

**Study Guide for
It's Time: LCMS Unity and Mission
by Matthew C. Harrison**

This study guide is offered as an accompaniment to Rev. Harrison's *It's Time: LCMS Unity and Mission* with the hope that it might facilitate study, discussion, and dialogue in congregational settings such as adult Bible class, board of elders, or church council. It could also be profitably used with a circuit pastoral conference, circuit convocation, or district board of directors. God bless your study of *It's Time: LCMS Unity and Mission* to the end that we might "be strong, bold, unified in act and song" (Nicolaus Selnecker, *LSB* 585:4).

1. What is the *Blue Ribbon Task Force on Synod Structure and Governance* (p. 2)? On what basis does Rev. Harrison argue that their proposal is insufficient?
2. Rev. Harrison uses the imagery of a ship to help us understand our life together in the Synod (p. 3). How is this imagery apt for appreciating our common life and mission?
3. Do you agree or disagree with this statement: "Our disunity is killing us and our mission effectiveness—and at just the wrong moment" (p. 3). Can you give any examples from your experience in the LCMS of how our disunity is negatively impacting our mission to seek and save the lost? How does God's Word address this problem? See 1 Corinthians 1:10. Note: Readers may wish to consult the excellent treatment of this passage in the *Concordia Commentary on 1 Corinthians* by Gregory J. Lockwood (pp. 39–57).
4. How does the search for a new structure divert us away from the real issues that divide us (pp. 3–4)?
5. Giving to our national church body is down. How does Rev. Harrison diagnose this problem? What is the remedy?
6. In spite of evident divisions and weaknesses in the LCMS, Rev. Harrison asserts that we are living in a "glorious day" (p. 4). What evidences does he cite of our Synod's vitality?
7. What are the wonderful gifts that God has bestowed on our church body (pp. 4–5)?

8. Rev. Harrison quotes J. C. and A. W. Ware: “Be what you are. This is the first step toward becoming better than you are” (p. 5). Given our confessional heritage, how does this apply to the LCMS?
9. What is the place of seminaries in the LCMS? How are they “both teachers for the church and teachers of the church” (p. 5)?
10. Comment on this statement: “. . . the structure of Synod should defuse power *away* from the International Center to congregations and districts, with strong partnerships with the seminaries” (p. 6). How might this look in light of Luke 22:25?
11. How does “the cardinal rule” that “the answers to local problems are local” (p. 6) apply to the governance structures of the LCMS?
12. How has the Synod’s financial health been diminished by divisions in doctrine and practice (p. 7)?
13. What are the three things that gave Luther courage in the face of fear (p. 7)? How do these items also apply to us in this moment of history?
14. What might happen if the LCMS took seriously Luther’s distinction between doctrine and life (p. 8)?
15. Lutherans have a long history of facing internal conflict. This is evident in the events that led to the *Formula of Concord* in the sixteenth century. How might this history help us to face our disagreements with honesty and humility today (pp. 8–10)? Note: See the Introduction to the Formula of Concord in *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions*, pp. 473–490).
16. What do you think of Rev. Harrison’s proposal that “It is time for a serious, decade-long effort—a non-politically organized and driven effort to regain theological and practical unity in the Synod” (p. 10)?
17. How might the wisdom of former Synod President Pfotenhauer help us in the struggle against party spirit and division (p. 10)?
18. Discuss this statement: “We must finally admit that going the route of political coercion to secure Synod unity has failed, is failing and will always fail. Our only hope is repentance, and then looking to the Word of God” (p. 11).
19. What is Rev. Harrison proposing with the “*Koinonia* Project” (p. 11–12)?
20. What does Matthew 28:19 say to both doctrine and mission (p. 12)? How do the insights of C. F. W. Walther help us understand the relationship between purity of doctrine and evangelical mission work (p. 13)?
21. What challenges did the LCMS face at the time of H. C. Schwan’s presidency (p. 13)? What was the “third way” advocated by Schwan (pp. 13–14)?
22. Why is it that mission and structure will not bring about unity in the LCMS (p. 14–15)?
23. What does Rev. Harrison identify as “our fundamental problem” (p. 14)?
24. How does the Word alone bring us together and bind us as one body (pp. 15–16)?
25. One of the most mission-minded leaders in the history of the LCMS was Friedrich Wyneken. How do his words, first spoken in 1855, still call us to repentance (pp. 15–16)?
26. Do you think that M. Scott Peck’s sociological analysis of the several stages of communal dysfunction has anything to say to our life together in the LCMS (pp. 17-18)?
27. How do we need to “empty ourselves” (p. 19) for healthy community in the LCMS?
28. Read Acts 2:42. How does this text reflect the true *koinonia* to which the Lord has called us (p. 19)?
29. Where do we go from here?