

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



**Association of Confessing Evangelical
Lutheran Congregations**

III. The Divine Service and Liturgical Offices

August 27, 2010
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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.

All Scripture References are from the English Standard Version of the Bible. Quotations from the Lutheran Confessions are from *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions*, copyright © 2000, 2006, 2009 by Concordia Publishing House.

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
August 27, 2010	Original Document	August 27, 2010
April 19, 2011	Removed example g., p. 13 re northern CA congregations. Renumbered examples.	April 19, 2011
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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.)

III. The Divine Service and Liturgical Offices

Holy Scripture and our Lutheran Confessions give witness to the faithfulness of liturgical worship and its power to unify the Church, to faithfully teach God's people, respect her traditions, and to reflect the unity of the one true God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – whom we worship. Additionally, liturgy serves chiefly for the proper administration of the pure Word and Sacraments (Augsburg Confession and Apology XIV). There the liturgy is confessed not chiefly as our sacrifice to God, but the means whereby He delivers His gifts to us. These same gifts are the marks of the Church (Augustana VII). Some have asserted that the LCMS Constitution Article VI (which reads: "Conditions for acquiring and holding membership in the Synod are the following: ...4. Exclusive use of doctrinally pure agenda, hymnbooks, and catechism in church and school"), is "nebulous." We reject this errant conclusion.

Holy Scripture and our Lutheran Confessions teach that all heterodox doctrine and practice (that is, false teaching) have no part in the worship and life of a Lutheran congregation. Today, however, some LCMS congregations openly and unapologetically employ the teachings of Arminian and Reformed theology by such false teachers as Rev. Rick Warren, Rev. Bill Hybels, Rev. John Maxwell, Rev. Carl George and others. We reject the toleration of these errors and strongly contend that there is no virtue to any false teaching.

Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions declare that the primary action in worship is taken by our gracious God who serves His people with His gifts of Word and Sacrament. Today, the liturgical practice of some LCMS pastors and congregations in the LCMS has been predicated on the false belief that worship is primarily the action of men who are present to serve God. We reject the toleration of this error.

Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions inform us that worship is an expression of the unity of the God who gathers us and the unity of the faith we believe, teach and confess, and that therefore we should "strive for uniformity" in our worship as did the early Lutheran confessors and Dr. C.F.W. Walther in founding the Missouri Synod. Today many LCMS officers, pastors and congregations have asserted that striving for unity and uniformity is an unbiblical binding of the Christian's freedom and conscience, and that much greater diversity of worship forms would serve the Church better. Unfortunately this has led not to new compositions of Lutheran hymns and liturgical settings but to importing worship forms from alien practices of Methodists, Baptists, Pentecostals and others. We reject these errors.

A. Original Position:

Uniformity in worship was considered necessary to give expression to continuity with the Church catholic, give expression to the unity of our confession, and the nature of the unity of the Triune God we worship, and to retain a *quia** subscription to our Lutheran Confessions. This unity in worship was viewed as a strength of faithful confession, provided unified instruction of our theology to the laity, and provided a clear Christ-centered, Scripture-centered focus to our synod's corporate worship.

* *quia*: an unconditional subscription to a confession "because" it is a correct exposition of God's Word, that is, it is in full agreement with Scripture and does not work against it at any point; as opposed to a *quatenus* subscription which is a conditional subscription only "in so far as" it gives a correct exposition of God's Word. The *quia* subscription simply allows the confession to say what it says without explaining away the plain language.

1. The Witness of Holy Scripture:

Genesis 13:18

So Abram moved his tent and came and settled by the oaks of Mamre, which are at Hebron, and there he built an altar to the LORD.

Exodus 25:9

Exactly as I show you concerning the pattern of the tabernacle, and of all its furniture, so you shall make it.

Exodus 28:1-2

¹ Then bring near to you Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the people of Israel, to serve me as priests—Aaron and Aaron’s sons, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar. ² And you shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother, for glory and for beauty.

II Chronicles 29:27-30

²⁷ Then Hezekiah commanded that the burnt offering be offered on the altar. And when the burnt offering began, the song to the LORD began also, and the trumpets, accompanied by the instruments of David king of Israel. ²⁸ The whole assembly worshiped, and the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded. All this continued until the burnt offering was finished. ²⁹ When the offering was finished, the king and all who were present with him bowed themselves and worshiped. ³⁰ And Hezekiah the king and the officials commanded the Levites to sing praises to the LORD with the words of David and of Asaph the seer. And they sang praises with gladness, and they bowed down and worshiped.

I Corinthians 14:26-33

²⁶ What then, brothers? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up. ²⁷ If any speak in a tongue, let there be only two or at most three, and each in turn, and let someone interpret. ²⁸ But if there is no one to interpret, let each of them keep silent in church and speak to himself and to God. ²⁹ Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said. ³⁰ If a revelation is made to another sitting there, let the first be silent. ³¹ For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged, ³² and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets. ³³ For God is not a God of confusion but of peace.

Hebrews 10:24-25

²⁴ And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Hebrews 8:2, 6

² Now the point of what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, a minister [*leitourgos* - liturgist] in the holy places, in the true tent that the Lord set up, not man. ... ⁶ But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry [*leitourgia* - liturgy] that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant He mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises.

Revelation 4

After this I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this." ² At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne. ³ And he who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian, and around the throne was a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald. ⁴ Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones were twenty-four elders, clothed in white garments, with golden crowns on their heads. ⁵ From the throne came flashes of lightning, and rumblings and peals of thunder, and before the throne were burning seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God, ⁶ and before the throne there was as it were a sea of glass, like crystal.

And around the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind: ⁷ the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with the face of a man, and the fourth living creature like an eagle in flight. ⁸ And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say,

"Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!"

⁹ And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever, ¹⁰ the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on

the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever. They cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

¹¹"Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created."

Revelation 5

Then I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals. ²And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?" ³And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it, ⁴and I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. ⁵And one of the elders said to me, "Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals."

⁶And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.

⁷And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne. ⁸And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. ⁹And they sang a new song, saying,

"Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, ¹⁰and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth."

¹¹Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, ¹²saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!" ¹³And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!" ¹⁴And the four living creatures said, "Amen!" and the elders fell down and worshiped.

Revelation 7:9-12

After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, ¹⁰and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" ¹¹And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, ¹²saying, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen."

Revelation 15:2-4

² And I saw what appeared to be a sea of glass mingled with fire—and also those who had conquered the beast and its image and the number of its name, standing beside the sea of glass with harps of God in their hands. ³And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying,

"Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations! ⁴Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.

Revelation 19:1-8

After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying out,

"Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, ²for his judgments are true and just; for he has judged the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality, and has avenged on her the blood of his servants."

³Once more they cried out,

"Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up forever and ever."

⁴And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who was seated on the throne, saying, "Amen. Hallelujah!" ⁵And from the throne came a voice saying,

"Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, small and great."

⁶Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out,

"Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. ⁷Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; ⁸it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure"—

for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

(Note: The citations from Revelation describe liturgical worship in heaven. The whole heavenly host speaks and worships as one Body in Christ. "On earth as it is in heaven" compels us to strive for uniformity in confession, speaking with one mouth as the prophets of old (Luke 1:70, Acts 3:18, 21), and in worship which is the practice of what we speak, *lex orandi, lex credendi*, that how we pray and worship is in fact our faith, our belief, and our confession. This heavenly unity refutes the errors today of everyone doing what is right in his own eyes or looking for some expression of personal preference in worship. The point here is that as one Body, the Church worships as one man and one mouth to bring praise to the unity of our One God. Anything contrary denies the very nature of the unity of the God we worship.)

2. The Witness of the Lutheran Confessions:

Augsburg Confession, Article VII (The Church):

¹ 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. ² For the true unity of the Church it is enough to agree about the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments. ³ It is not necessary that human traditions, that is, rites or ceremonies instituted by men, should be the same everywhere. ⁴ As Paul says, "One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all" (Ephesians 4:5–6).

Augsburg Confession, Article XXIV (The Mass) [34, 40]

³⁴ Because the Mass is for the purpose of giving the Sacrament, we have Communion every holy day, and if anyone desires the Sacrament, we also offer it on other days, when it is given to all who ask for it. This custom is not new in the Church.

⁴⁰ Therefore, since the Mass among us follows the example of the Church, taken from the Scripture and the Fathers, we are confident that it cannot be disapproved. This is especially so because we keep the public ceremonies, which are for the most part similar to those previously in use. Only the number of Masses differs. Without a doubt, these might be reduced in a helpful way, because of very great and clear abuses.

Augsburg Confession, Epilogue to Article XXI (Worship of the Saints) [4-5]

⁴ Although, in large part, the ancient rites are diligently observed among us. It is a false and hate-filled charge that our churches have abolished all the ceremonies instituted in ancient times. ⁵ But the abuses connected with the ordinary rites have been a common source of complaint. They have been corrected to some extent since they could not be approved with a good conscience.

Apology to the Augsburg Confession, Article IV (Justification) [310]:

¹⁸⁹ [310] So the worship and divine service of the Gospel is to receive gifts from God. On the contrary, the worship of the Law is to offer and present our gifts to God. However, we can offer nothing to God unless we have first been reconciled and born again. This passage, too, brings the greatest comfort, as the chief worship of the Gospel is to desire to receive the forgiveness of sins, grace, and righteousness. Christ says of this worship, “For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in Him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day” (John 6:40). And the Father says, “This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to Him” (Matthew 17:5)

Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Articles VII and VIII (The Church) [33]

³³ We believe that the true unity of the Church is not injured by dissimilar ceremonies instituted by humans, just as the dissimilar length of day and night does not injure the unity of the Church. However, it is pleasing to us that, for the sake of peace, universal ceremonies are kept. We also willingly keep the order of the Mass in the churches, the Lord’s Day, and other more famous festival days. With a very grateful mind we include the beneficial and ancient ordinances, especially since they contain a discipline. This discipline is beneficial for educating and training the people and those who are ignorant (the young people).

Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Article XXIV (The Mass):

¹ At the outset, we must again make this preliminary statement: we do not abolish the Mass, but religiously keep and defend it. Masses are celebrated among us every Lord’s Day and on the other festivals. The Sacrament is offered to those who wish to use it, after they have been examined and absolved. And the usual public ceremonies are observed, the series of lessons, of prayers, vestments, and other such things.

⁹⁹ We have briefly said these things about the Mass for the following reasons. First, we hope that all good people everywhere understand that we keep the dignity of the Mass and show its true use with the greatest zeal. Second, our reasons for disagreeing with the adversaries are most just. Further, we would encourage all good people not to help the adversaries in the profanation of the Mass, burdening themselves with other people’s sin. This is an important cause and an important subject, no less important than the work of the prophet Elijah, who condemned the worship of Baal. We have presented this important discussion with the greatest restraint and now reply without using abusive words. But if the adversaries push us to collect all kinds of abuses of the Mass, we will not present the discussion with such toleration.

Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Article XV (Human Traditions) [5, 20, 21]

⁵ The Gospel teaches that through faith we receive freely, for Christ’s sake, the forgiveness of sins and are reconciled to God. The adversaries, on the other hand, appoint another mediator: these traditions. By these they want to gain forgiveness of sins; by these they want to reconcile God’s anger. But Christ clearly says, “In vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men” (Matthew 15:9).

²⁰ Although the Holy Fathers themselves had both rites and traditions, they did not maintain that these are useful or necessary for justification. They did not cloud over Christ’s glory and office, but taught that we are justified by faith for Christ’s sake, and not for the sake of these human services.

²¹ The Fathers maintained the rites for these reasons. We also conclude it is proper for these reasons to keep traditions (good customs). We are greatly surprised that the adversaries argue for another design of traditions, that they may merit the forgiveness of sins, grace, or justification. What else is this than to honor God *with gold and silver, with precious stones* (as Daniel 11:38 says), that is, to hold that God becomes reconciled by a variety in clothing, ornaments, and by similar rites, which are countless in human traditions?

Apology of The Augsburg Confession, Article XXIV (The Mass), [80, 83]

⁸⁰ Let us discuss the word *liturgy*. This word does not properly mean a sacrifice, but rather the public ministry. Liturgy agrees well with our belief that one minister who consecrates gives the Lord’s body

and blood to the rest of the people, just as one minister who preaches offers the Gospel to the people. As Paul says, “This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God” (1 Corinthians 4:1), that is, of the Gospel and the Sacraments...

⁸³ Further references are not needed, since examples are understandable for those reading the Greek writers, in whom *leitourgia* is used for public civil burdens or ministries. Because of the pair of vowels, grammarians do not get this term from *lite*, which means prayers, but from public goods, which they call *leita*, so that *leitourgeo* means “I pay attention to,” or “I administer public goods.”

Large Catechism, Part I (The Ten Commandments, Third Commandment) [94]

⁹⁴ Note, therefore, that the force and power of this commandment lies not in the resting, but in the sanctifying, so that a special *holy exercise* belongs to this day. For other works and occupations are not properly called holy exercises, unless the person is holy first. But here a work is to be done by which a person is himself made holy. This is done (as we have heard) only through God’s Word. For this reason, particular places, times, persons, and the entire outward order of worship have been created and appointed, so that there may be order in public practice [1 Corinthians 14:40].

Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Article X (Church Practice), 5:

⁵ Under the title and excuse of outward adiaphora, things are proposed that are in principle contrary to God’s Word, although painted another color. These ceremonies are not to be regarded as adiaphora, in which one is free to do as he wants. They must be avoided as things prohibited by God. In a similar way in such a situation ceremonies should not be regarded as genuine free adiaphora, or matters of indifference. This is because they make a show or pretend that our religion and that of the papists are not far apart in order to avoid persecution, or they pretend that the papist’s ceremonies are not at least highly offensive to us. When ceremonies are intended for this purpose, and are required and received (as though through them contrary religions are reconciled and became one body), we cannot regard them as adiaphora. When returning to the papacy and departing from the Gospel’s pure doctrine and true religion should happen or gradually follow from such ceremonies, we cannot regard them as adiaphora.

3. The Witness of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod:

a. From the original constitution of the LCMS:

- II. Conditions under which a congregation may join Synod and remain a member.
 - 4. The exclusive use of doctrinally pure church books and schoolbooks. (Agenda, hymnal, readers, etc.) If it is impossible in some congregations to replace immediately the unorthodox hymnals and the like with orthodox ones, then the pastor of such a congregation can become a member of Synod only if he promises to use the unorthodox hymnal only under open protest and to strive in all seriousness for the introduction of an orthodox hymnal.

b. The first LCMS Constitution:

- V. Execution of synodical business.
 - 14. “Synod holds in accordance with the 7th article of the Augsburg Confession that uniformity in ceremonies is not essential; yet on the other hand Synod deems such a uniformity wholesome and useful, namely for the following reasons:
 - a. because a total difference in outward ceremonies would cause those who are weak in the unity of doctrine to stumble;
 - b. because in dropping heretofore preserved usages the Church is to avoid the appearance of any desire for innovations; Furthermore Synod deems it necessary for the purification of the Lutheran Church in American, that the emptiness and the poverty in externals of the served be opposed, which, having been introduced here by the false spirit of the Reformed is now rampant.

All pastors and congregations that wish to be recognized as orthodox by Synod are prohibited from adopting or retaining any ceremony which might weaken the confession of the truth or

condone or strengthen a heresy, especially if heretics insist upon the continuation or the abolishing of such ceremonies...

15. Synod as a whole is to supervise how each individual pastor cares for the souls in his charge. Especially is Synod to investigate whether its pastors have permitted themselves to be misled into applying the so-called 'New Measures' which have become prevalent here, or whether they care for their souls according to the sound Scriptural manner of the orthodox church."

c. **1998 Board for Congregational Services Report, 1998 Convention Workbook, pp. 30-33:**

"In recent years a significant debate has emerged in our Synod concerning our way of worship. Partly out of a desire to communicate the Gospel more effectively both to members and to the unchurched, a number of congregations have altered the orders of service provided in our hymnals. For some this foray into what is commonly called 'contemporary worship' entails substituting new materials for various parts of the liturgy. For others the services go well beyond altering existing worship patterns; rather, they have chosen to design services that clearly depart from the historic pattern of worship that has been handed down to succeeding generations of Christians for nearly 2,000 years...It is true that there is no biblical mandate demanding that a congregation use the same worship format at every service; congregations will nevertheless want to be concerned for unity and order. The solution of providing two, three, or even four different styles of services within a single congregation may answer a perceived need for variety that communicates the Gospel to people of different backgrounds and experiences. The end result, however, is not necessarily an improvement. In effect, the members go their own way (i.e., to their preferred service) on the basis of their own personal tastes. Rather than learning how to live and worship with the whole body, together with all of the rejoicing and struggling that may entail (I Cor. 12:26-27), the impression is given that the church is made up of individuals who segregate themselves on the basis of their likes and dislikes. How does this manifest the unity of the church?...Finally, for congregations that are discussing this issue for the first time, there is undoubtedly a sense of urgency that has entered the debate. Whether it is a concern for reaching the unchurched, a concern over the fear of losing members to other congregations, or a concern for the general direction of the congregation, it is easy to conclude that a change in worship styles will take care of many of the problems...For these reasons, the commission encourages congregations to proceed slowly before making any radical changes in their worship practices. Rather than rushing into a decision, it is essential that congregations study carefully all the issues that are related to the worship of God's people."

- B. Position Advocated and/or Practiced Today** - Congregations are being encouraged and enabled by the Synod to adopt a variety of worship formats for the sake of out-reach and for the sake of improving numerical growth. Use of so-called "contemporary worship" is now widespread throughout our church body.

Evidence of this Error:

1. The Synodical President in his report to the 2004 Convention calls into question the validity of Article VI in the Synodical Constitution because its meaning is apparently nebulous: "The conditions of membership in the Synod require the 'Exclusive use of doctrinally pure agenda, hymnbooks, and catechisms in church and school' (LCMS Constitution, Article VI).^{*} This presents a dilemma, since our Synod has not specifically stipulated what these 'doctrinally pure' contemporary worship resources for use by our congregation and professional workers must be." [2004 Convention Proceedings, Report of the President, p.56]

^{*} This language is essentially identical to the original constitution of the LCMS – "The exclusive use of doctrinally pure church books and schoolbooks. (Agenda, hymnals, readers, etc.)" [Article II, 4.], which was clearly sufficient for our founding fathers and all subsequent generations. Such

questioning has not served to obtain greater clarity of the original intent, but rather to legitimize contradictory interpretations toward affirming “respect for diversity” rather than unity (see 2 below).

2. The 2004 Convention approved the use of the new *Lutheran Service Book* to foster unity of practice in the Synod (2004 Res 2-03, To Accept LSB and Agenda as an Official Service Book and Hymnal of Synod). However, the same convention also approved, “That the Synod in convention affirm respect for diversity in worship practices as we build understanding of our theology of worship and foster further discussion of worship practices that are consistent with that theology.” (2004 Res 2-04, To Affirm Responsible Use of Freedom in Worship)
3. It is said by those who wish greater latitude in worship practices, all for the sake of reaching the lost, that worship style is independent of theology. Hence David Luecke’s Book, *Apostolic Style and Lutheran Substance*. Luecke advocates borrowing worship forms from Evangelicalism and inserting our Lutheran theology. Can this actually be done? If we borrow forms or styles of worship from sects within Christendom that deny baptismal regeneration, the physical presence of Jesus in the Lord’s Supper, and the efficaciousness of the Word, etc., can we retain the purity of the Gospel in the means of grace? Luecke gives his answer in the following:

“What gets communicated when a pastor offers a family the assurance that their loved one ‘was baptized’? I had occasion to think about this in a real-life situation. While my sister and I were in the hospital waiting room during our mother’s surgery, a mother and adult daughter sat down next to me. Soon their pastor arrived, and it became apparent that their husband and father was near death from an accident. The pastor was compassionate and reassuring in talking and praying with them. Sitting one chair away, I could not help but listen. What I heard was ‘he was baptized’ as the most fundamental reassurance of his eternal welfare.

Later it was learned the pastor was a well-respected Lutheran. That the man was baptized is certainly consolation, especially as a starting point. But if the man near death had given adult evidence of saving faith, even minimally through involvement in worship and church life, then recent testimony would seem more reassuring to the family than what was done to him as an infant. If there was no adult evidence to go on, then comfort in infant baptism is something to hang onto. But reliance for an adult’s salvation on an act done forty or fifty years earlier borders on sacramentalism.” [*Apostolic Style and Lutheran Substance*, David Luecke, pp. 86,87.]

4. Most of the songs, “hymns” and worship forms brought over into Lutheran worship today originate in Evangelicalism which, for the most part, denies original sin, the doctrine of election, grace alone (although they say they teach it, their practice reveals clearly that they do not. i.e., “deciding for Jesus” etc.), the means of grace, absolution, etc.
5. The *Ablaze!* campaign is committed to growing the Kingdom of God by “doing what ever it takes.” (As stated on its web page in the opening days of the program). Regarding worship, this means that we will incorporate any forms necessary for accomplishing this goal. Once again Article V of the Augsburg Confession is denied: To obtain such faith God instituted the office of the ministry, that is, provided the Gospel and the sacraments. Through these, as through means, he gives the Holy Spirit, who works faith, when and where he pleases, in those who hear the Gospel.
6. Focus on a “doing whatever it takes philosophy” rather than respecting the faithfulness of the Church catholic, leads to all manner of false doctrine and practice:
 - a. From the web page of Epic Church describing what they are about.

“It may be a new concept for you that going to church can be entertaining and engaging. While we still teach biblical principles and guidelines, it’s definitely a priority of ours to make each experience something special and have a blast in everything that we do.”
 - b. From Rev. Paul T. McCain’s web page “cybebrethren”:

“Over the years I’ve witnessed ‘clown eucharists’ in one of our Synod’s congregations where a guy dressed up like a clown did a ‘mime’ Eucharist at the altar, complete with dipping a crucifix into a chalice of wine. In a few of our congregations, there have been events in which people are

re-baptized to remind them of their baptism: yup, the whole nine yards, down to hopping in a backyard swimming pool. In another congregation, we've had a bed in the chancel during Lent for a sermon series on sex, advertised by people dressed up as Wookies on street corners. I have had to sit through 'worship experiences' while listening to a 'worship leader' do a great imitation of a Las Vegas lounge lizard tickling the ivories."

- c. New LCMS mission, Jefferson Hills Church, south of St. Louis, sets forth its focus as a "Lutheran" mission and its reason for forming.

"We believe a Great Commitment to the Great Commandment (Matt. 22:37-40) and the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19,20) will grow a Great Church!"

According to this statement what will grow a "Great Church" is our "Great Commitment." This language is all law and denies the words of Augsburg Confession V (The Ministry). Though likely unintentional, it also denies the doctrine of sola gratia. It is language that belongs within Arminian Theology which teaches that salvation is a matter of a man's decision to accept Christ. This model of ministry came from the Armenian teacher Rick Warren in forming Saddleback Church in southern California.

Then is given an encapsulation of their "Core Christian Beliefs." A note follows their "essentials" at the bottom of the page which reads,

"For a further explanation of our Christian beliefs **with a Lutheran understanding** [emphasis added] see Luther's Small Catechism . . ."

This kind of language (referring to what is believed as if it is from a "Lutheran perspective" and not simply what Scripture teaches) is completely contrary to the Lutheran Confessions and what it means to hold to the "faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 1:3).

- d. Also, from Jefferson Hills Church, at its inception, one of the web pages of their website stated (which has subsequently been removed after objections were voiced to the District President):

"God has a wonderful plan for your life. We believe that this plan can be seen, no matter how obscurely, in your hopes and dreams. **God speaks to us in the quiet of our heart and calls us to our higher calling** [emphasis added]. A church, if it really believes this, will learn to nurture that call (instead of our own agenda). That is our desire, for our dream to support yours."

Luther addressed such false teaching in the Smalcald Articles (Article VIII (Confession [9, 10])) when he stated:

⁹ ...enthusiasm dwells in Adam and his children from the beginning to the end of the world. Its venom has been implanted and infused into them by the old serpent. It is the origin, power, and strength of all heresy, especially of that of the papacy and Muhammad.

¹⁰ Therefore, we must constantly maintain this point: God does not want to deal with us in any other way than through the spoken Word and the Sacraments. Whatever is praised as from the Spirit—without the Word and Sacraments—is the devil himself."

- e. Jefferson Hills Church, along with the *Ablaze!* campaign, and in conformity with Church Growth principles as taught by Peter Wagner, Donald McGavran, and others, attempts to enlarge the Kingdom of God by appealing to man's nature through marketing principles in order to induce him to consider the Christian faith. This practice is based upon the assumption that if we make the worship service more "inviting," more "attractive," more "entertaining," more "contemporary," the church will grow.

The problem is that this is all based on a false understanding of free will. The Church Growth Movement is founded upon Arminian Theology which teaches the free will of man in matters of conversion and faith and denies both the doctrine of election and original sin. Contrary to what some believe within the LCMS (including pastors and church officials) "Word and Sacrament" cannot be added to Church Growth principles in order to Lutheranize them. These "means" of conversion and faith are not complimentary to one another and even oppose each other. The

very nature of the Church Growth Movement is antithetical to the doctrine upon which the church stands or falls: Justification. To rely upon man, even in the slightest degree, denies that salvation, from first to last (John 1:12,13; Phil. 2:12,13; Heb. 12:2), is solely the work of God (John 6:29) and therefore denies sola gratia. Note these words from Wagner and/or McGavran:

“Baptismal regenerationists complain that church growth does not sufficiently stress the sacraments. . . From the beginning the Church Growth Movement has been rooted in biblical, evangelical, conversionist theology. But it has refused to take sides on issues such as whether baptism should be administered to infants or only to believers...whether tongues proves that one has been baptized in the Holy Spirit, whether Christians should or should not drink, whether women should be ordained to the ministry, whether Christ is truly or only symbolically present in Holy Communion, and on any number of other areas of disagreement among theologians.”

“Since church growth has been born in an interdenominational milieu and taught to missionaries and pastors of many theological persuasions, and does not allow denominational differences to hide God’s desire that his lost children be found and his churches be multiplied, therefore, advocates of church growth have avoided voicing their own theological convictions, which are not—at this time under these circumstances—either causing or preventing church growth.”

“The science that investigates the nature, function, and health of Christian churches as they relate specifically to the effective implementation of God’s Commission to ‘make disciples of all nations’ [Matt. 28:19]. Church growth is simultaneously a theological conviction and an applied science, striving to combine the eternal principles of God’s Word with the best insights of contemporary social and behavioral sciences, employing as its initial frame of reference the foundational work done by Donald McGavran and his colleagues.”

(Note: The “effective implementation of God’s Commission” is not based upon our efforts but the work of the Holy Spirit, cf. Augsburg Confession V (**The Ministry**) and the Explanation of the Third Article of the Apostle’s Creed).

- f. The pervasiveness of contemporary worship services and/or “blended” traditional/contemporary services is evident with any cursory review of LCMS websites in most districts. It is increasingly difficult to find an LCMS congregation which exclusively uses the historic Lutheran liturgies of the Church.
- g. At the 2004 Synodical convention, the adoption of Resolution 2-04, “To Affirm Responsible Use of Freedom in Worship,” set forth and established the unwise use of contemporary forms which continue to divide us rather than unite us. In part it says:

“Resolved, That the Synod, in convention, affirm respect for diversity in worship practices as we build greater understanding of our theology of worship and foster further discussion of worship practices that are consistent with that theology...

Resolved, That the Commission on Worship initiate a process leading toward the development of diverse worship resources for use in The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod.”

Also at the 2004 convention, Resolution 2-03A, “To Accept *Lutheran Service Book and Agenda* as an Official Service Book and Hymnal of Synod,” reads in part:

“Resolved, That congregations and other entities of Synod be encouraged to participate in the introductory process for the new hymnal.”

The point of adopting an “Official Service Book” and of participating in the introductory process is to use the Official Service Book in our congregations, thus striving for uniformity in our worship.

- h. This condition of being of two minds respecting the public worship of the Synod continued at the 2007 Synodical Convention in Houston, TX, with the passage of 2007 Resolution 2-10, “To Foster

Greater Understanding of Worship through Theological Conferences,” and 2007 Resolution 2-02A, “To Provide Guidance and Direction for Use of Diverse/Contemporary Worship Resources,” and 2007 Resolution 2-03A, “To Commend Commission on Worship for *Lutheran Service Book*.” In the first resolution (2-01) the Synod in convention opted to hold theological conferences to, “...build greater understanding of our theology of worship and foster further discussion of worship practices that are consistent with that theology,” expressing the need to be unified in our theological basis for worship. But then immediately after, the next resolution on the floor of the convention (2-02A) sought to set the machinery in motion to develop materials for contemporary worship resources. Thus, the Synod moved ahead with supporting contemporary worship without first building the unity of our theology that would have helped us understand how to move together into the future.

C. ACELC Response:

Many in the LCMS believe that contemporary worship forms are a more effective way to attract unbelievers to worship services of our member congregations, and often give voice to the contention that liturgy simply does not communicate to modern Americans – especially younger Americans. This view dismisses out-right the biblical role of worship, specifically, that Christ is present to feed His sheep with His gifts of Word and Sacrament. The Scriptural and Confessional witness is that worship is for believers.

In addition, the introduction of various worship styles into the life of the congregation also serves to divide the congregation, often along family and generational lines. Children are shuttled off to the “Children’s Church,” teenagers to the contemporary worship service for their generational music, Baby Boomers to the camp-song services they grew up with in the 1960’s and ‘70’s, and grandma and grandpa to the traditional liturgical service which once served as the unifying instrument for worship for all ages in the Church.

Moreover, since the employment of contemporary worship in its various forms tends to make the worship of Lutheran congregations look very much like that of many Reformed churches, there remains very little that is distinctively Lutheran about such worship. Therefore it becomes a matter for many worshippers to simply exercise their personal preferences and attend one of the Reformed congregations if they have a somewhat better praise band or youth ministry, or better refreshments between services. The more Lutheran congregations become like Reformed churches in their worship and ministry, the less Lutheran they will be and the fewer reasons given for their members to remain loyal to the Lutheran Church.

The more worship accommodates the desires of the world, the more worldly it becomes.

The ACELC recognizes that there can be a variety of worship forms and practices that are biblical and faithful to God's Word. What needs to be determined is what is in the scope of worship uniformity that holds to that principle, thus maintaining continuity with the Church catholic.

Finally, in a church body that once “strived for uniformity” in its worship forms, “diversity” in worship has come to be declared a virtue. What used to unite us, now divides us. Many now claim that their Christian freedom permits them to do whatever they wish to do without regard for the unity of our church body, the unity of our congregations, and the unity of our understanding of the very clear language of our Lutheran Confessions. Christian liberty and unity has devolved into personal license and diversity.