

ISSUES

IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Winter 2002

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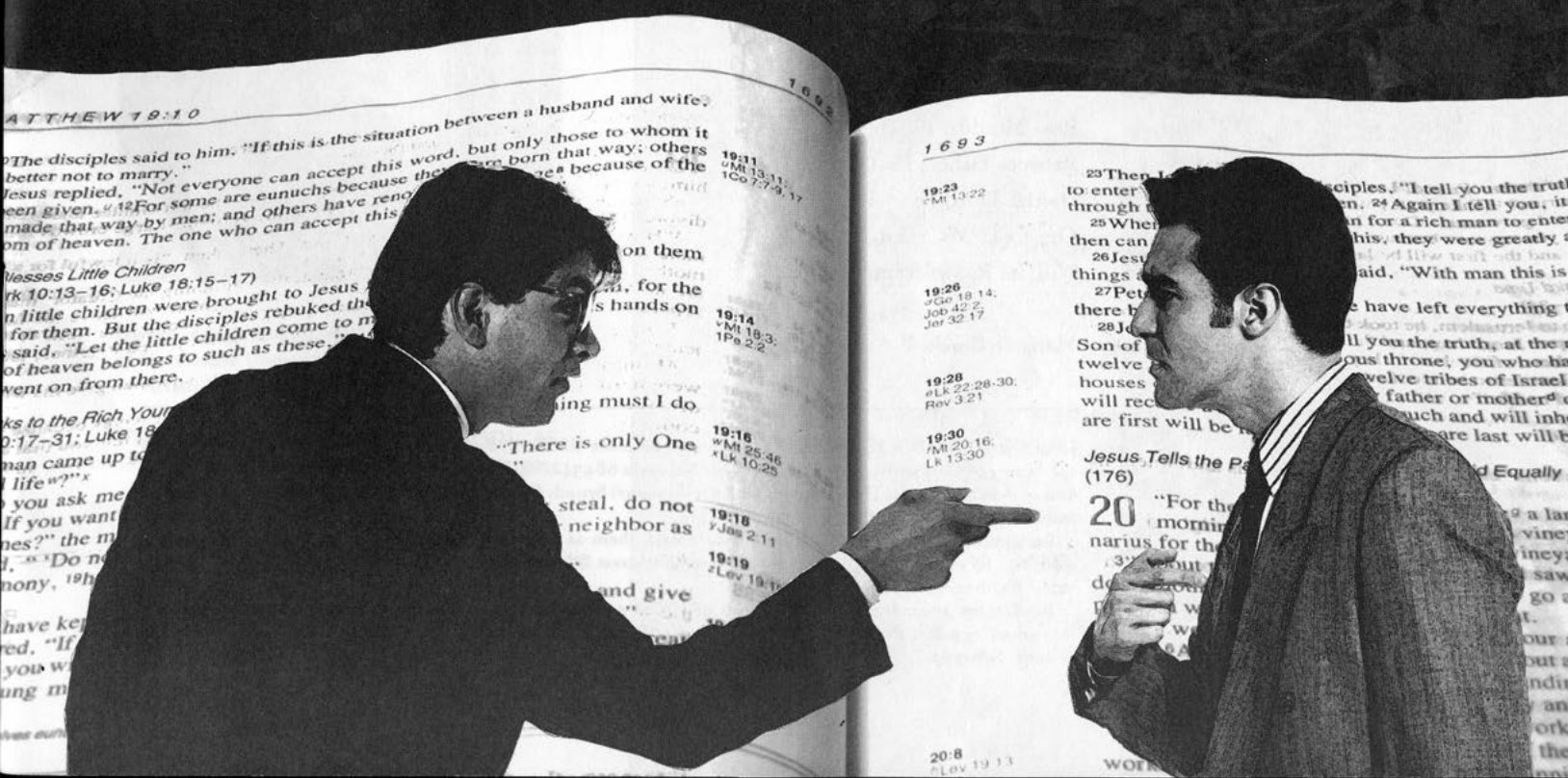
Be on guard for yourselves and for all the churches, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. Revelation

And the glory which Thou hast given Me I have given to them; that they may be one, just as We are one; John 17:22

And the glory which Thou hast given Me I have given to them; that they may be one, just as We are one; John 17:22

Does This Church Know Where It's Going?



MATTHEW 19:10
The disciples said to him, "If this is the situation between a husband and wife, better not to marry."
Jesus replied, "Not everyone can accept this word, but only those to whom it has been given."
19:11
*Mt 13:11
1Co 7:9, 17
19:14
*Mt 19:3
1Pe 2:2
19:16
*Mt 25:46
*Lk 10:25
19:18
*Jas 2:11
19:19
*Lev 19:11
and give

1693
19:23
*Mt 13:22
19:26
*Jas 18:14
*Job 42:2
*Jer 32:17
19:28
*Lk 22:28-30
*Rev 3:21
19:30
*Mt 20:16
*Lk 13:30
20:8
*Lev 19:13
20
For the morning
narius for the
do not
and give
20:8
*Lev 19:13
WOR

ISSUES

IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

A PUBLICATION OF CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY, SEWARD, NEBRASKA

Winter 2002
Vol. 36, No. 3

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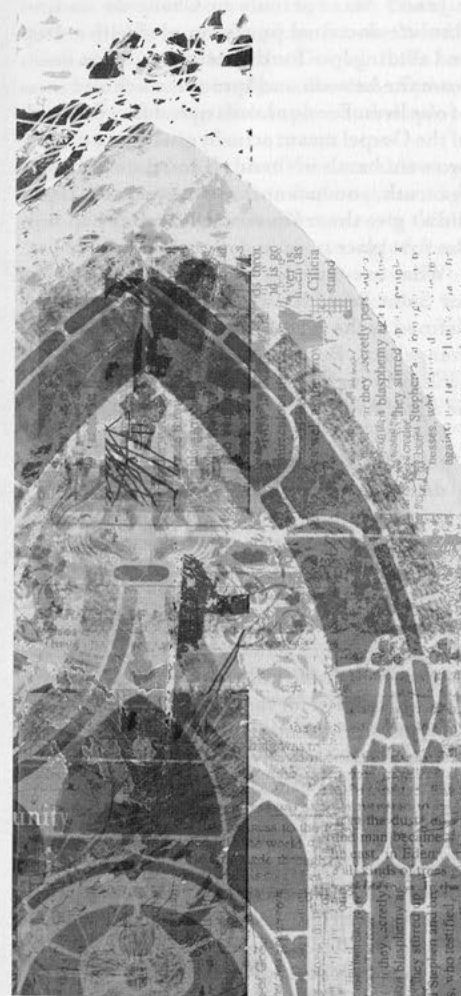
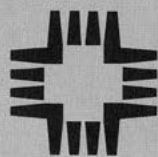
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reflections

DOES THIS CHURCH know where it is going? An elected officer of a national church organization recently asked this question in reflecting on a series of events in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. This edition of *Issues in Christian Education* focuses on actions that can cloud the vision of our beloved Synod and impede its mission and ways of dealing with disputes, while remaining faithful to the vision.

The challenges facing The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod were reflected in two headlines in the February 2002 edition of the *Reporter*. One read: "Mission Goal: Reach 100 Million People"; the other: "Board of Directors Orders Information Halt in Benke Dispute." The first emphasized an intent to double or triple the scope of LCMS mission work, while the second noted internal strife and dispute within the church.

In the introductory Theological Observer of the October 2002 *Concordia Journal*, James Voelz wrote: "Our Synod doesn't seem to be 'walking together.' Our people cannot agree on practice even though they might be able to agree on underlying theology. Fellowship and close communion principles are under heavy discussion and, in any case, have no commonly held understanding of application. The worship wars continue unabated, again, with principles of worship under heavy discussion and little common understanding in the area of application. Congregational peace is at a premium too. Almost daily one hears of accusations that pastors are high-handed, having 'Herr Pastor,' uncaring attitudes while the laity, one also hears, has a 'hire and fire,' 'give us what we want' mentality."

As you read this edition of *Issues*, look for answers to questions such as:

- Is doctrinal controversy possibly a good thing?
- Are divisions, controversies and factions actually necessary?
- What is the role of forgiveness in moving conflict toward healthy disagreement?
- Is the presence of conflict an indication that the church is alive and well?
- Are factions always bad? Must factions always end in divisions?
- Is conflict a problem or an opportunity?
- As the LCMS is viewed today by those on the outside, do they say, "Behold, how they love one another"?
- As a church body full of contradictions, will the LCMS flourish or flounder?
- Is our Synod pursuing its mission for institutional purposes?

continued on back cover

An "OP Ed"

"THERE WILL BE FOUR SPEAKERS," the chair indicated, "each one addressing the theme: 'Conflict, Confession and Unity—Addressing Doctrinal Issues Faithfully and Fraternally for the Sake of Christ's Mission.'" Translation: "Can the LCMS Tolerate Differences in the Application of Doctrine and Practice When Confronted with Real Life?" A tawdry translation, I suppose, but it gets to the point.

When President Kieschnick put the process for this conference into motion, he surely had in his heart the hope and desire that together we could in the future find ways to avoid the nastiness of dubious charges and counter charges, the likes of which arose after Atlantic District President David Benke prayed in Yankee Stadium. To my knowledge, Dr. Benke, the only one who lifted up the name of the Lord Jesus Christ there, is also the only one suspended for participating. How strange! It begs the question: "Does this church know . . .?"

The Phoenix gathering in August 2002 was led by Mr. Ted Kober, President of Peacemaker Ministries of Montana, and a significant member of the LCMS Board of Directors, most of whom were observers at the conference. Dr. Robert Kuhn, Chairman of the Board of Directors and immediate past President of the LCMS, was one of the four speakers. The BOD was well represented at this peace seeking meeting.

Only a few weeks later, *The Reporter* headlined and reported the amazing action of a majority of this same Board of Directors by which they publicly took to task our President Kieschnick, criticizing him for overstepping his authority in connection with his ministry *vis a vis* the Yankee Stadium flap. With confidence and in strident tone, they scolded our President, reminding him of his responsibility to act "decently and in order," a phrase which comes from this intriguing Spirit-inspired comment: "So, my friends, be eager to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues (sic); but all things should be done decently and in order" (1 Corinthians 14: 39-40 NRSV).

The incongruity of the BOD's support and participation at Phoenix and this subsequent action is startling! How does this fit in with the attempt of our President and Mr. Kober to bring a more peaceful climate to the embattled LCMS? Our question rises again, "Does this church . . .?"

At age 65 I was privileged to turn my church keys over to my excellent successor at King of Glory in Williamsburg, Pastor Tim Hinz. Fully aware of the pitfalls and possibility for

mischief when a retiring pastor hangs around as a member in the church from which he retires, we seriously considered moving away. But conversations with Pastor Hinz and mutual covenants made it possible to stay. Jackie and I give our pastor support and make our contributions. I also help mow the church lawns. But what if . . . *I had stayed active in the operations of the church, getting elected to the church council and even becoming chair of that group—and then what if I acted in such a way that people would know I didn't really support the new pastor. . .* Unimaginable? Maybe once in a century such behavior might slip under the line as defensible, but not often and not now.

This is an "Op Ed" piece. Some won't agree with my unspoken premise while others may. But from my limited perspective these types of "goings on" suggest that we are a control-oriented church that has lost its way in desperation to be pure as the driven snow. Should we not rather be driven by a motivation which springs from the empowering command of Jesus: "Go, teach, baptize" (Matthew 28:19 et. al.)?

I love this embattled church. I am saddened by the battle. Like many of you I can trace my ancestors to the boats of the 19th century. Johann Stephan Zehnder and his wife Margaretha Fuerwitt were among the second group of colonists recruited by Pastor Loehe. Our ancestors did a good thing! They were instrumental in founding a magnificent church body which has in my abiding optimistic opinion an opportunity to "turn the world upside down" by faithful witness to the Gospel of Jesus the Lord. That is what we must be about and the place to which we must be going. Questions like "Does this church . . .?" should not have to arise.

President Kieschnick says, "The mainstream of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod is and will continue to be solidly biblical, confessional, evangelical and missional, yielding not to those who are perceived as holding positions on either the 'far right' or the 'far left' with regard to theological issues in our midst, but focused on staying 'on the road together'."

With that in mind, we indeed will know where we are going. To that end, I for one am pledged to work together with you, with anyone.

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What Does This Mean?
Asking the Right Questions

THE ONE WHO FRAMES the question wins the argument, or so the saying goes. Nothing could be more true for The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod today. Everyone is asking questions. There are questions about missions and evangelism. There are questions about doctrine and truth. There are even questions about motivations at every level of our current synodical climate. It's about power. It's about truth. It's about evangelism. It's about identity. It's about Jesus.

Jesus? Yes. For only in Christ do we find absolute doctrinal purity coupled with a deep and abiding love for the lost that reaches down from the heavens and into the muck and mess of our lives. For our Lord, upholding the truth of the Gospel meant actually giving it away. The two went hand-in-hand. If you didn't cling to the truth, you had nothing to give away. If you didn't give the truth away, you never had it in the first place.

What was true for our Lord was also true for Saint Paul. His entire ministry could be defined as the relationship between truth and evangelism. But unlike us today, Saint Paul actually thought that doctrinal controversy may be a good thing for the church. He wrote:

For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you. And I believe it in part, for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized (1 Corinthians 11:18-19 ESV).

St. Paul suggests that divisions and controversies and factions may actually be necessary, and not simply peripheral to the character of the Christian Church. In order for the Gospel to be preached to the whole world, it must have opposition.

The entire history of the Christian Church bears this out. From Christians fleeing Jerusalem to Damascus, to decades-long controversies over obscure Greek words like *homoousios*, to arguments about jargon like *justification* or even the tiny word *is*, the history of the church is full of examples of how doctrinal controversies have actually clarified the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

As a parish pastor, there is nothing, *nothing* I love more in Bible class than for people to ask questions and even (dare I say it?) argue some point of doctrine. Why? Because this is how we learn. It is the Lutheran way of doing things: *What does this mean?*

When we talk about theological controversy, though, there is a tremendous temptation to use a modern category like *conflict*, because that would allow us to simply move the entire thing into the realm of personality differences or even "marketing" strategies, or something to that effect. But we do so at great peril. Why? Because if we simply look at these questions as *personal conflicts*, or make it sound like it has to do with where you went to seminary (or when), or whether you are

a midwest Lutheran or a salt-water Lutheran, we have now missed the opportunity to clarify the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

A family that refuses to actually talk, communicate, and yes, even argue, is a family that is in trouble. In the same way a church body that tries to obscure differences or act as if they don't exist is also in trouble. Our church has the opportunity to ask the theological questions that will get to the heart of the matter. How we frame the questions today will really answer whether we are acting as the Christian Church with an abiding love for the Word of God and for preaching the Gospel to the lost, or whether we are simply a collection of people using a common pension plan and employee search program.

I, for one, believe that if we are able to get past the extraneous personal questions and get to talking theology, we will come out of this as a church body much more strongly focused on the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Because He has made us the Body of Christ by baptism, it is worth the effort.

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All Things Through Christ

MOST PEOPLE I know do not like living in enmity with others. It is impossible to go through life without dealing with somebody who doesn't like us or even despises us. We know that wherever people live in community conflict exists. The whine of contentiousness inflicts all who are born in sin.

One of Satan's most insidious tools is gossip talkers who malign another's speech and deeds, and assign motives to people's behavior. The devil delights in gossip, for it is from him that "foolish talking" gains its impetus. Any observer of human behavior recognizes that a slight urging activates antagonism among people whose egos have been taught selfish advancement. We know that it only takes "a little gossip to make mountains of conflict." We also know that a thoughtless "tongue" in speech and print can scorch and char a community of believers.

How should members of Christ's Body within Christian congregations behave when conflicts swirl about them? We should strive to gather the energy of conflict into a creative tension for a church founded upon Christ.

We must resist the urge to rise above the fray and practice apathetic behavior. To ask, "Where is the church going amid the storms of life?" implies that the church is

moving somewhere. And it will have to do its "moving" right through inevitable conflict. Members must join the journey of Christ's church, and each should seek out a personal part in the "moving."

First, let's establish a point of departure for the Christian's conflicted path. A Christian's life-journey in the church begins with baptism. When we are baptized, God puts His mark upon us; our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit.

Baptized into Christ, we have put on Christ. God's loving mercy emboldens us to say, "We have the mind of Christ" (1 Corinthians 2: 16); therefore, we empty ourselves in the service of others, even within the upheaval of conflict. Our peace in Christ embraces Jesus' own directive: "Truly I say to you, to the extent that you served the needs of My sisters and brothers, even the least of them, you served Me" (Matthew 25:40).

We are children of the Light. The Holy Spirit illuminates our Christian way through the power of the Word. Peace pervades the joy of unconditional service among the daughters and sons of God. The majestic process of faithful obedience to the law of love makes our earthly circles just before God in Jesus' precious name.

Thus equipped, we seek to order life according to the Christian ethos expressed in The Sermon on the Mount. Here we find the guiding beliefs which distinguish the character of service by those who "have the mind of Christ."

The seed of The Sermon on the Mount transforms dissembling conflict into a creative tension that nurtures the faithful and builds up the Body of Christ. Beatitudes of healing and harmony can change conflict into good seed and salt which yield a taste of heaven in our church right now:

Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.

If we listen to Jesus' words and follow His nurturing advice, lines of meaning and purpose begin to build-up and peace and harmony ensue. Conflict cast in the crucible of God's gentle love and forgiveness yields fulfillment, hearty-health, and joy in Jesus Christ, the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

The key to moving conflict toward healthy disagreement is forgiveness, the very center of our faith. Forgiveness is the ground of our hope, the emblem of discipleship, and our reason for being a Christian. The Lord's Prayer expresses the true resolution to our

conflicted communities— "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us."

An obedient faith trusts that God's world is the object of God's grace, and that we may labor in it by the mercy and power God gives us. Only by faith can we live a valid life and grasp the truth of God. The miracle of faith guides us through those conflicts which seek to destroy us.

Our Savior's invitation to commit in faith to His purposes guides us as our church moves through conflict in achieving a God-pleasing vision—to nurture disciples, to bring Christ to all, to build up the church.

We know God's direction as we struggle with destructive conflict and hurtful behavior, which disconnect us from God and each other. We are to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and love our neighbors as ourselves. The law of love is the foundation upon which ethical Christian behavior is based.

Thus, Christians can, by the power of the Spirit, watch what they say and write. The church can change, governed by the everlasting truth of Christ crucified and made alive again. All of us can change because we see the Word made flesh dying in our place and paying the penalty for sinful conflicts and hurtful words.

God's awesome power enables us to live lives of lawful love, which comes not from human fabrication but from God's hand of mercy and grace. The mission of the church advances because God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself and enabling us to love others because God first loved us in His Son.

Again, back to the basics. Godly disagreements and spiritual conflicts among us can turn into a creative drama when we realize that fallen human beings aren't simply imperfect creatures who need improvement, but rebels who must surrender their arms. We must say we're sorry and realize when we're on the wrong track; we must get ready to start life over again and again from the ground floor in Jesus' name. Such awareness is the only way out of the "hole" that malicious conflict digs, the only way for the church and its members to strengthen their connection to the eternal Word. Such repentance means going full-speed astern, traveling in the opposite direction of our natures, and fusing firmly into God's dear law of love in Jesus Christ.

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WALTER ROSIN

Conflict and the Church's Vision

AT A RECENT THEOLOGICAL CONFERENCE in Phoenix titled "Conflict, Confession and Unity: Addressing Doctrinal Issues Faithfully and Fraternally for the Sake of Christ's Mission," a District President observed that one should not be surprised at conflict because the only place where there is no conflict is in the cemetery. There will always be conflict, also within the church, since sinful human beings—although also justified—who are members of the church have a vision which is not perfect. St. Paul seemed to be referring to this paradox in his first letter to the Corinthian congregation in which he described our vision of God as being distorted like a poor reflection in a mirror. As he stated, we only know in part and prophesy in part. The fact that there is conflict is an indication that the church is alive and well. As has been said, the church is always in the process of being reformed, a process which often involves conflict.

Contrary to the views of some, factions are not always bad. They may, in fact, as St. Paul also points out, be an opportunity for clarification and for determining that which is approved. Factions arose early in the history of the church beginning with the differences between those who

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held conflicting views about the place of the law in the entire matter of justification. Acts 15 and the Epistle to the Galatians document the argument which clarified the vision and mission of the church. Conflict developed in the Church at Corinth as members grouped themselves around Paul, Apollos, and Peter.¹ Paul pleaded with Euodia and Syntyche at Philippi to agree with each other. Many other examples can be cited. The value of or harm caused by conflict depends to a large extent on how one approaches it, that is, whether it is seen and dealt with as a problem or as an opportunity. To state this in another way, conflict may either clarify or cloud the vision of the church.

No Stranger to Conflict

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH-MISSOURI SYNOD has been no stranger to conflict, both external and internal. It was in fact born, at least to some extent, as a result of conflict with the efforts of a government to impose upon the church its desire to force a union between Lutherans and Reformed. While the reasons for the emigration from Saxony to America by those who were among founders of the Missouri Synod were undoubtedly mixed, the stated reason was a need for Lutherans to leave their homeland in order to preserve the Lutheran faith. Arrival in

¹ The reference is I Corinthians 11:19. Commenting on this verse the Concordia Self-Study Bible says, "As deplorable as factions may be, they serve one good purpose. They distinguish those who are faithful and true in God's sight." The New International Commentary on First Corinthians differentiates between divisions and factions. It states, "Paul is opposed to divisions as well as uniformity. There must be action in the church, expressing itself in discussions but not in separation. Discussions will not break up the church's unity; their consequences will be quite different from that, namely, that *they that are approved*, the believers that have proved to be reliable, *may be made manifest* (See Deuteronomy 13:3). A good discussion will show which Christians are the best founded in their faith, but it does not create divisions . . . Indeed factions must be, but not those which end in divisions."

America did not bring an end to conflict. The focus, however, changed from an external issue to that of internal concerns, including conflict not only between clergy and their leadership but also between clergy and laity. While these conflicts involved differing doctrinal positions and views such as the nature of the church and ministry, there were also issues of governance which needed resolution. The vision of the church, its nature and its mission, required a clarification which was not achieved without strong and serious debate.

Over the years there have been other conflicts in the Synod. The predestinarian controversy, the controversy over the doctrine of election, controversy regarding prayer fellowship, controversies which divided the synodical conference, controversy over the Statement of the 44 and others have characterized the history of the Synod. Prior to the present controversy which led to the model conference referred to previously, the most recent controversy was that which rocked the Synod in the 1970s over the issue of Scripture, including its nature, origin, formation and methods and legitimate tools for its interpretation. Closely related to this was, of course, the matter of practicing church fellowship and the breaking of church fellowship over these issues. The question was "What is necessary for the true unity of the church?" That conflict continues to the present day.

Dual Concern: Keeping the Message Straight and Getting the Message Out

FROM ITS BEGINNING the Synod stated its objectives, with slight variation, as they are found today in Article III of the Constitution. Originally they were included among the "Business of the Synod." The first of these as originally stated was "To stand guard over the purity and unity of doctrine within the synodical circle and to oppose false doctrine." The third was "Common protection and extension of the church," with the final one being "To establish connections with the Lutheran Church in foreign countries, especially Germany." While there is only a faint reference to mission activity in the sense of taking the message of the Gospel to others, it can be said that these emphases on purity of doctrine and extension of the church are reflected in the objectives of the Synod today. Article II

identifies the first two of ten objectives as follows: "The Synod under Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions shall: 1. Conserve and promote the unity of the true faith (Ephesians 4:3-6; I Corinthians 1:10), work through its official structure toward fellowship with other Christian church bodies, and provide a united defense against schism, sectarianism (Romans 16:17), and heresy; 2. Strengthen congregations and their members in giving bold witness by word and deed to the love of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and extend that Gospel witness into all the world." It is interesting to note that in 1998, when the Synod adopted a mission statement which, while it recognized the source for its mission as God's grace and empowerment "by the Holy Spirit through Word and Sacraments," did not include the emphasis contained in objective number one. The mission statement reads: "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." In some respects this statement raises the issue which has always been before the church. The question is "Where should its emphasis be? What should the vision of the church be?"

There are those who have argued that objectives number one and two of the Synod should be reversed, with the objective dealing with extension of the church being of first priority. While certainly not arguing that position, the Foreword to the 2001 Handbook of the Synod notes: "But for us who are Christians taking our first steps into this new millennium, it is encouraging to know that the things that matter most do not and will not change. The writer to the Hebrews summed it all up in a single phrase: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (13:8). So also is the Great Commission Jesus gave to His church, reflected clearly and succinctly by our Synod in its mission statement . . . "While the words do not specifically say so, it could be assumed that both aspects are reflected in this statement, namely that the maintenance of the pure word of Jesus Christ which does not change is the basis

for the missionary action of the church. "Both are important and neither is to be neglected. If the Word is not maintained in its purity, then the message of the love of God in Jesus Christ cannot be clearly proclaimed. They are really two facets of the same vision for the church. The mission and vision of the church is that of a church which, as stated by a former synodical President, keeps the message straight and gets the message out.

In many respects the efforts to separate these dual concerns often seem to lie at the bottom of most, if not all, of the conflicts in which the church finds itself involved. There is always the temptation to separate word from action, to believe that if one maintains the Word in its truth and purity, action is secondary. Or to hold that what is most important is action, the purity of doctrine being secondary. Of course, neither one of these positions is supported by the Scriptures or the Lutheran Confessions, and there are few, if any, within the Missouri Synod who would hold these positions in such crass form. Nevertheless, as noted, they often, if not always, lie at the root of controversy and conflict within the church.

The conflict in the 1970s is in many respects a reflection of this tension. The Missouri Synod had been growing, and its contact with the world about it was recognized as being of extreme importance if the Synod was to be relevant and its growth were to continue. As the Synod entered into dialog with the world about it, there were those who seemed to champion the idea that the world sets the agenda for the church. If the church is to be at all effective, it must listen carefully to and pay close attention to the culture of the day. It must rely on the culture to tell the church what its message ought to be as it sought to meet the needs of the world around it. And if it were to be effective, it could not isolate itself and create divisions. Strong and increased ecumenical relations were needed which would make the church more effective in carrying out its mission. Doctrinal differences should not divide as long as the Gospel was maintained. At least this was how this approach was viewed by some, with the charge of Gospel reductionism being leveled at those who seemed to hold it.

On the other hand, those who made the charge had deep concerns about the content of the Gospel which they viewed as being so

closely bound to the entire message of the Bible. They asserted that this message was being reduced to the point where the Gospel itself would be lost, resulting in the necessity to condemn the actions and views of those with whom they disagreed. There was a need to "circle the wagons," to draw a line. But the question which persisted was "At what point and on which issues?" In the minds of many the conflict between the two groups came down to the issue of a Battle for the Bible. Viewed in these terms there was little possibility of any kind of mutual understanding. The line was drawn at that point, and there was no drawing back even though both groups involved would maintain their commitment to the sacred Scriptures as the Word of God and to the Lutheran Confessions as a clear and correct interpretation of their content. The conflict came to be portrayed as a conflict between the liberals and the conservatives with the former being concerned with the engagement of Church and society, while the latter focused on defending the Word.

The result was fragmentation, with large numbers of members, congregations and clergy forming a group which eventually became part of a new Lutheran body that merged with The United Lutheran Church and the American Lutheran Church. Some would describe this as a weakening of the Synod, with a loss of membership which has not been recovered to the present time. Others would describe what occurred as a strengthening, since they viewed what occurred as a removal of that which was causing the Synod to lose its commitment to that which was distinctively Lutheran, and preventing it from witnessing to the Gospel in its truth and purity. While the loss of membership was to be regretted, in the long run they believed the Synod would be stronger.

Conflict: Problem or Opportunity?

AS STATED EARLIER, conflict may be viewed as either a problem or an opportunity. The conflict in the 70s with its lingering effects which exist to the present day and which was never fully resolved does not seem to have provided a great opportunity for the Synod. The differing positions which had become hardened did not remain internal but became widely known through the public media, a fact which perhaps

made it more difficult for the Synod to deal with the conflict. (It may be noted that this phenomenon is not new for the Synod which even before its founding discovered that its internal difficulties were an item for comment in the newspapers of the day which reported on the events and offered their opinions regarding the group involved in a conflict centering in the deposition of Stephan, the pastor and later bishop under whose leadership they had come to America.) The public attention in the 70s to the conflict in the Synod attracted few new members, since few people who were not committed to one position or the other and were not already members of the Synod felt drawn to a group of people which could not seem to resolve its own internal conflicts in a way which was consistent with its message. In the view of such people, it could hardly be said of them as it was of the first Christians, "Behold how they love one another." Furthermore, financial support for the Synod at the national level failed to keep pace with inflation and its continuing maintenance needs. Rather than supporting the Synod at the national level, congregations and districts recognized the opportunities and needs within their own areas and directed their financial and personal support to meeting them. All of this demonstrates that in most cases the Synod has not been successful in dealing with conflict in a positive manner to this day. Conflict and factions cannot be ignored, but unless the Synod is to experience the same results in the present conflict as it has experienced in the recent past, it must find a better way to deal with conflict so that it becomes an opportunity rather than a problem which clouds the vision of what the church is and what its mission is. Failure to do so will only result in further reduction in numbers and support for the mission of the Synod.

How can the present conflict be dealt with in such a way that it becomes an opportunity rather than a problem? How can it be dealt with in such a way that the mission of the Synod reflected in the statement adopted by the Synod in 1998 can be accomplished? How can the conflict be dealt with in such a way that the goal of reaching 100 million people with the Gospel of God's grace in Jesus Christ can be realized? There is probably no better

way than that which has been proposed and which was set in motion at the conference referred to in the opening paragraph of this article. In many respects it is an outgrowth of and application in the national arena of the process for conflict resolution adopted by the Synod in 1992, a process which, though adopted by the Synod as a means for resolving conflict, was never accepted by a minority.

The first step to be taken, if the conflict is to be resolved, under the blessing of God and through clarifying the vision of the church, is for those on each side of the conflict to draw back from the brink of self-destruction, a step proposed by one of the presenters at the recent conference but one which does not seem to have been followed in the 70s. If that is not done, it is quite likely that the only result of the present conflict will be negative. Unless there is a desire to resolve the conflict, no process or method will be successful. Recognition of each other as brothers and sisters in Christ, fellow Christians whose vision of the Church and its task is not perfect, is paramount together with a willingness to meet with and even confront one another in mutual conversation and respect.

The second step is to approach that conversation in a systematic and ongoing manner involving three areas as proposed by Peacemaker Ministries at the conference. This involves the matter of identifying what the issues really are which are involved in the conflict, identifying the positions which each party to the conflict holds, and finally the interests which each has, that is, what is the concern which each has which causes them to take the position on the issue. With one party it may be an interest in seeing that the Scriptural message of God's Law and Gospel are maintained in their truth and purity. With the other it may be that the message of God be proclaimed effectively by word and deed in dialog with the world and culture of the day. Sincere, open and honest conversation could well result in an understanding that the real concern of both is the vision of the church as people of every nation and kindred and tongue gathered around the throne giving glory and honor and power and blessing to the one seated upon the throne and to the Lamb, a vision which will not be achieved in all its fullness until eternity.

GERALD B. KIESCHNICK

Re-Envisioning Our Mission in the New Century

IN ONE WAY, it's quite simple. My vision for The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod in this new century is "One Mission, One Message, One People."

First, *One Mission*. Job Number One for our church body always has been, and always will be, seeking to fulfill the Great Commission of our Lord. "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20). In that *One Mission* we are joined as a band of brothers and sisters storming the gates of hell in the name of the ascended Christ.

Second, this mission is based upon *One Message*. "I am the way and the truth and the life," Jesus says. "No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). Many people are dying every day and eternally lost because they have not heard and believed the one saving message.

Third, this message yearns to be lived and shared by *One People*. This God-given unity yearns

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to be demonstrated. "Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ . . . stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel" (Philippians 1:27). So it seems simple enough: "One Mission, One Message, One People."

That's not controversial. You might choose some different words or prefer another emphasis, but I believe most of us find "One Mission, One Message, One People" unobjectionable. Vision should be simple but not simplistic. It should be easily remembered but also compelling at the grass roots of congregational life as it is in our synodical boards and offices and institutions of higher learning.

Will this vision that I'm proposing flourish or founder? The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod is a church body full of contradictions. On some fronts it's flourishing with encouraging evidence of growth. On other fronts (sounds like a battle word!) we seem to be foundering. So the challenge for this vision to flourish comes to this: How to deal with present realities in such a way that the vision is more than a nice set of words but becomes truly compelling for us in every aspect of our life together as The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.

That challenge will be met with a return to our historic core values. "Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls" (Jeremiah 6:16). A chief core value for us has been "Scripture Alone." I believe that we are all agreed in our commitment to Scripture. We should be! Beginning with God's creative word in Genesis and ending with a warning not to add or detract from the revelation of Scripture, the Bible from cover to cover attests to the truth and power of its revelation for the life of the

world and church. "Sanctify them by your truth; your word is truth" (John 17:17). "The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life" (John 6:63).

The Gospel, the revelation of God in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, "is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes" (Romans 1:16). So that this power will work among us, we have bound ourselves by our confessional commitment: "We believe, teach, and confess that the prophetic and apostolic writings of the Old and New Testaments are the only rule and norm according to which all doctrines and teachers alike must be appraised and judged" (*Formula of Concord, Epitome, Rule and Norm*).

Coming closer to our own age, the Constitution of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod states: "The Synod, and every member of the Synod, accepts without reservation: 1. The Scriptures of the Old and the New Testament as the written Word of God and the only rule and norm of faith and of practice; 2. All the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as a true and unadulterated statement and exposition of the Word of God" (Article II). And in our own time, all our pastors, our teachers, our professional church workers, and all our congregations have subscribed to this cardinal truth, "Scripture Alone." On this core value, our scriptural and confessional commitment to the efficacious work of God through His Word, we are agreed.

Lip service? Not at all. Our history demonstrates this lively commitment. Our investments in maintaining biblical and confessional seminary education, our school system from pre-school through the Concordia University System, and Concordia Publishing House all go back to the founding of Synod, in some cases even predate the Synod. More recently, a renewed emphasis upon catechesis is a very encouraging sign that this church body will flourish. And when I have interactions with the leaders of other Christian denominations and hear from our people who have ecumenical friendships, I often hear that we are known as a theologically gifted and learned church. It all shows that our lips are in sync with our hearts when we profess "Scripture Alone."

A caution is in order lest we thrive as an

earthly institution but find ourselves ashamed before God on the Day of Judgment (cf. 1 Corinthians 3:10-15). There will always be a great temptation to substitute human insights for the working of God's Word. Principles drawn from the social sciences are all around us, ready to usurp the role of scriptural and confessional theology as we move forward. I hasten to add, emphatically add, that human disciplines do teach many useful things that shed light on how we do our work. For example, so-called "felt needs" that are identified by cultural researchers do guide us to a better understanding of where we can apply the balm of the Gospel. The temptation, however, is to be ephemeral and not also eternal, to be more empathetic and less salvific in speaking about sin and salvation.

Overcoming this temptation will require that pastors and laity join together in personal and corporate study and submission to the authority of Holy Scripture. The role of Holy Scripture in our church means that it's not my vision, or your vision, or even the vision of the "institutional" church that will ultimately avail. Any vision stated by a churchman and embraced by the church body should be God's vision for the salvation of blood-bought souls. While many people outside the church, and sadly within it also, do not accept "Thus says the Lord" as definitive, we must. It's our core value, the ancient path that we have long walked in.

Our Mission Must Be One with God's Mission

THIS IS THE MISSION as our church body has defined and officially approved it: "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."

To say the obvious, we have our challenges. Annually, 35 percent of the congregations of our Synod gain not one adult by Baptism or confirmation. Annually, 47 percent of the congregations of the LCMS gain one adult or zero adults by Baptism or confirmation. Since 1968, the number of annual adult confirmands in our congregations has remained virtually the same, just under 30,000 per

year. Statistically it requires the efforts of 115 members of the LCMS to result in one adult confirmation a year. The national average in Christian churches is 85 adults who add one convert. Are we foundering? The "Mission 21st Century Task Force" I have appointed is studying the reasons for our decline in baptized membership with the purpose of making recommendations to reverse the trend.

Acknowledging that, it must also be said with joy that there are ample evidences that the mission of Christ is flourishing among us in many ways. Some intentional and strategic mission endeavors on the national level include:

- LCMS World Missions undertaking an intensive effort (still not officially named) to reach 100 million people in the next 15 years with the Gospel.
- "Pentecost 2000"—an effort to begin 1,000 new cross-cultural ministries.
- "What a Way!"—an initiative to create a new climate of joy and affirmation in the recruitment and retention of professional church workers.
- "For the Sake of the Church"—an effort to raise \$400 million to offset the expense of professional church-worker preparation and to double the number of students from The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod in our 10 colleges and universities.
- Next Generation Task Force—helping non-synodically trained teachers within our schools receive affordable theological training.

That, I repeat, is at the national level. There is much more happening at district and congregational levels that evidences flourishing mission.

In all this, the mission of God to save souls must be uppermost, not a mission to advance the Synod. Thus another caution: The Pharisees were mission-minded. Jesus said to the Pharisees, "You travel over land and sea to make a single convert" (Matthew 23:15), but then quickly added a word of condemnation: "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites!"

The condemnation was prompted by the Pharisees' mission for their self-righteous exaltation, not for the Messiah who came to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10). We dare not assume that our correct doctrinal formulations grant us an exemption from divine censure should we pursue mission for institutional

purposes. "Everything that was written in the past was written to teach us" (Romans 15:4). Our mission is a Law and especially Gospel mission through which Jesus seeks and saves the lost of the 21st century.

To Be in God's Mission We Must Be One with God's Message

THE MESSAGE IS SIMPLE in its essence: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not counting men's trespasses against them. And He has committed to us the message of reconciliation" (2 Corinthians 5:19). This message is the power of God to cut through the clutter of the hundreds of messages that bombard Americans every day. Those messages are not only soul-destroying for those who are lost but can be discouraging to us.

Yes, we get discouraged:

- because pluralism suggests that the faith of our Synod is an ethnic inheritance, not relevant for this pluralistic age;
- because we no longer live in the "Christian" America of past generations;
- because we're told everything is relative. Oprah Winfrey says, "One of the biggest mistakes humans make is to believe that there is only one way. Actually there are many diverse paths leading to what you call God."
- because historic practices of Judaeo-Christian morality have been jettisoned (abortion, euthanasia, living together, homosexuality, etc.).

Do these developments in our culture, trends that we all bump up against almost every day, consign us to founder, or can we hope to flourish? The latter is what I believe. We can confidently promote the Christ-centered message of infallible Scripture because it speaks to basic needs of the human heart through Law and Gospel. The Creator knows His creatures better than the promoters of post-modern thinking. We should be energized, for Lutheran Law-Gospel preaching centered in Jesus Christ can meet "felt needs" in a way no shopping mall ministry can begin to approach.

Pursuing the vision of this One Message has the most substantial backing known. The Gospel is God's power to convert (Isaiah 55:10-11; Hebrews 4:12) and has His promise of progress: "This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony

to all the nations" (Matthew 24:14). The destructive and discouraging spiritual mush of America at the start of the 21st century will best be met with the wise and winsome confidence that the truth has always enjoined. "Write down the revelation and make it plain on tablets so that a herald may run with it. For the revelation awaits an appointed time; it speaks of the end and will not prove false" (Habakkuk 2:2-3).

"Christianity," someone wrote, "did not do what it did or get where it got by being a milquetoast faith." Happily, The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod neither is nor will be a milquetoast church. People know and will always know where we stand on the infallibility of God's Word, on life issues, on marriage and family, on the godly education of our children, on moral absolutes and the reality of sin, and on the fact that faith in Jesus Christ is the only way to salvation and eternal life. While so many are standing at the crossroads and looking for new ways, we will proclaim the ancient paths, where the good way is, where our contemporaries can find rest for their souls.

We look to our pastors and theological faculties to lead us in this engagement. David H. C. Reid, once Chaplain at Edinburgh University, described a young pastor who was building the ideal church and manse. "His church would sit here, and his manse would sit there. He would have his study in the manse and his pulpit in the church connected by a sealed corridor, with his zealous wife guarding the door. There would be no telephone; his existence would be hermetically sealed through the week with his clean and chaste theology books. And then on Sundays he would burst from the study door, dash along the corridor and into the pulpit. Nothing would have bothered him, nothing would have upset him, all he would have to do is preach. His gospel would be chaste, pure and untrammelled with the world, that is quite true, but how out of touch with things that matter! When asked how he liked his new parson, an old Scot said that he supposed he was all right, in the main, but six days he was invisible and the seventh day he was incomprehensible. It just won't work to shut ourselves off on these tight little islands." (Carlisle Marney, *For All the Saints*, II, 776)

One Mission, One Message Shared by One People

THE PHARISEES (yes, another caution!) knew the Hebrew scriptures and their traditions but did not hear the revelation of Law and Gospel in the context of their own sinfulness and lost condition. We today are a divided church body. In my travels I have felt the pain that we are fractured by disagreements, some in doctrine, others in practice, exacerbated by a party spirit and well-organized political groups. A lack of harmony, concord and unity is apparent in our Synod and is demonstrated by specific actions and reactions that cross my desk on a regular basis. The devil is active in those details, and there's enough evidence to suggest that we may well founder. Or, is it God in the details?

It is God who wins out in the details when we understand that the Gospel message comes down to this: Jesus died for my sins; Jesus died for your sins. That message of the now-empty cross is the greatest unifying power among us, and it comes to us preeminently through the ministry of Word and Sacrament in the Divine Service. "The gifts of God come to us in many and various ways, but never so certainly as in the Divine Service of the Church. Here God delivers forgiveness, life, and salvation through His Word and holy sacraments, which are the means of His grace" (*Hymnal Supplement* 98, page 4).

There is "one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all" (Ephesians 4:5-6). Because it unites repentant sinners with God through Word and Sacrament, the divine service, God's action to us, is the unquestionably preeminent place where God makes His fractious people one. One Mission, One Message, One People.



A favorite poem of mine is "The Woodpile" by Robert Frost. Walking through a snowy marsh somewhere in New England, Frost happens upon a stack of firewood, cut, split, and neatly piled. It sits alone in the swamp, no tracks or footprints to show that it's being used. Looking closer, the wood is seen to be old, not this year's cutting, not last year's, nor the year before. The wood has turned gray, its bark warping off, and creeping, climbing vines have intertwined

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ROBERT ROEGNER

Expanding Our Mission While Dealing with Conflict

EVER SINCE THE BEGINNING of the Christian Church in the first century, there has been a tension between "being right" and "doing the right things"—between internal church strife around theology, doctrine and practice, and staying focused on Christ's Great Commission given to the church in Matthew 28 and Acts 1. Church history, it would seem, supports the previous thought. A couple of examples from the past will help us as we think of the present situation in The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.

The Pauline Epistles were written by the Apostle Paul to deal with all kinds of conflict centering in theology, doctrine and practice in places like Ephesus and Corinth. These cities were places in which Paul had planted new congregations, and in turn, these new congregations were maturing into thriving churches that proclaimed Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Unfortunately, far too much emphasis was being placed by some on being right instead of doing the right things. This conflict and controversy were taking place during a tremendous time of mission expansion. The Holy Spirit was changing the hearts of men and women as they heard the Word of God preached by men like

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Paul, Barnabas, Stephen and Peter. Christian witness was very successful in the first century, A.D., with hundreds of thousands of new believers flocking to these new churches, even though they had their fair share of problems.¹

A second example is the Reformation and all that it stood for 500 years ago, and still stands for today, within the Christian world. Certainly, the Reformation was a time of conflict involving theology, doctrine and practice within the church. A strong case could be made that it was about being right instead of doing the right things. Yet, the Reformation itself served as a time of great mission expansion, as people came to understand their relationship with Jesus in a more personal way through Martin Luther's explanation of the Means of Grace, that is, God's Word and Sacraments.

Therefore, considering Church history in general and two examples of Church history specifically, it should be no surprise to any of us that even though there is conflict within the LCMS today, a vision for sharing the Good News of Jesus with unreached and uncommitted people continues to drive the leadership of the LCMS at all levels of the church (i.e., congregations, districts and the Synod) to be in mission ministry.

Keeping Focused

IT IS A NATURAL TENDENCY for human beings to get off-track during a time of conflict, especially a conflict that so many within the Church feel so strongly about. For many, emotions run very high when the conflict seems to attack the very nature of our theology, doctrine and practice. This is true for everyone, whether clergy or laity, no matter on which side of the controversy you find yourself. It is very easy for us to become wrapped up in being right instead of doing the right things. When this happens it is natural for the next step to take place: the Church, both clergy and laity, begins to ask questions, such as: "Does this Church really know where it is going?" or "Can the LCMS really make a difference in the world it serves when the people within it can't seem to get along?" The simple answer is "YES!" Why? I believe that just like the two examples in Church history cited previously, the Great Commission commands of Jesus Christ to "Go therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them

in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19) and "You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8) transcend church conflict in general and the present LCMS controversy specifically.

Keeping Focused on the Good News

THE REAL ENERGY in a church like the LCMS comes from the Good News itself and the mission ministry (through the Great Commission commands of Jesus Christ) that serves it. There is no better theology, doctrine and practice to do mission ministry (through the Great Commission commands of Jesus Christ) than the theology, doctrine and practice of the LCMS. Staying focused on the Good News might seem difficult these days within the LCMS; however, it truly is that focus on what we believe about the Good News itself and our mission ministry (through the Great Commission commands of Jesus Christ) that distinguishes us from all the other denominations.

Below you will find seven "missiological principles." These principles represent the theology, doctrine and practice of the LCMS, focused on the Good News and our mission ministry (through the Great Commission commands of Jesus Christ) found in thousands of congregations, 35 LCMS Districts, auxiliaries like the Lutheran Women's Missionary League and the International Lutheran Laymen's League, LCMS seminaries and universities, Recognized Service Organizations, LCMS mission societies, LCMS World Mission and many others. It is truly this confessional Lutheran mission theology (keeping focused on the Good News) that ultimately drives a confessional Lutheran Church like the LCMS to a vision of mission expansion, even in a time of conflict and controversy. This is about doing the right things and not about being right; whereas, conflict and controversy are always about being right and not about doing the right things.

1. The Missio Dei. The mission belongs to God. It does not belong to human beings or the church; rather to God, who is the sole creator and sustainer of all creation: the world, humanity and the church. Hence, the mission and the church are God's, and He is the one who carries both to their ultimate conclusion.

The purpose of the *Missio* is the establish-

ment of God's kingdom. His action through which He met this end was the sending of His Son, Jesus Christ. For it is through the sacrifice of Christ that God redeemed mankind and made it possible for people to enter God's kingdom. Christ is the complete, objective fulfillment of the *Missio Dei* (Genesis 3:15).

2. The Grace Nature of the Missio Dei.

The *Missio Dei* was established and is daily sustained solely because of the grace of God. The *Missio Dei* is not maintained and extended because of the inherent merit of any person, nor because of one's actions, but solely because of the grace of God.

3. The Sending Nature of the Missio Dei.

God sent Jesus to fulfill His *Missio*; and as one is brought into a relationship with Jesus by grace through faith, every person is sent out to be the instrument of God to carry the *Missio Dei* to all the nations of the world. In order to be sent and to participate in the *Missio Dei*, one must first be brought into the kingdom of God and be equipped to carry out God's will (Hebrews 13:20-21).

4. The Apostolic Nature of the Missio Dei.

Because of the sending nature of the *Missio Dei*, the *Missio* is apostolic in nature. As the body of Christ extends itself throughout the ages into the world, it remains united, holding onto its original commission given to the apostles "... and those with them" by Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:18-20, Luke 24:33-49, Mark 16:15-19, and 1 Corinthians 15:1-7). United with its Sender, the Body of Christ stands in the place of and in the authority of God.

5. The Communication Nature of the Missio Dei. God subjectively fulfills the *Missio Dei* through the proclamation of His Holy Word. God carries the objective fulfillment of His *Missio* to the nations through the clear communication of His Word (Romans 14-15). Clear communication of the Word of God always rightly divides and uses the Law and Gospel. Communication of the Word of God is efficacious only because of the power of the Holy Spirit working through the Word.

6. The Sacramental Nature of the Missio Dei. God subjectively fulfills the *Missio Dei* through the Sacraments. God carries the objective fulfillment of His *Missio* to the nations through the administration of Holy



Baptism (Titus 3:5) and the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:23–32).

7. The Message of the *Missio Dei*. The *Missio Dei*'s message is of repentance and forgiveness only through Jesus Christ. It is one that continually echoes the tenets of Scripture Alone, Grace Alone, and Faith Alone. This message has not changed since the *Missio Dei*'s inception, and it will remain unchanged until its consummation, the Second Coming of Christ!²

Keeping Focused on the Good News and Sharing It

THE FUTURE IS SEEN AS VERY bright within the LCMS at this time, even though our church finds itself in the middle of conflict and controversy. There is a purpose for this great church body to exist. It comes from a vision by the leadership of our church, President Gerald B. Kieschnick, and hundreds of missionaries, many staff members, board members, and me, the executive director of LCMS World Mission. It reads as follows:

Praying to the Lord of the Harvest, LCMS World Mission, in collaboration with its North American and worldwide partners, will share the Good News of Jesus with 100 million unreached or uncommitted people during the next 15 years!³

Let me take a moment to unpack this purpose statement to clarify the meaning of the words and emphasize how keeping focused on the Good News and sharing it helps to expand our mission in the midst of our present conflict and controversy.

Praying to the Lord of the Harvest. Only if the Holy Spirit blesses our efforts will we make any real contribution to this mission expansion. It truly is about God's people serving God's people. LCMS World Mission's statement of mission theology states:

The core of the Gospel message is summarized in John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." Again, 1 Timothy 2:4: "He [God] wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth." All human beings by nature are lost since the sin of Adam (Romans 5:15–17). The forgiveness of sins, life and salvation can only be found by grace through faith in Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12).

From the beginning, God promised that he would take action to save his people (Genesis 3:15). He sent his people into the world to be a blessing to others (Genesis 12:1–3). Throughout the centuries he called people to himself through the prophets, and finally he sent his Son as his full and final revelation (Hebrews 1:1–2). In the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus, human beings are set free from sin once and for all (John 1:29; Romans 5:17–19, 6:4; 1 Corinthians 15:20–22; Hebrews 9:26–28).

After his resurrection, Jesus said to his disciples, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive

anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven" (John 20:21–23). On other occasions before his ascension, the Lord made it clear to his followers that his message was to be proclaimed throughout the world, starting from the place where they were (Luke 24:46–49; Acts 1:7–8; Matthew 28:19–20). Missionaries carry out the will of the Lord by seeking the lost through the faithful proclamation of God's Word and the administration of the sacraments.⁴

LCMS World Mission in collaboration with its North American and worldwide partners. As stated previously, our mission expansion is about confessional Lutherans around the world working together with one common purpose given to us by our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, in His Great Commission. The theology is Lutheran, the doctrine is Lutheran, and the practice is Lutheran—all done in the cultural context of the 4+ billion people living on this earth today who have received no witness that salvation and eternal life are theirs by "grace and through faith in Christ Jesus"! This is not just about the LCMS being in mission; rather it is about a worldwide movement of confessional Lutheranism leading the way because the Gospel needs to be proclaimed.

Will share the Good News of Jesus with 100 million unreached or uncommitted people. By sharing, I mean telling the Good News of Jesus in a way to which people (100 million of them) can respond. All might

not be converted; however, all will have an opportunity to respond as the Spirit works conversion. Just as the parable of the Sower in Luke chapter eight tells us, we must sow the seed of God's Word in the world. Today in that world we find billions of unreached or uncommitted people. These are people who have no connection to the story of Jesus or who have no faith, even though they may have been baptized.

During the next 15 years! There is a need to raise up a generation of God's people who have a vision for mission ministry—who have a vision for expanding the mission, even in the midst of conflict and controversy. Why? Because the reality is that there must be a sense of urgency about our purpose. As the LCMS World Mission's statement of mission theology states:

In the broadest sense, all Christians are missionaries. As priests before God, they carry the responsibility to "declare the praises of him who called [them] out of darkness into his wonderful light" (1 Peter 2:9). All believers are instructed, "Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us" (1 Peter 2:12). In many cases, evangelistic mission work is accomplished by people who simply seize an opportunity and spontaneously share the Word of the Lord, even in the midst of adversity (Acts 8:1–4).⁵

Keeping Focused on the Good News and Sharing it with a Lost World

DAVID BARRETT AND TODD JOHNSON write in the *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* that while the total number of Christians from the middle of 2002 until the end of 2025 is expected to grow from 2.05 billion to 2.61 billion, the increase in the number of non-Christians during the same period of time is even greater, expanding from 4.15 billion to 5.20 billion.⁶

What do we tell God when He holds each of us, members of the LCMS, accountable for wanting to be right instead of doing the right things? The reality is this: while we debate issues and choose which side we want to be on, while we involve ourselves in conflict and controversy, and while we spend time and energy on being right, millions of people in this world are dying and going to their eternal damnation in hell.

The only answer to this concern is making sure that we, the members of the LCMS, keep the LCMS focused on the Good News so that it will be shared with a lost world. This is our strength, even as the mission statement of the LCMS exclaims:

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.⁷

Conclusion

I WANT TO CONCLUDE this discussion of expanding our mission while dealing with conflict by referring to the way you dress. I am promoting a new "dress code" for the LCMS. It's not the kind of "dress code" that talks about dresses, ties or business casual, but the kind of "dress code" that addresses the kinds of spiritual "garments" you put on every day. Christians today, no matter where God has called them to be in mission ministry, are always being scrutinized by others to see if they are clothed in their spiritual dress. Just as our physical clothing affects others' perception of us, the inner qualities we demonstrate by our outward behavior have a major influence on how well we represent Christ to others.

Let's look at the spiritual "garments" which the Apostle Paul identified we should be wearing:

- Compassion—the spirit that moves our hearts to action when someone else is hurting or in need;
- Kindness—the moving force behind a small, encouraging gesture or a major investment of time and effort to help someone else;
- Humility—the quality that enables us to enjoy our own successes while giving God and other people the credit;
- Gentleness—a garment that doesn't clash with others because it's never harsh or unnecessarily forceful;
- Patience—the spirit that endures day-to-day irritation and frustrations with serenity, and bears with the foibles of others in a loving spirit.

A person wearing these qualities would certainly be attractive to others, regardless of his or her physical appearance. These are the same qualities that people saw in Christ, causing them to want to follow Him. When we put on these qualities, by grace through faith, we draw people to Him by showing them what He is like. After all, when it comes to spiritual clothing, He was the best-dressed person of all time.

This type of "dress code" will certainly expand our mission in the LCMS while dealing with conflict. This is certainly about doing the right things instead of wanting to be right.

What counts is getting dressed for your mission ministry!

Notes

- ¹ Barrett, David B. *World Christian Encyclopedia*. 2nd ed. WCE: Oxford University Press, 2001, pages 21–25.
- ² Written in collaboration with Rev. John Palka who is presently serving LCMS World Mission on loan to Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, as "Curriculum Developer" for the Ethnic Immigrant Institute.
- ³ LCMS World Mission. *Strategic Planning Process*. Purpose Statement of 9/1/02.
- ⁴ LCMS World Mission. *Mission Guidelines*. September 2000, page 1.
- ⁵ LCMS World Mission. *Mission Guidelines*. September 2000, page 1.
- ⁶ Barrett, David B. and Johnson, Todd M. *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*. "Annual Statistical Table on Global Mission: 2002." Vol. 26, No. 1, January 2002, pages 22–23.
- ⁷ The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. *2001 Handbook*. Copyright 2001, page 5.

book reviews

Corrective Love: The Power of Communion Discipline

Thomas C. Oden

St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1995

Historically in America the behaviors of humanity were controlled by three major agencies: civil government, public education, and the church. Some observers think that the government has become so hopelessly politicized that it can no longer objectively set the tone for human behavior. Others see public education as having become so beholden to advocates of political correctness that its influence on human behavior has been seriously eroded.

Thomas Oden is one who has confidence that the Christian church can continue to influence human behavior through a correct understanding and administration of the Office of the Keys. Nevertheless, he views the current strong inclination toward modernity even within conservative church bodies as presenting serious stumbling blocks as the church seeks to understand and to administer the Power of the Keys. A recurring theme throughout the book is "The way is narrow that leads to life."

Oden devotes an early chapter to a review of biblical basics concerning judgment and discipline in God's house. He calls attention to the extent to which some of the traditional components of Christian discipline, such as the practice of private confession, have been lost to the church and pleads for the church to reach out and to restore such salutary practices.

The author does not shrink from providing rather specific guidelines for laypersons and for pastors as they participate in hearing the private confessions of troubled sinners. He ventures into some areas which might be considered dangerous by some as he reminds the readers that women also are called to admonish and to counsel. Ultimately, he advocates that the Power of the Keys be regarded as decisions by "the whole people of God." The church must at all times remember that the status of the clergy reflects the work of the Spirit rather than the work of any human being.

Thomas Oden writes in a style which makes theological concepts readily available to the ordinary layperson as well as to the trained theologian. Greek terms are defined in the

narrative context, making the message clear even to those who are not fluent in Greek. The chapters are titled in question or implied-question form providing sort of a catechism approach to basic theological principles related to the Christian life. At the close of each chapter he has included a thumb-nail account of a case study for practical applications and discussions. Also at the close of each chapter he has included a recapitulation helping the reader to pull together main points presented in the chapter. These are presented so skillfully that the reader who is too busy to read Oden's book in depth might well capture much of the spirit of his narrative simply by reading the recapitulations.

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God's Song in a New Land: Lutheran Hymnals in America

Carl F. Schalk

St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House 1995

This small paperback, rightly identified by Schalk as an introduction to the topic, is not difficult to comprehend. However, one needs to stay focused because the reader is frequently provided with a plethora of detailed information without sufficient context. In the text Schalk strives to define, track, and report the influences of what he calls Pietism, Rationalism and Amiable Ecumenism as found in approximately 30 hymnals whose combined publication dates span almost 450 years.

The following definitions are provided. *Pietism*: retaining a link with historic Lutheran hymnody, yet tending to emphasize the subjective character of human experience in contrast to the orthodox confessionalism found in Reformation era hymns. *Rationalism*: frequently worked to change the content of hymnody in order to achieve agreement with human reason. *Amiable Ecumenism*: often embracing the hymnody of surrounding church denomina-

tions characterized by a theology foreign to or at variance with a theology rooted in the Lutheran Reformation.

The model of orthodox Lutheran hymnody for Schalk is found in the *Geistliche Lieder* of 1545 published in Leipzig by Valentin Babst, the so-called Babst hymnal. Martin Luther, who wrote the Preface, specifically endorsed this hymnal. As to the content of the Babst hymnal Schalk reports the following: "The Babst hymnal reflected the most significant consensus regarding a Reformation 'core' of evangelical hymnody that the 16th century produced and which was considered normative for Lutheran congregational song through the middle of the 17th century.

Schalk also monitors carefully the number of 16th century hymns that have been included in hymnals in America. Near the end of the book the reader will find generous appendices and notes used to clarify and document the material. Two items, one provided by the publisher on page 12 and the other by the author on page 185, should not have found their way into this book: A statement by the publisher, "Ugliness, emptiness, and absurdity have nearly become an obsession in all of the contemporary arts," is not true. An observation by the author, "... a new pietism has arisen in our time that seeks religious assurance within one's self, that seeks immediate affirmation in the senses. Rather than texts which 'tell the story,' we are bombarded with songs that, at best, reflect bumper-sticker theology. Musically, the church is awash in a triviality designed either to make us feel good or to manipulate us to someone else's predetermined ends. That triviality makes a mockery of the integrity of the Gospel itself," should have been shared in a venue other than this scholarly history of Lutheran hymnals in America. In spite of these minor flaws, the book should be read by all who want or need to know more about the song of the church. The reader will become aware of the constant change that has shaped and reshaped our past. This study reveals much about where we have come from and offers clues that may help us to ponder and prepare for where we may be headed.

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continued from page 3

• Is The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod more interested in "being right" than in "doing the right things"?

The gravity of the challenges and problems facing the LCMS are evident. The outcome of the struggles must be a high priority for all of us because of lost opportunities to share the Good News. Roegner says it well: "What do we tell God when He holds each of us, members of the LCMS, accountable for wanting to be right instead of doing the right things? The reality is this: While we debate issues and choose which side we want to be on, while we involve ourselves in conflict and controversy, and while we spend time and energy on being right, millions of people in this world are dying and going to their eternal damnation in hell."

Does this church know where it is going? Join me in praying that God will provide the guidance and strength to ensure that our beloved Synod stays focused on sharing the Good News that Jesus Christ is Savior of all.

Orville C. Walz

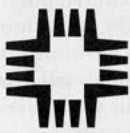
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themselves with the logs. Who would spend the labor of his ax, Frost wonders, only to leave his work so far from a useful fireplace?

Is that an illustration of where The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod is at the start of the 21st century? Are we comfortably complacent, in Frost's words describing the woodpile, "To warm the frozen swamp as best it could/ With the slow, smokeless burning of decay?" I honestly believe the answer is "No!" The grace of God to us throughout our history and the desperate need of the 21st century for Jesus Christ, that one name "under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12), call us forward to flourishing mission and ministry. I am convinced that we can keep our cord of wood—namely, our doctrine and practice—neatly stacked, tidy, carefully arranged, and yet flourish and burn brightly as we support one another in love and trust, always seeking to be faithful in mission and ministry.

One Mission, One Message, One People!

"Not to us, O Lord, not to us but to your name be the glory, because of Your love and faithfulness" (Psalm 115:1).



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