

The Order of Creation and the Church: *Random Thoughts and an Impassioned Plea*

ACELC Free Conference
Christ For Us: The Order of Creation
Rev. Clint K. Poppe 8/30/17

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. Psalm 119:105 (ESV)

The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever. Isaiah 40:8

*“For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven
and do not return there but water the earth,
making it bring forth and sprout,
giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,
so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;
it shall not return to me empty,
but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,
and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.” Isaiah 55:10-11*

Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Romans 12:11

“Orange Pants”

Growing up in the 1960's and 70's, I was keenly aware of the societal changes that were happening around me and throughout the world. My desire to let my hair grow long had nothing specifically to do with The Beatles, but a desire to fit in with the other kids who had boldly cast aside their “flattops” and “butches” for the more modern trend. Shortly after my mom bought our first color television, September, 1970, I proudly announced that I wanted to have a pair of orange pants (just like Greg Brady), and my mother, God bless her, saved money from her next three paychecks and special ordered me a pair. The old man behind the counter at Baumann's Department Store in West Point, Nebraska, tried to talk her out of it. Ray Bailey encouraged her to “talk some sense into that kid,” but she was bound and determined to make the purchase. “If they don't fit,” he said, “you can't bring them back; better have that boy come in so I can measure him proper.” The next day I came in and despite his best efforts to “talk some sense” into me, the measurements were made and the order sent in. That's how things worked back then in a rural Nebraska town, before Internet purchasing and Big Box stores, and I anxiously awaited the phone call announcing the arrival of my Greg Brady pants.

About ten days passed and the phone call came and I walked the ten blocks or so to the store. I exchanged the check from the Farmer's and Merchant's National Bank with my mom's signature on it¹ for the package and hurried home to try them on. They didn't fit all that well, maybe Ray Bailey's final attempt to dissuade me, but I wasn't going to tell anyone. I decided to save them for the big high school basketball game on Friday night, where I was sure that not only the kids from my small parochial school would see me, but the kids from public school as well. I was to meet Brad Toelle at Bernard's Sundries for a vanilla 7 Up and then walk to the gym from there. Brad was my all time best friend in the whole world, and when his dad sold the farm and they moved into town, we became inseparable. He had worked his mom as well for a wardrobe upgrade, and we were both going to turn heads with our new threads. I was about halfway done with my first pop when Brad walked in. He was wearing blue jeans and a regular shirt, just like always. Before I could even ask, he explained that his dad had been hitting the Falstaff (“baseball beer”) all afternoon and there was no way he was letting his kid “embarrass the family by dressing like a fool in public.”

¹ My dad passed away in 1966 at age 44. My mom, who recently turned 96, still signs her checks, “Mrs. Henry Poppe.”

Now I was on my own and I knew it. I could feel the people staring at me as we walked down Main Street. Dozens of cars were involved in the local ritual of “making mains,” which was simply driving back and forth for hours on end on the six to eight block stretch of bricks that was our downtown. In addition to my orange pants I had on my white shoes and white belt. I was wearing a red shirt (we were going to a basketball game and the team’s color was red!) and a blue windbreaker. I looked more like a flag from some unknown country than Greg Brady, but I trudged onward. I’m not sure what kind of reaction I was anticipating, but the vast majority of folks were more interested in the game than in my personal apparel. I was attempting so hard to walk the fine line between wanting to fit in and standing out in a crowd that I had forgotten my own identity. When one girl that I was hoping to gain the attention of pointed out that red and orange wasn’t a particularly good color combination, I kept my jacket on throughout the game. As I walked home later that night, my time was concerned with personal soul searching, sort of a junior high identity crisis. I made up my mind that never again would I do something just because everyone else was doing it, and I’ve tried my best to abide by that rule for the 45 or so years since. By the way, that was the only time I ever wore those orange pants.

Peer pressure is very real, and it isn’t limited to junior high school. Peer pressure, by definition attacks us from the outside, but it doesn’t only attack us from the outside. The devil, the world around us, and our own sinful flesh, all tempt us to turn away from God and His Word and cling to ourselves and worthless idols. In the same way that I so desperately wanted to fit in by way of hair and clothes and popularity, the church is tempted to change its outward appearance to fit in with popular culture. The changeless Word of God becomes subjected to the ever changing winds and whims of the loudest voices in and around us. We so desperately want to fit in. We want to be popular. We want people to like us and say nice things about us. So what do we do? We let our ecclesiastical hair grow long and we buy a pair of orange pants.

“Pastor Judy”

Fast forward to the late 1980s. I began my Lay Ministry studies at Concordia, Mequon in 1986, was certified and called to full time service in my home congregation two years later.² I don’t remember precisely when the situation I’m about to describe began, but I was not the only layman at St. Paul Lutheran Church in West Point, Nebraska, with a strong desire to serve the Lord, the other was a person named Johnson, Judy Johnson.

Judy Klute was a lifelong active member of the LCMS, growing up near Hampton, Nebraska, where her father was the church organist at St Peter’s Lutheran Church for more than four decades. When her husband Dick Johnson was hired as Guidance Counselor at West Point Junior Senior High school in 1979, she and her kids immediately joined St. Paul congregation. Judy was very active in the congregation. She served on the Church Council as Secretary of the church, sang in the choir, and taught Sunday School; her husband was not a member and only rarely attended services with the family. After teaching English the previous nine years, she worked now as a reporter and writer for the local newspaper, The West Point News,³ and had plans for starting her own public relations firm. Judy was smart and articulate, the consummate professional woman; but she wasn’t happy, at least not with her church. She wanted to have a more active and visible role in the congregation. She wanted to assist in leading the worship services. She wanted to read the Scripture lessons in the Divine Service. In short, she wanted to be a pastor, and why not, she had all the First Article gifts. So she challenged the pastor, Rev. James K. Gullen⁴, to prove to her why she couldn’t be a pastor in the LCMS.

² I have given many of the details of how and why I became a Lay Minister and how and why I entered Concordia Seminary in previous ACELC presentations. http://acelc.net/page/2014_free_conference_resources
http://acelc.net/page/2015_free_conference_resources

³ This was the new merger of the previous two local newspapers, The West Point Republican and the Cuming County Democrat.

⁴ After a moral tumble, James K. Gullen is no longer on the clergy roster of the LCMS. His repeated efforts to be reinstated have all failed.

Pastor Gullen was a roly-polly dynamo! He was an expert Greek exegete and brilliant musician. Despite his small stature, he had a powerful and commanding pulpit presence. But no one would have called him a “confessional” pastor. He was enamored with Church Growth philosophy and the newest evangelism techniques. He was experimenting with contemporary worship and slowly introducing it to the congregation. He loved it when one of the families from the smaller rural congregations wanted to transfer to his church and he vehemently denied all accusations of “sheep-stealing.” He was the one who encouraged me into the Lay Ministry program and he was the one who convinced the congregation to call me, first as part time lay assistant and later as full time Lay Minister. Faced with this possible church-dividing crisis over the role of women in the church, he did what many LCMS pastors do, he called for compromise and study.

The compromise was easy, but would have long lasting repercussions. The congregation had started the practice of lay readers about ten years prior, men only. Since Pastor Gullen had publicly stated that reading the lessons was a distinctive duty of the pastor, the lay readers must be men and they must wear a robe. His compromise was that women could read the lessons, only on LWML Sunday, and he would set up a special podium separate and distinct from the lectern and the women who read would not wear a robe. This way they could still help, he explained, but it would not confuse or compromise the Office of the Holy Ministry. I argued that if it was acceptable for women to read the lessons, according to the Word of God, one Sunday a year, it should be acceptable for them to read all 52 Sundays a year. And likewise, if it was wrong, according to the Word of God, for women to read the lessons, it should be wrong all 52 Sundays a year. My argument fell on deaf ears. This compromise was necessary, I was told, to keep peace in the parish.⁵

The study could not have come at a better time. In addition to the concerns raised by Judy Johnson, a new controversy had erupted. One of the teachers in our parochial school, Sharon Peters, was under fire from some of the 3rd and 4th grade parents. She was very strict in the classroom and had recently told the boys that they couldn’t wear their baseball caps during recess. Having two sons in the classroom, I thought the whole matter quite silly. The teacher is the authority and if she says no caps, then no caps; period. Other parents thought differently and they wanted her dismissed. One Sunday when Pastor Gullen was on vacation and I was teaching the youth Bible study, rather than asking one of the elders to fill in, Pastor asked Mrs. Peters to lead the regular Sunday morning Bible class. He reasoned that this way people could see what a wonderful person and competent teacher she was and thus put out the fire. She resisted. She said that it was improper for a female to teach adults in church, especially in the class that the Pastor always teaches. Pastor Gullen reasoned that this was different, since she was a called worker. She fired back that the principal of the school should do it since he was a male. Her argument fell on deaf ears. Mrs. Peters taught the Bible study and all hell broke loose. One side said that the pastor was pushing for women’s ordination through the back door. The other side said that now the pastor had no leg to stand on with regard to women reading the lessons and leading the worship services. The plan had backfired and all sides accused the pastor of speaking out of both sides of his mouth.

The study would not be on Sunday morning, but Tuesday evenings. The study was for the elders, Church Council, school staff, “and anyone else” interested in the topic. Twenty five copies of the new⁶ CTCR document, “Women in the Church” were ordered, followed by 25 more when a huge crowd showed up for the first class. We painstakingly read every word and looked up every Bible passage. Judy was polite, but consistently pointed out every appeal to tradition rather than Scripture. I bristled at the constant use of the terms “concept” and “function.” Most simply wanted to skip to the end, to the list of synodically approved “dos” and “don’ts,” but Pastor Gullen was adamant that we do the entire study first before we examine the conclusions. No one listened.

About halfway through the study, we were finally introduced to the terms “order of creation” and “order of redemption.” That settled the matter for me, and I was sure would settle the matter for the congregation. Here we had Scripture, the clear Word of God speaking directly to the matter before us, instead of an appeal to concepts and functions and tradition. Most folks were indeed convinced; most but not all. Judy had met privately with the

⁵ Jeremiah 6:14, 8:11, and Ezekiel 13:10 come to mind.

⁶ September, 1985. Commonly referred to as the “Yellow Document.”

pastor and said that she could not stay in a church body that wouldn't ordain women. "Subordination" was a man made concept and tradition in her mind and a holdover of sinful patriarchy in the church. When her father passed away in 1987 she and her kids joined a small rural ELCA congregation where they had a husband-wife pastoral team. She is now an ordained ELCA pastor serving two small congregations near Hooper, Nebraska. She is heralded as a champion of feminism, overcoming odds, and women's rights, by many in my home town.⁷

"You better learn to deal with it!"

Fast forward again, this time to 1999. As a newly ordained and installed pastor I was quite honored when the Lincoln Circuit Counselor, Rev. Michael Chaffee⁸, called with a request. He wanted me to represent the LCMS in a theological debate that was being held on the University of Nebraska campus. A group had put together a series of "Brown Bag Debates" under the general title of "Christian vs. Christian." The specific debate that he wanted me to participate in was subtitled "Lutheran vs. Lutheran: Women's Ordination." Professors, students, and other interested parties would gather for a brown bag lunch, and during the lunch a pastor from the LCMS and a pastor from the ELCA would each have 20 minutes to present their position. Questions and answers would follow. When I asked the Circuit Counselor why he was asking me, since I was "the new kid on the block," he stated that he thought I was bright and articulate and "would do a much better job than me" at this sort of thing. He encouraged me to be well prepared, because the ELCA pastor that had agreed to participate was "really good at this sort of thing." I was flattered beyond measure. It was only later that I found out that he had asked and been refused by every other circuit pastor.

To be honest, I really didn't prepare all that much. This was a topic I had down pat. I made a couple of Bible passage handouts, grabbed two different bundles of "What About" pamphlets,⁹ and called my preparation good. It took me a bit longer than I anticipated to find parking on campus and locate the room where we were meeting. When I arrived, the meeting room was packed, standing room only; I did not recognize a single face, save one. I was greeted at the door by the moderator and shown to my seat. I placed my brown bag on the table and got ready for one of my favorite times of the day, lunch time. I had seen my debate opponent immediately, the only person in the room wearing a clergy shirt besides me. I had met her once before, briefly, and knew her to be the Chaplain at Tabitha, one of the nursing homes in Lincoln that I regularly visited. Before I could even open my lunch, I was ushered to the other pastor's table to go over the format and rules. They were exactly as I had been told. Since several people were on their lunch breaks, we needed to get started immediately. I asked if she would like to go first, more out of concern for my stomach than politeness. She said that she would prefer to go second and wanted to have "the last word." I smiled and headed to the front of the room.

I had a two page hand out, which was in reality one page, back to back. One side was titled "Order of Creation" and the other side "Order of Redemption." Aside from the titles, it contained only Bible passages. When I stood up to speak the room grew strangely silent, and remained that way for my entire presentation. I went through every Bible passage on both sides as quickly and concisely as I could, trying my best to explain the difference between, and the unity of, the orders of creation and redemption. When I finished, my allotted twenty minutes were up. There were at least a dozen hands raised and I didn't know what to do next. I looked at the moderator and he told me to keep going. I answered every question, ranging from women's ordination to female acolytes. It was clear to me that the vast majority had never heard anything at all about the "order of creation," and no one had ever explained to them from Scripture why some churches don't ordain women. Occasionally I would

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http://norfolkdailynews.com/news/rural-churches-finding-pastors-through-new-over-program/article_02172567-5d5c-599c-84db-8ffbaa961475.html

⁸ After a moral tumble, Pastor Chaffee was removed from the clergy roster of the LCMS. After his attempts to be reinstated failed, he joined the LCMC. He is currently serving Christ Lutheran Church in Blair, Nebraska.

⁹ http://lutheranliturgy.org/whatabout/wa_elca-lcms.pdf

http://steadfastlutherans.org/images/whatabout/wa_ordinationofwomen.pdf

glance at the other pastor. She sat with her head down, taking notes on my handout, her face growing more and more red as each moment passed.

Nearly forty minutes had passed, but not a single person had left the room. As I sat down to my lunch, finally, I was wondering how my debate opponent would respond to the clear Word of God. To my shock, and to the shock of everyone in the room, she would not come forward to present. Instead, she stood up where she had been sitting and shook my handout in her fist. She said sarcastically, “Well, I’m obviously not the ‘expert theologian’ that Pastor Poppe is...” Then she paused. She looked straight at me and pointed her finger at me, and with a beet red face said, “I only have one thing to say; God is calling women into ministry and you better learn to deal with it!” Then she sat down.

After a moment of stunned silence, the room was abuzz. A small group gathered around the ELCA pastor as she was clearly upset and distraught. While a few left, I was surrounded by people asking questions and wanting more answers from the Bible. Baptism, Communion, fellowship issues, even cremation. For well over an hour I visited with people who actually wanted to know what God’s Word said on a particular subject. I remember one gentleman who belonged to a local Methodist church. He related how his pastor had championed women’s ordination and was now presiding at same sex marriages. He wondered if there might be a connection. Little did he know, he was asking the right question and light years ahead of his time. When the room was nearly empty I grabbed my things and walked to the door. A man was waiting for me outside. He introduced himself as a life-long member of the LCMS and currently one of the local congregations. He looked me square in the eye, and fighting back tears said, “Thank you. I have never been more proud to be a Lutheran than today. Thank you.” I said, “Thanks be to God!” We shook hands and went our separate ways. I finally got to eat my lunch on the drive back to the church.

“Take a good look in the mirror...”

Less than two years later, the Lincoln Circuit pastors were gathered together at Peace Lutheran Church in Waverly for our monthly Winkel. This was before the Circuit was split in two (Lincoln North and Lincoln South) and unlike today, the Winkels were very well attended. All of the retired pastors and most of the active pastors attended every month. I looked forward to these events and loved to hear the “war stories” from the veteran pastors. The theology wasn’t great, but the good outweighed the bad. This day would be a day that I would never forget. We had morning only Winkels, unlike the West Point Circuit that I had come from, which were all day events. We would start with coffee and goodies (I was never late!), a short worship service, one long or two short topics, casuistry, and then lunch (I never left early!). This day proceeded like any other, until we went around the room for casuistry,¹⁰ which generally amounted to little more than congregational or district announcements. The last person to speak was one of the newer pastors in the district, recently installed at St. Paul Lutheran Church in Malcolm. He had been a pastor for several years, including time of advanced study in Germany, and had been on and off the clergy roster because of health issues. He said, “Some of you know that my wife is an ordained Lutheran pastor from Germany. I’ve really been struggling with the LCMS doctrine which forbids women’s ordination. What really bothers me is that Romans 16 lists Junia¹¹ as a pastor. I think we’re wrong.”

What immediately followed was about 60 seconds of silence, that seemed like an hour. Finally, one of the pastors broke the silence, and I couldn’t believe my ears. Three pastors spoke, each one stating that they too thought the LCMS was wrong on the topic of women’s ordination and at the very least it was an “open question.” I could no longer keep quiet. First, I stated that nothing in Romans 16 speaks to the topic of women’s ordination and nowhere in the Bible is a female called a pastor. Then I briefly explained the order of creation and the order of redemption. I stated that Scripture was clear on the subject and suggested that we devote the next several

¹⁰ “a resolving of specific cases of conscience, duty, or conduct through interpretation of ethical principles or religious doctrine” <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/casuistry>

¹¹ Romans 16:7. “Greet Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners. They are well known to the apostles, and they were in Christ before me.” ESV

Winkels to the topic until we were all convinced by Scripture and united in doctrine and practice. I thought that would be the last word on the subject for the day, but I was wrong. One of the retired pastors, the Rev. Dr. Walter Theophilus Janzow,¹² stood up and said “Brother Poppe.” I honestly thought he was going to thank me or commend me. He continued, “I think you need to go home, take a good look in the mirror, and repent.” “Repent?” I asked, “Repent of what? Ted, do you mean to tell me that you think the Bible teaches women’s ordination?” He responded, “Oh no Clint, you misunderstand me. I agree with everything you said. It’s not what you said, but the way you said it. You sounded almost happy that women can’t be pastors. You need to go home, take a good, hard look in the mirror, and repent of your “male chauvinism.” I said, “You’ve got to be kidding me. Please do not misinterpret my zeal or my volume as anything other than a zeal for God’s Word in its truth and purity.” I looked at the Circuit Counselor, who had earlier admitted his struggle with the topic and he said, “I’m sorry Clint, I have to agree with Ted on this one.”

The ladies at Peace in Waverly had been very patient with us, but that patience was over. Lunch was ready and we would eat, now. As I stood in line, several pastors patted me on the back and quietly thanked me for my clear confession. One said, “Clint, I’m behind you all the way.” I said, “Thanks” but I silently wondered how far behind me; how many miles behind me. Not one of my “brother” pastors had my back. Not one of my “brother” pastors was willing to make the good confession at the precise time it was needed. I was sick to my stomach. That was one of the few times in my life when I didn’t enjoy my lunch.

The next morning I took a good look in the mirror, just like Ted asked me to do. But I didn’t repent. I thanked God for the courage to speak the truth at the Winkel and asked for more courage to do it again. I called Ted on the phone and asked if we could get together and talk. He seemed genuinely surprised by my call. When he asked me what I wanted to talk about I thought I was entering the Twilight Zone. I told him that I was troubled by our conversation the day before and wanted to get together, face to face, and work things out. He laughed at my words. He said that there was nothing to talk about. He said that he had already said everything that needed to be said and refused to meet with me. Then he said, “The fact that you are still troubled by this proves that I was right and you are wrong.” and then he hung up on me.¹³

“Your conscience is just plain wrong”

Please permit me one last vignette, which I believe will be a good segue into the second part of my presentation. In June of 2003 I was elected 1st Vice President of the Nebraska District. The six years that I served in that capacity held little joy and mostly frustration. To make the good confession while at the same time being shackled and muzzled as a synodical bureaucrat became increasingly difficult. Whenever I questioned a synodical statement or policy or heaven forbid, Resolution, I was “encouraged” to resign my position or received a phone call from the district attorney on retainer. I realized that making meaningful change in synod based on the Word of God was nearly impossible through the political process and an ever growing LCMS bureaucracy. One of the final events, the last straw so to say, in my decision to not let my name stand for reelection in 2009, was a bitter attack by some in the District Presidium against my conscience.

In October of 2007, the Fall District Pastors’ Conference was designated as an “All Professional Church Worker Conference.” What this meant was that instead of the pastors and teachers meeting separately as they normally did each fall, once every three years or so they meet together. What made this conference different was that it was going to be held in Lincoln, a part of my geographical region as Vice President. In the past, the regional vp always had a part in planning the conference. The Nebraska District does not have an elected Conference Plan-

¹² <https://blogs.lcms.org/2010/dr-walter-ted-janzow-former-dp-educator-dies>

¹³ This was just the beginning of my problems with Ted. He led the charge to have me removed from the BOD over the “Stu Tietz affair.” http://acelc.net/page/2016_free_conference_resources When my name was listed in his congregation’s bulletin as one to call for pastoral care during a time of vacancy, he publicly refused “any and all pastoral care by Poppe.” Following a stroke, he became fixated on me and sent me regular hate mail, often times signed in crayon. He once sent a Christmas card to the Nebraska District office and wrote on the bottom “Merry Christmas to everyone- except Poppe.”

ning Committee as some other LCMS districts do, and it is completely controlled by the District President. These conferences were rarely bright lights of theological orthodoxy, but at least I would get a little input. The Lincoln Conference location was announced more than a year in advance and when I asked about planning and speakers, I was told that nothing had yet been done, but things would start up soon. I was assured that I would be on the planning committee. Over the next several months my questions were answered the exact same way. I finally received an answer when the conference schedule was announced, complete with speakers and topics. I had been lied to and blackballed. It wasn't the first time (nor the last) and I would get over it; no big deal.

I think a few folks were feeling bad in how I had been treated, and at the last minute I was asked to do a short breakout session on "Classical Education." I agreed. The Nebraska District tradition is to begin each conference with a worship service that includes the Lord's Supper. It is a further tradition that the four regional vice presidents serve as Communion assistants. When I received my copy of the bulletin a few days before the conference I was surprised to see that laymen had been asked to do the Scripture readings in the service, a service that would be attended by more than 100 ordained pastors. The decision baffled me. When I questioned the decision, it was clear to me that I was stepping on the toes of the District President with my 13EEEs. I was told that this would "extol the priesthood of all believers." I was told that this would be a "gesture of good will" from the District to the non ordained professional church workers. I was told that the decision was final and that "I was free to not participate if doing so would violate my conscience." I took the District President's suggestion and did not attend the worship service. I didn't make a big deal out of the issue, certainly no public scene. When a few pastors asked me where I was, since my name was in the bulletin, I told them. And that was that, or so I thought. Apparently I wasn't as "free to not participate" as I was told.

For the next twelve months the attacks kept coming, growing in intensity. They finally boiled over at the October, 2008, Presidium meeting. Rather than simply ask for my resignation, one vp demanded it. I had sinned against every professional church worker in the district, I was told, and my refusal to participate in the worship service was a slap in the face to him personally and the entire district. I calmly told him that the District President and I had discussed it and he told me that I was free to not participate if doing so would violate my conscience. I was told, "Here's a thought for you; your conscience is just plain wrong!"

I knew that this was just the beginning, so I prepared for the onslaught that I was sure would follow. I got wind that the plan was to confront me again at the next Presidium meeting and then call for my formal resignation at the District BOD meeting the next day. When I saw the topic on the official agenda, I was pretty sure this was indeed the plan. Up until now, little had been written down, except for the hate mail I had received. Just about everything that had been said to me on the topic was in conversation with no physical record of what had actually been said. I decided to change that. I prepared the following and presented it at the next meeting:

December 4, 2008

Dear President Sommerfeld and members of the Presidium,

Grace and peace from God our Father through Jesus Christ our Advent King and Savior. Amen

Three months ago, at our last Nebraska District Presidium meeting, I was asked to clarify my position on lay readers in the Divine Service. Seeing this topic on our agenda for this evening, I decided to put my thoughts in writing so there would be no confusion on my position. I have also attached a paper from Rev. Rolf Preus that I believe is most helpful.

As you may know, I was asked to participate in the worship service (Communion assistant) offered during last year's All Professional Church Worker Conference in Lincoln. Having served as regional vice president of the district for nearly five years, this was the first opportunity for a district function of this type to be held in my region. I was very disappointed to learn that I was not chosen to be on either the conference planning committee or on the worship planning committee. I was also disappointed to learn that the special worship service for the event would not be held in one of the several LCMS congregations in Lincoln large enough to house the worship service, but instead in the motel. While disappointed by these actions, I put my personal feelings

aside. There was one action at this conference, the decision to have lay readers for the Divine Service, that caused me to ask questions and raise concerns.

The practice varies greatly in the congregations of the Nebraska District regarding the use of lay readers. Since we have two CTCR documents with varying opinions, they are less than helpful. There are many pastors in the LCMS, including myself, that firmly believe that the public reading of Scripture in the Divine Service has been given by God to the Pastor (the divinely instituted office of the holy ministry), either to read himself or to closely monitor and supervise. 1 Timothy 4:13 seems to make this clear, "Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching." (ESV) The Greek word translated "public reading" (anagnosei), according to both Kittel (I:343-4) and Colin Brown (I:245-6), is the public reading of Scripture in the worship service having a corrective and instructive role in a community threatened by false teachers. I was taught this in my homiletics classes at the seminary in St. Louis by Dr. Glen Nielsen (hardly considered an ultra conservative or "confessional" by anyone in our synod) that the public reading of Scripture in the Divine Service is proclamation and interpretation. This is the history of the New Testament Church for 1900 years. Only in the last century has the topic of "lay readers" become an issue. The Lutheran church has no tradition of lay readers, unlike the sub-offices in the Roman Catholic and Orthodox traditions, and the practice in the LCMS is very new. I believe it fair to say that it is a modern innovation. In many LCMS congregations the practice began only after the practice was allowed in neighboring Roman Catholic congregations following the liturgical changes of Vatican II. Roman Catholic theology denies our understanding of Gottesdienst or "Divine Service," seeing the liturgy as a "work of the people," a work which gains merit and earns grace.

When I arrived at Good Shepherd eleven and a half years ago I inherited lay readers, both male and female, along with several other practices I was either unfamiliar or uncomfortable with (open Communion, contemporary worship, no hymnal in worship or Catechism in confirmation class). I followed a long time vacancy pastor who refused to wear a stole or pronounce the absolution, because he "wanted to elevate the priesthood of all believers." After many years of slow and patient teaching, we have a congregation that is very united in both doctrine and practice (please note that I said "very" and not "perfectly!"). Our current practice regarding lay readers is quite simple. God has given this gift to the pastoral office. We have lay readers, men only, who are either vicars or students accepted by one of our seminaries. This is closely monitored and supervised by one of our pastors. I know first hand the struggles and joys of leading a congregation, through patient preaching and teaching, from a current practice to one that is more in line with God's Word and the Lutheran Confessions. As leaders in the Nebraska District, we need to be constantly aware of issues in our congregations, issues that have the potential to break the spirit of unity and bond of peace (Ephesians 4) and cause confusion or division. To have lay readers at a District sponsored worship service, a service in which scores of ordained pastors are in attendance, seemed to me to be nothing more than an innovation to push an agenda. Personally, I could not in good conscience be party to such an effort and graciously refused the invitation to participate. Individual pastors and congregations can and must deal with this issue and others like it as they arise. Such is the way of a parish pastor and congregation working together in the Kingdom of God. For the District to introduce a practice that may create or exacerbate a conflict, is something that we must strive to avoid at all costs.

I conclude with a portion of a paper I presented at the Fall Pastors' Conference of the Montana District in October of 2007 that seems to apply. I am happy to send you the entire paper if you wish.

"Everyone A Minister"

In 1973, Oscar E. Feucht wrote a book hoping to help people rediscover the role of the laity in the Missouri Synod.¹⁴ St. Louis seminary Professor Roland Hoppmann, now in the kingdom of glory, once told me that the book was considered theologically weak and lightly regarded at the time. The way people quote its title and contents today, you might think it has been added to the canon of Scripture. In his quest to help people unpack the biblical teaching of “the priesthood of all believers,”¹⁵ Feucht committed the cardinal sin of Lutheran theology; he failed to remember the paradox. In his book, not one word is spoken regarding the divinely instituted office of the holy ministry. He did not intend to deny this clear Scriptural teaching, but many since then have taken his work to be the final, and only word on the subject.

The phrase “everyone a minister,” in trying to elevate the role of the laity in the church, really does just the opposite. It minimizes the theology of vocation, blurs the distinction and paradox of royal priesthood and office of the ministry, and robs people of true joy and freedom in the Gospel. The 2001 Report of the Church Growth Study Committee offers a strong warning and urges great caution in this area. In reality, the idea behind “everyone a minister” is the most blatant form of clericalism in the church.¹⁶ It implies that your work is only pleasing to God if it resembles the work of a pastor, making your God-given vocations meaningless. This too is an error of Pietism.¹⁷ A new twist on this same error, being seen more and more in our synod today, is the teaching that everyone is a missionary.¹⁸ This type of teaching, while well intended, is an innovation in the church. Luther strongly cautions against the use of the royal priesthood to blur the distinction between office and priesthood, and the so called logic that because all are priests, all are ministers:

If Münzer and Carlstadt and their comrades had not been allowed to sneak and creep into other men’s houses and parishes, whither they had neither call nor command to go, this whole great calamity would not have happened. To be sure, the apostles did, at first, go into other men’s houses and preach there. But they had a command and were ordained and called and sent to preach the Gospel in all places; as Christ said (Mark 16:15): “Go into all the world and preach to all creatures.” Since then, however, no one has had this general apostolic command; but every bishop or pastor has had his definite diocese or parish. For this reason St. Peter (1 Peter 5:3) calls them κληvrou”, that is, “parts,” indicating that to each of them a part of the people has been committed, as Paul writes to Titus also (Titus 1:5). No one else, no stranger shall undertake to instruct his parishioners, either publicly or privately, without his knowledge and consent. On peril of body and soul no one should listen to such a man but should report him to his pastor or his ruler.

This rule should be so rigidly enforced that no preacher, however pious or upright, shall take it upon himself either to preach to the people of a papistic or heretical pastor, or to teach them privately, without the knowledge and consent of that pastor. For he has no command to do this, and what is not commanded should be left undone. If we want to perform the duties that are commanded, we have enough to do. It does not help their case to say that all Christians are priests. It is true that all Christians are priests, but not all are pastors. For to be a pastor one must be not only a Christian and a priest but must have an office and a field of work committed

¹⁴ Oscar E. Feucht, *Everyone a Minister* (St. Louis:CPH, 1974). See also *Issues In Christian Education*, Concordia University, Seward, Nebraska, Volume 36, Number 1 (Spring 2002), titled “The Ministry of Every Christian: Recovering a Neglected Doctrine.”

¹⁵ In light of current misunderstandings, perhaps the Biblical term “Royal Priesthood” should be used (1 Peter 2:9, Exodus 19:6, Isaiah 61:6, Revelation 1:6 and 5:10).

¹⁶ John T. Pless, *Reflections on the Life of the Royal Priesthood: Vocation and Evangelism*, does an excellent job on this topic.

¹⁷ Brent Kuhlman. “Oscar Feucht’s Everyone a Minister: Pietismus Ridivivus” *Logia* (Reformation 1999) 31-36.

¹⁸ http://www.missioncentral.us/missioncentral/mission_central_staff

*to him. This call and command make pastors and preachers. A burgher or layman may be a learned man; but this does not make him a lecturer and entitle him to teach publicly in the schools or to assume the teaching office, unless he is called to it.*¹⁹

Now is the time for a renewed study of Walther's Kirche und Amt,²⁰ and a rededication to the Scriptural gifts and paradox of royal priesthood and holy office.

*Respectfully submitted,
Rev. Clint K. Poppe*

They tried to stop me from reading the Preus paper²¹ but I was on a roll and wouldn't back down. One of the vps offered to work on a rebuttal but it never happened. The whole matter flickered out. This October there is another "All Professional Church Worker Conference" scheduled for Lincoln. We have a new District President and Presidium. It will be interesting to see who reads the lessons.

My Impassioned Plea

For many years an unofficial group of Confessional Lutheran pastors met regularly calling themselves "Nebraska Lutheran for Confessional Study (NLCS), the last several years meeting here at Good Shepherd. Many accused us of being a political action group, and when someone would show up to "spy" on us, they were always disappointed that we studied theology, not politics. President Sommerfeld had agreed to speak in January, 2009, and he presented a paper titled, "The Role of Laity in the Divine Service." Before he began, he apologized that he was not a theologian and that his paper would not be up to the academic standards that we were accustomed to.²² He was right to do so. Rather than starting with Scripture and then showing how practice flows from the Word of God, he had the impossible task of starting with a practice and then searching for something, anything, to justify it. His main appeal was to the rubrics in the hymnal, CTCR documents, and a lightly regarded article from Concordia Journal.²³

Two things stick out in my mind from President Sommerfeld's presentation, power and offense. It was clear that in his mind, the issue was a power issue. He believed, and stated, that pastors needed to stop using the Divine Service as a power play. He saw the insistence of the pastor leading the worship service, not as "the called and ordained servant of the Word in the stead and by the command of Christ delivering the gifts of God to the people of God through the divinely instituted office of the holy ministry," but as the pastor lording over the flock the fact that he is ordained and they are not. A classic pastoral power play. He also spent considerable time on the topic of giving and taking offense. We should be more loving and caring and accepting instead of taking offense at the slightest little issue. Besides that, we were giving offense to many by our insistence on pure doctrine and right practice. I don't think it ever crossed his mind that someone could be so convinced of something by the power of the Word of God, that they would be willing "to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints."²⁴

¹⁹ LW 13:64-65.

²⁰ C.F.W. Walther, *Church and Ministry*, translated by J.T. Mueller (St. Louis: CPH, 1875, 1987). I was once chastised, while teaching a class at one of our Concordias, for quoting from this book too much and using Walther's terminology of "auxiliary" offices in the church.

²¹ <http://www.christforus.org/Papers/Content/LayReaders.htm> I have attached a copy of this paper as an Appendix to this presentation.

²² In 2016, Rev, Russ Sommerfeld joined the theology faculty at Concordia University, Seward, Nebraska.

²³ Daniel Fienen, "Lay Readers in Public Worship," *Concordia Journal* 21:4 (October, 1995) 400-414. One day at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, this article came up in class. Professor Wayne E. Schmidt told our class that in his opinion, it was by far the poorest theological article ever printed in Concordia Journal.

²⁴ Jude 3.

At first I was angry and in time that anger turned into disappointment and despair. If the leaders in our church are either not willing or not capable of making a clear argument from God's Word on any given topic, we are in deep trouble. Then I came upon these quotes;

From Herman Sasse:

*What is to be done? What are we to do, dear brethren, who have been entrusted with the ministerial office of the Lutheran Church in times so decisive for the Church and the world? Nothing would be more wrong than if we were to wait for others to act. The Word Conference will take its course in accordance with the law by which it was guided at the outset. We cannot expect it to know what the church of the Formula of Concord is and to act accordingly... From it we can expect an inner renewal of Lutheranism as little as from any other ecclesiastical organization, including that of our own church. Nor can we expect anything at all, from our bishops, synods, church presidents, and faculties.*²⁵

Again Sasse:

*What should we do, in this situation of our church? And that means all of us, dear brothers, every pastor, every teacher of theology, who knows about the responsibility which he bears. We must first free ourselves of the superstition that what is to be done must and will be done by others, as those who are called to do something. The bishops and the great church presidents will do nothing. None of them before Hanover (when the meeting is commenced) will stand up and state a simple and clear profession of the doctrine of the Lord's Supper of the Lutheran Confessions, or profess its ecclesiastical consequences. Not one. At the meetings of the old World Convention, such a thing could still happen. Today there is no longer a Hein or a Reu. Even the great theologians will, when it comes to this question, grow very quiet. The times in which the professors were confessors are gone... So we must all speak, and in advance!*²⁶

My friends, it is too late to speak "in advance" for most of our people on the topic that is before us at this conference, The Order of Creation, but it is not too late to speak. Many in our church body and in the world have grown quite accustomed to their theological long hair and orange pants and desperately desire to fit in, no matter the cost. Many in our church body are so enamored with the LCMS version of canon law, bylaws and resolutions and CTCR documents, that they have forgotten how Lutherans who truly believe in an inspired, inerrant, infallible, and perspicuous Word of God "do" theology. Don't buy the lie that the Holy Scriptures aren't clear. Don't buy the lie that everything is an adiaphora or an open question. We live in a time where people are trying to put a positive spin on the condemning Word of God that says "everyone did what was right in their own eyes."²⁷ To speak the Word of God plainly and clearly on difficult topics will win you no friends with the world, and you will likely draw the fire from many both inside and outside of the church. You will be personally attacked. You might receive threats and hate mail. Your family will likely be shunned. Your call or church membership will be put in jeopardy. The personal stakes are high, but the eternal stakes of not standing on and speaking out the Word of God are much higher.

Each day that error in doctrine and practice are allowed, condoned, and promoted, their tentacles, like a cancer, grow deeper and more tangled. The time to speak is now, not tomorrow or after the next election. My impassioned plea is that we dedicate ourselves to clearly teaching the Order of Creation and the Order of Redemption in our congregations. The Zerbst book that you were given when you registered for this conference would be a great resource for you to get into the specific Bible passages. When questions arise that want to derail your efforts, stick to the plain words of Scripture. Dr. Laurence White has done a masterful job of showing how we in the LCMS have allowed changes in our doctrine and practice to get started and become entrenched by abandon-

²⁵ Herman Sasse, *Letters to Lutheran Pastors, Volume I*. CPH 2013, 15.

²⁶ *Ibid*, 427.

²⁷ Judges 17:6, 21:25. Judges is a book about apathy and apostasy.

ing the Word of God, it is a must read.²⁸ There are several essays in the collection of essays by CPH on the topic²⁹ that clearly show how the introduction and acceptance of women's ordination was driven not by the Word of God, but by societal change. The resources to help facilitate our teaching are easy to find and readily available; do we have the courage to use them?

Some of you know that I was not planning to speak at this conference because of some very serious family issues that I have been dealing with for many months. I was hoping to have Rev. Mark Preus speak in this slot. I asked him, begged him, and did my best to coerce him, but as a faithful pastor he could not in good conscience be absent from his duties as Campus Pastor at the University of Wyoming during this week, the first week of school. I commend him for his faithfulness. I wanted him to specifically address the one issue among us that should be the easiest to address and correct, the issue of women reading the lessons in LCMS worship services. Why should this be the easiest topic to address? Because we have a crystal clear passage of Scripture that teaches us that it is the Pastor's job to read the lessons. 1 Timothy 4:13 says, "Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching." CTCR documents may say that the Scriptures are not clear on where to "draw the lines," but God has made it very clear here. Do we have the courage to listen, and if need be to repent and make necessary changes in our heart and in our practice?³⁰ I cannot say it any better than Rev. Preus, and with his permission share his words on the subject. I echo his plea!³¹

God forbids women to speak the lessons in church. 1 Timothy 2:11-15 and 1 Corinthians 14:34-38. Those who say that God doesn't forbid women to speak the lessons in church (or read the readings, as people today say) appeal to current theologians in our synod to say that this is an open question or adiaphoron. I don't need to appeal to all the true Christian men and women until the 20th Century who support my position to refute them. I appeal to the Scriptures alone, which the LC-MS in the 2nd Article of her constitution makes the sole rule and norm and source of our doctrine.

They argue against the clear Scriptures who say that it is not clear whether God forbids women to speak the lessons in Church. Here are a few of their arguments. 1. That God's prohibition for women to teach and his command that they remain silent and learn in quietness and all submission refers only to preaching, or only to the pastoral office itself. To this they add that the Church has had laymen speak the lessons to prove that it is not essential to the pastoral office. 2. That women singing in Church or girls reciting Scripture at a Christmas pageant means they are also allowed to speak the lessons in Church. To this some add the boys in the early Lutheran schools learning to speak the lessons at Matins and Vespers. 3. That letting women speak the lessons in Church helps them get involved and gives them an opportunity to serve their Lord. 4. The Synod has declared, pursuant to a CTCR document, that the Scripture is not clear and that this issue ought to be decided by the congregations. 5. Our condemning women lectors is divisive and asserting personal opinions as the Word of God.

1. That God's prohibition for women to teach and his command that they remain silent and learn in quietness and all submission refers only to preaching, or only to the pastoral office itself. To

²⁸ <https://issuu.com/forgenerations/docs/shockandawefull-1>

²⁹ "Women Pastors? The Ordination of Women in Biblical Lutheran Perspective," Edited by Matthew C. Harrison and John Pless, CPH (St. Louis), 2008.

³⁰ See Louis A. Smith, "How My Mind Has Changed," in "Women Pastors? The Ordination of Women in Biblical Lutheran Perspective," Edited by Matthew C. Harrison and John Pless, CPH (St. Louis), 2008, 389-395.

³¹ I would especially encourage you to read the 200+ comments...

<http://steadfastlutherans.org/2017/04/a-plea-to-lc-ms-pastors/comment-page-1/#comments>

this they add that the Church has had laymen speak the lessons to prove that it is not essential to the pastoral office.

This denies the authority and clarity of the Word of God. The lessons that are spoken to the whole congregation are what is taught. It is not just a part of the teaching. It is the foundation of all the teaching the pastor does.

God's Word is clear that women are to be silent in the churches. No such prohibition is given to men. While most confessional Lutherans consider laymen speaking the lessons to be unwise and confusing these days, having laymen speak the lessons is not sinful and not forbidden, and in fact reinforces the teaching of Scripture that men are the head of their homes and as fathers are specifically told to teach their children. The early Lutherans were free to train young men to lead devotions in their homes, as seminaries are free to have students read the lessons before they are ordained. (Ephesians 6:4)

2. That women singing in Church or girls reciting Scripture at a Christmas pageant means they are also allowed to speak the lessons in Church.

This argument does violence to the Scriptures. Paul would not tell Mary not to sing her Magnificat, or forbid Hannah and Deborah their songs of praise, or exhort Miriam to stop singing with Moses. Paul would not tell parents to stop teaching their children Scripture, as Moses commanded parents to do in Deuteronomy 6:6-9. Paul's words that women are to be silent and not teach, but learn in quietness and all submission, do not do away with Scripture.

God's Word is clear and it is only ignorance of the Scriptures that would confuse this issue.

3. That letting women speak the lessons in Church helps them get involved and gives them an opportunity to serve their Lord.

This illustrates the exact problem very well. Women should be involved in their homes teaching God's Word, with the husband leading the devotions, as we see in Ephesians 6:4. Having the women read the lessons publicly contradicts this very order of creation that God has established.

We should not listen to those who tell us that this is a good way to make a woman feel welcome or to get her involved. It is not a good way because God tells women to learn quietly and in all submission. A woman speaking the lessons is not learning quietly and in all submission. We have to repeat this Word of God to them. We have to speak God's Word in 1 Tim. 2 and 1 Cor. 14 out loud and not be ashamed of it. We need to say not ashamedly, but clearly, with gravity, and with fear of God. We dare not explain God's Word away. You cannot hurt Christ's Lamb by speaking Jesus' Word. Christ's sheep hear His voice and follow him. (John 10:27-28)

Look, brothers, at the flock over which the Holy Spirit has made us overseers. We all see it. The broken families. Children denying the faith in droves. The husbands apathetic to the Word of God. The pious wives struggling to teach their children with lazy husbands who gladly obey the feminist goddess who tells them not to rule over their wives with the love and mercy with which Christ rules over us. (Eph. 5:25-28; 1 Pet. 3:7) They need men to speak the lessons at home!

The carnage of lost souls alone must wake us from our stupor. Now is not the time to politick. Now is not the time to wait for the right people to gain leadership, and gradually lead people to accept God's Word through power plays. Now is the time to visit families and speak boldly what God says and trust that His Word will not return to him empty. Now is not the time to trust in princes but in the Word of God. (Isaiah 55:10-11) Remember, "In season and out of season!" (2 Tim. 4:2)

4. The Synod has declared, pursuant to a CTCR document, that the Scripture is not clear and that this issue ought to be decided by the congregations.

The Word of God to which the Synod and all her pastors pledge undying loyalty cannot be changed. The 2nd article of the LC-MS constitution says, “The Synod and every member of the Synod, accepts without reservation: 1. The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the written Word of God and the only rule and norm of faith and of practice.

This Word of God is clear. Women are not to teach, they are to be silent in the Churches and to learn in quietness and with all submission. That is the Word of God that cannot be changed. This is why this 2nd article of the Synod’s constitution cannot be changed. God’s Word cannot be changed.

When people say that the Word of God is not clear here they are ignoring the pure Word of God and setting up man-made opinion in place of the Word of God. It does no good to appeal to synodical theologians who disagree with the Word of God. They are not allowed to teach as doctrines the commandments of men. God forbids it. (Matthew 15:9)

5. Our condemning women lectors is divisive and asserting personal opinions as the Word of God.

Pastors, you are not allowed to allow women to speak the lessons in Church. It is not loving to allow them to speak the lessons. It can be cowardice, pride, apathy, or wrong affections, but it is not love. Hurting their feelings will not hurt their faith because the Word of God cannot destroy the faith of God’s children. That is impossible. God telling wives to submit to their husbands doesn’t destroy their faith any more than God telling Eve that her husband should rule over destroyed her faith (Gen. 3:16), or any more than God telling husbands to love their wives destroys theirs. God telling women to be silent in the church and not to usurp authority over men does not hurt their faith. Neither does it destroy the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. (Eph. 4:3) The unity of the Spirit is created by the Word of God. Destroying the unity of the Spirit happens when we disregard the Word of God, as when pastors do not obey their Lord when he tells them through His apostle that women are to be silent in the churches.

Those who have women teach and speak the lessons are causing division among us by setting up a practice contrary to the doctrine we learn in the Bible. False doctrine and practice divides the Church. In setting forth the above arguments, they are creating disputes and schisms that the Church has never entertained or been troubled by except by Montanists and other heretics. And that raises the question, from where do these arguments come today?

They come from feminism, which denies that command which God gave to man when he spoke to woman, “Your husband shall rule over you.” Some feminist theologians even argue that because the Son is subject to the Father when he submits all things to Him on the Last Day (1 Cor. 15:28), the word “submission” no longer means the willing service and obedience Sarah gave to Abraham when she called him her lord – 1 Peter 3:5-6), because this would apparently deny the equality of the Father and the Son. But Christ Himself came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. (Mark 10:45) In making this argument, feminism assaults the final obedience of Christ when he hands all things over to His Father (1 Cor. 15:24-28). It assaults the lordship of Christ and the example he leaves for husbands and wives in how they ought to live with one another Eph. 5:22-33)

These are the lengths some go to in order to deny the order of creation. Feminists assault the Unity of the Godhead and the lordship of Christ all in order to avoid teaching the order of creation. And we see all over our churches the results overturning this order has caused.

But there are people telling you that you need to be patient, as if patience means not teaching and continuing to ignore God telling women to be silent in the churches. When God tells pastors to be patient, he tells them to be patient in teaching (2 Tim. 4:2). When a pastor doesn’t teach that women should be silent and thus not read the lessons, he is not being patient. He is

letting the devil teach Christ's sheep that women should not be silent in the churches, as we hear all around us today.

We live on every Word that comes from the mouth of God. There is a final argument some make, namely that this issue is not something we should worry about while there are other greater issues at stake. What other issues? Closed Communion? We practice Closed Communion to protect Christ's flock from the evil leaven of false doctrine (Gal. 5:9; 1 Cor. 1:10; 5:6). If we allow the evil leaven in we are not practicing Closed Communion.

What other issues? Is it that we cannot speak this Word of God until we speak other words that are more important? But Jesus teaches us to keep all things he commanded us (Matthew 28:20), and we not only do not keep Jesus' word when we have women speak, we are teaching against his Word, and opposing Christ Himself. I beg you to think soberly on this.

Is there another issue? What of the broken families I mentioned above? This is in large part caused by the spirit whose denial of the order of creation leads to having women teach and speak the lessons. What of the Biblical ignorance we see all around us? This is caused so often by the Word of God being softened so that people learn to ignore it and think it irrelevant to their lives, as it is being softened and downright ignored in the issue of women speaking the lessons. What of the worship wars, and our attempt to get people who have adopted the worship forms of sectarians to adopt any sort of traditional order for the sake of Christian discipline and good order (1 Cor. 14:40; Eptiome FC X.3-5)? But it is precisely in the context of forbidding women to speak in the Church that Paul in 1 Cor. 14 tells us to do all things decently and in good order. If we cannot get this right, what order do we have?

Or is the issue that we would lose members if we speak God's Word on this? Because we know, as the children of God, that the remnant that remains when the Mammon is gone, when our institutions have utterly collapsed, when the walls of Jerusalem have, as it were, fallen, this remnant will obey God, and out of love for women, children, and God himself, not allow women to read the lessons. The remnant's men will declare the works of God to the generation following, with their women and baptized children speaking beside them and blending with their voice in a harmony that the devil can't divide because God's Word cannot be broken. (Isaiah 40:8; John 10:35)

As the feminists hate us when we say, "Man up!", so I exhort you, "Be men!" (1 Cor. 16:13) Tell our seminaries that you require them to teach this to our future pastors. This is not an open question. This is not something up for each congregation to do what is right in its own eyes (Josh. 17:6) This is not something we ask the CTCR to give an opinion on. We know the answer. God's Word is clear. Our unity is not based upon the decrees of men, but on the Word of God that has so often shown us our own errors and led us out of darkness into the light of the truth of the Gospel.

We must obey God rather than men. We must learn to love as men who obey God, who rule over their wives as Christ does, with love, and therefore do not permit Christian women to rule over other wives' husbands. Women are to be silent in the Churches. God says this. He forbids them from speaking the lessons in Church. Excusing this by saying that it was a part in a dramatic reading or with good motives or whatever else the devil conjures up to sully the simplicity of our faith is not to be tolerated or defended in the Church which submits to Christ in everything. (Eph. 5:24)

Preach the Word, and risk all for it. All we have is the Word of God. Suffer for it, and you will love Christ's flock. Do not reduce God's Word to a false gospel that does not give you a delight in the Law of God. You are pastors, and God commands you to speak His Word on penalty of death. That's a threat, and not from me. (Ezekiel 3:18) But hear also His blessing, "Those

who turn many to righteousness will shine like the stars forever.” (Daniel 12:3) Therefore, brethren, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in Heaven. (Matthew 5:16).