

## ***Transform or Die: Taking a Look at the Transforming Churches Network***

by Scott Diekmann

### **Association of Confessing Evangelical Lutheran Congregations Free Conference**

+ August 17, 2019 +

If you've got a little Lutheran theological savvy, you likely correctly assumed just from the title of Rick Warren's *The Purpose-Driven Life* that the theology inside would be heterodox. The word "Purpose" gives it away. It might as well be named *The Law-Driven Life*, because that's its focus. Sometimes you *can* judge a book by its cover. But not always. The moniker *Transforming Churches Network* (TCN) is a little less likely to set off a klaxon in your head. Yet that word "*Transforming*" may not sit quite right. It doesn't sound Lutheran. What are they transforming, and why? They're transforming *your* congregation of course, one mind and one soul at a time, gradually, over a series of years (two years, *or more*, to be exact).<sup>1</sup> Maybe you noticed. Maybe you didn't, because your brain's been accommodated to the new standard. The 2010, 2013, and 2016 Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod (LCMS) National Conventions had overtures questioning the theological basis of TCN – 2019, *none*.

TCN's mission is "to help any interested congregation to transition from being an inward-focused church to one that is having an impact on their community for the Gospel."<sup>2</sup> Begun in 2007, it suckled on the milk of *Ablaze!* and the theology that birthed it.<sup>3</sup> By the start of the 2007 LCMS National Convention, sixty-seven congregations were already participating in a pilot revitalization program. The Synod adopted a resolution setting "a goal of praying and working for the mission revitalization of at least 2,000 existing LCMS churches by 2017." A non-profit was subsequently formed, and TCN ultimately became a Recognized Service Organization of the LCMS, although they are no longer an RSO. According to their website, they have a relationship with 32 of the 35 LCMS Districts and have 1,200 congregations in their network.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> TCN's *Seasons of Discovery* "is a step-wise Church Transformation process delivered in four seasons over two or more years that helps your church begin to engage your community with the Gospel of Jesus." "Seasons of Discovery," Transforming Churches Network, accessed July 11, 2019, <http://www.transformingchurchesnetwork.org/seasonsofdiscovery/>.

<sup>2</sup> Terry Tieman, David Born, & Dwight Marable, *Hinges: Opening Your Church's Doors to the Community* (Nashville: Transforming Churches Network, 2015), 10.

<sup>3</sup> *Ablaze!* was the LCMS Synod-wide evangelism program at the time. Jack Kirk described *Ablaze!* as "a Lutheran synthesis of Church Growth Movement (CGM)," synthesizing "the 'power of God unto salvation' with the tools of psychology, sociology, and the pragmatic of business and industry and essentially makes the success of the Gospel dependent on the behavioral disciplines." Jack Kirk, "A Pastoral View of 'Ablaze!'," Stand Firm (blog), June 3, 2008, <https://stand-firm.blogspot.com/2008/06/pastoral-view-of-ablaze.html>.

<sup>4</sup> There is no definition provided for "network." This congregational count may include congregations in other denominations as well. "ABOUT," Transforming Churches Network, accessed July 11, 2019, <http://www.transformingchurchesnetwork.org/about/>.

If your congregation commits to full-blown TCN involvement, initially it will be akin to undergoing a thorough history and physical, followed by a battery of tests. Pastor and parishioner alike will be poked and prodded by experts, followed by the administration of the medicine, in the form of a consultation report. If your congregation swallows the medicine, you *shall* follow the five prescriptions of the report. The promises of a revitalized and healthy congregation make that tablespoon of medicine seem worth the while, but remember, like those drug commercials on your favorite cable news network, one should always consider the side effects. Here's what the makers of TCN say about the mechanism of their treatment:

Our research and experience show that consultations are the fastest way to get congregations to become more outward focused and begin engaging their communities with the Gospel. It jump-starts the basic three-stage process of learning a new pattern.

The first stage is unfreezing, brought about by adequate discomfort or disequilibrium in order to produce sufficient survival anxiety in the organization. In a congregational setting, people recognize their "sin" and become anxious about whether or not their church will die if they continue on their current path.

In the second stage, there is a neutral zone where learning, transformation and change can occur. This second stage is characterized by learning anxiety, which involves both unlearning old self-serving or sinful habits and learning new habits, both in terms of behaviors and thinking in their faithfulness to God's will. Resistance is often experienced at this stage, where there is pressure to stay the same or return to what is old and familiar and maintain homeostasis, even when intuitively people know it is not best or right.

The third stage is called refreezing where the new behaviors are reinforced and adopted as the new norm. What becomes necessary in this change process is for learning anxiety to be reduced by providing a viable way forward. This reduction in learning anxiety is often created by things like a compelling vision, formal training, coaching, role models and support groups, which together create what sociologists term psychological safety.<sup>5</sup>

Compare that with this: **"For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified"** 1 Corinthians 2:2 (ESV). The first quote comes from the book *Hinges: Opening Your Church's Doors to the Community*, which was written by the three men most responsible for starting TCN, Terry Tieman, David Born, and Dwight Marable. The quote, which has everything to do with psychology and sociology, and nothing to do with theology, follows the course set by the seeker-sensitive/purpose-driven model,

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<sup>5</sup> Tieman, *Hinges*, 179-80.

whose goal is to transform your church.<sup>6,7</sup> The historical framework for TCN comes from the business mind of Peter Drucker (1909-2005), “the man who invented management.”<sup>8</sup> It is Drucker who launched the era of the mission and vision statement, found on the website of every Fortune 500 corporation. His worldview was informed by a casual familiarity with Christianity and a heavy dose of post-Enlightenment philosophers such as Kierkegaard and Rousseau.<sup>9,10</sup> Drucker occasionally mentions the “gospel” and uses other theological terms, but they are divorced from orthodox theological concepts.<sup>11</sup> He relates:

My interest in the megachurches was as a social phenomenon. My old and abiding interest in community. I saw them creating community for these young educated successful professionals who in nine cases out of ten were rootless. ...And this is the need or the opportunity which the megachurch

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<sup>6</sup> TCN differentiates itself from the Church Growth Movement (CGM), often associated with seeker sensitivity. They note that CGM attempts to attract people to the church with programs and activities, while TCN members are on the streets performing “community based servant evangelism.”\* They take different roads to arrive at the same point – everyone a minister. “For the Sake of Christ’s Commission: The Report of the Church Growth Study Committee” is a 2001 document prepared at the request of the 1995 LCMS National Convention. It does a thorough job of reviewing the theology and practices of CGM. Their findings have direct applicability to TCN as well. The document may be downloaded at <https://www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcm&id=1618>. \*Terry Tieman, “Urban Legends About TCN- Part II,” Transforming Churches Network, July 5, 2012, <http://www.transformingchurchesnetwork.org/urban-legends-about-tcn-part-ii/>.

<sup>7</sup> TCN still retains the CGM seeker-sensitive nature. The worship service may include “worship elements that are sensitive to the unchurched” (Tieman, *Hinges*, 75). “Seekers attend church hoping to make friends and connect with God in a way that is meaningful to them. The key is to develop an approach to the worship experience that fits your context and accomplishes your agreed upon mission and vision.” (Dwight Marable, *Motivation for Mission: Embracing God’s Vision for Your Community* (Cordova, TN: Transforming Churches Network, 2013), 41.)

<sup>8</sup> Bloomberg Businessweek (blog), November 27, 2005,

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2005-11-27/the-man-who-invented-management>.

<sup>9</sup> Drucker reveals in a videotaped interview that his interest in megachurches was “Because I looked out the window. There was that phenomenon. Period. And I’m curious.” When asked if his curiosity was from a personal religious standpoint, he answers: “I’m not the born again Christian, no. Been going to church and I’ve been tithing all my life, but I do not claim to be.” “Interview with Peter Drucker 2001-12-05,” Claremont Colleges video, 3:45:19, posted November 1, 2007,

<http://ccdlib.libraries.claremont.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/dac/id/2176>. The quote begins at 2:15:58.

<sup>10</sup> Chris Rosebrough answers the question “What is the nature of the seeker-driven church movement?” in **this highly recommended podcast**: “Resistance is Futile: You Will Be Assimilated Into the Community,” *Fighting for the Faith*, podcast audio, May 12, 2012,

<http://www.piratechristian.com/fightingforthefaith/2012/05/11/resistance-is-futile-you-will-be-assimilated-into-the-community-2>. The accompanying PowerPoint slides, in pdf format, can be downloaded here: <http://004f597.netsolhost.com/fff/ResistanceisFutile.pdf>.

<sup>11</sup> Consider this Drucker quote, written in 1959, which offers a simplified overview of his thought: “Society needs a return to spiritual values – not to offset the material but to make it fully productive. ...The economist is concerned with reality; an abundance is still far from being reality. But it is not premature to think seriously about the philosophy and metaphysics of abundance; for philosophy and metaphysics deal with the vision of what can and should be.

“Mankind needs the return to spiritual values, for it needs compassion. It needs the deep experience that the Thou and I are one, which all higher religions share.” Peter F. Drucker, *Landmarks of Tomorrow: A Report on the New ‘Post-Modern’ World* (Transaction Publishers: New Brunswick, NJ, 1996), 264-65.

exploits. And I saw it as a social phenomenon. But also the first of them are marketing successes.<sup>12</sup>

Drucker declares that “The ‘product’ of a church is a churchgoer whose life is being changed. The task of social-sector organizations is to create human health and well being.”<sup>13</sup> His brand of “well being” is a communitarianism whereby the individual is subsumed by the greater good of the community as man evolves.<sup>14</sup> The Church becomes just one more “values-based organization” among many that serve the project of societal transformation.

Drucker’s mentees include Rick Warren, Bill Hybels, and Bob Buford. Warren’s *purpose-driven* conglomerate,<sup>15</sup> Hybels’ Willow Creek Association,<sup>16</sup> and Buford’s Leadership Network<sup>17</sup> have all left a dent in the theological integrity of some LCMS pastors,

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<sup>12</sup> Claremont Colleges video. The quote begins at 2:17:23.

<sup>13</sup> Peter Drucker, “The Age of Social Transformation,” *The Atlantic Monthly*, Volume 274, No. 5, November 1994, <https://www.theatlantic.com/past/docs/issues/95dec/chilearn/drucker.htm>. Quoted from Lynn D. Leslie, Sarah H. Leslie, & Susan J. Conway, *The Pied Pipers of Purpose, Part 1: Human Capital Systems and Church Performance*, (Ravena, OH: Conscience Press, 2004), 16. ***Pied Pipers is a helpful monograph. It thoroughly explains the purpose-driven philosophy, including communitarianism and systems theory.***

<sup>14</sup> “Peter Drucker believes that the ‘social universe has no “natural laws” as the physical sciences do. It is thus subject to continuous change.’ ‘Continuous change’ in systems theory means that man and society are in a process of evolving, and teaches that man can harness change in order to facilitate and expedite his own evolution.” Leslie et al., *The Pied Pipers of Purpose*, 13.

<sup>15</sup> Mary Fairchild notes: “Mega churches like Bill Hybels’ Willow Creek and Rick Warren’s at Saddleback use modern marketing techniques in order to draw and hold large numbers of people. These people are converted and disciplined through modern organizational management techniques so that they can affect change in the community, and the world. This is accomplished by practicing the Hegelian dialectic repeatedly, in order to achieve gradual, incremental, (continual) change—also known as innovation. The Hegelian is developmental and evolutionary in character and its goal is to achieve ‘complete perfection’—man can become god apart from God.

“Unbelievers are purposely mixed with believers in the church to create the diverse group of people needed to achieve the change process. **Facilitated meetings and Bible studies are used to achieve the predetermined outcomes.** Subtly, believers are moved away from their original position of ‘moral absolutism,’ in order to ‘continue to get along with the group—relationship’ —through peer pressure (belonging) the goal is for everybody to get along so that we may attain world peace apart from God.” [Emphasis in original.] Mary Fairchild, “Willow Creek Community Church: Manipulating the Church to Globalism,” mfairlady (blog), April 26, 2003, <http://www.mfairlady.com/willowcreekmanipulateglobalism/>.

<sup>16</sup> The Willow Creek Association website, of which some LCMS congregations are members, states: “WCA Membership is a community of innovative churches sharing a common vision of supporting the building of biblically functioning churches globally, representing members from diverse churches, denominations, regions, cultures and ethnicities who want to learn from each other and see the Church thrive worldwide.” “Willow Creek Association Membership,” Willow Creek Association, accessed July 11, 2019, <https://www.willowcreek.com/Member/#/home/>.

<sup>17</sup> “In 1984 Bob Buford founded Leadership Network to be a resource broker to supply information to evangelical leaders and pastors, particularly targeting those who wanted to develop innovative churches. This organization has served as the main conduit for Drucker’s philosophies and practices to enter evangelicaldom.” See Discernment Research Group, “Peter Drucker’s Influence,” Herescope (blog), November 14, 2005, <http://herescope.blogspot.com/2005/11/peter-druckers-influence.html>. Sarah Leslie believes that “Leadership Network’s DNA is *not* about the Gospel of Salvation. It was *never* about Jesus Christ. The emphasis was always on ‘structure’ and ‘organization’ and the nuts and bolts of how to

congregations, and districts. The point of this long prologue is to emphasize that TCN's *structure* was built using business methods and ideas that are often deceptively *hostile* to the Gospel. "These philosophies are bent upon transforming the workplace, schools, government, and churches in our society."<sup>18</sup> While TCN isn't pushing Globalism or taking over the educational system, the purpose-driven plan they use is a house built on sand. The various moving parts of TCN closely mimic those of a seeker-sensitive/purpose-driven organization.<sup>19</sup> For you less-young Midwesterners in the group, this is like playing pinochle with a poker deck. It's *not going to "work."* What does this look like in practice? The following paragraph answers that question. The bracketed quotes come from TCN material. The non-bracketed quotes come from the Herescope blog,<sup>20</sup> which nicely describes the transformation process:

First, the transformational process subtly creates discontent with the current "system." ["Vision generally starts with a pastor and a small group of passionate people who will not settle for a church that is focused on itself, its past or its survival."<sup>21,22</sup>] " 'Vision' statements are usually concocted in orchestrated consensus meetings, in which foregone conclusions move people from Tradition towards Transition." [The congregation "will engage in a comprehensive Visioning Process, using guidelines provided by TCN. This process will include, but not be limited to, interviews and surveys with people and leaders in the community, prayer walking in targeted areas, and an interpretation of the area demographics. Finally, a Visioning Day, led by TCN will be conducted and an outwardly focused Vision Statement will be drafted."<sup>23</sup>] It is seeker-sensitive. ["Re-imagine and

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'transition' the church into the new 'emerging paradigm.' Yes, its emerging leaders spoke the hip-sounding intellectual language of theology and philosophy. But that was part of the structural change. They were charged with deconstructing the old mindsets of the old theological paradigm and building the new. Everything was to be turned inside out, upside down, and totally gutted. In this postmodern worldview there can be no absolute truth and God's Word is not the final authority. So the leaders actually threw out the road map and began careening down the road in an out-of-control bus. It was all a grand experiment." Sarah Leslie, "The Out-of-Control Bus That Runs Over Sheep, Part 2: The Culture Which Gave Rise to Mark Driscoll," Herescope (blog), September 18, 2014, <http://herescope.blogspot.com/2014/09/under-bus-and-off-map.html>. Jack Cascione reported that "The Leadership Network consultants have been giving seminars to LCMS District Presidents and LCMS District staff in Irvine, California, St. Louis, and other locations." Jack Cascione, "Dictatorship in the Name of Leadership," Luther Quest, April 5, 1999, <http://www.lutherquest.org/walther/articles/jmc00026.htm>.

<sup>18</sup> Leslie et al., *The Pied Pipers of Purpose*, 7.

<sup>19</sup> It's unlikely the majority of the pastors involved with TCN are cognizant of these underlying factors.

<sup>20</sup> The Herescope quotes are a conflation from three blog posts by Discernment Research Group:

"Worldview & Vision: Part 2: A Volatile Combination," March 22, 2006,

<http://herescope.blogspot.com/2006/03/worldview-vision-part-2-volatile.html>.

"Worldview & Vision: Part 3: Congregational Development," March 23, 2006,

<http://herescope.blogspot.com/2006/03/worldview-vision-part-3-congregational.html>.

"Worldview & Vision: Part 4: A Global Worldview," March 24, 2006,

<http://herescope.blogspot.com/2006/03/worldview-vision-part-4-global.html>.

<sup>21</sup> Tieman, *Hinges*, 90-91.

<sup>22</sup> **For an excellent overview of small groups and their danger when used as part of the transformation process, see Berit Kjos, "Small Groups and the Dialectic Process, Part 8,"** Truth Will Triumph (blog), April 1, 2004, <http://newswithviews.com/BeritKjos/kjos29.htm>.

<sup>23</sup> "The Bethlehem Connection," Bethlehem Lutheran Church, May 2015, <https://religiondocbox.com/66814247-Christianity/Message-from-pastor-korte-regarding-the-process-for-revitalizing-bethlehem.html>.



implement a strategy for developing worship services that help people feel welcomed, inspired and motivated to take the next step.”<sup>24</sup>] The vision is constantly broadcast to create new habits. [“Leadership will continually insure that every member knows and is committed to carrying out the [outward-focused missional] vision.”<sup>25</sup>] [Brackets added.] “During the Transition process, people normally are challenged to leave Tradition.” [“Will they keep doing what they have always been doing or will they chart a new path?”<sup>26</sup>] “Their 'cherished assumptions' are supposed to be abandoned in order to acquire new ideas, beliefs, opinions, attitudes and values.” [“What behaviors will produce the results that will help the new culture and values grow in your church?”<sup>27</sup>] “Transition is looking for your hot buttons, pet issues, senses, beliefs, opinions, desires, lusts -- any place where you are vulnerable, any doubts or fears, any hook where you can be enticed into participation.” [“When we hold on to this iceberg, we will not see the fruit of Empowering God’s People. The doors of the church will remain shut.”<sup>28</sup>] “Transition will even appeal to a higher cause, a greater good, a wonderful idea, an excellent effort.” [“...The people of Trinity traded in their victim mentality for an attitude of godly hope.”<sup>29</sup>] Guilt-motivation is fair game. [“The purpose for the Day of Prayer and Repentance is to offer prayers of confession for... apathy and or disregard toward those people that God misses most in this community.”<sup>30</sup>] Your God-given reason, such as that used for doctrinal defense, will be broken down via small groups in a dialectic process. [“We are persons, face to face, in community, not separated individuals: we are a people in community who need others...we discover our identity in the context of community. We learn best together, with the help of other people.”<sup>31</sup>] But... the process of Transition will cajole you to make a move towards CHANGE.” [“Urgency and hope go together like a hand in a glove. Without urgency, a complacent church will not wake up and make necessary changes.”<sup>32</sup>] There must be *continuous* change in order to meet market forces. [“Because the Church is the Body of Christ and not just an organization or institution, we believe that the Church must regularly examine and renew its systems in order to effectively fulfill its mission.”<sup>33</sup>] Improvement requires innovation... [“Consistently inspiring worship services will

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<sup>24</sup> Transforming Churches Network, “The Basics of the Accountability Model” Powerpoint, Mission International Research and Development, slide 16, 2008.

<sup>25</sup> Hope Lutheran Church consultation report, October 2008. This prescription is found on more than one congregation’s consultation report. [https://od.ik/s/144884902\\_xhE41/Hope%20Aurora%20Rx%202008.pdf](https://od.ik/s/144884902_xhE41/Hope%20Aurora%20Rx%202008.pdf)

<sup>26</sup> Tieman, *Hinges*, 173.

<sup>27</sup> “Change Dynamics: Learning Community Six,” Transforming Churches Network, 2014, 14.

<sup>28</sup> Tieman, *Hinges*, 44.

<sup>29</sup> Tieman, *Hinges*, 17.

<sup>30</sup> “Transforming Congregations Prescriptions,” Valley Lutheran Church, October 5, 2008, [http://web.archive.org/web/20130510234754/http://s3.amazonaws.com/storage.nm-storage.com/valleylutheran/downloads/Valley\\_Prescriptions.pdf](http://web.archive.org/web/20130510234754/http://s3.amazonaws.com/storage.nm-storage.com/valleylutheran/downloads/Valley_Prescriptions.pdf).

<sup>31</sup> We discover our identity *in Christ* by hearing and studying His Word. The community idea is Peter Drucker’s communitarianism in action. There is a dialectic synthesis of “truth” in TCN’s Triads small groups. The Hegelian dialectic works best in a diverse group, which is why the Triad consists of a “committed Christian,” a “seeker or maybe a marginal member of the truth,” and a third person brought in by the seeker or marginal member. (See *Hinges* p. 123.) The quote comes from *Spiritual Mentoring: A Guide for Seeking and Giving Direction* by Keith R. Anderson and Randy D. Reese, found in: “Learning Community Eleven: Triads for Transformation,” Transforming Churches Network, 2010, 7.

<sup>32</sup> Tieman, *Hinges*, 21.

<sup>33</sup> “Introduction to Church Transformation: Learning Community One,” Transforming Churches Network, 2014, 3.

necessitate being exposed to new ideas and approaches."<sup>34</sup>] ...and experimentation ["Empowering God's People is about pastors learning a new way of leading by experimenting their way forward into a new reality."<sup>35</sup>] ...and risk. ["We must courageously journey to a strange place where there are a lot of risks and much is at stake, a place where there are new problems that require us to think in new ways. ...To do this successfully, we must surrender our present self—we must step outside our old paradigms."<sup>36</sup>] "And Transition is always a MIXTURE of truth and error." ["At the Visioning Day, after hours of prayer and discussion, the Holy Spirit sovereignly moved among them, and unanimity emerged around three areas of vision."<sup>37</sup>] "...There are 'feedback mechanisms' (assessments) to ascertain progress, measure results, maintain accountability and demonstrate performance." ["It [the Board of Directors] will also devise systems of accountability so that everyone knows what constitutes success in advancing the vision and how they are doing in reaching their goals."<sup>38</sup>] [Brackets added.] "This 'system' is odious on its face. It is works-oriented and results-driven. General Systems Theory, from which this 'systems' thinking is derived, originates from some very pagan sources." "The reason this method is so successful is because it first concentrates its attention on LEADERSHIP. As pastors and leaders are trained by the business gurus in this new methodology, they also get a good dose of NEW DOCTRINE."

No one would question TCN's pious desire to spread the Gospel – for this they should be commended. Their zeal, however, has led them to echo the doctrine of Gerizim rather than Zion. A peek at the authors on whom they rely reveals a kaleidoscope of leadership coaches, change agents, mission strategists, systems thinkers, trainers, international consultants, thought leaders, facilitators, church planters, management experts, and journalists – even one “apostolic catalyst for the global organic church movement.”<sup>39,40</sup> There is however, a dearth of confessional Lutherans. Highly relevant books that *should* be on the list are missing.<sup>41</sup> There is the occasional Lutheran quote in TCN material, even

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<sup>34</sup> Terry Tieman & Dwight Marable, *Skill Builders: Leadership Tools for Opening Doors to Your Community* (Cordova, TN: Transforming Churches Network, 2012), 81.

<sup>35</sup> Tieman, *Hinges*, 52.

<sup>36</sup> Tieman, *Hinges*, 78-79. Tieman here is quoting Robert Quinn from his book *Deep Change: Discovering the Leader Within*.

<sup>37</sup> Tieman, *Hinges*, 94.

<sup>38</sup> Tieman, *Hinges*, 139.

<sup>39</sup> The apostolic catalyst is Neil Cole. “Our Authors,” 100 Movements Publishing, accessed 7-12-19, <https://100mpublishing.com/our-authors/>.

<sup>40</sup> Some of the names on the TCN reading list include Steve Addison, Keith R. Anderson, Alan Axelrod, George Barna, Kurt Bickel, Warren Bird, Paul Borden, M. Scott Boren, William Bridges, George Bullard, Kennon Callahan, Tom Clegg, Neil Cole, Robert Coleman, Jim Collins, Steven Covey, R. Robert Cueni, Alan Deutschman, Peter Drucker, Bill Easum, Jim Egli, Edwin H. Friedman, Eric Geiger, Greg L. Hawkins, Steven Hawthorne, Ronald Heifetz, Alan Hirsch, Bill Hybels, John Kaiser, Bob Kauflin, Phillip Keller, Graham Kendrick, John Kotter, Charles R. Lane, Marty Linsky, Bob Logan, David Maister, Will Mancini, Dwight Marable, Donald McGavran, Gary L. McIntosh, Reggie McNeal, Mildred Minatrea, Farrar Moore, Eugene Peterson, David Platt, David Putnam, Robert E. Quinn, Thom S. Rainer, Randy D. Reese, Alan Roxburgh, Rick Rusaw, Eric Siegel, Doug Sosnick, Andy Stanley, Peter L. Steinke, Ed Stetzer, Les Stroh, Gary Stump, Eric Swanson, Elmer L. Towns, Rick Warren, J. Michael Waters, Bob Whitesel, John Whitmore, and Christopher Wright.

<sup>41</sup> Germane confessional books include *Mission from the Cross – The Lutheran Theology of Mission* by Klaus Detlev Schulz, *Great Commission, Great Confusion, or Great Confession: The Mission of the Holy*

a missional version of Luther's explanations on the Lord's Prayer,<sup>42</sup> but as Francis Pieper points out, "...the character of a church body is determined by what it actually teaches and not by what it ought to teach. ...The Lutheran Church exists wherever Lutheran teaching resounds; wherever this teaching is absent, the Lutheran Church is absent as well."<sup>43,44</sup> While TCN may not have purposely avoided certain books, since the purpose-driven paradigm and Lutheran theology are antithetical, we should not expect them to inhabit the writings of confessional Lutherans. Given the glut of "missional" and "how to" books, the absence of confessional books is a sure sign that *Lutheran* doctrinal categories do not interest them.

TCN doctrinal indifference is highlighted by their featured speaker at the upcoming TCN Discipleship Conference, a non-Lutheran pastor, whose book *Onward Discipleship Journey*<sup>45</sup> is prominently featured on the TCN Conference page.<sup>46</sup> The book certainly contains the Gospel and in some ways is very good, yet it rejects the real presence and the efficacious nature of the Sacraments, promulgates decision theology, and lacks a proper distinction between Law and Gospel.<sup>47</sup> Thus an outward-focused missional organization dedicated to spreading the Gospel highlights a speaker who rejects the very means by which that Gospel is spread. "The true adornment of the churches is godly, useful, and clear doctrine, the devout use of the Sacraments, fervent prayer, and the like" (Apology of the Augsburg Confession, XXIV, 51).<sup>48</sup>

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*Christian Church* by Lucas V. Woodford, *Sanctification: Christ in Action* by Harold L. Senkbeil, and Gene Edward Veith's *God at Work: Your Christian Vocation in All of Life*.

<sup>42</sup> Tieman, *Hinges*, 146-52.

<sup>43</sup> Francis Pieper, *The Church and Her Treasure: Lectures on Justification and the True Visible Church*, trans. O. Marc Tangner (St. Louis: The Luther Academy, 2007) 273.

<sup>44</sup> "The issue here is not whether lip-service is paid to stock phrases like 'Word and Sacrament,' 'means of grace,' or 'pastoral office.' Lutheran advocates of 'Church Growth' sprinkle this language on habitually." Kurt Marquart, "'Church Growth' as Mission Paradigm: A Confessional Lutheran Assessment," in *Church and Ministry Today: Three Confessional Lutheran Essays*, edited by John A. Maxfield (St. Louis: The Luther Academy, 2001), 88.

<sup>45</sup> Gary Stump & Ed Watson, *Onward Discipleship Journey: First Steps for Growing In Your Faith* (Fishers, IN: Onward Church, 2017). The book can be downloaded here: <https://onwardchurch.org/discipleship/>.

<sup>46</sup> "Mark Your Calendar," Transforming Churches Network, accessed July 18, 2019, <https://t.e2ma.net/webview/aalj7b/95dec208ee7d9aba455dc24ac11c1ddd>.

<sup>47</sup> References: "We are baptized after believing in Jesus out of obedience," p. 8. "Baptism does not 'save' you—only your faith in Christ does that. Baptism is like a wedding ring. It's the outward symbol of the commitment you made in your heart," p. 9. "Take bread & grape juice and share the Lord's Supper together" p. 32. "When did you ask Jesus to be the Lord of your life?," p. 9. Luke 5:17-26, the healing of the paralytic, is discussed. The focus seems to be mainly on Law: "What is something God would have you do (obey) as a result of this Bible passage?," p. 16. Prayer and daily devotion are examined, but they lack an appreciation for the power of God's Word. Compare the discussion in Sessions # 2 and # 3 on prayer and Bible study and devotions with this quote from *Treasury of Daily Prayer*: "The rhythm of daily prayer is really a daily catechesis in the Word of God. As we hear and confess His Word, as we are instructed in the way of faith and love by the Law and the Gospel, and as we are thus taught to pray, the Holy Spirit is actively present and at work to bring us daily to repentance. He calls us by the Gospel, enlightens us with his gifts, sanctifies us in the faith, and keeps us united with Christ our Lord. All of this the Spirit does by the Word, which puts the old Adam in us to death and raises us to newness of life with our crucified and risen Lord Jesus. That is the rhythm of life for every baptized believer in Christ...." *Treasury of Daily Prayer*, ed. Scot A. Kinnaman (Saint Louis: Concordia, 2008), 15.

<sup>48</sup> *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions*, ed. Paul Timothy McCain (St. Louis: CPH, 2006), 228.



In a similar vein, Dwight Marable, who is on the Board of Directors and is the Director of Research and Resources for TCN, lacks a Lutheran pedigree. Mr. Marable is an incredibly talented person. He trained under Donald McGavran doing missionary work in Asia, and has led seminars in evangelism outreach all over the world. He founded Missions International,<sup>49</sup> and has put together training material for Rick Warren's Saddleback Church.<sup>50</sup> His statistical research has contributed to the transformational design of TCN, and he has written portions of their source materials.<sup>51</sup> He believes in decision theology and direct revelation from the Spirit.<sup>52</sup> He believes that "small groups are the most crucial factor in the health and growth of churches," not the means of grace.<sup>53</sup> TCN's thoughtless reliance on non-Lutheran sources demonstrates a willingness to use whatever parts best fit its purpose-driven mission, regardless of where those sources come from or their doctrinal probity.<sup>54,55</sup> This lack of fidelity stems from an allegiance to a foreign Material Principle: *mission*. When your Material Principle is not *justification by grace through faith*, Lutheran theology doesn't fit. You're looking for a theology with an emphasis on marshalling the troops and what you're going to *do*, not one with an emphasis on what you're going to *receive*. Klaus Detlev Schulz explains this further:

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<sup>49</sup> "Dwight Marable," Missions International, accessed 7-19-19, <https://missions.com/dwight-marable/>.

<sup>50</sup> *P.E.A.C.E. Church Planting Movement Training Manual* (Lake Forest, CA: Saddleback Church, 2006), 179. Download at <https://www.cmaresources.org/files/SergeantCPMBook.pdf>.

<sup>51</sup> Tieman, *Hinges*, 10.

<sup>52</sup> From Jim Egli & Dwight Marable, *Small Groups, Big Impact* (Bloomington: ChurchSmart Resources, 2011): "...Until he finally did accept Christ" (p. 36). "...Before they have made their own decision to receive Christ (p. 41). "People experience God's presence in small groups soaked in prayer. As we take time with God, his empowering and healing presence is released" (p. 25). "...Ask people to be quiet and to ask God's Spirit to give impressions to show you how to start your ministry time. After a time of silence people are encouraged to share things that came to their mind..." (p. 72).

<sup>53</sup> Egli, *Small Groups*, 87.

<sup>54</sup> Other parts of the TCN program gleaned from non-Lutheran sources include: 1) Triads, which come from Fellowship of Grace Brethren pastor Neil Cole in his book *Cultivating a Life for God*, 2) The church life cycle concept, which comes from Baptist George Bullard and his book *The Life Cycle and Stages of Congregational Development*, 3) The peer coaching model used in the small group study *Motivation for Mission*, which comes from business expert John Whitmore's book, *Coaching for Performance*, 4) The Individual Spiritual Health Assessment, designed by Saddleback Church, 5) The "Discipleship: Following the Master" study guide, modeled on the work of Steve Addison, a mentor to church movement pioneers, 6) The church consultation process, which comes from Baptist pastor Paul Borden and his book *Direct Hit: Aiming Real Leaders at the Mission Field*. See W. I. Strieter's review of *Direct Hit* in *Logia*, XIX:4, Reformation 2010, 47-48.

<sup>55</sup> "...These consultants are steeped in Church Growth Movement ideology, which is generally constructed by those who don't believe that conversion comes by hearing the Word of God without a 'decision' on your part, or who don't believe that conversion comes by the operation of the Holy Spirit through means. When you don't believe that the Word has the power to convert unbelievers, then helping the Holy Spirit with your own techniques in order to 'convince them' becomes the modus operandi. The Scriptures become an instruction manual on how to live your life, rather than the unfolding of God's divine plan of salvation in Jesus Christ. Since they hold to a flawed Christology, all other articles of faith, such as their views on sanctification, the Church, the Office of the Holy Ministry, and the Sacraments, are corrupted. Evangelism, which should be entwined with the liturgy, Word, and Sacrament, becomes a pragmatic board game played out on squares labeled 'sociological studies,' 'emotion,' 'felt needs,' 'business marketing,' 'assessment testing,' 'accountability,' 'coaching,' 'attitudinal changes,' and 'psychological manipulation.'" Scott Diekmann, "The Transforming Churches Network: Part 1, A Non-Native Invasion," Stand Firm (blog), April 27, 2009, <https://stand-firm.blogspot.com/2009/04/transforming-churches-network-part-1.html>.

In terms of mission the believer is therefore primarily and in the first instance a receiver, therefore passive in God's saving mission and only in the secondary sense carrier and active in His mission. The motivation for mission is not primarily rooted in the Great Commission (imperative) but in the indicative of God's act in Christ."<sup>56</sup>

Ken Schurb puts it this way:

Yet it is the gospel *for you* in the doctrine of the church — the church as receiver of God's gifts — that disappears with the "missional" claim, "the church of Jesus Christ is not the purpose or goal of the gospel, but rather its instrument and witness." This gospel is omitted from the picture when the church is defined simply as "God's instrument for God's mission." Although such "missional" thinking may stress that the gospel is for everyone else, Lutherans cannot help but rejoice that it is *for you*.<sup>57</sup>

TCN's missional mindset is inescapable. Nigh everything that pastor and parishioner do *must* be in service to mission:

Instead of spending most of his time "doing" the ministry, as he had done for decades, he shifted his time and effort to "equipping" others to do ministry. After their new vision was established, he included it in his preaching, bulletins and newsletters. He talked about the vision at church meetings and with every individual member he met. In each of the outreach activities, he was the catalyst for recruiting, training and overseeing others who actually planned, conducted and led the events. He also modeled outreach behaviors at each event. He told the members that if there wasn't interaction between the members and people from the community at the outreach events and they didn't get any new names and contact information for the prospect list, the event would be a failure.<sup>58</sup>

The new vision becomes an institutional scorched earth policy:

All existing and new ideas, facility plans, programs and ministries must be evaluated in light of this vision and any that do not enable the congregation to move closer to achieving this vision shall be stopped or not implemented.<sup>59</sup>

Anssi Simojoki remarks:

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<sup>56</sup> Klaus Detlev Schulz, "The Missiological Significance of the Doctrine of Justification in the Lutheran Confessions" (Th.D. diss., Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1994) 111. Quoted from Ken Schurb, "Missional? The Church in Luther's Large Catechism," *Logia*, XVIII:1, Epiphany 2009, 18.

<sup>57</sup> Ken Schurb, "Missional? The Church in Luther's Large Catechism," *Logia*, XVIII:1, Epiphany 2009, 18.

<sup>58</sup> Tieman, *Hinges*, 47.

<sup>59</sup> "Transforming Congregations Prescriptions," Valley Lutheran Church, October 5, 2008, [http://web.archive.org/web/20130510234754/http://s3.amazonaws.com/storage-nm-storage.com/valleylutheran/downloads/Valley\\_Prescriptions.pdf](http://web.archive.org/web/20130510234754/http://s3.amazonaws.com/storage-nm-storage.com/valleylutheran/downloads/Valley_Prescriptions.pdf).

...Missiology has proved to be a fertile garden of fashionable programs and slogans. ...Luke repeatedly mentions the growth of the church in the initial history of the Christian church, but it is certainly not a missiological method or principle in the New Testament, justifying what Donald McGavran came to teach as "church growth." Instead, the growth of the body of Christ is a trinitarian, christological, and pneumatological mystery which takes place through the apostolic doctrine and administration of the sacraments. ...We read in the New Testament that it was the particular commandment of the Holy Spirit to set apart Barnabas and Saul upon his particular calling of them (Acts 13:2). It is embarrassing to find irresponsible proof texting in so many missiological programs. Most embarrassing is that their connection to the word of God is in danger of being far from genuine.<sup>60</sup>

TCN certainly demonstrates a propensity for irresponsible proof texting. Not unexpectedly, they eisegete Ephesians 4:11-13 to turn laymen into ministers.

According to the text above, Jesus gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers to do the work of equipping the church.

God gave leaders to the church. The way that the church carries out the calling is through the leadership. It's not by the leadership doing the ministry. Verse 12 makes it clear that the leaders are "to equip his people for works of service." The calling is for the entire church, not just the clergy.<sup>61</sup>

In their hands, laymen again receive a vocational transformation via Romans 10:14-15: "Paul doesn't leave us very much wiggle room in this verse. It is pretty clear that God has entrusted Christians with the responsibility to search for people who are lost without Christ and we are to share the good news of what Christ has done."<sup>62</sup> John 5:16-20 inexplicably becomes a verse on "vision": "Vision—a clear picture of a preferred future—isn't discovered on a mountaintop or handed to leaders engraved on tablets of stone. Rather, it comes by seeking the heart of God and seeing where he is already working in the community (John 5:16-20)."<sup>63</sup> The ambassadors in 2 Corinthians 5:20 are also changed

<sup>60</sup> Anssi Simojoki "Glory and Humiliation in the Theology and Experience of Missions," *Logia*, XVIII:1, Epiphany 2009, 24, 25.

<sup>61</sup> Tieman, *Hinges*, 41. "And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:11-13 ESV). A proper exegesis of these verses can be found here: Robert Mayes, " 'Equipping the Saints': Why Ephesians 4:11-12 Opposes the Theology and Practice of Lay Ministry," *Logia*, XXVI:4, Reformation 2015, 7-15.

<sup>62</sup> Marable, *Motivation for Mission*, 26. "How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!' " (Romans 10:14-15 ESV). A proper exegesis of these verses can be found here: Jonathan Lange, "How Are They to Believe? Romans 10:14-15 in the Light of the Lutheran Confessions," *Logia*, VII:3, Holy Trinity 1998, 35-43.

<sup>63</sup> Tieman, *Hinges*, 29. "All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be

from pastors to “the people of God”: “We believe that the people of God in His Church are Christ’s ambassadors who partner with Him in His ministry of reconciliation.”<sup>64</sup> And predictably, Proverbs 29:18 is eiseged to turn the pastor into a vision-casting leader:

**Lack of a Clear & Compelling Vision:** While the people of Bethlehem have a desire to extend their Gospel ministry into the community, they do not have a specific picture of what this ministry should look like. “Where there is no vision, the people perish” (Proverbs 29:18). This lack of a clear, compelling and unified vision is preventing the congregation from reaching its potential in fulfilling the Great Commission.<sup>65</sup>

Johann Gerhard shoots down this idea by highlighting that the people do not perish where there isn’t a compelling vision, the people perish where there isn’t a pastor.<sup>66</sup>

Their eisegesis, rather than exegesis, of these passages *has* to be done in order to make their purpose-driven system work. When your goal is to turn the pastor into the “Transformational Pastor-Leader”<sup>67</sup> and the parishioners into ministers, you’ve obviously lost sight of Augsburg Confession Article V, the *sine qua non* of mission:

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.

Their new AC V looks like this:

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reconciled to God” (2 Corinthians 5:18-20 ESV). Both *The Lutheran Study Bible* and Lenski’s *Commentary* confirm that the ambassadors referred to are St. Paul and his associates, i.e. those called to the Office of the Holy Ministry, not laymen. Lenski mentions that “To scorn an ambassador or to mistreat him is to scorn and to mistreat the government which sent him.” In much the same way, to scorn a proper exegesis of St. Paul’s epistle is to scorn the apostle and the One who sent him. R. C. H. Lenski, *Commentary on the New Testament: The Interpretation of St. Paul’s First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2001), 1049.

<sup>64</sup> “Introduction to Church Transformation: Learning Community One,” Transforming Churches Network, 2014, 3.

<sup>65</sup> “The Bethlehem Connection,” Bethlehem Lutheran Church consultation report, May 2015, <https://religiondocbox.com/66814247-Christianity/Message-from-pastor-korte-regarding-the-process-for-revitalizing-bethlehem.html>.

<sup>66</sup> “Solomon teaches briefly but emphatically the sorry results that follow the abrogation of the office of the Word in Proverbs 29:18: ‘Where there is no prophetic vision’ (that is, when the public office of the Word ceases), ‘the people cast off restraint....’” Quoted in C.F.W. Walther, *The Church and the Office of the Ministry*, ed. Matthew C. Harrison, trans. J. T. Mueller (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2012), 186.

<sup>67</sup> This term is used in the pdf document titled “TCN-District Partnership,” p. 23.

Empowering people is the primary Hinge that opens the door for maximum missional impact in the community.<sup>68</sup> Without this Hinge in place, the leaders of the congregation will be weak or ineffective. All of the other Hinges are directly linked to this pivotal factor, because the equipping and releasing of others for ministry is required for the effective implementation of the other seven factors. This is especially true in regard to the senior pastor. His ability to equip and empower others to engage in mission and ministry will often determine a church's ability to experience meaningful transformation.<sup>69,70,71</sup>

Lucas V. Woodford summarizes:

Consequently, when the urgency of seeking and saving the lost is repeatedly cast as the sole purpose of the church, it seems that healthy theological discernment and discourse is often trumped by that urgency. Unbalanced and unchecked methods, strategies, and tactics that want to

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<sup>68</sup> According to Dwight Marable, "we have sought to know the key characteristics of churches that effectively empower church members to engage their communities with the Gospel. In other words, our research has focused on identifying the key factors, what we call Hinges, that shifted inwardly-focused congregations into churches that opened their doors to the community.

"To find these Hinges, we surveyed over 1,000 people in small to medium-sized churches in America. We processed this information through extensive statistical analysis, and we were able to determine the factors that lead to turning a church from an inward focus to an outward one. More specifically, we sought to understand the actions that lead to growing attendance, to new baptisms and to more new attenders from the community. The sophisticated processes that we have used have been guided by experts in this kind of statistical analysis." Quoted from Tieman, *Hinges*, 25-26. The Hinges are divided up into two sets of four each. The pastor factors include Empowering God's People, Personal Leadership, Visionary Leadership, and Bridge-Building Leadership. The church factors include Community Outreach, Focused Prayer, Functional Board, and Inspiring Worship (p. 26).

<sup>69</sup> Tieman, *Hinges*, 28.

<sup>70</sup> G. Mezger disagrees: "One of the most important factors, yea, we must say, the greatest factor, in the growth of our Synod, under God's gracious guidance has been, and still is, the preaching of His Word and Gospel, public preaching in public worship.

"Public preaching, the Word of God spoken by men of God whom He Himself has chosen and called through His congregation for this task, has been at all times the mightiest means of spreading His kingdom, of building His Church, both externally and internally. That is an established fact, proved again and again throughout the history of the Christian Church." G. Mezger, "Preaching in the Missouri Synod." *Ebenezer: Reviews of the Work of the Missouri Synod during Three Quarters of a Century*, ed. W. H. T. Dau (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1922), 279.

<sup>71</sup> TCN would point out to Mezger that "...we don't have the luxury of people just walking in off of the streets like we did 20-40 years ago. That age of the church no longer exists. We live in a day that requires us to move out into the harvest...out into the fields" (Marable, *Motivation for Mission*, 27). To an extent, TCN makes a valid point. Part of our apologetic task must be to break down the arguments of unbelievers so that they will be willing to give the Gospel a hearing. On the flip side, we must remember that it is God who builds His Church. "The Kingdom of God comes indeed without our prayer." Luther weighs in: "...Pray in the name of Jesus Christ that, since God has established His kingdom and it is His work, He would strengthen it. For He has certainly raised it up without any co-operation, advice, thought, and intention of ours; and hitherto He has also ruled, conducted, and preserved it. Nor do I doubt at all that He will certainly complete it without our advice and cooperation." *What Luther Says: A Practical In-Home Anthology for the Active Christian*, Ewald M. Plass, compiler, (St. Louis: CPH, 1959), §2412, 777.



"connect people to Jesus" become the preeminent purpose and reason for the church to exist.<sup>72</sup>

The methods are indeed unbalanced and unchecked. *Vision becomes king.*<sup>73</sup>

"Vision-casting" is an absolute *pox* on Christ's Church.<sup>74</sup> It may have been Screwtape who originally came up with the idea.<sup>75</sup> "Visions are born in the soul of a man or woman...."<sup>76</sup> ...It is "God's vision."<sup>77</sup> It is "where God wants you to go as a congregation."<sup>78</sup> "Leaders are set apart as they see what no one else does...."<sup>79</sup> Simply put, "vision" is whatever the pastor wants to do. Those who oppose the vision oppose God and might be given what Chris Rosebrough calls the left foot of fellowship.<sup>80,81,82</sup> To facilitate the vision, the Office of the Holy Ministry has become the Office of the Vision-Casting Leader. Like Satan tempting Jesus in the wilderness to abandon his kingly Office, TCN tempts the pastor to abandon *his* pastoral Office.

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<sup>72</sup> Lucas V. Woodford, *Great Commission, Great Confusion, or Great Confession: The Mission of the Holy Christian Church* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2012), 99.

<sup>73</sup> Vision is mentioned 182 times in *Hinges*, a book which is 201 pages long.

<sup>74</sup> "There is a difference between establishing a vision and preaching the gospel. The one calls for creative and imaginative leadership that is willing to adopt and execute changes in the company that will further the measureable [*sic*] goal of improving its performance. But the gospel's power lies hidden under the cross. The faithful steward of God's mysteries must set aside reliance on observable progress and embrace by faith God's promise that the preaching of the cross that is a scandal and foolishness to the wise of this world is in fact the wisdom and power of God. The preacher who relies on what he sees as evidence of the success of his preaching will abandon the preaching of the cross in favor of preaching principles for a success that can be empirically measured. The congregation that adopts the CEO model will look to the pastor to share something of his own beyond the clear teaching of the gospel." Rolf Preus, "The Pastor: CEO or Shepherd?," paper presented at Association of Confessing Evangelical Lutheran Congregations Free Conference, Holy Cross Lutheran Church, Kansas City, Missouri, February 10-12, 2015, 7, [https://mychurchwebsite.s3.amazonaws.com/c2001/4\\_2015\\_the\\_pastor\\_ceo\\_or\\_shepherd\\_preus.pdf](https://mychurchwebsite.s3.amazonaws.com/c2001/4_2015_the_pastor_ceo_or_shepherd_preus.pdf).

<sup>75</sup> Screwtape is a mid-level demon in hell in C. S. Lewis's beloved allegorical novel *The Screwtape Letters*. In the book, Screwtape sends a series of letters to his bumbling underling nephew, Wormwood, advising him how to keep believer and unbeliever alike out of the enemy's camp. Vision-casting leaders put the proof in Screwtape's statement "One of our great allies at present is the Church itself." C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters* (Ulrichsville, OH: Barbour and Company, 1990), 15.

<sup>76</sup> Tieman, *Hinges*, 90. This is a quote of purpose-driven pastor Andy Stanley.

<sup>77</sup> Tieman, *Hinges*, 29.

<sup>78</sup> Tieman, *Hinges*, 64.

<sup>79</sup> Tieman, *Hinges*, 77.

<sup>80</sup> "However, if there are 'controllers' within the congregation who simply will not allow the pastor to lead, it is important that the consultants and coach help the pastor make sure that they do not remain in a position of authority. A good nomination and board training process that includes a Code of Conduct for supporting the pastor, the mission and vision of the congregation, high ethical standards, and ministry involvement should insure that mature and principled leaders are selected for the new board of directors." "Accountable Leader Model: Frequently Asked Questions," Transforming Churches Network, 2009, 4, [https://od.ik/s/144884824\\_baUVs/Accountable%20Leader%20Model%20FAQs.pdf](https://od.ik/s/144884824_baUVs/Accountable%20Leader%20Model%20FAQs.pdf).

<sup>81</sup> "It is virtually impossible for any organization with misaligned or conflicting core values to advance, so those who are at odds with the values in the vision will either come around to seeing the Lord's leading in a new direction, or they will self-exclude. No one likes to see church members leave, but if we need to retreat to the old shallow holding environment to keep them on board, the price is too high." "Change Dynamics: Learning Community Six," Transforming Churches Network, 2014, 7.

<sup>82</sup> "Then, with vision in hand, the pastor and the coach set priorities and eliminate things that do not further the vision." Tieman, *Hinges*, 54.

In many TCN congregations where prescriptions are enacted, if no similar leadership model already exists, an Accountable Leadership Model (ALM) of governance is set up.<sup>83</sup> In essence, the pastor becomes the “CEO” and the parishioners become the ministers.<sup>84</sup>

This design creates both potential and realized problems. The first problem is that it eliminates the historic polity of LCMS congregations, necessitating Bylaw and possible Constitution changes. The Voter’s Assembly is largely taken out of the picture. “Congregational meetings need only take place once or twice a year and become a time to report and celebrate more than a time to deliberate and decide.”<sup>85</sup> The congregants relinquish stewardship of their own church.<sup>86</sup> The Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope “sets forth the basic principles for church polity which the reformers were convinced came from Holy Scriptures” according to George F. Wollenburg. His first principle derived from the Treatise is this: “The purpose of all church polity is the correct

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<sup>83</sup> “The Accountable Leader Governance Structure... has been implemented as a prescription in many of our revitalization consultations.” (ref.: “Implementing the Accountable Leader Governance Structure,” Transforming Churches Network, [https://od.lk/s/144884823\\_CRh1b/Implementing%20the%20Accountable%20Leader%20Governance%20Structure.pdf](https://od.lk/s/144884823_CRh1b/Implementing%20the%20Accountable%20Leader%20Governance%20Structure.pdf)).

<sup>84</sup> The general goal is to set up a governance structure with a small Board of Directors “who are above all passionate about the missional vision of the organization...” (Tieman, *Hinges*, 135). Those selected for the Board will be TCN advocates by design, thus minimizing opposition to the transformation. They set the guiding principles for the pastor’s leadership. The pastor’s function is similar to a “CEO,” who sets the direction via vision-casting. The pastor holds hiring and firing power over the staff of the key ministry leaders, whose job it is to manage the ministries of the Church. The “functional board” model is designed to be streamlined to get things done while still providing for boundaries and accountability. “The primary role of the members shall be to serve as the ministers of the Church: reaching out to unchurched people first and also caring for the needs of one another within the Church.” Ref.: “Implementing the Accountable Leader Governance Structure,” Transforming Churches Network.

<sup>85</sup> “The following decisions of the Church shall require the approval of the Congregation by a simple majority of those Members present and voting:

- (a) Calling or dismissing a called Pastor
- (b) Amending the Articles of Incorporation or the Bylaws
- (c) Selecting Members to serve on the Board of Directors
- (d) Ratifying the annual budget in broad categories
- (e) Purchasing or selling the primary Church facilities
- (f) Dissolving the corporation”

Ref.: “Implementing the Accountable Leader Governance Structure”

<sup>86</sup> Martin Noland contends “The most objectionable feature of TCN is that **it recommends to a congregation that it suspend its constitution and bylaws**. The new bylaws, which replace the original constitution and bylaws, have in every case made the pastor the **real** authority over **all affairs** of the church, both temporal and spiritual. Under the TCN constitution, the congregational voter’s assembly no longer functions as the legal authority for the church, and certainly not as the court of final appeal.

“**This is a doctrinal issue for Lutherans, because the voter’s assembly is the horizontal dimension of the public activity of the priesthood of all believers.**” [Emphasis in original.] Martin R. Noland, “Laymen’s Rights in Lutheran Congregations: Origins, Development, and Contemporary Challenges,” paper presented at Texas Confessional Lutheran Free Conference XX, Grace Lutheran Church, Brenhan Texas, September 11-12, 2009, 2. <http://7flock.com/mirror/tcl/conference/2009/martin-noland-laymens-rights/Martin%20Noland.%20Laymen%27s%20Rights.%20September%202009.pdf>

Also see Martin R. Noland, “The Arrogation of Powers by Missouri Synod Clergy,” *Brothers of John the Steadfast*, November 19, 2010, <https://steadfastlutherans.org/2010/11/the-arrogation-of-powers-by-missouri-synod-clergy-by-martin-r-noland/>.

teaching of the Gospel, the glory of Christ, the consolation of consciences, and the true worship of God (that is, the exercise of faith which struggles against unbelief and despair over the promise of the Gospel (Treatise 44)).<sup>87</sup> Compare that with TCN's reason for transforming the congregation via ALM: "Because this system has demonstrated effectiveness in helping congregations to be outward focused, healthy, and growing; it has been implemented as a prescription in many of our revitalization consultations."<sup>88</sup> The focus is *always* the same. What *we're doing* comes first.<sup>89</sup> The pure, evangelical doctrine is infrequently mentioned.

The second problem: The pastor largely abdicates those duties for which Christ has called him, and the parishioners are moved out of the nave and into the chancel, so to speak.<sup>90</sup> A purpose-driven system naturally gravitates to this type of leadership even if one is not imposed on it. As Kurt Marquart might say, "...If all this can be squared with AC V, then language has no meaning."<sup>91</sup> Johann Gerhard dispatches the everyone-a-minister mantra: "We do not make shepherds of the sheep, but demand that they be and remain sheep."<sup>92</sup> Since the pastor is now considered the accountable leader, he no longer has time for mundane things such as making sick calls or stopping by the Senior Saints get-together.<sup>93</sup> He devotes his time to empowering the members-turned ministers and generating enthusiasm for the outwardly-focused vision. Sick calls are made by the laity, and the Senior Saints wither away.<sup>94</sup> What pastor's conscience wouldn't be bothered in light of their ordination vows, which include this line: "Will you minister faithfully to the sick

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<sup>87</sup> George F. Wollenburg, "An Assessment of LCMS Polity and Practice on the Basis of the Treatise," *Concordia Theological Quarterly*, Vol. 49:2 & 3, April-July 1985, 92.

<sup>88</sup> "Implementing the Accountable Leader Governance Structure," Transforming Churches Network.

<sup>89</sup> "The affinity among members of these congregations will not be theology or doctrine but a powerful, personal experience with Jesus that has and is transforming their lives. Their faith will not be historical in the sense that it grows out of intellectual assent to ancient Christian truths. Rather, these congregations and the ones who lead them will evidence the same kind of personal devotion to Jesus that we find in the book of Acts. 'What would Jesus do?' is the question in their minds, not 'what does the church think?'" "Going Missional: Learning Community Six," Transforming Churches Network, 2014, 6.

<sup>90</sup> Rick Warren: "You must change the primary role of the pastor from minister to leader." Quoted from Rosebrough, "Resistance is Futile."

<sup>91</sup> Marquart was referring to the Church Growth emphasis on spiritual gifts. Marquart, " 'Church Growth' as Mission Paradigm," 99.

<sup>92</sup> Johann Gerhard, *Loci, De Ministerio Eccles.*, § 88. Quoted from Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. I (St. Louis: Concordia, 1950), 351.

<sup>93</sup> For the pastor, since his newly assigned duties come with new time-constraints, he can free up time "by being less involved with church duties or other life activities"... or "by intentionally spending less time with our current friends from church and more time developing relationships with those outside the church" (*Hinges*, 109). For the layman, "Which activities or commitments do you need to let go of to free up time for bridge building in the community?" (ref.: Tieman, *Skill Builders*, 40.)

<sup>94</sup> "16. If a pastor has to do all these things to help the congregation become outward focused, and meet all these new goals, who's going to do all the other ministry?"

"The answer to that really deals with time management, and the coach will help him with that. He'll need to delegate much of his current responsibility, in many ministry areas, to staff. If he doesn't have enough paid staff to do all those things, he'll have to recruit volunteer staff and train them to carry out these ministries. In many cases, some of the ministries will simply need to be dropped. Especially if they're not helping the congregation to reach its mission and vision, then they should no longer continue, or they should just be allowed to die from neglect." "Accountable Leader Model: Frequently Asked Questions," Transforming Churches Network, 6.

and dying, and will you demonstrate to the Church a constant and ready ministry centered in the Gospel?”<sup>95,96,97</sup> While both Luther and Gerhard list the duties of a pastor, neither suggests changing the culture to one of equipping or inspiring an outwardly-focused vision.<sup>98</sup>

Augsburg Confession V indicates that the means of grace are received from one who bears an office. That officeholder can only be your pastor, not a layman. “Chemnitz sums up what is confessed in the Augsburg Confession when he confesses the church as being where ‘there are those who preach and those who hear.’”<sup>99</sup> Walther is perspicuous: “...Conversion ordinarily takes place through called pastors, extraordinarily also through laypeople who are not called, this is by no means to say that this conversion through laypeople is an extraordinary conversion, but that this is not the usual God-appointed way.”<sup>100</sup>

### TCN comments

Through our worship, the Spirit empowers our outreach strategy.

This occurs through giving and receiving. We give ourselves to the Lord as living sacrifices, acceptable because of the once-and-for-all sacrifice of Jesus which removes our sin, and he receives our praises. He gives the power of His Holy Spirit to us, and we receive it in the Word: in Jesus, the Word made flesh, present in the bread and in the cup. We receive

<sup>95</sup> *Lutheran Service Book: Agenda*, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), 166.

<sup>96</sup> “When I (Terry) was a pastor in Fort Smith, Arkansas, I found that I could no longer make all the hospital visits and lead the church well.... Over a period of years, I instructed all the new members that they should not expect me to visit them in the hospital. We would tell them that they would be cared for, but that care would come from a small group or an elder.” Tieman, *Hinges*, 54.

<sup>97</sup> “ARTICLE 30: [INDIVIDUAL PASTORAL CARE] A pastor may not imagine that he does his ministry justice by public preaching alone. *Individual pastoral care* and the *home visits* that become necessary because of it are also an obligation which he may not shirk if he wishes to be regarded as a faithful steward.” Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther, *American–Lutheran Pastoral Theology*, ed. David W. Loy, trans. Christian C. Tiews (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2017), 319.

<sup>98</sup> “In his tractate *Concerning the Ministry* Luther says, ‘Mostly the functions of a priest are these: to teach, to preach, and proclaim the Word of God, to baptize, to consecrate or administer the Eucharist, to bind or loose sins, to pray for others, to sacrifice, and judge of all doctrine and spirits. Certainly these are splendid and royal duties. But the first and foremost of all, on which everything else depends, is the teaching of the word of God. For we teach with the word, we consecrate with the word, we bind and absolve sin by the word, we baptize with the word, we sacrifice with the word, we judge all things by the word’ (LW 40:21).” Quoted from John W. Kleinig, “The Role of the Holy Spirit in the Divine Service: A Lutheran Response to Charismatic Worship,” *Logia*, XXVI-3, Holy Trinity 2017, 26. Johann Gerhard concurs: “All told, therefore, there are seven duties of ministers of the church. We can relate all the rest to those seven: **first**, preaching the Word; **second**, dispensing the Sacraments; **third**, praying for the flock entrusted to them; **fourth**, controlling their own life and behavior; **fifth**, administering church discipline; **sixth**, preserving the rituals of the church; **seventh**, caring for and visiting the sick.” Johann Gerhard, “On the Duties of Ministers of the Church.” In *Theological Commonplaces*, Locus 23, Chapter 6, Section 2, trans. Richard Dinda (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod, 2005), 3-4.

<sup>99</sup> Norman Nagel, “Externum Verbum: Testing Augustana V on the Doctrine of the Holy Ministry,” *Logia*, VI:3, Trinity 1997, 28.

<sup>100</sup> C.F.W. Walther, *Essays for the Church: Volume I, 1857-1879*, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1972), 250.

God's Holy Spirit so that we may serve as living sacrifices—sacrificing time, comfort and personal priorities and extending ourselves to those who do not yet know Christ.<sup>101</sup>

That is a fantastic quote. It's the best quote in the entire book – yet the *receiving* is not nearly as important as the *sacrificing*. They're willing to skip the Divine Service for a service project “to demonstrate to their church members, as well as to the community, that they care more about others than themselves.”<sup>102</sup> “When the church is organized around the Great Commission of Jesus, every ministry and activity will be designed to involve members of the church in hands-on service in the community. All do the ministry, not just some who have official positions.”<sup>103</sup> Every member is swamped by the missional wave. They're doing discipleship groups, the Individual Spiritual Health Assessment questionnaire, Triads, Net-Fishing Events, sermon evaluations, prayer walking, Seasons of Discovery, bridge-building opportunities, the six-week Motivation for Mission study, interest groups, Core Competency questionnaires, and the list goes on. Your Christian freedom will be extinguished.<sup>104</sup> Luther had a lot to say about this:

We receive Christ not only as a gift by faith but also as an example through love toward our neighbor, to whom we are to give service and do good as Christ does to us. Faith brings and gives Christ to you as your own with all His possessions. Love gives you to your neighbor with all your possessions. These two things constitute a true and complete Christian life; then follow suffering and persecution for such faith and love; and out of these grows hope in patience.

40. You ask, perhaps, what are the good works you are to do for your neighbor? The answer is that they have no name. Just as the good works Christ does for you have no name, so the good works you do for your neighbor neither can nor should have any name.

...But you know that to serve God is nothing else than to serve your neighbor and do good to him in love—whether your neighbor is a child, wife, servant, enemy, friend—without making any difference, whoever needs your help in body or soul, and wherever you can help in temporal or spiritual matters. This is worship and good works.

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<sup>101</sup> Tieman, *Hinges*, 162-63.

<sup>102</sup> Tieman, *Hinges*, 121.

<sup>103</sup> Tieman, *Hinges*, 134.

<sup>104</sup> TCN slavery should not come as a surprise. The TCN document “Learning Community Eighteen: Building for Maturity” makes this bold statement: “In the first Reformation, the Word of God was returned to his people. In the second, the work of God is being returned to his people.” Rick Warren, the purpose-driven master, quips “I believe God is preparing the church for another reformation. The first reformation focused on what the church believed; this one will focus on what it does.” Are the two quotes a coincidence, or are they Screwtape’s handiwork? Warren quote ref.: “The Five Stages of Renewal In the Local Church,” [pastors.com](https://pastors.com/the-five-stages-of-renewal-in-the-local-church/), March 19, 2015, <https://pastors.com/the-five-stages-of-renewal-in-the-local-church/>.



...Therefore, you do not need to ask what outward works you should do; look at your neighbor, and you will find [enough] to do even if there were a thousand of you!

...For a Christian life consists not in outward conduct, nor does it change anyone as to his outward estate, but it changes him as to his inward estate; that is, it gives him another heart, another spirit, will, and mind which does the same work which any person without such a spirit and will does. For a Christian knows that it depends entirely on faith. Therefore, he walks, stands, eats, drinks, clothes himself, works, and lives as an ordinary man in his estate, so that one does not become aware of his Christianity....

...To cling to righteousness is to cling to faith and to remain in it. Where that happens, he grasps righteousness so that it becomes his own. Thus all that he does and lives is righteous. He has obtained it so that he dwells in it as in an inheritance. Therefore, whoever wants to do right and live in righteousness must believe and cling to it. He should do whatever he finds to do, without any distinction of works. Then he has that advantage that he does not need to seek or ask how those works become right, for they are already right. They are right just because they happen, and the righteousness—unsought, without any selecting or choosing—is already grasped, because he clings to it through faith.

...Therefore, take heed that the way of God goes on the right road. First, it does not tolerate a human doctrine and way, or a command. Second, it does not tolerate self-sought or self-chosen works. Third, it does not tolerate the examples of the saints.<sup>105</sup>

*Everything* you do in faith is a good work. *Whatever you're doing in Christ is a good work!* Your works are *unremarkable* before man, but nonetheless “acceptable to God through Christ” (FC SD VI 22). Your neighbor is whoever needs your help nearby – tying your child’s shoe, opening the door for a stranger. You don’t need to go looking or prayer walking to grasp this righteousness. Going about your ordinary day constitutes your worship.<sup>106</sup> This makes that TCN list of works look totally silly. Luther continues elsewhere:

On the contrary let everyone see to it that he is certain his worship and service of God has been instituted by God’s word, and not invented by his own pious notions or good intentions. Whoever engages in a form of

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<sup>105</sup> Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, American Edition, ed. Benjamin T. G. Mayes and James L. Langebartels. vol. 75, Church Postil I (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2013) 41-42, 155, 196, 253, 345, 353.

<sup>106</sup> “...The most important aspect of vocation is not our giving, but our receiving the love of God in Christ. The highest worship of God according to the Gospel, is the desire to receive Christ and His mercy and forgiveness. And that is done by us as Christians throughout our lives. ...We are so conditioned that, to receive what God gives is *second* and *less* significant to *do* something for God. ...Well that’s completely backward. God’s greatest joy is that we receive *His* mercy and grace in Christ.” Peter Bender, “The Christian Life of Vocation,” *Issues, Etc.*, March 3, 2014, <https://issuesetc.org/2014/03/03/1-the-christian-life-of-vocation-pr-peter-bender-3314/>.

worship to which God has not borne witness ought to know that he is serving not the true God but an idol that he has concocted for himself. That is to say, he is serving his own notions and false ideas, and thereby the devil himself; and the words of all the prophets are against him. For the God who would have us establish worship and service of him according to our own choice and inclination—without his commission and word—does not exist. There is only one God, he who through his word has abundantly established and commissioned all the various stations of life and the forms of worship and service in which it is his will to be served. We should abide by this and not turn aside from it either to the right or to the left, doing neither more nor less, making it neither worse nor better. Otherwise there will be no end of idolatry, and it will be impossible to distinguish between true worship and idolatry, since all have the true God in mind, and all use his true Name.<sup>107</sup>

TCN views those Christians who haven't been "transformed" as inferior:

...This church transformation mirrors the change individual Christians experience in their personal lives of faith. For individuals, there is a grace-initiated change from selfishness to service, from sin to devotion, from worship of self to worship of God. ...The transformation for churches occurs, then, as a plurality of people move from being primarily a spiritual club for church insiders to being both a caring assembly and an externally-focused ministry serving others in the name of Jesus Christ. ...Merely doing "church" better or getting more people in the pews is not the goal and is not acceptable. Nothing short of deep change or transformation is the true goal. When that happens the church will be different, behave differently, be renewed and improve the way it lives out its calling and ultimately bring more people to Jesus.<sup>108,109</sup>

The poor TCN parishioners have been duped. They have fallen into Screwtape's trap.

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<sup>107</sup> Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, American Edition, ed. E. Theodore Bachmann and Helmut T. Lehmann. vol. 35, Word and Sacrament (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1960) 273.

<sup>108</sup> Tieman, *Hinges*, 175.

<sup>109</sup> Klaus Detlev Schulz retorts: "Those who focus upon the ethical shape and formation of a church body's existence often comment disparagingly on church bodies in which mission activity is lacking: 'Any church that spends all its time huddling in worship without ever getting into the game of evangelism and social action is not worthy to be called a "church."' ' Such criticisms exchange ethics for the marks of the Church. They are motivated by pietism and hence target the inactivity of a congregation. By so doing, these approaches also impugn the Lutheran definition of the Church. Certainly, those in a congregation who respond to the Gospel with a missionary interest are most desirable and, theologically speaking, are an important part of a church body's existence; faith never exists without good works. Nor should congregations take an inward orientation and forget missionary obligations. On the other hand, we should not presume that members are disqualified from the Body of Christ because of their slowness or failure to seek the lost. Drawing that conclusion would compromise the essence of the Church that points to the Holy Spirit and God's Word as what builds all Christian life and the community." Klaus Detlev Schulz, *Mission from the Cross: The Lutheran Theology of Mission* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009) 213-14.

These human works assume the title of a perfect and spiritual life. They are preferred more than the works of God's commandments (works of one's own calling, the administration of the state, the management of a family, married life, and the bringing up of children).<sup>26</sup> Compared with those ceremonies, the latter are judged to be ungodly, so that they are exercised by many with doubting consciences (Ap. XV 25-26).

Jeremy Rhode concludes:

...The priesthood of all believers, or "everyone a minister," is the answer to renewal in the Church, and the answer to mobilizing the Church, and what this does then, is this bends the whole work of each and every individual minister to trying to go out and convert everyone.... So people... when everyone is a minister, they vacate this rich wonderful tapestry that is more than just trying to convert the world, and it gets emaciated into just that, and into a manipulation. The pastor himself then, is rather seen as an equipper of the *real* ministers and *his* office gets emptied out. No longer is it so important for him to preach the Gospel over and over, present tense, or administer the sacraments, but rather he becomes the equipper of the real ministers, he becomes their coach, their expert consultant, their vision caster, their CEO, he's the one who determines the marketing scheme and strategy, so his whole ministry that God has given him has been emptied out as well. So when everyone is a minister, both Christian and pastor lose, and honestly, so do our neighbors. ...The people you're actually trying to *evangelize*, get turned off, because you are simply proselytizing, and that's obvious. Whatever good you're doing is just to put a worm on the hook, so to speak, and then secondarily, when everyone is so interested in doing mission, the pastor ...stops preaching the Gospel and he starts just preaching mission strategy and how to reach out. People stop preaching the Gospel, or rather *proclaiming* the excellencies of Him who called them out of darkness and into His marvelous light, and they start talking more about community, or social involvement, or activism, or whatever it is. So the Gospel in fact suffers and therefore evangelism suffers, which is terribly ironic, because that's why the whole scheme is put in place in the first place. ...The Church is forbidden to be Church and forbidden to *do* mission and it *becomes* mission, and so it becomes *doing* rather than *receiving* – it becomes Law rather than Gospel.<sup>110</sup>

We've seen that TCN is the purveyor of false doctrine influenced by business principles and non-Lutheran theology. They twist Scripture. They depose laymen from their God-given vocations and implore self-chosen works. They undermine the Office of the Holy Ministry. Augsburg Confession Article V is threatened, and thus AC IV, *justification*, is

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<sup>110</sup> Jeremy Rhode, "Myths About Lutheranism: 'Lutherans Believe that Everyone is a Minister' ", *Issues, Etc.*, November 14, 2014, <https://issuesetc.org/2014/11/14/issues-etc-24-myths-about-lutheranism-lutherans-believe-that-everyone-is-a-minister-pr-jeremy-rhode-111414/>.

threatened.<sup>111</sup> Being heterodox, they have no place in the LCMS. Yet we would do well to heed Luther's gentle reminder:

...No one is to hear the Gospel for himself alone, but every one is to tell it to others who are not acquainted with it. For he who believes for himself has enough and should endeavor to bring others to such faith and knowledge, so that one may be a shepherd of the other, to wait upon and lead him into the pasture of the Gospel in this world, during the night time of this earthly life.<sup>112</sup>

The Transforming Churches Network is a theology of glory. Let's close with a theology of the cross, written by Steven A. Hein:

Luther was convinced that the Church on earth is living in the last days when Satan has been unleashed. The Devil is Lord in the world in these end times. For now, God's omnipotence operates under its opposite—it is perceived in weakness, in cross, suffering, and seeming defeat. Luther was convinced that reformation would not come to the believer or the Church until the better day. Said Luther, *that God is omnipotent is proved by faith alone*. For now, for our senses and experiential life—Satan rules all we can see.

Christ as Victor is an end-times manifestation in which we confidently hope. The revealed God to us seems not to be an omnipotent God. From the baby Jesus to Christ crucified and all points in between, the revealed God is humble, suffers, and dies to sin. The revealed God is tempted and vexed by the Devil (Matthew 4:1–11), as are we. The tribulations of Christ are our inheritance in Baptism where we become both participant and part of the battlefield in the cosmic struggle that is not yet finished. Things do not go better with God. Sometimes they can get downright wretched. The battle enjoins us now. Our baptismal inheritance has given us all that belongs to Christ: His battle, His cause, and His adversary. For all who live in the cross, this also means that time is short. The need is great for us to get our lessons, and get them right. The Lord is coming soon, and His question is not will He find reform, renewal, or record numbers, but will He find faith (Luke 18:8)?<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> "This is how Jesus is kicked out of his own church. The church establishes her own mission, her own vision, her own means of achieving her self-appointed purpose, and her own office by which to facilitate it being achieved. The justification of sinners is not the greatest good among those who have changed God's law from the ministry of death into a ministry of can do religious optimism. When justification is set aside, the ministry of the church is distorted. Instead of serving as a minister of Christ, speaking the words Christ gives him to speak, the minister becomes a hireling." Preus, "The Pastor: CEO or Shepherd?," 8.

<sup>112</sup> Martin Luther, *Luther's Church Postil, Gospels: Advent, Christmas and Epiphany Sermons, Vol. I*, trans. John Nicholas Lenker (Minneapolis: Lutherans in All Lands Co., 1905), 154.

<sup>113</sup> Steven A. Hein, *The Christian Life: Cross or Glory?* (Irvine, CA: New Reformation Publications, 2015), Kindle edition, location 2018-30.

The answer is “yes.” He will find faith. For He Himself promises that the gates of hell cannot prevail against His Church.

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. (AC V)

This article of faith *is* God for us, and it is the Church’s mission and evangelistic task. May God grant it for Christ’s sake.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of the letters 'LGG' in a cursive, stylized script.