

# **THE 2010 SYNODICAL CONVENTION: What Does This Mean For the Present and the Future?**

**Texas Confessional Lutherans Free Conference  
Grace Lutheran Church, Brenham, Texas  
September 11, 2010**

**by Rev. Richard A. Bolland  
Senior Pastor  
Holy Cross Lutheran Church  
Kansas City, Missouri**

Today, during the second hour of my presentation to you, Rev. Matthew C. Harrison will be installed as the 13<sup>th</sup> President of The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod. Upon his election two months ago, just an hour or so down the road from our location here in Brenham, Texas, President-elect Harrison described his election as a “tumultuous change” for our Synod. That it most certainly is. Rev. Harrison’s election, (along with the near sweep of “United List” candidates into office), signals the possibility, but not the certainty, of a return of our Synod to something more closely resembling our Grandfather’s Synod. This turn of events, for which many of us have been working and praying for nearly a decade, opens up at least the possibility that our venerable Synod might yet retain her character as an orthodox Lutheran church body, but only time will tell if that is to be or not. President Harrison inherits a challenge perhaps greater than any previous Synodical President in the history of our church body. Never before in our history have the divisions among us been as numerous or as great as they are at this time. Matt Harrison’s election was a miracle of God’s grace, and he will need many additional miracles to do what needs to be done to reclaim our church body from the cliff of heterodoxy over which she now hangs so precariously.

Please know that once again I am honored to speak to you at such an auspicious time in our Synod’s history and to address a topic that is so very important to our Synod at such a time of tumultuous change. I thank you for the kind honor of your invitation. I will do my best to make your investment in my airline ticket worthwhile!

## **WHAT DOES THE 2010 CONVENTION MEAN FOR THE PRESENT?**

First, how did it happen that the well-oiled political machine of President Gerald Kieschnick came to be de-railed? Who could have predicted it? Let’s give credit where credit is due - to Almighty God. I consider it as nothing less than divine intervention in answer to many, many prayers that the dark shadow which was hanging over us, has been lifted off of our Synod. However, it should be kept in mind that the juggernaut of Church Growth theology, methodology, and misidentified “missional emphasis” is still with us. The terrible and errant Transforming Churches Network is still with us. The Pastoral Leadership Institute is still with us. The Center for U.S. Missions is still with us. The *Ablaze!* initiative is still with us. The notion that worship style is subject to personal preference like that of picking a favorite flavor is ice cream is still with us. But at least there is now the opportunity to step back from these misguided paths, to examine their real nature, their real theology, and to see if the means of grace might just be able to do what God has promised they will do in calling those whom He will call to faith. These are major blessings which have resulted from Matt Harrison’s election. Thanks be to God!

The election of Matt Harrison is also due to God’s use of many, many faithful pastors and laymen who put in countless hours of hard work in order to identify and recruit Confessional Lutheran pastoral and lay delegates from the many circuits throughout our Synod. It is due to the many pastors and laymen who

took the time to write articles explaining the issues which continue to tear our Synod apart, and it is due to folks like you who sent in financial donations to support the publication of those articles that helped us all to learn what these issues are and what might be done about them. This election was vindication, in many ways, for all the criticisms leveled at pastors who were chastised by those in their own parishes for working on Synodical matters outside their congregations. God works through His people and He has served our neighbor through such men and women who chose to become involved in what many think of as “Synodical Politics” in order to preserve the pure Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Thank God for them all!

Perhaps we have learned from all of this that good theology and good politics can work hand in hand for the sake of God’s kingdom. Politics and theology are not and need not be mutually exclusive. We live and work in a Synod which has a Constitution, Bylaws, positions to fill and elections to fill them. All of that requires politics. It should be noted that it is God Himself who established government and who works through people to select leaders of His choosing. I guess if God is willing to get involved in politics then we really don’t need to apologize for doing so ourselves as long as our church politics (as well as our civic politics) are guided by our theology. We are citizens both inside and outside the Synod in both left and right hand kingdoms.

At this juncture of our Synod’s history, if anything, we need to be more involved in our Synod’s political life, not less. We need to care about what those in Synodical leadership believe, teach and confess and work to ensure that only faithful, Confessional people fill those positions so that we are not again led astray again down paths of error, but more about that later.

What we have been concerned about over the last decade was that our political, man-made institution called Synod would keep the Gospel pure because only the pure Gospel provides people with a clear picture of Christ and the salvation that He brings us through the cross.

**Whether or not The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod remains an orthodox Lutheran church body, is completely dependent on if and how the doctrinal errors and unbiblical practices into which we have fallen over the years are now adequately addressed and resolved. Then and only then will we be able to say that we, as a Synod, have stepped back from heterodoxy.** The election of a new President, while certainly important, is not that indicator. The game that many have played over time, that simply electing an orthodox President is the answer to our troubles, is an illusion that wasn’t true in our past and isn’t true for our present. One man didn’t get us into this mess and one man will not get us out of it. If we do not adequately identify and correct our errors and continue to permit truth and error to co-exist within our Synod then we cannot claim the mantle of orthodoxy. As Hermann Sasse (in commenting on the arranged co-existence of truth and error related to Germany’s 1934 Barmen Declaration) has written:

“It only lives on in church history, but not for its greatness, rather for its ridiculousness; not, as was thought then, as the dawn of a new day in the history of German Protestantism, as the consummation of the confessional unification of the Evangelical churches of Germany, but rather as a classic example of the fact that the most celebrated hours in the history of the church can also be her most untruthful, and that the most untruthful hours are those in which a man lies not only to himself, but to others as well, and even to God the Lord, in claiming a unity which in reality does not exist.”<sup>1</sup>

The LCMS, like the *Deutsche Evangelische Kirche* (DEK), has been lying to herself that we too are in doctrinal unity, when, in fact, we are not and haven’t been for a long time. Thus it is with the clarity of this important point that we must approach life in The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod following the 2010 Synodical convention. **We must agree on what it means to be an orthodox Lutheran church body.** As Rev. Dr. Francis Pieper wrote:

“A congregation or church body which abides by God’s order, in which therefore God’s Word is taught in its purity and the Sacraments administered according to the divine institution, is properly called an orthodox church (*ecclesia orthodoxa, pura*). But a congregation or church body which, in spite of the divine order, tolerates false doctrine in its midst is properly called a *heterodox church (ecclesia heterodoxa, impura)*...With regard to the orthodox character of a church body note well: (1) A church body is orthodox only if the true doctrine, as we have it in the Augsburg Confession and the other Lutheran Symbols, is actually taught in its pulpits and its publications and not merely ‘officially’ professed as its faith. Not the ‘official’ doctrine, but the actual teaching determines the character of a church body, because Christ enjoins that all things whatsoever He has commanded His disciples should actually be taught and not merely acknowledged in an ‘official document’ as the correct doctrine. It is patent that faith in Christ will be created and preserved through the pure Gospel only when that Gospel is really proclaimed. (2) A Church body does not forfeit its orthodox character by reason of the casual intrusion of false doctrine...A church body loses its orthodoxy only when it no longer applies Rom. 16:17, hence does not combat and eventually remove the false doctrine, but tolerates it without reproof and thus actually grants it equal right with the truth.<sup>2</sup>

And so it will be with our Synod today. What will we do with our errors and with unrepentant errorists? If we do nothing, then we are a heterodox church body. If, as a result of President Harrison’s proposed “Koinonia Project”, we merely craft nuanced language to embrace errant points of view along with the truth, then we shall continue to be a heterodox church body. **Only if we actually resolve our errors by measuring them only against the pure Word of God and then either welcome the repentant brother or sister back into the church body having confessed their error and embracing the truth or by removing the errorist from our midst if he or she does not repent, may we then claim the mantle of orthodoxy once again.** Anything less than this and The LCMS is a heterodox body.

Everything hangs on this! Our errors must be resolved or our Synod will not be a Synod.

If this hard work is not done, then Sasse’s words will come home to haunt us:

“Thus it is a foolish and simplistic hope that the false doctrine, which has been acknowledged in modern church government as equally legitimate with the pure doctrine, will finally disappear of itself. But where a church has made its pact with false doctrine and laid down the weapons with which it can and must fight heresy, there remains only the one last possibility for separating the church from heresy: the separation of the orthodox church from an image, which only bears the name ‘church,’ but in reality has nothing to do with the church of Christ.”<sup>3</sup>

**Let there be no mistake about it: The actions of the 2010 Synodical convention in electing a new Synodical President and Praesidium is nothing less than a step back from the brink of the heterodox precipice that we very narrowly avoided.** I do not believe that most rank and file pastors and laymen realize how incredibly close The LCMS came to crossing a point of no return respecting the retention of our Synod’s status as an orthodox Lutheran Church body. The 2010 convention was one of those watershed “lines in the sand” of which most simply don’t realize the significance until it has already been crossed and it is too late.

That is the kind of situation that the old American Lutheran Church (ALC) discovered when, with the best of intentions, they found themselves merged into a new church body in 1988 called the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). Although the future was plain to see prior to the merger, information regarding the encroaching dangers was well “managed” in the official media of both the ALC and the Lutheran Church in America (LCA) to such an extent that the rank and file had no idea what they were getting themselves into until it was too late. In the same way the out-going administration of The LCMS “managed” the official media of our own Synod so that the errors and dangers of the *Ab'laze!* initiative, the

Transforming Churches Network, the Pastoral Leadership Institute, the U.S. Center for Mission, and Baptist pastor, Paul Borden's organization, "Growing Healthy Churches" and other efforts went virtually unreported. Virtually no discussion was held in our official media which in any meaningful way addressed any other viewpoint than that of the administration. **I am confident in saying that had the Kieschnick administration been re-elected, the likelihood that our Synod could have been redeemed would have been best described as "slim to none."**

That having been said, it is not difficult to say what life in Missouri would have been like had Gerald Kieschnick been re-elected for a fourth term. There can be little doubt in anyone's mind that the mistaken emphasis on the misidentified mission of the Church would have continued unabated. The failure of the Kieschnick administration to distinguish properly the real mission of the Church: Teaching the Word of God in all its truth and purity and the administration of the Sacraments in accord with Christ's institution, confusing it with its result: the making of disciples (which is God's act), would have continued to justify a multitude of un-Lutheran practices among us.

Neither can there be any doubt that the considerable power, now unwisely consolidated in the Synodical presidency and the Council of Presidents, would have been used to virtually crush any political or theological opposition to the sought-after fundamental transformation of our Synod into a marginally "Lutheran" version of Church Growth, by-the-numbers, contemporary worshiping, congregationally restructuring, Neo-Missouri Synod which would bear little, if any resemblance to the church of our grandfathers.

One can only surmise as well that the continued marginalization and sometimes out-right persecution of Confessional pastors and laymen in our Synod would have continued and likely intensified. We were obstacles to the Kieschnick agenda that needed to be removed, since it had become quite clear that we had no intention of cooperating and going along with this un-Lutheran approach. With compliance to the resolutions of the Synod in convention being made mandatory, there would have been little, if any doubt that compulsory participation in such programs as the Transforming Churches Network was in our near future.

Had President Kieschnick been re-elected, there can be no doubt but that many within the Confessional ranks of our Synod would have promptly insisted that we would need to set our sights on the 2013 Synodical convention to remedy all our ills and once again the cycle of "winning" and "losing" would have continued for most. I am convinced, however, that there would have been a small group of LCMS pastors and congregations which would have had quite enough and would have sought to separate from the Synod. I say small, because most pastors and congregations would have succumbed to the path of least resistance and simply remained within Missouri no matter how unorthodox she might have become. As a result, the Synod would have divided between a group within Missouri who would have been prepared to leave which I shall call "New Synod Advocates" and the vast majority of congregations which I would term, "Synodicalists". The fact of the matter is that the majority of LCMS pastors, laymen and congregations are made of no better "stuff" than were the formerly faithful members of the old ALC or LCA. Most just go along and get along just because it is easier and less stressful. Believe me, it is!

It is my guess as well that at some point in the fairly near future mandatory financial support of the Synod would have been put into effect despite C.F.W. Walther's instruction:

"In its self-government the congregation is free to do anything that it can to defend before God, and the Synod has no say in the matter. But [the Synod] has the duty to give advice when asked. Therefore the Synod can establish no rules, no ceremonies, nor any kind of regulations; it cannot impose taxes, not even a penny. If our Synod would ever say, 'Every congregation must contribute one cent every year,' then the congregations should say, 'Not even [half a cent]. You must beg; yes, we'll gladly give to a beggar, but if you try to give us orders, our friendship is over.

Because—whether much or little—if we have conceded you a penny this year, you can demand a dollar next year, and even more in two years; for we would have then given you the right, the power, to tell us what to do.”<sup>4</sup>

No doubt but that many other outcomes would have resulted from a re-election of President Kieschnick and we may be grateful to God that this is not now the situation to which we would need to respond. **So close was our Synod to heterodoxy, and we are as yet not far removed. We remain an impossibly divided Synod and the task of the new President to bring healing and unity to such unbridgeable division is no enviable task.** Yes, with God all things are possible, but with sinful fallen man, what God wills can, and often is thwarted. In Harrison’s paper, “It’s Time!”, he also indicates that not all will be united by his proposed Koinonia Project when he says:

“It is possible to unify 85% of the Synod in doctrine, practice and mission, I’m convinced.”<sup>5</sup>

This is an admission that not all will heed the Word of God and our Lutheran Confessions and that complete agreement will not be obtained. Clearly, even the very optimistic prognostication of President Harrison admits that 15% will not be part of our Synod at the end of the resolution to be obtained at the conclusion of the Koinonia Project. The big question relative to this fact is what will be done with those who will not chose to accept the resolution which is agreed upon? Assuming that the issues which are resolved are done in accord with the orthodox Lutheran faith, if those who do not accept the out-come of the Koinonia Project do not leave our Synod of their own accord, then they must be removed. To fail to follow through in this fashion is, once again, to become a heterodox church body because we will have failed to deal with the heterodox.

The other danger is to have the Koinonia Project finalize their results (predicted to be a ten year long effort), by utilizing equivocating language that permits desparate theological views and irreconcilable practices to remain in place. Frankly, this would be the worst of all possible out-comes! This has not been proposed, yet we dare not shut our eyes and imagine it is impossible either, just ask Sasse! In this event the heterodoxy would not even be recognized as heterodoxy and separation would be made almost impossible save for a relatively small minority of very perceptive and determined orthodox pastors and congregations who would see the ruse for what it is and separate themselves from the Synod.

It is to this very point that Sasse writes:

“Among the lies which destroy the church there is one we have not yet mentioned. Alongside the pious and dogmatic lies, there stands an especially dangerous form of lie that can be called the *institutional* lie. By this we mean a lie which works itself out in the institutions of the church, in her government and her law [*Recht*]. It is so dangerous because it legalizes the other lies in the church and makes them impossible to remove.”<sup>6</sup>

Ultimately, what I told this conference in April of 2006 is still true: **Someone will have to leave this Synod.** This is not a tragedy, but a necessity regardless of who remains and who leaves. **I maintain that this election cycle just concluded in Houston was not so much about who was elected President of the Synod, but about who is leaving our Synod.** It is my fervent prayer that the election of Matthew Harrison marks the opportunity to have those who will not hear the Word of God in our Synod, who will not give up their errant doctrine and practice and who will not be reconciled to an orthodox conclusion of the Koinonia Project, leave us and either join an existing church body (perhaps the North American Lutheran Church [NALC] breakaway from the ELCA), or form their own body. I would say to such individuals please, please, please stop trying to convert The LCMS into your version of a more broad-minded “Lutheran” body.

At this present juncture our Synod is clearly at a crossroads and must deal with certain inescapable conclusions:

**INESCAPABLE CONCLUSION # 1. Under President Harrison’s leadership we must become a Synod dedicated to resolving our differences in doctrine and practice on the basis of God’s Word only.**

While it is certainly true that the entire Koinonia Project is predicated on gathering around the table with various respected leaders throughout the Synod who are representative of all the various disparate viewpoints represented among us, it is also true that we must do so with an iron-clad commitment to coming to theological conclusions at the end of the day.

Here it is necessary to understand how our liberal counterparts view this kind of exercise. First, the very idea that we must come to a single conclusion which approves of one viewpoint or another on any given issue is anathema to them. The liberal mindset insists that unity is found by adopting language which validates divergent points of view and never forces anyone to make a hard choice. This conforms to the idea of Hegelian Dialectic which supposes a “Thesis” for example: “Agreement in all articles of doctrine is the standard of admission to the Lord’s Supper.” Hegelian Dialectic also supposes an “Antithesis” for example: “All those who claim Christ as their Savior should be welcomed to the Lord’s Table.” The aim of Hegelian Dialectic is never to choose one of the two opposing sides but always seeks the predetermined third view which is called “Synthesis”, for example: “While respecting the need for the maintenance of sound doctrine, the necessity for individual pastoral discretion should leave the decision for admission to the Lord’s Supper to the individual case under consideration.” This is not the place right now to discuss the merits of exceptions; I only point out how exceptions are widely misused.

When our liberal counterparts want to sit down and dialog about theology they always seek a “win-win” solution so that the third, more accommodating view (synthesis) is obtained. Hence, we sat through so-called “Theological Convocations” in the past whose hallmark was the round table discussion at which we stressed what we held in common and never concluded anything about the subject under consideration. It is also this Hegelian construct which underlies our Synod’s Dispute Resolution Process which disdains actually resolving much of anything especially if that resolution is based on God’s Word and our Confessions.

What President Harrison must do is keep his word to resolve our issues based on God’s Word only and the correct exposition of that Word, our Confessions. God’s Word is not subject to any “Synthesis”!

**INESCAPABLE CONCLUSION # 2. If the Koinonia Project is actually going to resolve our divergent positions on doctrine and practice on the basis of God’s Word only, then the final result of these efforts must be a righteous division of our Synod by those who will not agree to the resolution regardless of who that party is.**

We simply cannot continue to be the Synod that we are today. It must be our doctrine, and that doctrine’s practice, which we hold in common if we are to be a Synod which is actually walking together. Apart from this fundamental understanding of ourselves The LCMS can only be a kind of religious institution which binds its members together based on the benefits of the Concordia Plans!

We simply must come to an understanding that we cannot continue to be a Synod which practices both open and closed communion.

We cannot continue to be a Synod which is both liturgical and non-liturgical in our public worship which is the very heart of the Church and which either unifies us as one people or divides us into our personal preference groups.

We cannot continue to be a Synod which has both ordained clergy and non-ordained laymen publicly preaching the Word and publicly administering the Sacraments in clear violation of Augustana Article XIV.

We simply cannot continue to be a Synod which withholds fellowship from heterodox church bodies and other worship forums of mixed confession and, at the same time, have clergy who participate in those same settings.

We cannot continue to be a Synod in which women engage in the public proclamation of the Word of God in our worship, (i.e., reading the lessons), or assist in the public administration of the Sacraments (i.e., distributing the elements of the Lord's Supper) and, at the same time, say that we conform our doctrine and practice to the doctrine of the Order of Creation, and to uphold the doctrine of the divine call to pastors to perform these sacred tasks.

We cannot continue to be a Synod which says it conforms to the doctrine of the divinity of the call to the Pastoral Office and, at the same time, continues to unbiblically remove pastors from their calls as though they were "at will" employees.

Furthermore, we cannot continue to be a Synod in which some in our Synod believe that pure doctrine is the very instrument with which we evangelize the world and, at the same time, also have a part of our Synod which believes that pure doctrine is an impediment to evangelistic out-reach.

We cannot continue to be a Synod which does not seem to understand what "mission" God has given to the Church and is confusing its true mission, (i.e., proclaiming the Word of God in all its truth and purity and administering the Sacraments in accord with Christ's institution), with the result of that mission, (i.e., making disciples) which is what our Lord accomplishes through these means of grace as He has promised.

Additionally, we cannot continue to be a Synod in which part of the Synod believes that numerical growth is virtually a "mark" of the Church, validating the ministry of a pastor or a congregation and, at the same time, be a Synod which understands that God's people are fed on the richness of God's Word and Sacraments so that they are rightly equipped by these means of grace to give a witness to their faith in the context of their God-given vocations. Whether or not the Lord blesses that effort with results is entirely up to Him.

Finally, we cannot continue to be a Synod which abjectly fails to exercise proper ecclesiastical supervision by failing to address the errors I've just listed out for you among us, yet also abuses the responsibility for ecclesiastical supervision to manipulate call lists, blackball Confessional pastors, and excuse the sins of those who have their ecclesiastical supervisors permission.

Ultimately there must be a biblical, Confessional resolution to these issues, and those who do not agree with the Word of God must either leave us voluntarily or be shown the door. The theological Schizophrenia of our Synod must come to an end! To retain such dissenters is to opt to become a church body which tolerates and/or condones heterodoxy and by definition that describes a heterodox church body.

This kind of righteous division or theological realignment is precisely what the Rev. Dr. Francis Pieper talks about in his landmark work, *Christian Dogmatics* when he writes:

"Such, however, as separate from a church body because it tenaciously clings to false doctrine are unjustly called schismatics, separatists, etc. This separation is commanded in Scripture (Rom. 16:17) and is the only means of restoring and maintaining true unity in the Christian Church."<sup>7</sup>

Again, Pieper in his 1905 Synodical address, “The Difficult Task of Holding Forth for the Truth” says:

“We tolerate within the Synod no doctrine and practice that contradicts Scripture. The congregations that form the Synod supervise each other so that God’s Word rules in doctrine and life. Where departures occur, we hold it as our duty, through doctrine, admonition, and punishment, to bring the erring out of their error. Where the Word of God will not be heard, there is exclusion from the Synod.”<sup>8</sup>

In other words, there is a righteous division that can, indeed must take place in a church body if there are those within her who cannot agree on a common doctrine and practice and so actually walk together. Failing this righteous division, a church body can only be considered as heterodox.

**INESCAPABLE CONCLUSION # 3. President Harrison’s election means that our Synod has this one, last and likely final chance to retain her orthodox Lutheran character if we have the will to do what is necessary to retain it.**

This is an opportunity, which I must confess, I did not believe we would have. I am pleased to confess I was wrong here. I honestly did not believe it would be possible to elect another Confessional President of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. Now, against all odds, we have that opportunity and should we fail to use it the fault for the demise of our once great and faithful Synod can only rest upon us. Frankly, this is a confession I was praying I would have to make and I am more than pleased to make it. Let us, therefore, not squander this brief reprieve which the Lord has given us!

**As Confessional members of The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod we must use this final moment! This is the time, and likely the last time, we shall have to preserve The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod as an orthodox Lutheran Church body for our children and their children’s children. If we fail to do what needs to be done now, generations yet unborn will suffer the consequences and the passing rain clouds of the Gospel may cease to fall on this nation as happened in Germany as a result of the unanswered Prussian Union, and the Barmen Declaration of 1934, leaving the homeland of Martin Luther literally bereft of the pure Gospel of Jesus Christ! If it happened there, then it can also happen here! This is a time for the voice of the faithful to break silence and to defend the truth of God with all our might, God helping us.**

As C.F.W. Walther warns us:

“While, according to the divine promises, it is impossible for the one Holy Christian church ever to perish, it is indeed possible, and it has actually happened at times, that in the full sense of the term there was no true *visible* church, namely one in which the preaching of the pure Word of God and the administration of the uncorrupted sacraments was carried on by an uncorrupted public ministry.”<sup>9</sup>

Much will depend on the personal goals and determination of our newly elected Synodical President regarding whether or not such efforts will be successful. It is a terrible weight on one man. Therefore I advise the following:

1. **Every Confessional pastor and layman in The LCMS must hold Matthew Harrison continually, daily, in our prayers.** He will be, (and probably already is), under enormous pressure to compromise on God’s Word and to embrace language in his Koinonia Project which will permit various viewpoints on doctrine and practice to be retained as equally acceptable in our Synod while sounding conservative and Confessional in its tone.
2. **Every Confessional pastor and layman must continually pray for and encourage our new President’s resolve to be strengthened to actually settle our differences in doctrine and**



**practice rather than play the game which our Synod has played *ad nauseum* in the past which is to utilize so-called “Theological Convocations/Discussions” to focus primarily on what we agree on and to marginalize and diminish that in which we disagree.** The Koinonia Project anticipates beginning with a small group of theologians/pastors/laymen to finally come to a consensus respecting resolutions to our divisions. That is a good place to start, but carrying that consensus into our congregations will be a far more daunting challenge. Respecting this initial phase of implementation as much as possible we would need to encourage our new President to employ “bottom-up” methodologies instead of “top-down” methodologies so that the reformation of our Synod is something that matures at the congregational level primarily and then filters up to the bureaucracy of the Synod. In this monumental effort the faculties of our seminaries should be deployed, to the greatest extent possible, even to the congregational level of doctrinal discussion and become increasingly influential as the process moves upward from the congregations. Permit me to share a few pipedreams to think about:

**Pipedream # 1:** What could happen if we discontinued seminary studies for one year to deploy our seminary faculties into our congregations to lead us in study regarding the resolution of our divisive issues?

**Pipedream # 2:** What could happen if every District President and all of their theologically qualified staff dedicated their full time for one year to being in their respective district’s congregations to work to bring unity in doctrine and practice?

**Pipedream # 3.** What could happen if these two years ran consecutively so that for two years this would be the main thrust of the work of our Synod?

**Pipedream # 4.** What could happen if, following the two years of intensive study, each pastor of each LCMS congregation would develop a plan to implement the resolutions of our doctrine and practice within each congregation of our Synod.

**These are decisive times and they call for serious – not business as usual – measures!**

3. **We must stop telling ourselves the lie that we are united in our doctrine but only have some differences over the way we practice our doctrine.** This is a false dichotomy and we must realize that we are talking about the same thing when we are talking about doctrine and practice. The two must speak the same language. We practice our doctrine, and our doctrine determines our practice.
4. **We must be willing to engage in a theological realignment (righteous division/theological realignment) of our Synod if we cannot mutually resolve our differences.** This is the only honorable, churchly and biblical way to deal with genuine doctrinal differences and if we are not willing to do this, then the entire Koinonia Project will come to nothing and The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod will no longer be an orthodox Lutheran church body. **I believe that all participants in the Koinonia Project should understand from the out-set that if we cannot resolve our differences, then we must divide.**

Again, C.F.W. Walther:

“When someone denies the Real Presence of Christ’s body and blood in Holy Communion, I can most certainly tell him, ‘You are no Lutheran.’ On the other hand when someone errs on a point of doctrine that has not yet been publicly confessed, I cannot immediately make that charge, but must first of all point out to him his error on the basis of Holy Scripture. But if he refuses to listen to God’s clear Word, I will finally tell him, ‘Well, in that case you are no Lutheran, for the Lutheran church believes what the Bible clearly says.’ We Lutherans belong to the universal (catholic) church; we have the doctrine of the universal church; the doctrine of the universal church is the

doctrine of the Bible; everything, absolutely everything the Bible says is part of Lutheranism. After all, we would be a sect if we were to accept other doctrines or wanted them to be considered as 'open questions' despite the fact that God's Word clearly teaches them. We would not be sect in the sense that we teach false doctrine, but because we would be allowing definite truth that is clearly taught in God's Word to be a matter of freedom."<sup>10</sup>

Brothers and sisters, the next three years in the life of The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod will determine whether or not this Synod can continue to exist as a Synod in any meaningful sense of the term. We must get behind our new Synodical President as we have never gotten behind a Synodical President before. These next three years must be a time of unprecedented, concerted effort not just on the part of President Harrison but on the part of every last Confessional pastor and layman in our Synod. **What needs to be done is not just the monumental effort which the Koinonia Project will be but there is also a political agenda and reform that is desperately needed to fundamentally reshape our Synod.**

What does the 2010 Synodical Convention mean for the present? It means that we must completely rethink how Confessional pastors and congregations have functioned within our Synod with respect to how we influence our elected leaders and our governance structures. Under past administrations an increasing number of procedural restrictions have been placed on the members of our Synod that have greatly restricted our ability to address error openly, publicly and without fear of reprisal. Faith in the Word of God and our Confessions to resolve such errors needs to be granted its rightful place once again.

What I mean by this is that we must move to consolidate the gains the Lord has graciously given us by ensuring that the issues which have been tearing our Synod apart are resolved and that our passive silence with the assumption that others will speak for us must come to an end. Yes, we must use the appointed means at our disposal to do so, (Dissent Process – Bylaw 1.8.1 and 1.8.2, not the Dispute Resolution Process!)<sup>11</sup> but that does not limit faithful members of the Synod from additional courses of action to keep the attention of our Synod focused on these needed resolutions. This will require a much greater emphasis on righteous political activism within our Synod. I will itemize some possibilities for this in the next section of my presentation.

What does the 2010 Synodical Convention mean for the present? It means that every time anyone tasked with resolving our theological differences attempts to utilize anything other than the Word of God and our Lutheran Confessions, we must loudly and immediately cry, "Foul!", and insist that only Scripture serve as our norm for our corporate faith and life together and therefore we must conform our every effort to that revelation of Almighty God and its correct exposition in our Confessions. This means that if past convention resolutions which equivocated on God's truth are employed to distract our Synod from what the Scriptures plainly and clearly say, or unbiblically prohibits or restricts the proclamation of pure doctrine or the identification of false doctrine, then we must also publicly insist that our Synod is not like the Roman Catholic Church which believes that if the "council" says something is right (even if it is unbiblical), that it cannot be in error. It doesn't matter whether such a false proclamation or restriction is passed by a simple majority vote, a 2/3rds majority vote or by a unanimous vote. **Nobody gets to vote on God's Word or the doctrine it reveals.** That is specifically why our LCMS Constitution says in Article VII, C – Resolutions at Synod Meetings:

"All matters of doctrine and of conscience shall be decided only by the Word of God. All other matters shall be decided by majority vote."<sup>12</sup>

**What else can this article be saying other than we do not vote on doctrine?** Unfortunately, this has become a practice among us which has been going on, (often with the best of intentions, but sometimes not), for far too long. The only legitimate reason for voting on our theology is either to condemn false doctrine which has come to us threatening the Gospel, or to affirm the true doctrine which we have

always held in opposition to those who espouse false doctrine. Unfortunately, some within our Synod have viewed voting on doctrine as a way to change our doctrine while, at the same time, claiming with bold-face that we are not. (e.g., our Synod's theological "gymnastics" and political machinations respecting the role of women in the Church and their inclusion on Boards of Elders, as congregational presidents and vice presidents and the same with respect to participation in unionistic and syncretistic worship participation serve as examples.)

## **WHAT DOES THE 2010 SYNODICAL CONVENTION MEAN FOR THE FUTURE?**

**First, let us speak theologically:**

**In order to clarify and resolve the theological differences in contention among us we must understand that apart from the resolution of these issues, there will be no peace in Missouri's future.** These are the things that divide us. Our governance structure will not unite us as a Synod and all the verbiage of the past decade which put that silly idea forward was illusory at best and disingenuous at worst. The best, most efficient Constitution and Bylaws that mankind can possibly devise will never sort out any theological questions. Here we must remember that while the evangelistic task of the Church is very important, it should not replace the first object of our Synod:

"1. Conserve and promote the unity of the true faith, (Eph. 4:3-6; I Cor. 1:10), work through its official structure toward fellowship with other Christian church bodies, and provide a united defense against schism, sectarianism (Rom. 16:17), and heresy."<sup>13</sup>

**In order to come to a consensus regarding the doctrinal issues which divide our Synod, it is first necessary to clearly define those doctrines in which we disagree.** Here I must with shameless abandon point your attention to the documents produced by the Steering Committee and the Consulting Committee of the group forming the Association of Confessing Evangelical Lutheran Congregations (ACELC). Since I have been serving as the elected Facilitator of the ACELC Steering Committee since last August, please permit me the use of the pronouns "we", "us", and "our" in reference to the work of this group of honorable, churchly men and women of our Synod.

Regardless of your personal feelings respecting the formation of such an association of congregations within our Synod, please do give your consideration to the good work we have produced in our catalog of errors. These were mailed out to every congregation of The LCMS at the conclusion of our Synodical convention two months ago. They were also mailed out to every elected Synodical officer both out-going and in-coming.

I would also urge you to carefully examine the other documents of the ACELC which are posted on our website at: <http://www.ancelc.net>. Especially note the following: "The Definition of Confessional Lutheranism in Light of Present Day Issues", (both the short and long versions), and also the various "Evidence of Errors" documents.

These statements were carefully and painstakingly crafted over more than a year's time and examined by some of the finest Confessional and theological minds in our Synod and were determined to be uniformly without error. You might have noticed that these documents and the announcement of the formation of the ACELC have received no small amount of criticism even from Confessional quarters within our Synod, but most of that has centered around the issue of forming an association. As for the catalog of errors, however, few, if any Confessional folks have taken issue with them and we are frankly amazed that so little criticism has been leveled at this necessary defining of the errors with which we must deal as a Synod. This lack of criticism serves as testimony to the care with which these documents were written.

**Why must we first define the issues which divide us? Simply because we must agree first on what these issues are if we are to make progress in discussing them and resolving them.** You may notice that each error is carefully written in “Thesis” and “Antithesis” format as good Lutheran theological documents ought to be written. Having said that there is no intention of the part of the ACELC to provide any kind of new “Confession” for the Church nor set some standard for granting or refusing fellowship, but only to provide these issues as starting points for discussion in whatever venue that President Harrison wishes to use for his Koinonia Project.

The Steering Committee of the ACELC has been roundly criticized for publicly releasing the catalog of errors with some wrongly asserting that such a release somehow undermines President Harrison’s efforts in his proposed “Koinonia Project”, or that the ACELC is attempting to set President Harrison’s agenda for him. Neither of these things are at all true! Permit me to share our new President’s own words with you:

“I have thought for some years that the way forward would be to bring together respected and capable people representing various constituencies and viewpoints. There are a number of ways such people could be gathered, and I will not bore you with specifics here, but it *can* be done non-politically. Seminary representation will be very important because both of our seminaries remain the most broadly respected institutions in the Synod, and diverse viewpoints on issues that trouble us are also represented to some extent within our faculties. The group (or groups, since a number of local efforts were the prerequisite for the great result of the Formula of Concord) would have to be of modest size, perhaps a dozen or so. Those present would have to be highly regarded by individuals sharing their general viewpoints, and known by the Synod at large to be principled, but also pious and reasonable. In fact, given the current status of things, it might even be best if this group were to form of its own accord, and thus without the accusation or even suspicion of machination.”<sup>14</sup>

Please permit a couple of observations:

1. The ACELC did form of its own accord and, by design, did not act politically by sending out our Fraternal Letter of Admonition and the catalog of errors prior to the Synodical convention so as to provide any fodder for those in our Synod who would have seen such an action as an attempt to affect the outcome of the Synodical elections. You should also be aware that we had no different plan regardless of the outcome of the elections of the Synodical convention and had President Kieschnick been re-elected the letter would have been sent out at precisely the same time. The reason for this is that the ACELC wants to talk about our theological errors only. Our aim is clearly not to divide our Synod but to help our Synod achieve unity in our doctrine and practice by forthrightly identifying our errors and resolving them. The ACELC has no intention of breaking fellowship with anybody in our Synod and it cannot be, therefore, schismatic as has been claimed by some.

Pieper has defined schism in this way:

“By the term ‘schism’ we mean a division in the Church which God’s Word does not enjoin, but which is begun by men for carnal reasons and therefore is sinful, e.g., a separation because of differences in church customs, church terms, order of worship, etc. In practice it is important to distinguish between schismatics acting from spite and schismatics acting from weakness in Christian knowledge and prejudice.”<sup>15</sup>

An association of congregations is simply the most “grass roots” kind of organization which can exist within our Synod whose fundamental membership is that of congregations and their workers. The purpose of the ACELC is simply to keep doing what is necessary to help keep our Synod focused on the theological causes of our already existing divisions in the hope that we might heal them either through agreement or through theological alignment at the end of whatever process President

Harrison utilizes to bring that conclusion about. Thus, the term “schismatic” cannot be applied to the ACELC legitimately, logically, or theologically.

2. In Holy Scripture St. Paul instructs us:

“I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. 3 For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.” (II Timothy 4:1-4)

If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him, (Luke 17:3)

Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. (Galatians 6:1-2)

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work. (II Timothy 3:16-17)

Such preaching, reproof, rebuking, correcting, training and exhorting are to be done at all times by all Christians, but especially by pastors of congregations who are obligated to fulfill essentially two fundamental duties of their offices: a.) Feed Christ's sheep with the rightly taught Word of God and the rightly administered Sacraments as Christ instituted them, and b.) Protect Christ's sheep from the false-teaching wolves in sheep's clothing. All of this is done for the sake of the sheep.

As Confessional pastors and laymen all of us have an obligation to speak up when false doctrine threatens our church body! For pastors and for congregations which hold membership in The LCMS, this duty to speak to our own church body when it is engaged in error is mandatory. As I indicated in my first section of this presentation, this is likely our final divine reprieve for our Synod. This is the time to speak because if these critical corrections to the errors dividing us are not made now, the likelihood of our beloved LCMS retaining her orthodox Lutheran character is nearly non-existent. Business as “usual” at this juncture in our Synod's history will kill this Synod! We must speak to theological error in our Synod now as we have never spoken before.

3. The past administration of our Synod was insistent that the level of doctrinal unity in The LCMS was the envy of church bodies throughout the world and that we should discontinue the “incessant doctrinal purification” among us for the sake of our evangelistic task. Secondly, it was claimed that we had no doctrinal issues, only issues related to the practice of our doctrine. The intent of these and other similar statements was to minimize doctrinal variation among us or to outrightly deny it. **Therefore, the discussions which need to take place to resolve these heretofore denied issues, also need to take place with the greatest possible degree of public input and public scrutiny.** As it says on the ACELC website:

“1. **What do we hope to accomplish?**

It is the hope of those joining together in the association of congregations to make public the official and tolerated errors of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in such a way that a productive discussion can be held within and around our Synod to address, correct and resolve those matters that are in dispute among us. This is done with a Christian, fraternal, and loving intent, to restore the unity of our Synod in its doctrine and its practice.”<sup>16</sup>

Is this at odds with President Harrison's proposed Koinonia Project? Not at all. There is no need for the entire Synod to cease all doctrinal discussion while the initial Koinonia Project group has its sequestered discussions. Both things can and should occur at the same time so that when the

Koinonia group's findings are solidified for public presentation then the Synod at large is already well-versed in these issues and can more effectively receive the findings of that body of theologians. This is far preferable to hitting the Synod "cold turkey" with pronouncements from "on high" and being told they must accept them because this is what others have decided. The Synod must also be brought along as much as possible during the Koinonia process. Toward that end it would be helpful if, from time-to-time, President Harrison would bring the whole Synod up-to-date vis-à-vis the struggles, issues and variant positions under discussion in the Koinonia conclave. This may be done without naming names.

4. Throughout the Synod over the next triennium theological papers dealing specifically with the errors in contention among us must become the subject of study at every level of our Synod. Perhaps beginning in our circuit pastor's conferences. Let's get our errors out on the table and measure them against the Word of God and our Confessions. Let each circuit come to preliminary resolutions of those issues and formally submit them to their respective district presidents for inclusion in district convocations dedicated to bring our differences to a conclusion with biblical/Confessional resolution. Let the results of these district convocations be forwarded to the President of the Synod and let the Koinonia Project deal with them as there will certainly be conclusions which are at odds with one another. This way the movement for resolution is from the bottom-up, not the top-down.
5. When theological papers are presented at pastor's conferences, district convocations, or Synodical conventions, what would happen if we once again took seriously the old practice of "accepting" the papers formally by the body receiving them. This old practice indicated that the paper was in accord with Holy Scripture and the Confessions, but in recent decades such "acceptance" has become a *pro forma* exercise in politeness. Let's get serious again about our theology!
6. Additionally, the terms "*adiaphora*" (things neither commanded nor forbidden in Scripture) and "Christian liberty", need to be clearly differentiated from doctrine and practice. Closed Communion is most certainly not *adiaphora*, yet many in our Synod insist that it is. Our retention of the Divine Service (what our Confessions refer to as the Mass), is not *adiaphora*. Statements in our confessions like:

"At the outset, we must again make this preliminary statement: we do not abolish the Mass but religiously keep and defend it." (AP XXIV, 1, Dau/Bente)

"Therefore, since the Mass among us follows the example of the Church, taken from Scripture and the Fathers, we are confident that it cannot be disapproved. This is especially so because we keep the public ceremonies, which are for the most part similar to those previously in use." (AC XXIV, 40, Dau/Bente)

It is especially in the area of the public worship of our Synod that the misuse of the term, "Christian Liberty" is transformed into license to do whatever seems right in each pastor's own eyes. What has been the result of this misuse of Christian freedom? It has resulted in the division of the Church and sometimes in the division of families within the very same congregations as each generation runs off to exercise their personal worship "preferences" with grandma and grandpa heading to the traditional liturgical service, Baby Boomer mom and dad heading for the "Kum Ba Yah" service, and the kids heading to the "Heavy Metal/Head-Banger" service where they can talk on their cell phones during the "message". **Brothers and sisters, worship is the central function of the Church!** It is that from which all other activities of the Church flow and ought to be the very center of our life together as God's people and yet it is not. **Of all things in the Church that ought to bring us together, we find that we are being divided in our worship. That division is nothing short of tragic!** The on-going worship wars are still tearing us apart and it seems that some are simply unable to understand the offense that is given by the license that has been taken. We must clearly understand the difference between doctrine and practice and *adiaphora* and so-called Christian liberty. We simply must stop sacrificing the unity of the Church on the altar of personal preference.

7. Finally, theologically speaking, not only does our Synod need to clarify and define what we believe, teach, and confess about the issues which are in contention among us, so also do individual pastors, teachers, and laymen need to come to the same conclusion. Are we one in doctrine and practice or are we not?

## **What does the 2010 Synodical Convention mean for the future? Now, let us speak politically:**

As previously indicated, The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod is a political creature of the left hand kingdom. It is a political organization whose purpose is to support the true Church of Christ which is the congregations and their pastors gathered around the rightly taught Word of God and the rightly administered Sacraments. The LCMS is not an end in itself and should not consider itself as such. The Church of God is not dependent on The LCMS as it is Christ Himself who will not suffer even the gates of Hell to prevail against the Bride of Christ.

On page 175 of E. Clifford Nelson's book, *The Lutherans in North America*, there is a table of Lutheran church bodies existing between 1840 and 1875. Altogether there are 58 such church bodies listed there (Please see the attached table following the endnotes.) Of those 58 Lutheran church bodies only one still remains to this day: The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod. The lesson I learned from this table is that Synods come and go over time. They are not the Church herself. If The LCMS should suddenly disappear from the face of the earth, the Church would not cease to exist.

This does not mean that our Synod should be abandoned or discounted as insignificant nor considered unimportant. Not at all! The LCMS has a long history of faithful proclamation of the pure doctrine of the Christian faith. Together we've developed magnificent facilities in our colleges, universities, and seminaries so that this pure Gospel might be proclaimed to God's people without error and to a world in desperate need of salvation that only the pure Gospel clearly provides. However, unless we successfully and faithfully deal with the correction of our officially adopted and tolerated errors, all of this exists for no good purpose whatsoever. Our theology is the main purpose for our existence.

However, it is a political organization and as such, it is subject to manipulation by politicians. Therefore, the election and/or appointment of these politicians is critical to ensure that our Synod retains its purpose of promoting the pure Gospel of Christ and therefore the retention of an orthodox Lutheran character.

We have now seen what can happen when politicians who are intent on controlling the political structure to achieve an unbiblical agenda can do to our Synod. Let there be no mistake about it: those political action groups within our Synod like Jesus First, DayStar, and the like were good at what they did. And what did they do? They laid long-term plans to ensure that people who agreed with their un-Lutheran agenda were elected into positions of influence over time with the ultimate goal being the complete political control of The LCMS and the advancement of their Church Growth, numbers-driven, theology of glory dreams. They came perilously close to achieving their ultimate goal! That is why the election of President Harrison was so "tumultuous".

Will we learn from what we have just witnessed? Here are some possible lessons:

1. There remain those in our Synod who want nothing more than to get back into power at the 2013 Synodical convention and you can be absolutely assured that they are already laying their plans for precisely that outcome.
2. The only way to stop them is to resolve our theological differences and invite those who will not heed God's Word to leave our Synod or evict them if they refuse to leave. However, this will take a very long time to achieve and in the meantime, we still must deal with them as a political force in our Synod.
3. Unrelenting political vigilance must be maintained to ensure that those elected to every Synodical or district office, everyone elected and/or appointed to any of our Boards of Regents for any and all of our Synodical schools and seminaries must be filled only by those faithful to the Scriptures and the Confessions because the proclamation of the pure Gospel is at stake.
4. This means that the level of effort expended to elect faithful Lutherans at the 2010 convention must be replicated in each and every district of our Synod, at each and every one of our schools and seminaries, and for any and all boards either on the district or Synodical level.
5. This level of political activity will require political organization the likes of which we have not yet known.

6. **Here is the goal:** To elect to every position within each district and on the Synodical level only those who are faithful, Confessional Lutherans and to continue to monitor and work the political machinery of our Synod so that this faithfulness continues into the foreseeable future. In other words, every gain we have achieved by God's grace in 2010, must be expanded and solidified for the very long term.

How can this be accomplished?

This goal of maintaining a Confessional, liturgical, Scriptural Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod can only be obtained by consistent prayer, vigilant theological correction and review, and by hard political work identifying, recruiting, nominating, and electing faithful Lutherans to each and every position of leadership in our Synod.

This means that Confessional Lutherans in every district of our Synod must get organized to specifically accomplish these goals. If possible, they need to be accomplished through the official agencies and procedures of our Synod. But in those districts which are steadfastly at odds with faithful Lutheran doctrine and practice, then this organizational activity must take place informally as it did in preparation for the 2010 convention. The results of the 2010 Synodical convention prove that such ends can be achieved by a dedicated group of Confessional Lutherans on a national level. That same dedication and hard work now needs to happen in each and every district. Our opponents have also learned this lesson.

Why would we act in such overtly political ways? To gain political power? No! **Rather our purpose is to ensure that there is, and shall remain an orthodox Lutheran church body for future generations of our children and their children's children and, (if the Lord permits it), that the name of that church body will still be The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.**

**What I am proposing is nothing short of a complete, Confessional reformation of The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod in order for her to reclaim her former faithfulness to the pure doctrine of Christ's Gospel and the former authoritative voice that was listened to and respected throughout the world.** We must jettison every attempt to jump on whatever theological "bandwagon" comes into vogue, (and which vanishes just as quickly), and disdain the notion that The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod needs to get with it and become "The Lutheran Church of Whatever's Happening Lately" that we nearly became and are still in danger of becoming.

Almighty God has graciously allowed this Synod another opportunity to be the faithful church body we were once again. He has permitted the election of a man who has a heart for pure doctrine and a plan to restore our theological integrity if we have the God-given courage to grasp it. However, Matthew Harrison would be the first to admit that he is just a man, and a sinful man at that...just like the rest of us. He can't do the daunting job before him alone! President Harrison needs the prayers, the vocal support, and the hard work of every last Confessional pastor and layman in this Synod! He needs congregations who will speak out to insist that error be dealt with in accord with God's Word and its correct exposition the Lutheran Confessions. He needs the dedication of every participant in the Koinonia Project to either resolve the errors which divide us under God's Word only, or do what needs to be done and recognize our irreconcilable differences and orchestrate a righteous theological realignment into separate church bodies. Then, and only then, can we look at our Synod and rightly say that we belong to an orthodox Lutheran church body.

Some have said that the work of the ACELC is just like so many efforts that we have seen before. A statement is written. People subscribe to it and nothing ever gets done. I empathize with that sentiment and agree that statements alone cannot resolve our differences. What counts is what is done with such statements. Proper, Godly, and unrelenting action to ensure that the issues which such statements raise are addressed and finally resolved in accord with a proper confession of God's Word is the badly needed follow-through that will bear good fruit. Perhaps now is the time when our own Synod can serve as the catalyst for such Godly efforts rather than be an impediment to honest concerns. Perhaps now is the time when we may recapture the treasure of pure doctrine which is the shining light of the Lutheran/Christian faith. Perhaps now faithfulness to God's truth will be the measure of God's blessings on our battle-worn Synod.

The date was July 10, 1973. The resolution before the Synodical convention was 3-01 – To Adopt "A Statement". Hanging in the balance was all that was to transpire that following year culminating in the



walk-out of 45 of 50 seminary faculty members at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. The resolution carried by a vote of 562-455. Rev. Herman Neunaber of the Southern Illinois District sought a Point of Privilege that he be allowed to register his objections to the vote in the record. Rev. Samuel Roth also sought such a registration and invited others to do the same and join in singing the first stanza of the hymn, "The Church's One Foundation". It was an iconic moment in the history of our Synod and for many years Confessional pastors simply could not bring themselves to sing that hymn again.

Today, in this place let us recapture this great hymn for the cause of our troubled Synod. That it's singing might spur us on to speak, not for the errors of the Seminex controversy of the 70's, but for the reformation of our Synod to its faithfulness. In 1973 the faithful sat while others stood and sung. Now I ask that the faithful stand and once again give voice to this great song of the Church. Please join me:

### **THE CHURCH'S ONE FOUNDATION**

The Church's one foundation is Jesus Christ, her Lord;  
She is His new creation by water and the Word.  
From heav'n He came and sought her to be His holy bride;  
With His own blood He bought her, and for her life He died.

Elect from ev'ry nation, yet one o'er all the earth;  
Her charter of salvation: One Lord, one faith, one birth.  
One holy name she blesses, partakes one holy food,

And to one hope she presses with ev'ry grace endued.  
Though with a scornful wonder the world sees her oppressed,  
By schisms rent asunder, by heresies distressed.  
Yet saints their watch are keeping; their cry goes up, "How long?"  
And soon the night of weeping shall be the morn of song.

Through toil and tribulation and tumult of her war  
She waits the consummation of peace forevermore  
Till with the vision glorious her longing eyes are blest,  
And the great Church victorious shall be the Church at rest.

Yet she on earth has union with God, the Three in One,  
And mystic sweet communion with those who rest is won.  
O blessed heav'nly chorus! Lord save us by Your grace  
That we like saints before us, may see You face to face.

- <sup>1</sup> Sasse, Hermann, *The Lonely Way*, Vol. 1, trans. Matthew Harrison, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Missouri, 2001, p. 271.
- <sup>2</sup> Pieper, Francis, *Christian Dogmatics*, Vol III, Concordia Publishing House, 1953, pp. 422-423.
- <sup>3</sup> Op. Cit., Sasse, p. 270.
- <sup>4</sup> Walther, C.F.W. "Duties of an Evangelical Lutheran Synod." *Essays for the Church*, vol 2. St. Louis: CPH, 1992. Page 31.
- <sup>5</sup> Harrison, Matthew, "It's Time!", <http://itistime.org/> , p. 8.
- <sup>6</sup> Op. Cit., Sasse, p. 268.
- <sup>7</sup> Op. Cit., Pieper, p. 427.
- <sup>8</sup> Pieper, Francis, "The Difficult Task of Holding Forth for the Truth", *At Home in the House of My Fathers*, trans. Matthew Harrison, Lutheran Legacy Publishers, 2009, p. 630.
- <sup>9</sup> Walther, C.F.W., "The True Visible Church", *Essays For the Church*, vol. I, Thesis IX, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Missouri, p. 138.
- <sup>10</sup> Ibid., C.F.W. Walther, "The True Visible Church", p. 141.
- <sup>11</sup> *2007 Handbook*, "Bylaws of The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod", Article I, 1.8.1, 1.8.2, p. 34, LCMS, St. Louis, Missouri.
- <sup>12</sup> Ibid., Article VIII, C, p. 14, LCMS, St. Louis, Missouri.
- <sup>13</sup> Ibid, Article VIII, p. 11.
- <sup>14</sup> Loc. Cit., Harrison, "It's Time", p. 11.
- <sup>15</sup> Loc. Cit., Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, vol. III, p. 427.
- <sup>16</sup> Frequently Asked Questions, <http://www.acelc.net>.