

ISSUES

IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Spring, 1999

Vol. 33, No. 1

IN GRATEFUL RESPONSE TO GOD'S GRACE AND EMPOWERED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT THROUGH WORD AND SACRAMENTS, THE MISSION OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCH—MISSOURI SYNOD IS VIGOROUSLY TO MAKE KNOWN THE LOVE OF CHRIST BY WORD AND DEED WITHIN OUR CHURCHES, COMMUNITIES AND THE WORLD.

Do We Want Synod at the National Level to Fade Away???

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Do We Want Synod at the National Level to Fade Away???

3 Reflections

Orville C. Walz, President

4 Editorials

6 The Mission of the Synod at the National Level

Walter Rosin

13 A Decade of Difference: Assessing New Ways of Funding World Missions

Neil Rabe

19 The Money Problem in the LCMS: How Can More Mean Less?

Larry L. Reinhardt

23 Fostering Partnership within the Synod: Why Not?

Richard T. Hinz

30 Book Reviews

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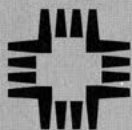
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reflections

WHAT HAS The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, at the national level, done for you lately? When facing various challenges, have you heard comments such as: "Send it to St. Louis," or "Let the International Center pay for it"? As a new century approaches, is there too much emphasis on Synod's shortcomings, rather than its many blessings in our Gospel proclamation? The May 1998 issue of the *Reporter* asked the question: *Is The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod at the national level fading away?*

The question asked in the *Reporter* about the future of our Synod at the national level deserves the attention of a church body that is committed to maximizing the impact of Gospel proclamation throughout the world. Structures and choices made at various levels of our church need to be evaluated on the basis of a theological view of mission, core values of the church, and pragmatic considerations.

This edition of *Issues in Christian Education* presents an overview of the current role of Synod at the national level, including an assessment of new ways in which one synodical department, LCMS World Mission, is carrying out our mission. Also presented are the financial challenges, the mission of Synod at the national level, and thought-provoking ideas for fostering partnership within the Synod.

Why are these questions even being asked? In an editorial Herman Etzold reminds us that "All the things which the Lutheran Reformation sought to correct in the organized church of the 16th century are still present, at least in embryo, in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod today, because the same fallen nature afflicts us still." It is time that we "clean out our basement," suggests Charles Blanco. Darwin Karsten encourages us to remember that exciting developments are occurring in Synod.

Why dare we not permit our beloved Synod to fade away at the national level? The reasons are numerous, but Walter Rosin reminds us of three reasons for a Synod: 1) A national Synod provides for a confessional unity that serves as the basis of the education of professional church workers and Christian higher education opportunities for our church's lay people; 2) A national church enables us to carry out a global mission outreach; 3) A Synod provides opportunity to engage in meaningful theological discussion and to communicate the message, purpose and nature of the church by using technology that is available.

Earlier, I referred to our beloved Synod. As a member of the teacher or pastor roster of the LCMS for nearly 40 years, I hear the word "beloved" used less frequently today. Why? May this edition of *Issues* renew in us an appreciation of the wonderful blessing The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod on the national level has been. We continue to share Jesus Christ who is the same yesterday, today and forever. However, we must constantly evaluate how we share the Gospel message, making use of today and tomorrow's technology and examining changing approaches to ministry. May God bless our efforts and use this *Issues* as motivation to move forward.

Orville C. Walz, President

Look Beyond the Symptoms

When people question the desirability of Synod's continuation, something evidently has gone awry. Declining funds for the operation of the Synod is seen as the malady which needs to be cured. Is the fading away of Synod the solution, or do we need to look deeper?

As Dr. C. F. W. Walther and the founding fathers of our Synod so keenly recognized, Synod is a mere human organization. It was organized to serve the church in a purely advisory role to achieve the goals of evangelizing the world and educating workers to do their job. Thus, Synod is neither indispensable nor divinely ordained. Only the local church, the congregation gathered around the Word and the Sacraments, has that distinction.

The other side of the coin is that, in order to work in unity to fulfill the mission which God entrusted to the church, we need some kind of organization like the Synod. Such an organization is formed and run by sinful human beings no matter what titles they may bear or what vestments they may wear. This "human" organization is prone to all the failings and sins which characterize fallen human nature in general since the fall of Adam and Eve. Among these are the lust for power, greed for wealth, and desire for fame. All the things which the Lutheran Reformation sought to correct in the organized church of the 16th Century are still present, at least in embryo, in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod today, because the same fallen nature afflicts us still.

The diminishing income for the support of Synod, its mission work, and the support of our educational institutions is only symptomatic. Perceptions of the Old Adam at work on the synodical level that need to be dealt with include: shaping Synod on the basis of a model of "Big Business"; paying salaries which rival the salaries of CEOs in the business world; wielding controlling power over congregations and personnel from a luxurious office in the swank International Center; dispensing favors to the faithful and chastisements to the recalcitrant; projecting a voice that presumes to speak as the voice of the entire Synod to governments and to other denominations; and relegating Christian love to second place in a need to control others and to maintain order in the ranks.

On the other hand, people will withhold their contributions when they are displeased with the way things are done or with what they seem to be getting. The Old Adam afflicts them also. They seek to quench their insatiable thirst for pleasure. Self-denial seems abhorrent. To cut down on contributions comes easily.

I was a lad when Synod decided to build a new Concordia Seminary campus in Clayton, Missouri. Our congregation in Sylvan Grove, Kansas, engaged in an "Every Member" solicitation for pledges to support the synodical project. My father, a struggling wheat farmer, pledged a sizeable amount in anticipation of the wheat harvest. But 1925 resulted in a drought and a complete crop failure. Instead of renegeing on his pledge, my father borrowed the complete amount from our local bank and sent it to St. Louis. What a satisfaction it was to all who gave sacrificially at that time that the entire cost of our grand Concordia Seminary was in the bank when construction began.

The problem of inadequate funds is not solved by wishing our Synod at the national level to fade away. That would only exacerbate the problem. Rather, let the leaders emulate the humble, self-sacrificing, loving spirit of Christ; and let the people "seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness" and demonstrate a grateful spirit of dedication and obedience to God's will.

Before we abandon ship in the middle of the ocean, let's repair what we have. There is nothing perfect in this world, not even the organized church. We need the example of humility, self-sacrifice and Christian love in our leaders; and we need the love of Christ, dedication, trust in God and obedience to His will in the laity. The problem is deeply spiritual. We fail to comprehend and appreciate the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Not that we do not have lots of Gospel preaching. Rather, we are told *only* Gospel. We need to hear the Law of God first in order to hear and appreciate the Gospel of God's grace through Christ's cross and empty tomb. The Gospel motivates only after the Law has done its work. "He who has an ear to hear, let him hear!"

Dr. Herman A. Etzold
Professor of Theology, *emeritus*
Concordia University, Nebraska

Cleaning Out Our Basement

"The ox knows its owner, and the ass its master's crib; but Israel does not know, my people does not understand" (Isaiah 1:3). "Look to the rock from which you were hewn, and the quarry from which you were digged" (Isaiah 51:1).

Do we want Synod at the national level to fade away? Were I to answer the question of this issue in the affirmative, I can imagine Synod—personified rising up and adapting the above complaints in Isaiah to me. Not that Synod is my Master. Nor is Synod to be identified with the Spirit's quarry whence I was hewn. However, this Synod has educated me and has provided the setting of my call. To imagine that Synod's work is finished now that I have fed on her milk bears an all-too-chilling resemblance to the vices of self-absorption and presumption.

Since any institution can be frustrating (teen-agers often find the institution of parenthood a frustrating hindrance to their "self-expression"), it is not uncommon for members of Synod to become frustrated with certain of its actions (or inactions). In a time of such frustration, who among us has not wished that Synod would fade away? However, one does pray for adolescent yearning to give way to adult understanding, namely, that freedom isn't found in self, but in one's relationship to another (Another!). Freedom by any other name spells bondage and loss.

What would be lost if "national Synod" were allowed to fade away? Three items come to mind. First, the structure for training professional church workers would be lost, a structure that, for all its limitations, has served the Synod extraordinarily well. Second, the structure to support world-wide mission work would be lost, creating obstacles for local congregations desiring to discharge the Great Commission in its fullness. Third, a structure for engaging in theological discussion beyond local settings would be lost (e.g., the Commission on Theology and Church Relations), depriving us of the counsel of a wide range of saints to inform and reform our individual positions, resulting in theological parochialism. (Some might claim this loss is already upon us; certainly we have not always created a healthy environment for open discussion. Nevertheless, the goal of achieving genuine concord calls for not only local, but national dialogue.)

Consequent to these losses, the radical autonomy that is characteristic of our age would have easier access into our parish life. Absent the mutual consolation and admonition of a national body of believers, individual pastors and congregations would have greater opportunity to push their own agendas, both theologically and personally. This is no idle fear. Without the "checks and balances" provided by the interconnection of congregations and pastors in the national body of Synod, only the powerful would prevail, and the Gospel would suffer. From another context, if pastors and congregations were angels, there would be no need of Synod, but since pastors and congregations are sinners as well as saints, something like a Synod is to be desired. Districts would not be able to "take up the slack" in this area, since a District is nothing other than "Synod in this place." Without a national Synod, there is no "District" as we have come to know it.

The church of Jesus Christ, however, is characterized not by radical autonomy, but by radical love, radical service, radical sacrifice, radical trust, radical obedience (which is to say, radical *theonomy*, which is to pray, "Thy will be done") to the *Radix*, the Root of our life, Jesus Christ. The continued existence of Synod at the national level reminds us of a unity on earth toward which the church is to strive. A national Synod compels us to listen to brothers and sisters in the faith outside our immediate circle, and it enables us to work with them to accomplish what individual congregations might not be able to do on their own.

My wife and I recently cleaned our basement. Having lived in the house a dozen years, we had accumulated much. The governing question was: "What to keep, what to pitch (I mean, *donate* to the church yard sale)?" After 150 years of existence, perhaps the question to ask is not if Synod at the national level should fade away, but what in Synod's "basement" of accumulated projects and tasks and goals we wish to keep, and what we wish to set aside (perhaps temporarily and/or regrettably).

Every national convention orders Synod to do more, while the remittance of unrestricted offerings dictates that it do less. If we are confused about Synod's purposes, then this "two-faced" phenomenon of "demanding more but providing less" will continue, leaving us increasingly frustrated. The more frustrated we become, the more apt we will be to let Synod fade away.

Lest that happen, with its attendant losses, this author humbly suggests we clean out our basement by finding a way to engage in a nationwide discussion about what we want Synod to be and do. Apart from conserving our Scriptural and Confessional heritage, deciding what to keep and what to set aside will be no easy task; but the result, an effective Synod supporting evangelical congregations, is worth the effort.

Charles W. Blanco, pastor
Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church
Ft. Lupton, Colorado

Exciting Developments

One of the greatest challenges for any not-for-profit group or organization is how best to use limited resources to accomplish maximum work. Synod at the national level finds its resources not only limited but declining in recent years. It may "fade away" for that reason alone. But should it? Or should we want it to "fade away"? What would it mean for the future ministry of our church body?

Synod certainly can fill roles that are needed and even necessary for its congregations and members. Synod can provide consistency in doctrine and teaching, fulfilling Peter's concern in 2 Peter 1:20: "Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation." Synod must hold accountable to the truth of God's Word those who walk together in brotherly love. Synod also can provide greatly needed leadership development as Paul encouraged in Ephesians 4:11-12: "It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up." Synod can fill a greatly needed role in developing leaders for service in building Christ's Kingdom.

These two functions, however, must flow out of a clear understanding of Synod's purpose. The focus must always be on people! People need to be "made disciples" and be "making disciples" of Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. To continue to exist and be efficient in the use of limited and declining resources, every function must be filtered through this truth of the Great Commission, the partnership Jesus has made with us who follow Him.

There is no place in ministry, including the Synod at the national level, for self-service and politics. If the Synod structure allows these to determine the direction and priorities of ministry as well as the distribution of resources, it should "fade away." The question really becomes, "Can we look honestly at what we are doing and genuinely root out the waste and poor stewardship of resources and people?" If we can, and then get back to the basics, Synod will exercise a very helpful role. Congregations and people will be divinely focused on disciple-making, resourced for effective ministry in their context, and encouraged to be about the Master's business where He has planted them.

I am very optimistic about Synod at the national level as I see this focus continuing to develop. There is an increasing attempt to listen to congregations and leaders and then to communicate in effective ways to enable diverse ministries to make disciples. Resources are being gathered from various sources, as well as created, to be shared with ministries that can use them. New ministry areas are evolving rather than ministry areas merely being perpetuated from the past. Exciting work is developing and increasing in ethnically diverse ministry, family ministry, outreach ministries, and congregational diversity (urban, rural, etc.). There are many exciting developments on the horizon of our ministry together.

I believe Synod should continue on the national level but only as it operates with a clear focus on the God-given purpose of disciple-making. It will take visionary and strong leadership to move us in this direction. With God all things are possible when our will is submitted to His.

Darwin L. Karsten, pastor
St. Mark's Lutheran Church
Eureka, Missouri

WALTER ROSIN

The Mission of the Synod at the National Level

AN UNPUBLISHED REPORT prepared for the synodical Survey Commission in 1961 includes the following paragraph:

Sometimes efforts to define the District-Synod relationships have been amusing. A synodical representative was attending a District convention and emphatically emphasized the need for individual cooperation in carrying out the synodical program. One of the "good fathers" and leaders in the District responded, "Schon gut! Aber das Hemd ist doch naeher als der Rock!" (Okay, but the shirt is much closer to the body than the coat!) The inference made was that the District was much closer to the people than the Synod, and consequently, could lay a more effective claim upon their time, talents and treasures. Thereupon the synodical representative immediately responded: "Hier ist nicht die Rede vom 'Hemd' oder 'Rock,' sondern vom 'union suit!'" ("Here, it is not the language of shirt or coat, but of the union suit.") With this analogy the synodical executive emphasized that the relationships did not consist of a 'we' and 'they' arrangement, but that they were, or ought to be, completely integrated and coordinated as in a single garment.

DR. WALTER ROSIN SERVED AS THE SECRETARY OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCH—MISSOURI SYNOD FOR 15 YEARS PRIOR TO HIS RETIREMENT. HE ALSO SERVED AS AN EXECUTIVE OF THE BOARD FOR HIGHER EDUCATION, THE PRESIDENT OF ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN HIGH SCHOOL, CONCORDIA, MISSOURI, AND AS A FACULTY MEMBER OF CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY, NEBRASKA.

Such an exchange represents a difference of opinion which still exists today and which has existed almost from the time of the establishment of the first Districts of the Synod in 1854. In effect it raises the questions, "What is the mission of the Synod at the national level? At the District level? At the Circuit level? At the congregational level?" Stated differently, one could ask, "What is the responsibility of each level, and, furthermore, are these responsibilities constant or do they change with time and circumstances?"

The Synod De Jure

On the basis of the existing Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod, viewed as an organizational structure, the Synod is and always has been an association of congregations joined together to carry out certain activities and achieve certain objectives which could not be accomplished by each congregation acting independently. From the very beginning, in contrast to those who initially thought a Synod should consist of clergy and lay representatives elected by congregations to direct congregations with respect to their activity, it was agreed that the Synod, as an organization, was only advisory in relation to the congregation which retained its right of self-government.

The same relationship, however, does not exist with regard to Districts. The underlying principle governing the relationship between the Synod and its Districts is that Districts do not create or constitute the Synod but are created by it. Throughout its history the Synod has reserved for itself the right to create Districts. Article XII of the Constitution, as well as many of the Bylaws relating to the Districts, has remained virtually unchanged and has served as the basic definition for Synod-District relationships since the Districts first came into being.



From the viewpoint of the official documents, it is incorrect to speak of the District and the Synod as two separate entities. The District is the Synod in that place. Based on this principle, the Synod at the national level, as congregations act in convention, has the authority to direct its Districts and Circuits to carry out certain functions. It cannot direct congregations to do so but may only advise, urge, encourage, ask or suggest that they take such actions.

By their decision, however, congregations, through national convention action, have authorized Districts to adopt their own structures within certain limits. While the Constitution of the Synod is also the Constitution of the Districts, each District may be, and is, incorporated for certain purposes and has its own Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws. These may be developed in any form and have any regulations or stipulations which the District through its convention action determines to adopt as long as they do not conflict with the Bylaws of the Synod as determined by all the congregations of the Synod in the national convention. The freedom thus granted tends to create tension as the efforts of the Synod at the national level to relate to all Districts becomes difficult, if not impossible. Each sets its priorities without the involvement of the other in a joint planning process when they both would like to use the same dollars.

The Synod De Facto

In most respects the *Handbook* is perfectly clear with regard to the relationships which should exist between the Synod at the national level and the Synod at the District level as well as, in principle, the responsibility or mission of each. However, the entities into which the Synod has divided itself (the Districts and Circuits), as well as those which comprise the Synod (congregations), involve people who are vitally concerned with mission and ministry. As such, the organization also has the characteristics of an organism or organisms rather than those of a static structure.

Historically, with the proliferation of Districts, increased functions and activities were assumed by Districts or were assigned to them by the Synod at the national level. Such an increase in functions and activities created a greater independence and autonomy as well as increased staff, including full-time District executive positions. Originally, for example, all Districts contributed surplus funds for what was known as home missions; and a national Home Mission Commission, after receiving individual requests from Districts, allocated the funds to the Districts on a percentage basis. As Districts saw the mission opportunities immediately before them, many of them determined that there were no "surplus" mission funds to transfer from their District

treasury to the common national treasury for allocation by the Home Mission Commission. As Districts attempted to gather as many funds as possible for their own specific needs, the tendency to develop autonomous, independent Districts received support. During this development, the original relation of the Synod toward its Districts and their work was gradually modified; not constitutionally, but practically.

The reason for the growing apparent independence and autonomy of Districts may be attributed to a number of factors.

- There often appears to be a tension, and it may actually exist, between decisions regarding work which is felt to be necessary by the Synod at the national level and the Synod at its District level. This is reflected in Bylaw 4.11b, which states that the elective officers (of the District) "Shall have primary responsibility for District implementation of the decisions of the Synod, *as applicable*, [emphasis mine] and for implementation of decisions of the District convention and District boards." The question of who decides "applicability" is unresolved.
- Since dollars and cents are required for carrying out the work of the church, since congregational funds are forwarded to the District, and since funds to assist the Districts in carrying out their mission work in the Districts are retained by the Districts and are not available to the Synod at the national level, the tendency is to grant greater responsibility and authority to the Districts.
- There is strong support for the view that the Districts are more aware, not only of the work which must be done, but also of the way in which it can be done most effectively in their particular locale.

As a result of the *de facto* situation, and in spite of relationships as spelled out in the *Handbook* of the Synod, the Synod in many respects is viewed often as a federation of Districts, not a federation of congregations. Each District has responsibilities which it identifies and must carry out. Note the efforts in recent years by each District to establish its own mission statement, while the Synod at the national level was seeking to develop one, an effort which culminated in the adoption of

Resolution 1-01A at the 1998 synodical convention. The function of the national level in this view is to support the District boards and staff, each of which may develop its own specific program as long as that program is in harmony with the program direction determined by the national convention of the Synod. The Synod at the national level in this scenario does not direct the Districts but only serves in support of them.

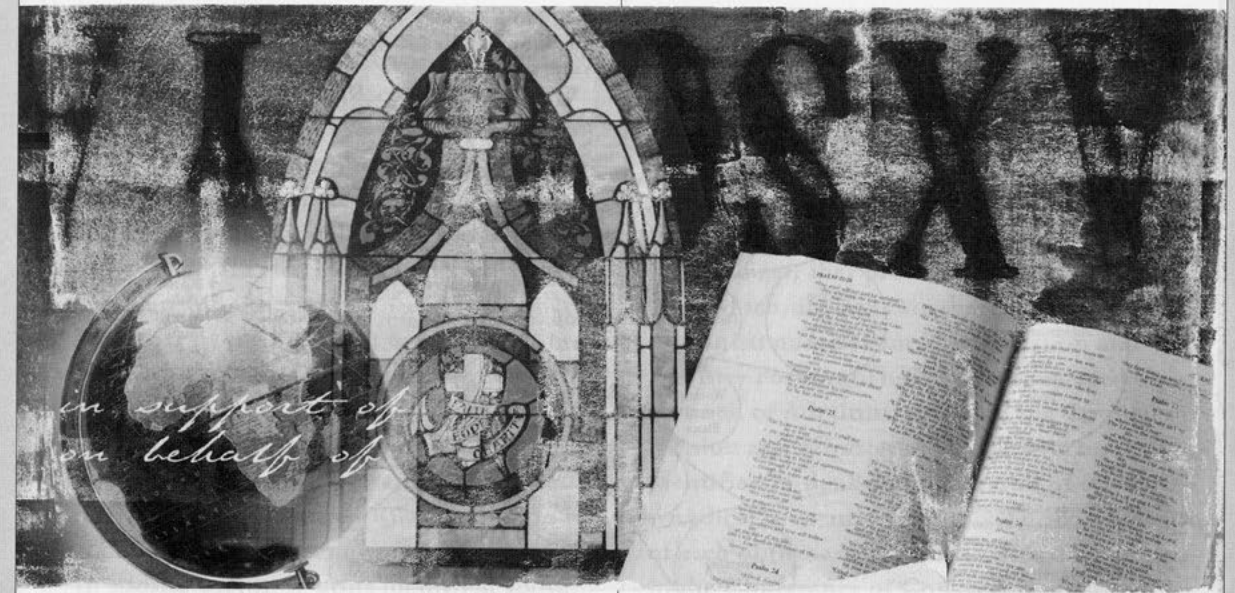
The Mission of the Synod

The mission statement adopted by the Synod states:

In grateful response to God's grace and empowered by the Holy Spirit through Word and Sacraments, the mission of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is vigorously to make known the love of Christ by word and deed within our churches, communities and the world.

This statement is, in effect, a summary of Bylaw 1.01 of the *Handbook* of the Synod which identifies the reasons for organizing a Synod as follows:

Committed to a common confession and mission, congregations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod join with one another in the Synod to support one another and to work together in carrying out their commonly adopted objectives. The Synod functions *in support of* its member congregations by providing assistance as congregations conduct their ministries locally as well as their ministries at large. The Synod *on behalf of* its member congregations administers those ministries which can be accomplished more effectively in association with other member congregations through the Synod. In this way member congregations utilize the Synod to assist them in carrying out their functions of worship, witness, teaching and nurture, service and support as they seek to serve (1) our Lord Jesus Christ, (2) the members of His body, and (3) the world which stands in need of the Word and the impact of His redeeming love.



In Support Of

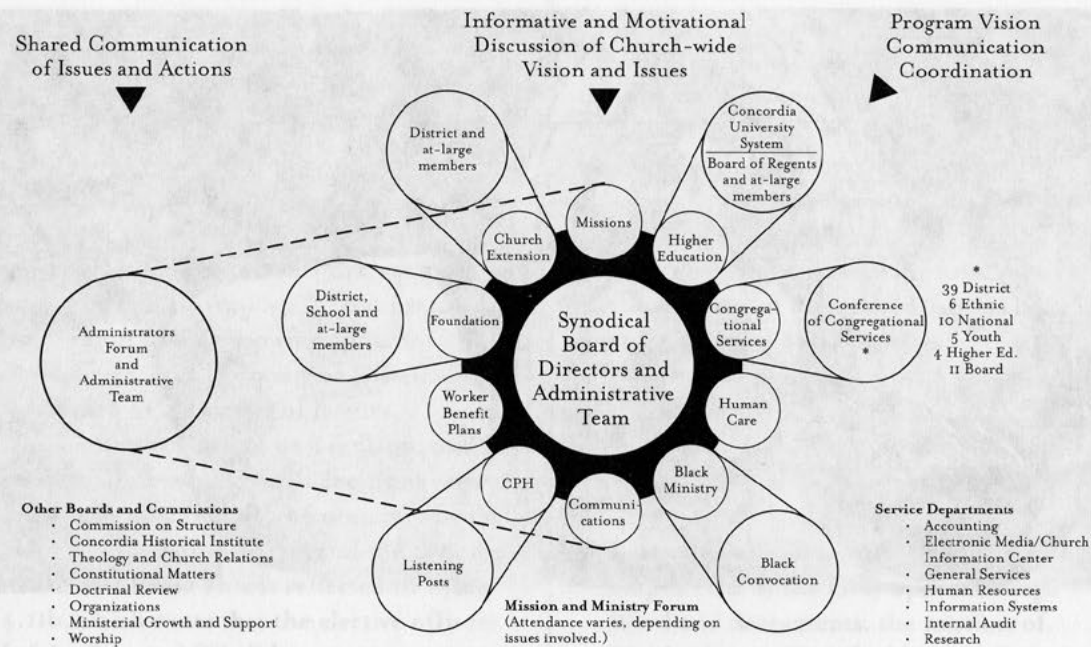
Based on this discussion, one can see that while the purposes of the mission of the Synod have not changed, the ways in which they are accomplished have changed and continue to do so. The purposes of the Synod are still to function "in support of" and "on behalf of" its member congregations. In response to the question, "What does this mean?" the answer is found in the final sentence of Bylaw 1.01 quoted above. The response to the traditional question, "How is this done?" is not as obvious since it will vary, depending on a number of factors. One of these factors related to the "in support of" mission is the variation in the size of Districts, geographically (or for that matter non-geographically as in the case of the English and SELC Districts) and numerically. Because of this variation the Synod at the national level cannot relate to each in exactly the same way. Still another is the structure of each District ranging from boards and staff which have at times mirrored those boards and staff established at the national level, to boards combining functions which are separate at the national level with little or no staff. Related to all of this is the decision of a number of Districts to move in the direction of staff who serve as "generalists," with each member relating to a certain number of congregations or congregations within a designated area.

The point is that in support of the member congregations the Synod at the national level must be flexible as it seeks to carry out that facet of its mission. On the one hand it may need to provide assistance to Districts in dealing directly with congregations at the request of Districts who have little or no staff. This could include the provision of materials prepared by the national level staff at the request of the District. On the other hand it might simply consist of support and encouragement of District staff as they relate to congregations. Such encouragement and support might consist of serving as a broker of materials which are available and which have been prepared by Districts, congregations or individuals. It might involve the linking of Districts and congregations throughout the Synod, assisting in matching needs with resources for meeting them.

On Behalf Of

As stated in the Bylaws, when the Synod functions "on behalf of" the congregations, it does so by administering ministries which can best be done together. These ministries involve primarily those which relate to missions and world relief, particularly foreign missions, and to higher education, including the education of lay persons for Christian service in their communities and throughout the world, but in

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod Organization Chart



particular the preparation of full-time church workers, e.g., ordained and commissioned ministers and certified lay workers. While there are certain District or local aspects to these functions, they are primarily administered at the national level. So, for example, boards of regents of colleges and universities select some of their own members, some are chosen by District conventions and some are elected by the national convention. Nevertheless all function under the oversight of the Board of Directors of the Concordia University System. In the case of seminary boards of regents, all are elected by the national convention with the exception of the Vice President of the Synod appointed by the synodical President and a District President chosen by the Council of Presidents. The seminaries operate under the oversight of the national Board for Higher Education.

In the area of missions, individual Districts, congregations or groups of congregations may determine to support specific missions as missionaries. Sometimes this is done through mission societies which have been established. Nevertheless, these efforts are, or at least are expected to be, coordinated through the Board for Mission Services who by Bylaw stipulation is to "serve as the only sending agency through which workers and funds are sent to the mission areas of the Synod, even though

programs are supported by Districts or other entities."

In addition to those areas identified above, there are some functions presently carried out at the national level which do not fall neatly into either the "in support of" or "on behalf of" categories. Among these would be the work of the Board for Communication Services, Commission on Theology and Church Relations, Commission on Organizations, Doctrinal Review, Commission on Worship, Board for Human Care Ministries, Commission on Ministerial Growth and Support, and Board for Black Ministry Services.

Organized for Action

The diagram above is an attempt to identify the way in which the Synod is organized at the national level in order to carry out its functions. It is an effort to visualize the relationship between the entities through which the Synod at the national level seeks to carry out its work.

The synodical Board of Directors, including officers of the Synod (President, First Vice President, Secretary, Chief Financial Officer, with the Chief Administrative Officer as advisory) has direct responsibility for the corporation known as The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. In that capacity it has a close relationship and responsibility to and for

certain program boards (Missions, Higher Education, Congregational Services, Human Care, Communications, Black Ministry, various commissions and service units) as it allocates funds for their operations and reviews their activities. These units also have individual boards responsible directly to the convention, some of which are elected by the Synod in convention and others appointed by the Board of Directors or the President or by some combination. (As a result of adoption of recommendations of the President's Blue Ribbon Committee on Structure, one-third of the members of almost all boards, including those of other corporate entities, are now to be elected by the synodical convention.)

In addition to those units identified above, the Board of Directors of the Synod has oversight but not direct management responsibility over agencies which are separately incorporated as not-for-profit corporations or which are trust entities. These include Lutheran Church Extension Fund, Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod Foundation, Concordia University System, Concordia Publishing House, Concordia Historical Institute and Worker Benefit Plans, a trust entity. In many respects there was little change in relation to these groups from that which already existed with the exception of the election of one-third of their governing boards and the relation of the Chief Financial Officer to some of the agencies. Action which was taken was primarily for clarification of the relationship of the synodical Board of Directors to the agencies, with the Constitution Article being changed so that Bylaws under which the agencies already existed would now be in harmony with the Constitution of the Synod. (The change does not become effective unless and until ratified by the congregations of the Synod prior to March 15, 1999.)

The relationship to the national convention was thus strengthened and clarified, and the oversight responsibility of the synodical Board of Directors became more obvious. The diagram above is also intended to indicate how the Synod at the national level provides for the way in which boards listen to and communicate with the member congregations. It is through meetings of user groups such as those identi-

fied that synodical agencies receive input through which they can determine how best to network to meet the needs of those represented in the larger groups such as Congregational Services, Concordia University System, Church Extension, the Foundation, Black Ministry and Concordia Publishing House. As these larger groups meet, they provide vision for the specific areas which, in turn, are shared with the Administrators Forum or the Mission and Ministry Forum. (These forums replaced the Council of Administrators and the Council on Mission and Ministry as formal structures identified in the Bylaws as a result of 1998 synodical convention action.) The composition of each of the larger groups varies. In some, as in the Conference of Congregational Services, the membership is very specific. The same is true of the members of Concordia University System and District and at-large members of the Lutheran Church Extension Fund. In others, such as the Black Ministry Convocation, it is either not specific, or as in the case of members of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod Foundation, less specific, being limited to representatives of those who use the Foundation services. In all cases, however, the purpose is to provide for two-way communication between the boards and their constituency.

Essential Functions or Bureaucratic Fluff

Having said all the above, the question still remains: "Which functions of the Synod at the national level are essential and which are either obsolete or at the most secondary?" While the Board of Directors of the Synod determines some of this through budget allocations, the answer to that question is one which can be answered only by the members of the Synod. And they will provide the answer in one of two ways, either by deliberate change of the objectives of the Synod or by lack of support of those attempting to carry them out. If no action is taken for change of the objectives, lack of support at one level might well imply that the members of the Synod have concluded that the responsibility for attaining the objectives, or at least a specific objective, is lodged at a different level. It could also imply that while the objective



is valid, it is not being carried out effectively or efficiently at a specific level, and methods of achieving the objective must be altered.

In my opinion there are certain functions which cannot be shifted or removed from the responsibility of the national level. These fall primarily in the area of those functions which are carried out "on behalf of" the member congregations. Chief among these is the function of the preparation of ordained and commissioned ministers who serve the member congregations. Unless that function is carried out at the national level, there can be no assurance that standards are met. That obviously does not mean that all who are prepared at the colleges, universities and seminaries for this work emerge from that preparation as from a cookie cutter or as clones. It does mean that the confession on which the Synod at all levels is based will more likely be maintained. Unless the member congregations of the Synod support that function at the national level rather than allowing for the support of that preparation at other levels, the Synod cannot expect that the confessional unity which has been a hallmark of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod will be retained. Rather, it can be expected that diversity in this area will increase, that the synodical membership will become more fractured, and that the differences will become irreconcilable, leading to the disintegration of the Synod. The support of this function of the Synod at the national level is, I believe, absolutely vital.

Closely related to that, I believe, is the administration of the global mission function of the Synod. Unless that is coordinated at the national level, the probability of duplication of efforts will increase as Districts and/or congregations choose to initiate or support mission efforts in those areas which as a result of national or international publicity have been given high visibility. This can only result in duplication of efforts unless coordinated, and at worst in conflicting efforts which undermine or negate the very Gospel we are seeking to proclaim. It also has legal implications, both real and contingent, in dealing with other countries as well as church relations implications. Of equal concern is the fact that without the necessary information which is available at

the national level, entire areas or people groups in which the Gospel has not nor is now being proclaimed are totally neglected. This is not to say that Districts and/or congregations should not seek to be more immediately involved in the mission effort of the Synod, but rather that that involvement be coordinated and administered at the national level.

One area in which, again in my opinion, a function of the Synod at the national level is not being carried out as effectively as it could be for lack of funds is in the area of communication. That function is extremely costly and has been limited until recently to funding from third source funds. Once more, in my opinion, if the image regarding the message, purpose and nature of the Synod is not coordinated from the national level, the messages which go forth will give not only a blurred, but even contradictory image of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

Conclusion

As noted at the beginning of this article, the Synod is not only an organization but an organism or organisms. It receives its direction from Jesus Christ, its head. But the organism, as such, will inevitably change, though its purpose will not. What will change is the method by which the purpose is accomplished. For example, the rapid advance of technology is changing the way individuals and congregations relate to Districts and Synod at the national level, with Districts often being bypassed. For some, this elicits fear. For others, this speaks of opportunity, opportunity to share and proclaim the Gospel more effectively and efficiently.

At the 1998 synodical convention a resolution was adopted calling for a National/District Relations Task Force. No doubt recommendations will emerge which will deal with the issue of functions of the Synod at these two levels, and those recommendations will involve some changes. What they will be is not yet known. For some of the member congregations, such recommendations will result in a fear that the Synod is changing and losing its direction. Others will view change as a time of excitement and opportunity. If nothing else, it will be interesting to see what the outcome will be.

NEIL RABE

A Decade of Difference: Assessing New Ways of Funding World Missions

A Decade of Difference

DURING THE DECADE OF THE 1990s, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod celebrated the 100th anniversary of its international mission efforts. Its first intentional outreach beyond North America was to India in 1895.

Today it is commonplace for many people to refer casually to "missions" as any or much of the work carried on by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, its districts and congregations. However, for the purposes of this article, "missions" is limited in meaning to include only the worldwide work of the Synod's Board for Mission Services. That work is known generally as LCMS World Mission, the global Gospel outreach of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

History of Mission Funding

Earlier in this century, prior to the decade of the 1990s, international mission outreach by the Synod was funded primarily via weekly offerings received in LCMS congregations. Those mission offerings received in congregations were then forwarded to the Synod via the respective district in which a given congregation had membership. That practice continues today. However, proportionately, weekly offerings received in LCMS congregations account for a smaller portion of the entire synodical mission budget each year. As recently

as in fiscal 1991-92, 73 percent of the then \$12,600,000 synodical mission budget was provided in this traditional weekly congregational offering manner.

It is interesting to note that during the approximately first 90 years of its history, the international mission outreach of the Synod had begun to receive some support from direct gifts (in addition to the weekly offerings in LCMS congregations) to fund its work. By fiscal 1991-92 direct gifts for this work amounted to 27 percent of the \$12,600,000 budget of LCMS World Mission. An analysis shows that these direct gifts were provided by individuals, families, organizations (such as women's groups, men's groups, couples' clubs), agencies (such as schools, Sunday schools, vacation Bible schools), districts, corporations (usually through matching charitable gifts made by employees) and foundations. Direct funding also included then, as it does now, gifts not only from the sources just listed but also from congregations desiring to raise and designate support for world mission outreach above and beyond normal weekly offerings. Such over-and-above direct gifts commonly have been designated for the support of a given missionary, mission field or mission project. In addition, direct funding included, and continues to include, the proceeds from matured legacies and bequests from individuals designating the work of LCMS World Mission as the recipient. Such direct funding has grown significantly during the decade of the 1990s, a decade of difference.

Today, the fiscal 1998-99 cash budget or spending plan for LCMS World Mission is approximately \$28,000,000. Of that amount, only 28 percent is provided by the weekly offerings received in LCMS congregations, whereas 72 percent is provided by direct funding. The graph, "Growth of Financial Support for LCMS World Mission," illustrates

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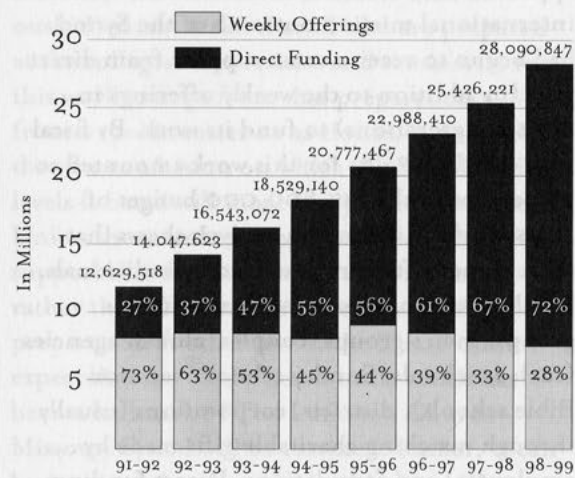
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that, during the decade of the 1990s, not only has direct funding provided for the expansion of resources available to undergird the global Gospel outreach of LCMS World Mission, but it has also made up for the shrinking support for the Synod available from weekly offerings received in LCMS congregations. This is a decade of difference. Both the amount of support and sources of such funding for LCMS World Mission have changed.

Growth in Financial Support for LCMS World Mission



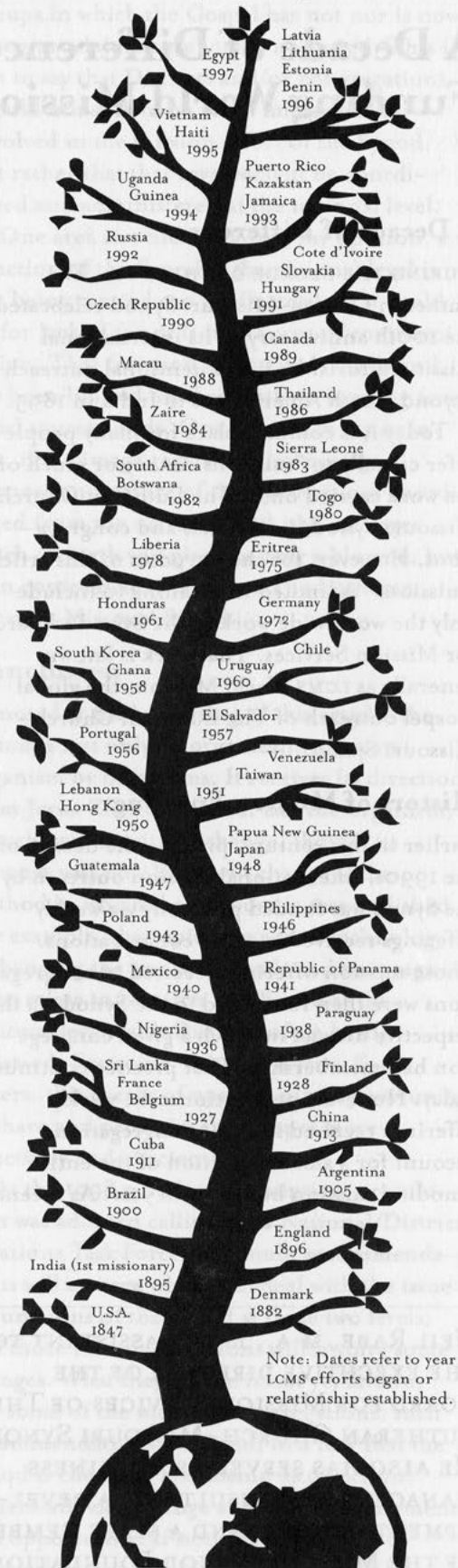
History of Mission Service

During the decade of the 1990s, God has provided for the growth of human and financial resources. This has enabled LCMS World Mission to strengthen existing work while entering more new fields and countries than at any other time in its history. In 1900, LCMS mission outreach was active in five countries. In 1990, it was active in 42 countries. Today it is active in over 60 countries. The "Declare His Glory Among the Nations" tree illustrates how God has expanded the service of LCMS World Mission. This is a decade of difference.

Growth in Direct Support

While many praise God for what He is accomplishing through LCMS World Mission and what it does for and on behalf of the members, congregations and districts of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, there are some who question or even challenge the changes reflected in how it is funded.

Declare His Glory Among the Nations



With growing financial support, LCMS World Mission is increasingly challenged to be responsible in its planning and accountable in its spending. Weekly offering support received in LCMS congregations provides unrestricted funds that can be used wherever needed most in the spending plan of the Board for Mission Services. However, a significantly high percentage of direct support funding is designated by the donor(s) for specific aspects of the spending plan. Donors deserve proper accountability that their gifts have been used for the intended purpose. This type of planning, use and accountability, although challenging, is beneficial for those who fund the mission and for the mission itself.

Some church leaders surmise that growth in direct giving to fund efforts such as LCMS World Mission tends to compete with, and negatively impact, contributions at the congregational level. Reliable research indicates that just the opposite is true. The Department of Rosters and Statistics of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod reports that contributions at the congregational level are at an all-time high. Such contributions generally have grown annually, outpacing the rate of inflation. Other respected research indicates that:

- Faithful contributors at the congregational level tend to support an average of 11 different Christian ministries or causes on an annual basis. Approximately one-half of the gifting from these contributions is to, and/or through, the congregation. The other half of their gifting is contributed directly to such efforts as LCMS World Mission as one of the ten remaining ministries or causes they support each year.
- Faithful contributors tend to increase their gifting to their respective congregations as they increase their direct support of efforts such as LCMS World Mission.
- Faithful contributors who support their congregations, as well as provide direct support for other Christian ministries or causes, may at a given time forego continuing direct support for a given ministry or cause beyond the congregation. When that occurs, they generally tend to identify an alternate ministry or cause to receive that portion of direct support rather than transferring such

support to their respective congregation. Direct giving, coupled with congregational giving, has emerged during the decade of the 1990s within all mainline Christian denominations. There appears to be a high correlation between that trend and the maturing of the Baby Boomer generation, those born between 1946 and 1964. Baby Boomers currently are reaching prime positions in their careers as well as assuming key leadership roles in the church and society. This is a decade of difference.

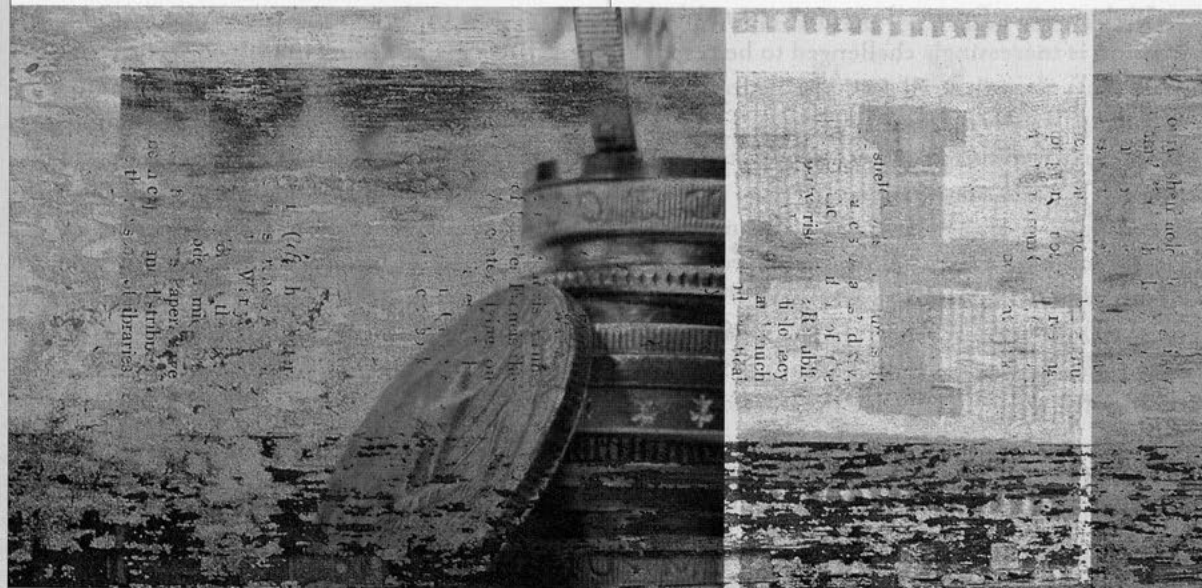
Biblical Stewardship

Others who question or challenge the changes reflected in how LCMS World Mission is funded express the opinion that direct support for a given ministry or cause, *apart from* rather than as *a part of* the local congregation, is not compatible with the biblical stewardship concept of first-fruits giving. Such understanding of first-fruits giving is limited to a time and a place. The place is church, the time is weekly worship. Faithfully offering a gift for the work of the Lord as part of weekly worship at the congregation is pleasing to the Lord. For the Christian, it is an act of faith and love. It is a benefit to the church. However, the blessings of first-fruits giving are not limited to Christian stewardship practiced only in that time and in that place.

For the Christian, all of life is an act of worship. All of life is lived to the glory of God. *Stewardship as a Christian* and *Christian stewardship* are related, but are not one and the same.

Stewardship as a Christian

Stewardship as a Christian is sometimes called whole-life or all-of-life stewardship. *Stewardship as a Christian* helps the faithful child of God determine values for all of life in terms of how gifts of time, skills, personal energy (physical, mental, emotional, spiritual), money and other possessions are used. It helps to establish priorities and patterns of action. It controls decisions related to what kind of job is right, where to live, how expensive a house to buy, what kind of car to drive or clothes to wear. *Stewardship as a Christian* is the basis and framework upon which the child of God builds a life that demonstrates both faith and love in action.



Christian Stewardship

Christian stewardship, on the other hand, is the driving force of the faithful Christian in response to the presence, power, pardon, peace, providence and plenty of God in Christ in his or her life. Faithful *Christian stewardship* is a Spirit-blessed determination of heart and head to devote first to the work of the Lord a proportionate share of all that He has given. Out of that determination, decisions are made as to what is accomplished through (given to and through) the congregation and what is accomplished through (given to) the other Christian ministry(ies) and/or cause(s) one may support directly, such as LCMS World Mission.

Stewardship as a Christian includes *Christian stewardship*, but all other aspects of stewardship for the child of God do not begin until after *Christian stewardship* decisions have been made and provision has been established for them to be carried out. That is first-fruits giving. It does not tie a faithful Christian steward to a time and a place, but frees him or her to carry it out throughout all of life. It offers financial gifting options for fulfillment, including:

- At weekly worship in the congregation.
- In response to a direct-mail opportunity to support directly a Christian ministry or cause.
- In supporting a congregation, or other Christian ministry or cause, with a gift in

memory of or in honor of a relative or friend.

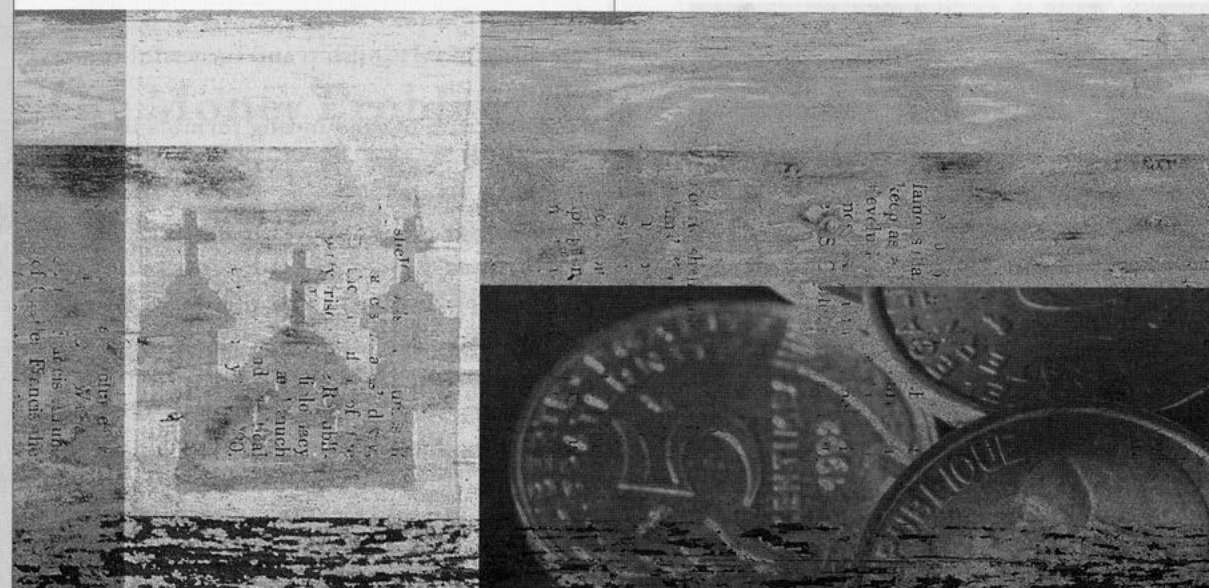
- A monthly, quarterly, semi-annual or annual direct gift to a Christian ministry or cause.
- An endless host of opportunities regardless of time or place, to make God's mission the mission of the faithful Christian steward.

The lessons learned from a decade of difference in new ways of funding LCMS World Mission can serve as models and examples for funding the entire Synod.

Funding the Synod

In responding to the theme of this edition, "Do we want The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod at the national level to fade away?" the response of this writer in discussing new ways of funding LCMS World Mission is an emphatic "No, we don't want The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod at the national level to fade away."

Those who will determine the future of the Synod must always be alert to the power of the gift of God entrusted to the Synod: the living voice of the Gospel, never changing, always adapting. From the perspective of this writer, LCMS World Mission has been and is faithfully carrying out the charge The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod has given to its Board for Mission Services. The Gospel has not changed during this decade of difference, and it must



never change! However, mission methods, priorities, strategies and methods of funding, among other things, have changed. They have adapted to a world that continues to change at an ever-increasing pace. In the midst of change, the mission has been blessed . . . blessed as never before.

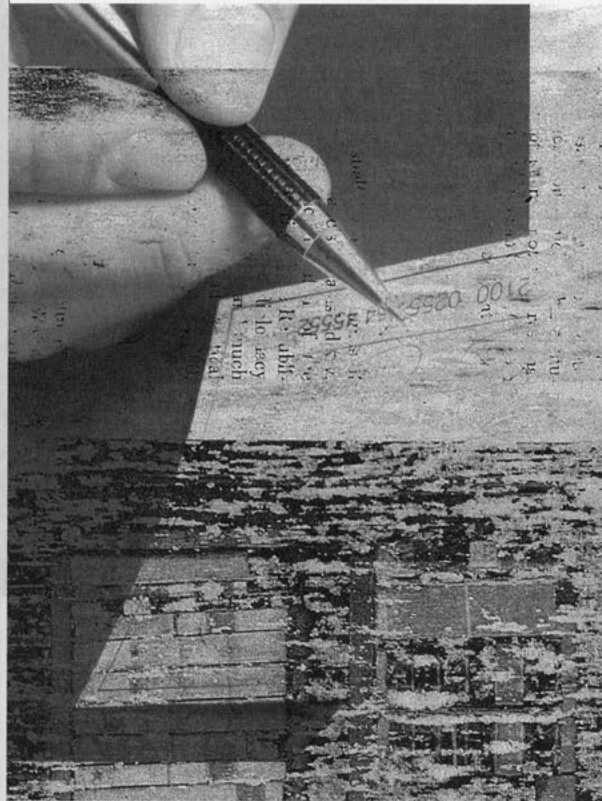
The Synod exists to serve in support of its member congregations and to serve on behalf of its member congregations. The congregations are autonomous and supreme within the structure of the Synod. This is both a theological and an organizational principle. When it comes to funding the work of congregations, districts and the Synod, some are critical that congregations are "keeping too much money at home." What a shortsighted perspective! For over 150 years the Synod and its districts have been serving congregations and serving on behalf of congregations. As a result, many congregations are maturing continually as they develop and become involved in mission and ministry efforts in their respective communities. Districts of the Synod are maturing in much the same manner. Such developments should be commended, and God should be thanked and praised. Such developments indicate that the Synod and its districts under the blessing of God have accomplished much of what they have been charged to do. Perhaps a new day in a fast-approaching new millennium no longer calls for the Synod or its districts to

do much of what either has done in the past. If so, church leaders on all levels need to plan for the future, mindful of the living voice of the Gospel, never changing, always adapting. This is what LCMS World Mission has done, especially during the past decade. God has richly blessed the efforts of LCMS World Mission and the response of His people in support of His mission.

God's blessing has yielded a decade of difference in the global Gospel outreach of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. The methods have changed. The locations and number of missionary personnel are at an all-time high. God's blessing has also yielded a decade of difference in the manner and the extent of funding mission outreach. This is a decade of difference in what God is accomplishing through LCMS World Mission. *Why not fund all aspects of the Synod's work in the same way LCMS World Mission is now being funded?* God's rich blessings on LCMS World Mission can be multiplied to include the totality of what the Synod is called to do.

The Funding Formula

Under the blessing of God, the significant growth in direct support for LCMS World Mission during the decade of the 1990s is the result of an intentional effort to link Christian stewards with mission opportunities. That intentional effort has been primarily the



responsibility of the Mission Development Unit, which was established in fiscal 1989-90.

The Mission Development Unit has methodically related mission opportunities to donors and prospective donors based on the following formula:

1. *Inquire* to determine the interests and priorities of the donor or prospective donor.
2. *Inform* the donor or prospective donor about opportunities to support LCMS World Mission.
3. *Inspire* the donor or prospective donor in terms of how prayers, encouragement and financial support will make a difference in the sharing of the Gospel via LCMS World Mission.
4. *Involve* the donor or prospective donor (individuals, families, organizations, agencies, districts, corporations, foundations, etc.) in ways meaningful to the donor and beneficial to LCMS World Mission.

The staff of the Mission Development Unit communicates with donors and prospective donors in person, via telephone or mail, at group gatherings as well as through the

Internet. Donor dialogue is a key to building a meaningful relationship and successful funding effort.

The action of the funding formula in the lives of God's people has been blessed with the following results:

- Each year more donors are fulfilling their Christian stewardship with contributions that include direct support of LCMS World Mission.
- Each year more donors who provide direct support for LCMS World Mission are increasing the frequency with which they share such gifts. Many who initially made direct contributions once or twice each year are now sharing four, six or even 12 times per year.
- Each year the average-sized gift contributed by donors who provide direct support for LCMS World Mission is increasing.

When the number of direct-support donors, the frequency of their contributions and the generosity of their gifts all increase, the result is geometric growth in the total amount of funding available for LCMS World Mission.

The funding formula God has richly blessed for LCMS World Mission can also be a blessing for all aspects of the work of the entire Synod, be it on the national, district or congregational level.

Partners in God's Mission

In addition to helping faithful children of God accomplish their Christian stewardship, LCMS World Mission has also been willing to partner with others who have a desire to expand God's mission. These partners are stewards also. LCMS World Mission does not own the mission. The partners do not own the mission. The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod does not own the mission. God owns the mission.

Be a partner in bringing hope and life to a dying world. Make God's mission your mission!

Ultimately God provides not only the people of faith to go out in His name to the ends of the earth. God also provides the financial resources needed to carry out His mission.

God be praised! Celebrate the fact that God's supply always meets every mission challenge!

LARRY L. REINHARDT

The Money Problem in the LCMS: How Can More Mean Less?

THERE'S AN OLD "BAD NEWS—GOOD NEWS" story about finances in a local congregation. The pastor gets up and tells the people, "The good news is that there is no money shortage in this congregation; there is plenty of money to do all the mission and ministry work that the Lord wants done in this place. The bad news is that it's still in your wallets."

That is the problem plaguing many Christian denominations in America today, but that is not really the money problem in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Total giving in our church body continues to rise year after year, but the way in which the giving takes place is causing some surprising challenges. Consider the question posed in the May 1998 issue of the *Reporter*. "How can the Synod make ends meet when gifts are producing a shortage?" Or, to put it another way, "How can more mean less?" Let's consider some trends in our church body during the 1990s.

Giving at the Congregational Level Continues to Rise

Total contributions to all LCMS congregations during the first seven years of this decade were (rounded to the nearest \$1 million):

1990—\$809 million	1994—\$913 million
1991—\$836 million	1995—\$931 million
1992—\$875 million	1996—\$960 million
1993—\$886 million	

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The dollar increase from 1990 to 1996 amounts to about \$151 million, which is a lot of money. However, the percentage of increase over that seven-year period is about 19 percent, an average of slightly less than three percent. That is roughly equivalent to the rate of inflation which means, in effect, that total contributions to congregations are about level.

What are congregations to do when their operating costs rise more than three percent in a year because of higher salaries, rising benefits costs and increasing costs of utilities, equipment and maintenance? The answer is that congregations will most likely keep a larger portion of their contributions to cover rising costs. Statistics indicate that this is happening. In 1990 LCMS congregations kept \$712 million for work at home and gave \$96 million for work at large; in 1996 LCMS congregations kept \$855 million for work at home and gave \$104 million for work at large.

That's one trend impacting the financial picture in our Synod. Another trend has to do with what is happening at the district level.

Contributions from Congregations to Districts are About Level

During the first seven years of the 1990s the contributions which flowed from congregations to districts to fund their work programs have remained fairly constant in actual dollar amounts (not counting inflation). Contributions from congregations to districts for 1990-1996 were:

1990—\$66.1 million	1994—\$64.4 million
1991—\$65.7 million	1995—\$64.6 million
1992—\$64.9 million	1996—\$67.8 million
1993—\$64.9 million	

These contributions provide the primary financial support for district work programs. What are districts to do to meet rising costs

when the level of income remains the same? The obvious answer is to forward less to Synod for the work that is done together.

A third major trend impacting the financial picture within The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is:

Contributions from Districts to National Synod Have Declined in the 1990s

The following figures show what has happened to the contributions from districts to national Synod:

1990—\$30.1 million	1994—\$26.9 million
1991—\$29.6 million	1995—\$26.5 million
1992—\$28.6 million	1996—\$26.2 million
1993—\$27.9 million	

What is Synod to do to meet its rising costs of carrying out its mission and ministry work when the income from districts is declining? The answer includes seeking gifts and grants from other sources.

Congregations, districts and Synod do have strategies and methods in place to cope with the financial trends. The question is, "How are these strategies and methods working?"

At the Congregational Level

The 6,200+ congregations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod continue to carry out their programs of mission and ministry although many, if not most, of them are living on the financial edge. This financial reality has caused many congregations to make changes in the way they operate.

Some cut staff or make staffing changes by going from full-time to part-time or using volunteers instead of paid staff. Others join with a neighboring congregation to share a staff position or enter into a dual parish arrangement to share the costs of pastoral services and other expenses. These are not necessarily actions that congregations want to take, but financial restraints make for hard decisions.

At the District Level

Districts are caught in the middle. They depend upon contributions from congregations to support their work program, and yet they are expected to forward a significant

portion of those contributions to Synod to help fund the work done together nationally and internationally.

Another challenge districts face is in the form of rising expectations of help and service from congregations. Congregations appreciate having district staff available for support and counsel, and district staffs want to help congregations. However, this increases the operating costs for districts while contributions from congregations remain the same at best. Districts have little choice but to keep a larger portion of congregational contributions to fund their work.

At Synod

The Synod also continues to function and support an ever-expanding work program in missions, higher education, human care, congregational services, communications and other ministry areas.

Congregations and districts join together as the Synod to accomplish the following:

- support missionaries and mission work in more countries than ever before;
- operate two seminaries and ten schools in the Concordia University System;
- provide high quality human care to people in need around the world;
- provide services and resources for congregational use.

As the Lord continues to open doors of opportunity for mission and ministry, the challenge is to make the most of these opportunities to make a difference to the ends of the earth. This expanding work requires expanding financial support. But the trends noted above indicate that the traditional method of providing financial support coming from the Sunday morning offerings to the districts and on to Synod is no longer providing the same amount of money for ministry beyond the congregational level.

SO, HOW IS THE DIFFERENCE MADE UP? The difference is made up through individual and corporate contributions, income from bequests, endowments and grants. The major portion of such contributions is "restricted," which means that the donor making the gift or the entity making the grant stipulates that the



money can be used only for a specific project or activity and not for normal operating expenses (salaries, capital expenses, supplies, etc.). This is in contrast to "unrestricted" contributions which can be used at the discretion of the synodical Board of Directors to fund any and all work of Synod.

The balance between "unrestricted" and "restricted" gifts has changed dramatically during the past seven years. The table below shows the annual unrestricted and restricted funds received by national Synod and the percentage that is unrestricted:

Year	Unrestricted (in millions)	Restricted (in millions)	Percentage Unrestricted
1992	\$29.4	\$14.0	68%
1993	\$29.1	\$24.2	55%
1994	\$27.9	\$22.4	56%
1995	\$27.9	\$17.7	61%
1996	\$27.9	\$29.4	49%
1997	\$28.9	\$34.4	46%
1998	\$27.7	\$34.7	44%


In 1996 the amount of "restricted" contributions exceeded the amount of "unrestricted" contributions for the first time in Synod's history.

ISN'T THIS OKAY? After all, the consensus is that many donors, particularly those from the so-called boomer and buster generations prefer to designate or personalize their giving. Evidence also indicates that a goodly number of

congregations like to designate how part of their contributions is to be used.

There are, however, some challenges or complications to consider. One has to do with the description of "restricted" and "unrestricted" funds. "Restricted" funds, as the name implies, can be used only for certain restricted purposes. Those purposes do not normally include what are called operating expenses such as salaries, building and equipment maintenance and supplies necessary for the work.

Perhaps an example from the Congregational Services Unit can help to illustrate the point. Congregational Services, made up of the eight departments of adult, child, evangelism, family, leadership, schools, stewardship and youth ministries, receives the bulk of its operating budget from the "unrestricted" funds of Synod. However, the "unrestricted" funds of Synod are declining rather than increasing. This means that the various departments of congregational services must assume that the amount of "unrestricted" funds they receive to do their work will decrease each year. Consequently, they either must do less than in previous years or seek special gifts and grants. But that does not necessarily solve the problem. Special gifts and grants normally are "restricted" so they cannot be used to meet the rising costs of such items as staff salaries, benefits, equipment and rental costs. Thus, while it may be possible to receive a gift or grant for a specific project or activity,



there may not be enough staff or operating support to complete the project or activity.

Additionally, if a department receives special grants or contributions, that may result in a cut from "unrestricted" funds. When that happens, it does not take much imagination to realize that "more" can easily become "less," since it will be more difficult to fund the increased operating costs necessary to accomplish the desired outcomes of a certain project or activity.

Furthermore, it is very difficult for the departments of congregational services to provide additional services and resources for congregations when the supply of "unrestricted" funding is in decline.

Another challenge or complication lies in the relative attractiveness of certain ministries. Some ministries, like world missions, higher education, black ministry or human care, are very visible. Prospective donors can relate easily to these ministry areas and may be more inclined to help fund them. Other ministry areas such as communications, information systems, general services and even congregational services, are not as visible or attractive to prospective donors and thus do not get as much donor attention.

Still another challenge or complication is the need for development staff. If special gifts are required, it is necessary for someone to tell the story and share the needs and opportunities. As more entities and agencies use development staff to share their stories and opportunities, there will be more development personnel working within the church. This can lead to a perception of "competition for dollars" and "donor frustration" when some donors are approached again and again by representatives from various entities and agencies of the church. All the entities and agencies surely are important and worthy of support, but is there perhaps a better way to fund this work?

The Synod in convention in July 1998 passed a number of important resolutions. One of these was Resolution 4-02 titled "To Encourage Unrestricted and Restricted Giving in a Balanced Manner." The full text of the resolution is found on page 125 of the 1998 *Convention Proceedings*. Some of the realities of this resolution are:

- God has richly blessed the individual members and congregations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod;
- Restricted gifts are now funding a larger portion of the Synod's total work program than unrestricted gifts;
- The opportunities are increasing for mission work at the local, district, national and international levels;
- Thanks are in order to God for His blessings and to individuals, congregations and districts for the generous unrestricted gifts which are critical for funding the work together;
- Thanks are also in order to God for His blessings to individuals, congregations, endowments, foundations and fraternal benefit societies for their generous restricted gifts which are also funding the work together;
- There needs to be an appropriate balance between unrestricted and restricted gifts so that individuals, congregations, districts and the Synod do not become overly dependent upon restricted gifts;
- There needs to be a renewed emphasis on the critical importance of unrestricted gifts to support the work done together at congregational, district, national and international levels.

This resolution does an eloquent job of speaking to the issue of "restricted" and "unrestricted" gifts, expressing appreciation for both and yet encouraging an appropriate balance so that the work of the Lord may be fully supported.

SO WHAT DOES ALL THIS MEAN FOR THE INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCH—MISSOURI SYNOD? The bottom line is the realization that an "unrestricted" contribution has an equal or greater value than a "restricted" contribution because it can be used in more and varied ways to support the Lord's work. Keep this in mind the next time you get ready to make a contribution that supports the Lord's work to the ends of the earth.

RICHARD T. HINZ

Fostering Partnership within the Synod: Why Not?

A WORD TO THE READER . . .

Readers will absorb this article more quickly by picturing a four-leaf clover.

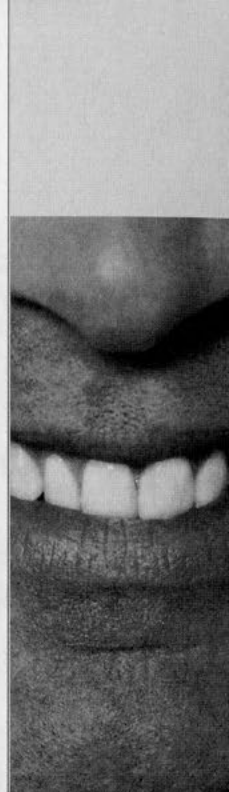
Following the "Introduction, each of the four parts becomes one of the leaves. Each contributes to the concluding section where we intend to mix the four for some helpful and possibly creative outcomes.

The intent of this article is to produce a positive challenge to all who continue to devote care and love in the processes of making congregations faithful, effective, and joy-filled communities fulfilling Christ's mission.

Introduction

Dr. Seuss, the eminent author of magical words for children of all ages, once accepted an invitation to give a commencement address. On a brilliant summer morning he walked quickly to the podium. Scholars and students, eager to hear what he had to say, settled in to listen. Dr. Seuss began speaking from his prepared manuscript. Then he abruptly sat down. He had spoken less than a minute! Stunned, the audience suddenly realized that this master of words and pictures had finished! What had he said? A lot of wisdom in a few words. On that morning he delivered this speech titled "My Uncle Terwilliger on the Art of Eating Popovers":

DR. RICHARD T. HINZ SERVED AS THE PRESIDENT OF THE SOUTHEASTERN DISTRICT OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCH—MISSOURI SYNOD FOR 16 YEARS. HE NOW SERVES AS AN ASSISTANT PASTOR OF PRINCE OF PEACE LUTHERAN CHURCH, SPRINGFIELD, VIRGINIA, AND AS THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF WELLSRING.



My uncle ordered popovers from the restaurant's bill of fare, And when they were served, he regarded them with a penetrating stare. Then he spoke great words of wisdom as he sat there on that chair. "To eat these things," said my uncle, "you must exercise great care. You may swallow down what's solid, but you must spit out the air." And as you partake of the world's bill of fare, that's darn good advice to follow: Do a lot of spitting out of hot air—and be careful of what you swallow.

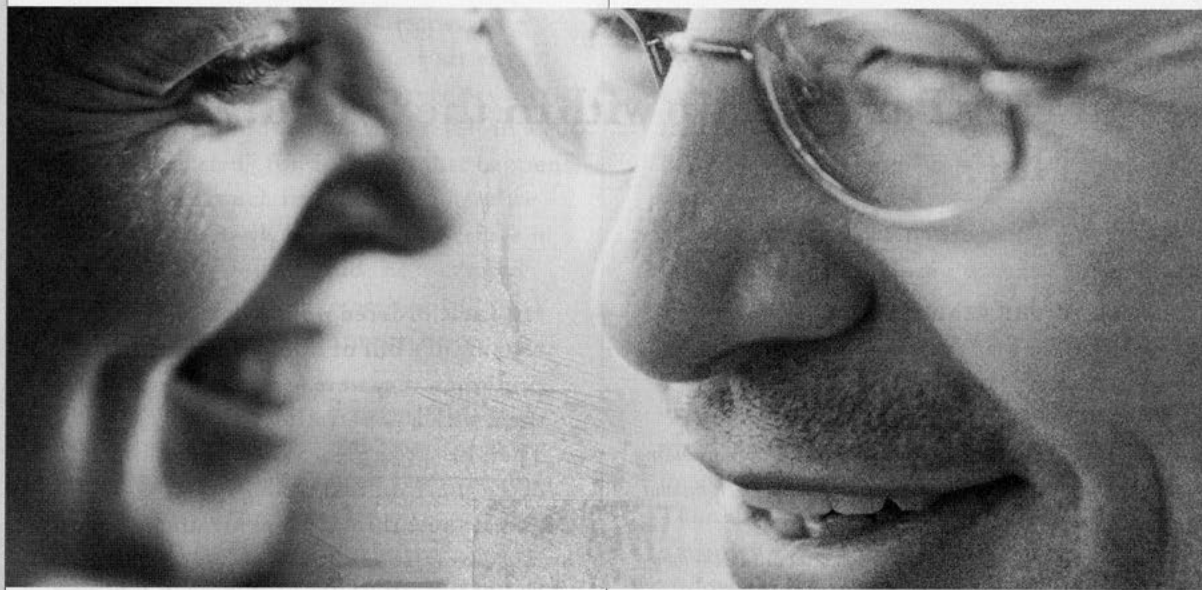
Partnership: What Does It Mean?

What Dr. Seuss suggests about "the world's bill of fare" is also good advice when it comes to individual words. *Partnership* is an example of what I mean. How do you identify the word's substance and get rid of the hot air? How do you lift up its root meaning?

Partnership became a favorite word of mine during my years as president of the Southeastern District of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. That fondness occurred because I, following the example of my predecessors, frequently needed a healthful perspective to surround my work with congregations and church workers.¹ The Apostle Paul's phrase, "partnership in the Gospel," became most apropos in every situation.

My debt to that phrase and image causes me to quote the phrase in its immediate context:

I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your *partnership in the gospel* from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. Philippians 1:4-6 (NIV)



Partnership? We need to focus on a meaning applicable to real life! After all, we are interested in more than simply being nice people with open personalities eager to offer warm fuzzies to each other!

Years ago, using resources I can no longer trace, I learned to press Paul's use of *partnership* to a point where I realized it was a "two-plus-one" word. It took more than two parties to form the partnership Paul had in mind. It took a minimum of two parties *plus* another, a third *something* or *someone* to cause the relationship of the two parties to come into existence. It also took that third something or someone to *sustain* the relationship. When Paul wrote to the Philippians it was the *Gospel* itself which effected and preserved their relationship.

The Gospel was the special message communicating the activity of God for the good of humans. Specifically the Gospel presented the story of Jesus Christ—His unusual activity of grace, "that though he was rich, yet for [our] sakes he became poor, so that [we] through his poverty might become rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9).

Empowered by no one less than Jesus Christ Himself, Paul could make *partnership* a call to

... do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you

should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in the very nature of God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant . . . (Philippians 2:3-6)

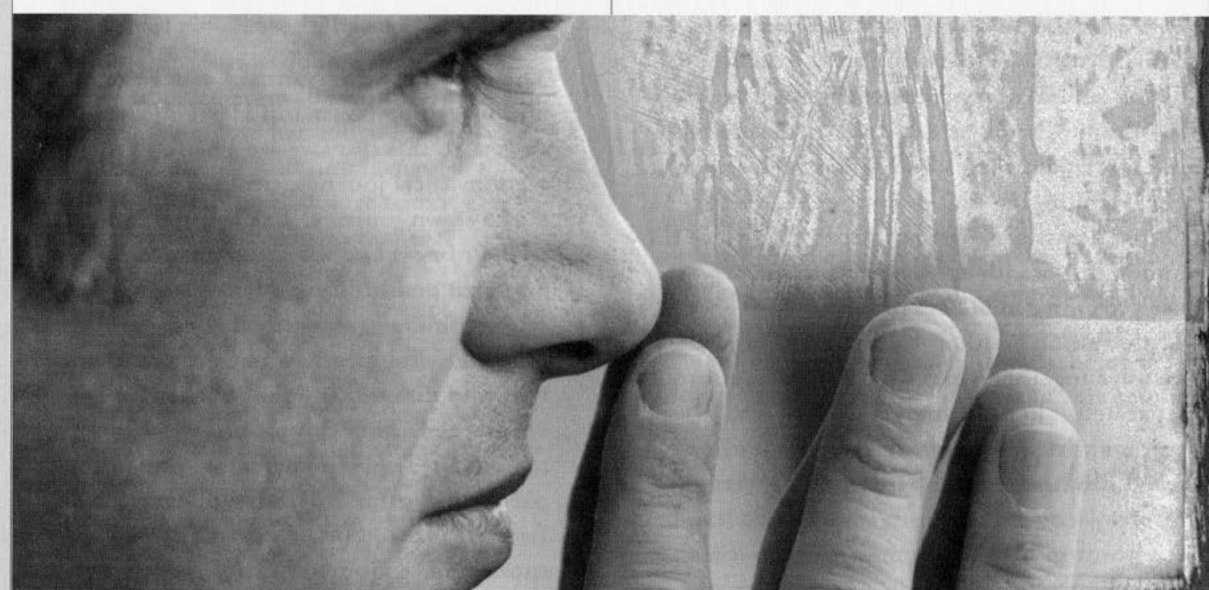
These careful observations about partnership do more than get rid of verbal hot air. They become a call to "press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of [us]" (Philippians 3:12), "for it is God who works in [us] to will and to act according to his good purpose" (2:13).

In brief, a partnership created and sustained by Jesus Christ is not a *static* abstraction defining people who are merely pals together, but a dynamic call for individuals and congregations to work together for the good of each other. It is filled with energy, commitment and the desire to be effective.

End of the first leaf and the beginning of the second . . .

Synod: What Can It Mean?

Is "Synod" filled with hot air? Asking the question so abruptly may appear to signal an anti-synodical leaning in this article. Not so! I



simply want to diminish the prevalence of current bureaucratic meanings.

It is possible, for instance, to define the "Synod" as the sum total of all congregations. It is also possible to define the "Synod" to mean the central structure, the national officers and organization, including the various boards, committees, study commissions, and those remarkable resourcing agencies such as the Lutheran Church Extension Fund and the LCMS Foundation. Likewise, if we follow popular usage, it is possible to define "Synod" as the national convention with its presumed activity of making ultimate decisions for the members of the Synod.

I want to look further to find for the word "synod" a historically justified meaning that matches the same dynamism Paul found in the word "partnership." That search requires me to articulate two assumptions. The assumptions are Scriptural. I know they are basic. I believe the following to be most certainly true:

1. The front line of mission and ministry is the local congregation. God gives to the members of the local congregation responsibility for teaching, witness, service, nurture, fellowship, stewardship, worship and administering the sacraments. (The foregoing list of responsibilities is admittedly more illustrative than exhaustive.)
2. All other levels of church life are to support

and enhance, and not hinder, the congregation's pursuit of its fundamental, God-given responsibilities.

The dynamic meaning of "Synod" must allow—more than that, *encourage*—an expression of "partnership" in which congregations necessarily take a front and center role. This "Synod" is the commitment of congregations to support one another in their mission and ministry and to offer that support *in as direct a way as possible*.

It is interesting to note that this focus on "Synod" seems to have been operative for the first synodical president, Dr. C. F. W. Walther. His first presidential address was titled "How shall we work together when we have no power over each other?" He may as well have added, "How shall we work together when we are so geographically separated, when the mail is so slow, and when automobiles, airplanes, telephones, radios, television have yet to be invented?"

The question Walther did indeed ask was remarkably perceptive. His answer was no less so. He noted that "Christ not only declares that He alone has the power in His church and exercises it by His Word, but He also expressly denies to all others any other power, any other rule, any other authority to command in His church."² He further stated that "We have merely the power to advise one another, that we

have only the power of the Word, and of convincing (persuasion)."³

If a person observes carefully, Walther was aware that "Synod" could lead to an insatiable interest in defining who has power over whom. How debilitating that pursuit would be for Christ's mission! Walther hoped to replace this human focus with an eagerness to see power used to equip members to serve! The question Walther did not ask—"How shall we work together when we are so geographically separated, when the mail is so slow, and when automobiles, airplanes, telephones, radios, television have yet to be invented?"—is not offered here as a facetious inquiry. We stand at a point in history where we can observe that all the inventions named—automobiles, airplanes, telephones, radios and television—have come upon the scene as gifts of God in helping congregations work more closely and effectively.

End of the second leaf and the beginning of the third . . .

Fostering: What Does It Mean?

"Fostering Partnership within the Synod" sounds like an amorphous, leaderless pursuit. The title does not offer the whisper of a hint about who is to do the *fostering*.

Leadership here will not fall to one. Many of us will need to assume leadership in fostering—advancing, encouraging, promoting—this potential. But the leadership needs to be a certain kind. The goals to be achieved are not for political gain or self-aggrandizement.

The kind of leadership needed is known today as "servant leadership." The term "servant leadership" has gained a certain currency and popularity in our circles—so much so that one feels the need to rescue it from a list of clichés.

While the phrase "servant leadership" has a churchy sound, it rose as the insight of Robert K. Greenleaf in the late 1960s. Mr. Greenleaf spent his entire adult career as the resident management guru with American Telephone and Telegraph. In retirement he began writing his reflections on leadership. He was a quiet, but an assured, advocate of the concept of "the servant as leader."⁴

He once explained where he got the idea:

The idea of The Servant as Leader came out of reading Hermann Hesse's *Journey to the East*. In this story we see a band of men on a mythical journey, probably also Hesse's own journey. The central figure of the story is Leo who accompanies with his spirit and his song. He is a person of extraordinary presence. All goes well until Leo disappears. Then the group falls into disarray and the journey is abandoned. They cannot make it without the servant Leo. The narrator, one of the party, after some years of wandering finds Leo and is taken into the Order that had sponsored the journey. There he discovers that Leo, whom he had known first as servant, was in fact the titular head of the Order, its guiding spirit, a great and noble leader.⁵

In the same work he provides an answer to the question, "How will you recognize a servant leader?" He writes:

The best test, and difficult to administer, is: do those served grow as persons; do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants?

Greenleaf's definition for servant leadership, given as a powerful question, identifies for us that kind of individual who is ready to foster partnerships within the Synod.

End of the third leaf and the beginning of the fourth . . .

Digital Information Technologies: What Can They Mean?

No one today needs convincing that the invention and arrival of the microchip have produced a major change throughout the world.

At the close of 1997, *Time* magazine designated Andrew Grove of Intel "Man of the Year." *Time* said,

more than any other person, Andy Grove has made real the defining law of the digital age: the prediction by his friend

and Intel cofounder Gordon Moore that microchips would double in power and halve in price every 18 months or so. And to that law Grove has added his own: "We will continually find new things for microchips to do that were scarcely imaginable a year or two earlier."⁶

When that article was published, four quadrillion transistors were produced every month, more than a million for every human on the planet. The article noted:

The dawn of a new millennium—which is the grandest measure we have of human time—permits us to think big about history. We can pause to notice what Grove calls, somewhat inelegantly, "strategic inflection points," those moments when new circumstances alter the way the world works . . . It can happen because of an *invention* (Gutenberg's printing press in the 15th century), or an *idea* (individual liberty in the 18th century), or a *technology* (electricity in the 19th century) or a *process* (the assembly line early in this century).⁷

Today the possibilities ushered in by the proliferation of the personal computer arrive faster than many of us can handle. Many major newspapers throughout the country have daily articles and weekly sections devoted to digital developments.

One area I attempt to monitor with some regularity is the field called "distance education" or "distance learning." I do so, not because I am part of the higher education scene, but because I think developments in this area will have an impact on local congregations in fostering reciprocally helpful partnerships with other congregations and in relating to the local community.

Limited space permits a reference to only one development reported by Dr. Jerry C. Lee, president of the San Diego-based National University.⁸ He begins by saying:

The need for America's institutions of higher education to develop and experiment with new approaches to learning has become a burning issue. Rare is the discussion on the future of higher

education that fails to make serious mention of the significant impact that digital information technologies—and the Internet in particular—have had and are having on the academy.

(Substituting the word "church" for the word "academy" in the last sentence helps us begin to catch the implications for our own discussion.)

Dr. Lee then describes a new offering of National University, namely, the Bachelor of Arts in Global Studies. He writes of this course:

First, it is not offered in the classroom, but solely over the Internet. Teams of faculty, rather than individual faculty members, designed [the] course in order to experience the kind of cooperation, interdependence, and interdisciplinarity the program seeks to foster. Finally, insofar as possible, each course attempts to stress . . . interrelation, interaction, and interdependence . . .

Near the conclusion of his description of the course, Dr. Lee writes:

The excitement of collaboratively working on and exploring issues prompted them to craft the curriculum in such a way that students might experience the same excitement. No longer was the object of a course to be the mastery of a body of knowledge—a virtual impossibility given the information explosion. Rather, the faculty designed courses to make education and learning a riveting, personally meaningful, and mentally formative experience that would stimulate in students a desire for lifelong learning and intellectual growth. The program was not to be the electronic equivalent of a correspondence course. The curriculum was designed to be interactive and collaborative, knowledge- as well as skill-based, creative as well as structured. It aims at promoting critical thinking, at helping students to develop new knowledge and skills for themselves, and at enabling them to become proficient users of the technologies of the digital revolution . . .

Look at the full quotations above. Do you notice words Dr. Lee finds it necessary to use? Words like "experience . . . cooperation," "interdependence," and "interdisciplinarity," "interrelation," and "interaction"? Words like these, plus the reminder to desire "lifelong learning and intellectual growth," loop us back to the very nature of "partnership"—that commitment to relate to other people in cooperative, interactive, interdependent and mutually beneficial ways.

End of the fourth leaf and beginning the juxtaposing of all four . . .

Fostering Partnership within the Synod: Why Not?

In the 1968 presidential campaign Robert F. Kennedy frequently quoted these lines, "There are those who look at things the way they are, and ask *why* . . . I dream of things that never were, and ask *why not*."

It is time now in the mix of the insights and suggestions coming from our consideration of partnership, Synod, servant leadership and digital information technologies to ask some "Why not?" questions.

First, however, take a quick review of the four topics we have covered:

1. A *partnership* created and sustained by Jesus Christ is not a static abstraction . . . but a dynamic call for individuals and congregations to work together for the good of each other.
2. A *synod* is the commitment of congregations to support one another . . . in as direct a way as possible.
3. *Fostering*, encouraging and promoting require a special kind of leadership. This leadership always asks the question: "Do those served grow as persons; do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants?"
4. The sudden rise of *digital information technologies* offers individuals new means to relate to other people in cooperative, interactive, interdependent and mutually beneficial ways.

Secondly, let us look at the approach of this concluding section. John Cleese, the British

comedic writer, pointed out: "It is self-evident that if we can't take the risk of saying or doing something wrong, our creativity goes right out the window The essence of creativity is not the possession of some special talent, it is much more the ability to play."

The anachronistic question lightly attributed earlier to Dr. C. F. W. Walther was an attempt at "playing." We had him asking in 1847. "How shall we work together when we are so geographically separated, when the mail is so slow, and when automobiles, airplanes, telephones, radios, television have yet to be invented?"

No one would deny that each of those inventions has significantly enhanced the church's ability to be more effective. In the past we witnessed the arrival of each as a gift from God and applied each to our work and partnerships.

Now, however, we are on the edge of looking at technologies that are expanding weekly. Last week's "miraculous" uses of the personal computer are this week's old stories. Visionaries, programmers and manufacturers are not finished "playing" with all the creative possibilities couched in the application of the microchip.

And so we can play too with possibilities in the field, "fostering partnership within the Synod" and ask innocently and playfully, "Why not?"

The LCMS has an excellent web site on the Internet,⁹ it ought to be pointed out. Its primary purpose is to provide information. The goal embraced by this article, however, is to develop partnerships of cooperation, interaction and interdependence *within* the Synod. The providers of such partnerships must be the beneficiaries; the beneficiaries must be the providers. Let me play with "DIT" (digital information technologies) and provide several examples:

- Each congregation is unique. Yet there are categories of congregations based also on similarities among them. Today we ask congregations to relate to each other geographically and politically to form circuits and districts. For the sake of finding further insights and helps, let us encourage congregations to form learning partnerships based

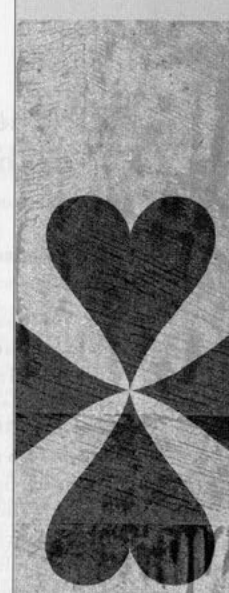
on categories suggested by size and circumstance. Why not? "DIT" makes it possible!

- I have never met a congregational leader who wants to be ineffective. Yet many lay leaders feel they are less than effective, because they have few first-hand opportunities to grow as church leaders. Let us encourage them to form learning partnerships around topics related to their interests. Why not? "DIT" makes it possible!
- I know that there are literally thousands of resources available to teachers via the Internet.¹⁰ As a group, teachers may have the most reason to complain of information overload. I presume, therefore, that they could benefit from a discerning partnership aimed at helping each other to benefit from the best of what is good and to avoid what is not so good. Why not? "DIT" makes it possible!
- Most pastors want to be lifelong learners. Many reinforce what they know by studies in areas where they are already good. That produces expertise, not growth-as-a-person. Pick an area where true growth might occur. Based on my own need and observation of others, one of those areas might be the art of leadership. Here would be an excellent growth area to form a learning partnership.¹¹ Why not? "DIT" makes it possible!
- Finally, the possibility I ought to consider: I know that there are other individuals like myself who, from the perspective of fulfilling Christ's mission, are striving to keep current with the technologies unleashed today. The task is daunting. We have the need to convene ourselves on-line in a serving partnership with the goal of giving birth to partnerships as yet unseen. Why not? "DIT" makes it possible!

Partnerships as yet unseen . . . the phrase signals that the list above is not complete. More than that, it describes an invitation to pursue the horizons of a vision for which one could spend a lifetime. Why not? The Apostle Paul did!¹²

Reference Notes

- 1 The vision statement of the Southeastern District to this day reads:
Strong congregations
Working in creative partnership
For the sake of
God's mission to the world.
- 2 Walther's 1848 Presidential Address, *Moving Frontiers*, ed. by Carl S. Meyer (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1964), p. 172.
- 3 *Ibid.*, p. 170.
- 4 Continuing advocacy for servant-leadership continues today at:
The Greenleaf Center for Servant-Leadership
921 East 86th Street, Suite 200
Indianapolis, IN 46240
Internet: greenleaf@iquest.net
<http://www.greenleaf.org>
- 5 Robert Greenleaf, *The Servant as Leader (A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness)*. (New York: Paulist Press, 1977), pp. 7-8.
- 6 *Time* magazine, December 26, 1997-January 4, 1998, p. 50.
- 7 *Ibid.*
- 8 *Distance Education Report*, (Farhad Saba, Ph.D., editor), December 1998 (Vol. 2, No. 12), published monthly by Magna Publications, Inc., 2718 Dryden Drive, Madison, WI 53704-3086, pp. 1ff.
- 9 www.lcms.org
- 10 Check the "K12" listings on the NET-HAPPENINGS Digest mailed several times daily. This mailing list is a service of the Internet Scout Project <http://scout.cs.wisc.edu/>
- 11 Reference the Leadership Network
2501 Cedar Springs, Suite 200
Dallas, TX 75201
www.leadnet.org
- 12 "Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus." Philippians 3:13,14.



Financial Meltdown in the Mainline

Loren B. Mead
Bethesda, Maryland: The Alban Institute, Inc., 1998

Loren Mead sounds the alarm about what he sees as the impending collapse of the infrastructure that has helped to bring Christianity into the lives of people across the North American continent and beyond. Mead's title choice of "Financial Meltdown" is a reflection of his concern that the deteriorating financial condition of many Christian congregations and mainline denominations may be irreversible and will inexorably lead to loss of the ability of the church to carry out its mission. Moreover, Mead sees the financial crisis as a symptom of a deeper problem—a *spiritual meltdown*—a part of which is our inability to deal with our own wealth. He asks, "What is going on in our hearts that has let us get so deeply in trouble, and what has kept us from doing something about it long before now?"

Mead has significant evidence to substantiate his assessment of the financial situation, including decreased numbers of members, giving-patterns that are static and an aging base of current givers. He asserts that fewer and fewer congregations are able to sustain a full-service model of parish ministry. Mead accuses churches and denominations of spending current income and savings as if there were no tomorrow, making promises to people and to programs that cannot be kept, and postponing problems for tomorrow with no plans to provide the resources to deal with them in the future. He maintains that church leaders are failing to communicate forthrightly and clearly about money and economics.

Is there a way to avert the meltdown? Mead cites several financial principles that should be adopted as a means to turn things around, including designing local and denominational structures to be self-supporting, speaking about church finances with clarity, and whole-system restructuring as opposed to piecemeal approaches to change. These principles, however, do not address the heart of the matter, which Mead identifies as our addiction to money and the powerlessness, anxiousness and guilt associated with the addiction. The solution to this spiritual dimension is not in better budgeting, fundraising or more tithing. "The beginning place, then, is repentance. Turning around. Turning away from reliance on ourselves and turning to God."

Dr. Stanley Obermueller
Professor of Business Administration
Concordia University, Nebraska

The Second Coming of the Church

George Barna
Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc.
1998

Barna makes the chilling observation that a growing majority of people have dismissed the Christian faith as weak, outdated and irrelevant. He believes that the church in America has no more than five years to affect our culture, rather than be affected by it.

Americans perceive truth to be relative and have a customized version of a faith that revolves around self. Most people's world view is a collection of fragmented ideals mindlessly adopted from pop culture. This view says God exists for the pleasure of mankind and that true power is accessed not by looking upward but by turning inward.

Americans affirm experience over knowledge, choices rather than absolutes, and preferences rather than truths. They are moving from the concepts of "Church Home" to "Spiritual Pit Stop," from seeing religion as something into which we invest ourselves to a commodity that we consume. Matters of faith are seen as a take-only, not a give-and-take proposition.

In a society where organizations succeed only by embracing strategic change whenever necessary, the church has opted for patience in the face of challenge, a patience which "... may be harmful to the church's health!" While Americans will take speed over depth every time, the Christian faith seems dedicated to maintaining dead churches and expecting church leaders to fill too many roles for which they are not qualified. Barna argues that church professionals rarely can be both teachers and leaders at the same time.

For the church to move forward effectively it must, following the pattern of the early church, conscientiously train leaders who build upon the six pillars on which the true church must be built: worship, evangelism, service, education and training, building community, and stewardship. Building without one of these pillars will cause a church to fail. Leaders must be persons who possess a unique blend of a calling, godly character and leadership competencies, competencies the author describes in detail. There are, he says, four types of leadership: The Directing, The Team Building, The Strategic and The Operational Leader. Church leaders will become most effective when they help church members to develop unity based on a shared vision, a common purpose, and consensual beliefs. Until this is done, the church will struggle to influence its own people, much less those who are on the outside looking in.

The first half of the book, which analyzes problems internal to the church and difficulties it faces in the self-centered world view of the American people, is insightful, to the point and chilling. The second half of the book is a bit more challenging and detailed. The reader who wants to become a leader in the church would do well to study this portion of the book.

Dr. Charles A. Reimnitz, President
The Haiti Lutheran Mission Society, USA

The Innovative Church: Seven Steps to Positive Change in your Congregation

Merton P. Strommen
Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress
1997

"Two of the dangers which confront the church are first that her message may change, and second that her methods may not change." (Henry Jacobsen) Strommen does not begin his book on change with this quote, and, in fact, he does not quote Henry Jacobsen anywhere in this study. Perhaps he should have, for change and how to bring it about efficiently and effectively is the focus of this book. Strommen is quite straightforward about his purpose: "My ultimate purpose is to help congregations address innovation as a natural part of their organizational life and to achieve the ideal: members who are predisposed to respond creatively to the needs that surround them."

In working toward this goal, the author expends little energy in making the case that change is necessary. He assumes that the methods of a living, vital congregation will need to undergo periodic change to meet the changing needs of the community which it strives to serve. Therefore, those looking for a jumping-off point for a squabble over change versus status quo in the church will be sorely disappointed. Yet he is always quite careful to distinguish between a changeless theology and a changing approach to ministry. Strommen's theological statements are always quite Law-Gospel centered: Law is clearly Law, and Gospel is clearly Gospel. Luther himself would be comfortable with his theological statements.

But theology is not the heart and substance of this book. It is really a "how-to" book. The writer effectively and convincingly uses the platform of Search Institute research and case studies to build his case for an orderly, planned approach to change. As those familiar with Strommen's earlier work would expect, he is not a proponent of congregations running around doing random good things. He is a proponent of quality research, good planning and intentional change processes.

Part 1 of the book serves as an overview of the dynamics of change within a congregation. He asserts that many congregations resist change primarily because leaders have gone about making changes without proper preparation and planning. It is his contention that real, effective changes take a great deal more time to carry out than most congregations allow.

Part 2 of the book becomes the "how to" manual for congregational leadership. Using the word FUTURES, Strommen outlines the steps to bringing about effective and meaningful change: Free people to participate in effecting change. Unite around needs. Tie innovation to mission and values. Use input of legitimizers. Rally broad ownership. Engage in action. Sustain the innovation long-term.

Perhaps most thought-provoking and potentially controversial is Strommen's contention that standing boards and committees cannot and will not be effective agents of change. Maintaining the status quo so consumes their time and efforts that there is no time or energy left for innovation. The author therefore argues that the most effective group to bring about innovation in a congregation's ministry is a task force. His assertion, based on research done by business consultant Robert Waterman, is that "the real action in an organization occurs outside the proper channels."

Although Strommen's book targets the local congregation, his approach to change has a lot to say about our current fiscal and mission struggles in districts and Synod offices. For Strommen, change is not a bad word; it is a necessity if we are to be Christ's agents in His changing world. Perhaps, if standing boards and committees are incapable of bringing about lasting and effective innovation on a parish level, the same is true on district and synodical levels. Perhaps, if appointing innovators to task forces on the congregational level and freeing them to dream and work is the first step to bringing about effective innovation in a congregation, that may be true at other levels also. Those who find themselves weary of doing the same things over and over again while expecting different results will benefit greatly from a thorough reading of this book.

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