

# Proceedings

October 2011

WISCONSIN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod  
2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222-4398  
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Published 2011  
Printed in the United States of America

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## Notes

To learn more about the convention and to view convention photos and video reports, visit [www.wels.net/convention](http://www.wels.net/convention).

Many references to the *Book of Reports and Memorials* (BORAM) are included within the convention resolutions. Unless otherwise noted, these are referencing the 2011 BORAM, which can be found at [www.wels.net/about-wels/synod-reports](http://www.wels.net/about-wels/synod-reports).



# Convention overview

More than 400 voting and advisory delegates met at Luther Preparatory School in Watertown, Wis., from July 25–29, 2011, for the 61st Biennial Convention of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. In addition to experiencing the uplifting worship services and devotions and hearing two fine doctrinal essays, the delegates spent a week reviewing the work of the synod during the past two years and making decisions on a number of issues.

## **The ministry financial plan (budget)**

Delegates approved a ministry financial plan for the next two years that will make possible the opening of four to six new home missions, expansion of staffing and programs in world mission fields, continued programs of called worker training at the ministerial education schools, and a modest increase in synodical salaries (2 percent and 2.5 percent in the next two years following two years of wage freezes). The budget recommended by the Synodical Council and approved by the convention provides for careful expansion of the synod's work, especially in the area of missions.

The synod's capital debt has been reduced from \$22.4 million in 2007 to \$11.6 million today. The budget provides for continuing payments to eliminate the synod's capital debt in eight years.

Chief Financial Officer Todd Poppe also reported to the convention that the closing for the purchase of a new synod administration building would take place Aug. 1. The relocation is possible because of an accepted offer for the synod's current administration building. Funding for the relocation will come from the sale of the existing building and the use of facilities funds already on hand; no mission dollars will be used for the move.

## **Bible translation**

After working for nearly a year, the Translation Evaluation Committee reported to the convention that its initial conclusions are that the revised New International Version (NIV) can be acceptable for use in synodical publications. (The current version of the NIV is being phased out by the publisher and will no longer be available for use in synod publications.) In an open hearing, many delegates expressed thanks for the committee's work and for its clear commitment to upholding the truth of the Scriptures. Some delegates expressed concerns and reservations about the revised NIV and spoke in favor of considering other options. No final decision was expected at this convention, and the committee was not making a final recommendation. The convention determined that a final selection of a translation for synod publications should be done at the district conventions in 2012, with a two-thirds majority of all delegates necessary to adopt a translation. The convention also resolved that a special committee should be appointed to investigate the feasibility of WELS taking part in an effort to produce a new confessional Lutheran translation of the Bible.

## **Termination of calls**

The Conference of Presidents submitted a report on the matter of terminating calls for financial reasons—something the synod and individual congregations were forced to do in the midst of the recent recession. The report stressed the importance of honoring the divinity of the call and showing love and respect to called workers whenever difficult decisions about divine calls need to be made. The convention accepted the report and also encouraged the Conference of Presidents to develop guidelines for advising congregations as they wrestle with decisions affecting divine calls and to consider whether a process of appeal should be developed.

## **Special celebrations**

The delegates had the special joy of declaring fellowship with the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Church of Puerto Rico. This church body originated as a WELS mission and has now achieved the status of an independent Lutheran church. The delegates also thanked God for 75 years of mission work in Nigeria and for 50 years of humanitarian

work done by the Central Africa Medical Mission. Finally, the delegates welcomed Rev. V'yacheslav Horpynchuk, the head of the Ukrainian Lutheran Church (ULC). Touched by his account of the history of Lutheranism in Ukraine and by the special challenges faced by that church today, the delegates were moved to gather a special offering of more than \$13,000 for the ULC. Horpynchuk expressed his deep gratitude for the warm welcome and for the generous gift.

### **"In Christ alone" long-range plan**

Delegates unanimously adopted the long-range plan developed by the Synodical Council. The "In Christ alone" plan provides the synod with a road map for the next six years.

### **Task force to study Lutheran schools**

The convention called for the appointment of a special task force to address the challenges facing Lutheran schools and to report their conclusions and recommendations to the districts in 2012.

The next synod convention will take place in July 2013 at Martin Luther College in New Ulm, Minn. For complete information on the 2011 convention, go to [www.wels.net/convention](http://www.wels.net/convention).

Serving in Christ,

President Mark Schroeder

# Voting delegates

## Arizona-California District

### Pastors

Jon Buchholz  
Frederick Casmer  
Samuel Clemons  
Ross Else  
Paul Johnston  
Philip Koelpin  
Daniel Schroeder  
Scott Stone  
Daniel Wagenknecht

### Teachers and staff ministers

Andrew Aguilar  
Peter Bauer  
Daniel Bredendick  
Rendell Koepfel  
Patrick Walker

### Laymen

Richard Baldauf  
Peter Bockoven  
Vernon Caulk  
Paul Dankert  
Scott Duryea  
James Fischer  
Joel Frey  
Raymond Frye  
Keith Gray

Gary Johnson  
Brad Kapellusch  
Jesse Meloling  
Raymond Miller  
Norman Nelson  
George Perry  
Gary Rasmussen  
Kim Winsor

## Dakota-Montana District

### Pastors

David Bitter  
Douglas Free  
Daniel Habben  
Keith Petersen

### Teachers and staff ministers

Bert Falak

### Laymen

Jim Carlile  
Thomas Hansen  
Terry Kemmet  
Dave Macioroski  
James Malmberg  
Richard Nolte

Wolf Parsons  
Rodney Sieg  
Kelly Sieh  
Gerhardt Struck  
Roger Wolff

## Michigan District

### Pastors

Norman Burger  
Mark Franck  
Samuel Hacker III  
Glen Hieb  
Norval Kock  
Paul Naumann  
Stephen Schamber  
Thomas Schroeder  
Larry Seafert  
Mark Smith  
Ross Ulrich  
Jonathan Voss

### Teachers and staff ministers

Charles Buege  
Dennis Friske  
Paul Hoffman  
Andrew Pappenfuss  
Leonard Proeber  
Steven Towne  
Aaron Trimmer

### Laymen

Robert Anderson  
Craig Atwood  
John Beeskow  
Roger Bogenschutz  
Nathan Breidinger  
Andrew Buettner  
Brent Buzzalini  
Gary Gilgen  
Robert Goddard  
Barry Haller  
Alan Irvine  
Robert Janecke

Glenn Kohn  
Arthur Liewert  
Winston Mortiere  
Jason Petoskey  
Kevin Pockrandt  
Thomas Pustelnik  
Thomas Reif  
Warren Rentz  
David Schafer  
John Schlaack  
Alan Selbig  
Chuck Stake

## Minnesota District

### Pastors

Michael Berg  
Wesley Bruss  
John Dolan  
James Grabitske  
Darren Green  
Dennis Harbach  
Douglas Lange  
Peter Leyrer  
Jeffrey Mittelstadt  
Mark Paustian  
Melvin Schwark  
Mark Schwertfeger  
Curtiss Seefeldt  
William Staab  
Ross Stelljes

### Teachers and staff ministers

Gary Bain  
Nathan Bitter  
Lawrence Czer  
John Gronholz  
Jonathan Hahm  
Thomas Hansen  
Donald Kock  
Scott Loberger  
John Meyer  
John Nolte  
Jason Snodie  
Steven Thiesfeldt

### Laymen

Bruce Baumeister  
Mark Boyd  
Mark Carlson  
Patrick Dillon  
Douglas Gray  
Curtis Hall  
Loren Johnson  
Floyd Kastens  
Reinhold Kehren  
Larry Klindworth  
Robin Kramer  
Ordell Laumer  
Perry Lund  
Louis Marzinske  
Dean Mietner

Steven Oelkers  
Wayne Paulson  
Rolf Reissman  
David Sauer  
Brett Schmidt  
Kurtis Sumption  
Chris Vodvarka  
Steven Voss  
Norris Voth  
David Wahl  
Roger Zolldan

## Nebraska District

### Pastors

William Goehring  
Thomas Jeske  
Kevin Klug  
Matthew Krenke  
David Schultz  
Earle Treptow

### Teachers and staff ministers

Joshua Glowicki  
Kip Wilson

### Laymen

James Bruland  
Richard Ellinghuysen  
James Free  
Kenneth Guillaume  
Paul Herzfeldt  
Thomas Krafft  
Ed Krieger

Donald Linskens  
James Oberlander  
Dale Pohlman  
Gary Schmidt  
Adam Vaughn  
Rich Yeager

## North Atlantic District

### Pastors

M. Robert Green  
Stephen Schmidt  
Paul Waldek

### Teachers and staff ministers

None

### Laymen

Dale Feddersen  
Jim Heikkila  
Roger Krahn  
Werner Lomker

Nicholas Oberle  
Mark Ristow  
Jonathon Roberts

## Northern Wisconsin District

### Pastors

Roy Beyer  
John Dorn  
Leon Ehlert  
Richard Frost  
Mark Hannemann  
Paul Lidtke  
James Naumann  
Paul Schossow  
Michael Spaude  
Thomas Unke  
Eric Verstein  
Richard Zahn  
Ronald Zindler

### Teachers and staff ministers

Abraham Enter  
Jason Gibson  
Steven Hennig  
Shawn Hill  
Brian Humann  
Larry Klukas  
Brian Miller  
Alan Nolte  
Philip Punzel  
James Roecker  
Joel Ungemach  
Peter Wolfgramm

### Laymen

Dennis Behnke  
Gary Cross  
Gary DeNamur  
Doug Drager  
Erwin Eickhoff  
John Falck  
Ed Garlieb  
Robert Jackson  
Tim Lehman  
Donald Potthast  
Roger Prestine  
Dennis Sheldon  
David Sievert

Wayne Springstroh  
Leon Strutz  
Steve Wright  
Richard Zellmer

## Pacific Northwest District

### Pastors

Mark Cares  
Mark Schewe  
Neal Schroeder  
Craig Wasser

### Teachers and staff ministers

Jeffrey Kurbis  
Mark Leitzke

### Laymen

James Aumann  
Patrick Beehler  
Eric Stahfeld  
Theodore Weiss III

Lee Winckler

## South Atlantic District

### Pastors

David Blaho  
Donn Dobberstein  
N. Martin Mielke  
David Priebe  
John Roebke  
James Schumann

### Teachers and staff ministers

Kyle Bender  
Daniel Brands

### Laymen

Richard Bublitz  
Jeremy Garrett  
Robert Holbrook  
Matthew Kopp  
Daniel Miller  
Earl Monday

Daniel Ross  
Peter Sahlstrom  
Kristopher Smith  
Corby Wetzel  
Leon Wichmann  
Mike Willems

## South Central District

### Pastors

Guy Bergenthal  
John Koelpin  
David Schneider  
Marc VonDeylen

### Teachers and staff ministers

Shawn Herkstroeter

### Laymen

Robert Hinz  
William Kalbow  
Timothy Lind  
Ricky McCormick

Scott Peters  
David Wagner  
Gilbert Wittig

## Southeastern Wisconsin District

### Pastors

James Aderman  
Steven Bode  
Michael Borgwardt  
Mark Braun  
James Castillo  
Curtis Golm  
John Graf  
Alan Gumm  
Gregory Hermanson  
Peter Kassulke  
Thomas Kneser  
Arthur Koepsell  
John Mattek  
Paul Prange  
Michael Quandt  
Joseph Radsek  
Steven Radunzel  
Stephen Ristow  
Timothy Spaude

### Teachers and staff ministers

Rodney Bollinger  
Ronald Buelow  
David Deibert  
John Dorn  
James Esmeier  
Fonda Fischer  
Robert Garbe  
Matthew Heyn  
Thad Jahns  
Todd Jahns  
Paul Kelm  
David Kren  
Paul Marquardt  
Joel Mattek  
John Melso  
Lance Meyer  
Michael Mittelstadt  
Neil Schlieve  
Greg Schmill  
Joel Schultz  
Stephen Schultz  
Kenneth White  
Randall Willms  
Gerald Zeamer

### Laymen

James Allen  
David Arnold  
Frederic Banaszak  
Richard Blievernicht  
James Dais  
Thomas Gentz  
John Hoh Jr.  
Roger Jeffery  
Chad Krutz  
Scott Menke  
Kim Moline  
Robert Musgrave  
Philip Nehls  
John Nolte  
Carlos Orta  
Thomas Palubecki  
Mark Pamperin  
Jonathan Rupprecht  
Joe Sanford  
Ronald Schmidt  
Dennis Unterholzner  
Roger Wilke  
Michael Witkowski

## Western Wisconsin District

### Pastors

P. William Bader  
Mark Bartsch  
John Braun  
Elroy Conradt  
Walter Davidson  
Mark Gartner  
Roy Hefti  
Paul Hirsch  
Matthew Holtz  
Gene Jahnke  
William Runke  
Paul Scharrer  
Glenn Seefeldt  
Peter Snyder  
Thomas Trapp  
John Unnasch

### Teachers and staff ministers

Laurence Clark  
Chad Czerwan  
Jon Engelbrecht  
Douglas Gurgel  
Paul Ihde  
Stephen Lauber  
David Leonard  
Timothy McEachern  
David Niemi  
Glen Pufahl  
Andrew Rosenau  
Kirk Schauland  
Adrian Smith  
Peter Wentzel

### Laymen

Terry Bauer  
Thomas Bobrofsky  
Jonathan Burk  
Gene Christian  
Charles Faught  
Grant Gentz  
William Lewis  
James Lillo  
Eugene Meyer  
John Mitchell  
Kirby Moldenhauer  
Leroy Nell  
Lavern Priebusch  
Dan Retzlaff  
David Schwantz  
Joel Scott

Jerry Weeden  
Franklin Wegner

## World missionaries

Jonathan Bare  
Daniel Sargent  
Nathan Wagenknecht

# Advisory delegates

## Officers

Rev. Mark Schroeder, President  
Rev. James Huebner, First Vice President  
Rev. Joel Voss, Second Vice President  
Rev. Robert Pasbrig, Secretary

## District Presidents

Rev. Jon Buchholz,\* Arizona-California  
Rev. Peter Naumann, Dakota-Montana  
Rev. John Seifert, Michigan  
Rev. Charles Degner, Minnesota  
Rev. Earle Treptow,\* Nebraska  
Rev. Joel Petermann, North Atlantic

Rev. Douglas Engelbrecht, Northern Wisconsin  
Rev. Theodore Lambert, Pacific Northwest  
Rev. John Guse, South Atlantic  
Rev. Vilas Glaeske, South Central  
Rev. David Rutschow, Southeastern Wisconsin  
Rev. Herbert Prahl, Western Wisconsin

## Synodical Council

Mr. Tom Schlittenhart, Arizona-California  
Mr. Seth Hansen, Dakota-Montana  
Mr. Philip Hempel, Michigan  
Mr. Paul Holzhueter, Minnesota  
Mr. Kurt Austad, Nebraska  
Mr. David Metzger, North Atlantic  
Mr. Ron Hillmann, Northern Wisconsin  
Mr. Warren Ehlke, Pacific Northwest

Mr. Mark Massmann, South Atlantic  
Mr. G. Harvey Dunn, South Central  
Mr. Timothy Snyder, Southeastern Wisconsin  
Mr. John Tappe, Western Wisconsin  
Teacher James Moeller, teacher-at-large  
Rev. Jonathan Schroeder, pastor-at-large  
Rev. Earle Treptow,\* pastor-at-large

## Board for Ministerial Education

Rev. Philip Hirsch, chairman, Board for Ministerial Education  
Rev. Paul Prange,\* administrator, Board for Ministerial Education  
Rev. Paul Wendland, president, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary  
Rev. Mark Zarling, president, Martin Luther College  
Rev. Matthew Crass, president, Luther Preparatory School  
Dr. William Zeiger, acting president, Michigan Lutheran Seminary

## Home and World Missions

Rev. Charles Westra, chairman, Board for Home Missions  
Rev. Keith Free, administrator, Board for Home Missions  
Rev. Phil Koelpin,\* chairman, Board for World Missions  
Rev. Dan Koelpin, administrator, Board for World Missions

## **Support Services**

Rev. John Braun,\* vice president, Northwestern Publishing House  
Mr. Todd Poppe, chief financial officer  
Mr. Martin Spriggs, chief technology officer

## **Other**

Rev. Bryan Gerlach, coordinator, Congregation and Ministry Support Group  
Mr. Joel Hochmuth, director, Communication Services  
Rev. James D. Liggett Jr., director, Ministry of Christian Giving  
Rev. Paul Naumann,\* chairman, Committee on Constitutional Matters

\* Also served as a voting delegate



# Floor committees

## Committee #1: Conference of Presidents

Rev. Douglas Free, chairman  
Rev. Mark Gartner, secretary  
Mr. Robert Anderson  
Teacher Nathan Bitter  
Mr. Peter Bockoven  
Mr. Brent Buzzalini  
Rev. James Castillo  
Rev. Mark Franck  
Rev. Alan Gumm

Teacher Larry Klukas  
Mr. Matthew Kopp  
Teacher David Kren  
Mr. Leroy Nell  
Mr. Donald Potthast  
Mr. Ronald Schmidt  
Rev. Mark Schwertfeger  
Mr. Jerry Weeden  
Mr. Frank Wegner

## Committee #2: Synodical Council

Rev. Samuel Hacker III, chairman  
Rev. Michael Spaude, secretary  
Mr. James Allen  
Mr. Craig Atwood  
Mr. Richard Baldauf  
Teacher Charles Buege  
Mr. Jonathan Burk  
Rev. Walter Davidson

Mr. Erwin Eickhoff  
Mr. Robert Goddard  
Rev. James Grabitske  
Mr. Kenneth Guillaume  
Teacher Steven Hennig  
Rev. Glen Hieb  
Mr. Scott Menke  
Rev. David Schultz

## Committee #3: President's report

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Rev. William Runke, secretary  
Mr. Dennis Behnke  
Staff Minister Rodney Bollinger  
Mr. John Finke  
Prof. John Gronholz  
Mr. Robert Hinz  
Teacher Todd Jahns  
Rev. Thomas Kneser

Rev. Matthew Krenke  
Mr. Perry Lund  
Rev. N. Martin Mielke III  
Mr. James Oberlander  
Teacher James Roecker  
Mr. Eric Stahfeld  
Mr. Steve Wright  
Rev. Richard Zahn

## **Committee #4: Finance and budget**

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Teacher Scott Loberger, secretary  
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Rev. Matthew Holtz  
Rev. Douglas Lange  
Teacher Joel Mattek  
Rev. John Mattek  
Rev. Paul Naumann

Rev. Stephen Ristow  
Mr. David Sauer  
Mr. Joel Scott  
Mr. Kelly Sieh  
Mr. Kurt Sumption  
Teacher Joel Ungemach  
Teacher Randall Willms  
Mr. Rich Yeager

## **Committee #5: Inter-Church Relations**

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Teacher Peter Bauer  
Rev. John Dorn  
Rev. John Graf  
Teacher Paul Hoffmann  
Mr. James Lillo  
Mr. Nicholas Oberle

Mr. Jason Petoskey  
Mr. Gary Rasmussen  
Teacher Kirk Schauland  
Mr. Dennis Sheldon  
Rev. William Staab  
Rev. Thomas Trapp  
Mr. Lee Winckler

## **Committee #6: Ministry of Christian Giving**

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Teacher John Dorn, secretary  
Mr. Raymond Frye  
Rev. M. Robert Green  
Teacher Douglas Gurgel  
Mr. Barry Haller  
Mr. Thomas M. Hansen

Mr. Roger Krahn  
Mr. Timothy Lehman  
Mr. Jesse Meloling  
Mr. Kim Moline  
Rev. Keith Petersen  
Rev. Eric Vertein  
Rev. Marc VonDeylen

## **Committee #7: Communications**

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Teacher Jeffrey Kurbis, secretary  
Mr. Bruce Baumeister  
Mr. Terry Bauer  
Rev. Michael Borgwardt  
Mr. James Carlile  
Mr. Jeremy Garrett  
Mr. Douglas Drager  
Staff Minister James Esmeier

Teacher Bert Falak  
Mr. Dale Feddersen  
Mr. Keith Gray  
Rev. John Roebke  
Mr. Joseph Sanford  
Rev. Paul Scharrer  
Rev. Paul Schossow  
Mr. David Sievert

## **Committee #8: Support Services**

Dr. Ronald Buelow, chairman  
Teacher Shawn Herkstroeter, secretary  
Rev. James Aderman  
Rev. David Blaho  
Mr. Richard Blievernicht  
Rev. Wesley Bruss  
Mr. Paul Dankert  
Teacher Fonda Fischer  
Mr. Charles Faught

Mr. James Malmberg  
Mr. Earl Monday  
Mr. Philip Nehls  
Mr. Dale Pohlman  
Mr. David Schafer  
Rev. Stephen Chamber Sr.  
Rev. Glenn Seefeldt  
Mr. Chuck Stake

## **Committee #9: World Missions**

Rev. Timothy Spaude, chairman  
Teacher John Melso, secretary  
Mr. Fred Banaszak  
Mr. Patrick Beehler  
Mr. John Beeskow  
Mr. James Bruland  
Rev. Jon Buchholz  
Mr. Mark Carlson  
Mr. Scott Duryea

Mr. Gary G. Johnson  
Rev. Peter Kassulke  
Mr. Daniel Miller  
Teacher Andrew Pappenfuss  
Mr. Roger Prestine  
Teacher Joel Schultz  
Mr. Gilbert Wittig  
Rev. Ronald Zindler

## **Committee #10: Home Missions**

Rev. Ross Else, chairman  
Teacher Daniel Brands, secretary  
Teacher Kyle Bender  
Teacher Chad Czerwan  
Mr. Gary DeNamur  
Mr. Grant Gentz  
Mr. Thomas Gentz  
Rev. William Goehring  
Rev. Curtis Golm

Teacher Matthew Heyn  
Mr. William Kalbow  
Mr. Raymond Miller  
Mr. Dean Mitzner  
Mr. Carlos Orta  
Mr. Thomas Palubecki  
Rev. Thomas Schroeder  
Rev. John Unnasch  
Mr. Theodore Weiss III

## **Committee #11: Ministerial Education**

Rev. Jonathan Voss, chairman  
Staff Minister Adrian Smith, secretary  
Mr. James Aumann  
Rev. Steven Bode  
Mr. Roger Bogenschutz  
Mr. Richard Bublitz  
Rev. John Dolan  
Teacher Abraham Enter  
Mr. John Falck  
Teacher Joshua Glowicki

Mr. James Heikkila  
Mr. John Hoh Jr.  
Mr. Alan Irvine  
Mr. Terry Kemmet  
Mr. Donald Linskens  
Mr. Mark Pamperin  
Rev. James Schumann  
Rev. Nathan Wagenknecht  
Rev. Craig Wasser

## **Committee #12: Congregation and Ministry Support Group**

Rev. Kevin Klug, chairman  
Teacher Leonard Proeber, secretary  
Teacher Gary Bain  
Rev. Jonathan Bare  
Rev. Guy Bergenthal  
Mr. James Fischer  
Staff Minister Robert Garbe  
Teacher Jonathan Hahm  
Rev. Paul Hirsch  
Rev. Arthur Koepsell

Teacher Mark Leitzke  
Mr. John Nolte  
Mr. Kevin Pockrandt  
Mr. LaVern Priebusch  
Mr. Jonathon Roberts  
Rev. Larry Seafert  
Mr. Leon Wichmann  
Mr. Roger Wolff  
Mr. Robert Zolldan

## **Committee #13: Northwestern Publishing House and WELS Historical Institute**

Rev. Michael Quandt, chairman  
Teacher Greg Schmill, secretary  
Teacher Andrew Aguilar  
Mr. Thomas Bobrofsky  
Mr. Mark Boyd  
Mr. Andrew Buettner  
Mr. Ed Garlieb

Rev. Gregory Hermanson  
Mr. Timothy Lind  
Mr. David Macioroski  
Rev. David Priebe  
Rev. Peter Snyder  
Rev. Ross Ulrich

## **Committee #14: WELS Church Extension Fund**

Rev. Samuel Clemons, chairman  
Rev. Ross Stelljes, secretary  
Rev. Michael Berg  
Mr. Nathan Breidinger  
Mr. James Dais  
Mr. Patrick Dillon  
Mr. James Free  
Mr. Curtis Hall

Mr. Larry Klindworth  
Mr. Ricky McCormick  
Teacher Lance Meyer  
Mr. Thomas Pustelnick  
Teacher Jason Snodie  
Teacher Steven Towne  
Teacher Gerald Zeamer

## **Committee #15: WELS Foundation and WELS Investment Funds**

Mr. Gary Gilgen, chairman  
Rev. Bill Bader, secretary  
Teacher Daniel Bredendick  
Rev. Mark Hanneman  
Mr. Robert Holbrook  
Rev. Paul Johnston  
Mr. Reinhold Kehren

Mr. Werner Lomker  
Teacher Michael Mittelstadt  
Mr. Norman Nelson  
Mr. Richard Nolte  
Mr. Steve Oelkers  
Rev. Paul Waldek  
Mr. Michael Witkowski

## **Committee #16: WELS Benefit Plans**

Mr. David Schwantz, chairman  
Rev. Leon Ehlert, secretary  
Mr. David Arnold  
Rev. Mark Cares  
Teacher David Deibert  
Rev. Darren Green  
Mr. Roger Jeffery  
Mr. Ordell Laumer

Mr. Arthur Liewert  
Mr. Louis Marzinske  
Mr. John Mitchell  
Teacher Glen Pufahl  
Mr. Thomas Rief  
Mr. Chris Vodvarka  
Teacher Kenneth White

## **Committee #17: Christian Aid and Relief**

Teacher Stephen Schultz, chairman  
Rev. Roy Hefti, secretary  
Rev. Elroy Conradt  
Mr. Robert Jackson  
Mr. Loren Johnson  
Mr. Brad Kapellusch  
Mr. Floyd Kastens

Rev. Phil Koelpin  
Mr. Winston Mortiere  
Mr. Dan Retzlaff  
Rev. Curt Seefeldt  
Rev. Mark Smith  
Mr. Roger Wilke  
Mr. Richard Zellmer

## **Committee #18: Long-range plan**

Rev. Daniel Wagenknecht, chairman  
Rev. Mark Paustian, secretary  
Teacher Brent Bloomquist  
Staff Minister Laurence Clark  
Mr. Robert Janecke  
Teacher Steven Lauber  
Mr. Glenn Kohn  
Mr. Ed Krieger

Mr. William Lewis  
Mr. Rolf Reissman  
Rev. Daniel Sargent  
Rev. Mark Schewe  
Mr. Wayne Springstroh  
Mr. David Wagner  
Teacher Patrick Walker

## **Committee #19: Bible translation**

Rev. Thomas Jeske, chairman  
Prof. Norval Kock, secretary  
Rev. David Bitter  
Mr. Paul Herzfeldt  
Teacher Paul Ihde  
Staff Minister Thad Jahns  
Mr. Eugene Meyer

Mr. Kirby Moldenhauer  
Rev. Paul Prange  
Teacher Andrew Rosenau  
Mr. Jonathan Rupprecht  
Teacher Neil Schliewe  
Rev. Daniel Schroeder  
Rev. Earle Treptow

## **Committee #20: Called worker continuing education**

Rev. Donn Dobberstein, chairman  
Teacher David Niemi, secretary  
Mr. Dean Duescher  
Teacher Thomas Hansen  
Rev. Dennis Harbach  
Teacher Donald Koch  
Mr. John Mattek

Teacher Brian Miller  
Mr. Wayne Paulsen  
Mr. George Perry  
Mr. Scott Peters  
Mr. Darrel Pochop  
Rev. Steven Radunzel  
Mr. Mark Ristow

## **Committee #21: Miscellaneous memorials**

Rev. Frederick Casmer, chairman  
Rev. Scott Stone, secretary  
Rev. Mark Bartsch  
Rev. John Braun  
Mr. Gene Christian  
Mr. Richard Ellinghuysen  
Mr. Joel Frey  
Mr. Douglas Gray  
Teacher Brian Humann

Mr. Thomas Krafft  
Rev. Peter Leyrer  
Staff Minister Paul Marquardt  
Prof. Timothy McEachern  
Mr. Robert Musgrave  
Teacher Alan Nolte  
Mr. Daniel Ross  
Mr. Kristopher Smith  
Mr. Denis Unterholzner

## **Committee #22: Constitutional matters**

Dr. Mark Braun, chairman  
Rev. Roy Beyer, secretary  
Teacher David Leonard  
Mr. Chad Krutz  
Mr. Wolf Parsons

Mr. Peter Sahlstrom  
Mr. John Schlaak  
Rev. Neal Schroeder  
Mr. Warren Rentz  
Mr. Adam Vaughn

## **Committee #23: Elections**

Teacher Rendell Koeppel, chairman  
Rev. James Naumann, secretary  
Teacher Shawn Hill  
Teacher Paul Kelm  
Mr. Robin Kramer  
Rev. Joseph Radsek  
Mr. Gary Schmidt

Rev. Stephen Schmidt  
Mr. Leon Strutz  
Teacher Aaron Trimmer  
Mr. Steven Voss  
Mr. Corby Wetzell  
Teacher Kip Wilson

## **Committee #24: Resolutions**

Prof. John Nolte, chairman  
Prof. Lawrence Czer, secretary  
Mr. Gary Cross  
Teacher Jon Engelbrecht  
Rev. Richard Frost

Rev. Paul Lidtke  
Rev. Jeffrey Mittelstadt  
Teacher Philip Punzel  
Mr. Gerhardt Struck

## **Committee #25: Membership and attendance**

Staff Minister John A. Meyer, chairman  
Teacher Peter Wolfram, secretary  
Teacher Dennis Friske  
Rev. Gene Jahnke

Rev. Melvin Schwark  
Mr. Rod Sieg  
Mr. David Wahl

# Committee #1: Conference of Presidents

## **Subject: Expressions of gratitude**

Resolution No. 01

WHEREAS 1) the accomplishment of the convention's work requires the effort of many people; and  
WHEREAS 2) the work of the synod depends on the consecrated labor of many people within its membership; therefore be it

Resolved, that the synod in convention express its gratitude to:

- St. John Lutheran Church and St. Mark Lutheran Church for the use of their facilities for our opening and closing services.
- The faculty staff of Luther Preparatory School for hosting this convention, especially Roger Kobleske.
- The support staff and officers of the synod for arranging and conducting the business of this convention, especially Kathy Kolander and Carla Martin.
- Those who delivered the sermons, devotions, and essays; conducted the services; served as organists and instrumentalists; sang in the choirs, and in other ways led us in worship.
- The Lutheran Women's Missionary Society for the presentation of the flags.
- The delegates and floor committees of the convention for their concentrated efforts and all who served on boards, commissions, and committees of the synod.
- Northwestern Publishing House; Church Extension Fund, Inc.; and others who provided materials for the convention.
- The school staff, kitchen staff, pages, and volunteers who have contributed their time and talent to make the convention flow smoothly to a successful completion.

Pastor Douglas Free, chairman

Pastor Mark Gartner, secretary

**ADOPTED**

## **Subject: Offerings of the convention**

Resolution No. 02

WHEREAS a thank offering was gathered at both the opening and closing services; therefore be it

Resolved, that the 2011 convention of WELS designate both offerings to the Lutheran Church of Puerto Rico.

Pastor Douglas Free, chairman

Pastor Mark Gartner, secretary

**ADOPTED**

## **Subject: Location of the 2013 synod convention**

Resolution No. 03

WHEREAS Martin Luther College has extended an invitation to host the 2013 synod convention in New Ulm, Minn.; therefore be it

Resolved, that we accept the invitation of Martin Luther College with thanks.

Pastor Douglas Free, chairman  
Pastor Mark Gartner, secretary

**ADOPTED**

**Subject: Expression of gratitude**

Resolution No. 04

WHEREAS Rev. Joel Frank has served faithfully as district president of the Nebraska District; therefore be it

Resolved, that our synod in convention thank the Lord for Rev. Frank for his years of faithful service.

Pastor Douglas Free, chairman  
Pastor Mark Gartner, secretary

**ADOPTED**

**Subject: The doctrine of the divine call**

Reference: Conference of Presidents report

Resolution No. 06

WHEREAS 1) the Conference of Presidents has reminded us what Scripture teaches regarding the office of gospel ministry; and

WHEREAS 2) our understanding of the doctrine of the holy ministry, as well as how we apply that doctrine, must always be drawn from Scripture alone, standing firm on God's truth where Scripture clearly speaks regarding ministry; and

WHEREAS 3) as believers we strive to make decisions based on Christian love and sanctified wisdom and judgment where Scripture allows Christian freedom in ministry matters; and

WHEREAS 4) there are times when a calling body recognizes it will not be able to support a worker and therefore may terminate a divine call for financial reasons or changing ministerial needs; and

WHEREAS 5) there may have been past situations involving the termination of divine calls that may have been handled in different ways, thereby showing greater honor for the public ministry and more love for those involved; therefore be it

Resolved, a) that we thank the Conference of Presidents and the three men who served on the ad hoc committee for their work on this report; and be it further

Resolved, b) that we adopt the general principles presented by the Conference of Presidents; and be it further

Resolved, c) that the calling bodies of our synod carefully adhere to these principles when making decisions about called workers, so that the ministry is given proper honor and called workers are treated with respect and honor; and be it further

Resolved, d) that we encourage continued study of the Scriptures in circuits and conferences regarding the doctrine of the divine call; and be it finally

Resolved, e) that in view of Christ's forgiveness we pray that a forgiving spirit prevail among us.

Pastor Douglas Free, chairman  
Pastor Mark Gartner, secretary

**ADOPTED**



**Subject: Strengthen school ministries**

Reference: Conference of Presidents recommendation

Resolution No. 07

WHEREAS 1) the Lord has instructed us in the Great Commission, "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19,20); and

WHEREAS 2) our Lutheran schools are actively carrying out this Great Commission; and

WHEREAS 3) the devil is powerful and is looking to destroy the wonderful work being done through our Lutheran schools; and

WHEREAS 4) it is vital that our Lutheran schools be as strong as possible during this time of challenge and change; therefore be it

Resolved. a) that all synod members keep our schools and their students, teachers, and leaders in their regular prayers; and be it finally

Resolved. b) that a task force on Lutheran schools be established and given the charge of working with the Commission on Lutheran Schools to find ways to build awareness of and to promote and strengthen Lutheran schools in our congregations, federations, and synod.

Pastor Douglas Free, chairman

Pastor Mark Gartner, secretary

**ADOPTED**

**Subject: Procedures for the elective termination of a divine call**

Reference: Unpublished memorial (2011-05U)

Resolution No. 09

WHEREAS 1) Scripture instructs us to treat all called workers with love and respect; and

WHEREAS 2) the convention has adopted the general principles regarding the doctrine of the divine call as it was presented by the Conference of Presidents; therefore be it

Resolved. a) that the Conference of Presidents develop a process regarding the termination of the divine call for elective reasons, giving consideration to the matter of an appeal in such matters; and be it further

Resolved. b) that they communicate this process to calling bodies so that it may be used proactively; and be it finally

Resolved. c) that the Conference of Presidents maintain oversight over the process.

Pastor Douglas Free, chairman

Pastor Mark Gartner, secretary

**ADOPTED**



# Committee #2: Synodical Council

## **Subject: Synodical Council report**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 49–55

Report No. 01

Floor Committee #2 has reviewed the report of the Synodical Council (SC). The SC is responsible for all activities of the synod in pursuit of its mission, other than those conferred on the Conference of Presidents, acting on behalf of the synod between conventions.

We commend the SC for faithfully following through in implementing the resolutions of the 2009 synod convention as outlined in BORAM, pp. 54 and 55. We have full faith that the SC will continue to monitor and implement the resolutions of the 2011 synod convention.

We note with joy the efforts made to reduce the number of special funds and the continued efforts to streamline the management of special funds. We are thankful that, since 2007, our synod has been able to significantly reduce our debt. We look forward to the day when the synod is debt free. We commend the SC for its efforts in the relocation of the synod's headquarters.

We express appreciation for the SC members who have completed terms of faithful service: Mr. Dale Anderson, SC lay representative; Mr. Rodger Anderson, SC lay representative; Pastor Harold Hagedorn, administrator for Home Missions; and Pastor Phil Koelpin, chairman for the Board for World Missions.

Pastor Samuel Hacker III, chairman

Pastor Michael Spaude, secretary

## **ADOPTED**

## **Subject: Synodical Council report addendum**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 49–55

Report No. 02

We express appreciation for the service of Pastor Doug Engelbrecht (SC COP representative), who concludes his time of service on the SC with this convention. We also have been informed that this will be the final year of Synodical Council (SC) service for Mr. Tom Schlittenhart, SC representative from the Arizona-California District; Mr. Seth Hansen, SC lay representative from the Dakota-Montana District; and Mr. Kurt Austad, SC lay representative from the Nebraska District.

We express appreciation for these faithful servants of the Lord.

Pastor Samuel Hacker III, chairman

Pastor Michael Spaude, secretary

## **ADOPTED**



# Committee #3: President's report

## **Subject: Membership—congregations**

Reference: Report from the President's Office

Resolution No. 1

- WHEREAS 1) the following congregations are recommended by their respective district presidents for membership in the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod; and
- WHEREAS 2) their constitutions have been examined and approved by their respective district constitution and legislation committees; therefore be it
- Resolved. that these congregations be graciously welcomed into the voting membership of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod:

### MICHIGAN DISTRICT

Hosanna Lutheran Church, Maumee, Ohio

### NEBRASKA DISTRICT

Grace Hmong Lutheran Church, Kansas City, Mo.

Christ Lutheran Church, Denver, Colo.

### PACIFIC NORTHWEST DISTRICT

Holy Trinity Korean Lutheran Church, Des Moines, Wash.

Peace in Jesus Vietnamese Lutheran Church, Boise, Idaho

### SOUTH ATLANTIC DISTRICT

Amazing Grace Lutheran Church, Myrtle Beach, S.C.

Shepherd of the Lakes, Land O' Lakes, Fla.

Pastor Norman Burger, chairman

Pastor William Runke, secretary

## **ADOPTED**

## **Subject: Membership—called workers**

Reference: Report from the President's Office

Resolution No. 2

- WHEREAS the following pastors, professors, graduate tutors, male teachers, and staff ministers are recommended by their respective district presidents for voting membership in the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod; therefore be it

Resolved. that the following be graciously welcomed into the voting membership of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod:

### ARIZONA-CALIFORNIA DISTRICT

Rev. David A. Frey, Living Word Lutheran Church, Mission Viejo, Calif., from WLS

Rev. Jonathan P. Loescher, St. Andrew Lutheran Church, Sacramento, Calif., from WLS

Rev. Gary Lupe, Gethsemane Lutheran Church, Cibecue, Ariz., from ACTS

Rev. Colin M. Rieke, Grace (Vail Exploratory), Tucson, Ariz., from WLS  
Teacher Steven A. Springborn, Cross of Glory Lutheran School, Peoria, Ariz., from MLC

#### DAKOTA-MONTANA DISTRICT

Rev. Seth D. Bode, Great Plains Lutheran High School, Watertown, S.D., from WLS  
Rev. Jordan P. J. Ertl, Our Savior/Grace Lutheran Churches, Bismarck/Minot, N.D., from WLS

#### MICHIGAN DISTRICT

Rev. Justin L. Dauck, Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich., from WLS  
Rev. Timothy S. Denney, Redeemer Lutheran Church, Big Rapids, Mich., from WLS  
Rev. Alexander F. Groth, Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church, Cincinnati, Ohio, from WLS  
Rev. Andrew M. Lindke, St. Bartholomew Lutheran Church, Kawkawlin, Mich., from WLS  
Rev. Joel M. Tullberg, Shepherd of the Hills, Lansing, Mich., from WLS  
Teacher Steven R. Lehman, St. Peter Lutheran School, Plymouth, Mich., from MLC  
Teacher Samuel Schlicht, Good Shepherd Lutheran School, Burton, Mich., from MLC

#### MINNESOTA DISTRICT

Rev. Benjamin P. Kempfert, Grace Lutheran Church, Oronoco, Minn., from WLS  
Rev. Aaron A. Nitz, St. Mark Lutheran Church, Bemidji, Minn., from WLS  
Rev. Stephen A. Schmiel, Faith Lutheran Church, Prior Lake, Minn., from WLS  
Rev. Steven R. Tews, St. Peter Lutheran Church, Balaton, Minn., from WLS  
Rev. Daniel J. Westendorf, Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., from WLS  
Rev. Wei Zhao, Distance Learning Program Assistant, East Asia, from WLS  
Teacher Matthew Evans, Crown of Life Lutheran School, West St. Paul, Minn., from MLC  
Teacher Daniel P. Gawrisch, Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., from MLC  
Teacher Theodore R. Glodowski, St. John Lutheran School, Goodhue, Minn., from MLC  
Teacher Justin D. Hansen, St. John Lutheran School, Red Wing, Minn., from MLC  
Teacher Samuel D. Korth, Trinity Lutheran School, Belle Plaine, Minn., from MLC  
Teacher Daniel H. Rick, St. John Lutheran School, Sleepy Eye, Minn., from MLC  
Teacher Derick M. Rosenbaum, Petra Lutheran School, Sauk Rapids, Minn., from MLC  
Teacher Nolan H. Valus, Mt. Olive Lutheran School, Delano, Minn., from MLC

#### NEBRASKA DISTRICT

Rev. James R. Enderle, Hong Kong Mission, East Asia, from WLS  
Teacher Taylor T. Bentz, Gethsemane Lutheran School, Omaha, Neb., from MLC  
Teacher Andrew D. Danner, Salem Lutheran School, Colorado Springs, Colo., from MLC  
Teacher Jonathan P. Huebner, Nebraska Lutheran High School, Waco, Neb., from MLC  
Teacher Bradley J. Jensen, Zion Lutheran School, Valentine, Neb., from MLC  
Teacher Ryan J. Obry, Trinity Lutheran School, Hoskins, Neb., from MLC  
Teacher Justin Vilski, Our Savior, Longmont, Colo., from MLC

#### NORTH ATLANTIC DISTRICT

Rev. Peter F. Hagen, St. Paul Lutheran Church, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, from WLS  
Rev. Philip P. Kiecker, Gethsemane Lutheran Church, Raleigh, N.C., from WLS

#### NORTHERN WISCONSIN DISTRICT

Rev. Lincoln A. J. Albrecht, Messiah Lutheran Church, Green Bay, Wis., from WLS  
Rev. Paul A. Bowe, Immanuel, Waupaca, Wis., from WLS  
Rev. Preston T. Heuer, Grace Lutheran Church, New London, Wis., from WLS  
Rev. Jesse K. Johnston, Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church, Waupaca, Wis., from WLS  
Rev. Paul M. Micheel, Holy Cross/St. Mark Lutheran Churches, Daggett/Wallace, Mich., from WLS  
Rev. Thomas M. Moldenhauer, St. Paul Lutheran Church, Algoma Wis., from WLS  
Rev. Matthew P. Nowak, Trinity/Risen Savior Lutheran Churches, Wabeno/Mountain, Wis., from WLS  
Rev. James D. Saatkamp, Christ/St. Peter Lutheran Churches, Denmark/Kewaunee, Wis., from WLS  
Rev. Robin A. Zeratsky, St. John Lutheran Church, Florence, Wis., from WLS  
Teacher William C. Fuerstenau, St. John Lutheran School, Montello, Wis., from MLC  
Teacher Karl R. Schwerin, Fox Valley Lutheran High School, Appleton, Wis., from MLC  
Teacher Landon J. Zacharyasz, Mt. Olive Lutheran School, Appleton, Wis., from MLC

#### PACIFIC NORTHWEST DISTRICT

Rev. Youn Soo Park, Holy Trinity Korean Lutheran Church, Des Moines, Wash., from WLS  
Rev. Jason A. Strong, Syndoulos, Fairbanks, Alaska, from WLS  
Teacher Nicholas K. Trebesch, Evergreen Lutheran High School, Des Moines, Wash., from MLC

#### SOUTH ATLANTIC DISTRICT

Rev. Philip J. Gurgel, Ascension Lutheran Church, Sarasota, Fla., from WLS  
Rev. Caleb J. Kurbis, Living Savior Lutheran Church, Asheville, N.C., from WLS  
Rev. Matthew P. Westra, Living Promise Lutheran Church, Morristown, Tenn., from WLS  
Rev. Benjamin P. Zak, Bethany Lutheran Church, North Fort Myers, Fla., from WLS  
Teacher John Althoff, Divine Savior, Doral, Fla., from MLC  
Teacher Erik Parsons, Divine Savior, Doral, Fla., from MLC

#### SOUTHEASTERN WISCONSIN DISTRICT

Rev. Aaron R. Bublitz, Mt. Lebanon Lutheran Church, Milwaukee, Wis., from WLS  
Rev. Luke D. Italiano, St. Luke Lutheran Church, Kenosha, Wis., from WLS  
Teacher Christopher D. Bartsch, Siloah Lutheran School, Milwaukee, Wis., from MLC  
Teacher Andrew J. Becker, St. Marcus Lutheran School, Milwaukee, Wis., from MLC  
Teacher Tyler J. Briney, Atonement Lutheran School, Milwaukee, Wis., from MLC  
Teacher Tyler Morgan, Word of Life Lutheran School, Milwaukee, Wis., from MLC

#### WESTERN WISCONSIN DISTRICT

Rev. Kyle D. Bitter, Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis., from WLS  
Rev. Joshua M. Bodden, St. Paul Lutheran Church, Onalaska, Wis., from WLS  
Rev. Daniel J. Foelske, St. Peter/Trinity Lutheran Churches, Savannah/Mt. Carroll, Ill., from WLS  
Rev. Joel D. Free, St. Luke Lutheran Church, New Lisbon, Wis., from WLS  
Rev. Harland H. Goetzinger III, Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis., from WLS  
Rev. Joshua M. Krieger, Immanuel Lutheran Church, Medford, Wis., from WLS  
Rev. Newlin T. Schafer, St. Andrew Lutheran Church, Middleton, Wis., from WLS  
Rev. Keith A. Schleis, St. Paul Lutheran Church, Menomonie, Wis., from WLS  
Rev. Txawj Hem Yang, Wausau Area Hmong Ministry, from WLS  
Teacher Martin R. Pagel, Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis., from MLC  
Teacher Philip J. Strong, St. Stephen Lutheran School, Beaver Dam, Wis., from MLC

Pastor Norman Burger, chairman  
Pastor William Runke, secretary

#### **ADOPTED**

##### **Subject: President's report**

Report No. 01

We note with gratitude the gift that God has given us in the service of President Schroeder over the course of the past four years. We pray that our Savior would continue to grant him a rich measure of love for the Word and for God's people, and courage and wisdom to guide our synod in fulfilling our Savior's mission.

We appreciate how President Schroeder laid out the principles that ". . . few other churches are offering: the gospel of Christ crucified—proclaimed by the Scriptures, summarized in the Lutheran Confessions, preserved for us through the generations." Together with President Schroeder, we pray that these principles, which by God's grace have guided us in the past, will continue to guide our church body in discussions today and mold our conversations and dealings with one another as we face the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

We pray that our heavenly Father would guard and protect our Wisconsin Synod as we work to proclaim the gospel to a dying world.

Pastor Norman Burger, chairman  
Pastor William Runke, secretary

#### **ADOPTED**

**Subject: Appointments and installations 2009–2011**

Report No. 2

*Installations:*

Rev. Keith Free as administrator, Board for Home Missions  
Rev. Paul Prange as administrator, Board for Ministerial Education  
Teacher Greg Schmill as director, Commission on Lutheran Schools

*Appointments:*

To Board for Ministerial Education  
Mr. Kyle Koltz

To Commission on Lutheran Schools  
Mr. Ronald Conradt  
Teacher Shawn Herkstroeter

To Commission on Worship  
Rev. Jon Zabell, chairman  
Rev. Aaron Christie

To Commission on Congregational Counseling  
Rev. Jonathan Hein, chairman  
Rev. Adam Mueller  
Rev. David Scharf  
Prof. James Tiefel  
Rev. Douglas Tomhave

To Constitution Committee  
Rev. Paul Naumann, chairman

To Commission on Inter-Church Relations  
Rev. Jonathan Balge  
Prof. Keith Wessel

To Translation Evaluation Committee  
President Paul Wendland, chairman  
Rev. John Braun  
Prof. Kenneth Cherney  
Prof. Thomas Nass  
Rev. Joel Petermann

To Continuing Education for Called Workers Committee  
Prof. David Bauer  
Rev. Bryan Gerlach  
Prof. Richard Gurgel  
Rev. James Huebner  
Rev. Peter Kruschel  
Rev. Paul Prange  
Teacher Greg Schmill

To Ad Hoc Congregational Assessment Planning Commission  
Rev. Jonathan Hein  
Rev. Wayne Schulz  
Prof. James Tiefel  
Rev. Douglas Tomhave

To Support Committee  
Rev. Douglas Free  
Rev. Mark Lindner  
Rev. Paul Naumann



Rev. John Steinbrenner  
Rev. Donald Tollefson

To Publication Review Committee  
Rev. Harlyn Kuschel  
Rev. John Schroeder

To Publication Coordinating Commission  
Teacher Jeffrey Inniger  
Rev. Harlyn Kuschel  
Rev. Brian Keller

To Study Committee, Termination of a Divine Call  
Prof. Joel Fredrich  
Rev. Peter Prange  
Prof. John Schuetze

To Christian Aid and Relief  
Rev. Robert Hein, chairman

To WELS Historical Institute  
Prof. James Korthals

To *Forward in Christ* Bible study writer  
Prof. Daniel Balge

To *Forward in Christ* interactive Bible study writer  
Prof. Joel Otto

To *Forward in Christ* devotion writer  
Rev. Norman Burger  
Rev. Steven Pagels  
Rev. Michael Woldt

To *Forward in Christ* editorial comment writer  
Rev. Kenneth Brokmeier

To Accounting Oversight Committee  
Mr. Carl Rudolph

To WELS Church Extension Fund, Inc.  
Mr. Kenneth Zehm  
Mr. John Tappe

To WELS Investment Funds, Inc.  
Mr. Daniel Eastman  
Mr. Ronald White

To WELS VEBA Commission  
Rev. Richard Agenten  
Teacher Christopher Fischer  
Mr. Richard Hudock  
Capt. Douglas Miller  
Mr. Jeffrey Timm

To WELS Pension Commission  
Mr. Robert Abramowski  
Mr. Roger Kamin  
Mr. David McCulloch  
Mr. Eugene Szaj  
Teacher Scott Uecker

To WELS Foundation  
Mr. Timothy Boerneke  
Mr. James Brenn  
Mr. Timothy McDonald  
Rev. Paul Prange  
Mr. Mark Schulz

Pastor Norman Burger, chairman  
Pastor William Runke, secretary

**ADOPTED**

# Committee #4: Finance and budget

## **Subject: VEBA premium holiday gift**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 54,77,78

Resolution No. 01

- WHEREAS 1) the Lord blessed the investments and use of the WELS VEBA insurance program so that a one-month premium holiday for 2009 was declared; and
- WHEREAS 2) many WELS entities participating in VEBA (congregations, schools, and other ministries) remitted to WELS the monthly premium holiday amount; and
- WHEREAS 3) this significant support contributed to a greater than anticipated Financial Stabilization Fund; therefore be it
- Resolved. a) that we thank the Lord of the church for these gifts through his people; and be it finally
- Resolved. b) that we thank WELS VEBA Commission for providing this premium holiday.

Pastor Daniel Habben, chairman  
Teacher Scott Loberger, secretary

## **ADOPTED**

## **Subject: Encouragement in continued use of the Financial Stabilization Fund (FSF)**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 54,77,78

Resolution No. 02

- WHEREAS 1) previous budget support forecasts estimated the amount of bequests that would be received in the next biennium and used that estimate in budgeting; and
- WHEREAS 2) there were years when the amount of bequests actually received was often significantly less than what was anticipated; and
- WHEREAS 3) this required adjustments to plans or reductions in ministry programs; and
- WHEREAS 4) now all non-CMO dollars are set aside in the Financial Stabilization Fund for use only in the following years, rather than in the year in which those funds are actually received; and
- WHEREAS 5) this step enables better planning because non-CMO funding is already on hand before it is used; and
- WHEREAS 6) it provides up to one year to address unanticipated reduced funding levels; and
- WHEREAS 7) it reduces the likelihood of needing to cut back on ministry in the middle of the year; and
- WHEREAS 8) it provides a mechanism for accumulating funds for capital or special projects; and
- WHEREAS 9) the Financial Stabilization Fund is working as designed; therefore be it
- Resolved. that we encourage the Synodical Council in its continued use of the Financial Stabilization Fund.

Pastor Daniel Habben, chairman  
Teacher Scott Loberger, secretary

**ADOPTED**

**Subject: Gratitude for reduced travel and meeting costs**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 52,54  
Resolution No. 03

- WHEREAS 1) the 2009 synod convention, in resolution 08-01, called for corporate travel expenses to be reduced by \$400,000; and
- WHEREAS 2) the reductions actually exceeded \$400,000; therefore be it
- Resolved, a) that the areas of WELS ministry be commended for their diligence in this matter; and be it finally
- Resolved, b) that the areas of WELS ministry continue to be circumspect when incurring meeting and travel costs.

Pastor Daniel Habben, chairman  
Teacher Scott Loberger, secretary

**ADOPTED**

**Subject: 2011–13 Ministry Financial Plan**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 77–90; Memorial 2011-04; Synodical Council Unfunded Program  
Priority List  
Resolution No. 04

- WHEREAS 1) the Synodical Council's (SC) proposed Ministry Financial Plan for the 2011–13 biennium not only maintains ministry but also provides for careful growth in Home and World Missions while maintaining a three-tiered, four-school ministerial education system; and
- WHEREAS 2) the SC's proposed Ministry Financial Plan for the 2011–13 biennium includes the projected use of reserves of one-time funds (totaling circa \$9.5 million) to sustain ongoing ministries; and
- WHEREAS 3) the SC's proposed Ministry Financial Plan includes a projected need for Congregation Mission Offerings (CMO) to increase 3 percent for calendar years 2012 and 2013; and
- WHEREAS 4) in order to maintain ministries and continue a careful growth of ministries beyond the 2011–13 biennium, support from all other sources will need to grow at 3 or 4 times the rate of inflation to make up for the use of reserves in the proposed Ministry Financial Plan; and
- WHEREAS 5) there are still unfunded ministry programs, including archives and archivist, that would be carried out if funding becomes available; therefore be it
- Resolved, a) that the 2011 synod convention adopt the 2011–13 Ministry Financial Plan proposed by the Synodical Council; and be it further
- Resolved, b) that we adopt the SC's unfunded programs priority list; and be it further
- Resolved, c) that we encourage every congregation to consider prayerfully increasing their CMO so that we can maintain and carefully grow area of ministry programs; and be it finally
- Resolved, d) that we pray that the Lord of the harvest bless the gospel proclamation that the 2011–13 Ministry Plan supports.

Pastor Daniel Habben, chairman  
Teacher Scott Loberger, secretary

**ADOPTED**

# Committee #5: Inter-Church Relations

## **Subject: Formalize fellowship with the Confessional Lutheran Church of Puerto Rico**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 157,158

Resolution No. 01

- WHEREAS 1) the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Church of Puerto Rico (IELC de PR) has its origin in mission work initiated by WELS in 1964; and
- WHEREAS 2) Christian fellowship has been practiced throughout the years between IELC de PR and WELS, and both churches have been members of the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference (CELC) since its inception in 1993; and
- WHEREAS 3) unity in faith between IELC de PR and WELS has been evidenced by a common commitment to the Holy Scriptures, to the Lutheran Confessions, and to the doctrinal booklet *This We Believe*; and
- WHEREAS 4) all of the affairs of the IELC de PR and of its congregations are currently administered by the IELC de PR, its governing board, pastors, and leaders, without any direct administration or financial support from the WELS Board for World Missions; and
- WHEREAS 5) WELS Commission on Inter-Church Relations has begun contacting IELC de PR as an autonomous sister church, making use of the non-budgetary Puerto Rico Fund for expenses; and
- WHEREAS 6) the IELC de PR at its national assembly on Jan. 29, 2011, officially resolved to ask WELS for a formal recognition of church fellowship; therefore be it
- Resolved. a) that we thank God for allowing the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Church of Puerto Rico (IELC de PR) to be formed as an independent confessional Lutheran church with whom we enjoy unity in faith; and be it further
- Resolved. b) that WELS officially declare fellowship with the IELC de PR as an independent sister church; and be it further
- Resolved. c) that we ask the Lord to bless this fellowship with continuing benefits and joy for both church bodies; and be it finally
- Resolved. d) that we look for opportunities to strengthen our fellowship with the IELC de PR, including cooperative efforts in theological education.

Pastor John Koelpin, chairman

Pastor Tom Unke, secretary

## **ADOPTED**

## **Subject: Work of the Commission on Inter-Church Relations (CICR)**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 8–10

Report No. 01

Floor committee No. 5 has reviewed the report submitted by WELS Commission on Inter-Church Relations (CICR). This commission's responsibility is to represent the synod in doctrinal discussions with other church bodies who are, or are not, in fellowship with the synod and to stay informed about the doctrinal trends in other church bodies.

We are encouraged to see that WELS and the ELS continue to work together in consistent doctrine and practice. This relationship with our sister synod continues to be a blessing to all.

We support the CICR as it seeks to encourage and provide assistance to church bodies in the Baltic States, Eastern Europe, and in Scandinavia.

We note with joy that our sister synod in Germany (the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church of Germany) is celebrating the 10th anniversary of its elementary school in Zwickau, which now has an enrollment of 145 students in grades 1–4. They have remained faithful in proclaiming the gospel in the face of many challenges.

We give thanks for the formal declaration of fellowship with the Evangelical Lutheran Confessional Church in Puerto Rico. This marks an important milestone in our efforts to share the gospel with the people of Puerto Rico.

We encourage the CICR in exploring the possibility of assisting with the organization of free conferences where topics pertinent to confessional Lutherans could be presented and discussed.

Floor committee No. 5 thanks the CICR for its faithfulness in working with other church bodies to explore relationships based upon a common confession of the truth of God's Word.

Pastor John Koelpin, chairman  
Pastor Tom Unke, secretary

**ADOPTED**

# Committee #6: Ministry of Christian Giving

## **Subject: Congregation Mission Offerings (CMO)**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 11,12

Resolution No. 01

- WHEREAS 1) every Christian enjoys the blessings of Christ's love; and
- WHEREAS 2) every Christian is called to share those blessings with others; and
- WHEREAS 3) the Ministry of Christian Giving (MCG) works "on behalf of the Conference of Presidents to remind every WELS member that Christ's love is our calling;" and
- WHEREAS 4) the CMO remains the primary source of funding to carry out the work God has called us to do; and
- WHEREAS 5) the MCG has produced excellent materials to be used for the purpose of excelling in the grace of giving based on "Christ's Love, Our Calling;" therefore be it
- Resolved. a) that we encourage every WELS congregation to recognize its CMO is the foundational source to carry out the ministry God has called us to do as we walk together as a synod; and be it further
- Resolved. b) that we encourage every WELS congregation to take advantage of the opportunity to participate in the CMO; and be it further
- Resolved. c) that we encourage every WELS congregation to prayerfully consider an increase in its CMO; and be it finally
- Resolved. d) that we encourage every WELS congregation to implement the "Christ's Love, Our Calling" stewardship program.

Pastor David Schneider, chairman

Teacher John Dorn, secretary

## **ADOPTED**

## **Subject: Expression of gratitude upon retirement**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 11,12

Resolution No. 02

- WHEREAS 1) Mr. Tom DeWitz has served the Ministry of Christian Giving faithfully for 11 years; and
- WHEREAS 2) Mr. Arnie Nommensen has served the Ministry of Christian Giving faithfully for 13 years and in the teaching ministry for 37 years; and
- WHEREAS 3) Mr. Neil Scriver has served the Ministry of Christian Giving faithfully for 5 years and in the teaching ministry for 43 years; and
- WHEREAS 4) Mrs. Jan Lampe has served the Ministry of Christian Giving faithfully for 10 years and an additional 26 years in the Synod Administration Building; therefore be it
- Resolved. that our synod in convention thank the Lord for their years of faithful service.

Pastor David Schneider, chairman  
Teacher John Dorn, secretary

**ADOPTED**



# Committee #7: Communications

## **Subject: Communication Services Commission**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 12–14

Resolution No. 01

- WHEREAS 1) the Communication Services Commission (CSC) was created in 1993 when the Commission for Communication on Financial Support was divided into two commissions: one for encouraging financial support; the other for promoting communication in general; and
- WHEREAS 2) the CSC exists to assist the Conference of Presidents (COP) in communicating WELS' mission to the members of the synod; and
- WHEREAS 3) the CSC meets quarterly to offer meaningful advice on day-to-day communication operations; and
- WHEREAS 4) the current structure of the CSC does not address the reality of rapidly changing communication operations; and
- WHEREAS 5) current technologies allow low cost or no cost exchange of information on an “as needed” basis; and
- WHEREAS 6) the COP is recommending that the CSC be eliminated and that the Office of Communications and its director be accountable to the COP through the synod president; therefore be it
- Resolved. a) that the Communication Services Commission be eliminated as proposed in bylaw Amendment #4 (BORAM, pp. 153,154); and be it further
- Resolved. b) that an informal committee be created to advise the director of communications on trends in the field and how they impact the delivery of information; and be it finally
- Resolved. c) that we thank those who served on the Communication Services Commission for their service.

Prof. Steven Thiesfeldt, chairman

Teacher Jeffrey Kurbis, secretary

## **ADOPTED**

## **Subject: Meeting the long-term communication needs of WELS**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 12–14

Resolution No. 02

- WHEREAS 1) communication methods, means, and messages are critical components to WELS accomplishing its overall goals; and
- WHEREAS 2) “At the heart of our planning for the future is our desire to seek the lost as well as nurture the found” (BORAM, p. 59); and
- WHEREAS 3) the Long-Range Planning Committee has identified a goal stating that “WELS will be more widely known as a confessional Lutheran church body, firmly founded on the Holy Scriptures and joyfully proclaiming the saving love of Jesus Christ in Word and sacrament to as many people as possible around the globe” (BORAM, p. 60); and

- WHEREAS 4) WELS strives to present a clear, positive, and recognizable image as a confessional Lutheran church body to the general public in a manner that benefits local congregations in their outreach efforts; and
- WHEREAS 5) the majority of current resources are directed toward internal communication (e.g. *Forward in Christ, WELS Connection, Close-Up*) and few are directed to external communication (promoting the WELS image to the outside world); therefore be it
- Resolved. a) that the Conference of Presidents places a high priority on meeting the needs of an ever-changing communications landscape; and be it further
- Resolved. b) that the director of communications addresses not only the needs of communicating to WELS' membership but also the needs of reaching out to the rest of the world; and be it finally
- Resolved. c) that the Synodical Council allocates the necessary resources in future budgets to address Communication Services' plans for communication designed for audiences outside of our WELS fellowship (external communication).

Prof. Steven Thiesfeldt, chairman  
Teacher Jeffrey Kurbis, secretary

**ADOPTED**

**Subject: Progress of the Communication Services Commission**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 12-14

Report No. 01

The Communications Floor Committee appreciates the progress the Communication Services Commission (CSC) has made toward its priority of unifying and coordinating various WELS communication platforms. The committee also supports the CSC's work in creating a social networking presence and is pleased with the initial results of this effort. The committee encourages a continued emphasis on social networking, mobile applications, and the promotion of new technologies. Finally, the committee strongly supports the initiative to fully leverage the newly-designed WELS Web site as an outreach tool.

Prof. Steven Thiesfeldt, chairman  
Teacher Jeffrey Kurbis, secretary

**ADOPTED**

# Committee #8: Support Services

## **Subject: Support Services review**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 65–76

Report No. 1

### *Technology and Financial Services*

In spite of budget cuts and staff reductions, we commend Technology and Financial Services for improved service. Outside contracting and a commitment to new technology has improved efficiency and quality. We thank Martin Spriggs, Todd Poppe, and their staff members for their commitment to excellence and dedication to ministry.

### *Human Resources*

Despite a lack of clerical support due to budget constraints, Human Resources continues to expand resource materials on Connect, conduct training, and seek new ways to better serve synod-operated organizations. We thank Roger Crawford and his staff for their tireless work.

The Human Resource Advisory Committee suggests the development of a volunteer human resource professional network to improve efficiency. Within each district, congregations would have a professional contact to assist them with human resource questions. We concur with the Human Resource Advisory Committee that this service would better address called worker care matters such as compensation guidelines, “minister of the gospel” tax treatment, and risk management issues.

### *Facility Services*

Facility Services provides support service to the ministries conducted at or through the synod corporate headquarters currently located in Milwaukee, Wis. We concur with the planned sale of the current Synod Administration Building (SAB) and the pending purchase of a 33,000-square-foot office building in Pewaukee, Wis.

Dr. Ronald Buelow, chairman

Teacher Shawn L. Herkstroeter, secretary

**ADOPTED**



# Committee #9: World Missions

## **Subject: General report**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 91–95

Report No. 01

We thank the Lord of the church who has blessed our WELS world missions with 1,396 souls who were added to our fellowship during the past biennium. This brings the total of those baptized to 84,466 in the 23 fields where WELS is doing work. This does not include the approximately 32,000 who are being served in seed-sowing ministries in Asia and Africa, but who have not been fully organized into congregations or national churches. The 32,642 souls in our world mission fellowship in 1990 have more than doubled to more than 84,000 today. If we added the people who are currently willing to be under WELS' spiritual guidance, there are more than 100,000 who need to be further nurtured, trained, and empowered to reach out to those around them.

We express our thanks and appreciation for the work of the Board for World Missions (BWM) as it uses cost-effective and alternative strategies, including funding the World Missions professor position at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, to reach an increasing number of people with limited funding.

We commend the BWM for encouraging national ownership of the gospel work, so that work moves forward at a better pace and ultimately enables manpower and resources to be redeployed elsewhere for the spread of the gospel.

We express appreciation for the work of the Multi-Language Publications Committee and encourage it to continue to explore uses of technology in sharing Christ-centered materials.

We encourage the BWM to continue the use of Christian Aid and Relief as a bridge for spreading the gospel.

We join the members of the BWM in expressing our thanks to Pastor Philip Koelpin who served the BWM as chairman since 1999 and on the board and its committees in various capacities since 1983. His dedication and zeal for mission work, his faithful service, his leadership, and his adept chairing of numerous meetings with complicated issues has earned the respect and gratitude of the Board for World Missions and the appreciation of WELS.

It appears that World Missions will be able to enter the next biennium reasonably confident that its current program can be sustained. Making this possible, however, is the heavy commitment of its special funds. Unless these special funds are generously replenished, or there is an adequate increase in Congregation Mission Offerings, it may leave us with the potential for further reduction of programs after the biennium is over. We encourage WELS members to prayerfully consider supporting World Missions' efforts through their generous gifts of love.

We pray for the safety of our missionaries and congregations who face dangers and opposition to the sharing of the gospel.

With the world's population at 6.8 billion and a growth of 80 million souls annually, there has never been a larger mission field or greater opportunity to spread the gospel than right now. With that in mind, we commit the future of our world missions to the Lord in prayer.

Pastor Timothy Spaude, chairman  
Teacher John Melso, secretary

## **ADOPTED**

**Subject: Joint Mission Council**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 105,106

Report No. 02

The Joint Mission Council (JMC) oversees those mission opportunities that are the operational responsibility of both the BWM and the BHM. Much of its work is centered on training people from foreign countries living in the United States before they return to their homes in our foreign mission fields.

The Lord has blessed the work of the JMC in accomplishing its purpose of preventing or resolving conflicts, enhancing outreach in established mission fields, and facilitating outreach into new mission fields.

We encourage congregations and members of WELS to look for opportunities in their communities to reach out to ethnic populations.

We pray for the Lord's continued blessings on all the efforts of the JMC.

Pastor Timothy Spaude, chairman

Teacher John Melso, secretary

**ADOPTED**

# Committee #10: Home Missions

## **Subject: Expression of gratitude**

Resolution No. 01

WHEREAS Rev. Harold Hagedorn has faithfully served as administrator for the Board for Home Missions for 24 years; therefore be it

Resolved, that our synod in convention thank the Lord for Rev. Hagedorn for his years of faithful service.

Pastor Ross Else, chairman

Teacher Daniel Brands, secretary

## **ADOPTED**

## **Subject: Board for Home Missions**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 99–103

Report No. 01

The ministry of the Board for Home Missions (BHM) has been filled with numerous challenges and blessings. One of the challenges is the board's interest in trying to help fellow synod members to see how the Lord is blessing the gospel proclamation in Home Missions. Those interested in learning more about this can set up a mission presentation by contacting [missionspeaker@wels.net](mailto:missionspeaker@wels.net).

In an attempt to better represent its district mission boards, the BHM decided to restructure into regional mission boards (BORAM, p. 100). Concerns have been expressed that the responsibilities of the regional board chairmen and the representation of the district mission boards under the new structure may be disproportionate. We wish the BHM God's blessings as its members evaluate and implement the restructuring process.

Among the blessings we note with thanks to the Lord of the church the 24 years that Rev. Harold Hagedorn faithfully served as administrator of the BHM. We also acknowledge with thanksgiving the generous \$1 million grant from WELS Church Extension Fund, Inc., (CEF) that allowed the allocation of funds to six missions for land and facilities. We rejoice that the BHM was able to start four new missions this calendar year in Leamington, Ontario; Tucson, Ariz.; Morristown, Tenn.; and Moncks Corner, S.C. The BHM continues to explore partnering with congregations in various ways to make the most of the limited resources available. We are pleased to report that the BHM has also identified many new mission fields that are ripe for harvest. We trust that the Lord will provide in his good time and according to his will the funds needed to pursue these opportunities.

Pastor Ross Else, chairman

Teacher Daniel Brands, secretary

## **ADOPTED**





# Committee #11: Ministerial Education

## **Subject: Ministerial Education**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 107–139

Report No. 01

The continuing scriptural purpose of Ministerial Education is the preparation of candidates for the public ministry of the gospel to proclaim Christ's love in the congregations, schools, and mission fields of our fellowship (*Book of Reports and Memorials*, p. 107). The Lord has richly blessed our four synodical schools this past biennium as they continued to prepare young men and women for the full-time ministry of proclaiming the gospel "to every nation, tribe, language, and people." Never before in the history of our schools have they enjoyed such wonderful opportunities to participate in the worldwide proclamation of the gospel beyond the classroom walls (opportunities that include Pastoral Studies Institute, overseas teaching, implementation of Mandarin, Daylight International Program, Project Timothy, and Project Titus). Our two preparatory schools, Luther Preparatory School (LPS) and Michigan Lutheran Seminary (MLS), are projecting positive trends in school enrollment. These student increases will, with God's blessing, translate into enrollment increases at Martin Luther College (MLC) and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS) in forthcoming years. Both WLS and MLC are faithfully implementing and working to expand continuing education programs for the spiritual and professional growth of our called workers. While the four synodical schools are currently understaffed due to budget restrictions, we are thankful that these dedicated men and women are proving themselves as faithful servants of the Lord and picking up additional workloads to the best of their abilities and for the good of their respective student bodies and our synod at large.

We note with concern that while the overall financial support for the Board for Ministerial Education will increase slightly this biennium, the Synod Support Operating Allocation portion of this amount will decrease slightly. For this reason, all four synodical schools are reporting that they will rapidly spend down whatever reserve funds are available to them and will need to implement tuition increases. However, with tuition increases we are concerned that students will continue to graduate from MLC and WLS with a significant debt load. While the four schools will receive adequate funding to operate and function this biennium, the Board for Ministerial Education (BME) continues to work toward a plan for long-term financial stability. This includes operating funds as well as capital projects on all four campuses that have been put on hold due to budget restrictions.

What our gracious Lord, the head of the church, said nearly 2,000 years ago is still just as applicable today: "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few" (Matthew 9:37). With that in mind we need to diligently encourage and recruit young men and women to prepare for the full-time preaching and teaching ministry, not just to fill current vacancies but also to be ready to respond to any opportunity the Lord places before us to preach and teach his Word throughout the world. Workers are still needed—needed for our local pulpits and classrooms, needed for our ministerial education schools and our area Lutheran high schools, needed for our home missions and our world missions. It will take the support of our entire synod to continue to produce these well-trained called workers. These schools are our schools. We are the ones whom the Lord uses to support these schools with our offerings, prayers, and encouragements. With his blessing "all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26).

In spite of the many challenges, the Lord continues to pour forth his blessings upon our schools (students, faculties, staffs, governing boards) and the members of the Board for Ministerial Education, as together they faithfully use their God-given gifts to prepare gospel servants for the Lord's kingdom and our church body.

Pastor Jonathan Voss, chairman

Staff Minister Adrian Smith, secretary

## **ADOPTED**



# Committee #12: Congregation and Ministry Support Group

## **Subject: CMSG funding priorities**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 16,17,32-35

Resolution No. 01

- WHEREAS 1) “The role of CMSG is to provide direct assistance to congregations so that they might carry out gospel ministry in the most faithful way on the local level . . .” and to provide resources to meet those needs; and
- WHEREAS 2) budgetary concerns required a downsizing of the CMSG from 11 positions in 2009 to five directors and one coordinator by 2011; and
- WHEREAS 3) this downsizing left no director for the Commission on Adult Discipleship, Youth and Family Ministry, and Congregational Counseling; and
- WHEREAS 4) the lack of funding for these commissions has made it difficult for them to fulfill their objectives; and
- WHEREAS 5) some programs, such as *LivingBold* and *Kids Connection* Web sites, that were being utilized by congregations are no longer available; and
- WHEREAS 6) some programs in the affected commissions are currently funded by grants that may soon expire, such as *Kids Connection* video; therefore be it
- Resolved, that as funding for Tier 1 priorities for CMSG becomes available, the commissions currently without directors be given special consideration to fund the most necessary programs and materials in these commissions.

Pastor Kevin Klug, chairman  
Teacher Leonard Proeber, secretary

## **ADOPTED**

## **Subject: Acknowledgements**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 16-35

Report No. 01

We thank the members of the CMSG for their diligent work in light of limited staffing and financial resources. We commend their efforts and pray that the Lord would continue to bless the CMSG with enthusiasm and creativity so that God’s people are faithfully served.

Pastor Kevin Klug, chairman  
Teacher Leonard Proeber, secretary

## **ADOPTED**

**Subject: Commission on Adult Discipleship**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 33,34

Report No. 02

We commend the faithful work accomplished by the Commission of Adult Discipleship especially in the area of Women's Ministry. This group has gathered Bible studies for women written by women and conducted a national conference. We encourage our congregations to promote these opportunities and to encourage the women of our synod to make use of them.

Pastor Kevin Klug, chairman

Teacher Leonard Proeber, secretary

**ADOPTED**

# Committee #13: Northwestern Publishing House and WELS Historical Institute

## **Subject: Publication Coordinating Commission (PCC)**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, p. 57

Resolution No. 01

- WHEREAS 1) the WELS Publication Coordinating Commission (PCC) coordinates and prioritizes the publishing and media production of the synod's boards and commissions and Northwestern Publishing House (NPH); and
- WHEREAS 2) in the past the PCC reviewed and evaluated publishing proposals for material that would not likely recover the cost of production and awarded funds from the Publication Fund to those it considered vital; and
- WHEREAS 3) most of the financial resources in the Publication Fund of the PCC were moved to the Financial Stabilization Fund in order to help other areas of ministry weather this biennium's financial challenges; and
- WHEREAS 4) the PCC has not been able to fund new projects because of the depleted Publication Fund; and
- WHEREAS 5) the PCC has identified a number of worthy projects—such as vacation Bible school materials, a follow-up video to *Road to Emmaus*, and various Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary textbooks (BORAM, p. 57)—that will require funds to complete them; and
- WHEREAS 6) the Synodical Council (SC) has identified funding restoration of \$300,000 to the PCC Publication Fund as a Tier 2 priority; therefore be it
- Resolved. a) that the PCC subcommittee continue to coordinate and prioritize the publishing and media production of the synod's boards and commissions and NPH; and be it further
- Resolved. b) that the PCC be thanked for its timely financial support of WELS; and be it further
- Resolved. c) that we encourage the members of WELS to support the PCC publishing projects with their prayers and financial gifts; and be it finally
- Resolved. d) that the SC make the restoration of the \$300,000 to the PCC Publication Fund a high funding priority within the SC's Program Priorities—Tier 2.

Pastor Michael Quandt, chairman

Teacher Greg Schmill, secretary

## **ADOPTED**

## **Subject: Northwestern Publishing House**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 141,142

Resolution No. 02

- WHEREAS 1) the WELS Constitution states, "The object and purpose of the synod shall be to extend and conserve the true doctrine and practice of the Evangelical Lutheran Church"; and

- WHEREAS 2) the constitution lists a number of activities we do together as a synod, including printing, publishing, purchasing, selling, and disseminating literature that maintains Lutheran doctrine and practice, and furnishing appropriate literature for parish schools, Sunday schools, missions, institutions, and churches; and
- WHEREAS 3) for more than 100 years NPH has prepared materials consistent with Lutheran doctrine and practice; and
- WHEREAS 4) the WELS long-range plan includes the continued function of NPH; and
- WHEREAS 5) NPH receives no funding from WELS' budget but instead generates revenue through the publication of Lutheran materials and sales to individuals, congregations, and schools; and
- WHEREAS 6) the bylaws of the constitution indicate the proceeds NPH receives from these sales shall be used to develop and publish new materials according to its mission; and
- WHEREAS 7) the leadership at NPH proactively anticipated the financial challenges caused by the economic downturn in our country and made appropriate adjustments to facilities, inventory, and staff; and
- WHEREAS 8) NPH is aggressively exploring the use of electronic means to distribute NPH materials; therefore be it
- Resolved. a) that NPH continue to explore ways to meet its financial challenges without diminishing its ability to serve the needs of the synod; and be it further
- Resolved. b) that NPH continue to look for ways, including electronic media, to produce quality materials that present the Lutheran teachings we treasure; and be it finally
- Resolved. c) that NPH be thanked for its long history of producing materials faithful to the truths of God's Word.

Pastor Michael Quandt, chairman  
Teacher Greg Schmill, secretary

#### **ADOPTED**

#### **Subject: WELS Historical Institute**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 142,143  
Report No. 01

We reviewed the report submitted by WELS Historical Institute. The institute works to preserve and present the story of God's grace to WELS, publishes *WELS Historical Institute Journal* and *WELS Historical Institute Newsletter*, and works for the restoration and preservation of Salem Landmark Church.

We thank the WELS Historical Institute for its work and encourage it to continue to seek funding apart from budgetary support of WELS.

Pastor Michael Quandt, chairman  
Teacher Greg Schmill, secretary

#### **ADOPTED**

# Committee #14: WELS Church Extension Fund

**Subject: WELS Church Extension Fund, Inc.**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 143–145

Resolution No. 01

- WHEREAS 1) WELS Church Extension Fund, Inc. (CEF), is a self-supporting, not-for-profit corporation; and
- WHEREAS 2) its mission is to provide financing for mission-minded projects under the direction of WELS Board for Home Missions by providing loans and grants to qualified mission congregations, so they can acquire land and build or renovate worship/ministry facilities used as tools for gospel outreach; and
- WHEREAS 3) the Loan Program is funded by investments in WELS CEF certificates by individual WELS members, WELS congregations, and WELS-affiliated organizations; and
- WHEREAS 4) the Grant Program is funded by gifts and bequests made directly to WELS CEF; and
- WHEREAS 5) during the past two fiscal years, WELS CEF has provided more than \$25 million in loans to mission congregations for 23 facility construction projects and 10 property purchases; and
- WHEREAS 6) during the same period, WELS CEF has provided more than \$2.1 million in matching grants to 20 different mission congregations, increasing their down payments for either land purchases or facility projects; and
- WHEREAS 7) since 1993, WELS CEF has disbursed nearly \$24 million in matching grants to mission congregations across North America; and
- WHEREAS 8) in 2011, WELS CEF has provided a one-time grant totaling \$1 million to WELS Board for Home Missions to help kick-start a number of mission congregations; and
- WHEREAS 9) in 2009, WELS CEF began offering Retirement/IRA certificates, providing a new option for supporting our missions; therefore be it
- Resolved. a) that WELS gives thanks to WELS CEF for the generous grants they have contributed to WELS Board for Home Missions; and be it further
- Resolved. b) that WELS encourages individual members and congregations to invest in WELS CEF Loan Certificates, Savings Certificates, and Retirement/IRA Certificates; and be it finally
- Resolved. c) that WELS encourages individuals to remember WELS CEF with their gifts and bequests.

Pastor Samuel Clemons, chairman

Pastor Ross Stelljes, secretary

**ADOPTED**





# Committee #15: WELS Foundation and WELS Investment Funds

**Subject: WELS Investment Funds, Inc.**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 147,148

Report No. 01

Our committee acknowledges the thorough work that the WELS Investment Funds, Inc. (WIF), directors and officers continue to do for the benefit of WELS organizations. WIF makes it possible for organizations within WELS to invest in two professionally managed investment portfolios, the WELS Equity Fund and the WELS Income Fund.

With the changing investment climate, various strategic investment options continue to be considered. To manage risk in an uncertain market, WIF considers numerous stock and bond investments but does not invest directly in individual companies. By following its current guidelines, the overall performance of WIF has outpaced the overall market. WIF provides a conservative investment medium for individual congregations and other WELS organizations.

WIF appreciates the more than 160 WELS organizations, including 129 congregations, who have invested more than \$65.8 million in WIF. As more organizations invest with WIF the overall costs are shared, improving overall return.

WIF encourages congregations or other WELS organizations that have long-term investments available to consider a WIF investment.

For more information, contact [www.welsfunds.net](http://www.welsfunds.net) or call toll-free 877-888-8953.

Layman Gary Gilgen, chairman

Pastor Paul Johnston, secretary

**ADOPTED**

**Subject: WELS Foundation**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 145–147

Report No. 02

WELS Foundation's function is to assist individuals in making prayerfully planned gifts either to WELS, a WELS congregation, or WELS-affiliated organizations and ministries.

Donors may choose from a surprising variety of plans and options as the Holy Spirit moves them to make a gift of love to the Lord, including the option of receiving a regular income. These gifts may include any form such as cash, investments, property, life insurance, or bequests. WELS Foundation works closely with WELS Ministry of Christian Giving.

Our committee heard an excellent example of teaching children about Christian giving. Every Thanksgiving, a grandmother would present her grandchildren with giving options from her donor advised fund. She would let them choose where the distribution of funds would be given. What a wonderful way to teach children about giving to the Lord!

Additional information can be found at the WELS Foundation Web site, [www.WELSFoundation.net](http://www.WELSFoundation.net), or call toll-free 800-752-8940. Requests are distributed to the appropriate WELS Christian giving counselor for follow up.

Layman Gary Gilgen, chairman

Pastor Paul Johnston, secretary

**ADOPTED**



# Committee #16: Benefit Plans

**Subject: WELS Benefit Plans**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 149,150

Report No. 01

The synod in convention wishes to commend and recognize the WELS VEBA Commission for its hard work in implementing the mandates made necessary by the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. While the long-term implications of reform are unknown, the commission is diligently attempting to insure the availability of affordable, quality health care to our called workers in the future.

The floor committee wishes to commend and recognize the WELS Pension Commission for steps to diversify investments in a manner that reduces risk while potentially increasing return. While not currently fully funded (approximately 80 percent), this action has the potential to make it fully funded within five to seven years.

Layman David Schwantz, chairman

Pastor Leon Ehlert, secretary

**ADOPTED**



# Committee #17: Christian Aid and Relief

## **Subject: The ongoing work of WELS Christian Aid and Relief**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 63,64

Resolution No. 01

- WHEREAS 1) the apostle Paul gives scriptural encouragement for the mission of WELS Christian Aid and Relief, “Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers” (Galatians 6:10); and
- WHEREAS 2) Jesus himself exhorts us to support those in need by telling us that on judgment day he will commend his sheep for their acts of Christian love, “I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me” (Matthew 25:40); and
- WHEREAS 3) the committee partners with WELS missionaries to support humanitarian aid projects that can help build bridges to proclaim the gospel; and
- WHEREAS 4) Christian Aid and Relief is not funded in the WELS budget but by the special gifts of WELS members; and
- WHEREAS 5) the 2009–10 fiscal year saw expenditures totaling \$468,849 with \$320,699 designated for domestic relief efforts and \$148,150 for foreign relief efforts; and
- WHEREAS 6) many thousands of dollars were given to support areas of humanitarian aid through home and world missionaries, offering opportunities to show how much WELS cares, which can help build bridges to proclaim the gospel; for example, a) in Haiti, money given to support orphanages led to Sunday School sessions through our missionary and lay helpers, b) in Africa, money for boreholes led to new opportunities to proclaim the gospel, and c) in Pakistan, money for food, clothing, and personal needs led to village Bible studies; and
- WHEREAS 7) WELS Christian Aid and Relief continues to look for ways to improve its communication to synod members and has produced a video that describes this ministry; and
- WHEREAS 8) the committee is partnering with other WELS agencies, such as WELS Kingdom Workers, Wisconsin Lutheran College, Wisconsin Lutheran Child and Family Service, and our synod’s worker training schools to coordinate volunteers to assist in relief efforts where appropriate; therefore be it
- Resolved. a) that WELS in convention thank the committee for its faithful work; and be it further
- Resolved. b) that WELS in convention encourage congregations, schools, and other local church organizations to make use of the WELS Christian Aid and Relief video so that the constituency of WELS who support the work can see firsthand how their gifts are used; and be it further
- Resolved. c) that local churches, schools, and organizations be encouraged to invite members of the committee to report firsthand about the work of the committee; and be it further
- Resolved. d) that WELS in convention encourage the constituency of WELS to use the Web page [www.wels.net/relief](http://www.wels.net/relief) to learn firsthand the current work of the committee and to donate online; and be it further

Resolved, e) that WELS in convention encourage each individual congregation to include WELS Christian Aid and Relief in its annual budget or to consider holding a freewill door offering at least once per year; and be it further

Resolved, f) that WELS in convention encourage other agencies of WELS to partner with WELS Christian Aid and Relief to coordinate volunteers who assist in relief efforts when appropriate; and be it finally

Resolved, g) that WELS in convention encourage the committee to look for more opportunities to provide relief and aid, which become bridges for pastors in home missions and missionaries in world missions to proclaim the gospel in new places.

Teacher Stephen Schultz, chairman  
Pastor Roy Hefti, secretary

**ADOPTED**

# Committee #18: Long-range plan

## **Subject: WELS long-range plan**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 59–63

Resolution No. 01

- WHEREAS 1) the synod's long-range plan as presented provides a general guideline for the future direction of our synod that is flexible enough to react to changing circumstances and allows areas of ministry to fill in the details of their plans; and
- WHEREAS 2) some WELS members have requested access to the details supporting this general plan; and
- WHEREAS 3) a good long-range plan needs to provide for measurement, tracking, and reporting; and
- WHEREAS 4) the long-range plan needs to recognize the great importance of staying current with new technologies as they become available, utilizing the best methods for spreading the gospel to as broad an audience as possible; and
- WHEREAS 5) it is important to communicate in a brotherly way with world mission fields and as we operate cross-culturally; therefore be it
- Resolved. a) that the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod in convention adopt the long-range plan with thanks to the long-range planning committee for its diligent service; and be it further
- Resolved. b) that access to the details that support this general plan be made available to interested members of our synod; and be it further
- Resolved. c) that provisions be made in connection with the long-range plan for measurement, tracking, and reporting that focus on efforts rather than just those results that only the Holy Spirit can grant; and be it further
- Resolved. d) that we encourage the utilization of the best methods for spreading the gospel to as broad an audience as possible through new technologies; and be it finally
- Resolved. e) as it involves churches in world mission settings, the long-range plan will be communicated to our brothers and sisters in the world in a way that does not impose our plans on them but respects their full partnership with us in gospel ministry.

Pastor Daniel Wagenknecht, chairman

Pastor Mark Paustian, secretary

**ADOPTED**





# Committee #19: Bible translation

## **Subject: Translation Evaluation Committee**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 36,37; Supplemental Report of the Translation Evaluation Committee; Unpublished memorials from the Michigan and South Central Districts

Resolution No. 01

- WHEREAS 1) the 1984 NIV will be unavailable for use in synod publications as early as 2013, and Northwestern Publishing House will need to change to a different translation; and
- WHEREAS 2) the Translation Evaluation Committee (TEC) was appointed by the synod praesidium to evaluate Bible translations; and
- WHEREAS 3) the TEC combined its members' experience and expertise to produce a measured report, to evaluate NIV 2011 in its entirety, to offer reviews of various other translations, to provide a supplemental report, to compile a comprehensive bibliography of theological and linguistic materials, to maintain a Q & A forum that answers the most frequently asked questions about NIV 2011, to create a Web site to share all its findings with the synod, and to arrive at a conclusion to which we may react; and
- WHEREAS 4) Floor Committee #19 reacted to the report of the TEC with approval; and
- WHEREAS 5) two memorials have come to this convention expressing concerns about the changes made in NIV 2011 and asking for time for study and discussion; and
- WHEREAS 6) continuing study and discussion are the path to consensus and confidence about which Bible translation to use in synod publications; and
- WHEREAS 7) the TEC is willing to continue in its role as our teachers and guides; therefore be it
- Resolved. a) that the synod in convention express heartfelt thanks to the TEC for its faithful work; and be it further
- Resolved. b) that the TEC continue to function in order to educate the synod on the general principles that we ought to use to evaluate the Bible translations mentioned in its reports, and so to help build a consensus among us on which translation to use for synod publications (suggested teaching methods include the publication of study documents, a symposium at our seminary, personal appearances, distance learning, and the like); and be it further
- Resolved. c) that the TEC specifically address the concerns about gender inclusive language and messianic prophecy in connection with its proposal to use NIV 2011 in synod publications; and be it finally
- Resolved. d) that we ask the Lord of the church to preserve his Word of Life among us so that we may use it to teach all nations.

Pastor Thomas Jeske, chairman  
Prof. Norv Kock, secretary

**ADOPTED**

**Subject: A Confessional Lutheran Bible translation**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 36,37; Supplemental Report of the Translation Evaluation Committee Resolution No. 02

- WHEREAS 1) some have articulated concerns about each of the translations currently available for use in our synodical publications; and
- WHEREAS 2) some have expressed a desire for a translation produced by confessional Lutherans (a 10- to 15-year project); and
- WHEREAS 3) confessional Lutheran study notes (a five- to seven-year project) would be a welcome addition to any Bible translation chosen for use in synodical publications; therefore be it
- Resolved, a) that the Synod Praesidium appoint a task force to study the feasibility of producing a confessional Lutheran translation and/or study Bible with notes to accompany whatever Bible translation is chosen; and be it finally
- Resolved, b) that the appointed task force offer a preliminary report to the 2012 district conventions and final recommendations to the 2013 convention of WELS.

Pastor Thomas Jeske, chairman  
Prof. Norv Kock, secretary

**ADOPTED**

**Subject: The mechanism for a decision on the choice of a Bible translation for synod publications**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 36,37; Supplemental Report of the Translation Evaluation Committee Resolution No. 03

- WHEREAS 1) making a decision on which Bible translation to use in synod publications before the synod meets in convention in 2013 would assist Northwestern Publishing House because it needs to make writing assignments and to avoid lost revenue; and
- WHEREAS 2) this decision will also impact those that Northwestern Publishing House serves, including our Lutheran schools; and
- WHEREAS 3) the ongoing work of the Translation Evaluation Committee (TEC) will be a major component in the selection process (i.e., the publication of study documents, a symposium at our seminary, personal appearances, distance learning, and the like); and
- WHEREAS 4) the synod in convention has authority to create a mechanism by which the decision on the choice of a Bible translation for synod publications may be made; therefore be it
- Resolved, a) that the TEC give a "Final Report" to the Synod Praesidium in time to be included in the 2012 *Report to the Twelve Districts*; and be it further
- Resolved, b) that the TEC include in its "Final Report" the input it will receive from the ongoing process of evaluation; and be it further
- Resolved, c) that on the basis of the TEC's "Final Report" the praesidium of the synod create a ballot that will be used at each 2012 district convention to choose a Bible translation for synod publications; and be it finally
- Resolved, d) that if there is not a two-thirds majority from all 2012 district delegate votes (aggregate), the Synod Praesidium will make provision for a final vote at the 2013 synod convention or call a special convention.

Pastor Thomas Jeske, chairman  
Prof. Norv Kock, secretary

**ADOPTED**

# Committee #20: Called worker continuing education

## **Subject: Continuing education for WELS called teachers**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 38–44; unpublished proposal

Resolution No. 01

- WHEREAS 1) out of love for both the lost and the saved, the Lord of the church has established the public ministry; and
- WHEREAS 2) the Lord of the church has established qualifications for those who would serve in the public ministry; and
- WHEREAS 3) individuals possessing these qualifications are divinely called into the public ministry; and
- WHEREAS 4) those who have been given such a trust must prove faithful; and
- WHEREAS 5) proving faithful requires “fanning into flame” the gifts that have been received; and
- WHEREAS 6) the devil is ever changing his tactics to most effectively destroy the faith of the children of God, necessitating the ongoing spiritual growth of called teachers; and
- WHEREAS 7) the ongoing changes in the profession of teaching require continuing education to stay abreast of these changes; and
- WHEREAS 8) the Sixtieth Biennial Convention of WELS adopted resolutions that the Continuing Education for Called Workers (CECW) Committee “develop a coordinated and comprehensive program of continuing education for called workers that meets real ministry needs and that understands the various learning styles and preferences of our workers,” realizing that “programs of professional growth can be flexible and can incorporate many different kinds of professional growth opportunities” (2009 BORAM, p. 186, lines 1021–1024); and
- WHEREAS 9) for called teachers, these directives are in keeping with the standards of the profession both within society and within WELS; and
- WHEREAS 10) research verifies that the development of a quality teacher and the establishment of lifelong habits of effective continuing education are supported through a system of new teacher induction; and
- WHEREAS 11) research verifies that ongoing professional development for teachers that is sustained and intensive leads to student achievement gains; and
- WHEREAS 12) a program of continuing education requires the resources of time and money; therefore be it
- Resolved. a) that WELS expect ongoing continuing education by its called teachers; and be it further
- Resolved. b) that WELS develop standards for continuing education that include creating, following, updating, and reporting a plan of continuing education to be called a Ministry Development Plan (MDP); and be it further
- Resolved. c) that a distinction be made between synod certification and continuing education status; and be it further
- Resolved. d) that a called teacher’s continuing education status be reported on documents that are supplied to a calling body when it considers candidates at a call meeting; and be it further

- Resolved. e) that the assignment of Martin Luther College (MLC) teacher candidates be accompanied by a system of new teacher induction; and be it further
- Resolved. f) that the ongoing status of continuing education be maintained by an ongoing process of creating, following, updating, and reporting of MDPs at regularly established intervals; and be it further
- Resolved. g) that MDPs include goals for spiritual and professional growth through formal and informal activities; and be it further
- Resolved. h) that the Commission on Lutheran Schools (CLS) in collaboration with MLC and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS) be authorized to create the necessary procedures and instruments to pilot and test the details of this system of continuing education; and be it further
- Resolved. i) that a system be developed whereby the MDPs are reported and managed; and be it further
- Resolved. j) that calling bodies be expected to provide the necessary resources of time and money so that teachers may maintain appropriate continuing education status; and be it further
- Resolved. k) that the Conference of Presidents (COP) and the Synodical Council (SC) plan for the resources of time and money needed to support a system of continuing education for WELS teachers; and be it finally
- Resolved. l) that the director of the CLS supply progress reports to the 2012 district conventions and the 2013 synod convention for their feedback and/or action.

Pastor Donn Dobberstein, chairman  
Teacher David Niemi, secretary

#### **ADOPTED**

#### **Subject: Continuing education for WELS called pastors**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 38–44

Resolution No. 02

- WHEREAS 1) the Sixtieth Biennial Convention of WELS adopted resolutions that the Continuing Education for Called Workers (CECW) Committee “develop a coordinated and comprehensive program of continuing education for called workers that meets real ministry needs and that understands the various learning styles and preferences of our workers,” realizing that “programs of professional growth can be flexible and can incorporate many different kinds of professional growth opportunities” (2009 BORAM, p. 186, lines 1021–1024); and
- WHEREAS 2) continuing education in WELS is motivated by the gospel; and
- WHEREAS 3) continuing education in WELS honors all God’s gifts, including our mind and all our abilities (First Article gifts); and
- WHEREAS 4) continuing education in WELS values the many ways individual called workers learn throughout their lives; and
- WHEREAS 5) continuing education in WELS delights in the mutual support of the body of Christ; and
- WHEREAS 6) in the summer of 2010, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS) established “Grow in Grace: the Institute for Continuing Education at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary” to signal a renewed commitment to provide resources and opportunities that enable it to partner with called workers—especially pastors—in the lifelong challenge of spiritual and professional growth; and
- WHEREAS 7) the work of Grow in Grace has been funded wholly by two generous grants without a single dollar from the seminary or synodical budget; and
- WHEREAS 8) the work of Grow in Grace under God’s blessing has launched into a five-pronged approach to support the spiritual and professional growth of called workers (2011 BORAM, pp. 39,40); therefore be it

- Resolved. a) that we acknowledge with heartfelt thanks the work of the CECW and WLS; and be it further
- Resolved. b) that we encourage WLS to continue the Pastor Partner Program (2011 BORAM, p. 40) in the coming biennium; and be it further
- Resolved. c) that our WELS congregations encourage and support their pastors in developing a spiritual and professional growth plan; and be it further
- Resolved. d) that WLS pursue the goal that the Grow in Grace institute be self-supporting; and be it finally
- Resolved. e) that the Continuing Education for Called Workers Committee supply progress reports to the 2012 district conventions and present a proposal for continuing education for pastors at the 2013 synod convention.

Pastor Donn Dobberstein, chairman  
Teacher David Niemi, secretary

**ADOPTED**



# Committee #21: Miscellaneous memorials

## **Subject: Time of Grace ministry**

Reference: Unpublished Memorials 2011-06U and 2011-07U

Resolution No. 01

- WHEREAS 1) Time of Grace Ministry is serving a valuable purpose in the spreading of the gospel around the world and serving our WELS constituency with doctrinally sound, Bible-based materials, television programs, and Internet resources; and
- WHEREAS 2) some in our fellowship are concerned with the relationship between Time of Grace and the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod (LCMS), possibly resulting in an unclear confession and/or cases of offense within our fellowship; and
- WHEREAS 3) the praesidium of the Southeastern Wisconsin District, the constitutionally appointed body tasked with overseeing doctrine and practice in its district, has been working with Time of Grace in order to address the issues causing the controversy and confusion; and
- WHEREAS 4) Time of Grace is cooperating with the praesidium of the Southeastern Wisconsin District in order to address these concerns; therefore be it
- Resolved. a) that the synod acknowledges, thanks, and encourages Time of Grace to continue in its ministry for the edification of WELS members and the spreading of the pure gospel message to thousands of others; and be it further
- Resolved. b) that the synod supports the praesidium of the Southeastern Wisconsin District as it works with Time of Grace (and will report to the Conference of Presidents in October 2011) toward a God-pleasing, scriptural resolution to this matter; and be it finally
- Resolved. c) that we praise God the Holy Spirit for the precious unity of faith and brotherly love we enjoy in WELS and pray that through the Word he keep us steadfast in the same.

Pastor Fred Casmer, chairman

Pastor Scott J. Stone, secretary

## **ADOPTED**

## **Subject: Christian Life Resources' proposed resolution on abortion**

Reference: Unpublished Memorial 2011-01U

Resolution No. 02

- WHEREAS 1) the Holy Scriptures clearly testify to a reverence for the life of the mother and the life of her unborn child as both being equal in value, each being accountable for sin, each the object of God's precious gift of salvation, and therefore each being worthy of protection; and
- WHEREAS 2) the Holy Scriptures demonstrates its reverence for life by commanding its protection and condemning as sin the selfish and wrongful termination of life; therefore be it
- Resolved. a) that we acknowledge when an abortion procedure is performed with the specific intent not to preserve life but to terminate life, it is rightfully called sin and condemned by God; and be it further

- Resolved, b) that we encourage the editors of our synodical periodicals, as well as our pastors and teachers, to continue fervently and faithfully testifying against sin and, in particular, the sin of abortion that involves the intentional and willful killing of any human life whether inside or outside of the womb; and be it further
- Resolved, c) that in those extremely rare circumstances in which a pregnancy directly endangers the physical life of the mother, or the mother's condition directly endangers the life of her unborn child, we call for action towards preserving both lives however possible or preserving at least one life when preserving both lives is not possible; and be it further
- Resolved, d) that we encourage our membership to express its concern and compassion for distressed pregnant women by supporting all God-pleasing options in the face of unplanned pregnancies and that our congregations regularly review the teaching of Scripture on the high price of sin and of the inherent value of God's gift of life; and be it finally
- Resolved, e) that we more zealously pursue the pure proclamation of the gospel of Christ, which alone can change wicked hearts from sin to righteousness and then to practice Christ-inspired love as we seek to care for both the mother and her unborn child.

Pastor Fred Casmer, chairman  
 Pastor Scott J. Stone, secretary

### **ADOPTED**

#### **Subject: The composition of the voting delegates for the synod convention**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 155,156; Memorial 2011-01

Resolution No. 03

- WHEREAS 1) the memorial from the Michigan District (2011-01) called upon the WELS in convention to amend the bylaws to revert back to 1993 delegate voting composition (see below); and
- WHEREAS 2) this committee determined that the best course of action is to receive more direction from the 12 districts of WELS before recommending this amendment to the bylaws; therefore be it
- Resolved, that the synod request each district to vote on the following proposed amendment to the synod bylaws.

#### *Current bylaw:*

- (b) The distribution of delegates among the districts shall be arranged as follows:
1. The number of delegates shall not exceed 400 voting delegates.
  2. Half of the voting delegates shall be lay delegates.
  3. In determining the distribution of male teacher and of pastor voting delegates, teachers shall be represented in the same proportion to their total number as pastors are to their total number.
  4. The recording secretary of the synod, with the advice and consent of the Conference of Presidents, shall determine the delegate distribution so that each district is equitably represented. The number of delegates of the Arizona-California, Dakota-Montana, Nebraska, North Atlantic, Pacific Northwest, South Atlantic, and South Central districts shall not be less than their number of delegates to the 1993 convention.
  5. Ordained pastors teaching at one of the educational institutions of the synod or within the synod are to be placed on the roster of active pastors. All other male members of the respective faculty are to be placed on the roster of active teachers.
  6. Overseas world missionaries shall be selected by the Board for World Missions as synod convention delegates with the same formula used in determining called ministerial delegates.
  7. Pastors and teachers, retired or active, are not eligible to serve as lay delegates.

#### *Proposed bylaw:*

- (b) Each district shall be represented by a delegation consisting of the following:
1. One lay delegate for every ten congregations of the district. Alternatively a district may choose to be represented by one lay delegate for every 2,500 communicant members in the district. Pastors and teachers, retired or active, are not eligible to serve as lay delegates.



2. One pastoral delegate for every ten active pastors serving in the district.
3. One male teacher delegate for every ten active male teachers serving in the district.
4. Ordained pastors teaching at one of the educational institutions of the synod or within the synod are to be placed on the roster of active pastors. All other male members of the respective faculty are to be placed on the roster of active teachers.
5. Overseas world missionaries shall be selected by the Board for World Missions as synod convention delegates with the same formula used in determining called ministerial delegates.

Pastor Fred W. Casmer, chairman

Pastor Scott J. Stone, secretary

#### **DEFEATED**

#### **Subject: Declining synod membership**

Reference: Unpublished Memorial (2011-04U)

Report No. 01

We commend the compassion for souls exhibited by our fellow Christians in the Pacific Northwest District as they have expressed in their memorial (2011-04U) concerning declining synod membership.

However, after hearing the report concerning the WELS Long-Range Plan 2017 (“In Christ Alone”), this committee determined that establishing another task force to research membership trends would be duplicating the efforts of the committee working on the Long-Range Plan 2017. We trust their work will address the questions put forth by Memorial 2011-04U.

Pastor Fred W. Casmer, chairman

Pastor Scott J. Stone, secretary

#### **ADOPTED**



# Committee #22: Constitutional matters

## **Subject: Amendment #1: Congregation and Ministry Support Group**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 151,152

Resolution No. 01

WHEREAS 1) the 2009 WELS convention approved the reorganization of the former Board for Parish Services and authorized the Conference of Presidents (COP) to implement it; and

WHEREAS 2) this reorganization involved certain name changes and other wording adjustments to the synod bylaws and the Constitution of the Districts as adopted by the 2009 convention; therefore be it

Resolved. a) that the synod constitution and bylaws be amended as follows:

### **Section 4.15**

#### **Congregation and Ministry Support Group**

(a) There shall be an appropriate number of commissions that shall serve under the Conference of Presidents to provide services and resources to congregations, schools, and individuals in the following areas of ministry: evangelism, worship, youth and family ministry, Lutheran schools, adult discipleship, special ministries, and congregational counseling.

(d) The commissions, their chairmen, and their directors are accountable to the Conference of Presidents.

(f) The director of each commission shall be called by the Conference of Presidents in consultation with the commission.

(g) Each commission director shall establish means of communication and coordination with district coordinators in carrying out the work of the commission;

and be it further

Resolved. b) that the synod constitution and bylaws be amended as follows:

### **Synodical Council**

#### **Section 5.00**

#### **Synodical Council Duties and Responsibilities**

(c) The advisory members of the council shall include the first vice president; second vice president; chief financial officer; an administrator each for home missions, world missions, and ministerial education; the coordinator of the Congregation and Ministry Support Group; the director of the Ministry of Christian Giving; the director of communications; and the treasurer. Additional advisory members may be appointed by the chairman as necessary;

and be it further

Resolved. c) that the synod constitution and bylaws be amended as follows:

### **Section 5.10**

#### **Synod Operations**

(d) Ministry Support includes the praesidium, the Synodical Council and areas accountable to it, and Support Services as specified in the bylaws;

and be it further

Resolved. d) that the synod constitution and bylaws be amended as follows:

**SUPPORT SERVICES**

Support Services includes but is not limited to accounting, archives/history, budgeting, benefit plans, finance, human resources, legal, lending, planning, real estate, revenue forecasting, and technology. The president oversees this area directly or indirectly through advisory members he appoints to support the corporations, committees, and commissions accountable to the Synodical Council;

and be it finally

Resolved, e) the District Constitution and bylaws be amended as follows:

**ARTICLE XV (District Constitution)  
Congregation and Ministry Support Group**

Section 1. There shall be a district Congregation and Ministry Support Group to assist congregations in the following areas of ministry: evangelism, worship, youth and family ministry, Lutheran schools, adult discipleship, special ministries, and congregational counseling. The group shall consist of as many coordinators as the district deems appropriate to cover these areas of ministry. Coordinators shall be elected for a term of six years and may succeed themselves once. The terms shall be staggered within the group.

Section 2. The coordinators shall provide a link with the synodical commissions. Each biennium the coordinators shall choose one from among their number to serve as the chairman of the group.

Dr. Mark Braun, chairman  
Pastor Roy Beyer, secretary

**ADOPTED**

**Subject: Amendment #2: Structure of the Board for World Missions**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 152,153

Resolution No. 02

WHEREAS 1) at its November 2010 meeting the Synodical Council (SC) approved a resolution, originally submitted by the Board for World Missions (BWM), which proposes a change to Section 6.16 (d) of the synod bylaws; and

WHEREAS 2) the Board for World Missions currently consists of two pastors (one the chairman), two laymen, and one teacher; therefore be it

Resolved, that the synod bylaws be changed to read as follows:

**Section 6.16  
Board for World Missions**

(d) The remaining four men shall consist of one pastor, two laymen, and one teacher and be elected for terms of six years from a slate of candidates proposed by the Nominating Committee of the synod and each may succeed himself once.

Dr. Mark Braun, chairman  
Pastor Roy Beyer, secretary

**ADOPTED**

**Subject: Amendment #3: WELS Christian Aid and Relief**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, p. 153

Resolution No. 03

WHEREAS 1) the WELS Committee on Relief and the WELS Humanitarian Aid Committee have been reorganized into a single entity entitled WELS Christian Aid and Relief; and

WHEREAS 2) its report in BORAM (p. 63) provides the rationale for this change and a description of the new committee; and

WHEREAS 3) the present bylaw does not reflect the current structure of the committee; therefore be it

Resolved. that the convention approve the proposed bylaw change for Section 6.92, which reads as follows:

#### **Section 6.92**

##### **WELS Christian Aid and Relief**

(a) There shall be an agency that will serve under the Synodical Council to assist them in administering and acting as agent for any program of disaster relief, special assistance to those in need, or humanitarian aid projects undertaken by the synod.

(b) The name of this agency shall be "WELS Christian Aid and Relief."

(c) The agency shall be overseen by a committee consisting of five members appointed by the president for a term of six years. The terms shall be staggered. At least one of the members shall be appointed from a slate of candidates provided by the Board for World Missions. Committee members may succeed themselves once. Insofar as practicable, the members shall represent diverse geographic areas.

(d) One of the committee members shall be appointed by the president to serve as chairman

(e) The committee shall make provisions for appropriate administrative and support staff.

(f) The committee, with the approval of the president, shall advise the constituency of the synod as to needs that, in the judgment of the committee, should be the object of relief appeals within the synod.

(g) The committee shall report to the president.

Dr. Mark Braun, chairman

Pastor Roy Beyer, secretary

#### **ADOPTED**

#### **Subject: Amendment #4: Office of Communication Services**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, pp. 153,154

Resolution No. 04

WHEREAS 1) in 1993 the Commission for Communication on Financial Support (CCFS) was divided into two new entities, the Ministry of Christian Giving and the Office of Communication Services, each governed by its own commission; and

WHEREAS 2) history has shown that there is no need for a commission to oversee the Office of Communication Services; and

WHEREAS 3) the Conference of Presidents (COP) is recommending that the Communication Services Commission be eliminated and that the Office of Communication Services and its director be accountable to the COP through the synod president; therefore be it

Resolved. a) that the convention eliminate the Communication Services Commission; and be it further

Resolved. b) that bylaws Section 4.30 be amended as follows:

##### **Office of Communication Services**

(a) There shall be an Office of Communication Services that shall serve under the Conference of Presidents to assist them in communicating the synod's mission to the members of the synod. The Office of Communication Services will be administered by a director of communications who shall report to the Conference of Presidents through the synod president.

(b) The Office of Communication Services, through its director, shall be responsible for a clear and consistent communication of the synod's mission from the synod's national offices; explore, support, and expedite innovative media usage, shared communication, and similar improvements on a continuing basis for WELS ministries and congregations; review and authorize all new communications originating in the synod's national offices; and evaluate parallel communications functions and efforts to seek economy of cost and time in communication from the national offices.

(c) The director of communications will work in close cooperation with the editor and staff of *Forward in Christ* to

coordinate and facilitate clear and consistent communication to the constituency of the synod. The editor of *Forward in Christ* shall be called by the Conference of Presidents and shall report to the Conference of Presidents through the synod president. A Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary professor shall be appointed by the Conference of Presidents to serve as the doctrinal consultant for *Forward in Christ*.

Dr. Mark Braun, chairman  
Pastor Roy Beyer, secretary

**ADOPTED**

# Committee #23: Elections

## **Subject: Elections**

Report No. 01

### **President**

Rev. Mark Schroeder, Watertown, Wis.

### **Second Vice President**

Rev. Joel Voss, Centerville, Ohio

### **Synodical Council**

*Pastor-at-large*

Rev. Earle Treptow, Denver, Colo.

### **Board of Appeals**

*Pastor*

Rev. Joel Leyrer, Wauwatosa, Wis.

*Teacher*

Mr. James Moeller, Watertown, Wis.

*Layman*

Mr. Kenneth Gosch, Aberdeen, S.D.

### **Board for World Missions**

*Chairman*

Rev. Larry M. Schlomer, Houston, Tex.

*Member*

Mr. Danny Wehmeyer, Deltona, Fla.

### **Board for Home Missions**

*Chairman*

Rev. Charles Westra, Columbia, Tenn.

### **Board for Ministerial Education**

*Teacher*

Mr. Jon Woldt, Winona, Minn.

*Laymen*

Mr. Hogey Holtz, Saginaw, Mich.

Mr. Dean Waldschmidt, Fond du Lac, Wis.

### **WLS Governing Board**

*Chairman*

Rev. Thomas Westra, Cincinnati, Ohio

### **Commission on Worship**

*Chairman*

Rev. Jon Zabell, Green Bay, Wis.

**Commission on Special Ministries**

*Chairman*

Mr. Charles Buege, Livonia, Mich.

**Commission on Congregational Counseling**

*Chairman*

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Rev. Joel Schroeder, Overland Park, Kan.

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Mr. Matthew Plocher, Ann Arbor, Mich.

Teacher Rendell Koeppel

Rev. James Naumann



# Committee #25: Membership and attendance

**Subject: Attendance**

Report No. 01

Three hundred seventy-four voting delegates attended the 61st Biennial Convention of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, comprised of one hundred eleven pastors, three missionaries, eighty-two teachers and staff ministers, and one hundred seventy-eight laymen. Forty-seven advisory delegates and four special guests were in attendance contributing to a total of four hundred twenty-five attendees. One delegate was absent and unexcused. One delegate was called home to heaven prior to the convention.

Staff Minister John Meyer, chairman

Staff Minister Peter Wolfgramm, secretary

**ADOPTED**



# Financials

The financial information listed on the following pages summarizes the ministry financial plan (budget) approved for the 2011–13 biennium by the 2011 convention delegates, outlined in Resolution No. 04 from Committee #4, Finance and Budget (see p. 28).

The plan calls for about \$62 million in total expenses for fiscal year 2011–12 and about \$63 million in fiscal year 2012–13. The adopted budget permits a careful expansion of both Home and World Missions—including the start of four to six new mission congregations in North America and increased manpower to east and south Asia. It also maintains staffing at all four synodical schools and permits a wage increase of 2 percent in the first year of the biennium and 2.5 percent in the second. The resolution adopted by the delegates notes that the ministry financial plan projects use of reserves (one-time funds) totaling about \$9.5 million to sustain ongoing ministries. Also, the approved budget is based on Congregation Mission Offerings (CMO) increasing three percent for calendar years 2012 and 2013 after several years of slight decreases or flat support.

The current ministry financial plan reflects the change begun in the last biennium of expanding the scope of financial planning to include areas of ministries' special funds—those funds restricted by donors for a specific ministry—and the synod's four ministerial education schools. It also includes continued use of the Financial Stabilization Fund (FSF), which is where all unrestricted non-CMO support flows. Before the FSF was established, the synod's ministry financial plan was based on the support forecast for CMO and other sources of operating support, such as gifts from individuals, foundation grants, and bequests. Although the CMO forecast, which is based on congregations' intent or subscription, has been fairly accurate in recent years, non-CMO sources of support have varied widely with little advance notice. Because these non-CMO sources are difficult to predict, in 2009 the Synodical Council and synod convention delegates concluded that good stewardship required these dollars be spent in the year or years after they are received rather than in the year they are expected to be received. Thus, the FSF was created.

In keeping with the synod's bylaws, the Synodical Council (SC) is responsible for providing a prioritized listing of unfunded ministry programs that would be carried out if funding becomes available. This biennium, the SC grouped the various programs into three tiers, with Tier 1 having the highest priority. Items within each tier are not prioritized. If funding becomes available, the SC will determine which individual programs will be funded, keeping in mind needs and circumstances at that time. Here is the list of unfunded ministry programs for 2011–13:

## Tier 1

\$135,000	Home Missions	Restore funding for a home mission, currently funded by special funds
\$125,000	World Missions	Restore funding for a professor at Asia Lutheran Seminary, currently funded by special funds
\$150,000	World Missions	Fund two graduate mission associate positions for East Asia, currently funded by special funds
\$300,000	Ministerial Education	Increase synodical support for schools to avoid depletion of net assets
\$160,000	CMSG	Restore funding for commissions, currently funded by special funds
\$100,000	Synodical Council	Provide funding for synod archives staff and operations

## Tier 2

\$135,000	Home Missions	One additional new home mission
\$125,000	World Missions	Asia Multi-language Publications coordinator
\$100,000	Christian Giving	Restore previously eliminated giving counselor position
\$ 50,000	Technology	Restore contingency funding previously eliminated

\$300,000	CMSG	Restore funding for the Publications Coordinating Commission previously eliminated
\$ 45,000	Financial Services	Restore administrative support for the Financial Services area
\$ 20,000	CMSG	Additional funding for Institutes for Worship and Outreach
Tier 3		
\$300,000	Ministerial Education	Program maintenance at synodical schools
\$300,000	Ministerial Education	Financial assistance for students at Martin Luther College
\$100,000	CMSG	Director for the Commission for Congregational Counseling
\$100,000	Christian Giving	Restore funding for counselor travel
\$ 46,000	Communications	Web site promotion to non-WELS members
\$100,000	Ministerial Education	Supplemental funding for the vicar program
\$100,000	CMSG	Restore funding for the civilian chaplain, currently funded by special funds
\$ 15,000	Human Resources	Operational needs



**Budget Summary**

	2009-10 Actual				2010-11				2011-12				2012-13			
	Synod Support & Ministry Transition		Special, gifts, tuition, fees		Synod Support		Special, gifts, tuition, fees		Synod Support		Special, gifts, tuition, fees		Synod Support		Special, gifts, tuition, fees	
		FTE	Total Funding			FTE	Total Funding			FTE	Total Funding			FTE	Total Funding	
<b>Home Missions</b>																
Board and Administration	431,878	3.85	663,815	231,937	14,900	508,974	14,900	523,874	3.85	543,795	37,000	580,795	4.10	566,160	22,000	
Board and Administration	1,936,986	2.00	2,510,990	517,443	1,969,074	1,969,074	2,486,517	2.00	2,013,037	547,300	2,560,337	4.10	1,920,583	533,600	2,454,183	
Campus Ministry	353,176	1.00	399,912	46,736	383,825	17,528	401,353	1.00	383,825	62,700	426,668	1.00	381,957	81,000	462,957	
Outreach Ministry	2,995,393	4.00	3,794,196	798,803	2,670,732	500,438	3,171,170	3.00	2,472,400	1,621,700	4,094,100	3.00	2,660,000	1,414,700	4,074,700	
Joint Mission Council Ministry	-	4.00	268,281	268,281	120,000	748,334	868,334	4.00	5,000	330,200	335,200	0.00	5,000	332,000	337,000	
<b>TOTAL</b>	5,717,433	14.85	7,637,194	1,919,761	5,652,605	1,798,643	7,451,248	13.85	5,400,200	2,598,900	7,999,100	10.10	5,533,700	2,383,300	7,917,000	
<b>World Missions</b>																
Board and Administration	395,997	4.65	520,297	124,300	527,900	340,500	868,400	4.65	491,250	90,600	581,850	4.90	500,650	90,600	591,250	
Africa	1,662,065	13.00	2,251,136	589,071	1,705,060	628,800	2,333,860	13.00	1,454,603	357,900	1,812,503	13.00	1,539,331	423,200	1,962,531	
Europe	550,718	2.25	656,569	105,851	715,750	217,000	932,750	2.25	529,055	155,800	684,855	2.50	556,244	156,000	712,244	
Latin America	714,241	7.25	1,018,154	303,913	783,700	131,800	915,500	7.25	663,635	176,100	839,735	7.25	660,778	170,200	830,978	
Native America	250,403	1.00	386,633	136,230	258,300	140,700	399,000	1.00	220,900	50,000	270,900	1.00	228,000	50,000	278,000	
East Asia	792,545	8.00	1,218,271	425,726	867,000	495,400	1,362,400	8.00	829,591	549,467	1,379,058	9.00	838,227	567,252	1,405,479	
South Asia	433,808	3.00	864,405	430,597	459,800	213,100	672,900	3.00	417,255	260,399	677,654	4.00	436,935	259,296	696,231	
Asia-Pacific Rim	493,708	2.00	706,045	212,337	403,500	189,100	592,600	2.00	243,000	368,861	611,861	3.00	244,995	382,761	627,756	
Joint Mission Council Ministry	244,555	0.00	280,429	35,874	120,000	-	120,000	0.00	390,700	57,400	448,100	3.00	403,600	57,400	461,000	
Multi-Language Publications	619,144	3.00	658,315	39,171	540,600	52,000	592,600	3.00	568,150	25,100	593,250	3.00	574,100	25,100	599,200	
Humanitarian Aid	127,416	0.00	167,142	167,142	-	181,000	181,000	0.00	137,361	805,000	942,361	1.00	141,240	1,105,000	1,246,240	
<b>TOTAL</b>	6,284,600	45.15	8,941,082	2,656,482	6,512,810	2,643,100	9,155,910	45.15	5,945,500	2,901,627	8,847,127	51.65	6,124,100	3,291,809	9,415,909	
<b>Ministerial Education</b>																
Board and Administration	500,206	2.00	733,553	233,347	207,650	513,000	720,650	2.00	859,452	165,800	1,025,252	1.45	653,356	165,800	819,156	
Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary	946,235	35.76	4,899,435	3,953,200	1,171,227	4,442,539	5,613,766	39.76	1,178,218	4,691,007	5,869,225	39.76	1,280,724	4,047,610	5,328,334	
Martin Luther College	3,900,620	144.50	15,435,814	11,535,194	3,681,530	11,542,533	15,227,063	141.50	3,188,133	12,718,247	15,906,380	139.75	3,016,053	13,306,537	16,322,590	
Luther Preparatory School	2,616,069	55.25	5,871,985	3,255,916	2,518,530	3,301,252	5,819,782	55.50	2,009,248	4,143,044	6,152,292	57.25	2,078,602	4,218,562	6,297,164	
Michigan Lutheran Seminary	1,625,119	39.31	3,302,862	1,677,743	1,415,800	2,209,316	3,625,116	39.31	1,127,549	2,432,451	3,560,000	41.31	1,149,865	2,741,235	3,891,100	
<b>TOTAL</b>	9,588,249	276.82	30,243,649	20,655,400	8,994,737	22,011,640	31,006,377	277.07	8,362,600	24,150,549	32,513,149	279.52	8,178,600	24,479,744	32,658,344	

	Budget Summary															
	2009-10 Actual				2010-11				2011-12				2012-13			
	Synod Support & Ministry Transition	Special, gifts, tuition, fees	Total Funding	FTE	Synod Support	Special, gifts, tuition, fees	Total Funding	FTE	Synod Support	Special, gifts, tuition, fees	Total Funding	FTE	Synod Support	Special, gifts, tuition, fees	Total Funding	FTE
<b>Congregation &amp; District Ministry Support</b>																
Congregation & Ministry Support	1,074,557	1,492,863	2,567,420	17.00	764,803	1,182,900	1,947,703	15.75	824,700	1,592,500	2,417,200	15.75	895,800	1,576,500	2,470,300	15.75
Conference of Presidents	149,718	23,632	173,350		63,900	25,000	88,900		65,500	250,000	315,500		65,600	250,000	315,600	
Christian Giving	1,514,555	72,667	1,587,222	16.50	1,462,787	102,500	1,565,287	16.50	1,563,400	100,800	1,664,200	16.85	1,734,500	100,800	1,835,300	18.50
Communication Services	326,573	94,989	421,562	4.60	456,000	80,000	536,000	4.60	464,200	141,500	605,700	4.60	480,300	141,500	621,800	4.60
District Ministries	876,522	-	876,522	0.00	947,300	-	947,300	0.00	909,000	-	909,000	0.00	931,800	-	931,800	0.00
Convention	95,703	77,830	173,533	0.00	11,000	36,000	47,000	0.00	85,300	80,000	165,300	0.00	-	-	-	0.00
Inter-Church Relations	6,594	14,303	20,897	0.00	8,800	-	8,800	0.00	59,800	10,000	69,800	0.00	58,800	50,000	108,800	0.00
Support	414,989	22,690	437,679	0.00	435,000	-	435,000	0.00	380,000	70,000	450,000	0.00	390,000	-	390,000	0.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4,452,211</b>	<b>1,798,974</b>	<b>6,251,185</b>	<b>38.10</b>	<b>4,149,590</b>	<b>1,426,400</b>	<b>5,575,990</b>	<b>36.85</b>	<b>4,351,800</b>	<b>2,249,800</b>	<b>6,601,700</b>	<b>37.20</b>	<b>4,554,800</b>	<b>2,118,800</b>	<b>6,673,600</b>	<b>38.85</b>
<b>Ministry Support</b>																
Facilities	103,849	636,033	739,882	0.70	125,604	496,485	622,089	0.70	149,700	477,000	626,700	0.50	159,600	479,100	632,700	0.50
Synodical Council	179,704	1,416	181,120	0.00	241,100	-	241,100	0.00	159,200	60,000	219,200	0.00	161,200	10,000	171,200	0.00
Synod Praesidium	260,202	74,667	334,869	2.50	261,900	4,000	265,900	2.50	297,500	33,000	330,500	2.50	303,600	18,000	321,600	2.50
Technology	1,385,082	94,243	1,479,325	13.50	1,221,627	86,896	1,308,523	13.50	1,257,300	176,100	1,433,400	12.00	1,287,400	121,100	1,408,500	11.50
Financial Services	1,110,316	52,654	1,162,970	14.00	1,238,967	-	1,238,967	14.70	1,207,300	-	1,207,300	13.45	1,252,600	-	1,252,600	13.45
Human Resources	185,964	1,263	187,227	2.00	192,060	-	192,060	2.00	199,800	-	199,800	2.00	204,400	-	204,400	2.00
Christian Aid & Relief	-	570,277	570,277	1.00	-	790,000	790,000	1.00	-	790,000	790,000	1.00	-	790,000	790,000	1.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3,223,117</b>	<b>1,430,253</b>	<b>4,653,370</b>	<b>33.70</b>	<b>3,281,258</b>	<b>1,377,381</b>	<b>4,658,639</b>	<b>34.40</b>	<b>3,250,800</b>	<b>1,536,100</b>	<b>4,786,900</b>	<b>31.45</b>	<b>3,362,800</b>	<b>1,418,200</b>	<b>4,781,000</b>	<b>30.95</b>
<b>MLC Chapel</b>																
Debt Retirement	121,830	-	121,830		1,600,000	-	1,600,000		1,600,000	-	1,600,000		1,600,000	-	1,600,000	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3,344,947</b>	<b>3,693,309</b>	<b>7,038,256</b>	<b>33.70</b>	<b>4,881,258</b>	<b>1,377,381</b>	<b>6,258,639</b>	<b>34.40</b>	<b>4,850,800</b>	<b>1,536,100</b>	<b>6,386,900</b>	<b>31.45</b>	<b>4,962,800</b>	<b>1,418,200</b>	<b>6,381,000</b>	<b>30.95</b>

	Budget Summary							
	2009-10 Actual		2010-11		2011-12		2012-13	
	Synod Support & Ministry Transition	Special, gifts, tuition, fees	Total Funding	FTE	Synod Support	Special, gifts, tuition, fees	Total Funding	FTE
<b>SUMMARY</b>								
Home Missions	5,717,433	1,919,761	7,637,194	14.85	5,652,605	1,798,643	7,451,248	13.85
World Missions	6,284,600	2,656,482	8,941,082	45.15	6,512,810	2,643,100	9,155,910	45.15
Ministerial Education	9,588,249	20,655,400	30,243,649	276.82	8,994,737	22,011,640	31,006,377	277.07
Congregation & District Ministry	4,459,211	1,798,974	6,258,185	38.10	4,149,590	1,426,400	5,575,990	36.85
Ministry Support	3,223,117	1,430,253	4,653,370	33.70	3,281,258	1,377,381	4,658,639	34.40
MLC Chapel	-	2,263,056	2,263,056	-	-	-	-	-
Debt Retirement	121,830	-	121,830	-	1,600,000	-	1,600,000	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>29,394,440</b>	<b>30,723,926</b>	<b>60,118,366</b>	<b>408.62</b>	<b>30,191,000</b>	<b>29,257,164</b>	<b>59,448,164</b>	<b>407.32</b>

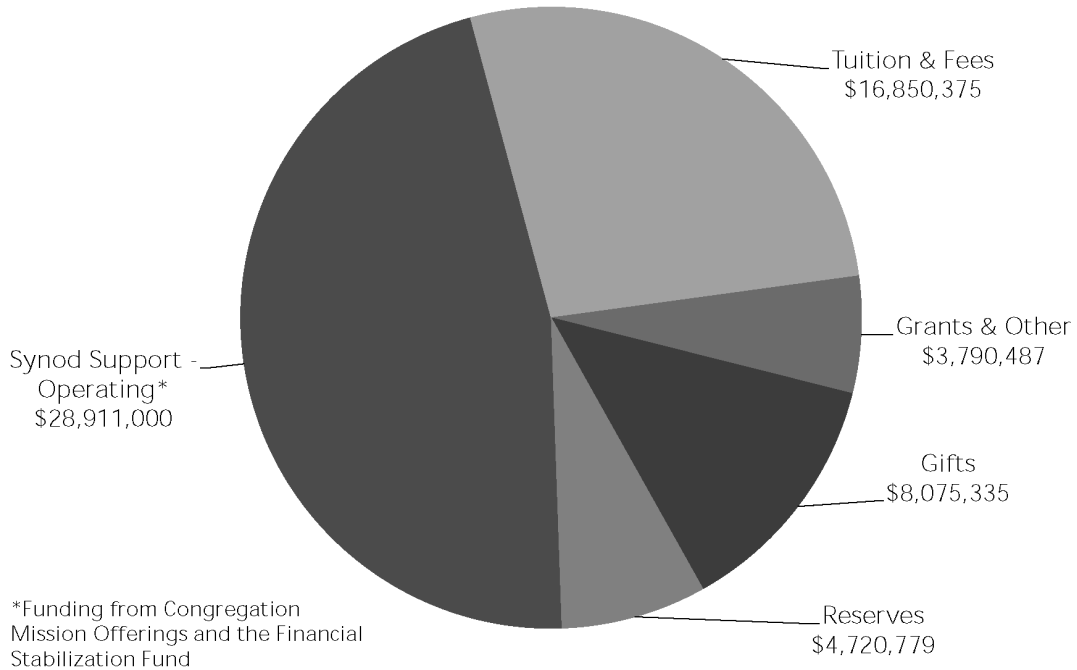
	2009-10			2010-11			2011-12			2012-13		
	Synod Support	% of total	% change	Synod Support	% of total	% change	Synod Support	% of total	% change	Synod Support	% of total	% change
	<b>Synod Support</b>											
Home Missions	5,717,433	19.5%	-	5,652,605	18.7%	-1.1%	5,400,200	18.7%	-4.5%	5,533,700	18.9%	2.5%
World Missions	6,284,600	21.4%	3.6%	6,512,810	21.6%	3.6%	5,945,500	20.6%	-8.7%	6,124,100	20.9%	3.0%
Ministerial Education	9,588,249	32.6%	32.6%	8,994,737	29.8%	-6.2%	8,362,600	28.9%	-7.0%	8,178,600	27.9%	-2.2%
Congregation & District Ministry	4,459,211	15.2%	15.2%	4,149,590	13.7%	-6.9%	4,351,900	15.1%	4.9%	4,554,800	15.5%	4.7%
Ministry Support	3,223,117	11.0%	11.0%	3,281,258	10.9%	1.8%	3,250,800	11.2%	-0.9%	3,362,800	11.5%	3.4%
MLC Chapel	-	0.0%	-	-	0.0%	-	-	0.0%	-	-	0.0%	-
Debt Retirement	121,830	0.4%	0.4%	1,600,000	5.3%	1213.3%	1,600,000	5.5%	0.0%	1,600,000	5.5%	0.0%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>29,394,440</b>			<b>30,191,000</b>			<b>28,911,000</b>			<b>29,354,000</b>		

	2009-10			2010-11			2011-12			2012-13		
	Total Funding	% of total	% change	Total Funding	% of total	% change	Total Funding	% of total	% change	Total Funding	% of total	% change
	<b>Total Funding</b>											
Home Missions	7,637,194	12.7%	-2.4%	7,451,248	12.5%	-2.4%	7,995,100	12.8%	7.4%	7,917,000	12.6%	-1.0%
World Missions	8,941,082	14.9%	2.4%	9,155,910	15.4%	2.4%	8,847,127	14.2%	-3.4%	9,415,909	14.9%	6.4%
Ministerial Education	30,243,649	50.3%	50.3%	31,006,377	52.2%	2.5%	32,513,149	52.1%	4.9%	32,658,344	51.8%	0.4%
Congregation & District Ministry	6,258,185	10.4%	-10.9%	5,575,990	9.4%	-10.9%	6,601,700	10.6%	18.4%	6,673,600	10.6%	1.1%
Ministry Support	4,653,370	7.7%	0.1%	4,658,639	7.8%	0.1%	4,786,900	7.7%	2.8%	4,781,000	7.6%	-0.1%
MLC Chapel	2,263,056	3.8%	-100.0%	-	0.0%	-100.0%	-	0.0%	-	-	0.0%	-
Debt Retirement	121,830	0.2%	1213.3%	1,600,000	2.7%	1213.3%	1,600,000	2.6%	0.0%	1,600,000	2.5%	0.0%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>60,118,366</b>			<b>59,448,164</b>			<b>62,347,976</b>			<b>63,045,853</b>		

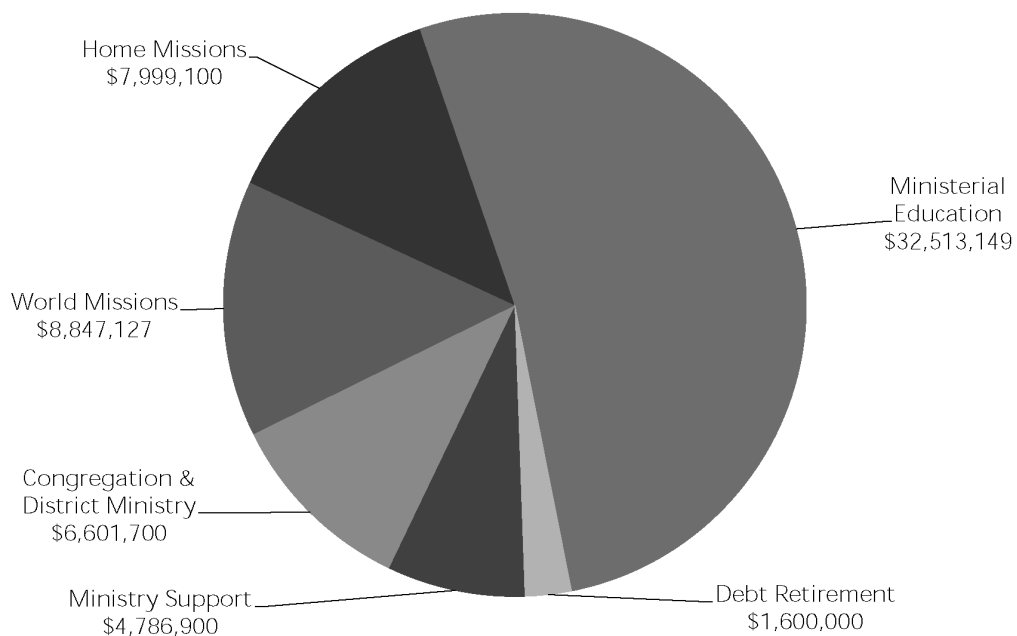




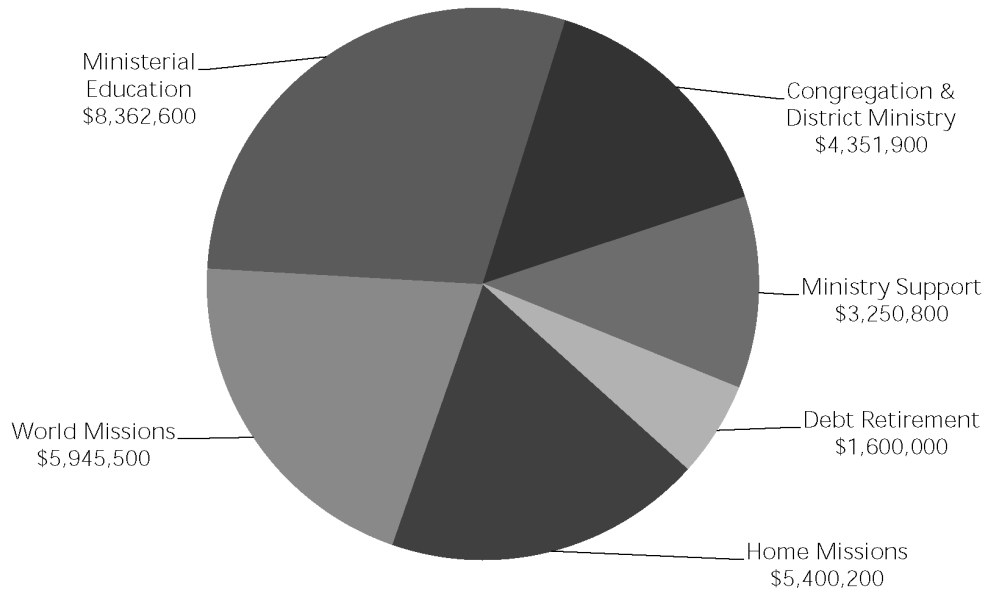
FY 2011–12 Total Ministry Plan Support  
\$62,347,976



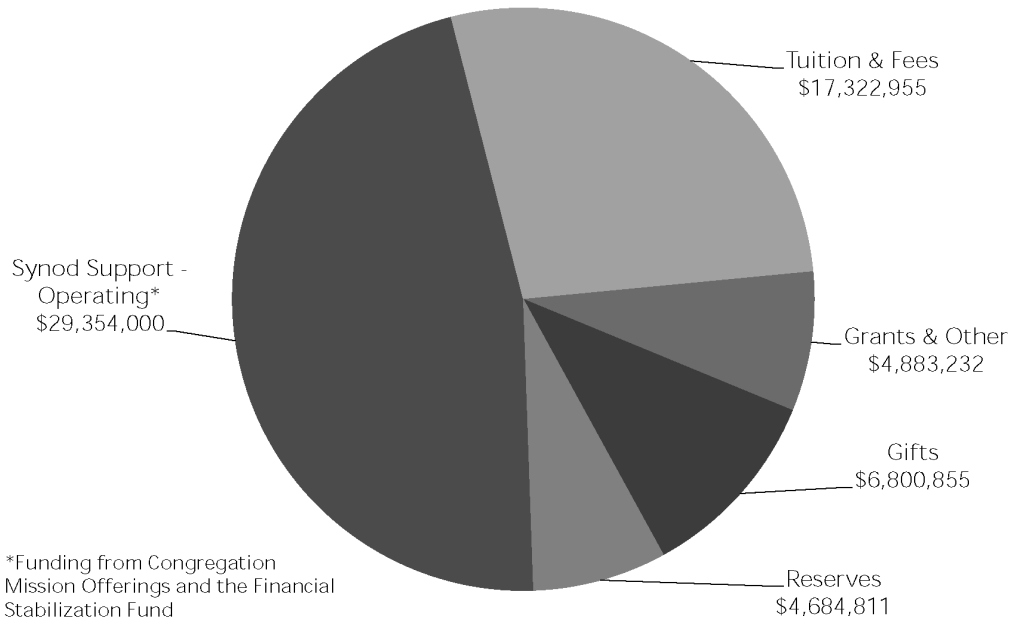
FY 2011–12 Total Ministry Plan Expenses  
\$62,347,976



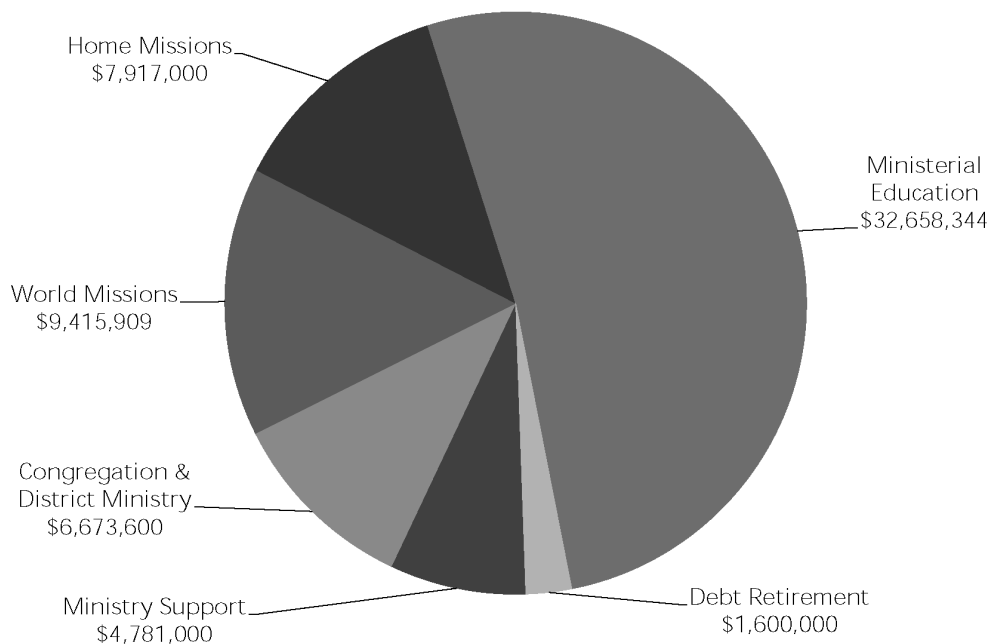
FY 2011–12 Synod Operating Support Allocation  
\$28,911,000



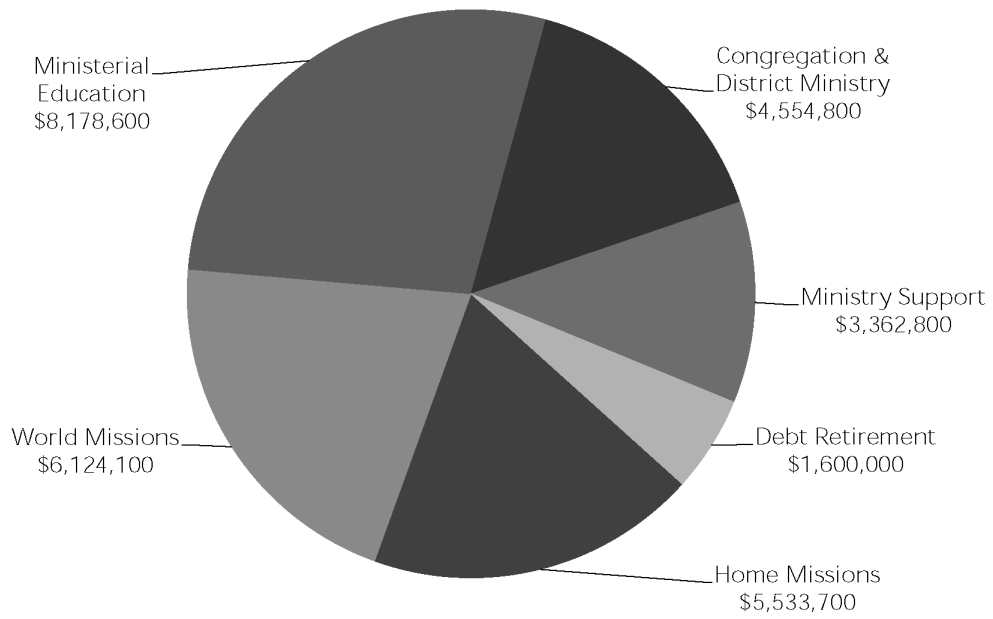
FY 2012–13 Total Ministry Plan Support  
\$63,045,853



FY 2012–13 Total Ministry Plan Expenses  
\$63,045,853



FY 2012–13 Synod Operating Support Allocation  
\$29,354,000





# Minutes

## Mon., July 25, 2011

The convention opened with a worship service with Holy Communion held at St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church, Watertown, Wis. The preacher was Rev. Paul Wendland, president of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. Romans 12:1-8 served as the text for the sermon. Rev. John Boehringer served as the presiding minister, Prof. Randy Bode as organist, and Adrian Smith as choir director. An area choir, soloists, and instrumentalists also assisted in beautifying the service to the glory of God.

President Mark Schroeder called the convention to order and welcomed the delegates in the name of the triune God at 11:17 a.m. President Schroeder introduced President Matthew Crass of Luther Preparatory School, who welcomed the group to the school. President Crass presented a short history of the school, directed the group to a handout from the school, and mentioned gifts from the school to each delegate. President Crass was thanked for his presentation.

Second Vice President Joel Voss was introduced. He presented an orientation to the convention, noting that the convention is “the synod.” He explained the *Book of Reports and Memorials* (BORAM) and discussed the floor committees, memorials, open forums, fellowship times, and the closing service scheduled for Thursday evening. He was thanked for his presentation.

Mrs. Jackie Hieb, president of the Lutheran Women’s Missionary Society (LWMS), was introduced. She and Mrs. Sharon Roth of the Rock River Circuit of the LWMS presided over the presentation of flags. These flags represent the countries in which WELS does mission work or in which WELS is in fellowship with a confessional church body. Following the presentation, President Schroeder thanked the ladies involved and the LWMS for their prayers and ongoing support of the mission efforts of WELS. The flags were left on display across the front of the convention floor.

There were no announcements, and the group joined in the common meal prayers. The morning session adjourned at 12:01 p.m.

The afternoon session was opened with prayer led by President Schroeder at 1:30 p.m. Teacher Rendell Koeppel, Chairman of Floor Committee 23, Elections, was introduced. The nominating ballot for the office of synod president was conducted. After all ballots were collected, the nominating ballot for synod president was declared closed.

First Vice President James Huebner took the chair. President Schroeder presented his printed *President’s report* (p. 100). He was thanked for his presentation.

President Schroeder resumed the chair. Rev. Jon Zabell was introduced, and he presented the essay “Cleansed and Fed—The Sacramental Life” (p. 107). He completed Parts One and Two. A break was declared at 3:24 p.m.

The afternoon session resumed at 3:45 p.m. Rendell Koeppel, chairman, reported for the Elections Committee. There were seven nominees for the office of synod president: Reverends John A. Braun, James R. Huebner, Thomas J. Jeske, Herbert H. Prahl, Mark G. Schroeder, Charles A. Westra, and Paul O. Wendland. After the ballots were cast, the election was declared closed.

Rev. Zabell presented Part Three of his essay “Cleansed and Fed—The Sacramental Life.” After the essay was completed, the floor was opened for questions and comments. After discussion of the essay, it was moved and supported to thank Rev. Zabell for his presentation. The motion carried.

The Elections Committee reported the election of Rev. Mark G. Schroeder for a second four-year term as the president of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. Schroeder received a large majority of the votes on the first ballot.

The nominating ballot for the position of second vice president of WELS was cast, and after all ballots were collected, the nominating ballot for second vice president was declared closed.

The afternoon session adjourned with prayer led by Secretary Robert Pasbrig at 4:29 p.m.

## **Tues., July 26, 2011**

President Mark Schroeder called the morning session to order at 8 a.m. Dr. Mark Braun led the opening devotion based on Psalm 1:1-3. Wyatt Smith served as the organist.

President Schroeder expressed his gratitude to the convention for entrusting him with the responsibility of the wonderful task of serving as the synod's pastor. What a joy, a privilege, and an honor to serve people who love their Savior, people with whom we will reign in heaven. He quoted from Ephesians 6:18,19: "Be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. Pray also for me." President Schroeder requested the prayers of all. He announced his acceptance of the call to serve for another four years as president of the synod, and he asked for God's continued blessings on WELS. The delegates responded with a round of applause.

Elections Committee Chairman Rendell Koeppel came to the podium and shared information about upcoming elections. The ballot for the election of second vice president was announced. Nominated candidates were Reverends Joel R. Voss, Herbert H. Prah, and Thomas J. Jeske. After all ballots were collected, the election was declared closed.

First Vice President James Huebner presented a PowerPoint overview of "In Christ Alone," WELS Long-Range Plan 2017. The report has been submitted to Committee #18 for a response. He was thanked for his presentation.

Mr. Todd Poppe, WELS' chief financial officer, presented a PowerPoint overview of the ministry financial plan. He was thanked for his presentation.

Rev. Joel Voss, WELS' second vice president, presented an overview of the Conference of Presidents' paper, "The doctrine of the divine call." He was thanked for his presentation. A break was declared at 9:26 a.m.

At 9:50 a.m. Chairman Koeppel announced the re-election of Rev. Joel Voss as WELS' second vice president. Nominations from the floor were opened for the 15 board and commission positions up for election. Rev. Kevin K. Schultz was nominated for the ballot for chairman of the Board for World Missions. It was moved and supported to accept the slate of candidates on the ballot. The motion carried. After all votes were cast, the election was declared closed.

Rev. Joel Voss announced his acceptance of the call to serve as the second vice president of WELS. He expressed gratitude to his family and to his congregation for their support of this work. He thanked the convention delegates and stated that he looks forward to working with President Schroeder in the future. The delegates responded with a round of applause.

Rev. John Braun, chairman of the Reformation 500 Committee, shared via PowerPoint the work of the committee. He emphasized what WELS, as a confessional Lutheran church, will want to celebrate and articulate in 2017. Reformation rallies will be encouraged synodwide. A video on the life of Luther is planned. A series of Bible classes will be prepared. Special worship services will be written. Additional ideas are requested. He was thanked for his report.

Rev. Michael Quandt, chairman, reported for Floor Committee #13, Northwestern Publishing House and WELS Historical Institute. Adoption of Resolution 13-01 was moved and supported. The motion carried. Adoption of Resolution 13-02 was moved and supported. The motion carried.

After announcements, the morning session adjourned at 10:36 a.m. for committee meetings.

At 1:30 p.m. the afternoon devotion, based on Galatians 3:26,27, was led by Rev. Daniel Habben. Teacher Jason Snodie was the organist.

Staff Minister John Meyer, chairman, reported for Floor Committee #25, Membership and attendance. Report #25-01 was read. Committee #25 was dismissed with thanks.

Chairman Koeppel presented a list of 14 candidates for 7 run-off elections. After the votes were cast, the run-off elections were closed.

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary President Paul Wendland presented the report of the Translation Evaluation Committee. He introduced the members of the committee and explained the reason why the question of Bible translations is before the convention. He emphasized that the choice of a translation is not a doctrinal issue. He asserted that



a word-for-word translation is not possible from one language to another and that there is no perfect translation. Three known reasons motivating the production of the New International Version 2011 (NIV2011) were mentioned: language changes; scholarship advances; and the mission of the Committee on Bible Translation (CBT), which demands that the translation utilize current and common language. Language has changed since the NIV84 was published. Wendland noted that every WELS congregation has the privilege of choosing the translation it wishes to use, but a translation decision is needed for Northwestern Publishing House. The Translation Evaluation Committee made the best use of the time available to them and did spend the most time working with the NIV2011. Gender inclusive language was a concern to the committee. However the truth regarding male and female roles is clearly taught in NIV2011; it is not a feminist translation. Old Testament verses containing messianic prophecy were carefully studied. Old Testament pronoun references to God are not capitalized, but that allows each reader to come to their own conclusions. Decision options available to the convention were outlined. In his closing remarks, President Wendland noted how humbling the work on this committee has been for him. He requested that although the matter is very emotional for many, that WELS be able to maintain the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace as translations are discussed. President Wendland was thanked for his presentation.

Rev. Daniel H. Koelpin, administrator of the Board for World Missions, introduced Rev. Douglas Weiser, who shared information regarding the 75th anniversary of mission work in Nigeria. He presented a historic video of mission work in Nigeria. He introduced veteran Nigerian missionary emeritus Prof. George S. Baer, who shared a few thoughts and memories. Baer was thanked with a standing round of applause. Weiser continued with a PowerPoint presentation depicting Nigeria and WELS' mission work there. He closed with a prayer asking for God's blessing on a "discovery team" of four headed to Nigeria in the near future.

Mrs. Linda Liesener was introduced. She spoke of the 50th anniversary of the Central Africa Medical Mission, projecting many photographs of the medical mission's efforts. Perhaps 1,000,000 souls in Africa have been touched by the work of the medical mission over the past 50 years. Mrs. Liesener and all the ladies involved were thanked.

Rev. Timothy Satorius, WELS' liaison to the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Church of Puerto Rico (IELC), addressed the convention. He quoted from the Book of Haggai and read a letter from President Rev. Sergio Cortijo of the IELC and a January 2011 resolution from this church body requesting fellowship with WELS. National Student Pastor Eligio Rodriquez, representing the IELC, was introduced. He addressed the group, giving thanks to God for allowing his presence at the convention. He thanked Missionary Ralph Martens for his many years of work in Puerto Rico.

Rev. John Koelpin, chairman, reported for Floor Committee #5, Inter-Church Relations. Resolution 05-01 was moved and supported. The motion passed with a standing round of applause. President Schroeder presented a gift, a wooden Luther seal carved by Indonesian nationals, to the IELC and was thanked by Rodriquez. Rev. Douglas Free, chairman of Floor Committee #1, Conference of Presidents, took the podium. Resolution 01-02 was moved and supported. The motion carried. The convention joined in singing the hymn, "We All Are One in Mission."

A break was declared at 3:40 p.m. The afternoon session resumed at 4 p.m. Rev. Daron Lindemann presented the essay, "Care of Souls: People Matter" (see p. 135). He completed the first 26 pages of the essay.

At 5:30 p.m. the afternoon session closed with prayer led by Rev. Daniel Habben.

Following the evening meal, an open hearing was held in the convention hall regarding the ministry financial plan and the Translation Evaluation Committee's report.

### **Wed., July 27, 2011**

The morning devotion, based on Psalm 32:1-5, was led by Rev. Paul Prange. The organist was Teacher Leonard Proeber.

Chairman Rendell Koepfel presented the final report of the Elections Committee, Floor Committee #23. Report #1 was moved and passed. The motion carried. The committee was thanked for its efficient work.

Rev. Daniel Koelpin, administrator of the Board for World Missions, presented a World Missions report using PowerPoint and a video clip. Koelpin highlighted recent developments in Haiti, including extensive humanitarian efforts; Mexico; Pakistan; and the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference. Rev. Philip Koelpin, chairman of the Board for World Missions, was introduced. He presented his final report, as his term on the World Mission Board is ending. He was given a round of applause as a thank-you for his many years of service. Three world missionaries also spoke about their world mission field ministries. President Schroeder expressed the synod's thanks to all WELS world missionaries and the World Missions staff.

Rev. Paul Prange, administrator of the Board for Ministerial Education, presented a ministerial education report. He introduced Rev. Philip Hirsch, chairman of the Board for Ministerial Education, who added to the report. The four WELS ministerial school presidents—Rev. Paul Wendland (Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary), Rev. Mark Zarling (Martin Luther College), Rev. Matthew Crass (Luther Preparatory School), and acting president and Teacher William Zeiger (Michigan Lutheran Seminary)—were introduced and using PowerPoint presented reports on the four schools.

A break was declared at 10:19 a.m. The morning session resumed at 10:43 a.m. with Rev. Charles Westra, chairman of the Board for Home Missions, reporting for Home Missions using PowerPoint. Rev. Keith Free, administrator of the Board for Home Missions, added to the report. The chairmen of district mission boards were introduced and thanked for their work. Rev. Craig Wasser reported on Korean outreach in Salem, Ore.

President Schroeder thanked all who presented reports.

Rev. John Moldstad, president of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS), brought greetings from the ELS. The theme for the ELS' recent convention was Jesus' question, "Who Do You Say That I AM?" Both the ELS and WELS take doctrine seriously but we also want to share it. Strategic planning has taken place in the ELS to address this sharing process. In the next five years, the ELS will emphasize sharing the Savior as each congregation views itself as a mission congregation, seeking new ways to share the Savior. Worship is also under study—sacramental, law-gospel worship. At the Emmaus Conference, Tacoma, Wash. (a free conference), three synod presidents of synods that were once part of the former Synodical Conference were present, perhaps for the first time in 50 years. The challenge of reaching the 16- to 29-year-olds in our society was noted. The outstanding WELS educational system was acknowledged with sincere thanks and appreciation. The ELS urges WELS to continue on the same path and with the ELS to remain faithful to the Word of God. President Schroeder asked President Moldstad to assure the ELS that WELS continues to pray for them and rejoices in our fellowship together.

Prof. Richard Gurgel shared a report on the work of the committee for Continuing Education for Called Workers (CECW) using a PowerPoint presentation.

After announcements, the morning session adjourned for lunch at 12:06 p.m. with prayer led by President Schroeder.

At 1:30 p.m., Rev. John Koelpin led the opening devotion based on 1 Corinthians 11:23-26. The organist was Rev. Bryan Gerlach.

Rev. Daron Lindeman completed the reading of his essay, "Caring for Souls: People Matter." The delegates joined in a round of applause in appreciation for the paper and the work of preparing it. It was moved and supported to thank the essayist. The motion carried.

Rev. Bryan Gerlach, director of WELS Congregation and Ministry Support Group (CMSG) and WELS Commission on Worship, reported for the CMSG. Adding to the report were Rev. Jonathan Hein, chairman of the Commission on Congregational Counseling; Teacher Greg Schmill, director of the Commission on Lutheran Schools; Teacher Cindi Holman, national coordinator for early childhood ministries; Rev. Carl Ziemer, director of the Commission on Special Ministries; Rev. Randy Hunter, chairman of the Commission on Adult Discipleship; and Rev. Michael Hintz, director of the Commission on Evangelism. Hintz also reported for the Commission on Youth and Family Ministry. PowerPoint presentations and videos were utilized in the reports. All were thanked for their reports and their work.

A recess was declared at 3:27 p.m.

At 3:52 p.m., Rev. Dr. V'yacheslav Horpynchuk, representing the Ukrainian Lutheran Church, addressed the assembly. He demonstrated his "law and gospel" tools and presented them as a gift to President Schroeder. He also presented a Ukrainian embroidered scarf, shirt, and brightly decorated Ukrainian Easter eggs to President Schroeder. Dr. Horpynchuk shared a PowerPoint presentation about the country and the Lutheran work done therein. He highlighted many current difficulties. The assembly responded with a standing round of applause. President Schroeder responded with the promise that WELS will stand with and support the Ukrainian Lutheran Church.

It was moved and supported that a special offering be gathered for the Ukrainian Lutheran Church. The motion carried, and the offering will be gathered on July 28.

Rev. John Koelpin, chairman, presented Report #01-GR-01 of Floor Committee #5, Inter-Church Relations. It was moved and supported to accept the report with thanks. The motion carried.

Rev. Norman Burger, chairman, presented the report of Committee #3, President's report. Adoption of Resolution

#03-01 was moved and supported. The motion carried. Adoption of #03-02 was moved and supported. The motion carried. Report #03-GR-01 was read. Report #03-GR-02 was submitted. It was moved and supported to accept the entire report with thanks. The motion carried.

Rev. Jonathon Voss, chairman, presented the report of Floor Committee #11, Ministerial Education. Report #11-GR-01 was read. It was moved and supported to accept the report with thanks. The motion carried.

Rev. Douglas Free, chairman, presented the report of Floor Committee #1, Conference of Presidents. Resolution #01-03 was moved and supported. The motion carried. Resolution #01-04 was moved and supported. The motion carried. Resolution #01-05 was withdrawn. Resolution #01-06 was moved and supported. The motion carried. Resolution #01-07 was moved and supported. The motion carried. Resolution #01-08 was moved and supported. There was discussion of unpublished memorial 2011-05U. It was moved and supported to recommit this resolution. The motion to recommit was carried.

Rev. Ross Else, chairman, presented the report of Floor Committee #10, Home Missions. #10-01 was moved and supported. The motion carried. Report #10-GR-01 was read. It was moved and supported to adopt the report of Floor Committee #10 with thanks. The motion carried.

Mr. David Schwantz, chairman, presented the report of Floor Committee #16, WELS Benefit Plans. Report #16-GR-01 was read. It was moved and supported to accept the report of Committee #16 with thanks. The motion carried.

The afternoon session adjourned with prayer led by Rev. John Koelpin at 5:20 p.m.

After the evening meal, World Missions presentations were offered in the assembly hall.

#### **Thurs., July 28, 2011**

Rev. Thomas Jeske opened the morning session with a devotion based on 1 Peter 1:23-2:3. The organist was Prof. John Nolte.

Mr. James Buelow, president of WELS Church Extension Fund (CEF), was welcomed to the podium. He shared information about the CEF utilizing a PowerPoint presentation.

A DVD presenting WELS Christian Aid and Relief was shown. Rev. Robert Hein, chairman of WELS Christian Aid and Relief, addressed the assembly utilizing a PowerPoint presentation. He introduced Mr. Mark Vance, director of operations for WELS Christian Aid and Relief, who spoke of the relief work he has been doing in Haiti, Japan, and New Orleans. The men were thanked for their presentations and their work.

Rev. John Braun, vice president of publishing services, reported for Northwestern Publishing House using PowerPoint. He was thanked for his report.

Teacher Steven Thiesfeldt, chairman, presented the report of Floor Committee #7, Communications. Report #07-GR-01 was read. Resolution #07-01 was moved and supported. The motion carried by more than a two-thirds majority. Resolution #07-02 was moved and supported. The motion carried. It was moved and supported to adopt the complete report with thanks. The motion carried.

Dr. Mark Braun, chairman, presented the report of Floor Committee #22, Constitutional matters. Resolution #22-01 was moved and supported. The motion carried by more than a two-thirds majority. Resolution #22-02 was moved and supported. The motion carried by more than a two-thirds majority. Resolution #22-03 was moved and supported. The motion carried by more than a two-thirds majority. Resolution #22-04 was moved and supported. The motion carried by more than a two-thirds majority. It was moved and supported to adopt the complete report with thanks. The motion carried.

Rev. Kevin Klug, chairman, presented the report of Floor Committee #12, Congregation and Ministry Support Group. Resolution #12-01 was moved and supported. The motion carried. Reports #12-GR-01 and #12-GR-02 were read. It was moved and supported to adopt the complete report with thanks. The motion carried.

Rev. Daniel Wagenknecht, chairman, presented the report of Floor Committee #18, Long-range plan. Resolution #18-01 was moved and supported. The motion carried. It was moved and supported to adopt the complete report with thanks. The motion carried.

A break was declared at 10:05 a.m.

At 10:30 a.m., Rev. James Mattek, director of ministry for Wisconsin Lutheran Child and Family Service (WLCFS), addressed the convention. Mattek emphasized that WLCFS is not part of the synod like Northwestern Publishing House but fully supports the synod. He presented a DVD depicting Luther Haven, which is located in Milwaukee and offers reduced rates to retired called workers. A second DVD was shown describing counseling services provided by WLCFS. Mattek was thanked for his presentation.

Rev. David Liggett, administrator of WELS Ministry of Christian Giving, presented the group's report. Various charts were used, and plans were shared for the four years of the current WELS stewardship program, "Christ's Love, Our Calling." Among other things, he urged daily devotions and regular church and Bible class attendance. He also mentioned a "silent" campaign to support a building at Martin Luther College, elimination of the existing capital debt, building up of WELS endowments, and capital needs at other WELS school campuses.

Rev. Thomas Jeske, chairman, presented the report of Floor Committee #19, Bible translation. The committee's three resolutions were first read before any motions were made. Resolution #19-01 was moved and supported. It was moved to amend Resolved B to change the word "translation" to "translations." The motion was defeated. The motion was called. The motion to call the question carried. The motion to adopt Resolution #19-01 carried.

At 12:02 p.m., Rev. Thomas Jeske offered a prayer, and the morning session adjourned for lunch.

At 1:33 p.m., the afternoon session was opened with prayer led by President Schroeder.

Rev. Thomas Jeske returned to the podium to continue the report of Floor Committee #19. Resolution #19-02 was moved and supported. The motion carried. Resolution #19-03 was moved and supported. It was moved and supported to amend Resolution #19-03 by dropping resolutions c) and d) and adding a new resolved c), "that the COP arrange for a special synod convention in July of 2012 to choose a Bible translation for synod publications." The motion to adopt the amendment was defeated. An amendment was moved and supported to add the words to the end of Resolved d) "or call a special convention." The motion to amend carried. It was moved and supported to amend Resolved d) by replacing the words "a two-thirds majority" with "a simple majority." The motion to amend was defeated. After a motion to call the question passed, the motion to adopt amended Resolution #19-03 was carried. It was moved and supported to adopt the complete report with thanks. The motion carried.

Rev. Donn Dobberstein, chairman, presented the report of Floor Committee #20, Called worker continuing education. Resolution #20-01 was moved and supported. It was moved and supported to amend the Resolution by striking whereas 8). The motion to amend carried. The motion to adopt amended Resolution #20-01 carried.

The afternoon session recessed at 3:09 p.m.

At 3:30 p.m., Rev. Dobberstein continued the report for Committee #20. Resolution #20-02 was moved and supported. The motion carried. It was moved and supported to adopt the complete report with thanks. The motion carried.

It was moved and supported to change the word "appointed" to "called" in Resolution #22-04. The motion carried by more than a two-thirds majority.

Rev. Timothy Spaude, chairman, presented the report of Floor Committee #9, World Missions. Reports #09-GR-01 and #09-GR-02 were read. It was moved and supported to adopt the complete report with thanks. The motion carried.

Dr. Ronald Buelow, chairman, presented the report of Floor Committee #8, Support Services. Report #08-GR-01 was read. It was moved and supported to adopt the report with thanks. The motion carried.

Rev. Fred Casmer, chairman, presented the report of Floor Committee #21, Miscellaneous memorials. Report #21-GR-01 was read. It was moved and supported to adopt Report #21-GR-01. The motion carried. Resolution #21-01 was moved and supported. It was moved and supported to amend whereas 2), dropping the words after the comma. The motion to amend was defeated. After a motion to call the question passed, the motion to adopt Resolution #21-01 carried. Resolution #21-02 was moved and supported. It was moved and supported to amend the resolution by adding the words, "the sin of abortion" in place of "sins" in Resolved b). The motion to amend carried. The motion to adopt amended Resolution #21-02 carried. Resolution #21-03 was moved and supported. The motion was defeated. It was moved and supported to adopt the complete report with thanks. The motion carried.

Teacher Stephen Schultz, chairman, presented the report of Floor Committee #17, Christian Aid and Relief. Resolution #17-01 was moved and supported. It was moved and supported to adopt the complete report with thanks. The motion carried.



At 5:21 p.m., President Schroeder closed the afternoon session with prayer.

Following the evening meal, a closing worship service was held at 7 p.m. at St. Mark's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Watertown, Wis. Rev. Joel Petermann served as the preacher and based his sermon on 1 Thessalonians 3:12,13. Rev. James Werner served as the presiding minister, and Adrian Smith served as the organist. An area choir, soloists, and instrumentalists also assisted in beautifying the service to the glory of God. As part of the service, Rev. Mark Schroeder was installed for a new four-year term as WELS president and Rev. Joel Voss was installed for a new four-year term as WELS second vice president.

### **Fri., July 29, 2011**

The morning devotion, based on Ephesians 3:14-21, was led by Rev. Daniel Wagenknecht. The organist was Teacher David Niemi.

Rev. Daniel Habben, chairman, presented the report of Floor Committee #4, Finance and budget. Resolution #04-01 was moved and supported. The motion carried. Resolution #04-02 was moved and supported. The motion carried. Resolution #04-03 was moved and supported. The motion carried. Resolution #04-04 was moved and supported. The motion carried. It was moved and supported to adopt the complete report with thanks. The motion carried.

Rev. Douglas Free, chairman, returned to the podium to report for Floor Committee #01, Conference of Presidents. Resolution #01-08 was withdrawn. Resolution #01-09 was moved and supported. The motion carried. Resolution #01-01 was moved and supported. The name of Carla Martin was added to those named in the resolution. The amended motion carried. It was moved and supported to adopt the complete report with thanks. The motion carried.

Rev. Samuel Clemons, chairman, presented the report of Floor Committee #14, WELS Church Extension Fund. Resolution #14-01 was moved and supported. The motion carried. It was moved and supported to adopt the complete report with thanks. The motion carried.

Rev. Neal Schroeder extended thanks for the convention's warm welcome to and support for Dr. Horpynchuk. Dr. Horpynchuk, in turn, extended his thanks for the support of WELS. He urged WELS to continue to stand firmly on the scriptures.

Mr. Gary Gilgen, chairman, presented the report of Floor Committee #15, WELS Foundation and WELS Investment Funds. Reports #15-GR-01 and #15-GR-02 were read. The motion carried. It was moved and supported to adopt the complete report with thanks. The motion carried.

Rev. David Schneider, chairman, presented the report of Floor Committee #6, Ministry of Christian Giving. Resolution #06-01 was moved and supported. The motion carried. Resolution #06-02 was moved and supported. The motion carried. It was moved and supported to adopt the complete report with thanks. The motion carried.

Rev. Samuel Hacker III, chairman, presented the report of Floor Committee #02, Synodical Council. Reports 02-GR-01 and 02-GR-02 were read. It was moved and supported to adopt the complete report with thanks. The motion carried.

Rev. Michael Quandt, chairman of Floor Committee #13, Northwestern Publishing House and WELS Historical Institute, returned to the podium. Report #13-3 was read. It was moved and supported to accept the complete report with thanks. The motion carried.

Rev. Fred Casmer, chairman of Floor Committee #21, reported that the committee chose to not present Memorial #2011-03 to the convention. It was moved and supported to accept this final report from Committee #21. The motion carried.

Mr. Joel Hochmuth spoke about how delegates might respond to questions about WELS and the antichrist. He showed the August *WELS Connection* to demonstrate what *WELS Connection* is trying to emphasize—the work of the Holy Spirit and the fact that WELS cares for souls. Hochmuth explained the tools that delegates can use when making reports about the convention. He was thanked for his report.

Rev. Philip Hirsch invited the delegates to a free conference scheduled for Nov. 9 and 10 at Martin Luther College in New Ulm. Four presenters and reactors are scheduled. Promotion of the free conference was encouraged.

There were several announcements. Rev. John Graf announced the total of the special gift for the Ukrainian Lutheran Church was about \$13,000.

President Schroeder made some closing comments (pp. 176,177). He spoke of the great challenge lying before us to share the Savior with the world. Do we have the “right stuff?” We are sinful, weak, filled with guilt. But we do have the “right stuff” because of what the Savior has done for us. He has given us the mission, the right message (law and gospel) and an amazing promise—he is with us. By the grace of God we do have the “right stuff.” What a joy to serve God by speaking about what we have seen and heard. The men in the assembly were thanked for their time and effort. President Schroeder stated that is a joy to work with you. The assembly responded with a round of applause.

The assembly arose and joined in singing the words of the Doxology.

At 9:54 a.m., it was moved and seconded to adjourn the 61st Biennial Convention of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. The motion carried, and President Schroeder declared the convention adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,  
Rev. Robert W. Pasbrig,  
WELS recording secretary

# 2011 memorial disposition

Memorial	Title	Submitted by	Committee assigned to	Disposition	Rationale
2011-01	Composition of voting delegates for synod convention	Michigan District	#21, Miscellaneous Memorials	Considered and addressed in a committee resolution	See resolution 21-03
2011-02	Concern for the unborn	Mr. Glenn Brunner, Kewaunee, WI	#21, Miscellaneous Memorials	Considered and addressed in a committee resolution	See resolution 21-02
2011-03	Careful scholarship in Genesis prehistory	Mr. Gerbold Lenke, Cedar Rapids, IA	#21, Miscellaneous Memorials	Considered but not forwarded	Concerns expressed are already being addressed
2011-04	Synod archives and archivist	Prof. Mark Braun, et. al., Southeastern Wisconsin	#4, Finance and Budget	Considered and addressed in a committee resolution	See resolution 04-04
2011-05	Formalize fellowship with the Confessional Lutheran Church of Puerto Rico	WELS Commission on Inter-Church Relations, Milwaukee, WI	#5, Inter-Church Relations	Considered and addressed in a committee resolution	See resolution 05-01
2011-010	CLK proposed resolution on abortion	National Board of Directors of Christian Life Resources, Southeastern Wisconsin	#21, Miscellaneous Memorials	Considered and addressed in a committee resolution	See resolution 21-02
2011-020	NTV 2011 and Translation Evaluation Committee work	South Central District	#19, Bible Translation	Considered and addressed in a committee resolution	See resolution 19-01
2011-030	Process of making a synodical decision on a translation for WELS publications	Michigan District	#19, Bible translation	Considered and addressed in a committee resolution	See resolution 19-01
2011-040	Declining synod membership	Pacific Northwest District	#21, Miscellaneous Memorials	Considered and addressed in a committee report	See report 21-01
2011-050	Appeal procedure for the elective termination of a divine call	Rev. Marcus Manthey	#1, Conference of Presidents	Considered and addressed in a committee resolution	See resolution 01-09
2011-060	Time of Grace Ministry	Rev. Eugene Antrus, et. al.	#21, Miscellaneous memorials	Considered and addressed in a committee resolution	See resolution 21-01
2011-070	Time of Grace Ministry	Rev. James Aderman, et. al.	#21, Miscellaneous memorials	Considered and addressed in a committee resolution	See resolution 21-01
Unpublished Proposal	Continuing education for WELS called teachers	Continuing Education for Called Workers Committee	#20, Called Worker Continuing Education	Considered and addressed in a committee resolution	See resolution 20-01





# Convention presentations

For a complete list of convention presentations, see the minutes, which begin on p. 87.

## Opening service sermon

July 25, 2011

St. John, Watertown, Wis.

President Paul Wendland

*"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing, and perfect will. For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully" (Romans 12:1–8).*

**D**ear brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus,

Competition. The mad scramble of life. Pushing the other guy down so I can get ahead. I see it all around me. Did Roger Clemons take steroids to become a hall of famer? Did Lance Armstrong to win the Tour de France? I don't know. But I could understand their thinking if they did. In a situation where even the slightest advantage can give you a leg up on the competition, why not? Besides: everyone else is doing it. Now is this competitive, looking out for No. 1 spirit just an American thing? Well, maybe we're perfecting it, but other cultures have it too. China, South Korea, Japan. Europe and India. I could go on and on.

And even in cultures and societies where community is emphasized over individuality, things are not always as wonderful as they might seem. An old African proverb says, "I am as we are; we are as I am." Sounds great, doesn't it? All for one and one for all. I find my identity not apart from the community but as a part of the community. Yet as it plays out, you quickly discover that sin is still at work. The pressure to conform, the pressure to keep your head down—not be too successful, too outstanding, too different from the rest—it's always there. You do it this way more because of outside pressure than from inner conviction. It's born more of a fear of what others will think rather than a heartfelt humility and genuine love. And there's still plenty of jealousy and resentment going on.

Think for a moment. Can you really imagine any society where people live in peace, where there are no possessions, no greed or hunger, a brotherhood of man? Maybe John Lennon could, but I can't. No way. It's just not how we're built.

But that's exactly what makes Paul's message here so astonishing. Paul does more than imagine such a group existing in the world. He proclaims it as a rock-solid, kingdom truth. Sure it won't be perfect this side of glory, but the body of

Christ is not a figment of his imagination, but God's extraordinary creation. All part of Jesus' transforming impact on us, a love that changes us from the inside out so that now we see that there may be

Different Gifts, but the Same Grace!

1. Because One makes us one
2. So we can serve the world and one another

1. Here we all are, brothers and sisters. It happens every two years. This great celebration of unity. From all over North America, from all around the world, men and women, rich and poor, many cultures, different languages—but one Lord. Isn't it just amazing? Isn't it just grace?

But here's a shocker: Christian don't always get along. Even WELS Lutherans. That's right. You heard me. We squabble. We quarrel. We fight. We disagree. And not always so agreeably. And not always about doctrine. In fact, I believe that most of our quarrels have very little to do with doctrine. More about different ways of doing things or different points of view on current issues. And we get passionate about these issues. We feel them deeply and so sometimes things get heated. They get heated because (gasp) we have different personalities, personalities that rub each other the wrong way. Sometimes our own egos get engaged and we want to be right—and to be seen to be right—more than we want to win our brother or sister or build the body up. It's a sad fact that sometimes our conduct as a visible congregation can lead people to say not, "See how they love one another!" but "Wow, they really beat each other up!"

And we know true, sincere Christian love is not something you can fake. Oh, you can put on the plastic smile, but if it still hides gleaming teeth that want to bite, what good is it? You can extend your palm in a warm handshake, but if it still conceals steely claws that long to tear, what's the point? Because the problem is right here, in the heart: our wayward, treacherous, sinful, me-centered hearts. And if our sin-nature is threatening to gain the upper hand in us, it's a sure sign that we're losing our grip on grace—the same grace that saved us all. When amazing grace ceases to be so amazing, that's where the trouble starts.

It's like that unforgiving servant Jesus talked about once. Not to unbelievers but to his disciples. The guy owed an impossible debt. He pleaded for more time to pay it off. Just like that, the master took pity on him. Forgave him everything. Just wiped the slate clean. Then what does the servant do? He forgets the impossible debt he owed, all that he had been forgiven, and he turns around and shakes down his fellow servant, "You gimme what I've got coming or I'll put you where the sun never shines!" Boy, Jesus gets us, doesn't he?

All too soon we start conforming to the world. We don't see so clearly the impossible debt we owe. We don't see so clearly the majestic mountains of mercies we've received.

And that's why, that's exactly why Paul speaks of our need for continuous transformation. Only One can make us one. Only One can renew our minds so that we take our bodies—each one of us in our unique individuality—and offer them all up as one single, complete sacrifice that's good and pleasing and perfect. God must transform us, or we must remain as we are. So Paul says, "Therefore in view of God's mercy!!"

It's as if Paul had said, "Yes, get a grip on your sin. See just how much you owe. See how poor and blind and wretched you are by yourself. But above all, keep your eyes focused on grace! Look at your God. See how rich, how free, how high, how deep his mercies are. They came to you new on the morning of your Baptism, making you a child of God. They are new to you every morning." Consider the nature of God's love. It's so different from ours. We love people who are good to us, kind to us. We love people who love us back. But God demonstrated his love to us in this that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Jesus gave himself up—not for the pretty good, not for those that mostly get it right in their sanctification struggles—but for sinners. For sinners. Like you and like me. Though he knows we have not always offered our lives up with humble and glad heart. Though he knows how often we've let ego trump love.

Isn't it a rich taste of his grace too that he's going to forgive each one of us today by giving us his body and blood "for you!" he says "for you!" Whether you've been tempted to disregard your brothers by running off to pursue your own road like the Prodigal, or whether you have been tempted to despise your brother with a judgmental, evil eye like the Older Son, Jesus' pardoning grace touches us right there, forgiving just that sin, healing just that hurt, and bringing us together under his great mercy. One and the same grace transforms us all. Only One can make us one. And we, though many, form one body in him.

2. So we can serve the world and one another. Paul can speak about these matters so confidently because he knows the power of grace. He knows that God really has done something new in the world by sending his Son to die for us.

He's making everything new, and that means Jesus' love really does renew our minds and transform our thinking so that we willingly put to death our old, egocentric, mad-scrabble way of living. Grace makes all the difference in the world. "Here's who you are," Paul's saying to us, "Now be who you are!"

Our response? "As he lived for others, so will I. As he gave his life up for others, so will I. Freely I have received, freely will I give. All that I am, I am by grace. All that I have, I have by grace"—that's the renewed mind talking.

But now here comes another shocker: we aren't all the same. Paul speaks about the "grace given to me." He knows that his gifts aren't the same as everyone else's. And he says to the members of this one new body that Christ's grace has created in the world, "We have different gifts, according to the grace given us."

That means I'm not Dave Valleskey. I've had to come to terms with that through the years. I'm not Mark Schroeder. I'm not Dan Deutschlander. I'm not Earle Treptow. I'm not Forrest Bivens. I'm not Tom Nass. I'm not \_\_\_\_\_. You can fill in your own blank from your district, your circuit, your congregation, or your family. People you love and admire, people who have blessed you, people whose gifts you may even wish you had. The first point here is, we're different because that's the way God wants it to be. It's the same as if Paul had said, "I have my gift . . . and the Holy Spirit has given each one of you your own gift."

The second point is that we no longer see these differences as things that divide us, as grist for the mill of competition or envy. Just the opposite: they unite us. The whole purpose of the picture of the body and its members is to demonstrate that we need each other. We can't make it on our own. That means I need my very real flesh and blood brother or sister right next to me in my congregation or circuit or district. Yes, even when he says things to me I may not like or that I may not want to hear. Yes that means even when I may not particularly like what he's doing because it's not how I would do it. I can't retreat into some special safe little cyber world, gathering about me all the bloggers and pundits who share my opinions and bounce them back at me. If I can't talk directly to my brother with whom I may have a concern, where is the love of Christ in me? If I can't love my real flesh-and-blood brother right next to me, with whom God has placed me, how can the love of God remain in me?

And the final and perhaps the most important point is, we can't fulfill the purposes God has in mind for the body of Christ if we run off on our own. God saved us as individuals. He saved us in all our wide variety of gifts and aptitudes. But he also saved us to be together and to work together. He means for us to display the splendor of his grace to all the world.

We are God's hands, bringing help and healing. We are God's feet, going out into all the world. We are God's mouths, formed to declare his praise—all of this guided by the mind of Christ that puts no limit on the boundaries of his love. If we don't preach the gospel, who will? If we don't model loving, self-giving relationships in the family, who will? Christ said, "I did not come to be served but to serve and to give my life for others." If we don't mirror his love in all our relationships both inside the church and outside of it, who will? God has no other plan! And this sacrifice of praise is good and pleasing and perfect to our God. He honors it by saying, "Whatever you do for the least of these brothers of mine, you've done it for me."

Luther sums up this truth so beautifully, "Who could fathom such great love? God comes down into our world and says that he receives all the deeds done to our neighbors as if they had been done to him! The world is full of God. In every lane you meet Christ. You find him at your door. Don't stand gaping into heaven (looking for some super spiritual way to love and serve God). You have him in your house, in your neighbors. Help them with your possessions, wisdom, and skill. I am as close to you as your brother who needs your help and teaching."

I look at you all and I see the faces of my dear brothers and sisters. This church body means so much to me. I am a synod man. My heart is full of joy and gratitude when I think of how I have been blessed by walking together with you through the years. You have been my leaders, my teachers, my encouragers. And even if I don't know you by name or recognize a single thing that you've done, that hardly matters. Jesus sees. Jesus knows. He honors every unknown act of mercy, every cup of cold water given in his name.

I thank God for you all because I see the wonder of what God is doing through you in the world. I know you feel the same. Different gifts, same grace!

I remember as a young man in central Africa—my first ministry—my sense of awe and wonder that there were so many people in America praying for me, supporting me with their gifts and offerings. They didn't know me. But they loved me. What a miracle of grace! And now as I go around representing the seminary, people come up to me and say

out of the sheer goodness of their grace-filled hearts, “We’re praying for you. We’re supporting you. We have the seminary, our schools, their faculties, their students, on our hearts.” What wonders God does among his people!

And I know, I know—as surely as I know Christ’s grace—that there are many more miracles and wonders to come, miracles he means to do through us, this little band of brothers and sisters. You know who you are. You are God’s own people. Now be who you are!

Amen.

## President’s report

*July 25, 2011*

*Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.*

*President Mark Schroeder*

“May the LORD our God be with us as he was with our fathers; may he never leave us nor forsake us” (1 Kings 8:57).

**T**he delegates to the convention of the Wisconsin Synod could not have been looking forward eagerly to the task that was before them. It promised to be a difficult and painful week, and it had nothing to do with the prospect of sitting for a week on hard chairs in a gymnasium without air conditioning. Weighty, even historic, decisions would need to be made at that convention—and the burden carried by the delegates who would make those decisions was a heavy one.

Fifty years ago this summer, the Wisconsin Synod was faced with making a final decision regarding an issue that had been prayed about, debated, and discussed for more than ten years. In question was the precious fellowship relationship with the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod (LCMS)—a relationship of unity in doctrine and practice that had begun more than 80 years earlier with the formation of the Synodical Conference.

Throughout the 1950s, WELS and the ELS had been in almost continual theological discussions with the Missouri Synod. At the heart of the discussions were Missouri’s changed position on church fellowship and signs that the LCMS was gradually moving away from its unqualified commitment to the inerrancy of the Scriptures. The LCMS was increasingly becoming involved with the American Lutheran Church in various church-related activities and had begun to work toward the establishment of fellowship, even though it was clear that there was no real unity in doctrine between the two church bodies. Only months earlier, after a decade of brotherly and patient admonition from its sister synods, the Missouri Synod had given a firm indication that it did not intend to heed the pleas to return to the doctrines on which it had always stood. The Wisconsin Synod was faced with the decision to declare that the blessed fellowship that had united the two synods no longer existed.

Those of us who did not personally experience those difficult days can only imagine how painful and traumatic that decision must have been—and what faith and courage was required to make it. If the fellowship relationship was declared to have ended, it would signal the end of almost 90 years of God-given unity in doctrine and practice. Families would be divided. Congregations would be split. Long-standing joint mission and educational efforts would no longer be possible. Matters of private conscience would become topics of heated public debate. The small Wisconsin Synod, which had for nearly a century leaned on its larger partner and looked to it for direction, would need to stand on its own—particularly in the area of missions.

In spite of the challenges and personal sacrifices, in spite of charges that WELS was being legalistic and judgmental, in spite of distortions and caricatures of the WELS doctrine of fellowship (which was in fact the historic position of all the members of the Synodical Conference), the delegates to that convention 50 years ago were led to make a courageous decision that reflected a steadfast commitment to the truth of God’s Word and to the Lutheran Confessions. It was a decision that brought no joy or pleasure. But if the Wisconsin Synod were to remain faithful to the Scriptures and to the doctrine that had been graciously preserved among us, it was a decision that had to be made.

God has blessed that courageous and faith-filled decision in the decades since. The end of the Synodical Conference was necessary because of the commitment by WELS and the ELS to stand firmly on the unchanging truth of God's inspired and inerrant Word, a commitment that by God's grace remains today. That event awakened in our synod the recognition that we would need to undertake an expanded mission effort that was truly worldwide in scope. It spurred our synod to a planned and focused effort to plant congregations far beyond the few Midwestern states in which most of our congregations were located. It kindled the recognition that the gospel was something not only to be cherished and preserved among us, but that it also needed to be shared with people of all cultures and races. The decision resulted in a renewed commitment to maintaining a strong system of ministerial education for both pastors and teachers. It strengthened our commitment to stand firmly and squarely on the unchanging Word of God in a world and culture that would be constantly changing. It enabled us to reaffirm that WELS is a synod that places its trust completely in the means of grace to bring people to faith, to strengthen faith, and to equip them to serve as faithful witnesses and disciples. It reflected a God-given commitment to remain distinctly Lutheran, anchoring all we do as a synod in the heritage of "sola gratia, sola fide, and sola scriptura" passed down to us by generations of faithful Christians who have gone before. It fostered a remarkable doctrinal unity and clarity throughout our beloved synod that still exists today.

Today, as we look back to that important event in our synod's history, we humbly thank God for the unity of faith and doctrine that he has graciously preserved among us, and that for 50 years he has permitted us to continue to find our strength and unity in his Word alone. As we look ahead to the future, we do so with the heartfelt prayer of Solomon, "May the LORD our God be with us as he was with our fathers; may he never leave us nor forsake us" (1 Kings 8:57).

### **Our synod's principles**

Almost four years ago, in a series of articles in *Forward in Christ*, I emphasized a number of characteristics that, by God's grace, describe our synod and the principles on which we stand. It was our prayer at that time, and I am confident that you will now join me in praying, that we continue to be a synod that

- stands boldly and without hesitation on the truth of God's inspired and inerrant Word.
- focuses on our mission of proclaiming to all people the gospel of Christ crucified and risen, with an undying commitment to reach the lost and to nurture the found.
- is a confessional Lutheran church, holding on to the great truths restored to the church through the Lutheran Reformation and clearly confessing and demonstrating what it means to be distinctly Lutheran.
- values Christ-centered and gospel-proclaiming worship, in which Word and Sacrament alone are recognized as the powerful means through which the Holy Spirit works, and which reflects and treasures the rich heritage passed down to us through the ages.
- is committed to Christian education on all levels, resulting in well-trained called workers and in lay members equipped to carry out their Christian vocation.
- cherishes the fellowship that unites us in a common faith, in Christian love, and in unity of doctrine and practice.
- is relevant to today's world, not because we have adjusted the message, but because the unchanging Word of God offers exactly what sinners need—a call to repentance and the unconditional assurance of forgiveness, life, and joy in Christ.
- is joyful and optimistic because it trusts in the promises of a gracious and all-powerful God.
- upholds and defends biblical values such as the sanctity of marriage as God has defined it, the God-given value of all human life, and the roles in which God has given to men and women for joyful Christian service in the home, church, and society.

As our synod continually rededicates itself to these principles, we will celebrate the amazing blessings that God has showered on us, in spite of our all-too-human failures and weaknesses. Together we will marvel that God has chosen frail and faulty vessels like us to be witnesses of his saving work in our communities, in our nation, and throughout the world. Together we will commit ourselves to carrying out that mission faithfully and fervently. Together we will recognize that faithfulness to doctrine not only does not hinder a commitment to mission efforts and outreach, but that faithfulness to the Word is the only sure foundation and springboard for our efforts to reach the lost with the saving truth of the gospel. Together we will rejoice in the gospel freedom that God has given to his church, and we will strive to exercise that freedom with great care, with extensive consultation, with Christian love, and with God-given wisdom. Together we will cherish the heritage that God has given to us, a heritage that connects us not only with the Reformers but with God's church on earth stretching back to the time of the apostles; at the same time, we will recognize that the church in every age—ours included—will continue to add to that heritage new expressions of faith that



faithfully proclaim Christ-centered biblical truth. Together we will work to uphold God's truth, bear one another's burdens, encourage one another, and forgive one another. Together we will admonish one another when necessary, but we will both give and receive admonition in a spirit of humble Christian love.

Paul's prayer for the Ephesians is a prayer also on behalf of Christians of all time, including us: "I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations" (Ephesians 3:16-21).

## **Convention reports**

The synod convention in 2009 outlined a number of areas to be addressed in the two years that followed. Delegates to the 2011 convention will hear detailed reports outlining the efforts and progress made during the past biennium, as well as descriptions of future plans and efforts, in the following areas:

- Resuming an aggressive effort to plant home mission congregations and to expand the reach of existing mission congregations (Home Missions).
- Expanding and enhancing world mission efforts through traditional and non-traditional mission strategies (World Missions).
- Supporting and maintaining our ministerial education system (Ministerial Education).
- Increasing our emphasis on congregation-wide involvement in reaching the lost (Commission on Evangelism).
- Developing and implementing a four-year stewardship emphasis for congregational use (Ministry of Christian Giving).
- Initial planning for the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation (Reformation 500 Committee).
- Development of a flexible program of continuing education for called workers (Committee for Continuing Education for Called Workers).
- Increased integration of ministerial education programs with mission experiences (Ministerial Education, World Missions, and Home Missions).
- Forging closer relationships with church bodies around the world that are united with us in doctrine and confession (Commission on Inter-Church Relations).
- Emphasizing the centrality of the means of grace in worship and outreach (Commission on Worship, Commission on Evangelism).
- Improving the synod's ability to provide assistance to congregations seeking to improve their ability to minister to members and prospective members (Congregation and Ministry Support Group).
- Conscious efforts to utilize early childhood ministry as a means for outreach (Commission on Lutheran Schools).
- Development of a long-range plan (Synodical Council).
- Enhancing the circuit pastor system for better spiritual care of called workers and enhanced synodical participation by congregations (Conference of Presidents, Ministry of Christian Giving).
- Improving ways to communicate to congregations and individuals the synod's mission and ministry programs (Communication Services).
- Stressing and communicating the recognition that the Congregation Mission Offering provides the foundational support for our mission and ministry, while making careful use of other financial blessings God provides (Conference of Presidents).
- Developing additional strategies for improved short- and long-term financial stability; continuing to make improvements in the transparency of financial reporting; and improving the planning processes for program and budget (Synodical Council).

Delegates will have the opportunity to hear and respond to reports on all of these activities in great detail throughout this convention. Many of these areas will be addressed and expanded in the proposed "In Christ Alone" long-range plan that will be considered by this convention.

## **The proposed ministry financial plan (budget)**

After the difficult reductions to the synod's mission and ministry programs that took place in 2007, we are thankful that the financial situation has stabilized. Congregations and individuals faithfully provided financial support in spite of a difficult economy and in spite of the fact that local congregations are facing financial challenges as well.

As the ministry financial plan was developed, it was our prayer that our synod would be able to move from the previous reductions to a resumed expansion of mission and ministry. Faithful stewardship would necessitate making wise use of the resources available, including a generous grant from WELS Church Extension Fund to provide Home Missions with additional funding for capital needs in various mission locations.

Planning was carried out with several guiding principles in mind: a commitment to “careful” (not “cautious”) expansion of our efforts to proclaim the gospel throughout the United States and around the world; a plan to maintain our system of ministerial education that would enable it to continue producing the quality and quantity of called workers we require; and an effort to improve our ability to provide assistance to congregations in carrying out their local ministries. All of these efforts would be accompanied by a continuing commitment to reduce administrative costs wherever possible. As you consider the details of the proposed ministry plan, you will see that the proposal will enable us, God-willing, to achieve those goals.

The proposed ministry financial plan will provide for a resumption of the careful expansion of our synod’s mission and ministry in the short term. It should be noted, however, that longer term sustained expansion of our mission will be possible only if Congregation Mission Offerings reverse their decline of recent years and return to historic annual increases.

### **Capital debt**

In 2007 the synod’s capital debt was \$22.3 million. The Year of Jubilee offering, continuing gifts from individuals and congregations, and budgeted payments have reduced the debt by almost half to approximately \$11.7 million. We join in thanking a gracious God for enabling us to make such progress even in difficult economic times. If current payments are maintained, the debt will be entirely removed within eight years. Once that happens, the \$1.6 million budgeted for debt repayment will be available to support other synodical missions and ministry.

### **Relocation of the synod offices**

In 2010 a study was conducted to determine the cost of making necessary repairs to the current Synod Administration Building on Mayfair Road. Conservative estimates indicated that nearly \$2 million would be required to bring the building up to code and make necessary repairs on major infrastructure. Such an investment would have required the synod to use precious resources that would be better used to support the ongoing mission and ministry of the synod.

In the fall of 2010 a real estate developer made an offer to purchase the existing administration buildings on Mayfair Road for \$2.8 million. With that offer in hand, a committee investigated the various options for relocating the synod’s administrative offices. After ruling out the construction of new facilities because of the cost, the committee looked at eight available existing buildings. One of those buildings, located along I-94 in Pewaukee, emerged as an ideal prospect for relocation. The Synodical Council authorized the acceptance of the offer to purchase the existing synod administration building for \$2.8 million. It also authorized an offer to purchase the Pewaukee building for a final price of \$2.82 million.

The Synodical Council had indicated that it would be willing to relocate the synod offices only if it could be done without the use of operating funds. The proceeds from the sale of the current building, along with facilities funds already on hand, will make this possible and will also cover the costs of moving, furnishings, and minor renovations in the new building.

A complete and current report will be provided to the convention by the synod’s chief financial officer, Mr. Todd Poppe.

### **Inter-church relations**

WELS continues to thank God for the close relationship it enjoys with the Evangelical Lutheran Synod. The two synods are in frequent contact through their presidents, in biennial meetings of the Evangelical Lutheran Confessional Forum (involving administrative leaders from the two synods), and in annual meetings between the WELS Commission on Inter-Church Relations and the ELS Doctrine Committee.

We also continue to forge stronger relationships with confessional Lutheran church bodies throughout the world. Most of these church bodies are members of the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference (CELC). The CELC meets every three years, with the last meeting held in New Ulm, Minn., last June and the next meeting scheduled for 2014 in Peru.

It was noted earlier in this report that our synod’s fellowship with the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod came to a sad end in 1961. That breach continues today due to continuing doctrinal differences in a number of areas. We are

encouraged to note, however, that the LCMS, under the guidance of its new president, Matthew Harrison, has begun a synodwide effort to discuss a wide range of doctrinal issues and to foster a greater doctrinal unity and consistency within the Missouri Synod. We pray that these discussions will be guided by the clear teachings of Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions.

No doctrinal discussions between WELS and the Missouri Synod have taken place, nor are any planned. One possible point of contact between the synods will be free conferences. A free conference is a theological conference outside of the fellowship relationship in which doctrinal topics are presented and discussed in order to clarify doctrinal positions and to identify areas of agreement and disagreement. One such free conference was held last April in Tacoma, Wash. Others may take place in the coming year. Communication and contact with other Lutheran bodies is fully in keeping with the 1961 synodical resolution which stated, "Under conditions which do not imply a denial of our previous testimony, we stand ready to resume discussions with the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod . . . these discussions to be conducted outside the framework of fellowship" (*Proceedings of the Thirty-Sixth Convention*, p. 198).

Last summer the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) voted to permit the ordination of practicing homosexual pastors. As a result, several hundred congregations have voted to leave the ELCA and have formed a new Lutheran synod called the North American Lutheran Church. WELS received a number of inquiries from ELCA congregations, but none chose to seek affiliation with our synod. The North American Lutheran Church retains the doctrinal positions of the ELCA with the exception of its view on the ordination of homosexual pastors.

### **Assignment of called worker candidates**

In May the synod's Assignment Committee met in New Ulm and Mequon to assign candidates as pastors, teachers, and staff ministers. At Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary all members of the graduating class, along with previous graduates who had been assigned to one-year calls (a total of 58 men), were assigned. This is the first time in several years that all available candidates were assigned. At Martin Luther College 79 candidates available for assignment anywhere for the teaching ministry received their assignments. Twenty-eight candidates were not placed on assignment day; 23 of those were still waiting assignment as of the middle of July.

We are thankful to the Lord of the church for providing these willing workers, and we pray that God would be with those candidates who are still awaiting assignment.

### **Special reports and recommendations**

In addition to the normal items of business, this convention will address a number of special issues. In some cases, the reports will include recommendations on which the convention will take action. In other cases, the reports will provide the convention with details of work that has been carried out, giving the convention the opportunity to provide reaction and direction for work still to be carried out.

- The report of the Conference of Presidents on the termination of divine calls for financial reasons, which was requested by the 2009 convention. It is not intended to be an exhaustive doctrinal study or a formal doctrinal statement. It outlines in summary format the biblical basis for our synod's practical application of the doctrine of the divine call.
- The report of the Translation Evaluation Committee. This committee was appointed to carry out an evaluation of the 2011 New International Version of the Bible (as well as other available translations) and to report its preliminary findings to the 2011 convention. This study was necessary because the current New International Version will not be available after 2013, and the synod will need to decide prior to that date which translation will be used in its publications. While no final decision is planned at this convention, delegates will have the opportunity to provide reaction and direction to the committee. Since this decision will have a major impact on our synod for decades to come, all other options (including the consideration of a different existing translation, the revision of an existing translation, or even a project to create an entirely new Lutheran translation) can and should be discussed before a final decision is made.
- The report of the Committee for Continuing Education of Called Workers, which outlines progress that has been made, especially in the area of creating a flexible program for continuing education for pastors.
- The proposed "In Christ Alone" long-range plan, which was developed by the Synodical Council and incorporates suggestions and revisions provided by the districts. The plan is not intended to be a compilation of detailed strategies; it is rather intended to be a broad road map outlining where our synod, under God, hopes to be in the year 2017, with specific strategies to be developed by those entrusted with planning and carrying out the work.



## Challenges ahead

This convention will review the many blessings that God has showered on our synod during the past two years. We will hear stories and see the faces of people in our world mission fields who have been brought from darkness into the light by the power of the gospel. We will hear of home mission congregations and established congregations reaching their communities with the good news of Christ crucified and risen. We will hear of the continuing blessings God gives to our church through young people training for ministry and growing in their zeal to proclaim the saving gospel to people of all races and cultures. We will thank God for congregations and individuals faithfully bringing their thank offerings to support their local ministries and to work together through the synod to take the gospel to people they will never meet and to places they will never visit. We will thank God for continuing to give our synod the commitment to remain faithful to his Word and to defend his truth. We will marvel at what God has done through called workers and laypeople who are flawed in their faith and who all too often fail to live up to their high calling.

At this convention, we will also hear of challenges and address problems. But these challenges and problems facing us are in themselves blessings from God, as difficult as they may seem. We see our precious system of Christian education struggling because of lower enrollments and insufficient resources. We note with proper concern that the synod itself is not growing as it once did and that a hostile and godless culture seems not to be interested in the saving gospel we proclaim. We agonize over the fact that we are not expanding our mission efforts as far and as fast as we sincerely desire. We struggle with the challenge of reaching as many people as possible without changing the message and relying on something other than the power of the gospel. Every day—and we need look no farther than ourselves—we are reminded of the sinful frailties of called workers and laypeople.

It is no secret that in recent years there have been some visible tensions in our synod over questions of the philosophy of and approach to ministry. There are those who have been very vocal in their commendable desire to reach more people with the gospel. There have also been those who have correctly emphasized the importance of maintaining the scriptural integrity of all doctrine and practice and retaining our distinct heritage as Lutherans. What needs to be emphasized is that these two views are not and should not be mutually exclusive. Both the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions emphasize that these two concerns and commitments must go hand in hand in a faithful church body. Zeal for outreach does not sacrifice faithfulness to biblical truth; rather, God-pleasing outreach must flow from a commitment to the pure Word. A commitment to remain faithful to biblical doctrine and practice does not neglect or deny the importance of mission outreach; in fact, Christians who treasure the message that God has entrusted to them, say eagerly with the early disciples, “Salvation is found in no one else [than Jesus], for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved. . . . We cannot help speaking about the things that we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:12,20). Conversely, outreach that minimizes the importance of holding on to sound doctrine and practice or tailors the message to suit the tastes of unbelieving hearers will eventually lose the truth; emphasis on doctrinal purity without a commitment to proclaiming that truth will eventually become dead orthodoxy. Confessional Lutherans will always emphasize both: faithfulness in doctrine and zeal for gospel proclamation. Just as the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions articulate and celebrate the amazing freedom that God has given us in Christ while exercising that freedom in wisdom and love, so the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions emphasize the dual responsibility and privilege of both defending God’s truth and proclaiming it wherever and whenever God gives the opportunity. A common commitment to both of these important tasks will strengthen our unity of purpose as a synod and focus our attention on the mission that God has entrusted to us.

Jesus never promised that his church would be free of problems and difficulties. Just the opposite. “In this world,” Jesus said, “you will have trouble.” But he didn’t stop with that sobering prediction. He immediately assured his followers, “But take heart! I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). In all of those challenges and problems God does not merely promise to bless us in spite of those problems. He promises actually to use those challenges and problems to bring blessing to us as he uses all things to work together for the good of those who love him. In every difficulty we face, God gives us the opportunity to place our trust and reliance completely on him and on the power of his means of grace. In those problems that confront us—problems that sometimes result in discussions and opinions that are loveless and unbrotherly—God gives us the opportunity to remember that he has made us members of the body of Christ and that the unity of faith we share is a priceless treasure that should never be put at risk because of personal pride or arrogance. In the disagreements that arise, God will bless us by teaching us that the only God-pleasing way to settle disagreements is to seek answers in his Word, to speak the truth at all times, and to speak the truth in love. No matter what the challenge or problem, no matter what thorn in the flesh God allows to come into our synodical or congregational lives, he will use it to remind us that when we realize our own weakness, that is when we are strong—strong in our Savior, strong in his Word, strong in his unchanging promises.

There have been times in the past when speakers at conventions have called on the synod to repent of its sins. The problem with such a call is that synods can't repent. Only people can. As we look to the future in our walk together as a synod, let that walk begin with humble and sincere repentance in each of us individually and personally at the foot of our Savior's cross—repentance for my weakness of faith, for my lack of trust, for my wavering commitment, for my selfishness, and for my sinful pride. As we do that, our gracious God will do as he always does: he will welcome prodigals back to himself with the full assurance that the blood of his Son has covered our sin and removed our guilt. He will assure us that he has brought us from death to life and from darkness into his light. And even more, as we rejoice in his forgiving love, he will continue to give us the amazing opportunity to be witnesses and proclaimers of all that he has done for us and for a world of dying sinners.

It goes without saying that our synod is not perfect. It can't be perfect, because it is a family of weak and imperfect sinners. That will remain true until Christ returns to transform his Church Militant into the Church Triumphant. In the meantime, we have joy and comfort in knowing that God has taken imperfect and flawed sinners like us, declared us to be perfect in his eyes for the sake of Christ, and placed us in this world to carry out the mission that he has entrusted to us.

That gracious act of God—accomplished on Calvary's cross and proclaimed in the Scriptures—places our synod in an incredibly wonderful position. We have the truth of God's Word. We have been entrusted with the unconditional gospel of forgiveness and life in Christ. God has placed us into a dying world and has opened the doors of opportunity to bring to that world exactly what it needs—and something that few other churches are offering: the gospel of Christ crucified—proclaimed by the Scriptures, summarized in the Lutheran Confessions, preserved for us through the generations—is ours by God's grace to hold for ourselves and to proclaim to the world. May God continue to lead us to say with Paul, "For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2). By God's grace, that is our precious heritage. That is our strength. That is our joy. And that is our blessed mission.

*Soli Deo Gloria!* To God alone be the glory!

# Essay:

## “Cleansed and fed: The sacramental life”

July 25, 2011

Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.

Rev. Jon F. Zabell

Note: This essay and the one that follows appear in their original format to preserve Greek and Hebrew notations and the authors' individual styles.

Scripture quoted in this essay is from NIV © 1984, Biblica, Inc.

### **God Has Poured His Love upon Us**

1. *Baptism saves.*
2. *Baptism sanctifies.*
3. *Baptism deserves our careful attention.*

### **God Feeds Us Jesus**

1. *Holy Communion is a mystery beyond comprehension.*
2. *Holy Communion is a gift beyond compare.*
3. *Holy Communion deserves our careful attention.*

### **The Sacraments Promote Good Theology**

1. *The Sacraments celebrate God's mysteries.*
2. *The Sacraments preach gospel certainty.*
3. *The Sacraments inform what we do in worship.*

#### *Abbreviations*

LW = Luther's Works

SC = Small Catechism

LC = Large Catechism

AC = Augsburg Confession

Ap = Apology

SA = Smalcald Articles

FC SD = Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration

**C**ongregations are like people. Each one has a personality. Some seem to be busy all the time; others just plod along. Some seem happy and confident despite abundant problems; others seem heartbroken and discouraged despite abundant blessings. From time to time, we all need a good pep talk. If my congregation suffers from low self-esteem, then maybe it's time to get busy and start new programs of ministry. If we're sailing along, then it might be time to get more members involved. Every congregation can benefit from this kind of common sense thinking and hard work, and a good pep talk works like a strong cup of coffee. It gets everyone moving.

Just as long as none of it draws our attention away from what we always desperately need. The Church is the bride of Christ. Our relationship with him depends upon his daily expressions of love and forgiveness, the forgiveness he won for us by his death and resurrection. We need more than a cup of coffee to get us moving. We need him.

In other words, we need the Gospel in Word and Sacraments. We know that. Our church body is magnificently blessed to know what a treasure his Means of Grace are. We are not ashamed of the Gospel. Every member is baptized. Communion has a regular place on our church calendars. The phrase "Word and Sacraments" regularly rolls off our tongues.

Still, what rolls so easily off our tongues might not always be so readily playing in our hearts and lives. Even though each of us is covered daily in the offensive stench of our sin, weak with hunger for the love and forgiveness only our Savior can give, we still kid ourselves into thinking all we need is a cup of coffee. We don't go running to the Lord's Table; we shuffle our feet. We don't dive into the waters of our baptism; we dip our toes to test the water.

The people of the WELS, our pastors, teachers, and synod leaders, and the presenter standing before you today regularly need encouragements toward sacramental living, not because we are teaching God's Word incorrectly, but because we are by nature always getting it wrong in our hearts and lives.

Herein lies one of the wonders of God's profound grace. He uses the very doctrine we forsake in our hearts and lives to bring our hearts and lives back in line with his doctrine. He uses the very Word and Sacraments we by nature despise to bring us back to a godly appreciation and godly use of his Word and Sacraments.

So let's dive in!

## **God Has Poured His Love upon Us**

### ***1. Baptism saves.***

In Old Testament times, baptisms were purely symbolic. God used certain kinds of baptisms, ritual washings, to teach his people that the only way to get close to him is with *clean hands and a pure heart* (Exodus 30:17-21; Psalm 24:3-4). God was showing people pictures of forgiveness and saying, "Let this remind you of the Savior you need. He's coming to wash away your sins!"

When Jesus arrived, the time for Old Testament symbolism came to an end. Just before his ascension into heaven, Jesus gave his disciples a new kind of baptism. He established a connection between baptism and the saving name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and he told his disciples to use this ritual as a means for making disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:18-20). Paul calls Baptism "a washing with water through the word" (Ephesians 5:26). Jesus wants us to use this word from God



(God's name) together with the water as a means or vehicle for him to deliver to us the blessings and the power of his saving love.<sup>1</sup>

New Testament Baptism is no mere symbol or picture. In his first letter, Peter says, "Baptism now saves you" (3:21). In his letter to Titus, Paul calls Baptism a "washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit (3:5). "To be baptized in God's name is to be baptized not by men, but by God himself" (LC IV, 10).<sup>2</sup> As the water of Holy Baptism touches your skin, God washes you, heart and soul.

### ***Baptism saves because of Jesus.***

Baptism saves because Baptism connects you to the Savior. At the cross, Jesus paid the price for the sins of the whole world. At your baptism God poured that forgiveness on you. There is an unbreakable connection between your baptism and the death of Jesus. Paul says, "Don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?" (Romans 6:3). In a manner of speaking, the water of Baptism is "colored with Christ's blood."<sup>3</sup>

Baptism also connects you to the resurrection of Jesus. Peter says, "Baptism saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 3:21). Paul says that in Baptism you have been "raised with him" (Colossians 2:12). Baptism is powered by the death and resurrection of Jesus and it connects you to him.

### ***We receive Baptism's benefits through faith.***

Some might think that the application of water and the speaking of God's Word are like a magical incantation. They treat Baptism superstitiously, as though God were casting a saving spell upon us. But God doesn't speak his words into thin air. He speaks to our hearts. Jesus says, "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved" (Mark 16:16, emphasis added).

God doesn't ask us to come up with this faith on our own. We couldn't do it, even if we tried (Ephesians 2:1). Faith is "not from yourselves, it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8). In Baptism, God gives us the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38b). The Holy Spirit puts God's saving name on us, and gives us faith in that name. "No one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:3).<sup>4</sup>

### ***Forgiveness***

One key blessing of Baptism is divine forgiveness (Acts 2:38a). We tend to think of our sin as though it were a small thing, an occasional problem in our lives. We tend to define our sin according to how badly it hurts someone else. Since most of us do our best not to hurt people, we tend to think that our sin is only a minor flaw. If this is how we think of sin, then Baptism will never matter much to us.

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<sup>1</sup> In Luther's Small Catechism he says, "For without God's Word the water is just plain water and not Baptism. But with this Word it is Baptism, that is, a gracious water of life and a washing of rebirth by the Holy Spirit" (IV).

<sup>2</sup> Since God is the one doing all the work, the person who performs a baptism is merely a steward of God's gift. So also the one who is baptized simply receives what God gives "That baptism is a gift of God, not a work of ours, we confess most incisively in our practice of infant baptism. We baptize infants because they too need the Savior. We baptize infants because Jesus invited them to come to him. We baptize infants because Jesus said that these "tiny ones" believe in him." Theodore Hartwig, "Sacramental Piety in Lutheran Worship: Benchmarks of Lutheran Theology." (WELS National Conference on Worship, Music, and the Arts, 1996), 8.

<sup>3</sup> Johann Gerhard, *A Comprehensive Explanation of Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper* (1610), (Malone, Texas: Repristination Press, 2000), 82.

<sup>4</sup> See Appendix A for more about Baptism and faith.

God's Word reveals the ugly truth about your sin and mine. All humankind is born in sin (Psalm 51:5). This sin is the absence of even the tiniest bit of goodness (Romans 7:18, Ephesians 2:1). We have no ability to change our sinful condition (Romans 7:21). Our sinful condition comes with a death sentence (Romans 6:23; Romans 5:12). Sin's punishment, death, is not only a physical, earthly punishment, but also a spiritual, eternal one (Revelation 20:14-15). Our sinful condition leads to sinful actions, which also condemn us (Matthew 15:19).

In Baptism God washes all of this sin away (Acts 22:16). This doesn't mean that a baptized person no longer sins (1 John 1:8). It means that God doesn't condemn us for our sins (Romans 8:1). For Jesus' sake, he forgives the sin you were born with, the sins you've committed, and the sins you will commit. No sin is left untouched by the forgiveness God gives us in Baptism.

"Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him" (Psalm 32:2).

### ***A baptized believer is a New Testament Noah.***

Where would you be without this forgiveness from God? When God sent a flood to destroy nearly every living thing in the world, Noah witnessed firsthand just how serious our holy God is about sin (Genesis 7:21). But God had not given up on his plan to send a Savior. By rescuing faithful Noah, God was preserving his promise in this world. From Noah's perspective, the destroying water of the "sin-flood" was also a water of rescue that lifted him and his family above the death and destruction of sin.

In the New Testament, the Apostle Peter says, "In [Noah's ark] only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also" (1 Peter 3:21). Your baptism is both a drowning and a rescue. It is God's picture of the person you are by nature, filled through and through with wickedness and sin, and it is a real drowning of that person, as real as the flood water that swept wicked unbelievers away in Noah's day. At the same time it is a real rescue, as real as the ark God provided for Noah.

### ***In Baptism, God robes you in the righteousness of Jesus.***

In John's Revelation of heaven, he sees multitudes of people in white robes, holding palm branches, and praising God for saving them. One of twenty-four elders tells John how these particular people happened to arrive in such a glorious place. He says, "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Revelation 7:14).

Jesus' death on the cross covers the filth and wretchedness of our sin, so that when God the Father considers everything we are and everything we've done, he chooses to see only his holy, innocent, sinless Son. Like Noah after his sin of drunkenness (Genesis 9:20-23), we lie naked and helpless in our shame, but God refuses to look. He carefully drapes the righteousness of Jesus over us, so that every inch of us is covered. It happened on the day we were baptized. Paul says, "All of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ" (Galatians 3:27). And not even death can rob us of Baptism's blessings.

### ***All of this defies human understanding.***

When all is said and done, it doesn't look like the one baptized has received the gift of the Holy Spirit. All we see is some wet skin and maybe some tousled hair. How can this external, physical action produce internal, spiritual effects, like forgiveness, life, and salvation, even in the hearts of infants? We can't see it happening. We can't fully explain how it's possible. All we have to go on is what God's Word tells us.

We wouldn't have it any other way. We're happy to let our confidence in Baptism rest on God's Word, and not on our own feelings or opinions. God is incapable of speaking a word that isn't true. Our feelings and opinions change; God's Word never will.

## **2. Baptism sanctifies.**

### ***You were crucified with Jesus.***

Sometimes a person who has been declared medically dead is revived a short while later. What kind of story can such a person tell us? People want to know: "What was it like to be dead?" One thing is certain about being dead. Being dead means you're done with sin. In Baptism, God declared that you were dead. In his letter to the Romans, Paul says, "Don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?" (6:3). He explains this by saying that we are no longer "slaves to sin - - because anyone who has died has been freed from sin." (6:6, 7)

If you hadn't died with Jesus, you'd always be looking for ways to get away with things. You would think of God's forgiveness as though it were a free pass to commit all kinds of sins. If your sinful flesh still held sway after God raised you to spiritual life, God's forgiveness would actually drive you away from him, because you'd always be using it for your own purposes instead of his. When you died, so did your desire to live apart from God.

### ***God raised you with Jesus.***

On the Last Day, God will raise all people from the dust of death, and he will bring believers to live with him forever in heaven (John 5:28, 29; Matthew 25:34-40). We will spend all eternity with all the saints and angels, offering perfect praises to our Triune God (Revelation 7:9-17). We can't see our future life yet, but we know it's coming. God has promised it.

In Baptism, God has raised us from spiritual death so that we can serve him in perfect righteousness *in this life*. As it is with our future life in heaven, we can't yet see this reality, but that doesn't make it less real. God says that it is so, and so we believe him. Because we were raised with Jesus, we are saints through faith in him, and we live that way. "You have been buried with (Christ) in baptism and raised... You died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God" (Colossians 2:12; Colossians 3:3). "By placing his name on us, Christ pulls us onto the cross, carries us into his tomb, and quickens us with his resurrection."<sup>5</sup>

Baptism may take less time than it takes to wash your hands before supper. But when God baptized you, he baptized your whole life. Your baptism covers the day of your birth into this world, the day of your departure from this world, and every other day in between. Don't think of your baptism as though it were only a distant event in your past. Your baptism is a present reality. "Baptism is a bath of renewal; it is begun in Baptism, but it endures for a lifetime."<sup>6</sup>

### ***You are a saint and a sinner.***

Some might wonder why we need our *whole life* baptized. They think that after you've been brought to saving faith in Jesus, living a God-pleasing life is up to you. They'll agree that if you slip into sin from time to time, God will be there to forgive you. But they don't think you should spend all your

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<sup>5</sup> Troy Dahlike, "Hidden In Christ: A Baptismal Perception of the Imperceptible." (*Logia*, Vol. IX, No. 2, Eastertide, 2000), 11

<sup>6</sup> Gerhard, *ibid*, 109



time thinking about your sin and God's forgiveness. At some point they'd suggest that you move on to other topics. You need to get out there and *do something*, don't you?

It's true that we need to live according to God's will. But we need to remember that in this life, we never move past the cycle of sin and forgiveness. Saint Paul called himself the "chief of sinners" and a "wretched man." He said, "I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature."

A Christian is, at the same time, a saint and a sinner (Romans 7:22-23). This means that a Christian loves God above all things. It means he wants always and only to listen to him, pray to him, and serve him. It also means that he hates God, wants nothing to do with his Word or with prayer, and wants to serve only himself. One Christian is two people at once.

Where, then, do we stand with God? Which person defines us in his eyes? Baptism answers that question loudly and clearly. We are sons of God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:27). Baptism makes us saints in God's eyes.

But because of the continuing presence of our sinful nature, we have a battle on our hands. Every saint is called also to be a soldier. Think of how simply we confess this truth in Luther's Small Catechism:

Baptism means that the old Adam (a.k.a. "old sinful nature") in us should be drowned by daily contrition and repentance, and that all its evil deeds and desires be put to death. It also means that a new person should daily arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever (SC IV).

There is no fiercer battle than this one, and it lasts your whole life long. According to our sinful nature, we don't want to live by faith. We don't want our lives to be hidden with Christ; we want God to lay out our successes and victories in full sight. "Does the old Adam really have to be drowned?" we wonder. "Can't the new person come forth without the old Adam dying?" But there isn't room for the both of you. Paul says "put off your old self which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires," and "put on the new self which was created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness" (Ephesians 4:22-24).

### ***Your baptism is a daily rescue operation.***

The battle rages on, day after day. When it comes to fixing what's wrong with ourselves on a daily basis, we are our own worst enemies. We tend to treat spiritual renewal like it's a diet program. We think it's about will power. Sinful thoughts and attitudes beckon like an open refrigerator door at midnight, and we think: "Just say no." "Try harder!" That might work when it comes to losing weight, but it will never power your Christian living. Spiritual renewal doesn't start inside of us. It can't. We are no match for our wicked, God-hating, sinful flesh.

That's the beauty of Holy Baptism. Your baptism is from God.

Temptation comes knocking. Devil, world, and flesh rise up in mutiny against us. They're out for blood, and we're in danger of being overrun. There's no negotiating with this vicious mob. There's no help to be found from inside ourselves. Baptism is like a fire hose at a prison riot.

Our consistent failure to measure up to God's expectations takes its toll. The memory of sins past and present plagues us. Our utter inability to improve our wicked sinful flesh shames us. How easily we let ourselves be ruled by a squirming conscience! By all outward appearances we may be doing our job and fulfilling our callings, while in truth we are dying of thirst. Jesus says, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled." Your baptism is your Rephidim



(Exodus 17:6), your oasis in the desert; a divine pool of pure forgiveness that satisfies your thirst and puts you back to work with a clean and happy conscience.

Every enemy to your sanctified living meets its match in Holy Baptism.

"Baptism is, in short, so full of consolation and grace that heaven and earth cannot understand it. But it requires skill to believe this, for the treasure is not lacking, but this is lacking: people who grasp it and hold it firmly" (LC IV, 39, 40).

### **3. Baptism deserves our careful attention.**

#### ***Ceremonies and symbols***

We Christians love to be reminded of our baptism.

At the start of worship, we hear our pastor invoke the name of the Triune God, and we see him form the sign of the cross that was made over our head and our heart when we were baptized. In the corporate confession of our sins, the whole congregation binds up the old Adam and throws him into the sea. In the pastor's absolution God raises us all from the dead. Think of all the other ways we hear and proclaim the work of Father, Son and Spirit in church, in our prayers, our hymns, our creeds, all the way to the Trinitarian blessing at the end. It's all a return to Baptism.

Even before a word in church is spoken, the baptismal font speaks for itself. Since we know what Baptism means, it makes sense that we would want to give our font a place of prominence, together with the altar and the pulpit, or "ambo." These visual symbols remind us of God's powerful Means of Grace. Baptism occupies a central place in the life of a Christian and the life of the church. It wouldn't be out of place to treat the design and the placement of our baptismal fonts with the same degree of careful diligence that goes into the creation and promotion of a company logo.

On special occasions when we are privileged to witness a baptism, we have double reason to give thanks, first for the person who is being baptized, then for our own baptism, which is a daily reality.

If you'd like to see a visible connection between the baptisms in your church and the resurrection of Jesus, light a Paschal<sup>7</sup> candle on the Sundays of Easter, and then again whenever there's a baptism or funeral. Use a baptismal candle, too. This candle is lit from the Paschal candle, sent home with the person who was baptized, and relit on baptismal anniversaries as a remembrance of Holy Baptism's continuing comfort and power.

To impress on people the way Baptism clothes us with Christ, you can create a simple white garment to be placed over a person's head after Baptism.

One of the great baptismal treasures of the Lutheran church is Martin Luther's Flood Prayer (See Appendix B). Luther takes a page from the Apostle Peter's book when he casts this prayer for the one baptized into the imagery of the great flood (1 Peter 3:20-21).

In *Christian Worship Supplement*, you can find a *Gathering Rite on Baptism*, which uses words and music to connect the opening hymn, confession and absolution, and the song of praise all under one baptismal theme.<sup>8</sup> There was an intentional effort to include a good number of good baptism hymns in *Christian Worship Supplement*, to add to the good number already present in our hymnal. Like

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<sup>7</sup> "Paschal" relates to the Passover and to Easter. When early Christians celebrated the resurrection of Jesus, the Paschal (Passover) Lamb, they called that day "Pascha." A Paschal candle may be placed near the baptismal font.

<sup>8</sup> The rite includes this instruction: "This alternate beginning for worship is intended for use not only when there is a baptism but may be used on any occasion to remind God's people of Baptism's continuing blessings" (*Christian Worship Supplement*, p. 8)

the *Gathering Rite on Baptism*, these hymns beg to be used even on Sundays when there is no baptism, because we live in our baptisms every day.

When it comes to the rite of baptism, simple is good.<sup>9</sup> We need to continue to examine our baptismal practice to make sure that none of our accompanying ceremonies and traditions draws people's eyes away from the washing with water through the word.<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, good ceremonies and meaningful traditions can communicate and affirm for us the blessings of Holy Baptism as well as testifying to our connection to Christians around the world and from days past (See Appendix C).

### ***Making the sign of the cross***

Luther teaches in his Catechism that each day we should "make the sign of the cross" and say "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen." Some people cross themselves because they are superstitious. They treat this personal ritual as though it were a good luck charm that will help them sink a free throw or pass a driver's exam. Others try to make the practice of crossing yourself mandatory by suggesting that if you don't do it, then you are not a true Christian. This treats the ritual like it's more important than the message behind it. The outward sign of the cross has no divine power in itself. But it can be a powerful, personal reminder of who you are and whose you are.

In the morning or at night when a Christian is confessing his sins to God in prayer, the mind is often occupied with many things. The action involved in making the sign of the cross can work like a sheep dog to corral our thoughts back to where they belong: every day we die with Christ, and every day God raises us to new life by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. When done in Christian freedom, crossing yourself in the name of the Triune God can be a good way to help you remember your baptism.

### ***Encouraging others***

It makes sense that in church, at home, in our hearts and minds we would want to surround ourselves with this glorious certainty that comes not from us, but from God: *I am baptized!* So also it makes sense that we would want to use this treasure in our loving admonishments and encouragements to others.

When a fellow Christian is caught in a sin, you're right to dig through Scripture to find a passage that will fit him and his situation personally. But don't forget to preach what God has already made personal for him: "You died to sin, how can you live in it any longer?" When a Christian friend is growing discouraged in her daily struggle against sin, you can preach divine comfort that is both objectively true

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<sup>9</sup> In 1523, Martin Luther published a rite of Baptism in German in which he retained many of the ceremonies of the medieval church for the sake of weak consciences, but he added this commentary as part of an epilogue to the rite: "Now remember, too, that in baptism the external things are the least important, such as blowing under the eyes, signing with the cross, putting salt into the mouth, putting spittle and clay into the ears and nose, anointing the breast and shoulders with oil, signing the crown of the head with the chrism, putting on the christening robe, placing a burning candle in the hand, and whatever else has been added by man to embellish baptism. For most assuredly baptism can be performed without all these, and they are not the sort of devices from which the devil shrinks or flees" (LW 53, 102). In a later revision of this rite (1526), Luther did indeed excise many of these ceremonies. But he kept, among other things, his *Sinfflutgebet* and the practice of vesting the baptized person in a white garment.

<sup>10</sup> For an in-depth study of the ceremonies and traditions that have accompanied Baptism since the earliest days of the New Testament, see Charles Cortright's essay, "Ego Te Baptizo...The Church's Liturgy as Instrument of the Baptizing God" (*Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Symposium*, 2002), available online at [www.wlssays.net](http://www.wlssays.net).



and also wonderfully personal: "You're clothed with Christ; you've been raised from the dead with him. You can do this!"

### ***Reaching out***

Baptism can serve well in our conversations outside the church. Even among the unchurched, most have heard of it, and many already have a positive opinion about it. Some have already been baptized; they just don't know what it means. Some have the wrong idea; they think Baptism is something we do to show how committed we are to God. If you're looking for a way to tell someone about the gracious love of God, who forgives all sin and gives us saving faith as a gift, talk Baptism.

In short, it is good to give yourself as many reminders of your baptism as possible, all the while keeping in mind that your baptism is more than a reminder. Baptism is your daily resurrection from the dead. In Baptism God clothes you with Jesus, so that you can face the struggles under your cross without waving the white flag. However bloody the battle, you'll always come out victorious, because Jesus has risen. Baptism is useful. So let's use it!

We must think this way about Baptism and make it profitable for ourselves. So when our sins and conscience oppress us, we strengthen ourselves and take comfort and say, "Nevertheless, I am baptized. And if I am baptized, it is promised to me that I shall be saved and have eternal life, both in soul and body." (LC IV, 44)

So a truly Christian life is nothing other than a daily Baptism, once begun and ever to be continued. (LC IV, 65)

### ***At the intersection***

Part Four in Luther's Small Catechism is *The Sacrament of Holy Baptism*. Part Six is *The Sacrament of Holy Communion*. Between them comes Part Five: *The Use of the Keys and Confession*.

To help us live in our baptism, and to help us prepare for Communion, the New Testament Church can use the Keys Jesus gave us. Jesus said, "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 16:19). After his resurrection from the dead, Jesus "breathed on (his disciples) 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 20:22-23).

We can confess our sins in private before God, and receive his absolution (pronouncement of forgiveness) in the Word of God we read and hear and remember. The Keys are God's way of taking this absolution and putting it in the mouth of a flesh and blood human being. Every believer has the Keys; pastors are called to use the Keys on behalf of the congregation. After the general confession of sins in our church services, when a pastor says, "I forgive you," he is speaking on the authority of Jesus, in his place. Through his called servant, Jesus is saying to you what he said to his disciples on the evening of his resurrection: "Peace be with you."

A pastor's absolution is available on an individual basis, too.<sup>31</sup> "Before God we should plead guilty of all sins, even those we are not aware of, as we do in the Lord's Prayer. But before the pastor we should confess only those sins which we know and feel in our hearts" (SC V).<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> One form for Private Confession is available in *Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal*, p.154.

The practice of private confession and absolution has fallen largely out of use in our circles, partly, perhaps, because legalistic admonishments from days past have left a bad taste in our mouths. ("No Communion for you until you face the pastor and come clean!") But when offered freely, the practice of private confession and absolution can offer great benefits.

Overall this writer thinks we are the poorer for the death of private confession. It was a rare opportunity to personalize Law and Gospel, in private, with no hurry, where there was no danger of one's dozing off or daydreaming. To judge from the writings of our German forebears, they had a deeper sense of their own sinfulness, as well as a corresponding gratitude and relief at hearing the Good News.<sup>13</sup>

Even in secular circles this kind of personal contact between listener and counselor is considered beneficial, but when the content of such an exchange is a return to Baptism, so that by God's Law the sinful flesh is nailed to the wall and by the absolution of God's mouthpiece the new person is raised from the dead, the benefits are divine!

The pastor needs absolution, too. He needs a clean conscience. He needs outside help. Who pastors the pastor so that his work will be a joy? When his sin troubles him, let him find another pastor he trusts, to whom he can confess and be absolved.<sup>14</sup>

Freely offered and freely received, in public or in private, confession and absolution is another way of saying, "I am baptized!" So then, it is also one helpful way for the baptized to be prepared for the reception of Holy Communion.

## God Feeds Us Jesus

### ***1. Holy Communion is a mystery beyond comprehension.***

What is the Sacrament of Holy Communion? It is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ under the bread and wine, instituted by Christ for us Christians to eat and to drink (SC VI).

Such simple words! Such profound truth! Jesus' body and blood are really present under the bread and wine of Holy Communion. How can the Son of God who fills everything in every way (Ephesians 1:23) be with us, here and now, fully and completely, delivered through the vehicles of bread and wine, so that we are eating and drinking his true body and blood?

The question we might ask about the Real Presence was the same question facing the shepherds when they first saw their newborn Savior: *How?* How can He who never sleeps sleep? How can He who needs nothing need food? How can He who never changes change? The shepherds might well have asked, "How can the Son of God who fills everything in every way be with us, here and now,

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<sup>12</sup> Private confession and absolution is encouraged in our Lutheran Confessions. See AC XXV; SA III, VII; and LC V, An Exhortation to Confession.

<sup>13</sup> Mark Jeske, "The Practice of Confession and Absolution in the Lutheran Church," (August, 1979), 10

<sup>14</sup> Taken from a video presentation by John Kleinig entitled *Pastoral Care of Pastors*, presented at *Doxology: the Lutheran Center for Spiritual Care and Counsel*, a pastors' institute offered by Harold Senkbeil and Beverly Yahnke.

fully and completely, in this manger, in the flesh?" But they had the word of God's angel, and that was enough. "The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told" (Luke 2:20).

So it is with the mystery of the Real Presence in the Lord's Supper. Every step we take toward human reason and logic to solve the mystery is a step away from God's Word. God doesn't invite us to solve the mystery. He invites us to take him at his word. Note how beautifully our post-Communion prayer ties the mystery of the incarnation to the mystery of the Real Presence, and then invites thankful Christians to remember what it all means:

O God the Father, source of all goodness, in your loving kindness you sent your Son to share our humanity. We thank you that through him you have given us pardon and peace in this sacrament (*Christian Worship*, p.24).

### ***Scripture is clear.***

The Sacrament goes beyond our ability to comprehend it. But there's nothing mysterious about the way Jesus explains it to us. "Take and eat," says Jesus, "this is my body. Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant" (Matthew 26:26, 27).

Many have tried to turn these words into a metaphor or a parable. They say the bread isn't actually Jesus' body, nor the wine his blood.<sup>15</sup> But these words of Jesus are his last will and testament. When we write our own last will and testament, we choose our words carefully and we speak as clearly as possible, so that there may be no misunderstanding among our heirs. It seems strange to think that Jesus would deliver his last will and testament in a metaphor or parable without clearly explaining what he means. Interestingly, those who force their own figurative interpretation onto Jesus' words find themselves at constant war with one another, like heirs fighting over an inheritance. "What sort of a parable can it be when even learned exegetes cannot say with certainty what it actually means!"<sup>16</sup> In his treatise, *The Lord's Supper*, Martin Chemnitz asks, "What is the difference between no testament of the Son of God or an uncertain one?"<sup>17</sup> But Jesus' words are certain and clear. The bread is Jesus' body. The wine is Jesus' blood.

What's more, we need to remember who is speaking these words.

If an ordinary man had taken bread and said, "This is my body," we might regard him as a madman, deceiver, or abuser of language, and we might reject the simple, natural meaning of the words as impossible nonsense. But the Speaker here is the Son of God, who is utterly truthful and reliable and has the infinite wisdom and power to back up what he says by making his body truly present.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Some say that the bread and wine merely symbolize Jesus' body and blood. Others say that Jesus' body and blood are "spiritually present," received by faith "in a spiritual way," but this is just another way of saying that his body and blood aren't really present (FC SD, VII, 3). At one point, Andreas Carlstadt, one of the radical reformers, actually believed that when Jesus said, "This is my body," Jesus was pointing at himself.

<sup>16</sup> Hermann Sasse, "The Lord's Supper in the New Testament," *We Confess Anthology*, translated by Norman Nagel, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1984), 69.

<sup>17</sup> Martin Chemnitz, *The Lord's Supper*, translated by J.A.O. Preus. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House), 86. Chemnitz (1522-1586), known in history as "the second Martin" for his importance as a Lutheran theologian, was a key figure in the writing of the Formula of Concord (1577).

<sup>18</sup> Joel Fredrich, "The Lord Jesus Institutes Holy Communion." (*Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Symposium*, 2003), 8.



If people still want to question the simple, natural understanding of Jesus' words, let them look again at Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, where he so clearly gives apostolic testimony to the Real Presence in the Lord's Supper: "Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ?" (1 Corinthians 10:16).

Jesus' body and blood were truly present under the bread and wine he gave his disciples in the upper room on the night he was betrayed, and they are present in our use of the Sacrament, too. "Do this," Jesus tells us. So we do. We consecrate the elements, we distribute them, and we receive them. Jesus has given us these words to say, and Jesus doesn't lie. Luther says, "When he said, 'Do this,' by his own command and bidding he directed us to speak these words in his person and name: 'This is my body'" (LW 37, 187). So we know that together with the bread and wine of Communion we receive the body and blood of our Savior, just as the disciples did when they were with Jesus in the upper room.<sup>39</sup>

What our senses could never reveal to us, God's Word makes perfectly clear. Hermann Sasse said, "[The Real Presence] was for Luther, and it is still today, the great test whether we are able to found our faith on the Word of our Lord alone, or whether we still have need of some support from human sources."<sup>40</sup> Luther wrote:

With this Word you can strengthen your conscience and say, "If a hundred thousand devils, together with all fanatics, should rush forward, crying, 'How can bread and wine be Christ's body and blood?' and such, I know that all spirits and scholars together are not as wise as the Divine Majesty in His little finger" (see 1 Corinthians 1:25). (LC V, 12).

The Real Presence of Jesus' body and blood in his Supper matters. Remember who this is. This is the Word of God, made flesh, true God, begotten from eternity, and true man, born of the virgin Mary. "In Christ, all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form" (Colossians 2:9). This is the true Passover Lamb who willingly shed his blood for the sins of the world. And it's not just *that* he is present in his Supper. In Holy Communion, Jesus Christ is really present, intimately present, incarnationally present, *for you*. You can think of the doctrine of the Real Presence when you hear the opening words of the Communion liturgy: "The Lord be with you."

## ***2. Holy Communion is a gift beyond compare.***

What happens in Communion runs counter not only to sinful reason, but also to sinful pride. The world wants nothing to do with talk about a divine blood sacrifice for sin. Our old Adam is still offended, too. I don't want to hear that my sin makes me ugly, and wretched, a son of Satan. I don't want to hear that the worst day of my life in this world is still better than the eternity in hell I deserve. I don't want to hear that my sin costs infinitely more than what I can pay. But it's all true, and it's true each day.

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<sup>39</sup> Our Lutheran Confessions quote John Chrysostom (c. 349-407): "The declaration 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth' (Genesis 1:28) was spoken only once. But it is ever effective in nature, so that it is fruitful and multiplies. So also this declaration, 'This is My body; this is My blood,' was spoken once. But even to this day and up to His second coming it is effective and works so that in the Supper of the Church His true body and blood are present." (FC SD, VII, 76).

<sup>40</sup> Hermann Sasse, *This Is My Body*. (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1959), 368.

So also, divine forgiveness isn't pretty. It hinges on the bloody suffering and death of God's Lamb, the Word made flesh. Every blood sacrifice of the Old Testament pointed ahead to his cross-shaped altar. New Testament worship is no less bloody. True worship of God has always been connected to the shed blood of God's Son. We know this isn't pretty, but we still call him *Beautiful Savior*, because we know what his blood means. His death puts God's new covenant into effect: "I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more" (Jeremiah 31:34). And we approach the Lord's Table eagerly precisely because of what Jesus tells us: "This cup is the new covenant in my blood" (1 Corinthians 11:25).

### ***Medicine of immortality***

God's Son took on human flesh and died on the cross to redeem us, body and soul. By his physical resurrection from the dead, Jesus has made it clear we, too, shall rise, bodily from the dead, and live with the Lord forever, body and soul, in heaven. "I know that my Redeemer lives... Even after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God... How my heart yearns within me!" said Job (19:25-27).

In his Means of Grace, the Gospel in Word and Sacraments, the Lord serves the whole person, both soul and body. Nowhere has God promised that his Means of Grace will cure us of our diseases in this life. But if you doubt that God's help for your soul is also help for your body, read David's words in Psalm 32: "When I kept silent, my bones wasted away.... You forgave the guilt of my sin... Rejoice... Be glad... Sing!" Luther says, "For where the soul has recovered, the body also is relieved" (LC V, 68).

Because of the earthly elements of Communion and the physical action involved in eating and drinking, it's easy to see why many Christians through the ages have compared this Sacrament to "medicine."

The Lord is speaking to flesh and blood sinners, inviting them to use hands and mouths and giving them forgiveness of sins. As sin is not a "spiritual" matter alone, but one that brings the most radical consequences to the body—death—so forgiveness of sin does not come to naked souls, but to human beings who use hands and mouths to eat and drink.<sup>21</sup>

Just like the Word of God and Baptism, Communion is for body and soul, for this life and the next. In heaven some day, forever cured of all sickness in soul and body we will say, "Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us" (Isaiah 25:9). Until then, our Lord Jesus invites us to eat and to drink his true body and his true blood, which is like a "medicine of immortality."<sup>22</sup> When we come to church and see that the altar has been carefully prepared, we can remember that the Great Physician is in.

### ***"Increase our love for one another."***

Perhaps the mystery of Communion seems so other-worldly and heavenly that we miss the help it gives us here and now.

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<sup>21</sup> David Schoessow, "Medicine of Immortality," *Logia*, (January 1995), 40.

<sup>22</sup> This phrase traces as far back as Ignatius of Antioch (ca. 35 – ca. 107) who used it in reference to Communion in his letter to the Ephesians (20:2).

The problems we face each day always stem from the problem of sin and its effects in us and others. Together with God's Word and Baptism, Communion is an incredibly *practical* gift from God. It's exactly what you need, not only for a clean conscience, but for strength and wisdom to carry out your roles in life, for the glad willingness to carry your cross, for comfort in time of grief, for the desire to forgive and love the people who are hard to forgive and love, and for the eagerness to be Jesus' witness to the world. Crises of youth, mid-life, and golden years all find resolution at the Lord's Table.

More than that, Communion preaches the unity we share as fellow Christians. It connects Christians to Christ and to one another. Among like-minded Christians, Communion is a good way to strengthen family bonds and friendships. Communion is good for your marriage. Communion is good for healing divisions in your congregation. "Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf" (1 Corinthians 10:17).

There are so many hindrances and temptations of the devil and of the world that we often become weary and faint, and sometimes we also stumble (Hebrews 12:3). Therefore, the Sacrament is given as a daily pasture and sustenance, that faith may refresh and strengthen itself (Psalm 23:1-3) so that it will not fall back in such a battle, but become ever stronger and stronger (LC V, 23-24).

### ***Words and faith***

How can eating and drinking do such things? It is certainly not the eating and drinking that does such things, but the words "Given" and "poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. These words are the main thing in this sacrament, along with the eating and drinking (SC VI).

Without Jesus' words, we'd go searching for something else. Without Jesus' promise, we might instead latch on to our own actions, so that we think the blessings of Communion come as a reward for our participation. Or maybe we'd focus upon the sacramental rite apart from Jesus' death and resurrection: "*Hocus pocus*"<sup>23</sup>, my sins are forgiven." As important as it is to recognize that Jesus' body and blood are truly present in the Lord's Supper, it is equally important to believe the words he attaches to this meal.

"Since this treasure is entirely presented in the words, it cannot be received and made ours in any other way than with the heart" (LC V, 36).<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> This famous magical incantation is a play on the words of institution in Latin: *Hoc est*, "This is" my body, etc.

<sup>24</sup> Luther also said: "If the mass (i.e., Communion) is a promise, as has been said, then access to it is to be gained, not with any works, or powers, or merits of one's own, but by faith alone. For where there is the Word of the promising God, there must necessarily be the faith of the accepting man. It is plain therefore, that the beginning of our salvation is a faith which clings to the Word of the promising God, who, without any effort on our part, in free and unmerited mercy takes the initiative and offers us the word of his promise. ... Promise and faith must necessarily go together. For without the promise there is nothing to be believed; while without faith the promise is useless, since it is established and fulfilled through faith. From this everyone will readily gather that the mass, since it is nothing but promise, can be approached and observed only in faith. Without this faith, whatever else is brought to it by way of prayers, preparations, works, signs, or gestures are incitements to impiety rather than exercises of piety." (LW 36:38, 39, 42)



### ***A proclamation of Jesus' death***

A young father returned to his pew after receiving Communion. His five-year-old daughter had been observing him from her place in the pew. She asked him, "How was the true body and blood, Dad?" Her father had been doing more than receiving something. He'd been *proclaiming* something, and not just to his daughter, but to everyone else gathered at the table and assembled in church that day. Paul says, "For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (1 Corinthians 11:26). Paul is explaining what Jesus meant when he said, "Do this in remembrance of me." To remember Jesus is to proclaim his death.

In Communion, Jesus the Bridegroom proclaims his vow of love to his bride, the Church. His love and faithfulness far exceed that of any other husband. Jesus' love is real rescue from sin, death, and hell. He has made our reception of the Sacrament a part of his proclamation of love. Together with him we are proclaiming his love by proclaiming his death.

Proclaiming Jesus' death is saying more than, "Jesus died."

But now the entire Gospel and the article of the Creed – I believe in... the holy Christian Church, ... the forgiveness of sins, and so on – are embodied by the Word in this Sacrament and presented to us (LC V, 32).<sup>25</sup>

Since our reception of the Lord's Supper is a proclamation of everything we believe about Jesus, we pay careful attention to the public confession of those who join us in that proclamation by their participation in Communion with us. We invite only those from within our church fellowship to join us at the table. To do otherwise would not only preach false unity; it would preach something other than the whole Gospel of Christ. (See Appendix D: Close Communion). But the exclusiveness of this meal and this love shouldn't lead us to set it aside.

In fact, one of the key reasons we're eager to see the Holy Spirit grow our fellowship is so that many more may become a part of Christ's proclamation of love in his Holy Supper, and fellow recipients of all the Supper's blessings. We want to stand together with many others, marveling at the mystery of the incarnation of our Savior and his Real Presence in his Sacrament. We want more and more people to be able to join us in this prayer:

We give you thanks, O Lord, for the foretaste of the heavenly banquet that you have given us to eat and to drink in this sacrament. Through this gift you have fed our faith, nourished our hope, and strengthened our love. By your Spirit, help us to live as your holy people until that day when you will receive us as your guests at the wedding supper of the Lamb, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever (*Christian Worship Supplement*, p. 37)

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<sup>25</sup> As an example of the Gospel used in the broad sense, Joel Fredrich points to Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 2:2: "I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified." Fredrich writes: "Paul used a comparable expression, 'Christ . . . crucified,' to refer to the whole message he preached and taught during the eighteen months when he founded the church in Corinth... Both phrases, 'the death of the Lord' and 'Christ crucified,' sum up the plan of salvation culminating in the death and resurrection of Christ and what it all means ('The Lord Jesus Institutes Holy Communion.' *Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Symposium*, 2003), 18.

### **3. Holy Communion deserves our careful attention.**

In his Large Catechism, Luther says, "Since we now have the true understanding and doctrine of the Sacrament, there is also need for some admonition and encouragement. Then people may not let such a great treasure – daily administered and distributed among Christians – pass by unnoticed" (LC V, 39).

#### **Preparation**

When Jesus instituted Baptism, he said, "Go and baptize all nations." But he gave Communion only to his disciples and said, "Do this in remembrance of me." The Lord's Supper is only for believers. In fact, Paul says, "Whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 11:27). And he concludes: "A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup."

Luther cites Scripture and says, "Those who are lewd and morally loose must be told to stay away (1 Corinthians 5:9-13). They are not prepared to receive forgiveness of sin, since they do not desire it and do not wish to be godly" (LC V, 58).

All communicants must be prepared before they approach the table. Through the ages there has been a good deal of misunderstanding about what it means to be prepared. Luther says that under the papacy, "we tortured ourselves to be so perfectly pure that God could not find the least blemish in us. For this reason we became so timid that we were all instantly thrown into fear and said to ourselves, 'Alas! we are unworthy!'" (LC V, 55). What does one need to be properly prepared to approach the Lord's Table? No more and no less than this: faith.<sup>26</sup>

So we prepare. Saturday isn't too soon to start thinking about Sunday. We treat an approaching trip to the Lord's Table like the event that it is. It's time to drop all pretenses. Our record of faithless worrying and selfish pride is only the tip of the iceberg. It's time to remember what it means that we are by nature sinful: not a moment passes when we don't desperately need the forgiveness Jesus won. Yet our preparation is filled with joy! At this meal God will provide us his antidote for sin's poison. Here he will serve real food for starving sinners. The Lord is about to bring the once-for-all sacrifice of Jesus into the here and now, and he's going to make it personal: "for you."

Outward actions can remind us to prepare our hearts. Fasting certainly isn't necessary, but if intentionally foregoing breakfast on a Communion Sunday helps you think about the rich banquet waiting for you at the Lord's altar, then, by all means, leave your corn flakes in the cupboard.<sup>27</sup>

Even a simple thing like filling out a Communion registration card can spark our anticipation for what we're about to receive. We appreciate every practical reminder to prepare our hearts: the bulletin blurbs, the church calendar posts, the hymnal in front of us bookmarked to page 156. Better still are

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<sup>26</sup> "Fasting and other outward preparations may serve a good purpose, but he is properly prepared who believes these words: 'Given' and 'poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins.'" (SC VI).

<sup>27</sup> Pastor Richard Krause writes: "Here in America we've renounced almost all traces of past practices -- the sign of the cross, private confession, a personal visit to the pastor before Holy Communion, fasting, and so on. We have our reasons for doing this, but have we changed our Communion preparation for the better? Is our new American 'lite' generating a positive hunger for the deep things of the faith? Might we consider taking some action to better prepare for the Sacrament? Perhaps we could forgo reading the Sunday paper before church. We might instead read selected psalms, portions of the catechism, or reflect on the Ten Commandments. One might arrive at church 15 minutes earlier to read through the Communion hymns ahead of time. We could meditate on the readings of the day and ask, 'What does this mean to me?' or 'How have I failed my God?'" ("Lutheran Lite." *Lutheran Leader*, Fall 1999).



those sweet invitations we hear from the pulpit. Not that a pastor has failed if he doesn't "preach us to the table." But he shouldn't take our eagerness for granted either. Invite us, pastor. Help us remember the "and" in Word and Sacrament.

### ***Christ's command and promise***

Since preparation for Communion is such an important issue, some have actually concluded that it's better not to receive it often, to avoid the possibility of improper reception. Others have suggested that it's enough to listen to God's Word. After all, the argument goes, the message of Jesus is just as powerful from a pulpit or an open Bible as it is from the Communion Table.

But the decision as to whether or not a believer should receive Communion isn't up to us. Jesus says, "Do this in remembrance of me." Some people imagine a loophole in Jesus' command, because when he distributes the cup he says, "Do this *whenever you drink it* (emphasis added)" (1 Corinthians 11:25). They take this to mean that it's fine to stay away from the Communion table for as long as they'd like.

Martin Luther interprets the phrase in another direction. He says, "Since he speaks the words 'As often as you drink it,' it is still implied that we should do it often" (LC V, 47). He says, "It is not left free in the sense that we may despise it. I call that despising the Sacrament if one allows a long time to elapse... If you want such freedom, you may just as well have the freedom to not be a Christian and not have to believe or pray. One is just as much commanded by Christ as the other" (LC V, 49).

Besides, Luther says, "Here he offers to us the entire treasure that he has brought for us from heaven" (LC V, 66). "We must never think of the Sacrament has something harmful from which we had better flee, but as a pure, wholesome, comforting remedy that grants salvation and comfort" (LC V, 68).

Writing about Holy Communion, Gene Edward Vieth, Jr. observes:

Without food, we would starve to death. We have to eat to fuel our physical life; otherwise, we grow weak and waste away. The only food that can sustain our bodies comes from the death of other living things. Whether we are nourishing ourselves from a bloody steak or ripped up plants in a vegetarian casserole, there can be no life, even on the physical level, apart from the sacrifice of other life. What is true for physical life is true for spiritual life – we can only live if there has been a sacrifice. And we can only live if we have continuing nourishment.<sup>28</sup>

### ***Frequency of Communion celebration***

Those who recognize the profound depravity of their sinful nature, and who understand what they receive and what they proclaim at the Lord's Table will naturally want to partake of it as often as they can.

Scriptural evidence suggests that early New Testament Christians offered the Sacrament weekly.<sup>29</sup> So did the Lutheran reformers of the sixteenth century.<sup>30</sup> Of course, frequent Communion

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<sup>28</sup> Gene Edward Vieth, Jr. *The Spirituality of the Cross: The Way of the First Evangelicals*. (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House), 53.

<sup>29</sup> The "breaking of bread" in Acts 2:42 is most likely a reference to Communion, or at least to the meal that preceded Communion in those days. In 1 Corinthians 11:17-34 the Apostle Paul strongly implies that the Corinthian Christians were celebrating the Lord's Supper whenever they came together for worship. It's interesting to note that even though Paul warns the Corinthians about improper reception of Communion in these weekly services, he never suggests that they should offer Communion less often to avoid its misuse.

celebration doesn't automatically translate into the frequent participation of God's people. In the centuries following the Reformation, many Lutherans lost their appreciation for the Sacrament, and so in time, Communion was offered as rarely as four to six times per year. In the twentieth century, Lutheran church calendars began to become more populated by Communion services. For a time, most of us in the WELS were offering Communion monthly. The practice now in most WELS congregations is to offer the Lord's Supper on two weekends per month. There are some congregations among us who have begun to offer Communion every week.

The idea of offering Communion at each main service is the kind of thing that people need to mull over in their minds. Some may be concerned that more frequent Communion will make Communion seem less special. Some people are used to inviting their friends to church on non-Communion Sundays. Some will be uneasy about increasing the length of the service in an already tight Sunday morning schedule. Some may misinterpret weekly Communion to be a shift toward Roman Catholicism, which has at times elevated the Sacrament over preaching. Luther says, "No one should by any means be forced or compelled to go to the Sacrament, lest we institute a new murdering of souls" (LC V, 42).

There are answers to these objections. The better we understand the blessings of Communion, the less concerned we will be about more frequent Communion seeming less special. People can learn how to talk to the friends they invite and the visitors they welcome. Services can be carefully streamlined and schedules can be changed. Weekly Communion predates Roman Catholicism; frequent communing doesn't denigrate the preached Word, it supports it.

There is more here to discuss than the scope of this paper will allow.<sup>31</sup> Suffice it to say that a Lutheran congregation isn't less Lutheran for offering Communion less than every week. Martin Luther offers sage advice for pastors: "Preach in such a way that by their own will, without our law, they will urge themselves and, as it were, compel us pastors to administer the Sacrament" (SC Preface, 22). Let pastors preach Law and Gospel and the benefits of Christ's Supper. If there is a move toward more frequent Communion celebrations, let it come from the people.

### ***Symbols and ceremonies***

Preaching the benefits of the Lord's Supper is always in place, but a pastor doesn't have to do all this encouraging on his own. A wise pastor lets his church's architecture preach its sermon too, without getting in the way. This is true even in congregations who worship in a shared space like a school gymnasium or a strip mall. We put a table in front of our people and we teach them to call it the altar, because it's a symbol of the once-for-all willing sacrifice of God's Lamb for the sins of the world. Then we serve Communion from it. People get it. Just as the font reminds, so the altar can invite.

The Communion liturgy has a sermon to preach, too. The canticle *Holy, Holy, Holy* combines the sermon of six-winged seraphs with the shouts of the Palm Sunday parade. Everyone who sings this canticle is preaching the same glorious news: our Savior, Jesus, God and man, is really present in this Sacrament, and he's coming to save us: "*Hosanna!*" So also, in the simplest of language, the canticle, *O Christ, Lamb of God* helps us confess sin, proclaim Christ, and pray confidently for his mercy. It wasn't until after the time of Luther that Christians began using the *Song of Simeon* as a regular part of the Communion liturgy. That makes it a relatively new addition, compared to the other two canticles. But it

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<sup>31</sup> "Because the Mass is for the purpose of giving the Sacrament, we have Communion every holy day, and if anyone desires the Sacrament, we also offer it on other days, when it is given to all who ask for it." (AC XXIV, 34.) See also Ap XXIV, 1.

<sup>32</sup> Especially helpful for this discussion are Jonathan Micheel's essay: "The Church Offers Holy Communion" and Jonathan Schroeder's essay, "Worship and Outreach: A Lutheran Paradigm." Both essays are available online at [www.wlssays.net](http://www.wlssays.net).



fits well. As blessed as Simeon was to hold the world's Savior in his arms, so blessed are we to receive his true body and blood in the Lord's Supper: "My eyes have seen your salvation." A fresh look at these familiar texts, together with the preface, the proper preface, and the collect, will never fail to prepare and encourage the hearts of God's people to receive Christ's Supper.

In *Christian Worship Supplement (Divine Service II)*, you'll notice that there's a Prayer of Thanksgiving in the Communion service to help everyone linger for a few more moments upon the saving work of Jesus and the meal he is about to share (See Appendix E).

In every sacramental sermon, song, and symbol, God's tired and hungry people can hear the sweet invitation of our Savior. "Come to the feast!"

## The Sacraments Promote Good Theology

God has poured his love on us. God feeds us Jesus. Holy Baptism and Holy Communion are treasures from heaven. It doesn't surprise us, then, to learn that Baptism and Communion, rightly taught and properly administered, promote good theology (just as good theology promotes our eager use of the Sacraments).

### 1. The Sacraments celebrate God's mysteries.

#### *Giving people Jesus*

Consider, first of all, how proper use of the Sacraments can promote a clear understanding about faith.

It's easy to slip into the thinking that faith is primarily an intellectual exercise.

A preacher may find himself *explaining* the saving work of Jesus rather than *preaching* Jesus. Faith does involve knowing things. And yes, it's true: *explanations* of Law and Gospel are still Law and Gospel, and so they are still powerful. But if all the preacher ever does is *explain* God's saving plan, his listeners will soon gain the impression that faith is primarily a matter of understanding explanations.

But then why should they keep listening to the same explanations about Jesus' saving work over and over again? In time they'll begin to think of their pastor as though he were a restaurant that only hands out menus but never actually serves food. They'll listen to his sermons and say, "Sounds good, but I'm still hungry!" If they're loyal, they'll keep coming to listen anyway, out of duty. But no one will gladly listen for long.<sup>32</sup>

There's a little rationalist at work in all of us.<sup>33</sup> God wants preachers and people to use the brains he gave them, but when it's time to preach and listen to the mysteries of the Gospel, logic has to know when to take a back seat. Faith is more than an intellectual exercise. Saving faith needs food. Saving faith needs Jesus. By their very nature, the Sacraments encourage this view of faith.

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<sup>32</sup> If faith really were nothing more than an intellectual exercise, which it isn't, then a preacher would be better off keeping his Gospel preaching to a minimum. Too many Gospel explanations would insult his listeners' intelligence. If a preacher's job were only to *explain* God's Word, then his people would eventually expect him to find a more diverse subject matter, like the commandments.

<sup>33</sup> Rationalism is an approach to discourse that elevates human reason and logic above all else, even God's Word.

It's your turn. You walk to the front. You kneel at the railing. The pastor approaches. He gives you... what? ...an explanation? No. He gives you Jesus.<sup>34</sup> Preaching can work the same way, of course.

We would do well to take our cue for preaching from what we do in the Sacraments: We *do* something. We *wash* people. We *give* Christ to them... In the Sacraments, we do not just *explain* Christ or the Gospel, or *describe* faith, or give instructions about how to get salvation, or whatever (though we may well do all of that), we just give it, do it, flat out, unconditionally.<sup>35</sup>

Not that the Sacraments are somehow better than the preached Word. The two work together. "Word and Sacrament are the single serving of two holy treasures bestowed by the risen Christ as he comes into the midst of his gathered church."<sup>36</sup>

### ***It's o.k. to love your pastor.***

"Great sermon, pastor!"

A pastor shouldn't be ashamed to say, "Thank you." The Gospel alone changes hearts, and God alone deserves the glory, but preaching is an art. Art requires skill. Skill requires faithfulness. People shouldn't be afraid to commend their pastor for a job well done, and he should continue to put his God-given gifts to faithful use each time he preaches.

But sometimes we go too far. We may begin to imagine that the spread of God's kingdom rides on the specific skill set of a pastor we love. "If he ever leaves, our congregation will be sunk!" we think. Or we may become envious of some other congregation's pastor and fail to appreciate the abundant gifts and the faithful work of our own. Pastors themselves aren't immune to this kind of thinking.

The Sacraments have a unique way of tempering our perspective. What kind of skill does it take to splash water on someone and say, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit"? How many amazing gifts are required for a pastor to lift a cup to someone's lips and say, "The blood of Christ, shed for you"?

We are grateful for the gifts God has given each of our pastors, and we benefit greatly from their faithful use of those gifts, but the success of our congregation's ministry depends on our good and gracious God, and the mysteries of his Gospel. The Sacraments help keep it all in balance.

"Thanks for the Supper, pastor!"

## ***2. The Sacraments preach gospel certainty.***

We have an incurable tendency to collapse inwardly upon ourselves all the time, to feed on our own innards.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> "The Sacrament preaches Christ... Sometimes we forget this. Christ is crowded out and something is substituted in his place. At times we become engrossed in some project of the church, or we labor diligently through the years for some organization within the church, or we set ourselves to acquire a fuller knowledge of the Bible, while all the while our Christ recedes into the background, his face is veiled, Golgotha grows dim. Then the Sacrament speaks. It preaches Christ and only him, who gave his body and shed his blood on the cross. It tears away every veil which has hidden Golgotha and brings us face to face with him who alone is to be the object of our affection and the center of our life" (Fred Lindemann, *in Remembrance of Me: Twelve Communion Addresses*. New York: The Lutheran Press, 1937) 86, 87.

<sup>35</sup> Gerhard Forde, *The Preached God: Proclamation in Word and Sacrament*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 89.

<sup>36</sup> Kenneth Wieting, *The Blessings of Weekly Communion*. (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), 17.

<sup>37</sup> Forde, *ibid*, 101.

In the century following Martin Luther's death, there was a reform movement within the German Lutheran church called *Pietism*. *Pietism* is not the same as *piety*. *Pietistic* is not the same as *pious*. Pietists believed that Lutherans had become so intent on preserving pure doctrine that they had begun to lose the personal, spiritual aspect of the Christian faith. Pietists wanted to get people more interested in personal Bible study, prayer, and Christian living.

These were good goals. The problem was with the Pietists' methodology. They didn't trust the Gospel in Word and Sacraments to do what God promises it will do. Instead they emphasized something they considered to be more practical. They preached about how to live the Christian life. One of the contributing factors to the decline of Communion celebrations in the centuries after Luther is that the Pietists didn't consider the Lord's Supper to be of any real value in equipping Christians to live a godly life. Even Baptism was considered incomplete until a baptized person added his conscious pledge at the time of his Confirmation in the faith.

Today's heirs to this pietistic thinking are found in large number within that large, loose federation of conservative Christian denominations who call themselves "Evangelicals." Many of them have just as little respect for the Sacraments as the Pietists did in centuries past. "Evangelicals have tended to see sacramental churches as dead churches because they rely merely on outward acts (the Sacraments)."<sup>38</sup>

The influence of Pietism is felt among us whenever we refuse to let God's Law be the destroying flood that it is, and treat it instead as though it's a squirt gun: "Sometimes I do bad things." Then, when it comes time to do better, we see no need for God's baptismal flood of forgiveness or the "holy ark of the Church."<sup>39</sup> The spirit of Pietism makes a person happy to read the end of Colossians three and the beginning of chapter four (rules for holy living) without paying much attention to the baptismal comfort of chapter two.<sup>40</sup> We may think we can do what we need to do if we dig down deep inside ourselves. But what do we find in there? The saint is still a sinner.

Pietists thought that by encouraging people to put more heart into their religion, they could help people to make their religion more genuine. What they really did was introduce doubt. What seemed to them to be the path to God was the wide road away from him. Pietism gave up the objective certainty of God's Means of Grace for the fearful uncertainties of the sinful flesh.

Precisely because the Sacraments come to us from the outside, they provide us with the certainty and confidence we so desperately need. In Baptism, God buried you with Christ and raised you again to new life. Who you are, what you do, and where you're headed: all of it is defined entirely by the robe of Christ's righteousness that God has already given you. In his Supper, Jesus the Savior really gives you his crucified body and shed blood, the price he paid to make you his.

A wafer touches your tongue. A word strikes your ear: "the body of Christ, given for you." This changes everything. Now you can work and pray and trust and forgive and rejoice. Are you feeling it? That doesn't matter. God is saying it. God can't lie.

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<sup>38</sup> Harold Senkbell, *Sanctification: Christ in Action*. (Milwaukee: NPH, 1989), 154.

<sup>39</sup> From Luther's *Sinfultgebet*

<sup>40</sup> "In (Christ) you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead" (Colossians 2:11-12).



### ***3. The Sacraments inform our worship practice.***

Is public worship primarily a matter of nurture or outreach?

Life-long Christians might not seem like they need much help with their faith. We call them "pillars of the church." It might seem like all they need to be nurtured is the occasional reminder about what Jesus has done for them.

Jesus' institution of the Sacraments demonstrates that Christian nurture is serious business. Baptism is a daily drowning and rising from the dead. Holy Communion is the real flesh and blood of Jesus, once shed, now given. If we believers really were so self-sufficient, then Jesus would not have had to take such extreme measures to keep us close to him. Even the most mature Christian depends completely and entirely on the shed blood of Jesus *every moment of his life*.

The business of outreach is equally serious. God has called us to preach the Gospel to all people. What happens in worship also serves those who are lost in sin and unbelief. Since worship is often their first contact with our church, we are right to do all we can to welcome them to our services and follow up with them afterward. This Word they will hear is the difference between life and death. The Sacraments proclaim Christ, even to those who don't partake. We need to pay careful attention to our guests in worship, and we need to pray that the message takes root.

In gospel ministry outreach is just as important as nurture. In public worship, nurture comes first. If a preacher puts outreach ahead of nurture in worship, he will never say, "You died with Christ in your Baptism and have been raised to live a new life." Sinners within God's flock need to be addressed like the saints and soldiers they are. The outreach ministry of our congregations depend on it!

The missionary call "Repent" is always followed with "and be baptized." The faith planted through Baptism or the Word, Christ wants to strengthen through a lifetime of feeding at the Supper. Any paradigm that removes the Sacraments from worship for the sake of outreach loses one of its God-given tools to accomplish worship's goal and purpose: the glory of God and the salvation of man.<sup>41</sup>

#### ***Conclusion***

Marriage counselors are always encouraging communication. Husband and wife express their love for each other in many different ways: a word, a smile, a kiss. A good marriage depends upon it.

In our marriage to Christ, he doesn't depend upon us for a thing. We depend entirely upon him. He needs no counsel; we do. We need regular admonishment and encouragement to see the many different ways he expresses and gives us his love. It makes sense that the Lord God who designed marriage to depend on such varied expressions of love would also design the marriage between Christ and his Church to work the same way.<sup>42</sup>

We will now return to the Gospel, which does not give us counsel and aid against sin in only one way. God is superabundantly generous in his grace: First, through the spoken Word, by which the forgiveness of sins is preached in the whole world (Luke 24:45-47). This is the particular office of the Gospel. Second, through Baptism. Third, through the holy Sacrament of the Altar. Fourth, through the Power of the Keys. Also through the

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<sup>41</sup> Schroeder, *ibid*, 18.

<sup>42</sup> Thanks to Bryan Gerlach for this marriage illustration.



mutual conversation and consolation of brethren, "Where two or three are gathered" (Matthew 18:20) and other such verses (especially Romans 1:12). (SA III, IV).

To live the sacramental life is to live on the receiving end of God's saving love in all its forms. It means that God has won us over to his way of thinking about what we need from him to live and serve each day. The key to this sacramental life, this sacramental piety is the Word and Sacraments themselves. "To increase sacramental piety in our churches, use the Word (sermon, Bible study, and the visual Word: symbolism). To strengthen our preaching and teaching, use the Sacraments."<sup>43</sup>

In our efforts to be the people God wants us to be, it's easy for us to forget who we already are in Christ. Our baptism tells us: we are saints and we are soldiers. God has called us to engage in a daily battle against our traitorous sinful nature and its allies, the devil and the unbelieving world. But God is on our side. His Word and Sacraments do more than point us to the blessings Jesus won for us by his death and resurrection; they actually deliver the goods. Baptism puts us on the cross with Jesus and brings us out of the empty tomb with him alive. In Communion, we receive the true body and blood of our Savior, together with God's unbreakable promise: *given and shed for you*.

The Means of Grace, the Gospel in Word and Sacrament, is the bridge between the love of Christ and our calling as saints and soldiers in this world. Cleansed and fed by the Lord himself, we can fight our sinful nature, we can gladly serve our neighbor, and we can spread the good news to all creation.

Piety regards both what has been given and what has been forgiven, that is, it compares the greatness of God's blessings and the greatness of our evils, sin and death, with each other, and gives thanks (Ap XXIV, 76).



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<sup>43</sup> Ron Muetzel, "Sacramental Piety – Past and Present," WELS National Conference on Worship, Music and the Arts, 2002.

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Those who are interested in more in depth study of Baptism and Communion are encouraged to read the Seminary Symposium papers on those topics. Each of these papers is available online at [www.wlssays.net](http://www.wlssays.net).

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## Appendix A – Baptism and Faith

If anyone refuses the blessings God gives in Baptism, he loses those blessings. Jesus says, "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but *whoever does not believe will be condemned*" (Mark 16:16, emphasis added). Some who have been baptized will not be saved, because they have turned their back on the Savior who died for them, just as some who have heard the Gospel of Jesus will not be saved, because they have chosen not to believe in him. This truth doesn't in any way diminish the power, the certainty, or the comfort of Baptism's blessings.

Yet although we receive Baptism's blessings only through faith, it is wrong to say that Baptism's power *depends* upon faith, as though Baptism's power is incomplete until we add our faith to it. That would make Baptism's usefulness dependent upon us, and we would have to be uncertain whether our baptism is everything God says it is. Luther says:

They are arrogant, clumsy minds that draw together such ideas and conclusions as these, "Where there is not the true faith, there also cannot be true Baptism." That's as if I would conclude, "If I do not believe, then Christ is nothing." Or "If I am not obedient, then father, mother, and government are nothing." Is that a correct conclusion, that whenever anyone does not do what he ought, the work that he ought to do shall become nothing and of no value? My dear, just invert the argument and rather draw this conclusion: For this very reason Baptism is something and is right, because it has been wrongly received. For if Baptism was not right and true in itself, it could not be misused or sinned against. The saying is, "Abuse does not destroy the essence, but confirms it." For gold is not the less gold even though a harlot wears it in sin and shame" (LC IV, 58, 59).

## Appendix B – Luther's Flood Prayer (Sintflutgebet), 1523

"Viewed in terms of biblical imagery, liturgical history, and pastoral sensitivity, Luther's prayer is a masterpiece" (Hughes Oliphant Old, quoted in John Koelpin's 1995 essay *The Uniqueness of the Rite of Baptism in Christian Worship*). This prayer is included in *Christian Worship: Occasional Services* as part of a rite that is intended for private baptisms. The prayer could easily be added to any baptism:

Holy God, mighty Lord, gracious Father, through your stern judgment the unbelieving world was destroyed by the flood, but according to your great mercy, you saved Noah and his family. You engulfed stubborn Pharaoh and his army in the waters of the Red Sea but led your people through those same waters to safety on dry land. In the waters of the Jordan your own Son was baptized and anointed with the Spirit. By these signs you foreshadowed the precious, cleansing bath which you give us in Holy Baptism.

Clinging to your command and promise, we ask that you would look with favor on this child. Through this water of Baptism, drown in him all sin inherited from Adam and any other evil he may do. Set him apart from the unbelieving world and hold him safe and secure in the holy ark of the Church. Keep him always fervent in spirit and joyful in hope so that he may honor your holy name and at last receive, together with all your people, the promised inheritance of eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



## Appendix C – Baptism Symbols and Ceremonies

From "Communicating Baptism's Power," Parish Leadership, Spring 1993, by Bryan Gerlach.  
The full article is available on WELS Connect.

- Let people see and hear the water during the baptism, the "washing of rebirth and renewal" (Titus 3:5). The Bible prescribes no mode for baptism; therefore any application of water is valid. But this does not suggest a minimum use of water.
- Banners and other art, whether installed permanently or placed just for baptisms, can help the baptized to appreciate baptism.
- Include special music from the choir or soloist in baptismal ceremonies.
- Offer a quality framed certificate to hang in the child's room. As recently as the early part of this [20th] century, certificates were of substantial size rather than greeting card size.
- After the baptism the pastor may take the baby and hold him or her toward the congregation. With the joy our baptismal theology gives, he may announce, "Your new brother or sister in Christ."

"The design and placement of the font may also speak our theology or mask it. We know what God does at the font, but what does the font itself say? Larger and more visible fonts would better remind people of their daily death and rebirth.

"If you are involved in a building program or the design of a chancel, you can urge that the baptismal font make a strong visual statement. Some baptisms occur on the side where worshipers can neither see nor hear what is going on. Some fonts seem designed as an afterthought rather than a place for God's rebirth miracle. Tucking the font in the corner until it is "needed" doesn't allow much visible reminder of baptism's ongoing significance.

"How large should a font be? In smaller churches the lectern is often large to be a pulpit, the pulpit even larger — leaving little room for a font. Some of our parishes, especially the smaller ones, are realizing that both a pulpit and lectern are not necessary. This allows better space for the font.

"Consider a location within the assembly rather than in or near the chancel. This works especially well with wraparound seating. An ideal placement is along some entry path still visible when the congregation turns toward the font for a baptism. This placement reinforces that baptism is a sacrament of entry. It also can be a more prominent visual reminder of baptism's ongoing meaning.

"It may be difficult or unwise to begin new customs. Parish leaders should encourage acceptance of new practices through education. Work slowly, patiently explaining the meaning of good customs. Start with a Bible class. Work at it for the next generation's sake so that more of God's people in the future can use a powerful vocabulary similar to Luther's. Work at it so that Christians can use his powerful retort, "But I am baptized!"

## Appendix D – Close Communion

From "The Lord Jesus Institutes Holy Communion." *Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Symposium* (2003), by Joel Fredrich.

At the Supper we proclaim the heart of the gospel explicitly through the words of institution *and the rest of it implicitly*. Who, then, has the right to muddy that proclamation with an alien message? Why should we allow that to happen by welcoming communicants who by their church membership continue to uphold a compromised confession of the gospel? The Supper was not given to reduce the gospel to a minimum but to summarize and clothe in sacramental form the gospel in its fullness. A traditional church building has altar, pulpit, and pews in one worship space. That nicely pictures the way the Supper, the sermon, and the people's confession all belong together as one harmonious witness to the gospel. It is not for us to tear them apart...

If a sectarian Christian comes to our communion table without renouncing his false confession, he will be continuing his assault upon our confession at the very time he is supposed to be proclaiming to us the death of the Lord for our salvation. It is bad enough that he maintains a false confession against us under any circumstances, but it is especially grievous if he does so at our celebration of the Supper. Why should we permit such a thing? Let him lay down his weapons first and come in peace. We are glad that there are many millions of believers outside the WELS, and we yearn for the day when all ills will be healed and we can sit down together at the marriage Supper of the Lamb. But where there are still assaults on the gospel, the Supper is no place to ignore them. The integrity of the gospel is at stake (page 18).

## Appendix E – Eucharistic Prayer – a brief history

Used as early as the third century by Hippolytus (A.D. 170-235), Eucharistic prayer was used as preparation for Holy Communion throughout Christendom until the days of the Reformation. Over time, Rome began to teach that Communion is a recurring sacrifice of our Savior, as though Christ's one-time sacrifice for all people were not yet complete, and as though it were up to the church to finish what he started. The Eucharistic Prayer began to reflect this false teaching. By the time of Luther, the Eucharistic prayer had become so identified with Rome's false teaching that when Luther revised the Liturgy, he omitted the Eucharistic Prayer completely. Luther wanted to make sure people understood that Jesus' death on the cross was a one-time sacrifice for all people, and there's nothing any human being will ever be able to add to that with our own sacrifices, even our sacrifices of thanksgiving.

Since then, some Lutherans have seen fit to restore this ancient prayer minus those offensive characteristics that had developed in Rome. Even one of Luther's own students designed an order of service which included the Eucharistic Prayer, with Luther's blessing.

### **(Appendix E – Continued)**

One of the benefits of using a Eucharistic prayer is that it can allow congregations time to remember and give thanks to God for the saving work of his Son and the blessings of the Sacrament. Jesus himself gave thanks before instituting his supper.

We are free to use a Eucharistic prayer in our Communion services, but we need to be careful not to offend those who are aware of the prayer's checkered past. The prayer found in *Divine Service II of Christian Worship Supplement* is clearly separated from the words of institution, so that no one confuses our sacrifice of thanksgiving (prayer) with Jesus' one-time sacrifice of atonement. The words of the prayer recall and proclaim Jesus' saving acts.

Liturgical historians will notice that the *Divine Service II* prayer has little in common with the Eucharistic prayer of the early Christian church. In the future, perhaps we will reclaim more of a connection with the good and wholesome aspects of that prayer. For now, the Hymnal Supplement Committee thought it best to keep the prayer brief and clear, to allow people to get used to the idea of using a Prayer of Thanksgiving as part of their Communion service.

For more about Eucharistic prayer, read Stephen Valleskey's 2003 essay, "Dr. Luther Celebrates Holy Communion," which is available at [www.wlsessays.net](http://www.wlsessays.net).

### **Prayer of Thanksgiving, from *Divine Service II (Christian Worship Supplement)***

**M:** Blessed are you, O Lord of heaven and earth. We praise and thank you for sending your Son, Jesus Christ, and we remember the great acts of love through which he has ransomed us from sin, death, and the devil's power.

By his incarnation, he became one with us.  
By his perfect life, he fulfilled your holy will.  
By his innocent death, he overcame hell.  
By his rising from the grave, he opened heaven.

Invited by your grace and instructed by your Word, we approach your table with repentant and joyful hearts. Strengthen us through Christ's body and blood, and preserve us in the true faith until we feast with him and all his ransomed people in glory everlasting.

**C: Amen.**

(Included in the Electronic Edition of the Supplement are seasonal versions of the Prayer of Thanksgiving: Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, and End Time, as well as two alternate versions for general use.)

## Essay:

# "Caring for souls: People matter"

July 26 and 27, 2011

Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.

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## Caring for Souls: People Matter

The brown paper bag just gets in the way. I can't slide the milk out of the fridge and need to reach awkwardly to grab the pickle jar. The bag has appeared enough that I know what is in it, and realize it doesn't belong to me or anyone in my family. It belongs to Ronnie, a friend of our family and the gratefully grinning recipient of the bag and its contents. He doesn't have a refrigerator, or a home for that matter. I slide my arm in the fridge and the brown paper bag drops to the floor, catapulting its contents at my feet. Ugh! The mess metaphors my family's efforts to "remember the poor" (Galatians 2:10).

Caring for Ronnie is messy.

Not in a dirty, unkempt sense like he's unclean, but in terms of my own inconvenient discomfort. Like brown paper bags taking up valuable space in my fridge and then dumping themselves all over my clean floor. Like wondering if I'm going about my business with Ronnie appropriately because his world and my world are worlds apart. Like the priest and the Levite discovered about the man who "fell into the hands of robbers...stripped...of his clothes, beat...half dead" (Luke 10:30). Is he beyond help? How does this work? What about the rules of ceremonial uncleanness and cultural norms? How can I really help, even if this person needs my help?

Messy. Not the person but the situation. And since the situation involves a person, let's call it a relationship. There Ronnie stands conspicuously at the stoplight. I remember the first time I rolled down my window after more than a few times looking the other way to avoid eye contact. "What's your name?" I asked.

"Ronnie."

"Can I pray for you?"

"Thank you so much, yes, please pray for me. Thank you." The light turned green and I waved a friendly goodbye.

My plan: Give him nothing and test his response. Would he argue, begging for at least some quick cash? Would he get grumpy? Ronnie's smile and polite response demonstrated otherwise, at least for now. Sometimes I just talk to Ronnie and I wonder if he's testing me because he asks things like, "How's Mrs. Lindemann?" Sometimes I pack extra bag lunch items for him. Sometimes I give him a little cash. Other people at church do the same, and occasionally they ask me if they should be doing anything differently. So I took Ronnie to lunch this spring and asked him what I should tell people at church when they ask how they can help him. He responded, "They can pray for me."

"What else?"

"I can do odd jobs, you know. Clean out garages. Rake. Walk dogs. Just tell 'em to hand me a slip of paper with their phone number and I'll get a hold of 'em."

"How will you get to their house?"

"Take the bus." So, maybe Ronnie isn't just begging for money, or pity for that matter. Conspicuously absent in his reply: "Gimme cash," with a sad sob story that follows. But it doesn't



make things any easier. This relationship with Ronnie is teaching me that sometimes building relationships as bridges for caring, gospel ministry is messy. Here's what I mean: there are times when I'm fine with driving right past Ronnie in my climate-controlled vehicle to my climate-controlled house without even a wave, as if I don't know him; am I being callously selfish or coolly responsible? Sometimes when I give him cash I flip through the ones, fives, tens, and an occasional twenty in my wallet, but I've never given him a twenty (instead saving those for me, the guy with a full-time job and closets and cupboards overstuffed with daily bread). I hope to have more time to feed his soul even as I feed his body, but that requires more than a quick greeting at the stoplight, and I always find that I'm due somewhere when I encounter Ronnie. I'm a busy man. Are the stoplight visits even worthwhile for the care of his soul? And can I regard them as "pastor" time or rather the Christian calling I received at my baptism? Finally, I've become so intentional about this relationship that I dismiss all the other underprivileged people who stand on that corner when Ronnie is somewhere else, and most any corner for that matter. I want to cultivate a relationship, a bridge of caring. But I can't build bridges with all of the poor and homeless.<sup>1</sup> It's a quality vs. quantity argument and I confess that may not have this right.<sup>2</sup>

So I think about these things, take them to my Father in prayer, and share them with you today precisely because they are messy. And that's okay. I'd rather be messy than merciless. "I was hungry and you gave me something to eat" (Matthew 25:35). I'd rather err on the side of trying to care and botching it up, than not caring at all. I'd rather respond wisely and responsibly than indiscriminately enable bad behavior, especially if I'll be seeing Ronnie often and this is not an emergency. It would be so much easier to toss Ronnie a couple bucks once in a while and drive away glad that I've done my duty. But our Master and Teacher never told his followers that caring for souls is supposed to be easy. Actually, he insisted it will be messy. "If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles" (Matthew 5:41). "I am sending you out like lambs among wolves" (Luke 10:3). "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword" (Matthew 10:34).

That reminds me of the pastoral axiom, "The ministry would be easy if it weren't for people." Isn't that the truth? We could create policy manuals, code books, and software programs that spell out the business of God with no need for alignment or adjustment because it all remains concisely controlled. Such would be our invention, however, not God's. God created Adam and Eve in the holiness he chose for them, then called them to the same holiness he wanted them to choose for themselves. And things got messy. It could have been so much easier if God had not allowed them to be people. Likewise the ministry in our churches and schools, the partnership among us in our synod, and the vocations to which each of us has been called could be so much cleaner, more convenient, and less confusing if we did not have to deal with people as people. This, however, is not the ministry of spiritual care to which God has called us.

Caring for souls means caring for people, because every soul on earth this side of eternity is embodied in humanity. If anyone could have bypassed human nature and directly cared for souls, it was Jesus Christ himself. However, consider his ministry, beginning with his own incarnation. His active obedience healed and helped people. In his parables he taught about people and for people.

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<sup>1</sup> One of my friends, a successful businessman in the Twin Cities, mentors three homeless men, developing friendships with them. He takes them to his athletic club where they can shower and join him for lunch, he even tutors them so he both teaches them to fish and gives them fish, feeding them for both a day and a lifetime. To do this well, he can't do it for every homeless person in the Cities. This is his cup of cold water (Matthew 10:42).

<sup>2</sup> For another approach that focuses more on congregational programs and activities for the underprivileged, try *101 Ways to Help People in Need*, a little paperback by Steve and Janie Sjorgren with encouraging insight into the culture of the homeless and a variety of practical, meaningful ideas for serving them (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2002).

His full humanity participating in the work of redemption even unto death, his resurrection appearances to his friends, and his real body and blood still given in the sacrament. Jesus cares about humanness—his own and that of every soul. People matter. No wonder the crowds were “amazed at his teaching” (Mark 11:18).

Relationships, as messy as they can be, build bridges for spiritual care. Might there be room in our hearts and memories to appreciate this just a little more today, and in our minds and plans to gain some fresh insight as those called to care for souls? To that end, the presentation of today’s essay will be both devotional and instructional, both reflective and interactive, practical, and of course relational. Besides the footnoted text, you will find references to supplemental material either in the appendices or in the Bible study that will accompany this essay.<sup>2</sup>

**RELATE**  
Your neighbor:

## Today’s need for relationships

It can never be said the Adele Gaboury’s neighbors were less than responsible. When her front lawn grew hip-high, they had a local boy mow it down. When her pipes froze and burst, they had the water turned off. When the mail spilled out the front door, they called the police. The only thing they didn’t do was check to see if she was alive.

She wasn’t.

Police climbed her crumbling brick stoop, broke in the side door of her little blue house, and found what they believed to be the 73-year-old woman’s skeletal remains sunk in a 5-foot-high pile of trash, where they had apparently lain, perhaps for as long as four years.<sup>3</sup>

Isolation is becoming popular in America. 7 in 10 Americans don’t know their neighbors.<sup>3</sup> So the chances are quite good that the family walking through your church doors for the first time is lonely. Busy, yes, but lonely. Homebound shut-ins aren’t the only lonely anymore. Besides isolationism, its close cousin, individualism, contributes to a lack of community in society and even in churches. Consider what a litigious society we have become, zealous for individual rights over community responsibilities, how career advancement trumps company loyalty, and relative truth redefines absolute truth. Sure, Americans join teams and organizations like churches, but these might often be described as a collection of individuals where people are a single part of a larger crowd, not a connected component of a unified group.

Perhaps a greater need for relationships is conceived not out there in the promiscuous world but within the wombs of our own churches. That is, the visible church. In an attempt to deal with the messiness that people contribute to the business of caring for souls, the visible church structures organizationally, budgets fiscally, creates hierarchy, pays bills, invokes policies, and maintains buildings. All for the sake of peace and good order. “It is so much easier to build things than people. It is easier to see progress and to know what works and what doesn’t when we deal

<sup>1</sup> The most important supplemental material may very well be your own “action list,” as you fill in some of the interactive text boxes during the essay, and take them home for personal follow through.

<sup>2</sup> (Frazee, Randy. *The Connecting Church*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001, 104). Originally a story in the *Boston Globe*, “Years After Neighbors Last Saw Her, Worcester Woman Found Dead in Home,” quoted in Jacqueline Olds, Richard Schwartz, and Harriet Webster. *Overcoming Loneliness in Everyday Life*. Secaucus, NJ: Carol Publishing Group, 1996)

<sup>3</sup> (Frazee 2001, 33)

with the tangible tasks of making things. Things don't resist our helping interventions in the way in which people so often do. Unquestionably dealing with souls is more demanding than dealing with things.<sup>6</sup> This machine of an institution, as institutions tend to do, becomes the end rather than the means. It exists for its own sake rather than for the sake of the people of whom it is composed. Policies and procedures dominate. Robert's rules order the meeting magisterially, not ministerially. "Thus it makes lists, labels people, assigns roles, and solves problems. But a solved life is a reduced life. These tightly buttoned-up people never take great faith risks or make convincing love talk. They deny or ignore the mysteries and diminish human existence to what can be managed, controlled, and fixed."<sup>7</sup> The organization even equates itself with the invisible church and claims promises from God's Word never intended for any human institution no matter how closely connected to the heavenly kingdom. And the institutional agenda must succeed at all costs, even at the cost of hurting the people it is supposed to help.<sup>8</sup> Might the visible nature of our religion be getting in the way of its invisible one? What happened to caring for souls?

The Scriptures direct us to a model for the care of souls: the shepherd. Isolationism, individualism, institutionalism, and other barriers to relationships find their answer in such care. In his great parable of the lost sheep, our Good Shepherd defines the immense worth of a person, the searching love of the shepherd, and the joyful relief of a straying soul now found. "Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep" (Luke 15:6). *My* lost sheep. Despite our wandering into pastures owned by other ranchers, and even enjoying it, our Good Shepherd never considers us to be someone else's responsibility or objects of care. In this we also rejoice with relief, for we have strayed.

The loneliness of our own isolationism has run away to the paths of dangerous predators, as if seeking companionship with them is a good idea. We "wandered over mountain and hill and forgot [our] own resting place" (Jeremiah 50:6). The rebellion of our own individualism has acknowledged but dismissed the voice of our Good Shepherd, preferring instead the self-sufficiency and independence of our doing that somehow gains God's favor. "We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way" (Isaiah 53:6). Called from sheep to shepherd, we've sold out the souls of sheep under our care for the sake of corporate greed and institutionalism, deserving the demoted title "hired hand" in the rebuke of Jesus: "The hired hand...abandons the sheep and runs away...because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep" (John 10:12,13). We assume that our visible church always operates with the blessing of God and is a blessing to people, but he says, "Woe to the shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of my pasture" (Jeremiah 23:1)! A broken relationship with God is our biggest problem.

So we begin our study of caring for souls as rescued sheep and repentant shepherds. Rather than redirecting our fears of isolationism, individualism, and institutionalism into blaming, denying, or masking—"Surely, not I"—we hear our Good Shepherd's voice and bleat for him to come in his

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<sup>6</sup> (Benner, David G. *Care of Souls: Revisioning Christian Nurture and Counsel*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998, 206)

<sup>7</sup> (Peterson, Eugene H. *The Contemplative Pastor*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1989, 64). Note: Eugene Peterson's writings poetically pursue the authentic calling of pastors and congregations in gospel ministry. His challenges are most often appropriate and scriptural insight colorfully compelling, worthy of reading and referencing. However, the hearty inclusion of Peterson's voice in this essay is not intended as whole scale endorsement of everything he says. The following review of Peterson by Prof. Rich Gurgel is worth printing here. "Peterson is quite postmodern (for example: he often displays a loss of a confidence in propositions to communicate changeless truth) and neo-orthodox/existentialist (for example: the Bible really only becomes the Word of God as we experience it)...He speaks of 'living the gospel' which easily suggests that the gospel is at its heart something for us *to do* rather than something for us *to believe*" (Gurgel, Richard. "Grow in Grace!" Southeastern Wisconsin District Convention, June 8, 2010, 9).

<sup>8</sup> Institutionalism is sometimes diagnosed best by those outside of the institution, and is one reason why the unchurched are unchurched. Before we dismiss their excuse: "I don't like organized religion," as faulty bias, we do the ministry much good by testing their complaint.



bleeding compassion. "You, my sheep, the sheep of my pasture, are people, and I am your God," he who never stopped owning us soothes in reassuring tones (Ezekiel 34:31). "The Lord is my shepherd," we who never wanted to leave him reply with a godly pride in belonging to the best, the only, the Savior. "I will fear no evil, for you are with me...My cup overflows...Goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life" (Psalm 23:4-6). The Good Shepherd has laid down his life for the sheep, and taken it up again for the sheep. We live! With him. For him. We listen to his voice. And he says, "Take care of my sheep" (John 21:16). Christ's love. Our calling. Caring for souls.

### Jesus washes feet, but not just feet

#### THINK, PAIR, SHARE

*Bigger church:* Describe a time when you appreciated your church

\_\_\_\_\_

*Smaller church:* Complete this statement: My church \_\_\_\_\_ by...

She sat in my office and unburdened her anxiety as properly as she could without faithless complaining. I'd say she performed admirably. "Lord, grant me such a spirit of patient perseverance," I thought. This was a grieving widow, though disturbed she was not distressed. Her gritty faith wouldn't allow it. But her faith was being tested, even as she submitted her body for test after test after test. Symptoms had developed, strange symptoms that doctors couldn't diagnose. They ruled out one malady after another but weeks turned into months and still no name for what she was experiencing. Fear and frustration fought hard against faith. Where was the answer? What if...? How come...? Nobody knew. We visited some time later and I saw a burden lifted. Her face lit up as she related the story about a particular doctor. A woman. A foreigner. She took time telling me how this doctor spent 40 minutes asking her personal questions the other doctors had not; she listened to her heartfelt concerns; she sympathized with her plight; she was with her in the moment, not just at an appointment. "I told her that she is an answer to my prayers, that I

had been asking the Lord for help and healing." The doctor hugged her and replied, "I, too, am Christian." Then she followed up the next day with a phone call. Still no diagnosis. No more promise for physical healing than when her patient walked into the office. But this Christian widow in my office enjoyed a relief, which she expressed as a blessing from God. She felt that someone cared, understood, finally took up her cause with empathy<sup>2</sup>—and Christ like empathy at that. This endocrinologist performed heart surgery by opening her own heart and touching the heart of this widow, healing her in unexpected yet much appreciated ways.

The church has the gospel, the best medicine in the world offering the ultimate healing of salvation, yet even the Great Physician understood that the gospel is administered to embodied souls. To people with life experiences, with learning disabilities, with personalities and biases, who speak other dialects or even languages, who hurt, who feel, who breathe, who fear. Having the gospel is not caring for souls. Having the gospel and having souls is not caring for souls. Having the gospel and applying it to people is caring for souls. One friend who is a pastor shared with me that in a neighborhood canvassing effort, he found a former member of his church. She had joined another church after her husband died. That church, familiar to her family, visited her multiple times a week for multiple weeks after the funeral and this pastor's church visited her once, inviting

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<sup>2</sup> "Empathy is the ability to enter into the experience of others, or, better, receive their experience as they share it with you, holding it within you in such a manner as not to confuse it with your own" (Denner 1990, 139).

her to remain faithful in worship and Bible study. They had the gospel. She had a need for the gospel. Its application, on this occasion, was a prescription for personal visits.<sup>10</sup>

“Putting care back in health care” is a marketing slogan that touches on a truth relevant to our Christian calling. Caring for souls, like caring for health, is more than transactional. It is relational. The souls to whom the church administers the means of grace belong to people. Therefore, people matter.

“Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power.”<sup>11</sup> The Father had put all things in the hands that washed the disciples’ feet. The powerful Son of God got up from the table like he had left the heavenly banquet to come to this earth. The powerful Son of God took off his outer clothing like he had put aside the use of his divine majesty. The powerful Son of God wrapped a towel around his waist like he had wrapped himself in human flesh. The powerful Son of God washed and dried the disciples’ feet like he had brought *his* humanity to touch the filthiest of *our* humanity, our grievous sins. We see in the redemptive humiliation of our Savior God his caring for souls that belong to people.

In the first century it was a friendly courtesy to wash the feet of those who would visit your home. The sweaty sandals as footwear and the dirt of the dusty roads made for less-than-appealing ankles and toes exposed during a meal. Normally a servant would be assigned the common task of washing the feet of the guests upon entry. Here in the private room Jesus had arranged, there was no servant. So the disciples entered and then gathered at the table with the slightly awkward embarrassment of neglecting a custom of the day. No servant? Well, Peter and John had arranged for the room, so they should wash feet. Nobody volunteered. The awkward moment lingered. Then the servant showed himself. The mighty Lord Jesus, the powerful Son of God, washed their feet. Maybe he started with Judas, or perhaps he washed a few others as the moment became more awkward. None of them argued or interfered, nor did any take up the task. Yet they all wondered if it should be this way. Somebody should do something.

“[Jesus] came to Simon Peter, who said to him, ‘Lord, are you going to wash my feet?’”<sup>12</sup> Peter could see Matthew or Andrew or any of the others washing his feet. But not Jesus. “Lord,” Peter addresses him with a title superior to “Rabbi,” emphasizing the greatness of Jesus as the glorious Son of God who will save us all by crushing our enemies, not by washing our feet.

“Jesus replied, ‘You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand.’” Jesus accepts Peter’s innocent interference as an ignorant mistake. He simply didn’t know any better. He’ll connect the dots later. Do you hear more encouraging love in Jesus’ reply than disappointed rebuke? He doesn’t fault or shame Peter for asking what was on the minds of all the disciples, for expressing his curious concern about a Savior he so dearly loved. “It’s okay. I know what I’m doing. Yes, I am the Lord of all, and I’ll always be the Lord of all, but now is the time for me to be the Servant of all to suffer and die for sins.” This is Jesus’ willing choice. Nobody is forcing him to the cross. He chooses the cross. He chooses the dirty feet of messy people.

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<sup>10</sup> “Widows and widowers frequently complain that after their spouse’s death, friends and other concerned people seem reluctant to talk about the deceased. Contrary to what you might think, most widowed people want to talk about the significant other they have lost” (Haugk, Kenneth C. *Christian Bereavement: A Way of Life*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1984, 41). The church where this pastor serves now administers its own support group called *GriefShare* <http://www.griefshare.org/>.

<sup>11</sup> *εἰς τὰς χεῖρας* - literally “put all things into his hands.” The account of Jesus washing his disciples’ feet is in John 13:1ff.

<sup>12</sup> *Κοῦρα, σὺ μου πλύνεις τοὺς πόδας;* - the “you” is emphasized in the sentence structure.

“No,” said Peter, “You shall never wash my feet.” “Jesus, you should be busy battling the devil and the Romans at that, crushing my enemies, defeating all those evildoers out there and setting up your throne forever! You’re so above washing feet, especially my feet.” And Peter, who called Jesus “Lord,” asserts himself as a lord, demanding a different kind of savior, contending for only greatness—not grace. “Washing feet? Jesus, you and I are both better than that.”

Better than what, my friend? Can you be willing to find yourself, with me, in Peter’s objection? Who has not been served because I am too good for them? Who has not been loved because I am too busy for them? What has not been done because I’m too important? What has not been prayed because I don’t have time? How often have I missed following Jesus because I don’t find him on my path of greatness as he walks his path of humility and misses me, because I lifted my chin so high that I couldn’t find him while he was humbly washing feet? Why do I struggle to let the mighty Lord also be my suffering Servant, touching my dirty, filthy sins?...Saving me.

“Jesus answered, ‘Unless I wash you, you have no part with me.’” Jesus isn’t concerned about Peter’s feet any more, and doesn’t mention them in his response. He is concerned about Peter as a person, as a sinner in need of saving. “Unless I wash *you*.” And Jesus makes Peter’s having a part with him—being connected to Jesus as his Savior—not depend on anything Peter does but on something Jesus does. “Unless I wash you.”

Impulsive Peter quickly jumps to a conclusion, giving up his opposition into the extreme of another eager misunderstanding. He doesn’t hear the answer of spiritual washing in Jesus’ words. “‘Then Lord,’ Simon Peter replied, ‘not just my feet but my hands and my head as well.’”

“Jesus answered, ‘A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean. And you are clean.’”<sup>13</sup> Just as our bodies are clean after we bathe or shower for the day and we only need to wash our hands before we eat, so we are (and remain by faith) spiritually clean when Jesus has washed away our sins by his suffering and death. We need “only a little washing up,” so to speak, through the confession and absolution in the liturgy of worship, or asking forgiveness from someone we hurt, or praying with repentance to God.

The suffering Servant stoops from his eternal, glorious throne in heaven to the sandy floor and sweaty feet of a room filled with his own fickle followers. His caring for souls is so extreme, so loving to the end, that it makes room to save us, and now leaves room to compel us.

“I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master...now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.” If any of his disciples think we are too great to stoop down for menial tasks in serving others, we can only do so by thinking of ourselves as greater than Jesus. Jesus has washed our feet, that part of us most dirtied by the sinful world, and so he purifies our souls. Today, with our feet still on this earth, we stand clean, we walk clean, and we are blessed when we wash the feet of others, caring for their souls.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> You are clean. Everywhere. “The blood of Jesus...purifies us from all sin” (1 John 1:7). You are clean. Not based on your successful caring for souls but on your faith in the caring for souls in the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. “You were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 6:11). You are clean. Now and into eternity when it can be said, “These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (Revelation 7:14).

<sup>14</sup> So then, in what other instances besides washing his disciples’ feet was Jesus caring for souls during his time on this earth? Did his miracles care for souls? All of them, even the physical healings and the providing of bodily nutrition and promoting emotional safety during the storm? Did his teaching care for souls? The parables understood by some but not

"Do as I have done for you...You will be blessed," Jesus calls us with command and promise.

What can we do to care for souls isolated by the loneliness masked within our overbusy, multitasking, smartphone existence? Invite them to the upper room by caring for them as people—washing their feet and serving them the sacred meal. As Jesus has done for us. And we will be blessed. What can we do to care for souls in our individualized world insisting that their self-wisdom is the best way, their self-awareness the ultimate truth, and their self-sufficiency sufficient for salvation? Become their servants even as they argue that they know and deserve the best seats like the disciples did—washing their feet and gently leading them to see that it's not all about the individual, but about the suffering Servant and the Church he calls to be one. As Jesus has done for us. And we will be blessed. What can we do to care for souls oh-so-concerned about the institution of the church that the earthly stifles the heavenly? We can challenge ourselves to put the outward organization under the microscope, and where structures or routines have become "rules taught by men" (Isaiah 29:13) "having a form of godliness but denying its power" (2 Timothy 3:5) we exert the courage to take off the comfortable slippers of these sanctioned systems and scrub between toes with the Savior's love, there finding genuine caring for souls.

In what ways can we better fulfill our footwashing Shepherd's calling, "Take care of my sheep...Do as I have done for you"?

## The soul, the body, and spiritual care for people

"The soul makes man different from everything else God created. Man has height, size, and weight. So does a rock. Man takes in nourishment and grows. So does a tree. Man feels and moves about. So does a dog. But man has one thing no other creature has: a soul, which enables man to think spiritual thoughts and perform spiritual actions."<sup>15</sup> The soul is divinely created life that makes people who we are. In the beginning God breathed "the breath of life" into Adam's nostrils to make him "a living being" (Genesis 2:7).<sup>16</sup> So the soul is the non-material being in us that is the seat of our life. The Bible credits the soul (or spirit)<sup>17</sup> with our personality and our ability to believe and praise God, and it assigns to the soul our thinking, our willing, and our feeling.<sup>18</sup> It will never cease to exist. This makes the soul more valuable than all. "What good is it for

### STUDY

Refer to Psalm 77: 1-12, Appendix A on p. 32 of this essay.

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all? How about his public preaching—was that more of a caring for souls as public proclamation of the means of grace? his fulfillment of prophecy? his temptation and transfiguration? his birth and baptism? his crucifixion, resurrection, ascension? Maybe the better question is: In what instances was Jesus *not* caring for soul? Or the best question: In what different ways was Jesus always, ultimately caring for souls?

<sup>15</sup> (Luchtechand, *Lyle L. Man: From Glory to Ashes and Back*. Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1998, 51)

<sup>16</sup> Theologians refer to "the propagation of the soul" since then, and among the religions of the world we can find any of four teachings: emanationism (the soul flows from God's essence), pre-existence (all souls were created by God in the beginning and remain in storage until the moment of conception), creationism (by a direct act God creates a new soul for every new body separately conceived), and traducianism (through the reproductive process resulting in God's gift of conception a new soul is propagated through parents along with the body). If the first two sound quite New Age and mystical, they are, and lead themselves to endless myths. Only the latter two can be supported with Scripture.

<sup>17</sup> While some prefer that 1) body, 2) soul, and 3) spirit form a trichotomy of a person's existence, the Scriptures clearly teach a dichotomy that defines a person in terms of 1) body and 2) soul/spirit. The words soul and spirit refer to one and the same, cf. Ecclesiastes 12:7; Matthew 10:28; James 2:26; 1 Corinthians 5:5, 7:34; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Colossians 2:5.

<sup>18</sup> Psalm 77 continues in the first person singular, as its author interchanges "I" and "my" with "my soul." The soul is not part of a person. The soul is the person. Without a soul we are clumps of dirt and leftover ashes.



a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mark 8:36,37)

As far as our calling on this earth to care for souls, we remember that the soul lives in mutual dependence with the material being, the body, which is the organ through which the soul functions. Like electricity needs a conductor, the soul needs a body. The soul plugs into this world in which it lives through the body's faculties and functions. The fact that each human being consists of body and soul in one person makes caring for people a critical component of caring for souls.<sup>19</sup> Lawns need lawn care. Customers need customer care. Cancer and Parkinson's disease need a cure. Why do souls need care and cure?<sup>20</sup> Jesus explains, "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (Luke 4:18,19). Release. That's forgiveness.<sup>21</sup> Sins sent away by the saving command of the one with perfect obedience and satisfactory sacrifice.

The heart and core of caring for souls is the forgiveness of sins. Real sins casting a real curse on real people, who turn in repentance to a real Savior. This redemption and release is pronounced upon the entire person, body and soul, and affects the entire person, body and soul, just as Lutheran pastors commit a corpse to its resting place in the ground with the words, "May God the Father, who created this body; may God the Son, who by his blood redeemed this body together with the soul; may God the Holy Spirit, who by Holy Baptism sanctified this body to be his temple; keep these remains to the day of the resurrection of all flesh."<sup>22</sup> The Scriptures promise believers a holistic salvation not fragmented between internal and external, or visible and invisible, or soul and body. "Created of dust and the breath of God, we cannot escape from either."<sup>23</sup> In the beginning of time Adam wasn't complete until the physical was united with the breath of God. At the end of time our bodies will be reunited with our souls on Judgment Day.<sup>24</sup> In between, Jesus, the Great Physician, cared for "the whole man" (John 7:23) in both his teaching and his touching.

Care of souls can thus be understood as the care of persons in their totality, with particular attention to their inner lives. This can never be accomplished by ignoring a person's physical existence or the external world of behavior...Caring for souls is caring for people.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> "The English phrase, 'care of souls,' has its origins in the Latin *cura animarum*. While *cura* is most commonly translated as *care*, it actually contains the idea of both care and cure. *Care* refers to actions that are designed to support the well-being of something or someone. *Cure* refers to actions that are designed to restore well-being that has been lost. The Christian church has historically embraced both meanings of *cura* and has understood soul care to involve nurture and support as well as healing and restoration" (Benner 1998, 21).

<sup>20</sup> "Dust you are," the LORD God, both faithful in his love and mighty in his holy zeal, pokes Adam in the chest after he ate from the tree he was commanded not to eat from. "And to dust you will return" (Genesis 3:19). Thanks to our first father we are all dead people. "Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin" (Romans 5:12). Our destiny handed down from the first Adam: dirty, rotten corpses. But the second Adam delivered what was promised already in Eden: a new destiny, a new identity, a restored soul. "For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many!" (Romans 5:15). And how freely God's gracious gift is given through that one man, Jesus Christ, into poor, broken souls blinded to life and imprisoned by death.

<sup>21</sup> **αφεσις** - this word is often translated "forgiveness," cf. Luke 1:77.

<sup>22</sup> *Christian Worship: Occasional Services*. Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2004, 90

<sup>23</sup> (Benner 1998, 107)

<sup>24</sup> Job knew that. "I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!" (Job 19:25-27)

<sup>25</sup> (Benner 1998, 22,23)



The goal, therefore, of caring for souls is not to renounce the physical as the Gnostic<sup>26</sup> false teachers did, as if trading humanity for divinity. “The task of salvation is not to refine us into pure spirits so that we will not be cumbered with this too solid flesh. We are not angels, nor are we to become angels. The Word did not become a good idea, or a numinous feeling, or a moral aspiration; the Word became flesh... Things matter. The physical is holy.”<sup>27</sup> The one to whom our salvation belongs is both spiritual and physical; his incarnation says so. We who are recipients of his creating, redeeming, and sanctifying are both spiritual and physical. And we do well to remember that those for whom we care—to whom we proclaim the forgiveness of sins through Christ—are both spiritual and physical. “The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God” (Galatians 2:20). Called to take care of sheep in our Shepherd’s flock, we discard and discount neither the body nor the soul.<sup>28</sup>

Where does that leave our church body in our caring for souls? In speaking of relationships are we compromising our theological integrity with anthropological themes? Such is certainly a danger for any church body dipping its toes into the waters of culture in order to reach it with the gospel. We need to be very careful here lest we think we can dive in and not get totally wet. The tools with which Christ has equipped us for gospel ministry that cares for souls are God’s Word and the sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper. So is there a proper place for psychology, and might it be useful to our pastors-in-training? My pastoral theology textbook from seminary days says that “knowledge of psychology and pedagogical principles ... provide [a pastor] with insights which will enable him to size up situations correctly.”<sup>29,30</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Gnosticism troubled the church in the postapostolic era. Its followers considered everything material and physical to be evil, a prison that keeps man from returning to his divine source. Salvation, then, was an evolution. The spirit of man must be liberated from his body through knowledge [*gnosis*], so that he can return to the fullness of God. Gnostics denied the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ. Their God was an impersonal deity. He was remote, never entering directly into human affairs. He was the silent principle of good, with no word of revelation to save sinners (unknown source, from my notes).

<sup>27</sup> (Peterson, *The Contemplative Pastor* 1989, 68)

<sup>28</sup> “By our practice of spirituality we are not raised to a higher plane above the normal, everyday, bodily life but we receive the Holy Spirit from Christ so that we can live in God’s presence each day of our lives as we deal with people and work, sin and abuse, inconvenience and heartbreak, trouble and tragedy. We are not called to become more spiritual by disengaging from our earthly life... Christian spirituality does not deal with the human mind or human soul in contrast to the body, but with the whole life of those who have faith in Christ and are animated by the Holy Spirit. As Christians, we believe that the eternal Son of God took on a human body to redeem us and to share the Spirit of the Father with us bodily. Luther sums up this discussion of spirituality well in a discussion of the real presence of Christ’s body and blood in His Holy Supper: Thus, all that our body does outwardly and physically, if God’s Word is added to it and it is done through faith, is in reality and in name done spiritually. Nothing can be so material, fleshly, or outward, but it becomes spiritual when it is done in the Word and in faith” (Kleinig, John W. *Grace upon Grace*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2008, 23,24); Martin Luther quote from AE 37:92. Kleinig continues by astutely lamenting that spirituality has been largely reduced to religious psychology and, although psychology can help us understand ourselves, it doesn’t give us the full picture “of us as people, let alone of us as Christians. In contrast to psychological self-analysis, this study uses the Sacred Scriptures to investigate how God the Father regards us in Adam and in Christ and what He makes of us with his Holy Spirit.” (Kleinig 2008, 24)

<sup>29</sup> Schuetze, Armin W. and Habeck, Irwin J. *The Shepherd Under Christ*. Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1974, 140

<sup>30</sup> Consider the instructions from an earlier textbook of pastoral theology published in 1932 that influenced both the Missouri and Wisconsin Synods: “In dealing with human beings, diagnosing their particular troubles and ministering to their spiritual welfare, a pastor ought to know that there are such different types of persons... If we are able to recognize the different types of human beings, we can understand the individual human being better, and to understand him better means to be better able to approach and to help him... A pastoral call should be made for the purpose of getting close to the individual, establishing mutual confidence, and speaking to the parishioner in reference to his spiritual needs... He should study the individual church-member in reference to his character, disposition, temperament, opinions, environment, education, friends and acquaintances, occupation, business associates, poverty or wealth, special hobbies, reading, physical condition, etc.” (Fritz, John H. C. *Pastoral Theology*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1932, 203, 185)

Additionally, in Thesis VIII of *The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel*, the lectures of confessional Lutheran hero, C.F.W. Walther, he states, "The Word of God is not rightly divided when the Law is preached to those who are already in terror on account of their sins or the Gospel to those who live securely in their sins."<sup>31</sup> Walther would have ripped his robe at the religious professionals in Jesus' day confusing law and gospel by preaching the law to those souls already in terror on account of their sins.<sup>32</sup>

Prostitutes, tax collectors, and criminals enter the kingdom of heaven, even ahead of "righteous" church leaders.<sup>33</sup> Appearance suggests otherwise. However, Christ-like caring for souls relies not on appearance alone. Of course Jesus can read hearts. We who can't see the invisible church must read *people* as we care for *souls*.<sup>34</sup> The Lutheran middle insists that in caring for souls we practice the latter without neglecting the former. Instead of pitting rites and relationships against each other, as if the venue of caring for souls features a battle between theology and psychology, we strive to connect *people* to *God* by understanding both as accurately as possible. This balance is the basis for Walther's Thesis VIII, for Jesus' evangelical approach to "sinners," and for the seminary delving into dealing with human beings and prompting students' insight into psychological and pedagogical principles. It is also the reason for pumping cool air conditioning into a people-packed gymnasium on a late July afternoon lest delegates or essayist physically fall asleep, which hinders the proclamation of the gospel. We care for embodied souls and inspired bodies. Such a balance of the divine and human, of spiritual and physical, is not neat and tidy.

Defend sound doctrine according to God's changeless Word and let unrestrained love be the proof of our teaching, lest our wrangling have little to do with Jesus or he with it. Having one thing to say has the advantage of consistency. The more difficult position is for those who say *two* things, not meaning by this timid compromise, but expressing both truths loudly and energetically; that's when you can make almost everybody angry.<sup>35</sup>

The Lutheran middle gets messy, even, according to the professor, making people angry in the sense of a frustration that we can't just push the "easy" button or invoke "we've always done it this way." We can't make caring for souls clean and predictable, totally and theoretically removed from practical humanness. The way the ministry really works, however, is that "week after week, Christ

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<sup>31</sup> Walther supports his thesis by referencing 1 Timothy 1:8-10, and also Jesus' proclamation of gospel forgiveness to the sinful woman, Zacchaeus, and the thief on the cross. These three were all seen by the Pharisees as unforgivable sinners. (Walther, C.F.W. *The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel*. Edited by W.H.T. Dau. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1929, 1986, 101)

<sup>32</sup> And more than that, the Pharisees and teachers of the law were preaching a gospel to each other and their followers living securely in their sins, but a Christless gospel which was "really no gospel at all" (Galatians 1:7).

<sup>33</sup> Jesus reserved his most scathing condemnations for these church leaders. "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees" (Matthew 23:13,15,23,25,27,29, cf. also 16). They were appointed to care for souls and instead "shut the kingdom of heaven in men's faces" (23:13). They relied too heavily on appearance, both their own ("Everything they do is done for men to see," 23:5) and that of others, and it blinded them to the truth. Theirs wasn't a lack of sincere effort but a lack of humble, repentant faith in the redemptive work of the Savior. "You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are" (23:15). It wasn't that they didn't have the right rites, they just abused them with an absence of theological integrity. "You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. You blind guides!" (23:23,24)

<sup>34</sup> One of my not-so-stellar moments in ministry was administering the means of grace in an inspirational hospital devotion to woman lying in bed, unable to communicate, captivated by my presentation. Unfortunately I didn't check in with the nurses' station that visit (always do this!) because Esther had already been dead for two hours.

<sup>35</sup> (Paustian, Mark A. "Unleashing our Calling: Today's Christians Find Fulfillment in their Vocations." Mequon: Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Symposium on Vocation, 2006, 10; previously in his essay, Paustian attributed the Lutheran "two things" to Adolf Koberle in *The Quest for Holiness*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1936, 266-268.)



washes the disciples' dirty feet, handles their very toes, and repeats, 'It is all right, believe it or not, to be people.'<sup>36</sup>

## Lutheran *Seelsorge*

The German, Lutheran Johannes Muehlhaeuser, our synod's first president, washed feet and handled toes, not only by ministering to people during Milwaukee's cholera epidemic, but with his pastoral heart in the infant years of the Wisconsin Synod.<sup>37</sup> *Sorge* is a German word that, used in a good sense, means care or concern for someone, and in a negative sense, means worry or anxiety. *Seel* means soul, so *die Seelsorge* is the care of souls. There's a mood, a spirit, however, to *Seelsorge* that is pastoral in nature. A shepherd-like approach to ministry. Therefore, *der Seelsorger* became a popular German Lutheran synonym for *der Pastor*.<sup>38</sup> Martin Luther, whom some argue invented the term, left us a legacy of the fatherly, pastoral spirit of Muehlhaeuser, even though Luther's dominating traits sometimes overshadowed it. Luther's was a Lutheran middle, a balance of "pastoral admonition and care (*Seelsorge*; literally, the care of souls) as defining all aspects of pastoral ministry, rather than as a separate specialty of the pastor tied to therapy and personal well-being and separated from the Word and sacrament."<sup>39,40</sup>

Timothy Wengert suggests, in his foreword to *The Pastoral Luther: Essays on Martin Luther's Pastoral Theology*, that *Seelsorge* contributed to Luther's angst in the posting of the ninety-five theses due to what he observed as "bad preaching and its effects on the people" regarding indulgences. Wengert quotes Luther again: "I regret deeply the false understanding [of the indulgence preachers' sermons] among the people."<sup>41</sup> Thus the ninety-five theses themselves are filled with pastoral concerns for the laity and the preaching of the gospel. Furthermore, "some of

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<sup>36</sup> (Peterson, *The Contemplative Pastor* 1989, 84)

<sup>37</sup> "The Muehlhaeuser Synod—in its first decade the Wisconsin Synod could well be called that, and it often was. This was so not because Muehlhaeuser sought to rule the small body or to set himself up in a strong hierarchical position as its president. The constitution he drafted would soon be replaced. His mild Lutheranism would soon give way to a strong confessionalism. It was not organizational skill nor a dominating spirit on the part of its founder that caused the new synod to be referred to as the Muehlhaeuser Synod. It was so called because its senior member in age and experience led the young men who joined it with a pastoral heart and with genuine concern..By his fatherly, pastoral spirit, by his practical wisdom and experience, by his humble yet determined zeal for the gospel Muehlhaeuser influenced the synod he founded so that it often was called and in fact to a large extent was the Muehlhaeuser Synod during its first ten years...In 1855 Muehlhaeuser was one of the few pastors of Milwaukee who did not abandon the sick during a cholera epidemic, a fact gratefully remembered by the whole city. At the time of Muehlhaeuser's death, *The Milwaukee Sentinel* paid tribute to his practical concern for people..All of this made it quite natural to call the congregation he founded and served for nearly two decades the 'Muehlhaeuser Church'" (Schuetze, Armin W. "Muehlhaeuser: Founding Father of the Wisconsin Synod." Mequon: Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary essay file, 5,8).

<sup>38</sup> (Deutschlander, Prof. Daniel M. *Ein Kleines Theologisches Woerterbuch*. 1994.)

<sup>39</sup> (Wengert, Timothy J. *The Pastoral Luther: Essays on Martin Luther's Pastoral Theology*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2009, 4)

<sup>40</sup> The Augustinian influence on his faith, life, and ministry played a role in Luther's *Seelsorge*. "Martin Luther was an Augustinian in the sense that he was a member of the Augustinian Eremites. He entered their Black Monastery at Erfurt on July 17, 1505, at the age of 21. Several other orders maintained houses in that city and its environs. It is not too daring to say that the story of the gospel's course in history would not be the same if the earnest young man had entered one of the others. This was the only order which combined the study of Scripture and of Augustine's writings with dual emphasis on the care of souls and higher education" (Balge, Richard D. "Martin Luther, Augustinian." Mequon: Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Essay File, 1).

<sup>41</sup> (Wengert 2009, 6, with footnote references WA Br 1:108-15; LW 48:43-49)

Luther's most poignant writings (beyond those thousands of remarkable sermons) arose directly out of pastoral concerns.<sup>42</sup>

Keep on loving each other as brothers. Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it. Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering...Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith (Hebrews 13: 1-3,7).

So, like Augustine and Luther, Walther and Muehlhaeuser, and the current president of Martin Luther College,<sup>43</sup> we preach the Word and administer the sacraments faithfully. At the same time we love those in our church and synod family, as well as our friends, family, neighbors, the underprivileged, strangers, even our enemies. Depending on the circumstances of care, we may be more involved in one than the other, but such is sometimes difficult to determine as the methods of caring for souls become quite permeable.

As a pastor called by my congregation to administer the means of grace, I must confess that I frequently face this temptation and trap: By virtue of my office, its responsibility and its authority, I focus so intensely on the preparations and operations of administering the means of grace that I forget their core that forgives me and others in Christ's love and their call to follow the way of Christ's love. My transaction of the process gets in the way of the product, so to speak. It even frustrates my personal, spiritual health while I martyr myself with overbusyness thinking I'm the second savior (who doesn't exist but few people want to tell pastors that). It wields my ordination like a club because I have in my hands, by permission of the people I serve, the calling to above all else ensure the proper administration of the means of grace. Above all else? Even love? "Love is for later, for others," the liar whispers to my itching ears. "You are the custodian of the means of grace, and that more than anything needs your attention. Hurry up, you're falling behind." And, religious professional that I am, I hurt the very people Christ entrusts to me, thinking I'm helping them by administering the gospel yet along with it I am administering a loveless trampling of their souls. And then I complain how faithless they can be.<sup>44</sup> I excuse my lovelessness and lack of caring with the lie that I'm so responsible for the means of grace

### DISCUSS

"Nothing is more important than saving souls." Clarify and explain two opposite extremes reacting to this statement from a transactional point of view or a relational one. Then give an example of what the balance looks like.

<sup>42</sup> (Wengert 2009, 6,7. A fact demonstrated in a small selection of titles from throughout Luther's career: *Fourteen Consolations for Those Who Labor and Are Burdened* (1524); *Whether Soldiers, Too, Can Be Saved* (1526); *Whether One May flee from Deadly Pestilence* (1527); *A Staple Way to Pray for a Good Friend* (*Master Peter the Barber*) (1525); *A Comfort for Women with Whom Things Have Gone Awry during Childbirth* (1542).)

<sup>43</sup> With the pastoral heart of Muehlhaeuser and Luther, the president of Martin Luther College endears himself to students by putting on his shorts and sneakers on a sweltering August afternoon and carrying boxes, fans, blankets, and wardrobes up, up, up to dorm rooms waiting for students. I know this because it's the first thing a lonely mother of a new MLC student mentioned to me last fall when I asked how things were going. Is this not caring for souls? I am not disappointed that the president isn't more directly dispensing the means of grace because I know that, come midwinter when students get squirrely or lonely or fall into other traps of the devil as students do, they can flash back to the sweaty head revealing the pastoral heart of their president. "He really cares." He's not a hierarchical threat. They will be more ready to give him an extra minute and an open heart to receive from him what he knows is the heart of Seeborg—Christ's love. "Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins" (1 Peter 4:8).

<sup>44</sup> Eugene Peterson quotes Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "A pastor should not complain about his congregation, certainly never to other people, but also not to God. A congregation has not been entrusted to him in order that he should become its accuser before God and men." (Peterson, Eugene H. *Five Smooth Stones for Pastoral Work*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1980, 65, footnote attributes this quote to Dietrich Bonhoeffer. *Life Together*. New York: Harper & Row, 1954, 29)

and its success. Nothing is more important than saving souls. Satan is the one who succeeds as I foolishly fragment the delicate Lutheran balance of truth and love, spiritual and physical, product (what) and process (how). Walther would rip his robe at me, too. No, he'd point me to the cross. There I find the earth-splitting, heaven-rending tension of law and gospel ripping out the heart of God where it bleeds for sinners with life and death, anger and love, threat and promise, human and divine, heaven and hell. Perhaps he'd point me also to the upper room where my Savior washes clean the soles and souls of those whom he calls, "Do as I have done for you...You will be blessed." Forgiven, I leave remembering balance. Two things.

Lutheran *Seelsorge* cares about the integrity of the means of grace *and* cares about the whole well-being of the people whom the gospel catches in its net. A fisherman treats the trophies of his catch gently and respectfully, understanding what might harm them in the process of being hauled in. He also takes care of his fishing gear, the tools of his livelihood, without which he'd never catch fish. Sometimes these twin interests collide and things get messy. Nets get snagged deep in the water and must be cut loose and lost. Or lures get snapped deep in a fish's jaws and, cutting the fish to save the lure, the fisherman loses the fish. Likewise, fishing for men can be messy. We ought to expect it. And do well to prepare for it. People are people, not just fluffy souls. Again, the goal is balance, always keeping in mind that means of grace ministry is the church's calling, and love is the church's calling, neither without the other. Faithful means of grace ministry is loving, and love for others finds its life and meaning in the means of grace.<sup>45</sup>

Finally, Lutheran theologians have traditionally applied *Seelsorge* to the pastoral office alone, and rightly so.<sup>46</sup> This was the term's original intent, and it continues to this day. However, "Christian soul care is much too important to be restricted to the clergy or any other single group of people...Ultimately, all Christians are called to the task of caring for the souls of others."<sup>47</sup> Christ's "Take care of my sheep," (John 21:16) was spoken to Peter as the first call of an echo for disciples of all times, just as he commissioned the Eleven and all believers, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation" (Mark 16:15). Anyone who follows Christ is "the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world" (Matthew 5:13,14) to season others' lives with God-flavors and shine into others' lives with God-colors, caring for souls. Called workers like pastors, teachers, and staff ministers have the joyful responsibility to care for souls on behalf of their calling body, while all Christians (including called workers in our personal priesthood) care for souls in response to the calling of the Scriptures.<sup>48</sup> Here, too, a balance is important. Clergy do not hold a monopoly on caring for souls,<sup>49</sup> and the laity ought not entrust caring for souls exclusively to their called workers. At the same time, the church will agree on the wisdom of assigning particular tasks to either party for the good of the kingdom.

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<sup>45</sup> "In spiritual care, God wants to act. In the midst of all anxiety and sorrow we are to trust God. God alone can be a help and a comfort. The goal of spiritual care should never be a change of mental condition...I do not provide *decisive* help for anyone if I turn a sad person into a cheerful one, a timid person into a courageous one...Christ and his victory over health and sickness, luck and misfortune, birth and death must be proclaimed. The help he brings is forgiveness and new life out of death" (Bonhoeffer, Dietrich, and Rochelle, Jay C. tr. *Spiritual Care*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985, 30)

<sup>46</sup> "Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers" (1 Peter 5:2).

<sup>47</sup> (Benner 1998, 32-34)

<sup>48</sup> For my definition of terms, I reserve *Seelsorge* and "pastoral care" for the pastoral ministry, while "care of souls" and "spiritual care" can apply to both the public ministry (pastors, teachers, staff ministers, and other called positions) and wider Christendom.

<sup>49</sup> My pastoral theology textbook introduced me to *Seelsorge* as follows: "The pastor has responsibility to minister not only to the congregation as such, but also to each individual member of his flock...concerned not only about the well-being of his flock as such, but also about that of each individual sheep in his flock according to its needs." Then the authors continue, "It is not essentially different from what every Christian ought to do." (A. W. Schuetze and I. J. Habeck, 1974, 139)



Multitudinous writings do and should exist on the topic of the call and ministry and more will be needed, but such lies beyond the scope of this essay. A similar volume of writings offers scriptural guidance and encouragement for means of grace ministry (at this convention one such offering is being presented on the sacraments), which is the heart and core of caring for souls. Fewer writings, at least in confessional Lutheran circles, offer scriptural guidance and encouragement for the relational aspect of caring for souls with means of grace ministry. So let's devote the remainder of our attention to this focus: relational ministry. But not without some concern, that is, we must be sure that we keep one foot planted firmly in the means of grace entrusted to us, without stepping away from the tools given to the Church. Only then can the other foot find a landing spot, stepping forward into our calling to care for souls, which is caring for people.<sup>50</sup>

We commit to the instructions and exhortations of the Scriptures and do not detach the soul from the person, nor Christ's love from the Church's love—with fear and trepidation. But also with faith and prayer, that our love may “abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight” so that we may “be able to discern what is best...filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God” (Philippians 1:10,11).

## People matter to God and to the Church

The June 2011 edition of the *WELS Connection* celebrated the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Central Africa Medical Mission. “It's obvious God has blessed our synod's mission efforts through the Lutheran Church of Central Africa. Since WELS missionaries first arrived in Zambia and Malawi half a century ago, membership in our sister synod which operates in the two countries has grown to more than 55,000. The Holy Spirit gets all the credit for the growth. The medical mission helped open doors for the gospel by caring for the sick or injured.” Care for the body opened the door to the soul.<sup>51,52</sup> People matter. Kathie Wendland, one of the early nurses at the medical mission, explains, “They come to you at a time when they're going to listen like they've never listened before. Many are facing death. And that's really a wonderful opportunity then to be talking to them about an eternal life that is waiting for them through Christ...What I was doing there was creating this reputation of someone who loved people, somebody who would take care of people when nobody else would or could, and because of that, now they would listen when someone would tell them about Jesus Christ.”<sup>53</sup> Now they would listen. Like the parents and their little lambs who learn of Jesus because of your early childhood education program or vacation Bible school. Like the hungry

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<sup>50</sup> “Every prominent curate in antiquity—from Basil and the Cappadocians through St. John Chrysostom and all the way to Gregory the Great—every single one of them entered into their work as physicians of the soul only with great fear and trepidation. They were keenly aware of the eternal ramifications of the work of pastoral care. I would, therefore, stress that any contemporary efforts to recover soul care in our time be done with great caution; we need to go slowly and learn from one another and from those faithful *Seelsoerger* who have gone ahead to glory” (Senkbeil, Harold L. “The Art of Spiritual Evaluation: A Framework for Understanding the Health of the Soul and Its Cure.” *Christ's Gifts for Healing the Soul: Toward a Lutheran Identity in the New Millennium*, 2001, 55).

<sup>51</sup> The apostle Paul liked to refer to similar open doors for the gospel: “a great door for effective work has opened to me” (1 Corinthians 16:9); “Now when I went to Troas to preach the gospel of Christ and found that the Lord had opened a door for me” (2 Corinthians 2:12); “And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message” (Colossians 4:3).

<sup>52</sup> “[Pastor Cox] remembers that we learned the importance of offering humanitarian aid here partly by accident. Our missionaries were told by the president of Malawi they couldn't expand their work into his country from Zambia—unless they also provided medical care. ‘I thank God that he put President Banda in our way so to speak when we thought he was getting in our way and maybe setting up a barrier, but it became that door to the gospel that he really set up for us.’ And so the Central African Medical Mission stepped in to provide the required care.”

<sup>53</sup> (Quotes retrieved from *WELS Connection*, June 2011)



and homeless souls with physical hunger, both of which you feed as they now listen. People matter. Why? Because they matter first and foremost to God.

God himself is relational. The doctrine of the Trinity, as we believe it from Scripture and express it in the Athanasian Creed, affirms that “we worship one God in three persons and three persons in one God.” Real and living persons—“distinct,” yet relational—the persons of the triune God interact with each other. The Son is “begotten of the Father” and the Spirit “proceeds from the Father and the Son,” all of whom are “coequal and coeternal...one God worshipped as three persons.” This God instituted marriage, designed friendships, and fashioned the Church as the body of Christ for humans, whom he wired to be relational like him. More than that. With him!

The incredibly good news is that Emmanuel wants to relate to people who have broken his design, showing ourselves, by our shameful sins, to be incapable of connecting to him and each other in a way that fulfills his holy purpose.

When the Apostles’ Creed confesses trust in the one who was born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried, it expresses a penetrating affirmation of God’s determination to share fully in our human condition. This stands against the docetic<sup>54</sup> view that Christ was never really born.<sup>55</sup>

On the night before he died Jesus spoke some of his most powerful words, connecting—interlocking—the dots between God’s miraculously mysterious intra-relationship within the Trinity and his miraculously merciful inter-relationship with sinful people lost without his love. He “lets us in,” so to speak. Saving us. Setting us apart.<sup>56</sup>

People matter to God. The first chapter of the Old Testament concludes with the crown of God’s creation: people. And the first words of the New Testament in Matthew 1:1 mention two topics without which the Scriptures would be meaningless: Jesus Christ and people, specifically the beginning of the Son of God’s genealogy as “the son of David.” As if asterisked to be footnoted with (*sic*), four particular names stand out as peculiar: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and “Uriah’s wife” Bathsheba. Not only was it culturally inappropriate and confusing to include women in genealogies, but...*these women*?! I guess anyone can get into the family. Exactly.

People matter to Jesus. During some of the most intense moments of his redemptive work saving souls globally, Jesus reached out to souls locally, caring for them as people. At his baptism Jesus could have asked Gabriel to baptize him like new parents eagerly asking a special guest pastor to perform a baptism, but instead he ministered to John as much as, or more than, John ministered

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<sup>54</sup> DJL footnote—Docetism is a false teaching related to Gnosticism, proposing that Christ did not really have a physical body, just an apparent one, and therefore only apparently suffered and died, but not really. Dangerously man made separation of the spiritual and physical.

<sup>55</sup> (Oden, Thomas C. *Care of Souls in the Classic Tradition*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984, 19)

<sup>56</sup> From the gospel of John:

- “I am in the Father and the Father is in me...I am going to the Father” (14:11,12).
- “I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor, to be with you forever” (14:16).
- “I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you” (14:20).
- “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him” (14:23).
- “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener...I am the vine; you are the branches” (15:1,5).
- “I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you” (15:15).

to him.<sup>57</sup> Jesus' transfiguration lifted the eyes and strengthened the resolve of three "eyewitnesses of his majesty" (2 Peter 1:16; Luke 9:28) whom he later took along with him into the inner garden when, with suffering soul, he dared to ask the Father for another way, if possible (Mark 14:33-36). Jesus had healed many people, spiritually and physically, in quiet corners and busy streets, yet in the heated moment of being arrested, he applied heaven's miraculous help to an enemy, healing the guillotined ear of Malchus, a servant of the high priest (Luke 22:51). Stumbling forward under the crushing weight of the cursed cross, Jesus refused to spit poisonous venom on his attackers (1 Peter 2:23), instead warning the weeping women. Then with his crushing weight of the world's sin on the cross, Jesus prayed for his enemies, pardoned a condemned criminal, and provided for the well-being of his mother (Luke 23:26-43; John 19:25-27). Risen from the dead, Jesus returned a second time to the disciples huddled in the locked house, to patiently calm the doubts of Thomas with spiritual promise and physical sight and touch (John 20:24-29). His "convincing proofs that he was alive" (Acts 1:3), compassionate concessions to the weak human flesh of his disciples, continued for 40 days until Jesus ascended not under the cover of darkness but in the midday company of his disciples as "he was taken up before their very eyes" (Acts 1:9). These works of caring for people make our Savior's active obedience as lovingly "other-focused" as his passive obedience, both of which graciously fulfill with "the full extent of his love" (John 13:1) our calling, "Do as I have done for you." Before we even try. With feet and hearts already clean, we now extend our love—further than ever before.<sup>58</sup>

Fittingly, this God in relationship within the Trinity and in relationship with people cares about community and relationship among people. People matter. "Take care of my sheep." Sheep caring for sheep is who we are and what we are called to do. The Scriptures say that makes us shepherds who, like Moses and David, and even Jesus, speak the language of both sheep and shepherd. Paul explores and encourages our dual identity of *receptacle* of the gospel and *resource* for the gospel with two metaphors: "jars of clay" and "body of Christ."<sup>59</sup>

People. Jars of clay. Cracked pots.<sup>60</sup> Common, ordinary Christians. Sometimes wayward sheep. Helping other cracked pots and wayward sheep. Even lost sheep. This is relational ministry as assigned by our relational God, who never removes himself from the relationship just as the head never decides to refuse its body as junk or even recycle it for another. Neither does God remove the

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<sup>57</sup> "Then John gave this testimony: 'I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. I would not have known him, except that the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.' I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God'" (John 1:32-34).

<sup>58</sup> "My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you...This is my command: Love each other" (John 15:12,17). Sandwiched between these commands from Jesus to us about the ultimate fulfillment of his law is the ultimate fulfillment of his gospel for us and in us: "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends...You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name" (15:13,14,16).

<sup>59</sup> 2 Corinthians 4:7, "We have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us." Paul's words emphasize the humanity—the "earthen" dimensions—of congregations. Also, it is clear that congregations often do obscure rather than reveal God by their behavior; yet Paul's words suggest that it is through these human qualities—a congregation's life together and its witness in the world—that God's extraordinary power is visible and experienced. In their very humanity, congregations are revelatory agents—for good or for ill...In addition to the clay jar metaphor in his correspondence with the church at Corinth, Paul also referred to the Corinthian congregation as the "body of Christ" (1 Cor. 12:27). This is an equally extraordinary claim: that in the common life and witness of these quite ordinary and often wayward Christians at Corinth, Christ was present. They were not simply Christ's emissaries or representatives, but his very body, charged with continuing his ministry... (Carroll, Jackson W. *God's Potters: Pastoral Leadership and the Shaping of Congregations*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006, 2,11)

<sup>60</sup> Thanks to Pastor Jim Radloff for teaching me this term early in my ministry, though I'm not sure if he wanted me to learn it more as a description of others or myself. I have a hunch that I'm a better pastor and person when I realize it is both.

responsibility he places on us and in us to care for people, which in light of his caring for us divinely becomes less of a busy burden and more of an affectionate *agape* love. Just recall some of the terms of endearment spilling out of the hearts of the inspired authors of Scripture to the people they care about—friends, brothers, saints, my dear children, companion, beloved, fellow servant, and more.

One of the most delightful expressions of people caring for people in the Bible is Paul's writing to his beloved Thessalonians. "We were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children. We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us" (1 Thessalonians 2:7,8).

- "We loved you so much," an intensity of affection and attraction, the Greek word was once discovered on the grave stone of a child as an inscription of the parents' deep yearning<sup>61</sup>
- "To share," is the giving of something with which one retains a part and the other receives a part so that they relate<sup>62</sup>
- "Our own lives," literally, "our own souls,"<sup>63</sup> soul sharing is part of gospel sharing in relational ministry

"We dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting, and urging you to live lives worthy of God...When we were torn away from you for a short time (in person, not in thought), out of our intense longing we made every effort to see you...May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you" (2: 11,12,17; 3: 12). This is far from transactional, procedure-driven, busy-busy ministry that puts organizational agenda first. This is a love-based caring for souls. Does my church look like this? Does my synod look like this? Do I? In some ways with some people, yes. In other ways with other people, not so much. Sometimes I am just way too important in my own eyes.

At the end of the day in my church and synod, the invisible church marches on and ministers in the sphere of and in step with—not separate from—the visible church. Two things. Therefore, people matter. John the Baptist knew that, so he dressed and ate and preached and baptized appropriately for his context in his style with his gifts, always pointing to the Lamb of God. Always preparing the way. "The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him" (Mark 1:5). And through him they found the Messiah.

#### REFLECT AND RESOLVE

"Now about brotherly love ... do so more and more" (1 Thessalonians 4:9,10). Refer to Appendix B on p. 33 of this essay. After reflecting on its encouragement write your keyword(s) here:

### Relational means of grace ministry

The *Pulpit & Pew* project "asked pastors about a number of daily problems that they face; the one that they reported as their greatest challenge was reaching people with the gospel in today's world. Seventy-four percent overall said that this was a problem they faced on a day-to-day basis."<sup>64</sup> This statistic supportively suggests the relevance of an essay at a synod convention about relational means of grace ministry.

<sup>61</sup> σφιγρομαι

<sup>62</sup> μεσσημιαν

<sup>63</sup> ψυχη

<sup>64</sup> [Carroll 2006, 32]

Want to relate to the child in your classroom with ADD? Start where you are and with what you have, especially the love of Jesus that scrubs between toes. See yourself as the child's servant rather than master. Continue with some research of your own, and partner your care for souls with an ADD professional. You don't have to be the expert. Get more information from the student and his or her parents than from the Internet. Live the gospel. Share the gospel. Two things.

Not sure how to get your leadership on board with member ministry that takes ownership of the church's mission and doesn't rely on the pastor do to everything? Start where you are and with what you have, especially the love of Jesus that gets up from the tasty meal and takes up the towel. Show servant leadership by believing in Christ and in his love that empowers and equips believers.<sup>66</sup> Trust these partners in the gospel<sup>67</sup> to do ministry fitting the church's mission with their gifts and their ideas their way<sup>68</sup>—yes, get out of the way; go golfing, volunteer at the police department, find some friends who aren't pastors or members or WELS, take a reading retreat or a sorely needed vacation, and stop smothering the universal priesthood with well-meaning micromanagement. Give people (and fellow called workers at your congregation and around our synod) the permission to try, and the courageous grace to fail forward.<sup>69</sup> Continue with some research of your own. Study the Scriptures. Grow together with your leaders and admit you don't have all the answers and will accept some of theirs.<sup>70</sup> Live the gospel. Share the gospel. Two truths. That's relational means of grace ministry.

When it came to relating to people and caring for their souls, Jesus was anything but controlling or transactional. Jesus was the model soul shepherd in his dealings with people. He met them where they were, invited choice, asked probing questions, was scandalously inclusive, dealt with each person uniquely and individually, spoke in ordinary language, demonstrated a holistic respect for the close relationship of body and soul, invited engagement not passive receptivity, and gave himself not just advice.<sup>71</sup> Jesus was, and still is, our relational Savior, in tune with the present

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<sup>66</sup> (Carroll 2006) *Pulpit & Pew* is a major research project whose purpose is to describe as comprehensively as possible the state of Protestant and Catholic pastoral leadership in the U.S. What are the trends, and what issues do clergy face? The project also aims to contribute to an understanding of excellent pastoral leadership and how it can be called forth and supported. If undertaken by Duke University Divinity School, the project is supported by a grant from the Lilly Endowment, Inc. For further information, see [www.pulpitandpew.duke.edu](http://www.pulpitandpew.duke.edu). (Editor's note)

Ten research reports and seven books relate what has been learned. The 10 reports, plus a number of articles on various topics, are available at no cost from the *Pulpit & Pew* website ([www.pulpitandpew.duke.edu](http://www.pulpitandpew.duke.edu)) or from *Pulpit & Pew*, Duke University Divinity School, Box 90983, Durham, NC 27708. Two previous books focused on Catholic priests (Hoge 2002 and Hoge and Wenger 2003) and were published by Liturgical Press. In cooperation with the National Federation of Priests' Councils, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company is publishing the remaining five books as a *Pulpit & Pew* series. In addition to this book, they include a study of clergy who have left the pastoral ministry either to take another type of church-related position or to leave ministry altogether (Hoge and Wenger 2005); a study reporting in-depth interviews with six pastors about how they and their congregations seek to engage in public ministry in their local communities (Constantine 2005); a theological reflection on the meaning of excellence in ministry (Jones and Armstrong 2006); (Prefers sustains is) and a history of pastoral leadership in America (R. Erskine Hollifield, 2007).

<sup>67</sup> Philippians 1:6, "...being confident of that, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion..."

<sup>68</sup> Philippians 1:4,5, "...I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel..."

<sup>69</sup> Philippians 1:10, "...so that you may be able to discern what is best..."

<sup>70</sup> Philippians 1:14, "Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly."

<sup>71</sup> Philippians 1:25, "...I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith."

<sup>72</sup> (Benner 1998, 27,28; a partial listing here. See the complete list in Appendix C, p. 35 of this essay. A few of these could use better explanation, if not scriptural support)



situation and faith and Scripture. The Pharisees, in their technical world that banked on institutional and transactional attempts to get right with God, hated that.<sup>72</sup>

Thomas C. Oden, in *Care of Souls in the Classic Tradition*, "chooses to illustrate his point by discussing the most influential single author on pastoral care in the history of the church—Gregory the Great, who was Bishop of Rome from A.D. 540-604. Gregory's *Book of Pastoral Rule* is the single most widely read book, outside the Bible itself, ever written on the subject of pastoral care." While we might debate the "most influential single author" compliment for Gregory, Oden does us a favor by connecting Gregory's pastoral care to Augustine, "a brilliant pastor at work showing...a wise contextual pastoral care."<sup>73</sup> He continues by describing what contextual meant for Gregory.

Each pastoral case requires variable response...Gregory's most influential assumption is that no two pastoral cases are to be handled in precisely the same way. Each requires a response gauged to the specific contours of the situation. Gregory calls the pastor to be keenly attentive to these contextual peculiarities, fine nuances, and ever-changing emotive qualities rather than flatly applying rigid norms without listening to the situation.<sup>74</sup>

That sounds like a lot of work, and it is. Messy work, like trying to fumble through cultivating a friendship with a homeless man. Or one of my pastor friends who, instead of sending a form letter (or even a letter for that matter) brought the means of grace to an inactive member by personally visiting his farm, accompanying him to the barn, and learning how to milk cows. Now he's baling hay, too, and through this relational ministry his visits live the gospel, share the gospel, and care for souls. "Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep!" (Luke 15:6).

The messiness of black Florsheim wingtips that now need polishing for Sunday is kibbles and bits compared to the inner turmoil when it comes to relational ministry. One of my favorite church cartoons speaks volumes in only two pictured frames. In the first, a pastor studiously sits in front of a pile of books with pen in hand, and the cloud of his thought says, "I should be making visits." In the second frame, the same pastor is sitting next to a homebound woman on her floral print sofa with Bible in hand and cat nestled at his feet, thinking, "I should be working on my sermon." Satan, I decry thee! Leave me alone! Let ministry be straightforward and easy. Then again, who says this comes from Satan? The Pharisees saw the mess Jesus was making of their institutionalized religion and thought he came from Satan.<sup>75</sup> Not true. The God of salvation explained to skeptical Ananias how he'd work through the mess of drafting the murderous Saul: "This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name" (Acts 9:15,16). Paul's thorn, his chains, and his shameful past all made his ministry a mess—as catalysts for the kingdom that captured him and for which he fought to the end.

Embrace the mess, brother. Christ is in it with you. Don't be afraid of the burning bush that makes you wonder if you should be a shepherd or a rancher. Don't be afraid of the other side of the boat when the fish aren't biting on your side. Don't be afraid of reductions in numbers that make you make difficult decisions you don't want to make. Don't be afraid of how to divide your attention

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<sup>72</sup> "You hypocrites! Doesn't each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or donkey from the stall and lead it out to give it water?" (Luke 13:15). "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath...Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus" (Mark 2:27,28,3:6).

<sup>73</sup> (Oden 1984, 8,14. The author seeks "to avoid three stumbling blocks: 1) an antihistorical view of pastoral theology; 2) an antipastoral approach to historical theology; and 3) an antitheological style of pastoral care." 13)

<sup>74</sup> (Oden 1984, 55)

<sup>75</sup> "It is by the prince of demons that he drives out demons" (Matthew 9:34).

between the faithful 99 and the one who is lost. Don't be afraid of asking questions. Don't be afraid of unknown answers. Don't be afraid of the wind and the waves, sent by heaven's breath—your Savior is there. "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid...Come" (Matthew 14:27,29). These are not easily resolved conflicts for embodied souls, for saints with both flesh...and freedom.

"Somebody once asked Gregory of Nazianzus a question. He replied, 'I would rather answer that one in the pulpit.'<sup>76</sup> The chancel is so safe. The pulpit is so objective, and it should be no other way, at least in that place. With the post-service walk to the narthex, however, the objective collides with the subjective, and we pastors encounter real people. Teachers spend the day in the classroom proceeding through planned lessons and a schedule structured by bells and procedures. Then after school it gets more interesting. Then they see Brock behind school kissing Emily, and an angry mom needs to vent, and coworkers need to be managed differently. We have honed our skills for means of grace ministry that focuses on pastoral rites, such as found in the liturgy of our worship that we perform from the chancel, and on corporate organization such as found in a teacher's classroom. We have also honed our skills for means of grace ministry in visitation and counseling, outside of the pulpit and classroom. Somewhere between public rites and private meetings, such as in the narthex and the hallway, the parking lot and the faculty lounge, the church community and our own neighborhood, we find everyday opportunities for means of grace ministry, not as connected to rites as to relationships. As we now explore both environments, they will shed light on relational ministry practices that care for souls.

## Relational ministry practices<sup>77</sup>

God willing, by the time of our 61st biennial synod convention, the WELS National Conference on Worship, Music, and the Arts will have successfully served at least another 1,000 participants. "Since 1996, conferences have been held every three years and interest has grown with more than 1,000 people benefitting from each event. Interest in good worship innovation continues in WELS as does the need for both solid theological and creative perspectives."<sup>78</sup> Theology blends with creativity in our worship education, developing our worship leaders, musicians, vocalists, and artists to better serve embodied souls with the means of grace. But alas, music itself is not the means of grace; neither are felt banners or paraments, for that matter. Yet they serve and support the means of grace, so we do well to pay attention to them, to study them, and to educate ourselves in their theological and creative use.

Relational ministry and its practice is not, in itself, the means of grace. When we value people and treat them with interest, it doesn't save their souls any more than a three-year-old pounding on the piano saves souls. We would not speak of Dale Carnegie as a Seelsorger. Neither should we be satisfied neglecting the impact of relational ministry as serving and supporting the gospel,<sup>79</sup> just like music. Called workers who develop their people skills through early training and lifelong learning are better equipped to care for souls, even as they are better equipped to care for

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<sup>76</sup> Donald G. Miller, *Fire in Thy Mouth*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1954, 83. Quoted by Eugene H. Peterson, *Five Smooth Stones for Pastoral Work*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990, 93.

<sup>77</sup> These relational ministry practices will be much further expanded for practical application in this essay's accompanying Bible study to be posted on Connect, WELS' internet for called workers and congregational leaders, by the end of August (<http://www.wels.net/connect-resources>).

<sup>78</sup> <http://www.wels.net/news-events/events/national-worship-conference>

<sup>79</sup> Kenneth Haug, founder of Stephen Ministries, believes that "education offered in churches and other religious institutions does not always satisfy the need for knowledge that will serve you well in caring for others" (Kenneth C. Haug and William J. McKay, *Christian Counseling: A Way of Life Leader's Guide*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1996, 14).



souls because they have learned how to present a religion lesson or preach a text. Church members who, with theology and creativity, evaluate the systems of their congregation with a concern that people matter, are better equipped to care for souls. We need education in God's gifts of relating to people as much as we need education in God's gifts of directing a choir or decorating a chancel.

As Lutherans, we thank God for clear teaching on the inherent power of the means. We know all growth in faith and power for sanctified living comes only by the power of the Spirit in the gospel. Our knowledge, skill, and abilities cannot in themselves convert an unbeliever or strengthen a single child of God.

But right there we must be careful that we don't draw an unbiblical conclusion that would actually make us quite imbalanced in our theology and approach to ministry. I will use an analogy from the Apostles' Creed. We want a full three article approach to ministry...We use First Article gifts, to proclaim Second Article truths, with Third Article confidence. The gospel and the means of grace, the Second and Third Articles, stand in magisterial position within the church. The gifts of the First Article stand in a ministerial position to the gospel and the means...

There is room in the ministry for many and varied sets of First Article gifts.<sup>80</sup>

Relational ministry employs First, Second, and Third Article gifts to care for embodied souls. Below are some practices in areas where we might consider developing skills in First Article gifts that care for souls by relational means of grace ministry. The list is not exhaustive by any means, but simply makes a start at identifying areas of opportunity for attention.

### **Mutuality**

A relationship can be a professional one, such as a teacher and student or doctor and patient and, when so, the reciprocity of knowing, learning, and growing is disproportionate. "A student is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master" (Matthew 10:24). This professionalism has its place in the secular world as well as the church. The principal dude is not the students' big buddy. Then again, the president of Martin Luther College gets two days of exercise each year carrying boxes of shoes, clothes, maybe some books, and making acquaintances, maybe some friends. I have worked side by side with two veteran pastors who have taught me the importance of being real and having fun with members of the congregation both at and away from church, and I have caught what I was taught: When people have "learned to know [their pastor] as a friend who takes personal interest in them, it will be much easier for them to accept his ministrations in a time of trial, or to go to him for help when a problem arises in their personal life...[and] will serve to build up the member's confidence and make him more ready to speak of what is in his heart."<sup>81</sup> The mutuality of a personal relationship brings dividends of blessings for both parties.<sup>82</sup> "You are those who have stood by me in my trials," (Luke 22:28) the Son of God thanked his disciples for their companionship and care.

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<sup>80</sup> (Gurgel, Richard. "Fan into Flame (Your Faith and) the Gift of God! A Call to Grow for Brothers and Sisters in the Public Ministry." 2009, 12.13)

<sup>81</sup> (A. W. Schuetze and I. J. Habeck, 1974, 141,144)

<sup>82</sup> Sometimes the one considered the professional or the expert is the one who benefits, grows, and learns even more. I wonder if a day goes by when a kindergarten teacher doesn't learn something from the little lambs under her care. Ronnie, my homeless friend, brings joy, appreciation, and growth to my life and ministry, opening my world to explorations otherwise unknown. By mutuality in relational ministry we find ourselves cared for.

No, by their vocation or their call into the public ministry, parents and children do not stand on equal footing, neither do teachers and students or clergy and laity. Yet the Bible's metaphor for a pastor is not *king* but *shepherd*, whose influence is rarely coercive. "Not that we lord it over your faith, but we work with you for your joy," the apostle assured the Christians in Corinth (2 Corinthians 1:23), employing mutuality in caring for souls.

Pastors must live in the spacious country of the covenant and be on familiar terms with all the people and their dialects, know every nook and cranny in the landscape—not merely be informed about them as a tour guide might but at ease among them as one who has grown up there, playing in the mountains and working in the fields, falling in and out of love, getting hurt and getting well. It is no easy thing, venturing out of our cozy small-minded religious programs into a large-souled obedience, leaving the secure successes of our professionally designed lives...<sup>82</sup>

## GROW

Think of people or groups in your care, who in turn can care for you. List two of them whose relationship you could develop more closely in months ahead, for mutual blessings.

- 1)
- 2)

The mutuality of relational ministry had its place even among church fathers like Augustine, who once told his congregation in Hippo, "For you I am a bishop; with you I am a Christian."<sup>83</sup> Caring for souls is not something we always do *to* people, often it is something we do *with* them.

Nathan's approach to the scandalous King David demonstrated mutuality. "I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the LORD'—and you forgave the guilt of my sin" (1stalm 32:5). How the kingdom of God benefits when open dialogue<sup>84</sup> at church

council, school board, faculty, and a host of other meetings becomes expected as the culture of the organization, led by the pastor or principal. "What you have to say is important. You are a valuable contributor." And that means listening.<sup>85</sup>

## Listening

My 19-year-old son and I met a salesperson and when we were walking away, I asked him, "Do you remember her name?"

"Yeah...no...I think it's Kim."

<sup>82</sup> [Peterson, Eugene H. *Working the Angles: The Shape of Pastoral Integrity*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1987, 57]

<sup>83</sup> [Smither, Edward L. *Augustine as Mentor*. Nashville: O & H Publishing Group, 2008, 222]

<sup>84</sup> My father has Parkinson's disease and lives in a nursing home. I have watched him respond so much more positively to health care professionals who come near, come close, and come down where he is sitting (especially because he is hard of hearing). Doctors and nurses giving him even a small dose of mutuality make all the difference. During that moment he can better hear them and be sure that he is being heard. So the exchange between the two parties multiplies its dimensions of understanding. The dialogue that takes place in these circumstances differs greatly from the short answers and succinct questions otherwise. Genuine, expressive dialogue "is more than advice giving, information exchange, or the communication of something already known. Properly understood, dialogue is exploration and discovery through conversational engagement. It is shared inquiry that is designed to increase awareness, understanding, and insight." (Banner 1998, 131)

<sup>85</sup> "True physicians of the soul, therefore, must pray for God's gift of discernment...St. John Chrysostom warns every would-be shepherd against haste or dictatorial methods in dealing with God's sheep...he calls for tact and patience among pastors...The shepherd needs great wisdom and a thousand eyes, to examine the soul's condition from every angle'... The pastor must first listen to the soul before he can minister to the soul. Since the condition of the soul is disclosed primarily by the heart, effective physicians of the soul must polish their listening skills: they must learn to listen not merely with their ears but with their hearts. Faithful pastoral care of the soul starts when one heart discloses itself to another heart—then the healing ministrations of God's Word and Sacraments may be most effectively applied" (Senkbel, 54).

"Hmm...I think it's...well, it starts with an 'm.'" It was Melissa, but that really didn't cut it if I'd greeted her, "Hi Mmmm." My son and I agreed we needed to work on remembering the names of

**DEMONSTRATE** your listening skills! Greet your neighbor, the one you met when we first started, 1) using your neighbor's name, and 2) by echoing to your neighbor the one interesting fact that you learned about that person.

people we meet.<sup>87</sup> It's kind, courteous, and expresses interest. Mom always told me we should listen twice as much as we speak because God gave us two ears and one mouth. One local bank boasts on a billboard, "Ironically our tellers are great listeners." James urges us to be "quick to listen, slow to speak" (James 1:19). Listening not only allows us to better understand and evaluate, but it also offers significance to the one who is speaking.<sup>88</sup> That person matters. "Tell me more about \_\_\_\_." "How's it going with \_\_\_\_?" Then

whatever we hear can make a difference in approaching that person with care relevant to his or her needs more than our assumptions. "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen" (Ephesians 4:29). Harold Senkbeil refers to this type of listening as "spiritual evaluation," supporting a means of grace ministry.

Medical charts are indispensable for physicians of the body. Physicians of the soul are interested in the history of the soul's care as well...to discover what spiritual ailments are chronic in this soul, what pressing temptations of the devil, world, or flesh are impinging on the soul's health, and what God has been doing about it...Spiritual evaluation is best understood as a two-stage process. First, the pastor seeks to understand the presenting symptoms in view of the overall health of the soul. However, the pastor who knows that the sole remedy for sin is the forgiveness of sins will see this stage as merely preliminary. The heart and center of the care of the soul is the absolution of the sinner in the name of Jesus Christ.<sup>89</sup>

"The nineteenth-century French clinician Laennec used to say to his students: 'Listen, listen to your patient! He is giving you the diagnosis.' Laennec was a good physician. He invented the stethoscope."<sup>90</sup> One wonders what trouble could have been spared if Job's friends or young Joseph's brothers would have done a little more listening. It isn't easy, as this admonition suggests:

Few learnings are more important to the pastor than to learn when to keep silent and when to speak. Two equal dangers must be avoided: either speaking what should be left unspoken or failing to speak what must be spoken. The pastor must at times be like a bell—an open,

<sup>87</sup> Later, at a wedding rehearsal, I met with a delightful Indian couple and their family and friends, a roomful of brown-skinned, black-haired strangers, and related the experience—complete with names—to my wife, Thangaraja, Aditya, Shanmugasundaram. Now, why could I remember multiple Indian names so strange to my American tongue but not "Melissa"? Because I knew I needed to pay attention and work hard in order to pronounce their names correctly. With Melissa, I was thinking ahead about how I'd counter her high price and company lines. I wasn't paying attention and treating her as a person, just a position that was getting in my way.

<sup>88</sup> Listening can often become our term for what we're really doing and that's rehearsing in our mind what we're going to say next while the other person's mouth is moving and sounds are dropping to the floor. Just like asking questions—leading questions—can often become our term for exerting our opinion in a way sneaky enough that the other person might eagerly agree. In a conversation with a caring WELS man concerned about his friend attending a heterodox church, the man told me that his friend was turned off by religious authorities preaching at him about his queer life choices. I suggested that before he also preached to his friend, he should ask him some questions and listen for awhile. His response was, "We are asking him questions and listening, like the other day I asked him, 'Don't you know that they don't believe in infant baptism?'" That's a leading question. "He who answers before listening—that is his folly and his shame" (Proverbs 18:13).

<sup>89</sup> [Senkbeil 2001, 61]

<sup>90</sup> [Peterson, *Five Smooth Stones for Pastoral Work*, 1900, 09]

clear, ringing public witness. But bells are irritating if rung incessantly. Bells are best heard sparingly and at the uniquely fitting time, especially at special, celebrative times.<sup>91</sup>

In counseling and classroom discipline before we offer forgiveness or sage advice too prematurely for what is good for the soul, we need only listen...and then maybe listen some more. "Okay, what did you do then?" "Why is that important to you?" Participants made a discovery in our recent friendship witnessing session—they can become more confident in their witnessing if they do a little work first on their listening skills and remind themselves that they don't always need to win the argument right off the bat. Or even argue. Questions are powerful. "The particular skill which needs to be developed is to diagnose just what Word of God the individual in a particular situation needs and to be able to apply it in a manner which he will understand."<sup>92</sup> And mystery of mysteries, the omniscient Son of God spent time in his Father's house as a 12-year-old among the temple teachers "listening to them and asking them questions" (Luke 2:46).<sup>93</sup> Finally, the Bible promises that God even listens to us.<sup>94</sup> Is there a person or situation you are now struggling to understand? Get to know and appreciate the people for whom you care. Listen to them, "allowing the soul to unburden itself in the presence of someone whose care surpasses mere human compassion...Such spiritual listening therefore transcends empathy; the goal is to evaluate the health of the soul and to provide such nutrients and cures as its maladies may suggest."<sup>95</sup> Then speak what he or she or they need to hear, remembering what believers need to hear—yes, like to hear—most of all. Their Savior's voice.<sup>96</sup>

### LEARN

Identify a person or situation you are now struggling to understand, and can commit to new and improved listening:

### Spiritual conversations

We might be surprised that C.F.W. Walther, our champion of distinguishing between law and gospel in means of grace ministry, especially in preaching, advises pastors, "Don't preach." He understood that preaching is not the essence of ministry but a form of it. The essence of ministry is the gospel, which is the means of grace in Word and sacraments. The twin doctrines of law and gospel deserve publication far beyond the pulpit. Therefore, in his textbook of pastoral theology when instructing seminary students about visiting the sick, Walther said of the pastor, "Give the patient the necessary spiritual nourishment in a conversational, not a sermonic, way: especially that he not preach much to the severely ill, and, if they are in great pain, that he impress on them only passages of holy Scripture with short applications and suitable hymn verses, pausing from time to time, and praying with short, heartfelt sighs."<sup>97</sup> Pastors love hospital visits because we stand before a captive audience, but Walther says save the sermon for the pulpit. There is opportunity here for dialogue, for a two-way spiritual conversation in a garden where God is working, pruning, cleaning, loving. How many of these moments of pastor-with-people-in-crisis present themselves for relational ministry? Hired hands might sigh, "Too many!" Shepherds would muse, "Not enough."

<sup>91</sup> (Oden 1994, 66)

<sup>92</sup> (A. W. Schaefer and L. J. Halbeck 1974, 140)

<sup>93</sup> On another note of role reversal, the July/August 2011 edition of *Preach the Word* newsletter (Vol. 14, No. 6) published by the WELS Commission on Worship and edited by Prof. Rich Gargel focuses on preachers listening to their hearers (<http://preachthewordwels.net/>)

<sup>94</sup> "The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles" (Psalm 34:17).

<sup>95</sup> (Seakbelle 2001, 38)

<sup>96</sup> "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me" (John 10:27).

<sup>97</sup> (Walther, C.F.W. *American Lutheran Pastoral Theology*, Urlickamer, John, ed. New Haven, MO: Lutheran News, Inc., 1995, 207)

David Benner agrees with the “not enough,” and describes these occasional ministry moments as “episodic pastoral care.” Perhaps a bit too critically he worries about members of the visible church who receive pastoral care only at church or when sick or dying, “Is it any wonder that they feel the church has little relevance to the inner life of their soul?”<sup>98</sup> With advances in medical care, sick members sometimes sneak in and out of the hospital before pastors know it or can respond, or they find home treatment just as effective. This presents fewer opportunities for pastoral visitation.<sup>99</sup>

Rather than congregations asking the Lord of the church to strike a few members each week with some kind of plague or other malady—not serious enough to be fatal but serious enough to hospitalize them long enough for a caring visit where the pastor can enjoy an extended, personal conversation with them—a better option might be to engage similar spiritual conversations in other moments. An e-mail, “Pastor, we had our baby.” A phone call, “Miss Schultz, Tyler’s having some issues at home and won’t be at school until lunch today.” The small talk with parents after Sunday school or in the hallway, small talk with leaders before the elders meeting, even at the grocery store bumping into the person who sits in the fourth pew, left side every Sunday. Most people, most of the time, are not in crisis mode. Rather than creating a crisis, we can enter the everyday and bring the means of grace there in spiritual conversations. Pastors can do this. Teachers can do this. Normal people can do this. At church. At school. At the ball game.

Current parish life seems to have pastors so busy running the organizational structure of the congregation that they have little energy to devote to spiritual care. Consequently, parishioners have learned to seek out their pastors only in great emergencies, usually prefacing their contact with: “Pastor, I know you’re busy, but...” What follows is usually a request for counsel or advice in dealing with a difficult situation.

Pastors who take seriously their responsibility for soul cure will find that opportunities present themselves at every turn: in teaching, preaching, catechesis, sick calls, and requests for counsel. Even mere requests for advice may present opportunities for spiritual conversation. Spiritual conversation can lead to instruction, instruction to repentance, and repentance may open the door to confession, absolution, and healing. Spiritual care is not a one-time confrontation. The faithful *Seelsorger* follows the thread of the cure of the soul through each and every contact with his parishioners throughout their lifetimes.

Likewise, the faithful pastor will find occasional opportunity for direct communication with his parishioners regarding spiritual evaluation and cure. Substantive changes in life vocation (marriage, birth of a child, death of a parent or spouse, etc.), physical or mental illness, hardship, success, and many other situations in life present unique occasions to explore the health and healing of the soul.<sup>100</sup>

“Lord, how I loathe the big issues,” a sentence Eugene Peterson copied from one of C.S. Lewis’ letters, touches on this truth.<sup>101</sup> If there’s one thing that exasperates spiritual shepherds, it is our sheep not paying attention to the Good Shepherd until there’s something big going on, and then they’ve not trained their embodied souls to pay attention well. These are the parents who worship on Christmas (and maybe Easter) because their kids are in the program. If you know such a person

<sup>98</sup> (Benner 1998, 190)

<sup>99</sup> In its section of survey about time spent in pastoral visitation, the *Pulpit & Pew* project discovered that a pastor’s time in visitation declined sharply in recent history, at least from the pastors’ viewpoint, “from over nineteen hours [per week] in 1934, to fourteen and a half hours in 1954, to just over nine hours in 2001. Although pastors nearly doubled their time counseling between 1954 and 2001, time spent in visitation dropped by over seven hours a week.” (Carroll 2006, 105)

<sup>100</sup> (Senkbeil 2001, 59,60)

<sup>101</sup> (Peterson, *The Contemplative Pastor* 1989, 115)



and he's a farmer, go ask him to show you how to milk cows. If she runs a cute little corner coffee café, change it up from Starbucks and spend your \$3.75 and 30 minutes in relational means of grace ministry. "The cure of souls is not a specialized form of ministry...but is the essential pastoral work. It is not a narrowing of pastoral work to its devotional aspects, but it is a way of life that uses weekday tasks, encounters, and situations as the raw material for teaching prayer, developing faith, and preparing for a good death."<sup>102</sup> This is caring for souls not necessarily connected to traditional church rites, and that's okay; both have their place in life and ministry.

Everyday small talk about God and spiritual conversations outside of worship or Bible study frequent the Scriptures, mostly because the heroes of faith we find there operated no church machinery like we do today as far as facilities, programs, and staff.<sup>103</sup> Jesus met people where they were at with the language of parables.<sup>104</sup> We sometimes speak of teachable moments in the nurture of our children. They present themselves so plainly sometimes, and in my experience it was often only after I missed the opportunity that I realized the open door I just passed by. Yet this helped me prepare better for the next teachable moment and pray for my Father to help me be more than a "quality time" father but better an "all the time" father. Being in the moment with people is relational ministry that cares for souls. Find those moments. Bring Christ there. And don't leave too soon.

### Group care

The popularity of social networking on the Internet has multiplied such moments. The recently launched WELS Facebook page is taking off and even surpassing the traditional WELS web site in its popularity.<sup>105</sup> Group interactivity among friends—even Facebook friends—offers another opportunity for relational means of grace ministry. Like this thread on the WELS Facebook page:

(Original post): I am very concerned for my salvation. I know that Jesus died on the cross to forgive us our sins, however, many years ago I committed adultery and got a divorce. I fear

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<sup>102</sup> [Peterson, *The Contemplative Pastor* 1989, 59]

<sup>103</sup> How often did Noah, that "preacher of righteousness" (2 Peter 2:5), bring God to his workplace and from his workplace in conversations while conspicuously building the huge ark? The prophets preached both to public audiences but also in spiritual conversations of everyday moments with kings, widows, family members, neighbors, and seminary students. Paul didn't need a visitor's badge for his prison ministry because he passionately brought Christ to wherever he encountered people (during a conversation about witnessing. I once heard someone suggest that we not only bring people to Christ but bring Christ to people).

<sup>104</sup> The small talk and the everyday of spiritual conversations (like parables) need not dumb down the kingdom of God and the saving of souls. "Parables sound absolutely ordinary: casual stories about soil and seeds, meals and coins and sheep, bandits and victims, farmers and merchants...As people heard Jesus tell these stories, they saw at once that they weren't about God, so there was nothing in them threatening their own sovereignty. They relaxed their defenses. They walked away perplexed, wondering what they meant, the stories lodged in their imagination. And then, like a time bomb, they would explode in their unprotected hearts. An abyss opened up at their very feet. He was talking about God; they have been invaded!...Parables aren't illustrations that make things easier; they make things harder by requiring the exercise of our imaginations, which if we aren't careful becomes the exercise of our faith...Parables trust our imaginations, which is to say, our faith. They don't herd us paternalistically into a classroom where we get things explained and diagrammed. God does not impose his reality from without; he grows flowers and fruit from within. God's truth is not an alien invasion but a loving courtship in which the details of our common lives are treated as seeds" (Peterson, *The Contemplative Pastor*. 1989, 32,33)

<sup>105</sup> The WELS Facebook page, since its launch in May 2010, has attracted 9,000 people who "like" it; 5,000 of them are active monthly users, and the majority of them are not called workers. Within the first few months of its introduction, the WELS Facebook page had more people like it than the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* (this has reversed in recent months as mid-size companies have taken up the Facebook craze). In May 2011 the WELS Facebook page connected to 282,811 post views (number of times anyone viewed a wall post, even repeated views, and views appearing on a person's page) as compared to 106,373 total visits to the WELS website (including repeat visits) during the same period. (Hochmuth, Joel, WELS Director of Communications, interview by Daron Lindemann, conversations during May/June 2011)



that breaking one of God's Ten Commandments is a sin punishable by damnation to hell. Would God forgive me for this sin?

(Comment): I'm banking on forgiveness ...

(Comment): We all sin. All sins are punishable by damnation to hell. That's why Jesus died to save us from our sins...ALL of our sins! The ten commandments (sic) didn't rate the seriousness of our sins...break one, break them ALL.

(Comment): All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

(Comment): And we are all forgiven by the sacrifice of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To believe that we will be still punished for our sins is like doubting God and the sacrifice Jesus suffered for us...

(Comment): forgiven (sic) through faith ... no other way.

(Comment): Forgiven by Christ salvation no other way!

(Comment): I am Lutheran (ELCA). I wanted to say that I have also wondered if I am going to Hell for my sins eventhough (sic) I have repented (not adultery). What I read here brought me peace. Thanks to my Lutheran brothers and sisters, even from a different synod for the reminders of God's mercy and love

In God's creating activity only one thing on that sixth day prevented it from receiving God's accolade of "good." Aloneness. God solved that by creating a companion for Adam. The companionship of another—whether in God's institution of marriage or in the friendships we treasure—is a gift. Friendship blesses people in special ways not usually enjoyed in other relationships, especially professional relationships like pastors, teachers, and staff ministers. Church professionals can think and act more relationally at given opportunities, and they can also plan and promote groups where non-professionals can interact with each other in ways that draw out the faith, hope, and love of Christians otherwise reserved in deference for the trained skills of the professional. What many pastors and teachers have discovered about the organic interactivity of peer partners and breakout groups in the classroom setting for discussion, study, and projects also applies to the wider relational ministry of the church. Groups help God's people grow and let them shine, serving and being served, caring and being cared for, learning, and discovering that Christ's calling belongs not only to the professionals. Ministry is multiplied. And God saw that it was good.<sup>106</sup>

Christians are going to enjoy the fellowship of friendships. Why not capitalize on the eager and organic nature of Christian friendships by creating more arenas for relational means of grace ministry? More "one another-ness" that multiplies gospel ministry and cares for souls like the Christians in the early church.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> In the same paragraph where he mentions his "priestly duty," Paul also empowers the Roman Christians, "I myself am convinced, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, complete in knowledge and competent to instruct one another" (Romans 15:14). And Luther on relationships: "We see Christ, who is struggling with temptation in the garden, look for comfort in the society of three disciples (Matt. 26:40). When Paul sees brethren coming toward him (Acts 28:15), the very sight of these revives his spirit, and he feels comforted...Therefore solitude is to be avoided. We should long for the society of people we know, especially in times of dangerous spiritual troubles...As for myself, I judge the loss of all one's possessions easier to bear than the loss of a faithful friend." (Plass 1959, 1326,527)

<sup>107</sup> "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every

You may be called to serve some of the friendliest Christians, yet discover that being a friendly church is nice but not enough. Additionally in some cases, being a big church has its benefits but also its challenges, especially related to Christians connecting in meaningful friendships that extend means of grace ministry. Spend some time analyzing this challenge, studying the Scriptures, researching the pros and cons of group ministry through reading as well as evaluating group life in other churches, and relating all of it to your local context. In what ways can your church or school intentionalize relational ministry with groups?<sup>108</sup>

## BRAINSTORM

What groups currently exist, whose relationships could provide a starting place for more intentional means of grace ministry?

What ideas for group ministry have you had or heard?

## Pastoral care

Dear pastor,

When you were ordained into the holy ministry and installed to care for souls in this congregation, we called you to follow the Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ. He is our Savior and you represent him among us.

When we call upon you for greater leadership and act as if the success of the church rests on your shoulders, remember your Shepherd, Jesus Christ, and follow him. It may seem that nothing can be done without a dramatic and dominant leadership style but, when it is a matter of nurture and growth for the flock over time, the servant is the model. Moses and Elijah came down from the mountain, after all. Come down to us. Be with us. What we need more than your greatness is your servanthood—patient and loving, kind and caring. If you aren't sure what this looks like in your ministry or if you are doing it well, please ask us. We care about you and our ministry together.

When we expect that you are responsible for getting things done effectively in the congregation, remember that people matter more than things. Be effective with *people* and efficient with *projects*. Projects aren't as urgent as we make them seem, and although they have deadlines, they don't have souls like people do. People matter.

When we come to you with our problems, expecting you to make them all better, before diagnosing solutions or making everything okay, help us first see the grace of God operating in our lives. This is the theology of the cross. Help us in our weakness see Christ as our strength and shield, entering our troubles and our suffering as Savior even in the storm. Your job is not to create the church triumphant, solving problems and calming every wind and wave of which we are afraid, but to care for our souls. Before rescuing us, be with us. And bring Jesus Christ, our only Savior.

When we look to you for all the right answers, make room for small talk, for open dialogue, for spiritual conversation, and for listening to us. We don't want you to have an answer for every question, because it helps us search the Scriptures and seek the righteousness of God as his own people. It gives us greater ownership of our faith, our congregation, and its ministry. It puts us on the agenda, too.

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day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved" (Acts 2:42-47).

<sup>108</sup> See Appendix D on p. 36 for a description of our experience at Grace Lutheran Church in Milwaukee, WI using a group structure for relational ministry. Other churches have also done this, and in some ways better. Here's our story.

When the pressures exerted on your pastoral professionalism begin hardening it into ecclesiastical impersonalism, when you want to be more relational in your means of grace ministry but don't know where to begin, turn first to your Lord. Spend more time with him—personal time. A closed room and safe place, just you and your Lord, with no other projects or worries. Nobody needing you but rather you needing your Lord. Nobody calling you but your Lord, who bid every one of his disciples, "Come," before commanding them, "Go." Learn to be more relational with your Lord. You matter to him, and to us. Then take time to be relational outside the day-to-day operations of this congregation. Develop friendships with others. Enjoy hobbies. Eat and exercise because you are a person, not just a pastor. Stay healthy and fit so that your First Article gifts can serve and support our Second and Third Article ministry.

When your job becomes running the church from Sunday to Sunday with institutional duties, much like running a house where the to-do list grows as fast as the summer grass, practice the virtue of building a home, not running a house. You're not the manager of the lawn but the caregiver of the family. Nurture us with the peaceful pastures of Christ's love. Lead us on the paths of Christ's righteousness by walking alongside of us in a relationship. Restore souls. Comfort us. The house of the Lord is not a structure or a system but a shepherd calling the Good Shepherd's sheep closer, safer, farther. We are following.

Thank you for being our shepherd and pastor.

Pastors, more than encouragement from God's people, consider encouragement from God's Word in the spiritual leaders of the Scriptures who understood and practiced relational ministry to embodied souls.<sup>109</sup> "It is okay to be people, after all." With all that said, the person who matters most in your pastoral ministry is you. Understand that correctly, however, defined by Paul's words,

I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me faithful, appointing me to his service. Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief. The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst. (1 Timothy 1:12-15)

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<sup>109</sup> Solomon's ruling in the case of the protesting prostitutes saved an innocent child because part of his God-given wisdom was understanding human nature, and he applied it as leader of God's people (1 Kings 3:18-28). People matter. Moses, after he learned from the terror of murder that he didn't need to be needed, benefitted from understanding his need to be networked. The people surrounding Moses—Miriam (Exodus 15:1,20,21), Jethro (Exodus 18), and Aaron (Exodus 4:14; 17:12)—filled in gaps, provided support, and equipped him to become a better leader. People matter. Mordecai respected both the direction he saw for God's people and the decision of Esther as to her personal participation. No bullying, no crisis mode of laying guilt trips on her if she doesn't get more involved. His trust in the work of God wasn't reduced to depending on her (Esther 4:14). People matter. Joseph could have divorced Mary and possibly changed the setting of redemptive history, but his spiritual leadership trusted in the Lord's word and took into account the Lord's work amidst the messiness of human and divine, physical and spiritual (Matthew 1:18-25). People matter. Saul was made new in conversion and became the new guy on the team, but his past preceded him and "he tried to join the disciples but they were all afraid of him, not believing he really was a disciple" (Acts 9:26). Barnabas took a chance, took the risen Christ at his word, and took Saul by the hand knowing that even big boys need handholding once in a while. People matter. Saul took up the name Paul, neither ashamed of the gospel nor ignorant of the people to whom he proclaimed its power for salvation. Trapped in accusations at a Sanhedrin assembly, Paul demonstrated a working knowledge of people and relationships by appealing to his belief in the resurrection. The Sadducees, who "say that there is no resurrection" (Acts 23:8), protested so vehemently that the men of the Sanhedrin turned on each other in debate, raging into a mob scene so violent that the commander rescued Paul. People matter.



Pastors, who you are and how you see yourself as Christ Jesus our Lord sees you, saves you, and strengthens you makes more of a difference in your pastoral calling than any other person. There is only one you. Nobody else wears your fingerprints or carries your personality and gifts. Nobody else, in your view, sins more. This focus of reality—of faith, really—is the foundation of relational ministry, the interest in administering the means of grace to people who are no different than you in their sins. And in their Savior. His abundant grace and love appoint you, your history, your personality, your strengths and weaknesses, even your potential to the public ministry. You matter, after all. Christ cares for your soul first before calling you to care for others, and when he calls you he calls all of (who) you (are). Lead as a sheep. Follow as a shepherd.

### **Caring for souls: people matter**

Today we have listened once again for that calling of Christ. In his promising shepherd's voice. At our dirty feet cleansed by his care-full living water. Throughout his ministry to all kinds of people and "sinners." And certainly on the cross where our shame found its end. The inspired Word of God instructed us that souls on this earth belong to bodies and bodies to souls, therefore when we minister we do so to the whole person. The creating, redeeming, and sanctifying work of God gives and renews value to people—after all, God is relational himself and equips his children to be relational in our love to him and others. The practices of relational means of grace ministry sometimes indirectly support the gospel and sometimes directly serve people with the gospel, the visible church striving to keep in step with the invisible church.

The means of grace enrich, equip, engage, empower, and encourage people, with pastoral rites, and through personal relationships. And often both wonderfully at the same time.

Those cards just get in the way.

Cluttering his window sill next to his desk they try their best to remain standing on edge but some of them are starting to curl and droop a little bit. That's okay. They may not look pretty, but they mean a lot to him. He knocks them over when he reaches for his blinds and, not so bothered, really, repositions them, appreciating the people they represent. The fine graphic images on the front of the cards don't catch his eye as much as the photos tucked lovingly inside a few of them, photos of souls in his care. He can see them—smiling. The perfect rhyme and rhythm of the professional poetry was a good read, but when he takes a peek at a few of the cards on a difficult day now and then, he re-reads the handwritten sentences, some of them in sloppy handwriting. The design and poetry of Hallmark—well, anyone can buy that for a couple bucks. The relationships of people, of souls to whom and with whom he ministers, these matter more. Even as they matter to Christ, and his love, and his calling.

"Do as I have done for you ... You will be blessed," Christ speaks with command *and* promise. This is our calling.

## Appendix A – Caring for Souls: People Matter

### Psalm 77:1-12

Identify the thinking, willing, and feeling of the author's soul in this psalm by circling the words that indicate such. Mark each with a *T* for thinking, a *W* for willing, or an *F* for feeling.

- <sup>1</sup> I cried out to God for help;  
I cried out to God to hear me.
- <sup>2</sup> When I was in distress, I sought the Lord;  
at night I stretched out untiring hands  
and my soul refused to be comforted.
- <sup>3</sup> I remembered you, O God, and I groaned;  
I mused, and my spirit grew faint.
- <sup>4</sup> You kept my eyes from closing;  
I was too troubled to speak.
- <sup>5</sup> I thought about the former days,  
the years of long ago;
- <sup>6</sup> I remembered my songs in the night.  
My heart mused and my spirit inquired:
- <sup>7</sup> "Will the Lord reject forever?  
Will he never show his favor again?"
- <sup>8</sup> Has his unfailing love vanished forever?  
Has his promise failed for all time?
- <sup>9</sup> Has God forgotten to be merciful?  
Has he in anger withheld his compassion?"
- <sup>10</sup> Then I thought, "To this I will appeal:  
the years of the right hand of the Most High."
- <sup>11</sup> I will remember the deeds of the LORD;  
yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago.
- <sup>12</sup> I will meditate on all your works  
and consider all your mighty deeds.

## Appendix B – Caring for Souls: People Matter

The balance between caring for the means of grace and caring for the people it saves and serves challenges us. So does the balance between caring for the means of grace and for the people—fellow called workers—administering it. Jesus shepherds us here, too. Both Martin Franzmann and Prof. Forrest Bivens urge our relational interests here, too. Caring synodically for fellow pastors, teachers, and staff ministers is also our calling.

Read and reflect on their encouragements below. First, consider Franzmann’s presentation of being called to greatness. Then, turn the page and contemplate which of Brother Bivens’ many resolves or renewals is a battleground in your heart where you need the Spirit’s work to fight off flesh, world, and Satan. Be honest with yourself and take it home by transferring a key word or two from this appendix to the text box on p. 18 of this essay, taking it with you to bring to God later.

In a sermon on Luke 1:15, “For he will be great in the sight of the Lord,” Franzmann writes:

John the Baptist is the only man in the New Testament who is called great in a laudatory sense, except, of course, the Man Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. And yet he of all men is totally unconcerned about any greatness of his own...What does it look like, this greatness of John the Baptist, this Advent greatness?

It is marked, first of all, by a great and free independence. By throwing himself wholly upon God and upon His greater Coming One, and by depending completely upon Him, John made himself free of everyone and everything else. He was free from the passion for conformity to patterns. He broke them all. He broke the Judaic pattern...he called men away from the settled sanctities of the temple and the synagogues, from all their hallowed habituations, and called them into the desert to confront there the bare majesty of [God]...

We with our awed respect for patterns, our passion for belonging, our avidity for acceptance, our yearning for the security of a certified mediocrity, our fear of renouncing the majority. It’s nice to be normal, it’s nice to be accepted, it’s nice to belong...With independence comes that quality which we find hard to give a single name to. The Bible calls it *parrhesia*, boldness, confidence, the courage for antagonism, if you will. John...bade all Israel, without exception, all the pietists of penance, all the hierarchy, everybody, to put themselves on a level with the dirty Gentile and be washed with his Baptism of repentance unto the remission of sin. Does this quite square with our idea of the good, solid church in a good, solid neighborhood, with a nice sign out in front, the church which pays its debts, including the debt of lip service to a pattern...?

So we are funny-looking figures too, we who inherit John the Baptist’s mouth, finger, and voice, as Luther put it ... John renounced all bigness, and he became great in the sight of the Lord. (Franzmann, Martin H., Feuerhahn, Ronald, ed. *Ha! Ha! Among the Trumpets*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1966, 1994, 25-30)

In an essay on spiritual renewal, Prof. Forrest Bivens writes:



"Now about brotherly love we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other. Yet we urge you, brothers, to do so more and more" (1 Th 4:9-10). Love for fellow saints is a cherished gift from God and a key expression of spiritual renewal...

Our resolve is not simply to be 'loyal to the organization' for the survival or expansion of the institutional church. Our resolve is to guard tongue and hand that we treat brothers as brothers, implying testimony and discipline, encouragement and rebuking—but requiring love in all things...

The temptation will remain among us to decry any... synod structure [as] being placed above or against kingdom concerns. The temptation will likewise remain for organizational overseers to lament what appears to be local parochialism and offer solutions without the benefit of an on-site appraisal of how the kingdom fares in a given locality.

Let us resolve to observe together how terrifically frustrating our ministries can be in this world...Pastors and teachers scrap for time to devote themselves to the diligent and devotional study of Scripture that renewal might flourish through their ministries. Administrators also seek and make plans for renewal emphases but are unable personally to apply law and gospel in many classrooms and congregations to further the cause. Let us resolve to remember our shared frustrations.

Let us resolve to confess the presence of a pope within each of us that ultimately seeks a renewal that is neither radical nor truly relational, but merely a reaffirmation of personal prestige. The tendency is to do what we want at the expense of our gracious God's honor and our fellow laborers' good name. These and similar temptations are like the poor; they are always with us.

Let us also resolve to "be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires" (Ja 1:19-20). The diligent perusal of Scripture again and again reminds us how difficult it often is to appraise another's faith and life without divine declaration...Relational renewal, flowing from heart and mind, will check improper tendencies and nourish the mutual and brotherly application of law and gospel. Concerning this we may be quick to speak.

Let us therefore resolve to seek radical and relational renewal for and with one another. (Bivens, Forrest. "Spiritual Renewal as Expressed in the Christian's Life." Mequon: Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Essay File)

## Appendix C – Caring for Souls: People Matter

David Benner identifies a list of characteristics that identify Jesus as the model soul shepherd in his dealings with people (Benner, David G. *Care of Souls: Revisioning Christian Nurture and Counsel*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998, 27,28).

- met them where they were
- was compassionate
- acted out of an explicit moral context but was never condemning
- spoke with authority
- invited choice
- asked probing questions
- affirmed faith responses
- was scandalously inclusive
- set limits and took care of himself
- dealt with each person uniquely and individually
- related in a manner that affirmed people's value
- was never coercive or manipulative
- spoke in ordinary language
- didn't minimize the costs of discipleship
- dealt at the level of motivation, not just behavior
- preferred dialogue over monologue
- respected, but wasn't limited by, cultural norms
- demonstrated a holistic respect for the close relationship of body and soul
- never allowed his own needs to get in the way of meeting the needs of others
- challenged people never to settle for less than God's best for them
- gave in proportion to receptivity and spiritual hunger
- invited engagement, not passive receptivity
- gave what people needed, not what they asked for
- identified embedded spiritual issues
- allowed people to ignore or reject his help
- gave himself, not just advice
- accepted the trust people placed in him

## Appendix D – Caring for Souls: People Matter

### Group life

You may be called to serve some of the friendliest Christians, yet discover that being a friendly church is nice but not enough. Additionally in some cases, being a big church has its benefits but also its challenges, especially related to Christians connecting in meaningful friendships that extend means of grace ministry. Spend some time analyzing this challenge, studying the Scriptures, researching the pros and cons of group ministry through reading as well as evaluating group life in other churches, and relating all of it to your local context. In what ways can your church or school intentionalize relational ministry with groups?

This is what we did at Grace Lutheran Church, and the result was creating a number of new opportunities for relational ministry both serving and supporting the means of grace. We now foster group life among our diversified membership in three areas: 1) a system of Grace Groups where we want people to be connected and cared for, 2) an intentional support of common interest groups (some of which already exist like the choir or the softball team, and others we created, for instance a new running club and a reading club), and 3) we are beginning to form some support groups, starting with a grief support group. Next on the list is a focused effort on groups devoted to Bible study.

What has become key is the connecting point between the groups and the ministry of the wider congregation, and we've made concerted efforts to manage that intersection. The intent is for each to complement the other. Wider ministry adapts itself to group participation which in turn strengthens souls who are active in wider ministry. So, for example, we encourage groups to attend our church-wide Bible studies, participate in our church-wide summer Bible reading, or sit at our church picnic—as their own group. We provide service opportunities, like preparing fellowship meals before Advent and Lent services, and promote them for groups to sign up and own them. Some groups have even decided to take on the annual responsibility of an evangelism, education, or fellowship event.

Finally, group life at Grace is where our new member nurture (assimilation) happens, rather than in large scale settings like worship. Group life, initially partnered with pastoral instruction, eventually takes over in the new member nurture process. All new members, whether confirmands or professions of faith or WELS transfers, participate in new member nurture.

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# Closing service sermon

July 28, 2011

St. Mark, Watertown, Wis.

Rev. Joel Petermann

Theme: *As the Lord fills us with love, he also spills us with love.*

Scripture reference: *1 Thessalonians 3:12,13*

Her name was Hadassah. She was a Jew, bearing the name of a famous biblical Jew whose Persian name was Esther. She was the granddaughter of the Widow of Nain. Her father was the child being carried in the funeral procession whom Jesus restored to life. She was only a teenager in 70 A.D. when the Roman General Titus, Vespasian's son, destroyed Jerusalem. Her family were all killed or died in the siege, and she was carried away to Rome and sold as a slave.

She was a Christian Jew. She believed that Jesus was the Messiah. Her father had taught of the forgiveness Jesus had won for her. She believed in God's grace to save her and lived her life filled with that love to serve Jesus by being a servant to others. Yet, while anyone could see from her dark hair, her deep eyes, and her outward dress that she was a Jewess, she did not tell others that she was a Christian. Christians were fed to the lions in Rome. Yet though she did not tell others, it was obvious something was different about her. She was not like other Jews. She loved with a selflessness that stood out.

Finally it was her love that gave her away. She loved unconditionally without thought of personal gain. She loved her youthful mistress, Julia, even though that mistress in her own self-absorption often berated and mocked her. Still Hadassah loved her as a sister, or even as a mother, once even placing her body between that of her mistress and the whip of her abusive husband. Hadassah often gave her meager slaves' income to Romans who were in need, though Romans despised her race. She loved others despite and beyond their treatment of her, despite what they had done in their lives. She would not compromise her morals, and yet she was not judgmental of others. She rather felt compassion for the depth of their lostness.

Her love simply spilled out of her because of the love of Jesus Christ that filled her. Finally that love spilling out of her was the clue that she was not just a Jew. First others guessed and then they asked whether she was a Christian. Love was the mark of a Christian's life.

Hadassah is not a real person. She is a fictional character created by Francine Rivers in her fictional novel *A Voice in the Wind*. Yet she could have been real. Her life illustrates the power of Christ's love in his followers. It is this same love that Paul is praying for when he wrote to Thessalonian Christians—who not unlike fictional Hadassah did face persecution for being Christians in a heathen Roman world: "May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones" (1 Thessalonians 3:12,13). This serves as a fitting prayer to end this convention.

Why is it Hadassah could not hide her Christianity? Why was the love and faith of the Thessalonian Christians so well known that Paul had heard about it before penning his first letter to them? Why did Jesus say that all people would know that we are his disciples if we love one another? The answer is because Jesus' love for us is so powerful, so amazing, so uplifting that we are like a glass someone just keeps pouring more and more water into until what happens? The water overflows, doesn't it? It spills out! It has to happen. Jesus' love for us is just so vast, that it just has to spill out of us and flow into the lives of others around us.

So why do we so often NOT see that love spilling out of us into our lives? Why are we struggling as a synod, in such a wealthy nation, to fund ministry plans instead of our Ministry of Christian Giving telling our members to keep some of their gifts because we have more than we can use? Why are fewer than 50 percent of our membership spilling over with praise for our Lord Jesus each worship service when we can worship without fear of persecution? Why are



even fewer of us involved in regular Bible study either on our own or in group Bible studies or our children in Sunday school? Why do we so often struggle to get volunteers to help with evangelism efforts in our congregations?

The only answer can be that somehow we are not being filled to overflowing with Christ's amazing love. How can that be? The problem is here—in our hearts, yours and mine. It can be so subtle that we don't know it is happening. There is a prideful part of our nature that slowly begins to believe a lie about ourselves. Little by little, unconsciously, the thought slips in that because we belong to the conservative WELS or are a convention delegate or a called worker we are a shoe-in to get to heaven instead of realizing that there is nothing in us that deserves this. There's that ungodly arrogance that looks out and sees the miserable lives of others, their weaknesses, their sins, their pitiful lifestyles or downtrodden lives and thinks, "I'm better than they" and imagines that God is impressed with me. There's that fatal forgetfulness that deletes the phrases "there is no one who does good," "all have sinned," "the wages of sin is death" or "by nature objects of his wrath" from our daily consciousness of God. Then we fail to appreciate his incredible love for us. Our hearts stop longing for a love we see no need for. So our love cup grows empty and stops overflowing.

Amazingly, even then our Lord and Savior does not stop pouring his undeserved love upon us so that we might be filled up again and spill over with his love in our lives even more. Paul prayed for this for the Thessalonian Christians: "May the Lord make your love increase and overflow." This is not something we can do. We can't fill ourselves with love so that it overflows. It's something that only the Lord can do. But how does he do this? Scriptures says, "We love because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19). Jesus said, "As I have loved you, so you must love one another" (John 13:34). Our love overflows for others when we first remember and ponder how much Jesus loves us. When we with unfeigned humility come to him and say, "Lord have mercy on me, a sinner!" then he pours out incredible love into us. He does this in his Word and sacraments.

This is what we have been hearing about this past week as we've looked at the Christian's sacramental life. That life is about Jesus coming to us and pouring his love into our lives. He pours his love into our lives when we bring our children, little bundles of sinful nature from the time of conception, sinful flesh born of our sinful flesh, and he washes them through Baptism. He gives them new birth by his Spirit and makes them his dear children.

He pours his love into us when we, like the tax collector in the temple, strike our chest with a grieved hand at the beginning of our worship service and confess: "I am by nature sinful. I deserve your punishment, Lord. Have mercy on me." Our Lord pours his love into us as he turns to us through his called servant and responds: "I have been merciful. Jesus paid for your sins. You are reconciled to me. You are forgiven. Be reconciled to me. Don't be afraid. Go in peace."

He pours his love into us when we, like Peter, shed bitter tears at how we, in our self-centered pride, have denied we know Jesus with thoughts and lips and lives. Rather than deny us, our Savior gives to us his body and blood. He speaks to us assuringly as he gives it to us, "Here, this is for you, for the forgiveness of all your sins. Eat and drink and know that I love you anyway. Though you forsake me, I will never forsake you."

In that Word and sacrament Jesus does not come and pat us on the back and say, "What a good person you are!" Rather he says, "What a wretched sinner you are! But I love you anyway. I retched in pain and agony because of your wretchedness, so you would never have to. I treat you now not as a wretched sinner, but as the crown jewel of my heart."

As the Lord pours this love into us in such abundance it creates also a love in us that begins to spill out. Paul writes that first this love spills out for one another. So I'd like to ask you, "How do you respond to those who have stopped making regular and faithful use of the Word and sacraments in your congregations?" Do you perceive them as "those weaker members." Do we say, "Good riddance. If they don't want to hear, then let's get them off the books!" Do we ignore them and think, "It's their business what they do, not mine"? Lord, forgive us again in your love for these attitudes. Instead, Lord, seeing and hearing your love for us, help us to spill that love to these brothers and sisters. Help us to love them as lost souls, needing to be found again by your love. Help us to love them as slaves of sin and Satan, needing to be freed again by your love and forgiveness. Help us to love them so much that we won't give up on them just as you don't give up on us. Help us to love them so that we patiently and unfailingly show them their need for your love. Help us to lead them back to the use of the Word and sacraments that they again may see and be filled with the depth of your love for them in your forgiveness and grace.

Paul then spills Christ's love in us even further. Paul had not kept the love that Jesus had shown him to himself or even to just other Jews. He shared it freely with all so that in Thessalonica "a large number of God-fearing Greeks and not a few prominent women" (Acts 17:4) believed. So also he prays our love will spill into the lives of all people. This might be by doing acts of love to others—even our enemies—as we treat them with kindness and gentleness and re-

spect. But above all we love all people by longing to share Jesus' sacramental gifts with them. Perhaps we are hesitant to share the love found in all these gifts because some may not be ready or able to make use of them all just yet. But these gifts are at the heart of all our outreach. These sacramental gifts are the personal distribution of forgiveness to each soul in the most intimate way from our Savior. Instead of de-emphasizing these gifts to those outside our congregations, I submit we need to showcase them, even the Lord's Supper. Show what wonderful blessings Christ gives through them and how glad we are to receive them and the love he gives through them. The power of Jesus' love found there will change hearts so that others gladly and eagerly come in a way and at a time that Jesus wants them to come as united members of his church.

Speaking of changed hearts, Paul declares that the result of God's increasing love in our lives is that our hearts are more securely blameless and holy in his presence when Jesus returns. We need that assurance. For we know our hearts, and we know the love that spills from us is far from blameless and holy. But God's love, which produces that love, gives an additional assurance to us. Jesus not only died for our lovelessness; he also lived the perfect love we couldn't. This perfect love of our Savior covers what is lacking in our best efforts to love one another. Don't be discouraged when our love is not as perfect as we would like. Jesus' love perfects our love done in faith so that in God's sight it is blameless and holy and we are holy ones with Christ.

Yet here is our dilemma: How can we be more like our Savior and love even those who are nasty to us? How do we turn over more of our wealth to serve the purpose of the Lord instead of ourselves? How do we develop more compassion for people that compels us to speak about Jesus? The answer: when Jesus' love fills us more and more through Word and sacraments. Hadassah called God's Word her meat. That's because it fed her and gave her strength to love the unlovable and to serve those who were not worth being served. It filled her with Jesus' love and then spilled his love through her to many others. Paul prays for this for real Christians like you and me. Let it be our prayer as we go home from this convention. Lord, fill us with your love and then spill us with your love for one another and for all people. Amen.

## President's closing remarks

*July 29, 2011*

*Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.*

*Rev. Mark Schroeder*

**B**rothers, I don't know if you noticed it, but within the last week or so the space shuttle flew for the last time. Long before the end of the shuttle program, long before the shuttle program even began, years before man walked on the moon, our country was involved in a heated space race with the Soviet Union. And when that race was heating up, there was a group of hot-shot pilots at Edwards Air Force Base out in California, guys who would push the latest in jet aircraft to the very limits. And those men were men who were known for the risks that they would take and the challenges they would face. And to do it, they had to be some extraordinary guys. They had to be men of incredible flying skills. They had to be people with tremendous physical and mental capabilities, amazing determination, men with kind of a recklessness about them. And they coined a phrase for what those pilots out in California had. People said they had the "right stuff." And that simply meant that they had the ability, they had the gift, they had the talent, they had the mindset to take on the greatest challenge and to do what they needed to do.

Brothers, we have a much greater challenge than breaking the sound barrier or reaching the moon, and a much greater opportunity. We know that God has placed a tremendous challenge and opportunity in front of us to reach the world with the precious saving gospel of Jesus. And I guess it is probably fitting and natural that we would ask if, up against that challenge, we have the right stuff. There are two answers to that question, I think.

The first answer is obvious. Just like those first disciples that Jesus gathered around himself shortly before he was going to ascend, guys who had been with Jesus for three years listening to him, eating with him, speaking with him, watching him perform miracles—even at that late date, those men were asking some pretty dumb questions. Those

men were showing that they really weren't equipped to do anything that the soon-to-ascend Savior was going to ask of them. And we are kind of in the same boat. When we look at the mission that God has given us to do, we have to look at ourselves and say that we certainly don't have any right stuff to do what God asks us to do. We look at ourselves and we see nothing but sinners, nothing but weakness, nothing but doubt, nothing but faults in character and personality, nothing but short-sighted vision, nothing but guilt, nothing but unworthiness. And so we say we don't have the right stuff.

On the other hand, there is another answer to that question. Everyone here in this room has the right stuff to do what God wants us to do. Why? Because of what God has done for us. We have the right stuff because he has given us the mission. It's not a mission we came up with. He's given us the mission. He's defined it for us. And it is a wonderful, glorious, clear mission. It doesn't come out of a room where people are putting sticky notes on the wall and trying to craft words and statements. It's a mission that's beautiful and clear. Jesus simply says to us, "Go." Go and preach the gospel. Go into all the world. Make disciples of all nations by baptizing them with the sacrament, by teaching them through the Word, so that they can know Jesus as their Savior.

What a beautiful, clear mission, to take the words that God has given us to heart and then to take them to the world. He gives us the mission. And that gives us the right stuff. We also have the right message, a powerful message that we didn't come up with. It is a message that God has entrusted to us and that he has given to us. He sends us out into the world as his ambassadors, as his spokesmen, and he says, "Here is the word that I want you to speak." A word of law, powerful law, condemning words that drive people to their knees because of their guilt, but also the sweet sound of what Jesus did for us in love on the cross and the wonderful news of what he did on Easter Sunday leaving that tomb empty behind him. He gives us a message that he says is a powerful message, a message that's sharper than a two-edged sword. A message that God says when the Word goes out it will not return to him empty but will accomplish what he pleases. A powerful gospel, the power of God for salvation. We have the right stuff, because he has given us the right stuff, the right message.

And finally we have the right stuff to carry out that mission and meet the challenge that God has given us to do because he has given us an amazing promise. When Jesus was about to ascend, he said to his disciples, "When you go out there you are not going alone." He said, "I will be with you. I will be with you to the very end of the age." So we know as we carry out his mission together as a synod, or as individuals in our families and communities, that we are not going alone and we know that the mission does not depend on us. He says, "I'll be with you. I'll be with you to protect you. I'll be with you to guide you with my word. And I'll be with you to bless the words you speak, working through those words by the power of the Holy Spirit."

So brothers, do we have the right stuff to do that mission? Yes, we do, by the grace of God because of everything he has given us: the mission, the message, and the promise. And as you go away from this convention, I pray that you will go back to your congregations to remind them that they too have the right stuff and that this little corner of the world, this little corner of the Christian church that we call the Wisconsin Synod, is still God's instrument in one small little way to take that saving message of Christ to a world that's dying in sin. And what a joy it is to be a part, to be privileged, to serve God in that way. And we thank him for that. And what a wonderful encouragement then it is for us to look at the mission in front of us not as any kind of a burden, not as something to be feared, but as a special privilege. You and I who can't help speaking about the things we have seen and heard will be blessed with the right stuff that God gives us.

Thank you for your work during this week. Thank you for all of your words, words I know that the Lord guided you in speaking from a wisdom that he gave you. Thank you for your love of the gospel and your love for a world of sinners who need to hear that gospel. It is my privilege to have spent this week with you, and it is certainly my privilege as I look forward to working with you and all of the members of our synod to continue to do the mission that God has given us to do. May God bless us, and may he bless the people who will hear the good news through us. Thank you.







