

VIII. Church's Mission & 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.

1. Passages from Scripture that testify about the Church's Mission and Evangelistic Task. [* Pages 5-7]

Matthew 13:1-23	Romans 9:22-24	I Timothy 2:4
Matthew 24:22, 24, 31	Romans 10:14-17	I John 1:9
Matthew 28:19-20	Romans 11:33	
Luke 24:47	I Corinthians 2:14	
John 6:37, 65-66	II Corinthians 4:6, 13	
Acts 2:40-47	Ephesians 1:4-6, 19a	
Romans 8:29-30	II Thessalonians 2:13	

2. The Lutheran Confessions, the Reformation Fathers and our Synodical Fathers. [* Pages 7-11]

Augsburg Confession, Article V (The Ministry)

¹ So that we may obtain this faith, the ministry of teaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments was instituted. ² 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. ³ This happens not through our own merits, but for Christ's sake. ⁴ 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."



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 (First President of the LCMS; 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.)

3. **Evidence for the Existence of this Error.** [* Pages 12-14]

- a. In the January 2010 issue of the *Reporter*, the front page banner headline article regarding a national LCEF (Lutheran Church Extension Fund) 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.

- b. 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. 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. See more at (<http://www.transformingchurchesnetwork.org/>)

4. **The ACELC Concerns.** [* Page 4-5; 14-16]

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.

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 launched efforts to evangelize by primarily appealing to the Law and not the Gospel.

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.

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.



* Asterisks refer to page numbers in the ACELC ***Evidence of Errors in the LCMS: VIII. The Church's Mission & Her Evangelistic Task*** document. You are encouraged to download the entire document from <http://www.ancelc.net/> → Key Documents → ACELC Admonition and Error Documents. The online version contains the full text of all Bible passages, Lutheran Confession citations, examples, quotations and sources for all the citations and quotes.