an impossibility; instead, growth of all kinds and living missionally become insatiable thirsts for you, your leaders, your teenagers.

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### **My Space to Sacred Space.**

Christian and Amy Piatt.  
St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2007.

It would be an understatement to assert that ministering to today's youth is complex and challenging. Recent developments in technology, such as the Internet and cellular phones, give young adults the ability to access an incredible amount of information in a short time and maintain relationships via electronic devices as opposed to face-to-face encounters. Not surprisingly, these changes have affected an entire generation's perception of reality, as well as their attitude toward the church. In *My Space to Sacred Space: God for a New Generation*, authors Christian and Amy Piatt seek to understand and respond to the spirituality of young adults, especially in light of recent declines in church membership and denominational affiliation.

The content of the book is largely based upon an exploration of the relevance of faith in the lives of young adults. Given that the authors consider personal narrative to be "a central dynamic in the modern faith experience," each chapter contains the story of an individual or couple that represents a different cross section of today's young adult population. While the Piatts found this information to be helpful and enlightening, they also implemented a young adult spirituality survey online, consisting of 57 questions related to topics such as personal religious affiliation and images of God. The results of this survey are later discussed in various portions of the book.

The first chapter gives a brief summary of the complex attitude towards reality generally held by young adults. For example, starting at a very young age, today's youth have been repeatedly confronted with visual images of violence and injustice, resulting in a skeptical response toward the world. Although this generation has in many ways gone into social retreat, it has certainly utilized modern technology to maintain the

human need for community. The authors refer to the increasing popularity of MySpace as sufficient evidence for this type of social trend. Furthermore, the author discusses the prevalence of pluralism in youth's understanding of religion—a pluralism that is deeply interested in spirituality despite its lack of interest in the institutional church. Responding to such pluralism the authors remark, "If one perceives the mission of the church to be one of conforming the world to an established set of creeds ... such pluralistic and mystical trends may prove disturbing. However, if one sees openness to an experience of transcendence as a door through which the church may enter into dialogue, today's young adults offer a fresh landscape."

The remaining chapters sort through the findings of their research and present the personal narratives gathered as they relate to issues facing the church. The importance of personal narrative as a spiritually enlightening component of modern faith is reiterated over and over throughout the book—to the point where one wonders if one's story is given as much credibility as holy writ. The Piatts explain, "In coming together, sharing stories of hope and healing within the context of faith, we become coauthors and co-creators in a still-evolving, divinely inspired creation that began with the Word."

As the book progresses, it is quite obvious that the authors are writing from the perspective of liberal Christianity as opposed to a confessional or orthodox approach. Citing the creedless system of their own Disciples of Christ denomination, the Piatts seek to respond to the spiritual curiosity of young adults by means of spiritual exploration and ongoing discovery. Naturally, this ambiguous attitude toward absolutes affects the conclusions they reach concerning polemical issues such as homosexuality and exclusive salvation through Christ. This is clearly seen in the chapters, "The God Image" and "Who May Serve?" For example, in the latter chapter the authors seem to suggest that images of God should shift to accommodate the felt needs of a particular generation. While the authors' desire to make religion relevant to a generation often illiterate in such concepts is indeed commendable, this is taken to such an extreme that the church appears to join in the collective ambiguity rather than offer a voice of truth.

Despite the authors' less than helpful response to the issues facing today's youth, readers will appreciate the implications

of their research. By providing a sort of spiritual litmus test of young adults, the research identifies needs within religious education as well as areas in which the church has failed to live up to its job of outreach. Furthermore, the multiple narratives shared throughout the book do a fine job of placing an actual face on the generalities often associated with modern youth. As a result, readers are able to better understand the real-life struggle of those who, despite their interest in spirituality, feel alienated by the church. In relation to this, the research leads the authors to conclude, "regardless of worship styles, church architecture, or programmatic amenities, what more young adults are showing us is most important to them is relationship."

Overall, this reader considers the Piatts' findings and observations to be very informative and therefore useful for anyone seeking to better understand the complex spiritual landscape of today's youth. Nevertheless, the authors' response to these complex spiritual issues lacks a confessional foundation, and therefore leaves many issues of truth up for grabs.

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### **BibleWorks 7. Software for Biblical Exegesis and Research.**

Windows 98/XP Release.

BibleWorks LLC.

[www.bibleworks.com](http://www.bibleworks.com)

What exegetical tools can assist us in serious and precise study of the text of the Scriptures for the sake of preaching and teaching? We who take ultimately seriously the language of Holy Writ and have inherited the tradition of Reformation scholarship are always alert to that scene. Perhaps that's especially pertinent in an era in which the pew gets subjected to alternate extremes of the relativism of post-modernism theologies and the manipulations of entrepreneurial Christianity. Nothing replaces methodical training in biblical languages, hermeneutics, exegetics, and theology. Nothing replaces *oratio, meditatio, and tentatio*. However, struggle with the text can be greatly aided by tools. *BibleWorks 7* is such a valuable tool that takes great advantage of our modern technology.

*BibleWorks 7* is intended for the serious student. Far simpler electronic copies of the Bible will suit the average reader; however,

(Review continues on back cover)

## book reviews (continued)

the pastor, the teacher, the scholar/student who seeks help should consider the \$350 price tag well worth the investment. The tool offers the user a very broad and flexible series of options in investigating the text from mere search for a particular reference to complex word study and grammar comparison and word order capacity. These appear in three parallel windows—a Search column, a Browse column, and an Analysis column. Besides a variety of standard editions of the original texts, ready at hand are a large number of translations in both English and other languages. The large library also includes Philo and Josephus, and patristic works in both Greek and Latin. Several versions of Luther's translations are included, both the original and current editions. Texts and translations are readily comparable.

Quick identification of original forms is given by the tool in a "pop-up window" for any original word and automatically linked to lexical and grammar aids. Years ago, unrecognized forms had to be laboriously sought in analytical lexicons. Ready at hand is a thorough list of the standard scholarly lexical and grammar aids; and these are automatically linked to the selected text for study. Matthew Henry's commentary is included. The system is linked also to the

Strong's numbering system. A detailed and adaptable Bible atlas is part of the system.

Intriguing and helpful to this reviewer is the facility the tool offers in identifying parallel references and applications. An example might assist. Recent text study yielded the observation that only Luke and John make reference to Jesus' contact with the Samaritans. The research windows quickly put these references up for musing in their immediate contexts and the larger context of the Lucan narrative.

The files include a plethora of How-to-Guides for performing everyday tasks including book and topical studies, exegetical papers, the researching of Greek and Hebrew texts, and shortcuts, tips, and tricks. The thorough interpretive process that used to require a large table for all pertinent books to be in front of the student can now take place on the screen of a laptop. Because of built-in flexibility and storage, the student using *BibleWorks 7* can hold a series of investigated threads together at once. Seminary students and others early in the pursuit of biblical study will benefit from being able to accumulate and link study notes and have them readily available. For this veteran many of those are stored on paper in a file cabinet nowhere near as accessible.

As this reviewer has sought to become familiar with *BibleWorks 7* and make use of it, disadvantages have come to mind. The number of tools can be almost overwhelming. Like the use of most computer applications, becoming familiar with the shortcuts and symbols is a process of experience. There is, however, a thorough and helpful tutorial included in the program itself. Not all of the options are equally valuable. An example of this is the special tool for the diagramming of sentences, a very helpful process, but not one the current generation may be familiar with. I was trained with the Nestle critical apparatus; it is not included with this edition. The insights of the encyclopedic Kittel's "Word Book" are not part of the library, nor are the standard Blass-Debrunner-Funk grammar that was a standard. However, the current reliable grammars and lexicons are included.

If state-of-the-art biblical study tools are on your shopping list, then *BibleWorks 7* is the product you must look at.

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