

**Evidence of Errors in  
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod**



**Association of Confessing Evangelical  
Lutheran Congregations**

# **VIII. The Church's Mission and Her Evangelistic Task**

February 22, 2011

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Note: This document is one of several ACELC documents on evidence of errors in the LCMS. As the documents are completed they will be posted to the ACELC web site at <http://www.acelc.net/>. Topics include:

- Pure Doctrine
- Holy Communion
- The Divine Service and Liturgical Offices
- Unionism and Syncretism
- Service of Women in the Church
- The Office of the Holy Ministry
- The Unbiblical Removal of Pastors from their Calls
- The Church’s Mission and Her Evangelistic Task
- Ecclesiastical Supervision
- Dispute Resolution

Additional topics may be added as needed. If you have a comment, question, or concern, please contact the ACELC (<http://www.acelc.net/>). Your input will be seriously considered.

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The references from the Lutheran Confessions include some words or passages from the German 1580 or Latin 1584 edition, these are set apart with < >.

### Record of Document Updates

Version	Changes/Additions	Date
February 22, 2011	Original Document	February 22, 2011

## A Fraternal Admonition to Correct the Errors of Our Beloved Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

### Preamble

"And they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship in the breaking of bread and in the prayers." Acts 2:42

C.F.W. Walther, (first President of the LCMS), wrote:

"A fellowship in which the Word of God is fundamentally falsified, or in which a fundamental falsification of it is tolerated, is not a true orthodox church, but a false, heterodox church or sect."

(*Essays For the Church* Vol I, "Communion Fellowship," Concordia Publishing House, 1992, p.207)

Presented in this document are concerns over variant teachings and practices by some pastors, congregations, and institutions of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod. These errors have largely been ignored and even tolerated by those elected for the supervision of doctrine and practice in our fellowship. Even the Synod itself in convention has adopted resolutions that violate our fidelity as a synod to Holy Scripture and our Lutheran Confessions.

Many attempts have been made to address and correct these errors. Numerous pastors, laity, congregations, respected doctors of the Church, circuits, district pastoral conferences, even sister synods and their pastoral conferences have taken public issue with these errors and the recent "positions" the LCMS has taken in its past conventions, but to no avail. Districts also have sought redress of these errors through resolutions and overtures to the Synod in Convention only to have them never come to the convention floor for consideration.

In addition, various publications and organizations have attempted to address the adoption of worship forms, texts, and ceremonies that come from alien and errant confessions - as to whether this may be done without also adopting their error. Church history and the inseparable correlation between doctrine and practice teach us that how we pray and worship is in fact our faith, our belief, and our confession (*Lex orandi, lex credendi*).

At stake is the very doctrine upon which the Church stands or falls - the genuine confession of justification by grace alone through faith alone for the sake of Christ's death and resurrection alone. As the Lutheran Confessions state, "this article of justification by faith is the chief article of the entire Christian doctrine." [SD III, 6] When this chief article is at stake so also is the evangelical mission of the Church in our midst, and likewise the ongoing presence of the marks of the Church, and thus the LCMS as a light of the true Gospel of Christ.

Therefore we are compelled out of faithfulness to Holy Scripture and our Lutheran Confessions (to which The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod claims fidelity) to seek Biblical reproof and correction of these errors. Our cause is to offer a fraternal critique of our teaching and practice, and to call our much loved Missouri Synod, her pastors, congregations, and institutions to repentance and back to what she has previously claimed as her source and norm of faith and life – Holy Scripture and its correct exposition, the Book of Concord of 1580.

In this process we seek not to contend over the trivial, nor matters merely of denominational custom or tradition, but over those matters that challenge our very fidelity to the changeless faith that was once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3). It is our intent to hold the LCMS to the Scripturally faithful teaching of the Book of Concord as catholic teaching and not simply something that we, as Lutherans, believe. Thus, when we speak of theological "positions" and the "position of synod," this should be understood as nothing less than what the Athanasian Creed calls "the catholic (or universally held) faith."

It is our sincere prayer that the LCMS would give serious and fraternal consideration to the words here given according to their benevolent intention. Our mission/purpose is to restore what has been compromised – that is a fellowship of unabashed confessional Lutheran congregations in North America and throughout the world for the sake of our children and grandchildren – and yes, for the life of the world. *May God the Holy Spirit, through the Word of Law and Gospel, call, gather, enlighten and sanctify the Church gathered within the Missouri Synod!*

***(Please note: All evidence for the existence of error is only illustrative, not exhaustive.)***

## VIII. The Church's Mission and Her Evangelistic Task:

- Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions identify the mission of the Church as proclaiming the Word of God in all its truth and purity and administering the Sacraments in accord with Christ's institution. Today some in the LCMS have misidentified the mission of the Church as the completion of the so-called Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20) which is the result of the Church doing her mission, not the mission itself. We reject the toleration of this error.
- Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions teach that God knows His elect, and that not one of these will be lost. Today some in the LCMS teach that it is indeed possible to increase the population of heaven, and therefore decrease the population of hell, if we are doing our evangelistic task properly. We reject the toleration of this error.
- Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions teach that it is the power of the Holy Spirit alone (working through Word and Sacrament) which brings about conversion in the life of an unbeliever. Today some in the LCMS teach that our zeal, passion, and intentionality for the evangelistic task are necessary to effect such conversions. We reject the toleration of this error.
- Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions declare that pure doctrine clarifies and supports the Gospel, while false doctrine obscures and hinders the Gospel. Today some in the LCMS, for the sake of growing the church numerically, receive those who are uninstructed, or marginally instructed in the faith into membership in LCMS congregations, thus bringing people with false beliefs into the life of the church. We reject this error.
- Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions identify the marks of the Church as the Word of God taught in all its truth and purity and the Sacraments administered in accord with Christ's institution. Today many in the LCMS have advanced numerical growth as a sign of the "legitimacy" of a congregation, essentially making numerical growth a mark of the Church. We reject the toleration of this error.

### A. Original Position -

While always being concerned with giving a Christian witness to unbelievers, The Lutheran Church understood its mission to "make disciples" as meaning that the Church carries out that disciple-making by teaching the Word of God in all its truth and purity and by administering the Sacraments in accord with Christ's institution, thus feeding God's sheep on the means of grace and preparing them to enter their various God-given vocations to give witness to their faith. The Synod historically and theologically avoided attempting to motivate Christians by means of guilt regarding unbelievers going to hell because it correctly understood that the number of the elect, chosen by God in Christ before the foundations of the world is a static, not a dynamic number and that God has promised that He will not lose one of His elect.

This never meant that Lutherans do not care about the lost, nor believe as Calvinists teach, that some are predestined to heaven while others to eternal damnation in hell. Rather, it simply means that it is the joy of all Christians to proclaim their faith in the Good News of Christ crucified and risen to all people, in all places, and at all times, knowing that it is only God who does the saving and that He accomplishes this as He wills. **In other words making disciples is the result of the Church rightly carrying out her mission of rightly proclaiming God's Word and rightly administering His Sacraments, and not the mission itself.**

Lutherans have always understood that it is only through the means of grace - Word and Sacraments – that such conversions are brought about by God and that these means of grace are completely sufficient to accomplish what God has promised they will accomplish. Such God-given conversions are not at all dependent on the “zeal,” “commitment,” “passion” or “missional mindset” of the Christian, but only on the power of God’s Word.

Additionally, Lutherans have always believed that they hold the one, true faith of the Apostles and the Prophets and that it is only by means of giving clear voice to this faith in all its articles that the witness of Christians is most clearly heard. Therefore down-playing the importance of pure doctrine or pitting doctrine in opposition to the evangelistic task is a theological foolishness. It is precisely through the right doctrine that the beauty of salvation in Christ is clearly seen. False doctrine mixed into a Christian witness only obfuscates the Gospel and misdirects one’s hope of salvation away from Christ and toward human good works and merits, thus obscuring one’s assurance of salvation.

### 1. The Witness of Holy Scripture:

#### Matthew 13:1-23

<sup>1</sup> That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. <sup>2</sup> And great crowds gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat down. And the whole crowd stood on the beach. <sup>3</sup> And he told them many things in parables, saying: "A sower went out to sow. <sup>4</sup> And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. <sup>5</sup> Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, <sup>6</sup> but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away. <sup>7</sup> Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. <sup>8</sup> Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. <sup>9</sup> He who has ears, let him hear."

<sup>10</sup> Then the disciples came and said to him, "Why do you speak to them in parables?"

<sup>11</sup> And he answered them, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. <sup>12</sup> For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. <sup>13</sup> This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. <sup>14</sup> Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says:

'You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive. <sup>15</sup> For this people's heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.'

<sup>16</sup> But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. <sup>17</sup> For truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.

<sup>18</sup> Hear then the parable of the sower: <sup>19</sup> When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path. <sup>20</sup> As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, <sup>21</sup> yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away. <sup>22</sup> As for what was sown among thorns,

this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. <sup>23</sup> As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.

**Matthew 24:22, 24, 31**

<sup>22</sup> And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short...

<sup>24</sup> For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect...

<sup>31</sup> And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

**Matthew 28:19-20**

<sup>19</sup> Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

**Luke 24:47**

<sup>47</sup> ...and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

**John 6:37, 65-66**

<sup>37</sup> All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.

<sup>65</sup> And he said, 'This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.' <sup>66</sup> After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him.

**Acts 2:40-47**

<sup>40</sup> And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation." <sup>41</sup> So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. <sup>42</sup> And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. <sup>43</sup> And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. <sup>44</sup> And all who believed were together and had all things in common. <sup>45</sup> And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. <sup>46</sup> And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, <sup>47</sup> praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

**Romans 8:29-30**

<sup>29</sup> For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. <sup>30</sup> And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

**Romans 9:22-24**

<sup>22</sup> What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, <sup>23</sup> in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory—  
<sup>24</sup> even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles?

**Romans 10:14-17**

<sup>14</sup> How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? <sup>15</sup> And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" <sup>16</sup> But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?"  
<sup>17</sup> So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

**Romans 11:33**

<sup>11</sup> Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!

**I Corinthians 2:14**

<sup>14</sup> The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

**II Corinthians 4:6, 13**

<sup>6</sup> For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ...

<sup>13</sup> Since we have the same spirit of faith according to what has been written, "I believed, and so I spoke," we also believe, and so we also speak, ...

**Ephesians 1:4-6, 19a**

<sup>4</sup> ...even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love <sup>5</sup> he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, <sup>6</sup> to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved...

<sup>19</sup> and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, ...

**II Thessalonians 2:13**

<sup>13</sup> But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.

**I Timothy 2:4**

<sup>4</sup> ...who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

**I John 1:9**

<sup>9</sup> If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

**2. The Witness of the Lutheran Confessions:**

**Augsburg Confession, Article IV (Justification)**

<sup>1</sup> Our churches teach that people cannot be justified before God by their own strength, merits, or works. <sup>2</sup> People are freely justified for Christ's sake, through faith, when they believe that they are received into favor and that their sins are forgiven for Christ's sake.

By His death, Christ made satisfaction for our sins.<sup>3</sup> God counts this faith for righteousness in His sight (Romans 3 and 4 [3:21–26; 4:5]).

**Augsburg Confession, Article V (The Ministry)**

<sup>1</sup> So that we may obtain this faith, the ministry of teaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments was instituted. <sup>2</sup> Through the Word and Sacraments, as through instruments, the Holy Spirit is given [John 20:22]. He works faith, when and where it pleases God [John 3:8], in those who hear the good news that God justifies those who believe that they are received into grace for Christ’s sake. <sup>3</sup> This happens not through our own merits, but for Christ’s sake.

<sup>4</sup> Our churches condemn the Anabaptists and others who think that through their own preparations and works the Holy Spirit comes to them without the external Word.

**Augsburg Confession, Article VII (The Church)**

<sup>1</sup> Our churches teach that one holy Church is to remain forever. The Church is the congregation of saints [Psalm 149:1] in which the Gospel is purely taught and the Sacraments are correctly administered. <sup>2</sup> For the true unity of the Church it is enough to agree about the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments. <sup>3</sup> It is not necessary that human traditions, that is, rites or ceremonies instituted by men, should be the same everywhere. <sup>4</sup> As Paul says, “One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all” (Ephesians 4:5–6).

**Formula of Concord, Epitome, Article I (Original Sin) 6**

In the same way, Christ redeemed human nature as His work, sanctifies it, raises it from the dead, and gloriously adorns it as His work. But original sin He has not created, received, redeemed, or sanctified. He will not raise it, adorn it, or save it in the elect. In the Resurrection original sin will be entirely destroyed (1 Corinthians 5:51-57).

**Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Article XI (God’s Eternal Foreknowledge <Predestination> and Election) 5, 19**

<sup>5</sup> God’s eternal election, or predestination, means God’s preordaining to salvation. It does not include both the godly and the wicked, but only God’s children, who were elected and ordained to eternal life before the world’s foundation was laid. As Paul says in Ephesians 1:4–5, “He chose us in Him.... He predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ.”

<sup>19</sup> He will also sanctify in love those who are justified, as St. Paul says (Ephesians 1:4).

**Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Article XI (God’s Eternal Foreknowledge <Predestination> and Election) [various]**

<sup>14</sup> In other words, the entire teaching about God’s purpose, counsel, will, and ordination belongs to our redemption, call, justification, and salvation. They should be treated together the way Paul treats them and has explained this article (Romans 8:29–30; Ephesians 1:4–10) and as Christ treated it in the parable of Matthew 22:1–14; namely, that God in His purpose and counsel ordained the following:

<sup>22</sup> Finally, He will eternally save and glorify in life eternal those whom He has elected, called, and justified.

<sup>23</sup> God has prepared salvation not only in general in this counsel, purpose, and ordination. In grace He has considered and chosen to salvation each and every one of the elect who are to be saved through Christ. He has also ordained that in the way just mentioned He will, by His grace, gifts, and efficacy, bring them to salvation. He will aid, promote, strengthen, and preserve them.

<sup>25</sup> The following issue also belongs to the further explanation and saving use of the teaching about God's foreknowledge to salvation: Only the elect, whose names are written in the book of life [Revelation 21:27], are saved. Therefore, how can we know, or why and how can we perceive who the elect are and who can and should receive this teaching for comfort?

<sup>28</sup> If we want to think about our eternal election to salvation helpfully, we must in every way hold strongly and firmly to this truth: just as the preaching of repentance is universal, so also the promise of the Gospel is universal, that is, it belongs to all people. For this reason Christ has given these commands:

Repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all nations. (Luke 24:47)

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son. (John 3:16)

Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! (John 1:29)

The bread that I will give for the life of the world is My flesh. (John 6:51)

The blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. (1 John 1:7)

[Jesus] is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. (1 John 2:2)

Come to Me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. (Matthew 11:28)

For God has consigned all to disobedience, that He may have mercy on all. (Romans 11:32)

Not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. (2 Peter 3:9) The same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing His riches on all who call on Him. (Romans 10:12)

The righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ [is] for all who believe. (Romans 3:22)

For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in Him should have eternal life. (John 6:40)

It is Christ's command that this promise of the Gospel also should be offered to everyone in common to whom repentance is preached (Luke 24:47; Mark 16:15).

<sup>29</sup> We should not think of this call of God, which is made through the preaching of the Word, as a juggler's act. But we should know that God reveals His will by this call. He will work through the Word in the people He calls, so that they may be enlightened, converted, and saved. For the Word, by which we are called, is a ministry of the Spirit, which gives the Spirit, or by which the Spirit is given (2 Corinthians 3:8). It is God's power unto salvation (Romans 1:16). The Holy Spirit wants to be effective through the Word, and to strengthen and give power and ability. It is God's will that we should receive the Word, believe it, and obey it.

<sup>33</sup> We should concern ourselves with this revealed will of God. We should follow and diligently think about it. Through the Word, by which He calls us, the Holy Spirit bestows grace, power, and ability for this purpose. We should not sound the depths of God's hidden predestination, as it is written in Luke 13:23–24, where one asks, "Lord, will those who are saved be few?" and Christ answers, "Strive to enter through the narrow door." So Luther says:

But you had better follow the order of this epistle [of Romans]. Worry first about Christ and the gospel, that you may recognize your sin and His grace. Then fight your sin, as the first eight chapters here have taught. Then, when you have reached the eighth chapter, and are under the cross and suffering, this will teach you correctly of predestination in chapters 9, 10, and 11, and how comforting it is. [Preface to the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans (1546); LW 35:378]

<sup>34</sup> “Many are called, but few are chosen” [Matthew 22:14]. This does not stem from the fact that God’s call, which is made through the Word, has the following meaning. It is not as though God said: “Outwardly, through the Word, I indeed call all of you to My kingdom, everyone to whom I give My Word. However, in My heart I do not mean this for everyone, but only for a few. For it is My will that most of those whom I call through the Word shall not be enlightened or converted. Instead, they shall be and remain damned, even though I explain Myself differently to them through the Word, in the call.”

<sup>35</sup> For this would be to assign contradictory wills to God. In this way it would be taught that God, who surely is Eternal Truth, contradicts Himself, when, in fact, God punishes such wickedness in people, when a person states one purpose and thinks and means another in the heart (Psalm 5:9; 12:2–4).

<sup>38</sup> On this account, as the Augsburg Confession in Article XI says, we also keep private Absolution. We teach that it is God’s command that we believe such Absolution. We should regard it as sure that, when we believe the word of Absolution, we are as truly reconciled to God as though we had heard a voice from heaven [John 12:28–30], as the Apology also explains this article. This consolation would be entirely taken from us if we did not understand God’s will toward us from the call that is made through the Word and through the Sacraments.

<sup>39</sup> The Holy Spirit certainly wants to be present with the Word preached, heard, and considered, and He wants to be effective and work through it. Yet this foundation would be overthrown and taken from us if we misunderstand election. Therefore, the meaning is not at all like the one referred to above, that the elect are to be the sort of people who despise God’s Word, thrust it from them, blaspheme and persecute it (Matthew 22:5–6; Acts 13:46); or, when they hear it, harden their hearts (Hebrews 4:2, 7), resist the Holy Spirit (Acts 7:51), persevere in sins without repentance (Luke 14:18–20), do not truly believe in Christ (Mark 16:16), only make an outward show (Matthew 7:22; 22:12), or seek other ways to righteousness and salvation outside of Christ (Romans 9:31).

<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, God has ordained in His counsel that the Holy Spirit should call, enlighten, and convert the elect through the Word [Romans 10:17]. He will justify and save all those who by true faith receive Christ. In the same way, He also determined in His counsel that He will harden [Romans 9:18], reprobate, and condemn those who are called through the Word if they reject the Word and resist the Holy Spirit [Acts 7:51]. This is true even though the Spirit wants to be effective and work in them through the Word and persevere through the Word. In this way “many are called, but few are chosen” [Matthew 22:14].

<sup>43</sup> This is how much of the mystery of predestination is revealed to us in God’s Word. If we abide by this teaching and cling to it, it is a very useful, saving, consoling teaching. It establishes very effectively the article that we are justified and saved without any works and merits of ours, purely out of grace alone, for Christ’s sake. Before the time of the world, before we existed, yes, even before the foundation of the world was laid—when, of course, we could do nothing good—we were chosen by grace in Christ to salvation, according to God’s purpose (Romans 9:11; 2 Timothy 1:9).

<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, all opinions and erroneous teachings about the powers of our natural will are overthrown by this. God in His counsel, before the time of the world, decided and ordained that He Himself would produce and work in us by His Holy Spirit’s power. Through the Word, He would do everything that belongs to our conversion.

<sup>54</sup> There is no doubt that God foresaw before the time of the world, and still knows, exactly, which people who are called will believe and which will not believe. He also knows which of the converted will persevere and which will not persevere. He knows which will return after a fall and which will fall into stubbornness. He also knows the number of how many there are of these on either side. Beyond all doubt this is perfectly known to God.

<sup>55</sup> However, God has reserved this mystery for His wisdom. He has revealed nothing to us about it in His Word, much less commanded us to investigate it with our thoughts. Instead, He has seriously discouraged us from that (Romans 11:33–35). Therefore, we should not reason in our thoughts, draw conclusions, or inquire curiously into these matters, but we should cling to His revealed Word, to which He points us.

<sup>68</sup> The Father wants all people to hear this proclamation and desires that they come to Christ. Christ does not drive these people from Him, as it is written, “whoever comes to Me I will never cast out” (John 6:37).

<sup>69</sup> In order that we may come to Christ, the Holy Spirit works true faith through the hearing of the Word. The apostle testifies about this when he says, “faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ,” (Romans 10:17) that is, when it is preached in its truth and purity.

<sup>76</sup> Furthermore, the declaration in John 6:44 is right and true, “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him.” However, the Father will not do this without means, but has ordained His Word and Sacraments for this purpose as ordinary means and instruments. It is not the will of the Father or of the Son that a person should not hear or should despise the preaching of His Word and wait for the drawing of the Father without the Word and Sacraments. For the Father draws indeed by the power of His Holy Spirit. However, He works according to His usual way. He works by the hearing of His holy, divine Word, as with a net [Matthew 13:47–48], by which the elect are plucked from the devil’s jaws.

<sup>77</sup> Every poor sinner should therefore attend to the Word, hear it attentively, and not doubt the Father’s drawing. For the Holy Spirit will be with His Word in His power, and will work by it. That is the Father’s drawing.

<sup>95</sup> From our explanation, friends and enemies and, therefore, everyone, may clearly see that we have no intention of yielding any part of God’s eternal, immutable truth for the sake of temporal peace, tranquility, and unity (which is not in our power to do anyway). Such peace and unity would have no permanence, since it is devised against the truth and for its suppression. We are even less willing to adorn and conceal a corruption of the pure doctrine and clear, condemned errors.

<sup>96</sup> We do yearn with heartfelt pleasure and love for unity. On our part, we are sincerely willing and anxious to advance that unity (according to our utmost power) by which God’s glory remains unharmed. We willingly advance unity where nothing of the divine truth of the Holy Gospel is surrendered, no room is given to the least error, and poor sinners are brought to true, genuine repentance, raised up by faith, confirmed in new obedience, and justified and eternally saved alone through the sole merit of Christ.

### 3. The Witness of the Reformation Fathers and our Synodical Fathers:

#### Luther's Works, Saint Louis Ed., No. 12, p. 437:

"Secondly he indicates the danger of neglecting the grace of God. Thereby he certainly intimates that the preaching of the Gospel is not a constant, permanent, and continuing proclamation. The Gospel is rather like a pelting rain that hurries on from place to place (*en fahrender Platzregen*). What it hits, it hits; what it misses it misses. But it does not return nor stay in one place; the sun and heat come after it and lick it up. Experience also teaches us that in no section of the world has the Gospel remained pure and unadulterated beyond the memory of a man. On the contrary, it stood its ground and flourished as long as those remained who had brought it to the fore. But after they had passed from the scene, the light also disappeared. Factious spirits (*Rottengeister*) and false teachers immediately followed."

#### C.F.W. Walther:

The means by which man is converted is the Word or God, heard or read... Ordinarily through called preachers, extraordinarily also through laypeople who are not called... One must also not think that conversion depends on the outward form in which the Word of God is preached. Frequently the most powerful sermon fails to influence the heart of this or that person, while through a simple prayer meeting (*Betstunde*) a spark may be lit that burst into a blazing flame. Prayer meeting, instruction of children, reading service (*Lesegottesdienst*), prayer in church (*Kirchengebete*), Lord's Prayer, benediction, in short, everything which belongs to the public service, is also a sermon. Whoever despises these things also despises preaching and wants to prescribe to God when and how He should convert, advance, and strengthen him. (C.F.W. Walther, "Theses Concerning Man's Conversion to God," *Essays for the Church*, Vol. I, pp. 248, 250)

#### C.F.W. Walther:

Thesis IV. The sole author of conversion is God the Holy Spirit, who effects it through the Word of God, Law and Gospel, solely by grace, for Christ's sake; man can indeed prevent it in himself, but he cannot cooperate in it. (C.F.W. Walther, "Theses Concerning Man's Conversion to God," *Essays for the Church*, Vol. I, p. 256.)

### B. Position Advocated and/or Practiced Today:

Essentially a new "mark" of the Church has been established under the rubric of the necessity of numerical growth of the congregation. In the current emphasis on outreach (based on an errant idea of the Church's mission), as the be-all and end-all of the Church, many within our Synod are touting numerical growth as a validation of the true Church. This is seen in the pervasive assumption that a congregation that is not growing numerically is said to be in need of "revitalization" and is an "unhealthy" church. This is another way of saying that they are not doing their "job."

- All of the mission effort finally finds its purpose in numerically growing congregations.
- Pastors of congregations that are declining or are in a numerical plateau are often disparaged and declared to be obstacles to the formation of a "vital" and "growing" church. Congregations in this situation are said to be in need of "revitalization" with the implication that such congregations are either dead or dying.
- Our "Material Principle" (or central doctrine) of the faith has always been salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Jesus Christ alone. However, current trends and emphasis on

missions has in practice elevated evangelistic outreach toward numerical growth as our central teaching. Such emphasis has led to an unfortunate undermining of the true “Material Principle” (central doctrine) by advocating human “Church Growth” methodologies over the God-given means of grace (Word and Sacraments) as that which is essential to growth in the Church.

- On the Transforming Churches Network, “Pastor Survey,” p. 4, the final question given the applying pastor is: “If we do not achieve the 5% growth goal in the next 24 months, and 5% growth annually thereafter, I will put my name out for a call.”

This completely violates the doctrine of the divine call and forces the pastor to make a commitment to numerical growth goals before his congregation even decides if they wish to be a part of the TCN program.

**Evidence of this Error:**

1. In the January 2010 issue of the *Reporter*, the front page banner headline article regarding a national LCEF conference, indicated that the three keynote speakers were
  - Dr. Bob Roberts, Keller, Texas (Senior Pastor, Northwood Church, Keller, TX (Non-denominational/Reformed));
  - Mr. Keith Ogorek (Staff member of Zionsville Fellowship Church, Zionsville, IN (Non-denominational/Reformed); and
  - Rev. Dr. Paul Borden, San Ramon, CA (Baptist, Director of Growing Healthy Churches Network – non-denominational).

While we would never invite non-Lutherans to lead our people in worship, our Synod frequently employs false teachers to train our Lutheran pastors and laymen in various areas of church life – especially evangelism, as though somehow we would benefit from false teaching based on a faulty understanding of the Gospel. The use of such false teachers only serves to propagate their false doctrine into our church body and thus confuse, undermine, **and cause doubt as to the efficacy of** the true doctrine of the Gospel and its proper proclamation and administration.

2. The synodical administration has established something called the “Transforming Churches Network” in which the Bylaws of participating congregations may be discarded or “temporarily waived” in place of a governance structure in which a Board of Directors runs the congregation and has the authority to recommend to the voters the termination of their pastor’s call. (This is a violation of the doctrine of the divine call.) Additionally, in initial meetings by a “visitation team” with church leadership, the called shepherd of the sheep is excluded so that his influence cannot be exercised in these meetings. (<http://www.transformingchurchesnetwork.org/>)
  - a) The visiting team interviews the leadership and some of the membership of the congregation and as a result of their visit, writes a report listing strengths and weaknesses of the parish, but also makes specific prescriptions that the congregation and pastor have previously committed themselves to do.
  - b) The pastor functions as the Chief Executive Officer of the new Board of Directors and will be held accountable for achieving whatever prescriptions the congregation has adopted from the visiting team prescriptions. Additionally the Senior Pastor would be able to set the salaries of all staff, hire and fire all staff (an Associate Pastor is considered “staff”), set the congregational budget and be accountable for producing the

necessary finances to meet that budget. Moreover, any school or Early Childhood Center staff would report directly to the Senior Pastor and be accountable to him. These staff as well as the Senior Pastor may hire or fire. The Senior Pastor is also responsible for the evaluation of all staff members. The Senior Pastor, however, will be evaluated by the Board of Directors.

- c) In addition, when one goes to the LCMS website and looks up "Revitalization" one is immediately forwarded to the Transforming Churches Network (TCN). In the Sample Survey of the **"TCN Core Competencies Assessment: Survey and Report,"** there is virtually no language regarding the maintenance of pure doctrine and proper practice. Every item of the survey is geared only toward factors that have the potential to promote numerical growth in attracting those outside the congregation. Additionally, in the TCN "Pastor Survey" the entire thrust of the survey is to measure the pastor's commitment to making "radical changes" in the congregation, including the statement, "I want to help this congregation embrace the idea that a primary reason this church exists is to reach those who need to know Christ." Moreover under the "Personal Commitment to Change" the change being promoted (the reason for the revitalization effort) is clearly numerical growth, "I am committed to take the actions necessary to see our attendance grow by 5% in the next 24 months." And again, "I will work toward the longer term goal of at least 5% attendance growth per year." The litany of emphasis on numerical growth being the mark of a truly "revitalized" congregation continues throughout the "Pastor Survey" to the point that under the section entitled, "Accountability," point "d" states, "If we do not achieve the 5% growth goal in the next 24 months, and 5% growth annually thereafter, I will put my name out for another call." Clearly it is only numerical growth which constitutes the revitalization of the pastor and the revitalization of the congregation. TCN is only about numerical growth. This mistaken overemphasis is taken while completely ignoring the faithfulness of the pastor and the congregation to the right teaching of the Word of God and the proper administration of the Sacraments which actually are the mission of the Church.
- d) The Transforming Churches Network (TCN) works hand in glove with the Center for U.S. Missions (CUSM) based immediately adjacent to Concordia University, Irvine, CA. As it says on its, "About Us" page: "The Center for U. S. Missions is a partnership between The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) World Mission, Concordia University Irvine, and the North American Mission Executives of the LCMS."

Just reading the downloadable list of seminars is a journey through contemporary worship advocacy, and Church Growth methodology and ideology. Titles such as: "Starting a Contemporary Worship Ministry from Scratch," "Planning and Leading Contemporary Worship with Biblical Integrity," "Praise Team Basics," "A Potpourri of Creative Ideas for Contemporary Worship" are only part of an ongoing list.

### C. ACELC Response:

Beginning with a misidentification of the mission of the Church as the human efforts required to make disciples, and compounded by the addition of human emotions like "zeal," "motivation," "commitment," "intentionality" and "passion" as humanly centered necessities to achieve "effective" out-reach, the administration of the LCMS has launched its efforts to evangelize by primarily appealing to the Law and not the Gospel. In addition, at the beginning of the administration's efforts to launch this new emphasis on out-reach, the definite impression was given that since people are going to hell with every passing second, and since we are not (it was

alleged) giving evangelism the emphasis it deserves, then it was our fault that people were ending up in hell because we simply were not doing our evangelistic task well enough. This is false doctrine. Our Lord has clearly said that He will not lose one of His elect. The eternal populations of heaven and hell are static, not dynamic. Their number is known only to God Himself, not His creatures.

Therefore the idea that we can "effect" differently from what God has eternally foreseen, ordained, and elected is a dangerous error that places an unnecessary and unwarranted "guilt" upon a person should their witness fail to produce the desired result. Guilt can lead to desperate measures when efforts appear fruitless and new measures are then sought and incorporated in addition to or in place of the true means by which God does work conversion and salvation when and where He pleases. The consequent outcome is to blend the leaven of man's works with that of God's and so compromise, obfuscate, and even overthrow the true and only means by which a man can be converted to saving faith in Christ.

An example is the incorporation of "contemporary worship" as an outreach tool in order to make the church more relevant and palatable to a culture dead to God as if to effect in them an influence to "accept" Christ on their own terms and within their own cultural context. In this, it is the cultural adaptations and their influence that serve as the converting or growing means of the church. The irony is that this method and approach actually works to undermine the very goal intended – bringing people to true faith in Christ, by subordinating and even overthrowing God's means of grace to cultural "influences."

All guilt driven motivations for engaging in "missions" are precisely rebutted by the doctrine of election. The doctrine of election helps us understand that there will be those who hear the Gospel and believe it, and those who will hear the Gospel and reject it. That whoever believes does so by the grace of God alone through the gift of faith given and worked in preaching God's Word in truth and purity and administering the Holy Sacraments as our Lord instituted. Those who reject the Gospel do so on account of their sin and resistance to the Holy Spirit. This means that it is God who works faith when and where He pleases in those who hear the Gospel. Our Christian witness can only set forth the Gospel before others. It can neither make them nor influence them to believe it. Therefore it is most important not to confuse or mix the role of the Christian in matters of Christian witness with that of God's work, lest the very means by which only a man may be saved be lost to human convention.

In addition, the emphasis on "numbers" in saving lost souls places the Christian under a tyranny of expectation to accomplish a work that properly belongs to God and can only be accomplished by Him. This again risks the danger of "guilt" when desired numbers are not achieved or those to whom we witness do not come to faith in Christ.

Thus the guilt and burden being laid upon pastors and laity in "growing the church" and producing certain humanly determined returns and "numbers" is simply unbiblical. That a pastor be led to resign his divine call when not meeting such desired results is utterly contrary to the call itself and is a human intrusion and attack upon God's call and will. No such expectations and outcomes were placed upon the prophets and apostles, not even upon Jesus Himself by the Father. Imagine Jesus resigning His God-given call because many disciples no longer followed Him when He taught difficult and inconvenient truths (John 6)! Yet, Jesus did continue in His call and the outcome was that He lost none of whom the Father had given Him (John 17).

It is time to stop criticizing pastors who faithfully proclaim God's Word and rightly administer God's Sacraments, as though they were ignoring outreach, for these are the very means by which disciples are made. They faithfully and joyfully engage in the evangelistic task every

Sunday morning as they go about feeding the sheep of God and equipping them by the powerful means of grace to give the good testimony of Christ crucified and risen in the divinely provided venues of their vocations in life. Thus does God grow His Church. We need not be burdened with the results of our evangelistic efforts. God will take care of calling His own to Himself. We are indiscriminate “sowers” of the “seed.” It is the Lord who brings in the harvest and He will not fail.