

CRITICAL ISSUES IN THE LCMS TODAY

THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH & EVANGELISM

CONFESSIONAL LUTHERANISM IS MARKED BY PASTORS AND LAYMEN WHO:

7. In accord with the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions, trust in God's appointed means of grace to accomplish all that He promises (Is. 55:11). Accordingly, we joyously proclaim the Gospel of Christ to all people everywhere. We acknowledge that through His Word and Sacraments, God will call to faith those He chooses to call to faith and will save those He chooses to save. Moreover, we acknowledge that the Word and Sacraments are God's only means of grace. Therefore, our efforts or techniques have no power to cause salvation or enhance the likelihood of conversion. Such conversion is effected by the power of the Spirit through the Word according to God's gracious choice. Thus, while honored to serve as God's instruments to bestow His grace, we also recognize that our efforts do not determine the number of the elect and we believe in our Lord's promise that none of His elect will be lost. God may or may not grant numerical growth to His Church at any given time or place. Indeed, we understand that in these latter days the world will look upon the Church of Christ as despised, beaten down and defeated. Therefore, the success of the Church and her pastors is not to be judged by earthly models of "success" and "efficiency," reflected by the numbers of people who attend their congregations, but by the faithfulness of their teaching and preaching.
(Matthew 13:1-23; Matthew 23:37; John 6:65-66; John 16:18-25; Ephesians 1:19; I Corinthians 2:14; II Corinthians 4:6; Acts 7:51; John 3:16; John 6:37; I Timothy 2:4; Matthew 25:34, 41; Romans 9:22; Romans 8:29; Ephesians 1:4-6; Matthew 24:22, 24, 31; Romans 8:30; Roman 11:33; Luke 24:47; II Thessalonians 2:13; Mark 4:1-20; Matthew 28:19-20; II Corinthians 4:13; Matthew 10:32-33; I John 1:9) (LC Part I, 42; EP I, 6; Luther SL12, 437; FC SD XI 68-69; FC SD XI 80; FC Ep XI 19; FC Ep XI 5; FC SD XI 43-44; FC SD XI 14, 22-23; FC SD XI 25; FC SD XI 33; FC SD XI 40; FC SD XI 28-29, 34-35; FC SD XI 38-39; FC SD XI 54; FC SD XI 76; FC SD XI 95-96)
8. In accord with the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions, hold that the purpose and work of the Church is the right teaching of God's Word and the right administration of the Sacraments, thus proclaiming in word and deed the one true faith. This right teaching and administration of the Sacraments equips God's people to proclaim the Gospel in their divine vocations, thus keeping Christ's command to "Go and make disciples." Making disciples is the result of God's work and not the result of human desire, passion, or effort.
(Isaiah 55:11; Matthew 28:19-20, Acts 2:42; Acts 5:42; Romans 10:14-17; Romans 13:8-10; II Corinthians 8:3-4; Ephesians 6:5-8; Colossians 3:18-4:1) (AC XX, 1-2, 28-29; AC XXVII, 49-50)

What are the Issues in Contention Today?

- 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 insist 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 insist that it is the power of the Holy Spirit alone (working through Word and Sacrament) which brings about conversion in the life of an unbe-

liever. 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.

The Witness of Holy Scripture

Matthew 10:32-33

So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven,³³ but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.

Matthew 13:1-23:

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea.² And great crowds gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat down. And the whole crowd stood on the beach.³ And he told them many things in parables, saying: "A sower went out to sow.⁴ And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them.⁵ 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,⁶ but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away.⁷ Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them.⁸ Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.⁹ He who has ears, let him hear."

¹⁰Then the disciples came and said to him, "Why do you speak to them in parables?"¹¹ 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.¹² 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.¹³ 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.¹⁴ 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.¹⁵ 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.'

¹⁶But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear.¹⁷ 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.

¹⁸"Hear then the parable of the sower:¹⁹When 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.²⁰As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy,²¹ 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.²²As 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.²³As 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 23:37:

³⁷ "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!

Matthew 24:22, 24, 31

²² 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. ²⁴ For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. ³¹ 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 25:34, 41

³⁴ Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

⁴¹ "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

Matthew 28:19-20

¹⁹ 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, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Mark 4:1-20

¹ Again he began to teach beside the sea. And a very large crowd gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat in it on the sea, and the whole crowd was beside the sea on the land. ² And he was teaching them many things in parables, and in his teaching he said to them: ³ "Listen! A sower went out to sow. ⁴ And as he sowed, some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured it. ⁵ Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and immediately it sprang up, since it had no depth of soil. ⁶ And when the sun rose, it was scorched, and since it had no root, it withered away. ⁷ Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain. ⁸ And other seeds fell into good soil and produced grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold." ⁹ And he said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

¹⁰ And when he was alone, those around him with the twelve asked him about the parables. ¹¹ And he said to them, "To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables, ¹² so that

"they may indeed see but not perceive,
and may indeed hear but not understand,
lest they should turn and be forgiven."

¹³ And he said to them, "Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables? ¹⁴ The sower sows the word. ¹⁵ And these are the ones along the path, where the word is sown: when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them. ¹⁶ And these are the ones sown on rocky ground: the ones who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy. ¹⁷ And they have no root in themselves, but endure for a while; then, when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away. ¹⁸ And others are the ones sown among thorns. They are those who hear the word, ¹⁹ but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. ²⁰ But those that were sown on the good soil are the ones who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold."

Luke 24:47

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

John 3:16:

¹⁶ "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

John 6:37, 65-66:

All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. ⁶⁵And he said, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father." ⁶⁶ After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him.

John 16:18-25:

¹⁸So they were saying, "What does he mean by 'a little while'? We do not know what he is talking about." ¹⁹Jesus knew that they wanted to ask him, so he said to them, "Is this what you are asking yourselves, what I meant by saying, 'A little while and you will not see me, and again a little while and you will see me'? ²⁰Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy. ²¹ When a woman is giving birth, she has sorrow because her hour has come, but when she has delivered the baby, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world. ²² So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you. ²³ In that day you will ask nothing of me. Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you. ²⁴Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.

²⁵"I have said these things to you in figures of speech. The hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figures of speech but will tell you plainly about the Father.

Acts 7:51:

⁵¹ "You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you.

Romans 8:29-30:

²⁹ 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. ³⁰ 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:

²² 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,

Roman 11:33:

³³ 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:

¹⁴The 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:

⁶For 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.

¹³ 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:

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

^{19a} and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might

II Thessalonians 2:13:

13 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:

4 who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

I John 1:9

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

The Witness of The Lutheran Confessions

Large Catechism, Part I (The Ten Commandments, The First Commandment):

[42] But unfortunately, here is the failure: the world believes none of this, nor regards it as God's Word. For the world sees that those who trust in God and non in Mammon suffer care and want, and that the devil opposes and resists them. They don't have money or favor or honor, and besides, can scarcely support life: On the other hand, those who serve Mammon have power, favor, honor, possessions, and every comfort in the eyes of the world. For this reason, these words must be understood to speak against the appearance of such things. And we must consider that they do not lie or deceive, but must come true.

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 <blessed> resurrection original sin will be entirely destroyed (1 Corinthians 5:51-57).

Formula of Concord, Epitome, Article XI (God's Eternal Foreknowledge (Predestination) and Election)

⁵ 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." ¹⁹ ⁵. 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)

¹⁴ 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:

²² ⁸. Finally, He will eternally save and glorify in life eternal those whom He has elected, called, and justified. ²³ 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. **25** 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? **28** 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).

29 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.

33 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]

34 "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." **35** 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).

38 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.

39 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). **40** 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].

43 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). **44** 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.

54 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. **55** 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.

68 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).

69 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.

76 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.

80 Here, then, the apostle clearly says that God *endured* with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath. But He does not say that He *made* them vessels of wrath. If that had been His will, He would not have required any great long-suffering for it. The reason that they are fitted for destruction belongs to the devil and to people themselves, and not to God.

95 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.

96 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.

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."

OTHER COMPLICATING ISSUES REGARDING THE CHURCH'S MISSION & EVANGELISM

1. In response to our current Synodical administration's emphasis on "Making Disciples/Evangelism many congregations within the LCMS have:

- a. Opened their communion rails to those who believe differently by abandoning the necessity of agreement in all articles of doctrine as the standard by which admission to the Lord's Table is granted. This is done so that "no one feels left out", to be "inclusive" or "to recognize the diversity of genuine Christian faith", or to "make visitors feel more welcome", and finally to increase membership numbers.

Some have listed out a few doctrines (Salvation in Christ, the real presence of Christ's body and blood, a requirement to be baptized, the granting of forgiveness of sins through participation in Christ's body and blood, but stop far short of requiring full doctrinal agreement and/or requiring thorough instruction in our faith and agreement with it for admission to the table of Christ's body and blood which is fundamentally an expression of our unity in Christ in all things and our unity with each other.

Others have neither a written nor spoken word about Holy Communion in bulletins nor spoken by the pastor to in anyway limit admission to this sacred table. Still others openly invite "all baptized Christians."

- b. Others have minimized both youth and adult instruction before becoming members of an LCMS congregation. In some instances this instruction has been only one or two Sunday or Saturday afternoon sessions prior to adult confirmation. This means that the functionally uninstructed are coming forward in variance of faith to receive the Lord's body and blood. It also means that such pastors and congregations are slowly becoming non-Lutheran congregations, in that they are welcoming functionally non-Lutherans into

their fellowship and that can only bring false doctrine into the congregation which will eventually bring division into those congregations. Moreover, now when these virtually uninstructed “Lutherans” go on vacation or business trips, they attend services at LCMS congregations and are also welcomed to those altars because they hold membership in other LCMS congregations! In this fashion the fellowship of the Synod becomes virtually meaningless!

2. In response to this new (and errant) emphasis on being “missional” or “intentional”, many congregations have been urged to adopt the unbiblical models of governance and methodology of the Reformed Church Growth Movement. The intent of this effort is to achieve a fundamental restructuring of The LCMS as a church body.

- a. Our own Synodical president has publicly said, “teaching God’s Word in all its truth and purity and administering the Sacraments in accord with Christ’s institution is not enough.”
- b. The administration has established something called the “Transforming Congregation’s Network” in which the Constitution and 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 by themselves to fire their pastor. (This is a violation of the doctrine of the divine call!) Additionally, in initial meeting by a “visitation team”, the called shepherd of the sheep is excluded from meetings that the visitation team has with church leadership so that his influence cannot be experienced in these meetings.

<http://www.transformingchurchesnetwork.org>
- c. The visiting team interviews the leadership and some of the membership of the congregation and as a result of their visit, writes up a report listing strengths and weaknesses of the parish, but also making specific prescriptions that the congregation and pastor have previously committed themselves to do.
- d. The pastor functions as the CEO 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 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.
- e. 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: “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”, and the list goes on and on!

Never is there any mention of using the historic liturgical worship of the Lutheran heritage. For instance under the seminar description entitled, “Worship Resources”, it says: “Where do you find the best songs, theologically and musically, for contemporary

worship? How about video resources, mp3 resources, transposition and worship flow resources, lead sheet resources, instrument training resources, drama resources, etc? A nuts and bolts workshop that requires a room with a high speed internet connections...video projector, screen, audio amplification & cable to go from laptop to sound system.”

Always there is the clear implication that liturgical worship is passé and does not speak to our culture and is not effective for out-reach as though God's means of grace are simply inadequate to serve as the Holy Spirit's means to speak to unbelievers or believers.

<http://www.centerforusmissions.com/default.aspx>

3. A new “mark” of the Church? In the current emphasis on out-reach 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.

- a. All of the mission effort finally finds their purpose in growing congregations and therefore the Synod numerically!
- b. Pastors of congregations which are shrinking 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 the need of “Revitalization”. The implication is that such congregations are either dead or dying.
- c. Our “Material Principle” or central doctrine of the faith has always been, salvation by grace alone, through faith in Jesus Christ alone. Now it seems that our central teaching is evangelistic out-reach resulting in numerical growth!

4. What are the presuppositions of the TCN?

- a. The fundamental assumption underlying the TCN “revitalization” process is: **A church that is not growing numerically is an unhealthy church.**
 - 1.) This is not the theology of the cross, but the theology of glory at work!
 - 2.) By this measure the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints or the Jehovah's Witnesses are “healthier” than the Lutheran Church.
 - 3.) TCN measure of a “healthy” congregation is that it is growing numerically by 5 percent per year in worship attendance.
- b. In order to achieve this kind of numerical growth TCN insists that:
 - 1.) District staff are to hold pastors accountable for the achievement of such goals.
 - 2.) Underachieving staff receive no raise or are fired.
 - 3.) Pastors need to be held accountable for numerical results.
 - 4.) Ineffective pastors who do not achieve the desired results are asked to move on.
- c. What do these methodologies indicate?
 - 1.) Clearly those advocating the methods illustrated above have lost all faith in the means of grace – Word and Sacrament, and disbelieve God's Word that He will bring the harvest He desires!
 - 2.) Also, it is clear that the Gospel has been abandoned in favor of the Law!