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SERMON for the OPENING SERVICE of the 48TH ANNUAL CONVENTION

**of the
Concordia Lutheran Conference
Friday, June 25, 1999**

Delivered by the Rev. Paul R. Bloedel, President

Text: **Ephesians 4:14-15**

Beloved friends in Christ and especially all pastoral and lay delegates to the 48th Convention of our Concordia Lutheran Conference, guests and visitors,

When the satanic spirit of liberalism entered the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, that once great synod began to forsake the only norm and standard of faith and life which had been upheld steadfastly by Walther, Pieper and others up till about the year 1922. A resentful spirit began slowly to enter the Synod apparently beginning with the professors in the prep schools and in St. Louis Seminary, through the synodical officials to the rank and file among the pastors and stimulated by influential liberal laymen who were evidently moved by popularity and outward growth and prominence and who were without solid Scriptural convictions. This spirit finally erupted publicly with a document called “*A Statement*,” drawn up, signed and circulated by forty-four prominent Missouri Synod professors, pastors, and theologians in the year 1945.

These Statementarians, as they were called, whose numbers increased steadily into the hundreds, deplored the lack of love exercised by those who opposed the sin of unionism and encouraged the joining together in religious work and worship with heterodox Lutherans in spite of differences in doctrine and practice. There was talk, in those days, of uniting in religious work and worship at least on the basis of those doctrines on which they were agreed. The stage soon became set for the adoption of the “*Common Confession*,” a union document which compromised the Scriptural position of the Missouri Synod, as set forth in *The Brief Statement*, with the errors of the American Lutheran Church. The *Common Confession*, consequently, placed the Missouri Synod on a false confessional foundation in the name of LOVE.

False teaching then began to run rampant and was tolerated throughout the synod on the verbal inspiration of Scripture, on the days of creation, on Adam and Eve being real people, on the virgin birth of Christ, on objective justification, on the Sacrament of the Altar and on the doctrine of the Church and ministry. Boy Scoutism and the military chaplaincy were embraced; money making schemes (bake sales, bazaars, raffles, etc.) became popular throughout synod; women began to vote in the congregations and became voters at synodical conventions; pastors could be called into and discharged from their offices by majority vote; even the modern worldly dance, which had been consistently denounced as sinful throughout synod, became socially acceptable; and many congregations began to hold dances in their church buildings for various social events and at weddings. And all this was tolerated in the name of love, while pastors who insisted on remaining faithful to the pure teachings of God’s Word in doctrine and practice and urged the synod to return to a God-pleasing in accordance with God’s Word, were expelled from their congregations in the most loveless, unscrupulous and unscriptural fashion.

One of the Scripture texts which the liberals in the Missouri Synod used as their watchword, at that time, and in which they found refuge was the text on which the motto for our convention this year is based, namely, “*Speaking the Truth in love*.” They felt that the former attitude of the Missouri Synod toward false doctrine and a strict adherence to Scripture was *loveless* and *legalistic*. This, of course, met with hearty approval on the part of the majority of lay people throughout the Synod, who had not been thoroughly instructed in the Word of God, who were

happy to be able to join in religious work and worship with relatives and friends in heterodox Lutheran congregations, and who felt that now they were more in step with the times. They were led completely to misunderstand the Word of God in our text.

Let us therefore consider as the theme for our meditation in this opening service of our 1999 Convention these words of St. Paul to the Christians at Ephesus:

“Speaking the Truth in Love”

Let us consider:

- I.** The truths which should be spoken, taught, and confessed, both in doctrine and practice, and
- II.** How love should be the moving element when the truths of God’s Word are spoken and correctly applied.

Now, may God the Holy Ghost bless the consideration of His Word.

I.

In the verses which precede the words of our text, the Apostle Paul speaks of the work of the ascended Christ in the growth of His Church on earth: How He is not far away from His Church but fills all things with His divine presence and majesty by which He rules the whole world for the benefit of the true believers; how He gives to them apostles, and prophets, and evangelists, and pastors and teachers that they might be perfected in their faith, that they might faithfully be served with the Word, that they might be built up as the Body of Christ in unity and faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ spiritually mature, knowing the teachings of Scripture well and being able to apply the Word of God to their thoughts, words, and actions that from this day forward they are no longer children tossed about by every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive. Then come the words of our theme, *“But speaking the Truth in love,”* and the text continues, *“we may grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ!”*

It is obvious from the context that the truth referred to in our text, which we should speak, is not merely human truths (for example, the truths in mathematics or true science) as *opposed* to fiction or to something which is obviously untrue. The truth which we should speak in love is the truth of God’s Word, as opposed to error and false teaching, as opposed to *“good words and fair speeches which deceive the hearts of the simple,”* as opposed to *“every wind of doctrine”* by which, as children, immature Christians are tossed about to their own destruction, as opposed to the *“sleight of men, and cunning craftiness”* by which unsuspecting Christians are deceived, as opposed to the *“sheep’s clothing”* of the false prophets who as ravenous wolves greedily devour the sheep. What faithful teaching and thorough instruction in the Word of God is therefore called for by these words, *“Speaking the Truth in love?”*

Without question, *“Speaking the Truth in love”* must begin in your home! Your children should be told, as soon as they are able to understand words, that they had been brought to the Lord Jesus in Holy Baptism on which occasion, through faith in their Savior, they vowed what had been publicly expressed by their sponsors, namely, to serve the Triune God and Him only and to resist the devil and all his wicked works and ways. And so, to a little child, you, as a Christian father, may therefore say, “Dear little girl or dear little boy, when you were a tiny infant you were baptized. Water was poured on your head three times, in the name of the true God, Father,

Son, and Holy Ghost. By having you baptized, your mother and I brought you to the Lord Jesus; and you were made His dear child, a lamb in the fold of the Good Shepherd. If you had died when you were still an infant or a very young child, you would have died believing in Jesus as your Savior; and God's holy angels would have taken you to heaven. Then the goal for which the Lord had given you to us would have been reached, and you would be happy forever and ever."

As early as possible little children should be taught words and their meanings which should become a part of their Christian vocabulary: Bible, sin, Satan, death, hell, Jesus, Father, Son, Holy Ghost, heaven, Savior, prayer, angels, God's commandments and God's love. It's not difficult to explain to little children what sin is and how, because of sin, we deserve death and everlasting punishment in hell; how sin came into the world and why all people are sinners, even Mama and Daddy and Brother and Sister; how Jesus, the Son of God, became a little child to keep God's holy Law perfectly in their place and to suffer the punishment of hell on the cross for them and for all people, the punishment which they deserved by their sins, that all who believe in Him might receive the forgiveness of sins and go to heaven; and then how eager we should be to show our love for Jesus by our words and by our actions. Such words and concepts should be instilled or imparted consistently into the minds of your children by talking to them, even in your everyday conversation, *and* by your example, as they grow in wisdom and knowledge during the very formative, pre-school years of their lives. They should know to whom they pray, whom they praise, and to whom they give thanks, and WHY! Then they can be encouraged, out of love for Jesus, to renew their Baptismal Vow every day, saying, "O help me Lord this day to be Thine own dear child and follow Thee; and lead me, Savior, by Thy hand until I reach the heavenly land;" "Keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please Thee!" "Dear Savior, hear my little prayer! Make it so I don't sin so much any more!" "Help me to be good; to love my mama and daddy and my brothers and sisters more and more day by day; and to be kind to them. Help me to make Your commandments the rule for my life because You loved me so much that you suffered and died for my sins and made it possible for a sinner like me to go to heaven!"

"*Speaking the Truth in love*" should, in this way, begin in your home, even as the Lord says in Deuteronomy 6:6-8, "*These words, which I command Thee this day, shall be in thine heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes, and thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house and on thy gates!*" O, what would our Conference be like if all of our households diligently followed this Word of God "*that we may grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ!*" Do you think that our children, on which the future of our congregations and our Conference rests, raised in such a Christian environment, would easily be tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine and by behavior which is contrary to the Word of God? Do we not, then, as parents see the gravity of the situation; and should we not resolve that the pure truths of God's Word, where Law and Gospel are properly divided, must always be the guiding principle in our homes?

Then what about our pastors' work among us? How eagerly and how readily such Christian parents will want to hold up their pastor's hands by insisting that their children work diligently in preparing their Sunday School lessons and Confirmation Class assignments, that ample time is used productively for their memorization of the assigned Bible passages, and that the Word of God is not simply given a lick and a promise but is thoroughly committed to memory, and that they approach their work with the Word of God in prayer, saying, "*O Lord, Thy Word is before me. Help me to learn it well with a reverent and teachable mind that, through it, my faith may*

be strengthened and I may grow in my knowledge of Thee and in the application of Thy Word to what I believe and how I act to the glory of Thy holy Name, my gracious Savior and Redeemer, without whom I am lost and condemned, ruined in body and soul;" and that they are able to put into their own words how each Bible passage which they memorize is important for them, how it applies to what they believe, how they talk, and how they live out their lives in this world as dear children of God.

Such "*speaking the truth in love*" should also be evidenced in every divine service and Bible class throughout our Conference. The truths of Scripture, spoken from your pulpit, should not be mere platitudes or just quotations from the Bible or from orthodox church fathers or from the Lutheran Confessions, but should carefully be applied to the faith and life of the members in the congregation; and, because all Scripture is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction and for instruction in righteousness, "*speaking the Truth*" involves everything that is taught in the Bible, even as the Apostle Paul told the Ephesian elders, the pastors, at Miletus, "*I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God!*" Yes, truths should be spoken which plainly set forth what the Bible teaches in opposition to all the false teaching and practice throughout external Lutheranism, as well as among the Reformed, and wherever sectarianism rears its ugly head; also those truths which speak out plainly against the socially and politically acceptable sins of our day: abortion; the modern dance; pornography in literature, art, and photography; unmarried couples living together as husband and wife; sexual perversion described as an alternative life style; and drunkenness as a sickness; economic speculation and gambling; government lotteries; stealing by a show of right and the gaining wealth by all kinds of suits against others in court; gossip and sins of the tongue which can so easily destroy the unity of the spirit in a Christian congregation; avarice and over-extending one's income by the misuse of credit cards; and so on.

Bible classes should be held not only on Sunday morning but also at other times during the week, if possible, so that any average member in the congregations of our Conference is enabled to do what our text and the theme of this convention tells us, namely, to *speak the truth in love*. The Word of God, through the pen of the Apostle Paul in our text, is not directed merely to pastors but to all true Christians everywhere. There should be a thorough knowledge and understanding of God's Word. You can't speak what you don't know! You have to *know* the truth before you can speak, confess, uphold and defend it! Thus the Apostle Peter urges us in his epistles to grow in our knowledge of Scripture, not to stagnate after Confirmation and thereby lose even that which we, by God's grace, have! As new-born babes frantically want their milk, so we should earnestly and eagerly desire the unadulterated Word of our God, that we may grow thereby. Again the Apostle Peter writes: "*Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*" And these words are written in the context of a warning directive. The first passage, I Peter 2:2, which tells us that we should desire the Word of God as new born babes desire milk, is preceded by the words, "*Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings [things which destroy faith], as new born babes, DESIRE the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may GROW thereby!*" and in II Peter 3:17, the admonition to grow in grace and knowledge is preceded by the warning, "*Beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But GROW in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!*" Yes, in order to speak the truth, you must grow in it. Not to grow means most often to stagnate and to retrogress, just like a child who does not grow is seriously ill and may soon die! Not to use the Word of God in our lives by speaking, confessing, teaching and upholding its precious truths is to lose it or to have it taken from us by the Lord Himself, whom, by our non-use of the Scriptures, we would be asking to visit us with a famine of His Word. I can think of nothing more terrible in the whole

world: no one to speak, teach, confess or uphold the Word of God in its full truth and purity.

II.

Now, this “truthing” is to be done in “LOVE!” Our text does not have in it the words “*speaking the truth*” as it is translated in our *King James Version*. Instead of the phrase “*speaking the truth*,” our text has only a single Greek word which cannot be translated with a single word in the English language unless we used a made-up word such as the word “truthing!” This word would then include speaking, teaching, confessing, defending, conversing in, contending for, upholding, admonishing, rebuking, and comforting with the Word of God. “**Truthing in love!**”

Whenever we speak, teach, confess, or uphold the truth of God’s Word, we are to be motivated by LOVE first of all, love for the Lord, who has been infinitely gracious to us and in all His dealings with the children of men in Christ Jesus, our Savior, and secondly (the way in which the word love is evidently used in our text, namely), our love for the souls of others which is built on our faith in and love for our Savior. This, of course, is not the kind of love which the Statementarians had in mind when they chose this text as their motto. They actually used this Word of God to defend “watering down” the truth or “compromising” it with error for the sake of *outward* peace and unity. This they called “*speaking the Truth in LOVE!*” To them it was more loving to join together in religious work and worship with those who teach false doctrine and the followers of false teachers, than to follow the Word of God which says in Romans 16:17, “*Mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them!*” Because of this wrong use of the word “love,” they also forsook following the words of the Lord Jesus in Matthew 18, so that the God-pleasing use of church discipline and excommunication, as well as synodical doctrinal discipline, fell into disuse and is seldom, if ever, found any longer in the Missouri Synod or its constituent congregations.

In our text, the Apostle Paul obviously opposes that speaking the truth of God’s Word which is merely done for the purpose of contention or strife (Philippians 1:15-16), or primarily to make a show of one’s theological acumen, understanding and knowledge. Such a pedantic misuse of the God’s Word would remove from it its power and grace and be an offense to the weak. Our pastors’ sermons, throughout our Conference, should not merely be a recitation of Scriptural truths or, as is so popular among conservative Lutherans today, an endless quoting from our orthodox fathers or from the Lutheran Confessions. Every sermon should be a vital demonstration of love for the souls of the people which God has committed to their care to feed, people who are being fed daily with the husks of man’s wisdom at work, at school, in the market place, at the doctor’s office, in conversation with worldly-minded friends and relatives, on television, over the radio, in the newspaper, and in millions of books. Every sermon should be filled with that wisdom alone which is able to save their souls, which is a mystery to man as he is by nature and to our old sinful flesh, hidden from the wise and prudent of this world but revealed unto babes, so that the preacher *feeds* the Church of God which He has purchased with His own blood (Acts 20:28)!

And, to this end, Law and Gospel must be properly divided not only in our sermons but also in our Bible Classes, in our Sunday Schools, in our instruction classes for Confirmation, in our families, in our conversations with our fellow Christians and with those who are outside our fellowship. We must tell others the truth about themselves, even as we know from Scripture the truth about ourselves: How that we are, by nature, lost and condemned, ruined in body and soul, deserving nothing but eternal condemnation in hell. Why? Because each one of us is conceived and born in sin, having no true fear, love and trust in God in our hearts as we came forth from our mother’s womb, without any righteousness or the ability to do even so much as one good thing which is pleasing to the Lord, not being able to know or understand the things of the Spirit of God, dead in trespasses and sins, enemies

of God and opposed to His Word! Yes, there is not one good thing in us by nature because of which fact even our best works are as filthy rags in God's sight (Isaiah 64:6)!

We must reveal to others God's wonderful plan of salvation for them, even as we know that precious truth for ourselves: How that God loved us and all human beings from before the foundation of the world! Why? Not because of anything good in us or about us! Why then? Because of His undeserved kindness which the Bible calls "*grace*" and which cannot be separated from Christ Jesus, our Savior! In eternity, God determined to send His only-begotten Son into this sin-cursed world, to make Him a true man like unto us in every respect, yet without sin, that, as a true man, He might be able to take our place under the Law and suffer the eternal punishment of hell which all people deserve; and that, as true God, His keeping of the Law would be sufficient for every man, woman and child ever to live here on earth, thus satisfying God's *legislative* justice, and that His suffering the torments of hell would be substitutional for all people, thus satisfying God's *punitive* justice. God commands us to keep His holy Law perfectly in thoughts, desires, words and deeds. Jesus did just that in your place, sanctifying your sinful birth by His sinless birth and sanctifying your sinful life by His sinless life, "*for as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous*" (Romans 5:19)! God demands eternal punishment for every one who is conceived and born in sin and is not holy and perfect in His sight. This demand, too, Jesus fulfilled as your Substitute, bearing in His own sinless body the consequences of sin throughout His life here on earth and, on the accursed tree of the cross, enduring the torments of hell which you and I and all people deserve by our sins, so that He "*has redeemed us from the curse of the Law being made a curse for us!*" (Galatians 3:13). Therefore in Christ "*we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace*" (Ephesians 1:7) because "*God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them*" (II Corinthians 5:19). Yes, "*ALL [who] have sinned and come short of the glory of God*" are "*justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus*" (Romans 3:24), that all who believe in Him "*should not perish but have everlasting life*" (John 3:16)!

But WHO among us can believe in Jesus as our Savior and Redeemer? Here, too, we must confess to others the Scriptural truth, so notoriously perverted by the Reformed sects, that none of us can make our own decision for Christ or believe in Him as our Savior by our own reason or strength because of our sinful conception and birth. It is the Gospel, the Good News of our salvation in Christ Jesus, our Savior, in Word and Sacraments, through which God, by His almighty power, changes the human heart, making His enemies His friends, opening spiritually blind eyes so that they may see the way to heaven, and making the spiritually dead alive! The Bible says, "*Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God which liveth and abideth for ever!*" (I Peter 1:23). The Gospel is God's power to save us, as it is written, "*I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation!*" (Romans 1:16); and, speaking of the true believers, John writes, "*Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God!*" (I John 1:13). "*So then faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God!*" (Romans 10:17).

Yes, we must be motivated by love for the souls of others when we speak these precious truths to them. We are not handling human philosophy or cunningly devised fables but the Word of God through which God works, nourishes, and sustains saving faith in the human heart and brings others into His Kingdom of Grace. Only the Word of God, the Holy Scriptures, are "*able to make [them] wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus*" (II Timothy 3:15).

But "*speaking the Truth in love*" or "*truthing in love*" must also involve itself in telling other

professing Christians how good works are an absolute necessity in their lives and in the life of every true child of God, even as following the Word of God in YOUR life is so vitally important, remembering always that it is not your upright life or your good works which make you a Christian, but that you endeavor to live an upright life and do good works because the Lord has made you a Christian. As a Christian you do not do good works in order to get to heaven, but because heaven is already yours through Christ your Savior as a free gift of God's grace! Good works, a Christian life, is the fruit of your faith in Christ Jesus, who says, "*If a man love Me, he will keep My Words*" (John 14:23); "*If ye love Me, keep My commandments!*" (John 14:15). Here is where admonition, comfort, warning, exhortation, and instruction in righteousness occupy an important part in "*speaking the Truth in love*" as Christians. Out of love for the souls of others, you should also tell them ever so plainly, "If you are really a Christian, you will earnestly want to live your life as a child of God. You should therefore live your Christianity, "*walk[ing] worthy of the vocation wherewith [you] are called*" (Ephesians 4:1), glorifying God both by your words and by your deeds in harmony with what God says in His Word.

A Christian cannot love his Savior and, at the same time, despise certain portions of God's Word. If there are errors in doctrine and practice, you should *speaking the truth in love* by refuting those errors with the pure teachings of Scripture, knowing that any error will threaten a person's faith; it "*will eat as doth a canker*" (II Timothy 2:17); and as yeast, it will "*leaven the whole lump*" (I Corinthians 5:6). If there are those who claim to be Christians and listen to and support false teachers, you should *speaking the truth in love* and warn them with the words of Jesus, "*Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves*" (Matthew 7:15). If a fellow Christian is given to worldliness, and his mind is beginning to be obsessed with the pleasures of this life, and he is pondering how close he can get to living as the world lives and yet not sin; if he is seriously ill; if doubts beset his heart; if troubles, the cares and the worries of life, anxieties and hardships besiege him; if he is gravitating toward unchristian friends and companions; rightly apply the pure teachings of God's Word out of love for his soul and point out plainly what should always and only motivate him to oppose whatever threatens his faith, namely, the great love of God in Christ Jesus his Savior, to listen to and to heed carefully the warnings, exhortations, instructions and admonitions which you are able to bring to him from the Scriptures. If your "*speaking the truth [to him] in love*" meets with stubbornness and contempt, such a person may have already lost his saving faith in Christ Jesus and may be on the broad road to hell!

May our text and motto for this year's convention sink deeply into your heart and encourage you to use the Bible passages which you have committed to memory down through the years, especially in your Confirmation instruction class, so that, rightly dividing the Word of truth, using both Law and Gospel in its proper application to what you, as a Christian, believe and how you, as a Christian, live, the Word of God may become in you, as our Savior said to the Samaritan woman, "*a well of water springing up into everlasting life*" (John 4:14), "*that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the sleight of men and cunning craftiness whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ.*" God grant it! Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria!

SERMON PREACHED at the SUNDAY SERVICE

of the

Forth-eighth Annual Convention

of

CONCORDIA LUTHERAN CONFERENCE

delivered by

The Rev. M. L. Natterer, Pastor — St. John's Lutheran Church, Lebanon, Oregon

Text: **I Corinthians 13:6**

My dearly beloved fellow believers:

How is a man saved? Not by his works but by the grace of God through faith in Jesus. *“For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast”* (Ephesians 2:8-9). Our Lutheran Confessions bear witness to this blessed truth when it declares in Article IV of the Augsburg Confession of 1530, “It is also taught among us that we cannot obtain forgiveness of sin and righteousness before God by our own merits, works, or satisfactions, but that we receive forgiveness of sin and become righteous before God by grace, for Christ’s sake, through faith, when we believe that Christ suffered for us and that for His sake our sin is forgiven and righteousness and eternal life are given to us. For God will regard and reckon this faith as righteousness, as Paul says in Romans 3:21-26 and 4:5.” This blessed Scriptural teaching was brazenly condemned by the Romanists at the Council of Trent in Session VI, Canon 11,12 and by all the work-mongers of today. But this is the teaching of Scripture, the only teaching which brings certain and lasting comfort to our sin-burdened souls. And, by God’s grace, it is the teaching of the true orthodox Lutheran Church. We teach this truth in our Lutheran Catechism, (pages 140,141), and unashamedly confess it before men. One of the chief criticisms of this Scriptural teaching is that this teaching fosters the idea that man can now live as he pleases without any restraints upon his behavior. But such forget that where the Holy Spirit has truly regenerated the heart through the sweet Gospel message then the fruits of faith automatically follow. *“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature”* (II Corinthians 5:17); *“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them”* (Ephesians 2:10). It cannot be otherwise, *“Faith without works is dead”* (James 2:26). While we Christians know these truths so well, because of our sinful flesh and the constant temptations of the devil and the unbelieving world which give us, as Luther so aptly writes, no peace or rest day or night, we must constantly be reminded of these truths lest we succumb to the false ideas which so many people harbor within their minds and which flow from their lips. Let us at this convention then beseech the Holy Spirit to enlighten our hearts and minds concerning the queen, as Luther calls it, of all our Christian virtues and consider that:

God-pleasing Love**I.** rejoices not in iniquity, but **II.** rejoices in the truth**I.**

Love has been, is, and will continue to be shamefully abused by ever so many people. Love is used to excuse practically every kind of sin such as: false doctrine, living together without the benefit of marriage, perversion, gossip, stealing, and even murder. Look, for example, at the sin of abortion. “Did you know that every year between 45 and 60 million abortions are performed? That is 4 times as many people as in New York ... Every year as many unborn are aborted as were killed in the entire Second World War. And not to be forgotten is the fact that the Second World War lasted some six years while we are speaking about the number of abortions for ONE year” (Adapted from “Kinder: Sachen zum Wegwerfen?”). Recently we read about a father

whose 26-year-old son was a pervert. Instead of telling his son that if he did not repent of this abomination he would be cast into hell, he stated publicly, “I must love —and I’m proud of— my gay son” (*Detroit Free Press*, November 20, 1998). He even went so far as to add another item — a license plate that reads “GAY SON.” It is almost unbelievable that there are those who seek to excuse such flagrant transgressions of God’s Word in the name of love!

Dr. Joseph F. Fletcher, professor of ethics at Cambridge Episcopal Theological School, became very famous with the publication in 1966 of his book *Situation Ethics*. In it he set forth “that any acts, even lying, premarital sex, abortion, adultery and murder could be right — depending on the situation. Because whatever is the most loving thing in the situation is the right and good thing. It is not excusably evil, it is positively good.” All this under the guise of love! This is the insidious teaching which has spread throughout Christendom like a malignant cancer. We are reminded of the Jesuits founded by Ignatius Loyola who held to the principle that “the end justifies the means.” Carried out consistently under the banner of love, the consequences would be horrendous! Then in the final analysis all manner of iniquity could then be justified!

Let us look carefully at this chapter from which our text has been selected. When we go back to verse one we note that the word “*charity*” is used in our Bible. In fact, it is used nine times in the thirteen verses comprising this chapter. In each case the same Greek word is used — *agape*, which means “love.” This Greek word stands for what is generally considered to be the highest form of love. It is most often used to describe God’s love for us. In Romans chapter 5, verse 8 we read, “*But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*” And in that verse which we commonly refer to as the Gospel in a nutshell, John 3:16, we observe that a verb form of this word is used when it tells us that “*God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son...*” (John 3:16). This word is used also to denote the love with which we should love God but also one another. “*We love Him, because He first loved us*” (I John 4:19). And the Lord Jesus declares “*This is My commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you*” (John 15:12). Such a love does not rejoice in that which is displeasing to Him who loved us beyond measure in redeeming us from sin, death and hell by His substitutionary sacrifice upon the cross.

Whoever loves to rejoice in iniquity does not possess a God-pleasing love, yea, such a one is not even a Christian. There is no middle ground, no fence straddling as it were, for “*no man can serve two masters: for he will hate the one and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon*” (Matthew 6:24). Look at the vast host of believers throughout the Old and New Testaments who did not rejoice in iniquity! We think of such notable examples as the Prophet Elijah, who denounced King Ahab’s wickedness (I Kings 18), and John the Baptist, who came in the spirit and power of Elijah (Luke 1:17; Matthew 17:1-13), telling King Herod that it was not lawful for him to have his brother’s wife (Matthew 14:3). And what about the Apostle Paul who did not rejoice in iniquity but rebuked the members of the Corinthian congregation because their toleration of various sins (e.g. I Corinthians 5). So also we Christians. Not rejoicing in iniquity does not simply refer to a conviction of the mind but it also includes speaking out against iniquity! “*For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh*” (Matthew 12:34).

Are these words of our text applicable to us? Indeed they are! After all, the Apostle Paul penned this epistle to the “*church of God which is at Corinth, them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints...*” (I Corinthians 1:2). Here was a Christian congregation established as a result of the preaching of the Gospel by the Apostle Paul on his second missionary journey (Acts 18:1-11). And the Apostle knew only too well that they still possessed their sinful flesh

which manifested itself in various sins for which the Apostle had to rebuke them. We, my dear fellow-believers, are no exception! And if any one of us thinks that he is, then let him take note of Luther's words given to those who feel no hunger and thirst for the Lord's Supper. Let him "put his hand into his bosom, and feel whether he still have flesh and blood, and that he by all means believe what the Scriptures say of it in Galatians 5 and Romans 7;" let him "look around to see whether he is still in the world and keep in mind that there will be no lack of sin and trouble, as the Scriptures say in John 15 and 16; I John 2 and 5;" let him remind himself that "he will certainly have the devil also about him, who with his lying and murdering, day and night, will let him have no peace within or without, as the Scriptures picture him in John 8 and 16; I Peter 5; Ephesians 6; II Timothy 2" (Christian Questions and Answers). There is not one of us who could skip the Fifth Petition of the Lord's Prayer, "*Forgive us our trespasses.*" No, "*there is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not*" (Ecclesiastes 7:20).

Particularly in these last evil days of the world in which the devil has been loosed (Revelation 20:3) the temptations are intensified as we observe in the words of the Lord Jesus, "*For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened*" (Matthew 24:21-22). And the Savior reminds us that "*the love of many shall wax cold*" (Matthew 24:12). And have we not experienced that in our congregations? Many who at one time appeared to oppose all manner of iniquity gradually succumbed to the desires of their flesh and, like Demas (II Timothy 4:10), lost their love for the Word and ran with the world. Hence we Christians must constantly "*watch and pray, lest [we] enter into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak*" (Matthew 26:41).

II.

God-pleasing love "rejoices in the truth." Many sneeringly remark with Pontius Pilate, "*What is truth?*" (John 18:38). We surely can not depend upon men for the truth. The Psalmist laments, "*I said in my haste, all men are liars*" (116:11). Look at the reputation of the Cretians concerning whom one of their own prophets declared, "*The Cretians are always liars;*" and the apostle acknowledges, "*This witness is true*" (Titus 1:12,13). No matter how honorable and upright a Christian may be, the believer still has his sinful flesh and must confess with the Apostle, "*The good that I would I do not, and the evil which I would not, that I do*" (Romans 7). No wonder, then, that, in writing to the Christian congregation at Ephesus, we observe how the Apostle admonishes them, "*Putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another*" (Ephesians 4:25). And the Lord condemns the sin of lying. In the last book of the Bible He declares that "*all liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death*" (Revelation 21:8).

In view of this we ask: Where then is the **absolute** truth to be found if we can not find it with men? For us Christians the answer is so plain. The **absolute** truth is found in the Holy Scriptures! The Lord Jesus says in His high-priestly prayer, "*Thy Word is truth*" (John 17:17). And why is that Word the absolute truth? Because "*all Scripture is given by inspiration of God*" (II Timothy 3:16) and "*holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*" (II Peter 1:21). The words which these holy men of God spake were not "*the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth*" (I Corinthians 2:13). "*It [is] impossible for God to lie!*" (Hebrews 6:18). "*Every word of God is pure*" (Proverbs 30:5).

O what comfort for us Christians to know that the Bible is the verbally inspired oracle of God and not a collection of the writings of man's wisdom! Our Christian faith rests upon a solid foundation

and is “*built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief Cornerstone*” (Ephesians 2:20). And we Christians rejoice in that Word and cheerfully confess with our Lutheran forefathers, “We receive and embrace with our whole heart the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the pure, clear foundation of Israel, which is the only standard by which all teachers and doctrines are to be judged” (*Formula of Concord, Through Declaration, Compr. Sum., 3.9 Ap., IV, 107; III, 268*). This is the Word which tells us that although we have rightly deserved to be cast into the eternal fires of hell because of our sins, for “*the wages of sin is death*” (Romans 6:23), “*but God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us*” (Romans 5:8); yea, “*God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus*” (Ephesians 2:4-6).

Now I ask you: How could we possibly rejoice and take comfort in this message unless the Scriptures were indeed the infallible truth of God? Only then can we confidently confess with the disciples concerning the Lord Jesus, “*We believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God*” (John 6:69).

Since we Christians have found our joy and peace in the absolute truth of Holy Writ which assures us that we have been translated out of the kingdom of darkness into the marvelous light of Christ’s glorious kingdom, we are now to “*show forth the praises of Him who hath called [us] out of darkness into His marvelous light*” (I Peter 2:9). For if we truly love the Savior who gave Himself for us, then we shall also strive with the aid of the Holy Spirit to amend our sinful lives and sincerely seek to follow the absolute Word of Truth. Jesus says, “*If a man love Me, he will keep My words*” (John 14:23). And where are the Savior’s words? In the absolute Word of Truth — the Holy Scriptures! Rejoicing in that Word, we Christians then rejoice in following that Word in our relationship with the children of the world and with our fellow-believers. The Savior commands us, “*Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven*” (Matthew 5:16). The unbelievers can not see the faith which dwells within our hearts, for “*the Lord knoweth them that are His*” (II Timothy 2:19). They observe only what we say and do. How quick they are to note discrepancies. Hence we hear the Apostle Peter warn us, “*Let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil doer, or as a busybody in other men’s matters*” (I Peter 4:15).

And what about our relationship with one another as brothers and sisters in Christ? If we truly rejoice in the absolute truth, then we shall love to practice truthfulness and uprightness with one another. O how we must pray in this respect with the Psalmist, “*Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips*” (Psalm 141:3). Why? Because, writes the Apostle James, “*the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity...and unruly, evil, full of deadly poison*” (3:6,8). Many a congregation has been literally torn asunder by tongues wagging with malicious gossip and lies!

Such sins are totally incompatible with our high and noble calling as the children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. Not only are we commanded to “*speak not evil one of another, brethren*” (James 4:11), but also “*let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbor*” (Zechariah 8:17).

Well, you ask: What am I to do if I know that my Christian brother or sister is guilty of a sin plainly contrary to the Word of God? Love rejoices in the truth and we know what God’s Word of Truth tells us to do. “*If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone*” (Matthew 18:15). And the manner in which this is to be done, is

also told us in Holy Writ. *“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted”* (Galatians 6:1). God-pleasing love will reveal itself not clothed in pharisaical self-righteousness but rather in humility, ever being cognizant of *“the beam that is in thine own eye”* (Matthew 7:4). God-pleasing love always stands ready not only to rebuke but also to forgive the repentant brother or sister. *“And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day,”* Jesus says, *“and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent: thou shalt forgive him”* (Luke 17:3,4). Rejoicing in the truth, we shall also strive to defend those who are falsely accused, ever seeking to place the best construction on the words and actions of one another, but only *“so far as it can be done in keeping with the truth.”*

May our dear heavenly Father grant us His Holy Spirit that all of us may more earnestly strive to increase in such God-pleasing love, a love which rejoices not in iniquity but in truth! Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria!

HISTORICAL ESSAY

delivered to the

Forty-Eighth Annual Convention of the Concordia Lutheran Conference

by

The Rev. David T. Mensing, Pastor • Peace Ev. Lutheran Church, Oak Forest, Illinois

“The Missouri Synod’s Slide into Heterodoxy, 1932-1947”

In just two years, our Concordia Lutheran Conference will mark its Golden Anniversary. To the world round about us, our little church-body, comprised of only seven small congregations, is statistically insignificant on the ecclesiastical landscape and barely worth a mention among the huge synods and federations that have arisen and grown by leaps and bounds during this same fifty year period. Nevertheless for half a century we shall have enjoyed the singular gracious blessings of our Lord and God for Jesus’ our Savior’s sake, whereof we are glad; and we have survived as a Conference—yea, we have flourished in many respects—much to the surprise of those who never even heard of us, much to the disgust of those who hate us and despise our stand, and much to the frustration of those whose bowl of pottage scraped out of the fleshpots of Egypt no longer satisfies them. For us, the unadulterated Holy Scriptures have been Manna for our souls and a fountain of living water springing up unto everlasting life. Therefore we gratefully ascribe all glory to God for having preserved unto us in their purity His saving Word and the sacred ordinances of His House as the precious means whereby He has strengthened us in the true and saving faith and promises to keep us therein even unto the end. In order to focus our younger members in particular upon the reasons for our existence as a church-body, it behooves us specially to consider retrospectively the reasons for the formation of our “parent” body, the Orthodox Lutheran Conference, in 1951, and to thank and praise our gracious God and Lord for having preserved us in true orthodoxy to the present day. *“That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born, who should arise and declare them to their children”* (Psalm 78:6), it is essential that we examine the events in history which caused our Conference’s “fathers” to “mark” the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod as a heterodox

church body and made it essential for them to “avoid” it and to go it on their own (Romans 16:17).

Our people, as well as others who may hear or read this essay, should understand that those who protested against the errors making steady inroads into the synod and particularly against the toleration of those errors by the very ones who were charged with maintaining doctrinal discipline within that body, dearly loved the Missouri Synod and its heritage of the truth championed by Dr. Walther, Dr. Pieper, and many others. As was the case with Luther in the early days of the Reformation, it was not their desire to leave the Missouri Synod and to form another (or a “competitive”) church body. On the contrary, it was their fervent hope and prayer that their earnest protests would not fall on deaf ears but would be heard as the clarion call of the Holy Scriptures to the pastors, laymen, professors and officers of the synod to be more zealous in “endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:3) by exercising vigilance, identifying variance, disciplining those who “cause[d] divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which [they had] learned” (Romans 16:17), and thus guarding the confessional position of the synod in both doctrine and practice. When this was not done, in spite of patient admonition, and they realized that they were viewed by the leaders of the synod (and even by the rank and file) as crackpots, troublemakers and self-serving saber rattlers, our faithful fathers had no choice but to leave.

Part One

Ironically, Missouri’s slide into heterodoxy—an admittedly *gradual* one— began some twenty years earlier as an unexpected result of what had seemed to be a completely legitimate, yea, a Godpleasing, interest on the part of our Lutheran forebears, namely, to seek to bring together the various synods bearing Luther’s name into a fellowship characterized by complete unity in faith and confession, in doctrine and practice, based on the verbally-inspired, inerrant, and completely clear and all-sufficient Word of God. This had been, after all, Dr. Walther’s fond desire which he saw at least partially fulfilled in the formation of the Synodical Conference in 1871. Sadly but not surprisingly, the yen for outward “union” soon replaced the insistence on true “unity” on the agenda of some of the staunchest theologians of the synod, especially between 1930 and 1950 (as can be seen by comparing their earlier writings with their later ones). The leaven of indifferentism spread like a cancer (II Timothy 2:17), and subtle compromise (couched in non-specific language which deliberately blurred points of controversy) became the order of the day not long after the adoption of the *Brief Statement* in 1932.

By 1930, the “Lutheran” landscape was still painted in black and white with a “muddied” grey-scale in between. But the “technicolor” hues had not yet hopelessly confused the picture, making even the grossest departures from God’s Word attractive to the casual and non-critical viewer as the situation is today. There were basically three “Lutheranisms” on the scene: Liberal Lutheranism, middle-of-the road Lutheranism, and orthodox Lutheranism. Since this year’s essay is intended to be fairly brief, we shall endeavor to distill the historical development of these as much as possible.

In 1918, the **United Lutheran Church in America** (ULCA) was formed by the union of the **General Synod** (dating from 1820, a rapidly growing body covering practically the entire eastern third of the United States, but characterized by laxity in doctrine and practice), the **General Council** (formed in 1867 by “conservatives” who had defected from the General Synod), and the **United Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the South** (a body composed of synods below the Mason-Dixon Line, organized in 1863, which had retained its separate identity

since Civil War days). This **United Lutheran Church in America** represented the most liberal and latitudinarian of nominal Lutherans in both doctrine and practice.

In 1930, the **American Lutheran Church** (ALC) was constituted by the union of the *Buffalo Synod* (founded by J. A. A. Grabau and other Prussian Lutherans in 1845), the *Iowa Synod* (founded in 1854 by Franconian Lutherans who had migrated from Michigan to Iowa), and the *Ohio Synod* (organized by Lutheran pioneers already in 1818). This **American Lutheran Church** then united in October of 1930 with the *Augustana Synod* (organized in 1860 by Scandinavian Lutherans who had left the *General Synod* because of its laxity), the *Lutheran Free Church* (of Norwegian Lutherans who did not join the larger Norwegian body in 1917 but organized their own synod), the *Evangelical Lutheran Church* (ELC), known until 1946 as the *Norwegian Lutheran Church* (organized in 1917 by most of the Norwegian Lutherans chiefly on the basis of their common language and heritage), and the *United Evangelical Lutheran Church* (UELCC), known until 1946 as the *Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church*, (organized in 1870 by Norwegian and Danish Lutherans). This federation, known as the **American Lutheran Conference**, was created to facilitate cooperation among all the above-mentioned bodies, and had as its doctrinal basis the *Minneapolis Theses* of 1925. The bodies comprising the **American Lutheran Conference** represented in 1930 the middle-of-the-road Lutherans in doctrine and practice.

Finally, we come to the **Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America**, referred to commonly as the **Synodical Conference**. This federation had been founded in 1871 as an advisory body whose main purpose was the expression, encouragement and promotion of unity in doctrine and practice and the practice of unity-based fellowship in cooperative church work and worship. The constituent bodies of this orthodox fellowship were the *Missouri Synod*, now known as the *Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod* (LCMS), founded in 1847 by Saxon immigrants under Dr. C. F. W. Walther and others, who had left Germany because of religious oppression; the *Wisconsin Synod*, now known as the *Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod* (WELS), founded in 1850 by Germans who came to America as missionaries to those who had earlier emigrated but had no preachers and teachers of the Word; the *Norwegian Synod*, now known as the *Evangelical Lutheran Synod* (ELS), a minority remnant of the old *Norwegian Lutheran Church* (ELC) in 1917 [See paragraph above.] and formed its own synod in 1918; and the *Slovak Synod* (SELC), founded in 1902 by Lutheran congregations of Slovak descent and language. When the slide of the Missouri Synod into blatant heterodoxy was plainly marked by its sister synods in the late 40's and early 50's, and the Missouri Synod refused their admonition and pleas to correct their self-destructive course, the Synodical Conference broke up with the withdrawal of the ELS in 1961 and of the WELS in 1963. It became totally inactive in 1966 and was dissolved in 1967. Ironically, the synod founded by Dr. Walther in 1847 destroyed his dream of Godpleasing Lutheran union based on true unity of faith and confession. Within less than a hundred years after its founding, the **Synodical Conference** was scuttled because of the consistent and unabating slide of the Missouri Synod into persistent heterodoxy!

While the years immediately following World War I have been characterized by many church historians as a time of “rapprochement,” a period during which concerted efforts were made on the part of the various Lutheran groups to come to a “meeting of the minds” in matters of doctrine and practice and thus eventually into some sort of pan-Lutheran organization, this is an oversimplification. This may indeed be the view of those who regard the entire matter of Lutheran union to be “political” in nature, to be settled by “negotiation” in which the art of “compromise” is the tool which crafts eventual agreement; but it fails to consider the requirements of Holy Scripture for truly Godpleasing fellowship, namely, true unity in faith and

confession, in doctrine and practice, based alone on God’s inerrant Word, without compromise, without ambiguity, without accommodation, without “yielding aught of the eternal, immutable truth of God for the sake of temporal peace, tranquility and unity” (Thorough Declaration, *Formula of Concord*, XI, 95, *Triglotta*, p. 1095).

Significant social pressure was brought to bear during this period for pan-Lutheran cooperation in the spiritual care of Lutherans in the armed forces. In 1917, a *National Lutheran Commission* was created for this very purpose representing all of the Lutheran bodies except the members of the Synodical Conference, the latter synods maintaining “purely external cooperation.” But a year later, a more permanent intersynodical organization, the *National Lutheran Council*, came into being under a series of “regulations” which included by 1926 the declaration that the unity of this council was based upon the basic doctrinal agreement of its member-bodies. This so-called “agreement” was tenuous at best due to variations in “interpretation” of Lutheran doctrine and practice, and it turned out to be the virtual *sham* of “agreement to disagree” which set the tone and standard for later efforts at Lutheran union. And for the *Synodical Conference*, there was always the question with respect to such organizations—as well as chaplaincy in the armed forces then and later—as to how much “cooperation” could be rendered that would remain “purely external.” The heat was being turned up.

Still a fellowship of truly orthodox synods, the *Synodical Conference* was constantly being accused of standing in the way of progress toward Lutheran union. Specific reference was made to the “unreasonable” insistence of its constituent bodies that full agreement in doctrine and practice be the sole requisite not only for church *fellowship* but also for church *work* (“cooperative endeavors”) with other Lutheran groups. With the view toward shedding the label of arbitrary obstructionism, representatives of the Missouri and Wisconsin Synods joined an Intersynodical Committee which included members of the Buffalo, Iowa, and Ohio Synods to hammer out a document which, it was hoped, could become the basis for mutual cooperation and eventual fellowship. The initial draft of the “*Intersynodical (Chicago) Theses*” was presented in 1925, but the committee itself could not reach a consensus on the wording until 1928, when the document in its final form was presented. In 1929, the Missouri Synod rejected the Theses as totally inadequate because a) certain paragraphs did not address the specific points of controversy, b) others were so ambiguously phrased that both parties could find in them their own positions, and c) at times the statements represented the false position of the opponents rather than the orthodox position of the Missouri Synod and Synodical Conference. The Synod decided instead to draw up *its own* theses addressing the specific unresolved controversies, and to make this document the doctrinal basis for any further discussions toward fellowship and church relations. This document, crafted by a committee appointed by President Pfothenhauer (which included Drs. Pieper and Engelder), was entitled “*Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod.*” It was adopted by the Missouri Synod in 1932, was never amended by the Synod, nor withdrawn, nor retracted; and, as the sound and “living” document it continues to be, having had its roots in the now long-gone days of the Missouri Synod’s orthodoxy, it still belongs to the Confessional Standard of our *Concordia Lutheran Conference* today.

What then happened to start the Missouri Synod on its downward slide into heterodoxy? What changed shortly after the adoption of the *Brief Statement* to steer the synod onto a different course? And was a real mid-course correction ever made to bring that body back to its insistence on *true unity* as the only basis for Christian fellowship and cooperative church work? In this first part of our essay, we shall address these questions and answer them briefly. But we shall save the crowning evidence, the “proof of the pudding” of Missouri’s patent heterodoxy, for Part

Two.

Not long after the *Brief Statement* was adopted and the clear assumption was established that discussions were thence to be based upon *its* Scriptural declarations, the representatives of the American Lutheran Church filed their reaction to that document and the result of their deliberations. In their *Declaration* of 1938 (also known as the *Sandusky Declaration*), they stated that, on the basis not only of the *Brief Statement* but also of the *Minneapolis Theses* of 1925 (the agreement which paved the way for the organization of the American Lutheran Conference) and of the *Chicago Theses* (already rejected by the Missouri Synod as defective), they were issuing a series of summary statements. Those statements watered down the unequivocal wording of the *Brief Statement* and insisted that certain differences be acknowledged as not being divisive of Church fellowship. The subsequent resolution of the American Lutheran Church in the same year reiterated this position and further insisted that the *Brief Statement* be viewed in the light of their *Declaration* as not being in contradiction to the *Minneapolis Theses*, inasmuch as they were not about to give up their membership in the American Lutheran Conference. They therefore declared that the *Brief Statement together with* their *Declaration* constituted “a sufficient doctrinal basis for Church fellowship between the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church.” —So near, and yet so far! The power-play had been made. The ultimatum had been laid down: All or nothing! Take it or leave it! Missouri would either agree to the ALC’s terms or would have to bear the stigma of having scuttled the negotiations! The ball was in Missouri’s court!

Suddenly, the once unbending, uncompromising, orthodox synod of Walther, Pieper, and Engelder *yielded* and accepted the conditions stipulated by the American Lutheran Church, even though it stopped short of the ALC’s expectation that it would immediately establish Church fellowship on the basis of what had been mutually accepted. The Wisconsin Synod was furious over the fact that Missouri had accepted a document that was not only defective but represented an easy compromise couched in deliberately ambiguous language. The *Declaration*, they held, did not state the truth clearly and did not exclude error in controverted doctrines. Moreover, the Wisconsin Synod pointed out that the ALC’s *Pittsburgh Agreement* with the United Lutheran Church in America showed its true and completely transparent intention, namely, to attempt union with *both* the Missouri Synod *and* the radically liberal ULCA at the very same time! The outrage of their Synodical Conference brethren — not an accusing conscience because of the forbidden fruit it had just swallowed— caused the Missouri Synod to issue in 1940 an explanation to the American Lutheran Church about “candidly what in our view . . . still stands in the way of actual fellowship between our two bodies.” And Missouri carefully back-pedaled into safer territory. The ALC, too, saw the impractical and almost insurmountable task of becoming the bridge between the Missouri Synod and the ULCA; and it backed away from both of them. Yet the sugary-sweet taste of the fruit lingered on the tongues of all three parties; and, as the “loss of innocence” makes carnal indulgence easier the next time around, the loss of true orthodoxy in an *attitude of latitude*, in a lapse of *confessional standards*, in ambivalence toward *doctrinal purity*, and in the willingness to couch disagreement in *deliberately crafted ambiguous language*, became evident in the subsequent appearance of *A Statement* in 1945 and in the easy and frankly “sleazy” way in which the signers were permitted to escape virtually unscathed!

These were the “official” dealings of the “officials” of the Synod that signaled the beginning of the end of Missouri’s orthodoxy. But there were other symptoms of the festering cancer of heterodoxy eating away at the heart and other vital organs of the once orthodox Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States. Indeed, the blame for Missouri’s fall from its once cherished perch on “*the foundation of the apostles and prophets*” (Ephesians 2:20)

cannot be laid solely at the feet of her leaders.

The orthodoxy of the Missouri Synod after 1932 began to take on the stench of “dead orthodoxy”— an orthodoxy professed, an orthodoxy preached, an orthodoxy taught, an orthodoxy committed to paper, pointed to and boasted of by one and all as the hallmark of “Synod” (a name which almost *personified* the institution)— but an orthodoxy that *in practice* was a sham! [“Practice” is defined as the consistent application of doctrine (Exodus 34: 11; James 1:22; Luke 6:46; etc.)] The rank and file of both clergy and laity became infected with the insidious contagion. “Doctrinal discipline” (whereby brethren hew to the mark of God’s inerrant Word and by sound doctrine both exhort and convince gainsayers in their fellowship) was neglected; and those pastors who practiced it in pastoral conferences and conventions were sometimes actually booed down and told to keep their dogmatics to themselves! [Your essayist recalls from his childhood an instance in which his father and several other orthodox pastors in a conference out East were labeled “SOB’s” by their fellow pastors—“super orthodox brethren”! Some fellowship!] “Church discipline” in the local congregation according to Matthew 18:15-17 was also sorely neglected, and the principles of Holy Scripture became purely “theoretical” for the average church member, principles to be confessed on Sunday mornings and to be ignored during the week. The doctrinal position of the Missouri Synod was “solid” on paper—concerning the inerrancy of Scripture and its verbal inspiration, unity as the requisite for fellowship, close communion, sinful religious unionism, the chaplaincy, lodge membership and Scouting, merchandising to support the work of Christ’s church, modern social dancing, gambling, engagement being tantamount to holy marriage, etc. Even a casual look at the books and tracts published during this period bears this out. BUT *in practice* things were otherwise! Practice on these matters varied from pastor to pastor, from congregation to congregation, from member to member within the same congregation; and virtually NOTHING was done about it! Personal variance was not considered “divisive of fellowship” in spite of I Corinthians 1:10, Ephesians 4:3, and many other passages. “Personal unionism” in joint prayer between individuals not in fellowship with one another was not as bad as “institutional unionism” between church bodies. Toleration of occasional lodge membership was not as bad as “synodical policy” approving it. Bake sales, suppers, and bazaars to support the church were okay as long as the synod was “on record” as opposing them. Modern social dancing was perfectly acceptable, even at wedding receptions in parish halls, as long as books and tracts were published “officially” condemning it. Is it any wonder that the American Lutheran Church was suspect of the Missouri Synod’s insistence on complete agreement in doctrine and practice for the establishment of fellowship? The *synod itself* wasn’t consistent; the *pastors* didn’t want to be consistent; and the *laymen* were quite content with the inconsistent application of their precious orthodoxy. Some orthodoxy! The Missouri Synod was already in a precipitous slide, and there was no evidence of an imminent turnaround in spite of the vigorous protests of a precious few who dared to raise their voices.

Part Two

Suddenly and completely “out of the blue” —particularly for those who were either indifferent to or oblivious of the creeping heterodoxy that was eating like a cancer from within the body— organized dissatisfaction with the official orthodox position of the Missouri Synod was widely publicized, dissatisfaction particularly with its Scriptural requisites for Godpleasing union with other Lutherans and its refusal to enter into fellowship with the A. L. C. Forty-four pastors and professors, many of them renowned theologians in the synod, representing themselves as voices of reason and legitimate concern, met in Chicago, Illinois, on September 6-7, 1945, to mount an offensive against what they termed “some of the most vexing problems confronting our Synod.”

To illustrate these alleged “problems” they preferred vaguely-worded general accusations against unnamed members (and presumably also officers) of the synod without supporting evidence and without proof, and they drafted and signed *A Statement* which they represented as their sincere effort to combat those “problems”.

A copy of this *Statement* was sent by Dr. E. J. Friedrich, one of the leaders of this renegade group, to Synodical President John W. Behnken on September 19, who, the very same day, in a long distance phone call, asked Dr. Friedrich to postpone the publication of the *Statement* until the praesidium [the President and the four Vice Presidents of Synod] had an opportunity to discuss its contents with the signers. This request was denied. On October 2, Dr. Behnken and the rest of the praesidium urgently telegraphed their protest against the publication of the *Statement*, but a representative committee of the signers declined to honor the protest. Thereupon the document with its cover letter was distributed throughout the Missouri Synod, putting into print and thrusting into the public eye the pernicious views of those who *today* would no doubt still be regarded by “modern” Lutherans as “genuinely concerned *moderates*” and “pleading *voices of reason*” in the interest of Christian unity. This precipitous circularization of *A Statement* threw down a red-hot gauntlet at the feet of President Behnken, which, as it soon became evident, he was both unable and unwilling to pick up and deal with in accordance with Scripture as the chief executive officer of the Missouri Synod, charged with guarding the confessional position of that church body against error and public offense. Moreover, the subsequent lengthy defense of *A Statement* contained in a booklet entitled “*Speaking the Truth in Love*” grossly perverted that Bible text (Ephesians 4:15) and used it for the propagation of error. It is therefore in direct testimony *against* that perversion that we have taken Ephesians 4:15 as the motto of this present convention of our beloved Conference and now uncover in retrospect the lies, slander, and false doctrine that were permitted to stand, “*that the generation to come might know*” (Psalm 78:6) the truth about *A Statement* and the official cover-up which effectively sealed the doom of the Missouri Synod as a heterodox church body.

What About the Charges? —In the cover letter that accompanied it, the signers of *A Statement* published general accusations against unnamed members of Synod, without the evidence and proof required by Holy Scripture, charges which, understood in the context of *A Statement* and the agenda of its signers, targeted those pastors and synodical officers who remained steadfast and unmoveable (I Corinthians 15:58) on the doctrinal position of the Missouri Synod (*Brief Statement* of 1932) and resisted any and all efforts to compromise that doctrinal position for an “easy union” with the American Lutheran Church. The “*good words and fair speeches*” (Romans 16:18) in which the charges were cloaked were perniciously deceptive. They had been cunningly crafted in their language so as to beg the question and entice the reader to accept them as legitimate outrage at false doctrine and practice, when, in actuality, they couched condemnation of true orthodoxy in fair-sounding terminology. Would not **we ourselves**, not knowing of the wicked machinations of these 20th Century “*men of Belial*” (I Kings 21:10-13), have been outraged to learn that there were those in our church body who showed:

- “a pernicious spirit, utterly at variance with the fundamental concepts of the Gospel”??
- “a wrong approach to the Holy Scriptures”??
- “a misconception of the essence of the Gospel”??
- “barren, negative attitudes and unevangelical techniques”??
- “unsympathetic, legalistic practices”??
- “self-complacent and separatistic narrowness”??

- “utter disregard for the law of Christian love”??
- “ecclesiastical persecutions”??

Yet, there was no evidence, no proper witness, no proof; so that even if the allegations *had been true*, they would have constituted **false witness** according to the Eighth Commandment (See Luther, *Large Catechism*, §109-112), **slander** (Psalm 50:19ff.), and blatant **defamation** (Proverbs 11:9). What these amounted to were the counter-accusation of and *ad hominem* attack upon the defenders of the truth that Ahab threw in the face of God’s servant, Elijah: “*Art thou he that troubleth Israel?*” (I Kings 18:17).

What About the Content?? —While not everything in *A Statement* is contrary to Scripture, several sections are **questionable** because of the inferences that can be drawn from them on the basis of the signers’ quite public and undisguised agenda:

Section One: “We affirm our loyalty to the great evangelical heritage of historic Lutheranism.”

The term “Lutheran heritage” is deliberately vague here. The signers obviously do not affirm loyalty to the *Sola Scriptura* heritage, or they would affirm loyalty to the inerrant, verbally-inspired Scriptures. Their “Lutheran heritage” can better be characterized as a “Melanchthonian” heritage.

Section Two: “We deplore a tendency in our Synod to substitute human judgments, synodical resolutions, or other sources of authority for the supreme authority of Scripture.”

This sounds nice at first hearing, but when we consider that the “human judgments, synodical resolutions, or other sources of authority” objected to by the signers are those resolutions whereby an easy union with the A. L. C. had been blocked (including, of course, the *Brief Statement of 1932*), the color of the horse suddenly looks different!

Section Three: “We deplore all man-made barriers and all ecclesiastical traditions which would hinder the free course of the Gospel in the world.”

We would deplore the same —*if* that were what this section actually deplores. In point of fact, the signers deplore here proper Scriptural “practice” in the Synod including prohibitions against unionistic services, joint prayer with the heterodox, and participation with false church bodies in evangelism programs. They found the regulations of Synod against such things restrictive of the Gospel.

Section Four: “We deplore a loveless attitude which is manifesting itself within Synod ... in suspicions of brethren, in the impugning of motives, and in the condemnation of all who have expressed differing opinions....”

This, too, is fair-sounding until we understand that the signers equated “lovelessness” with admonition and doctrinal discipline in the Synod, the denunciation of sinful religious unionism, and the condemnation of those who “*cause divisions and offenses*” by espousing false doctrine and/or permitting false doctrine to stand alongside the truth without discrimination.

Section Six: “We believe that there should be a re-emphasis of the privileges

and responsibilities of the local congregation also in the matter of determining questions of fellowship.”

Dr. Friedrich’s official denial notwithstanding, this wording clearly opens the door to *selective fellowship* apart from joint recognition of brethren on the part of the synodical organization. In proper joint recognition of fellowship on the part of a church body, there is no hierarchical rule established for the synod or conference over the congregation, but only a safeguard against subjectively selective fellowship which ultimately results in religious unionism. Such a safeguard should be valued, not deplored.

Besides the above, **four sections** are definitely *objectionable*, namely, sections **five, eight, nine** and **eleven**. Let us look at each briefly:

Section Five: “We affirm our conviction that sound exegetical procedure is the basis for sound Lutheran theology. We therefore deplore the fact that Romans 16:17-18 has been applied to all Christians who differ from us in certain points of doctrine. It is our conviction based on sound exegetical and hermeneutical principles, that this text does not apply to the present situation in the Lutheran Church of America.”

1) NOT exegetical procedure (the method of expounding Scripture) but CLEAR SCRIPTURE ITSELF (the prooftexts or *sedes* which stand on their own without interpretation) is the only basis for sound Lutheran theology! 2) Romans 16:17-18 does not allow for the variances and exceptions forced upon it by modern exegetes. It is a *sedes doctrinae* or prooftext which forbids religious unionism, that is, church work and worship between those not united in doctrine. Even in 1945, the face of “Lutheranism in America” was a multi-faceted, spiritually schizophrenic mess! Today, it’s so bad that the “face” of outward Lutheranism is hopelessly disfigured and repulsive! The application of Romans 16:17-18 is NOT an “exegetical question”!

Section Eight: “We affirm our conviction that any two or more Christians may pray together to the Triune God in the name of Jesus Christ if the purpose for which they meet and pray is right according to the Word of God. This obviously includes meetings of groups called for the purpose of discussing doctrinal differences.”

1) This section could not have been “affirmed” if Romans 16:17-18 had not already been dismissed by the statementarians as not being applicable to fellowship between the orthodox and the heterodox (Section 5). Nevertheless other passages as well show that fellowship with the heterodox is contrary to the will of God and that joint prayer with those who err in doctrine and/or practice and refuse to heed correction is prohibited: Amos 3:3; Acts 2:42; I Corinthians 1:10; Ephesians 4:3ff., etc. 2) Since when do “Lutherans” espouse the Jesuitical principle that “the end justifies the means”? If the purpose for which they meet is Godpleasing, why would they deliberately fly in the face of God’s Word by practicing fellowship before fellowship is established?

Section Nine: “We deplore the tendency to apply this non-Biblical term [*unionism*] to any and every contact between Christians of different denominations.”

While the term is “non-Biblical,” that is, it is not found written anywhere in the Bible, both the *term* and the *concept* are completely Scriptural. This characterization of the statementarians

only seeks to detract from the importance of understanding the pernicious nature of sinful religious unionism. Moreover, by “any and every” the signers do not refer to *equal yokes* between the orthodox and heterodox; they want to exclude from the term “unionism” such things as joint prayer, joint mission work, joint youth activities, joint chaplaincy ministries in the military, joint hospital chaplaincies, etc., as well as indiscriminate exercise of fellowship between individuals.

Section Eleven: “We affirm our conviction that ... fellowship is possible without complete agreement in details of doctrine and practice which have never been considered divisive in the Lutheran Church.”

It is simply NOT TRUE that there are “details of doctrine and practice which have never been considered divisive in the Lutheran Church.” A doctrine is no more and no less than a clear teaching of Scripture. Differences other than doctrinal differences are not divisive, as our Lutheran fathers have consistently held, namely, “human traditions, that is, rites and ceremonies instituted by men” (Augsburg Confession, VII); BUT concerning doctrine, “The Word of God shall establish articles of faith, and no one else, not even an angel” (Smalcald Articles, *Triglotta*, p. 467, 15). In all such matters, God’s Word demands complete unity in doctrine and practice (I Corinthians 1:10). Note that the unscriptural character of *A Statement* laid down in Section Five reaches its ultimate and logical conclusion and purpose in Section Eleven.

What About the Cover-Up? —While it is true that President Behnken and the four Vice Presidents initially requested the signers NOT to send out *A Statement* until they had opportunity to discuss it with them, no action was taken when public offense was given in its immediate dissemination. Instead, the following chain of events took place which at the same time represented the President’s meager efforts at “damage control” and demonstrated his unwillingness to see it through to a Godpleasing resolution:

1) On December 10, 1945, President Behnken and the First Vice President of Synod met with the representative Continuation Committee of the signers and, in Behnken’s words, “voiced our disagreement with some of the points in *A Statement* as well as with the accompanying letter and insisted that these be corrected or withdrawn.” But nothing was done.

2) A subsequent meeting was arranged for February 14-15, 1946 in St. Louis, for the praesidium, the district presidents, and the signers. By the time this meeting was held, several hundred protests had been received by Behnken’s office from conferences and individuals all over the synod. At this meeting, the signers “explained” the statement and its accompanying letter; but two separate requests from the praesidium that they “withdraw” or at least “suspend” *A Statement* were declined. In direct contradiction of this fact, the *Lutheran Witness* reported on February 26: “The signers did not retract, nor were they asked to retract.” (p. 72). It was immediately obvious in what camp the *Lutheran Witness* had chosen to align itself. One positive step came out of the meeting: A committee of ten men chosen by the President was established to study *A Statement* in the light of God’s Word and to meet with a corresponding committee of the signers.

3) By April, 1946, the President’s Committee of Ten was established; but it soon became evident that it had no real status as far as reaching a final settlement was concerned. When the committee stated that it was essential for the President himself to define its status and the scope of its work and asked him for a meeting toward the end of that month, Behnken suggested that approval of such an arrangement be sought from the *signers’* committee! The President’s Committee deemed such a procedure entirely out of order. In the meeting that was eventually held on April 27, it was agreed that the committee would be regarded only as “advisory to the

President of Synod.”

4) The two committees of “Ten and Ten” met together three times (August 13-16, September 23-25, and November 12-15, 1946). In the first meeting, the President’s Committee presented to its counterpart committee a detailed list of objections to *A Statement* and to its accompanying letter; and, since the signers had been soliciting *additional* signatures throughout the summer and had been distributing the booklet “*Speaking the Truth in Love*” in defense of the *Statement*, President Behnken stipulated that no further solicitation be made and that distribution of the booklet should cease. Nevertheless, just two days after the conclusion of the second meeting, the chairman of the signer’s group (who had been present at the first meeting as well) issued a letter dated September 28, urging his fellow signers to do just the opposite and adding: “It seems as though it should be an easy matter to secure additional signers.” When at the meeting of November 12-15 the signers’ committee was called to account for these breaches which were agitating against a proper Godpleasing settlement, the signers’ committee gave no assurances of cooperation or compliance.

5) Following the November meeting and in view of mounting apprehension in Synod about the end result of its efforts, the President’s Committee decided that it had to make an immediate summary report to the President on negotiations to date and to request that the report be shared with Synod’s clergy for their assurance.

6) When, however, the final draft of the committee’s report was presented to President Behnken, he suggested a scenario of “writing *finis* to *A Statement*” —putting the whole matter to rest— by getting the signers simply to agree to the following: a) The Continuation Committee of the signers would cease to function; b) there would be not further propagandizing for *A Statement*; c) the “Statementarians” as a group would dissolve; d) the issues involved would be studied further at “conferences;” e) there would be no further solicitation of adherents; f) “*Speaking the Truth in Love*” would no longer be circulated; and g) the President would offer to local pastoral conferences “materials” for discussion of the issues raised by *A Statement*. The President’s Committee thereupon unanimously informed Dr. Behnken that his proposal was *unsatisfactory* because it did not provide for retraction of the defamations in the accompanying letter and did not mark as false nor require the retraction of any of the sections in *A Statement*. After the praesidium had privately considered these objections, the President stated regarding future procedure: “It is evident that *finis* cannot be offered to the church.” Although this statement was defective because of what was not said, namely, what exactly Behnken intended to do to bring a proper Godpleasing *finis* to this controversy, the President’s committee hoped, as late as the end of December, that he would heed its objections and not proceed with his compromising proposal. It still trusted that he would present its report to the Synod, as it had requested him to do, and then that he would act accordingly—Scripturally, forthrightly, honestly, and uncompromisingly in the best tradition of his predecessors in the office of Synodical President.

What About the Conclusion? —The subsequent action of Dr. Behnken, in direct violation of his assurances to his own advisory committee, has been variously characterized as a betrayal, a sell-out, a back-door escape, a pact with the devil, and the product of the stereotyped “smoke filled room” of big-time politicians. On January 11, 1947, the President and the First Vice President arranged a brief meeting with the chairman and secretary of the President’s Committee simply to inform them *after the fact* that the praesidium had met five days before, January 6, in Ft. Wayne, Indiana, with the committee of the signers and with the St. Louis seminary professors allied with them—but without any of *the President’s own* committee present—and had reached

An Agreement to settle the controversy. In effect, however, it only **disposed** of the controversy **without settling it**. That *Agreement* was a *travesty* —an artful compromise worthy of Melancthon and a textbook example of the heterodoxy which had taken hold of the Missouri Synod at the highest level of its leadership! The *Agreement* stated in part:

“An earnest evaluation of the discussions involved in ‘*A Statement*’ has demonstrated that we are agreed on many of its assertions, even though agreement has not been reached on some of the specific questions raised. ... Nothing has developed, however, which is divisive of church fellowship. ...

“It has therefore been agreed in a meeting of the Praesidium and of the representatives of the Signers that in the interest of peace and harmony in our midst and for the furtherance of the Kingdom of God at large ‘*A Statement*’ and ‘*The Accompanying Letter*’ be withdrawn as a basis of discussion so that the issues involved may be studied objectively on the basis of theses prepared under the auspices of the President of Synod.

“The withdrawal of ‘*A Statement*’ as a basis of discussion shall not be interpreted as a retraction... .”

In spite of Dr. Behnken’s promise that the issues involved would be studied further in the light of God’s Word and that further “theses” would be written to clarify matters, subsequent meetings and studies were nothing but a sham! Behnken steadfastly refused to formulate antithetical statements which would specifically reject the wording of *A Statement* or would state unequivocally that *A Statement* expressed false doctrine. His attempt at developing “guidelines” for the clergy’s eventual further study became transparently lopsided when the Springfield seminary’s faculty found the St. Louis seminary’s faculty “opinion” on Romans 16:17-18 *unacceptable*, and yet the St. Louis opinion was published by Concordia Publishing House as official for use in dogmatics courses in the St. Louis seminary.

Moreover, at the 1947 Convention, many overtures and memorials to the Synod regarding *A Statement* were not published. Other attempts to address the issue were killed by parliamentary maneuvering on the floor. And yet, in spite of such obstacles, the Synod went “on record” as reaffirming the *Brief Statement* and as giving its “definite support” to Memorial 607 which clearly defined the doctrines in controversy and actually rejected the errors contained in *A Statement*. Nevertheless failure on the part of the synod’s officials to take proper and effective disciplinary action against erring members has been repeatedly excused on the grounds that, because of the *Agreement*, *A Statement* “no longer exists.” Nonsense! Several years after the *Agreement*, signers were still defending *A Statement* and their subscription to it. “*Speaking the Truth in Love*” was still being distributed. And the “proof of the pudding” lay (and still lies) in the **practice of the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod**, in the **official publications and documents of the synod**, in the **residual effects** of the *Agreement* seen in **subsequent controversies** (including that which precipitated our separation from that body when it adopted the *Common Confession* three years later), and in the **lack of doctrinal discipline still today** in a church body whose slide into heterodoxy began ironically shortly after its adoption of the *Brief Statement* in 1932 and was all but set in concrete just twenty-five years later! After now almost fifty years of retrospective consideration of all that has gone over the dam since we left the Missouri Synod in 1951, we thank God for His gracious deliverance of His people from “*Egypt*” and for His continuing mercy in sparing us from the lure of its “*fleshpots*”. We have seen what malnutrition has resulted in those who sold their birthright of orthodoxy for a mess of “*Egyptian*

pottage” and in those who, having once left “*Egypt*” in obedience to God’s Word, returned to their spiritual detriment! And we wonder what child of God, having once tasted the sweet Manna of His unadulterated Word and having been raised on a diet of pure doctrine and faithful practice, would knowingly return to a spiritual garbage can to forage upon the maggots of heterodoxy?? “From this preserve us, Heavenly Father!”

Soli Deo Gloria!

DOCTRINAL ESSAY

delivered to the

Forty-Eighth Annual Convention of the *Concordia Lutheran Conference*

by

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The Need, Purpose and Function of Admonition and Discipline in the Christian Congregation

In giving His Great Commission, Christ, the Lord and Head of His Church, said, “*Go ye therefore and teach [make disciples of] all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*” (Matthew 28:19). Christ then added these words: “*Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.*” By these words Christ commanded that all the doctrines of Holy Writ be taught and enjoined in the Church. For this reason the Apostle Paul was compelled to assure the elders of Ephesus, “*For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God*” (Acts 20:27).

Since Christian or brotherly admonition is one of the many commands which Christ has discharged to His Church on earth, every faithful Christian pastor must, therefore, teach the members of his flock what the Scriptures say on Christian admonition and church discipline. The matter of admonition and discipline is not optional. Christ says, “*If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone*” (Matthew 18:15). To the Thessalonians Paul said, “*Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother*” (II Thessalonians 3:15). Paul said to Timothy, “*Them that sin rebuke before all, that others may fear*” (I Timothy 5:20). Paul said to Titus that he must “*both (to) exhort and (to) convince the gainsayers*” (Titus 1:9). He then added: “*Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith*” (Titus 1:13).

That admonition is God’s will is also amply demonstrated by Christ and the Apostles. St. Mark tells us that after Jesus rose from the dead and appeared to His disciples, He “*upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after He was risen*” (Mark 16:14). He even rebuked His own mother at the wedding in Cana, saying, “*Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come*” (John 2:4). We also note two incidents where Paul gave admonition. First, Paul did not withhold from admonishing Peter in Antioch when Peter’s public actions denied that believing Jews and Gentiles are all one in Christ Jesus and that the ceremonial separations of the Old Covenant were abolished in Christ. Hence Paul tells us, “*But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because*

he was to be blamed” (Galatians 2:11). Secondly, when the Corinthians dallied in admonishing and removing a fornicator, Paul rebuked the church and said, “*Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person*” (I Corinthians 5:13).

That brotherly admonition and discipline are not optional needs to be emphasized for several reasons. One reason is that we live in an age when visible Christendom, and especially outer Lutheranism, is infested with antinomianism. To be antinomian means to be against the Law. Antinomians are opposed to the proper use of the Law of God. Today the proper use of the Law in external Christendom is almost non-existent. As a result of this reluctance to use God’s Law to denounce sin or to condemn anyone, brotherly admonition and church discipline have become all but extinct.

Another reason we must emphasize that Christian discipline is not optional is that there occurs on occasion a false application of an article in our Lutheran Confessions. The Epitome of the *Formula of Concord* in its opposition to the Schwenckfeldians rejects the following Schwenckfeldian position, namely, “That it is not a true Christian congregation [church] in which no public excommunication [some formal mode of excommunication] or no regular process of the ban [as it is commonly called] is observed” (*Triglotta*, 846, 26). Likewise, the Solid Declaration of the same article rejects as erroneous, “That a congregation in which no public excommunication or regular process of the ban is observed, is no true Christian congregation” (*Triglotta*, 1100, 34). Here our Confessions rightly reject the notion of the Schwenckfeldians that a lack of a regular, on-going process of discipline resulting in excommunication renders a church no longer a true Christian church.

What spawned the position of the Schwenckfeldians? The Schwenckfeldians were what Luther called “*Schwärmer*” or enthusiasts. They were enthusiasts of the highest order. They denied the means of grace and believed only in the immediate working of the Holy Spirit. As such, they were also pietists and, like most pietists, were highly legalistic. Hence, they had a legalistic view on church discipline. They deemed a congregation not a true or orthodox church which did not have a regular, systematic exercise of the ban or excommunication. Yet, a congregation does not cease to be a Christian congregation if discipline has been lax, or even if the greater ban for a period of time is not exercised. The true Christians in a congregation, the true sheep, the very people who make a congregation a Christian church in the proper sense (the hypocrites are members only improperly), are still there in spite of the lack of the ban. Also, circumstances might make the exercise of the third step, “*tell it unto the church,*” not possible. In the days of the Reformation, Luther and his fellow confessors were so busy with the Reformation that, except for the most flagrant of cases, the ban was not practiced. This did not render the congregations non-Christian, nor did it even render them no longer orthodox. In addition, in new congregations where indoctrination has just begun, there may be such a lack of knowledge and such a degree of immaturity that gaining unanimity in a Voters Assembly may be very difficult, if not impossible.

However, this provision in the *Formula of Concord* against the Schwenckfeldians must not be abused by using it as a justification for persistent or chronic neglect of brotherly admonition and the exercise of the ban. Persistent, chronic neglect of brotherly admonition and the failure to exercise the ban where Scripture requires it would at the very least certainly call into question the orthodoxy of a Christian congregation. In the final analysis, because brotherly admonition and discipline are commanded by Christ and the Apostles, we cannot therefore call such admonition and discipline “optional.” Indeed, the very fact that Christ has entrusted to the Holy Christian Church on earth, especially and in particular to every local congregation, the Office

of the Keys, indicates the importance of the faithful exercise of the Keys. In Matthew 16:19 Christ says, *“And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”* Again, in Matthew 18:18 our Savior says, *“Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”* And again in John 20:18-19, Christ says, *“Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose soever sins ye remit they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.”*

Therefore, our essay will address **“The Need, Purpose, and Function Of Brotherly Admonition and Discipline In The Christian Congregation.”**

Part One: The Need and Purpose of Brotherly Admonition

Since the need and purpose of brotherly admonition are so closely joined together, we shall consider them together under this first section. Yet we can and should also distinguish between need and purpose.

At the very outset, the NEED for brotherly admonition is due primarily to the fact that Christians in this world are sinners. It is true, of course, that by faith in Christ we are saints. In God’s sight we are in and through Christ pure and holy. *“But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God”* (I Corinthians 6:11). Nevertheless, due to our Old Adam, our sinful nature, we are also sinners. The Apostle John says, *“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us”* (I John 1:8). Moreover, Paul says in Romans 7:18, *“For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.”* In like measure Galatians 5:17 says, *“For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.”* Indeed, Christ’s words, *“For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies”* (Matthew 15:19), also apply to the Christian’s natural heart.

Therefore, even though Christians do not sin willfully and maliciously, they do nevertheless sin out of weakness. Often in charity we overlook those sins of weakness without admonition, as the Bible says, *“For charity shall cover the multitude of sins”* (I Peter 4:8). Yet where even sins of weakness take on habit and are no longer being combated with a concerned heart, even these ought to be admonished lest they grow into something which is being justified and defended. Sins of weakness, like a small weed sprout, if not pulled out, will grow deeper, larger and stronger until they are no longer sins of weakness. For example, a Christian may unintentionally react to a certain situation with fleshly anger. He may well have been provoked to such anger. In such a case there may be no need to admonish him since right away he himself sees his sin and immediately repents of it. Yet if the brother shows himself repeatedly getting angry, he must be admonished with such Scriptures as, *“Be ye angry and sin not, let not the sun go down upon your wrath”* (Ephesians 4:26), or *“Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, show to wrath: for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God”* (James 1:19-20).

Another need for admonition is that the Church Visible is ever subject to being infested with

tares among the wheat. False sons, hypocrites, although hidden from men for a season, will usually make themselves manifest. In Christ's day, the scribes and Pharisees showed themselves to be hypocrites. Of them Jesus said, *"This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me"* (Matthew 15:8). Their hypocrisy moved Christ to utter some of His severest condemnations. Over and over again in Matthew 23 Jesus said, *"Woe unto you scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites."* Moreover, when Ananias and Sapphira attempted to cover their lie to the Holy Ghost, Peter sternly admonished them, and since his admonition was not heeded, both husband and wife were struck down by God Himself. Furthermore, Paul warned the elders of Ephesus, *"For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also, of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them"* (Acts 20:29-30). Jesus warns, *"Beware of false prophets which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves"* (Matthew 7:15). Moreover, the churches of Galatia were being infiltrated by the Judaizers, Jews who professed faith in Christ but who claimed circumcision was necessary for justification. Their inroads were seriously influencing the congregations.

If such false prophets and exposed hypocrites are not admonished and brought to repentance or, in the absence of repentance, put out, the unity of faith is destroyed in the congregation. The Word of God demands unity of faith. The Bible says, *"endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace"* (Ephesians 4:3). Again the Bible says, *"Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you: but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment"* (I Corinthians 1:10). In conjunction with this, Paul also says, *"Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them"* (Romans 16:17). Thus, admonition and discipline are needed to maintain the God-demanded unity of faith in the congregation. Indeed, how could a congregation partake of the Lord's Supper if its members are divided due to some members living in sin or others promulgating false doctrine?

Furthermore, the very need for admonition and discipline in the Christian congregation serves also to give the PURPOSE for admonition and discipline. The most obvious purpose of brotherly admonition and discipline is to rescue and restore the erring for the saving of their souls. II Timothy 2:25-26 says, *"In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may RECOVER themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will."* Paul also writes, *"Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual RESTORE such an one in the spirit of meekness..."* (Galatians 6:1). When Paul instructed the Corinthians to put out from among them the fornicator, he again explained the purpose. He said, *"To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be SAVED in the day of the Lord Jesus"* (I Corinthians 5:5). Also, James wrote, *"Brethren if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall SAVE a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins"* (James 5:19-20). Likewise, Jude 21-22 says, *"Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. And of some have compassion, making a difference; and others SAVE with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh."*

That one of the purposes of Christian discipline is the rescue and saving of souls needs to be emphasized in the face of the hesitancy and reluctance of some congregations to carry out the third step of discipline where Christ instructs the church to declare an impenitent person *"an heathen man and a publican"* (Matthew 18:17). It is not unusual for Voters' Assemblies to get

“cold feet” when an impenitent person refuses even to hear the church. The men may let their emotions and feelings, and no doubt the whispering of Satan, cause them to think that declaring a person an heathen man and a publican is judgmental and unloving. Rather, failure to declare an impenitent person a heathen is truly unloving, in that it permits him to continue in sin. An impenitent person must be told the unvarnished truth that if he does not repent he is damned even as he lives. When he dies, he will most certainly suffer eternal damnation in hell. Where the heart is impenitent, there is no saving faith. Impenitence equals unbelief, for Christ says, *“He that believeth not shall be damned”* (Mark 16:16).

Indeed, to neglect or to fail to warn an impenitent person that he will perish unless he repents, is to take his blood upon one’s own self! This is no more soberly enunciated than in Ezekiel 3:17-21 where God says to Ezekiel, *“Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul. Again, when a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumblingblock before him, he shall die; because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he hath done shall not be remembered; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless if thou warn the righteous man, that the righteous sin not, and he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because he is warned; also thou hast delivered thy soul.”* These words are so clear they need no further comment.

Moreover, not only do admonition and discipline serve the purpose to rescue and save the erring wayward soul, they also serve to keep the faithful on the straight and narrow path. Believers, true sheep, can become complacent. They need to be reminded of the potential for falling. In those well-known words of Paul, the Scripture says, *“Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall”* (I Corinthians 10:12). Hence, even before Peter denied his Lord three times, the Savior warned him for the purpose of keeping him from falling. The Savior said, *“Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren”* (Luke 22:31-32). And O how such prior warning was needed! Right after Jesus spoke this word of admonition, we read how this warning fell on deaf ears. The Bible says, *“And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death. And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me”* (Luke 22:33-34). Nevertheless, the Lord’s admonition and prayer, coupled with Christ’s grieved look at Peter after the cock crew, did bring about immediate repentance and the rescue of Peter’s soul. As the Bible says, *“And he went out, and wept bitterly”* (Matthew 26:75). The admonition of the Lord had come flashing back into Peter heart!

We mentioned earlier about the Galatians being infiltrated by the Judaizers. Paul gave warning to them so that they would not turn to another Gospel. He said, *“I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the Gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ”* (Galatians 1:6-10). Again, for the purpose of keeping the Galatians in the

true doctrine of justification by grace through faith, Paul earnestly entreated the Galatians, “*O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? Have ye suffered so many things in vain, if it be yet in vain?*” (Galatians 3:1-4).

Moreover, admonition and church discipline serve to promote the life of sanctification in the congregation. In that regard it works in tandem with the third use of the Law in the Church, namely, a rule or guideline. When members are admonished, this serves to perk up other members to be more diligent in their own life of sanctification. After Ananias and Sapphira were struck dead, what we might call God’s own swift excommunication, we are told in the Scriptures, “*And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things*” (Acts 5:11). In these last days when Christian congregations are lax in sanctification and prone to lukewarmness such as was found in the lukewarm church of Laodicea (Revelation 3), admonition and discipline serve as a “wake-up call.” Many years ago when this writer’s pastorate had just begun, he found that he had inherited a congregation laden with “dead wood,” delinquent members, many of whom had not been in church in two, three, even four or more years. After the pastor took his elders with him to visit and admonish these grossly delinquent members, some still refused to repent of despising the means of grace. They refused to come to church. They were then excommunicated. In the subsequent Sundays thereafter, church attendance took a sudden upswing and stayed up. Great fear came upon the congregation! A proper fear of God was restored in the congregation.

Furthermore, discipline is not only condemnatory, but exhortatory. When fellow members are not only warned against gossip, against sinful judging, against fornication, against worldliness, but also shown the corresponding Godly ways as set forth in Scripture, the congregation is thereby being encouraged and cultivated in letting its light shine even among its own members as well as in the world. Discipline for the purpose of exhortation is the exercise of the *third use* of the Law. Such was the nature of Paul’s instructions to the Romans when he wrote, “*Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another; not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality*” (Romans 12:9-13).

Ultimately, of course, brotherly admonition and discipline, as any other faithful adherence to the Word, redound to the glory of God. When an erring person or fallen person repents, the members give glory to God, and God Himself rejoices. Christ our Lord says in His parable of the Lost Sheep, “*And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbors, saying, unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance*” (Luke 15:6-7). Likewise, at the conclusion of the Parable of the Lost Coin, Christ says, “*And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbors together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost. Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth*” (Luke 15:9-10).

Part Two: The Function of Christian Admonition and Church Discipline

At the outset of this section, we do well to explain how the word **function** is being defined and used. Function has to do with operation, procedure, method, or execution. When it comes to church discipline, we are not left to our own reason and judgment, although good judgment guided by Scripture most certainly must be exercised. Where there is a lack of discretion and necessary tact, the end goal of having an erring brother reconciled may be seriously impeded. Otherwise, as we shall see, Christ our Lord takes from us all need to be creative, inventive and imaginative in dealing with erring persons in the church. Moreover, in this section on function, we must also include the manner or attitude with which the functions are to be exercised.

As stated, the function or procedure in carrying out church discipline is not left to the church to decide. Scripture tells us how to proceed when the sin committed is private, and also how to proceed when the sin committed is public at the outset. We shall take them one at a time.

Here it needs to be pointed out that the Christian congregation exercises discipline only when sin is involved. In this regard, not our feelings and not our personal subjective assessments define sin. God's Holy Law alone defines what is sin. I John 3:4 says, "*For sin is the transgression of the law.*" Also, not only sins of life, but also doctrinal error is a matter which warrants church discipline. If the error in doctrine involves a fundamental doctrine necessary for saving faith (e.g., the Virgin Birth, the deity of Christ, the bodily resurrection of Christ, justification by grace alone through faith alone, etc.), the unrepentant errorist must be declared an unbeliever. As for non-fundamental doctrines, persistence in the error results in the cessation of church fellowship.

With respect to sins which are not public, Christ sets forth the so-called "three steps" of discipline. The "three steps" are outlined for us in Matthew 18:15-17. The first step is this: "*Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.*" Because the sin is private or not publicly known, it should not be made public, but must be dealt with privately. This is why Jesus says, "*Go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone.*" Therefore, if a private sin is exposed, this in itself would be a sin. It is making public what is no one else's business. This also deprives the erring brother of the opportunity to repent in private and to keep the matter contained. Indeed, should the erring brother repent, the matter is over; and others need not and must not know that the matter ever existed.

Concerning this first step, we ought to understand properly Jesus' words, "*If thy brother shall trespass **against thee.***" The initiation of the first step is not done only if the sin is specifically committed against you personally. You may go on a hunting trip with a fellow Christian. He takes along a bottle of Jack Daniels and that evening forgets himself and drinks too much. He did not specifically sin against you but against himself and God. Nevertheless, you must admonish him. Even though his sin was not committed against your person, it was nevertheless against you in that his sin was an offense to you and violated your mutual brotherly spiritual relationship.

However, with respect to this first step of dealing with a brother who sins and who must be admonished in private, there is a proper patience to be observed. This first step need not be conducted just once. Obviously if the person repents, no more efforts are necessary. The matter is over. You have gained your brother. However, if the brother is not gained by one visit, it would be wise to try again at that level. It may well be that the admonished brother has been pondering the first admonition, and his conscience is bothering him. A second timely visit may gain the brother. If so, the matter is then over, and no one needs to be apprized of the matter.

However, when it becomes evident that the *first* step has gained no progress, one must proceed with the *second* step which our Savior sets forth. He says, “*But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.*” These one or two brethren are called in to witness what is said, both by the admonishing brother and by the offender. They confirm that what the accused has been charged with is indeed sin, and that the offender was properly admonished with the Word. Indeed, it has been well said that the one or two brethren called in ought to be upright, mature Christians whom the offender respects and knows to be objective and unbiased. It would be foolish to take one or two persons whose conduct has been offensive or whose lack of knowledge makes them unable to give solid, Biblical admonition.

The taking of one or two more persons as witnesses has a two-fold purpose. First, should the matter eventually have to go to the church, the church will hear of the matter out of “*the mouth of two or three witnesses.*” Then, as Christ says, “*every word may be established.*” The church cannot and must not take up cases where there is not the Scripturally required witness. [We will expand on the necessity of witnesses under our discussion of the *third* step.] The other purpose for taking one or two more is that the very presence of one or two other brethren will serve to impress more heavily upon the offender that his sin is not a mere matter of excusable weakness, but a matter where the soul is in jeopardy. As witnesses, the one or two more should not be merely passive witnesses, but should also join with the first brother in admonishing the offender. Indeed, the two or three are to speak as one voice with the Word of God. If the offender senses lack of unanimity among those bringing the admonition, this undermines the strength of the admonition. Howbeit, if, by the grace of God, the offender should repent as a result of the exercise of the second step, the penitent one is to be declared forgiven and the matter ceases. No further action is necessary, and the matter must not be publicized.

However, should this *second* step (which may be repeated) also not result in repentance, the *third* step must follow. Christ says, “*And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church.*” Obviously, although apparently not so obviously to the WELS, ELS, and CoLC, the church here mentioned in Matthew 18:17 is the divinely instituted local congregation. Yet in the Wisconsin Synod’s official pastoral theology book, *The Shepherd Under Christ*, in the chapter dealing with church discipline, there is a very revealing paragraph. It purposely makes hazy and ill-defined the meaning of the word church in Matthew 18:17. That paragraph reads: “There is nothing in Matthew 18:17 to indicate that the church which is involved in church discipline must be organized in a specific manner. The presence of the church is determined by the fact that the means of grace are in use in the midst of a number of professed believers; that they are gathered in Jesus’ name (Matthew 18:10), that is, in response to the Gospel revelation to perform functions which the Lord has assigned to them. Our Lord’s concern is not to grant a special privilege to a group organized in a specific manner, but to make sure that a sinning brother is given every possible opportunity to be confronted with the seriousness of his sin. To read more into Matthew 18 than is there can lead to a restriction of New Testament liberty and flexibility by the introduction of a ceremonial law, to hierarchical attitudes which consider excommunication valid only if declared in the presence of a pastor and announced by him, or to an evasion of a duty of love when an offense occurs of which no one in the offender’s congregation knows” (Armin W. Schuetze and Irwin J. Habeck, *The Shepherd Under Christ*, Northwestern Publishing House, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1974, page 169). This entire paragraph reveals the WELS’ false doctrine of the Church and Ministry! They foster the idea that any casual gathering of believers using the Word is “church.” They see the local Christian congregation and its shepherd as not the only divinely instituted grouping of Christians. Hence, what confusion is created when discipline must be exercised.

However, it is obvious that when Jesus says, *“Tell it unto the church,”* He means that the two or three are to tell it unto the local Christian congregation of which the offender is a member. This is Christ’s own divinely designated group of Christians given the authority to exercise publicly the power of the Keys, and especially to carry out the third step of discipline. Hence, not a Bible study group, not a synod or conference, nor the entire Holy Christian Church on earth can possibly exercise the third step.

When the sin and impenitence of the offender is told to the church (the local congregation), it is told out of the mouth of the two or three witnesses. Here the witnesses of the second step become crucial. In both the Old and New Testaments, God sets forth the requirement that witnesses give testimony of a sin before a final judgment may be rendered. The following passages set forth this requirement and principle:

Numbers 35:30 — *“Whoso killeth any person, the murderer shall be put to death by the mouth of two or three witnesses: but one witness shall not testify against any person to cause him to die.”*

Deuteronomy 19:15 — *“One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established.”*

Matthew 18:16 — *“But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.”*

II Corinthians 13:1 — *“This is the third time I am coming to you. In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.”*

Also, with respect to the requirement of witnesses in a charge against a pastor, Scripture gives the following requirement: *“Against an elder receive not an accusation but before two or three witnesses”* (I Timothy 5:19). This passage teaches us that the church is not even to receive a charge against its pastor which is not properly witnessed and substantiated by *“two or three.”* Here the comments of the Lutheran commentator, R. C. H. Lenski, are pertinent: *“Timothy is not to receive an accusation against an elder so as to take further steps about it, make an investigation, hear even the elder himself regarding the accusation, except on the basis of two or three witnesses. The honor due the office demands this protection, for even a charge of which an elder is acquitted nevertheless damages his office and his work to some degree. Paul’s purpose is to have no case taken up in which the verdict will after all have to be acquittal; also, and in the very first place, to prevent anybody from bringing such a case. This is to be a special safeguard that is to protect the good name of the office and its incumbents in the interest of the church itself. Ordinarily the witnesses are cited at the time of the trial; in the case of an elder they must be cited at the time the accusation is preferred, otherwise the accusation is not to be received”* (R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistles to the Colossians, to the Thessalonians, to Timothy, to Titus and to Philemon*, Augsburg Publishing House, 1945, page 684).

When, however, an erring or sinning brother’s case is told to the church, then the church must call the offender to appear before the church (which is the Voters’ Assembly composed of the adult male communicant members of the congregation —women and children are not to have rule in the church— to be admonished by the church. At this meeting, the church, on the basis of the testimony and evidence presented by the two or three witnesses, calls upon the offender

to repent. The offender is given opportunity to speak, yet not to hold forth and propagandize, but to repent of his sin. Should he maintain his innocence, he must do so with witness and evidence which clearly disprove or nullify what has been testified against him. However, should the offender in the face of undisputed evidence or the witnessed charges against him still not repent, Christ instructs the church on what it must do. Christ says, *“Let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican”* The church is to declare the impenitent person a heathen, an unbeliever. The person must be declared an heathen man for the simple reason that his steadfast impenitence has already rendered him such. The church is declaring publicly and formally what the person has already made himself to be: *“An heathen man and a publican.”* Thus, he is not to be considered merely no longer a member of the congregation, but no longer a member of the Holy Christian Church, the communion of saints. And just how sure and certain is the church’s action of declaring an impenitent person *“an heathen man and a publican”*? Jesus says in Matthew 18:18, the verse which immediately follows the three steps, *“Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven”* As Luther writes in his Small Catechism, *“This is as valid and certain, in heaven also, as if Christ, our dear Lord, dealt with us Himself.”* For this reason, should this excommunicated person continue to come to church (which may happen), then the pastor must faithfully carry out the declaration of the church by forbidding the person to receive the Lord’s Supper.

However, by the grace of God, the offender having been called to appear before the Voters may repent. What a wonderful and happy result of the entire, patient exercise of the Keys! As we quoted earlier, Jesus says, *“I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance”* (Luke 15:7). Then the congregation has the joy of officially and publicly declaring the repentant person to be forgiven or absolved. This, too, *“is as valid and certain in heaven also, as if Christ, our dear Lord, dealt with us Himself”* (Luther). Christ says, *“Whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven”* (Matthew 18:18). And again, *“Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them”* (John 20:23). Indeed, this is ever the ultimate prayed for and striven for goal of church discipline.

With respect to the third step, it has been asked if the offender must in every case be present to hear the church. While this is preferable, it is not required by the text. Jesus simply states: *“If he neglect to hear [i.e., literally, turn away his hearing from] the church.”* Hearing the church is not necessarily audible hearing. Usually the offender is summoned to appear before the church by way of a letter. The letter sets forth the sin for which the offender is being called upon to repent. Hence, even the invitational letter is the church’s addressing the impenitent one. If the person refuses to appear, the church may deem it proper to extend a second invitation. However, if the offender, without valid reason, simply will not appear and refuses in every way, even by letter or other communication, to express his repentance, the church is thereby NOT prevented from declaring the offender an heathen man and a publican. The emphasis is not so much on the physical hearing of the church, but on heeding the church’s admonition. The impenitent one is not hearing the church when he or she refuses to submit to the church’s call to repent of the sin which has been presented on the basis of two or three witnesses.

At this juncture of our discussion on function or procedure, we need to address how to proceed when a sin is public at the outset. I Timothy 5:20 says, *“Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear.”* When Peter gave public offense by his conduct in Antioch, Paul did not take him aside to rebuke him privately, but rebuked him before all. Galatians 2:14 says, *“But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the Gospel, I said unto Peter BEFORE THEM ALL, if thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles....”* The obvious

reason a public sin needs to be rebuked publicly is that there is no privacy to protect. There being no privacy involved, the first two steps of Matthew 18 are not applicable and are unnecessary. Even more importantly, the rebuke must be as wide as the offense. The public rebuke must correct the false doctrine or practice as far and wide as the sin caused offense. It must bring correction to all who had been exposed to the sin or error and were in danger of accepting the error.

However, there may be instances, due to the age and spiritual maturity of the offender or due to other special conditions, when even after the public sin has been publicly rebuked and an immediate repentance is not expressed, the offender may be further dealt with by the pastor and elders so as to bring about repentance. In other words, the sought after repentance not gained at the time of the public rebuke may well be obtained in the semi-privacy of a meeting with the Pastor and elders. Should repentance be gained, the repentance must then be made public. Normally the repentant one should make his confession before the church. However, should the person be of a timid disposition or have other personal impediments which may make a public confession not possible, the repentance given before the pastor and elders, who together are witnesses, could then be announced to the church, and the church would accept the witnessed repentance.

Having detailed the function and procedure of church discipline, it is here that we should bring in the proper attitude and conduct which is to prevail throughout church discipline, beginning even at step one. Because our goal is to save a soul, the admonishing Christians, whether one at the start, whether two or three at the second step, or whether the Voters at step three, are to deal with the offender with genuine humility, courtesy, tact, and sincere concern for the brother's soul. Here the words of Galatians 6:1 are golden. "*Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.*" If the admonishing brethren are haughty, over-bearing, patronizing, or come across as self-righteous, this could well place a stumblingblock before the offending brother and cause him to be further galvanized in his impenitence. Thus, not only must we speak the truth, but as our Convention theme-verse reminds us, we must "*speak the truth in love*" (Ephesians 4:15). [Of course, such speaking the truth in love does not mean that firmness is out of order. If the offender is haughty and belligerent, speaking the truth in love will require a firmness and sharpness which the belligerence dictates.]

Furthermore, we should realize that we could well have been the one who fell. As Paul says, "*Considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.*" We should approach our sinning brother with the full realization that, but for the grace of God, it could have been "I." When Jesus informed the disciples at the last Passover on Maundy Thursday that one of them would betray Him, they all asked, "*Lord, is it I?*" Each disciple (Judas, of course, was *hypocritical* in saying, "*Is it I?*") yes, each disciple could indeed have been guilty of this sin, even unknowingly. Thus Luther once remarked that a true Christian upon hearing an accusation against him does not simply dismiss the accusation as being utterly impossible or improbable.

The humble, sincere attitude of the admonishing brethren manifests their genuine concern and love for their erring or fallen brother. One must ask himself, "Do I want my fellow church member to be lost? Do I care about his soul in harmony with the care which the Lord has for souls? The Lord Himself says, "*As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live*" (Ezekiel 33:11). Likewise, Peter reminds us that the Lord "*is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance*" (II Peter 3:9). And again, the Bible reminds us that "*(God) will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth*" (I Timothy 2:4).

Conclusion

In these last days of sore distress, especially as people increasingly “*will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears, and shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables*” (II Timothy 4:3-4), the need for brotherly admonition and discipline will surely not decrease, but may increase. This is why Paul also added, “*But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry*” (II Timothy 4:5).

Moreover, let us remember the words of our Lord in Luke 18:8, “*When the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?*” These words of our Savior tell us that not only will few be believing or be in the faith, but also that few will still be holding “*the faith,*” the body of true doctrine. Thus, while in the exercise of brotherly admonition and discipline we must take care not to fall into the loveless, pietistic legalism of the Schwenckfeldians, we should also take equal care that, when warranted, we not neglect to exercise sincere, loving brotherly admonition among us. By such loving, faithful, brotherly admonition, we shall contribute to the saving and preserving of the few who will still be believing at our Lord’s return. It is all in the interest of the Gospel of our salvation. May God help us to carry out this solemn responsibility.

*“Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling,
and to present you faultless before the presence of
His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God
our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power,
both now and ever. Amen” —Jude 24-25*

MINUTES OF THE 48th ANNUAL CONVENTION

[Please note: The *official minutes* of the Convention for both the Friday and Saturday sessions were not submitted to the *praesidium* by the then Secretary of the Conference, Pastor Mark W. Dierking,, either for the customary review or for subsequent publications in the official proceedings, nor were follow-up requests for this important document honored or even answered. The only record of those first two days exists in Pastor Dierking’s abbreviated “digest” published in the July-August issue of the *Concordia Lutheran*. That digest was therefore used to re-create the “minutes” of the Friday and Saturday sessions as they appear below. The minutes of the Sunday sessions, taken by Pastor David T. Mensing as Secretary *pro tem* in Pastor Dierking’s absence, are included in their entirety.]

Friday, June 25, 1999

FRIDAY MORNING

The 48th Annual Convention began with a worship Service of Convocation. The *pastor loci*, the Rev. David T. Mensing, served as liturgist, while the Rev. Paul R. Bloedel, the President of our Conference, preached the opening sermon based on Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, chapter 4:14-15, with the theme “*Speaking the Truth in Love.*” The first part of this edifying sermon focused

on the fact that it is only God's truth which we must speak, teach, confess and practice, while the second part clearly showed that Christian love should always be the motivating factor when the Word of God is spoken either publicly, that is, in the name of and for a local congregation, or at home or even in one-on-one discourse with one another.

Immediately following the service, the opening session of the Convention was called to order with a brief devotion by Pastor Bloedel. The first item of business after the opening was one of the most joyous events of the entire Convention. Faith Ev. Lutheran Church of Jackson, Michigan, which had applied for membership in our Conference earlier in the spring and whose constitution and doctrinal position had been examined and declared to be in accordance with our doctrinal position and the Word of God, was formally received as a member congregation. Pastor Mensing, who had been intimately involved in the discussions with Faith congregation and her Pastor, the Rev. Ross Mahan, was the pastoral delegate who made the motion that Faith congregation be accepted into fellowship with our Conference, with thanksgiving to God for His grace in bringing us together. Pastor Mahan will undergo a colloquy at our Fall Pastoral Conference to be held at Peace, Oak Forest, in October. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously. In thanksgiving, we joined together in singing the common Doxology, "Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow."

The next item of business was the appointment of the *ad hoc* convention committees followed by the recognition and seating of pastoral and lay delegates from each congregation. Pastor Bloedel then presented his President's Report in which he focused on God's grace to our little Conference over the past fifty years, examining both the good and wonderful things the Conference experienced along with the disappointments and outright defections worked by Satan through the years. He also urged the delegates to take their duties seriously, especially when it came to voting for our Conference officers and committees. He also noted the extraordinary work carried out this past year by both Pastor Mensing and Pastor Stallings. Pastor Mensing was our first seminary professor in our new seminary plan. He was also intimately involved with the work of the Committee on Lutheran Union, working both with the President of the *Fellowship of Lutheran Congregations*, the Rev. Robert Lietz, and at the same time carrying on discussions with the Pastor and laymen of Faith congregation in Jackson. He also served as the Conference Archivist, not only organizing materials, but also with the help of several laymen, transferring these materials to computer disks for future reference. He also worked very hard at his chairmanship of the *Scriptural Publications* Board of Control, giving a great deal of thought to and drawing up recommendations regarding this very important arm of our Conference work. Pastor Bloedel also noted that Pastor Stallings was likewise very busy as the Editor of our "*Concordia Lutheran*." As Editor he draws up the subject and title for each article, assigns the articles to the contributing pastors, and then *gently* urges each pastor to try to submit his article by the designated deadline. Also ably assisting our Editor is Mr. John Steinke who formats each issue of the *C. L.* in polished form to present to the printer. He also maintains an up-to-date mailing list and from this list prepares the mailing stickers to be affixed on each copy. Each issue is mailed not only to our Conference brethren, but also to over 300 other pastors throughout the country. Our thanks to both Pastors and those who assisted them in their faithful work throughout this past year. It is our prayer that God will, according to His grace, allow them to continue to serve for many years to come. The last item of Pastor Bloedel's Report focused on some changes he thought should be made to our present Conference constitution.

FRIDAY AFTERNOON

After a delicious lunch served by the ladies of Peace congregation, the afternoon session began with a devotion and then the presentation of Pastor Mensing's historical essay entitled "***The Downward Slide of the Missouri Synod into Heterodoxy, 1932-1947.***" His essay gave an excellent overview of the people and events which contributed to the loss of orthodoxy within the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. Its downward slide began in the early 1930's when Francis Pieper's "Brief Statement" of 1932 was adopted by the convention but with parts of it ignored by both pastors and laymen in the synod, and with the synodical officials charged with doctrinal oversight simply ignoring the inroads of false doctrine. Things began to come to a head with the 1945 presentation of "A Statement," a document drawn up by forty-four prominent LCMS theologians and pastors. "A Statement" was thoroughly corrupted with false doctrine cleverly hidden in "*good words and fair speeches.*" "A Statement" was immediately attacked by conservative pastors and theologians in the LCMS, and the paper was finally "withdrawn" — not, however, repented of and repudiated, but only "withdrawn." "A Statement" served as the opening of the door for acceptance of the "Common Confession" in 1950 and became the official death knell of orthodoxy in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. The entire essay will not only appear in the Proceedings, but will be serialized in our *Concordia Lutheran*.

Following a brief recess, the Convention reassembled to consider two suggested amendments to the Conference *Constitution*. The first suggested change dealt with Article VII of the *Constitution* which treats the Officers of the Conference. The recommended change set forth certain parameters or prerequisites for both pastors and laymen in order for them to hold office in the Conference. The second suggested change to the *Constitution* in Articles IX and XII, the first dealing with Standing Committees, specifically the Editorial Committee, while Article XII deals specifically with the Publishing House Board of Control. In brief, the suggested changes streamlined the organization of these committees and their work, especially bringing up to date for our present circumstances the operation and management of our publishing house. The Convention assembled approved both changes for submission to the individual congregations in a referendum to determine whether or not they will be adopted. The text of these amendments is included in full in the *Proceedings*.

There was a final recommendation from the Board of Directors which suggested that the medical loan made to Pastor Dierking in 1998 be completely forgiven. With no discussion, the motion unanimously passed with the heartfelt thanks of Pastor Dierking expressed to the Convention.

Saturday, June 26, 1999

SATURDAY MORNING

Saturday's session began with an opening devotion led by Pastor Redlin of Good Shepherd Ev Lutheran Church, Tucson, Arizona. Then Pastor Stallings of Holy Scripture Lutheran Church, San Antonio, Texas, began the first part of his doctrinal essay entitled "***The Need, Purpose, and Function of Christian Discipline in the Local Congregation.***" In the first section of his essay, Pastor Stallings focused on "The Need and Purpose of Brotherly Admonition." There was a great deal of profitable discussion which accompanied this excellent essay.

SATURDAY AFTERNOON

The highlights of the afternoon session were the proposed organizational changes suggested for the Publishing House Board of Control and, of course, the election of officers and committees.

Under the report of the Chairman of the Publishing House Board of Control, several proposals were made and there was a great deal of discussion on each one. The first was that the Conference establish a bookstore under *Scriptural Publications* with the intent of making available to our congregations a steady supply of orthodox books and materials. This suggestion was adopted. The second suggestion by the Committee was that our current Seminary Book Store be consolidated with the new Conference Bookstore, with the proviso that the books intended for seminary students and their professors be set aside for that purpose and not offered to the general public for sale. The item the committee requested was \$5000.00 in “seed money” with which to purchase an initial stock of books, especially orthodox books which soon may go out of print (i.e. Pieper’s *Christian Dogmatics*, etc.). This proposal entailed a lively and long discussion. It was finally decided that the grant be reduced to \$3000.00. There was one more resolution which proceeded out of this discussion, namely, that the *Concordia Lutheran* be provided to the members of the Conference at no charge. Again, there was a great deal of discussion, but in the end it was decided that copies of the *CL* would be provided to our members *gratis* in a bulk mailing to each congregation.

Finally, the Board of Control moved that the Conference’s *ad hoc* committee for the maintenance of the Conference Web page be discontinued and the administration of the Web page be placed under the administration of the Board of Control of *Scriptural Publications*. The item was added to the recommended changes to Article XII of the Constitution and was voted on and passed by our congregations in convention assembled. The entire amendment will, of course, still have to be passed by the congregations in a referendum..

The Mission Committee then gave its report. Its chief recommendation was that the subsidy of \$600.00 per month to St. Stephen’s, Wilmot, be continued another year. That motion passed unanimously, and Pastor Dierking expressed his thanks on behalf of his entire congregation.

The Committee on Theological Education gave its report, supplemented by reports from both our Seminary Professor, Pastor Mensing and our Seminarian, Mr. Paul E. Bloedel. We noted with thanksgiving to God the work both men had done this past year, especially giving thanks to Pastor Mensing for a very difficult and busy schedule. Our seminarian is doing excellent work; and, once he finishes his seminary work, he will be, by the grace of God, a well-trained and able candidate for the ministry.

The last major item on Saturday’s agenda was the Election of Officers and Committees. The results of that were as follows:

President: The Rev. M. L. Natterer
Vice-President: The Rev. David T. Mensing
Secretary: The Rev. Mark W. Dierking
Treasurer: Mr. Victor K. Bloedel

Board Member-at-Large, Midwest - Mr. JC Perry
Board Member-at-Large, Far West - Mr. John D. Okamoto

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Rev.. E. R. Stallings, Rev. M .L .Natterer, Mr. John M. Steinke

COMMITTEE ON MISSIONS:

Rev. David G. Redlin
Rev. Ross Mahan
Mr. John Mensing
Mr. Bill Bergstrom
Mr. John Mayrhofer

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Mr. Victor K. Bloedel
Mr. Mark Mensing
Mr. John M. Steinke
Mr. Clayton Palmquist

COMMITTEE ON THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION:

Rev. Paul R. Bloedel
Rev. David T. Mensing
Mr. Lloyd E. Martin
Mr. Dan Bloedel

COMMITTEE OF LUTHERAN UNION:

Rev. David T. Mensing
Rev. Mark W. Dierking
Rev. E. R. Stallings
Mr. Phillip R. Martin

PUBLISHING HOUSE BOARD OF CONTROL:

Rev. David T. Mensing
Mr. Philip R. Martin
Mr. Raymond S. Kusumi

It was moved and seconded that all elections be declared unanimous, and this motion was unanimously carried. Thereupon the Saturday sessions were adjourned.

Sunday, June 27, 1999

SUNDAY AFTERNOON

The afternoon session began at 2:25 p.m. with a devotion led by Pastor Mensing. Inasmuch as Pastor Dierking, who had been scheduled for this devotion, had fallen and injured himself after the morning service, he was not present. The devotion, therefore, centered upon the Lord's loving chastisements of His children; and in the prayer the delegates besought the Lord's help and blessing upon Pastor Dierking for his recovery. Hymn 535, verses 1-8 was sung, followed by the reading of Hebrews 12:1-13 and a prayer. The devotion concluded with the ninth stanza of the hymn and the Apostolic Benediction.

For this final session of the convention, the newly-elected President, the Rev. M. L. Natterer of Lebanon, Oregon, assumed the chair as is our usual custom. Due to the absence of the Secretary, it was first moved and seconded that Pastor Mensing serve as Secretary *pro tem*. This motion was carried.

Pastor Stallings then began the second portion of the **Doctrinal Essay** scheduled for this convention, entitled: “*The Function of Christian Admonition and Church Discipline.*” He introduced this section by defining “function” as operation, procedure, method or execution; and he pointed out that in the exercise of Christian discipline and admonition the Lord does not leave method and procedure to the individual. The method and procedure is stipulated in such passages as Matthew 18:15-18 with no room left to human creativity and contrary interpretation. The essayist took the text through its three steps, showing particularly how a private sin is to be dealt with—just as privately as possible—and noted that the initial steps of admonition can be repeated in patience when a sinning brother allows himself to be dealt with. When the private and semi-private efforts show themselves to be fruitless, however, the “*two or three*” are to “*tell it unto the church,*” that is, to the Voters’ Assembly of the congregation. In this connection, the essayist pointed out the Wisconsin Synod’s false teaching on the doctrine of the Church that down-plays the local congregation and its role in admonition, that denies the local congregation as the only God-ordained external fellowship and functioning unit of Christ’s Church on earth. The essayist then also pointed out the difference between the way a public sin is to be handled and the way in which a private sin is dealt with. A public sin should be rebuked publicly, “*that others also may fear*” (I Timothy 5:20), even though a private or semi-private effort might be undertaken in the first instance. Eventually it must come to the removal of the offense from those to whom it was given, of whatever breadth the circle of those affected. If the sin was common knowledge, the public offense resulting therefrom has to be removed publicly. The point was continually made, however, that those bringing admonition should do so “*in the spirit of meekness*” (Galatians 6:1), that is, without a haughty, pharisaical attitude. Following the presentation of the final portion of the essay, which was interspersed with lively discussion from the floor, the entire essay was received with thanks to the essayist, publication and inclusion in the Proceedings subject to the usual review by the *praesidium*.

At 3:50 p.m., a fifteen minute recess was declared.

Following the break, Pastor Mensing presented the **Report of the Committee on Lutheran Union**. The substance of this report had been given the day before when Pastor Lietz of the *Fellowship of Lutheran Congregations* had been present to comment on it. (See the synopsis of that presentation in Saturday’s minutes. The full text of the report is included in these Proceedings. See Table of Contents.) It was moved and seconded to receive the report, and the motion was carried.

The combined report of the **Conference Archivist** and of the manager of the **Seminary Bookstore** was then given by Pastor Mensing and adopted. In addition to the written report, which consisted of a balance sheet prepared by Phillip Martin covering the funds of both endeavors, Pastor Mensing briefly reminded the delegates of the constant vigilance for out-of-print theological “treasures” sought by the Seminary Bookstore for future seminary students and pastors whose libraries should be augmented with such volumes. He also mentioned that the **Conference Archives** are in the process of readying more convention essays and sermons for publication, both in electronic and print format, the former very likely to be available on the Conference Web Page. Pastor Mensing noted for the record that, when the Seminary Bookstore

was incepted, it was required that an annual financial accounting be given to the Conference in convention assembled. This provision was lost sight of in recent years, and yet an accounting was routinely made simply as a courtesy. A formal accounting will be made in the future in conjunction with the report of the Business Manager of *Scriptural Publications*. The report was unanimously adopted.

The **Final Report of the Finance Committee** concerning the 1999-2000 Budget was given by the Conference Treasurer, Victor K. Bloedel. He reiterated the adjusted figures on the budget from the previous day as follows:

<i>Scriptural Publications</i>	\$ 6,500.00*
St. Stephen's Subsidy	7,200.00
Conference Archives Subsidy	500.00
Telephone Expenses	2,000.00
Convention Expenses	1,000.00
Travel Expenses	4,000.00
Miscellaneous Expenses	<u>1,500.00</u>
TOTAL	\$ 22,700.00

*In addition to the \$ 3000. originally budgeted (chiefly for the publication of the *CONCORDIA LUTHERAN*), this figure includes \$ 3,000 newly authorized for the stockpiling of "endangered" books in the Conference Bookstore's inventory AND \$ 500. for the Seminary Bookstore to use in obtaining used books for sale exclusively to students first and then to their instructors.

The revised **Fiscal Budget for 1999-2000** was then unanimously adopted.

The Resolutions Committee then gave its final report. It included eight resolutions, the first two of which were committed to it by the convention to include certain functions and duties under the responsibilities of *SCRIPTURAL PUBLICATIONS*. One of these was simply in the form of a directive; the second to be included in the proposed amendment to Article XII of the Constitution. Those first resolutions, therefore, could be passed by a simple majority vote, but the second had to be passed by a two-thirds majority in order to attach its provisions to the amendment of Article XII. The resolutions are summarized as follows:

#1—That books to be acquired by *SCRIPTURAL PUBLICATIONS* for sale by its bookstore be examined and reviewed ahead of time by the President, the Book and Tract Editor, and the chairman of the Board of Control;

#2—That the Conference Web Page be placed under the administration of *SCRIPTURAL PUBLICATIONS'* Board of Control, and that this be made permanent by including it in the amendment to Article XII to be ratified by the member congregations.

#3—Thanks to outgoing officers and members of standing committees and the Lord's blessings besought for newly elected officers and committees as they undertake their tasks;

#4—Thanks to the pastors who delivered the sermons at this convention;

#5—Thanks for the two Scriptural essays delivered at this convention;

#6—Thanks to the pastors who conducted the devotions during this convention;

#7—Thanks to the organist and choir of Peace congregation —augmented by the voices of guests to the convention— for their musical offerings;

#8—Thanks to Pastor and Mrs. Mensing and the members of Peace congregation for their hosting of the 48th Annual Convention.

All resolutions were adopted by *unanimous* vote. The report of the **Resolutions Committee** was also then adopted by the convention.

The **Final Report of the Committee on Registration and Excuses** was then presented. In addition to information provided in the committee's initial report, the following was reported: Total attendance at the Sunday Divine Service was 121. Total offering for the Sunday Service was \$1974.75. It was moved and seconded to receive the report, and the motion was carried.

Mr. Raymond Kusumi distributed his **Statistical Report** for fiscal year 1998-1999. After brief discussion, it was moved and seconded to receive this report; and the motion was unanimously carried. The President then reappointed Mr. Kusumi as Conference Statistician for the coming fiscal year with thanks for his continued faithful service.

Time and Place of the 49th Annual Convention: Mr. Robert G. Bloedel, delegate from St. Luke's Lutheran Church in Seattle, then rose to convey to the convention the invitation of his congregation to host the convention in the year 2,000. There being no other invitations, it was moved and seconded to accept this kind offer from the brethren in Seattle, and the motion was unanimously adopted. The dates were then stated for the record as those found in the present convention Agenda, namely: **June 23, 24, and 25, 2000**, with the Pastoral Conference meeting on Tuesday, June 20th, and Wednesday, June 21st, and the Board of Directors Meeting on Thursday, June 22nd.

The business of the 48th Annual Convention having been completed, Pastor Mensing, Secretary *pro tem*, was asked to read back the Minutes from the Sunday afternoon session. It was moved and seconded to adopt this record subject to polish and the usual review, and the motion was unanimously carried.

It was then moved and seconded to adjourn the convention. The motion was unanimously carried, and the convention adjourned at 5:07 p.m. with a devotion conducted by the President. Psalm 118 was read responsively, followed by the singing of Hymn 53, a prayer, and the customary closing formula concluding with the Apostolic Benediction.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. David T. Mensing, Secretary *pro tem*

REPORT OF THE CONFERENCE PRESIDENT

48th Annual Convention of the Concordia Lutheran Conference

Dear Brethren,

Once again, and evidently for the last time, I have been given the distinct privilege of addressing you in convention assembled as the President of the Concordia Lutheran Conference. How the years have literally flown by since Pastor Natterer and I, fifty years ago, left Concordia Seminary, Springfield, Illinois, to embark upon our life's work. We helped in the organization of our Conference at Okabena, Minnesota, in the Fall of 1951, then known as the Orthodox Lutheran Conference, and continued to be involved in its reorganization in 1957 as the Concordia Lutheran Conference. We both refused to sign the Constitution of the heterodox Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, and the synodical officials tyrannically invaded our congregations and moved them to depose us as pastors of the respective flocks over the which the Holy Ghost had made us overseers. We were both deposed on the evening of the self-same day, namely, Reformation Day, October the thirty-first, nineteen hundred and fifty-one: Pastor Natterer being removed from his office as pastor of Trinity Ev. Lutheran Church at Lansing, Illinois, and I from my office as pastor of Christ and Centennial Ev. Lutheran Churches in Wilmot, South Dakota. O how the Lord graciously helped and strengthened us through those “dreadful years,” humanly speaking, and turned them into blessed years, years of joy and happiness in His service.

We have seen pastors, lay people, and entire congregations come and go in the history of our Conference, some, because they were not truly with us in the Lord and His Word to begin with, others because they followed the inclinations of their sinful flesh and not the Lord Christ, and still others because the Lord took them from us to their eternal rest in heaven. These things should never be discouraging to us as long as, by God's grace, we remain steadfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, preaching and teaching His Word and it alone in its full truth and purity, thoroughly instructing both young and old in our congregations, knowing that such labor is not in vain in the Lord, and that it is through His Word alone that the Lord Jesus adds to the Church such as should be saved. Thus “*speaking the Truth in love*” may the members of our Conference never be blown about by every wind of doctrine but become ever more mature and settled in their Christian faith, “*grow[ing] up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.*”

In my report to you this year, there are several things I wish to emphasize. These are simply the observations of an old man, which I would wish both our pastoral and lay delegates to take to heart, to observe at this convention and perhaps draw from it something to act upon in the future. One of my concerns has to do with the voting on the part of our delegates for the incumbents of the various offices and standing committees. Perhaps at this convention, at least, we could observe better decorum, more orderly behavior and propriety, less levity, and more seriousness of purpose when writing and casting our ballots. In order to guide you in this important aspect of your work as delegates, I would like to call your attention to the following facts:

First of all, it is important for our delegates to know that the President's office is one of the least demanding offices in our Conference. It may be the most prestigious office and the one which carries with it the most responsibility, in the final analysis; but it has a tendency to be far overrated. As long as the work of the various committees is being carried out according to Constitutional guidelines and convention directives, the President has actually very little to do. He does not need to and ought not to interfere with the work of the standing committees or to be concerned about the regular work being carried out properly and efficiently by these committees between conventions. If any of the standing committees needs or desires his input

during the year, he is available as an *ex-officio* member of each committee. This, of course, does not mean that he is responsible in any way to guide the work of the respective committees so that the committees may not act on their own without the President's specific approval or sanction. Our Conference then would not need any committees. We would need only a President; and that's not the way our Conference is set up constitutionally.

Secondly, the Vice-President holds a very important position. He is the chairman of our Pastoral Conference, but, of greater importance, he is the chairman of our standing Committee on Lutheran Union. As the CLU chairman he is to keep abreast of the doctrine and practice as well as the inter-synodical relationship between other Lutheran bodies and independent Lutheran congregations. Here you want to vote for a man who has special gifts and talents in this very important area of our Conference work.

Thirdly, the work of Conference Secretary is a job which seems unending in its demands upon the time as well as upon the mental and physical stamina of the incumbent. His duties include the recording of careful minutes of every session of our CLC convention, of the meeting of the Board of Directors, and of the Pastoral Conference sessions, with the exception of the period designated for cases of casuistry. He is to see to it that these minutes are made available to congregations, board members, and pastors respectively in a timely fashion and to submit copies of all reports, sermons, and essays, together with the minutes of the convention, to the President and Vice-President for their careful review before publishing the Proceedings. All this, together with other minor matters listed in the Constitution, should make you think carefully about the gifts and abilities of the pastor you select for this important office, upon whom will depend a careful record of the yearly activities of our Conference.

Fourthly, our Treasurer is to be a layman who is able to keep an accurate, up-to-date, permanent record of all moneys received and disbursed by our Conference, to keep the congregations informed as to the financial affairs and condition of our Conference, and to have his books properly audited for each regular convention or to be examined at any time by the request of a majority of the Board of Directors. He is a member of the Board of Directors and the chairman of the Finance Committee whose work is set forth in our Constitution. Think carefully and vote for a layman who is qualified, in your estimation, to handle this important work and responsibility!

Fifthly, vote carefully for the members of the Editorial Committee. Be sure, in your own mind, that the pastoral members who are the editor and assistant editor of our Conference periodical, as well as the layman on the committee, are able to produce an official organ for our Conference which is second to none, a theological journal which has appeal, is well written, carefully planned and neatly produced, thoroughly edited in the light of God's Word, timely and edifying. This is a committee whose work continues throughout the year and must be able, as nearly as possible, to meet publication deadlines. Think carefully before voting for the incumbents of this committee.

Sixthly, voting for our Committee on Theological Education should not be done without careful thought. Two pastors and two laymen are on this committee whose job it is to supervise both the faculty and student body of our seminary and, together with the faculty, to determine the curricula, courses of study, admissions, and all seminary activity in general.

The Board of Control for our Publishing House is also a vitally important committee. It has been searching through our archives and making available valuable tracts and documents in neatly printed form, even on the Internet. Great progress has been made this past year, in this area of

Conference work, by our incumbent Publishing House Board. In this respect I wish to give special recognition to Pastor David T. Mensing, who is the chairman of the Publishing House Board of Control, for his unselfish and untiring labor not only in this capacity but also as the Vice-President of our Conference, chairman of our Committee on Lutheran Union, and our only active full-time professor, teaching a loaded schedule of difficult courses in our Seminary. His leadership, dedication, and help in various areas have been invaluable to our Conference for which it is difficult to express sufficient gratitude.

Our delegates are asked to take special note also of the Standing Committee on Missions whose chairman, a pastor, is a member of the Board of Directors, and whose work is chiefly, at this time, to review and submit a subsidy request for St. Stephen's congregation at Wilmot, South Dakota.

Now, my purpose, dear brethren, in going through the work of these important offices and committees is to urge you to use sound and prayerful judgment in your selection of men and in casting your ballot in the election of our officers and committees. Try to know who they are personally, what kind of work they have done, if any, for our Conference in the past, how at home they are in Scripture and in their ability to discuss God's Word with others, how active in the work of the Lord they have been in their home congregations and their general upright behavior and conduct. Be also concerned in your voting as to where the officers and chairmen of the various committees are located so as not to have the work of the Conference being carried out chiefly at one place. We are a Conference **of congregations**, not a Conference which delegates all its work to be done only by one or two pastors or laymen and in one or two of our congregations. Now may the Lord bless our efforts in our elections, this year, to His glory, to the extension of His Kingdom among us, and to the promotion of our unity in attaining the goals of our Conference together.

Dear brethren, the Constitution of the Concordia Lutheran Conference has been a valuable document in guiding us in our work together toward goals which we could never accomplish as individual congregations. There are, however, a few Articles which are obviously in need of revising or updating. I am therefore recommending that at this convention you are given an opportunity to review our Constitution with a view toward amending Article VIII, especially section 2b, Article IX, section 2, and all of Article XII, perhaps also an Article relating to our Conference Web Page.

As our Convention proceeds, during the next three days, you will hear the reports of our various standing committees. Listen to them carefully and feel free to ask questions so that you know what every committee has accomplished and desires to accomplish in the year to come, that you may cast a knowledgeable vote on any resolution which a committee report may evoke and be able to convey the activities of our Conference to your respective congregations for their concurrence.

On Sunday, you will be privileged to receive the Lord's Supper for the strengthening of your faith and as a testimony of our God-given unity, as guest communicants of Peace Ev. Lutheran Church here in Oak Forest. Make your intention to come to the Lord's Supper known to your pastor, and he will, in turn, announce you for Communion to the local pastor, Pastor Mensing.

And now, dear brethren, let us, by God's grace in our Savior Jesus Christ, be steadfast and unmovable in our Christian faith, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that our labor here on earth is not in vain in the Lord (I Corinthians 15:58).

Respectfully submitted,

Paul R. Bloedel, President

REPORT of the COMMITTEE TO REVIEW THE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

It is with great reluctance that we accept President Bloedel's report as giving his report "for the last time." But we recognize that we must abide by the constitution of our conference which states that "the President of the conference may not be elected for more than three consecutive terms" (Art. XI). During these three years Pastor Bloedel has very ably fulfilled all his responsibilities as President, especially his chief obligation in leading the conference "in guarding its confessional position and in stemming public offence" (Art. VII 1:b). We thank our dear heavenly Father who so graciously provided him with the needed wisdom and strength to fulfill his duties so conscientiously as his reports during these last three years so clearly reveal. Having examined this last report, we once again observe his genuine concern to preserve our sacred heritage and his diligent and timely encouragement to maintain decorum in convention assembled with prayerful consideration to all decisions made in our conference and to know the people we elect. We pray that the Lord of the vineyard would grant Pastor Bloedel with health that he may continue to serve us in the years before us with his God-given gifts and talents.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rev. M. L. Natterer
Mr. Lloyd E. Martin

REPORT of the COMMITTEE ON REGISTRATION AND EXCUSES

Presented for seating at this convention according to the official credentials submitted by their respective congregations are the following delegations:

From Peace, Oak Forest, Illinois —

The Rev. David T. Mensing, Pastoral Delegate
Mr. John P. Mensing and Mr. Lloyd E. Martin, Lay Delegates
Mr. Paul E. Bloedel and Mr. Michael J. Danyluk, Alternates

Total Votes: 3

From St. Stephen's, Wilmot, South Dakota —

The Rev. Mark W. Dierking, Pastoral Delegate
Mr. Aaron Dierking and Mr. Luke Dierking, Lay Delegates

Total Votes: 3

From Holy Scripture, Windcrest, Texas —

The Rev. E. R. Stallings, Jr., Pastoral Delegate
Mr. John Steinke and Mr. Dan Steinke*, Lay Delegates [*Excused]

Total Votes: 3 [Lay Delegate casts 2 votes]

From St. Luke's, Seattle, Washington —

The Rev. Paul R. Bloedel, Pastoral Delegate
Mr. Raymond S. Kusumi and Mr. Robert G. Bloedel, Lay Delegates

Mr. John Okamoto and Mr. Victor Bloedel, Alternates

Total Votes: 3

From **St. John's, Lebanon, Oregon** —

The Rev. M. L. Natterer, Pastoral Delegate

Mr. Bill Bergstrom and Mr. Michael Schrader, Lay Delegates

Mr. Bill Schrader, Alternate

Total Votes: 3

From **Good Shepherd, Tucson, Arizona** —

The Rev. David G. Redlin, Pastoral Delegate

Mr. Joshua Redlin*, Lay Delegate [*Excused]

Total Votes: 2 [Pastoral Delegate casts 2 votes]

From **Faith, Jackson, Michigan** —

The Rev. Ross A. Mahan, Pastoral Delegate

Mr. JC Perry, Lay Delegate

Mr. Jim Ewers, Alternate

Total Votes: 3 [Lay Delegate casts 2 votes]

Total Number of Votes to be Cast: 20

Total in attendance at the Friday Service of Convocation: 85 Offering Received: \$ 231.00

Total in attendance at the Sunday Communion Service: 121 Offering Received: \$ 1,974.75

Respectfully submitted,

Committee on Registration and Excuses

**Concordia Lutheran Conference
FINANCIAL REPORT for 1998-1999**

	-----General Fund-----		Student Aid Fund
	Year-to-Date	Budgeted	Year-to-Date
Beginning Cash Balance, June 1, 1998	\$ 28540.45		\$ 25046.17
Add Cash Receipts:			
Holy Scripture, San Antonio	800.00	600.00	0.00
Peace, Oak Forest	5000.00	4200.00	400.00
St. John's, Lebanon	3255.00	3105.00	50.00
St. Luke's, Seattle	3100.00	1200.00	4200.00
St. Stephen's, Wilmot	0.00	0.00	0.00
Good Shepherd, Tucson	377.70	300.00	110.60
Interest Income	1027.52	1500.00	1478.76
1998 Proceedings	0.00	400.00	0.00

1998 Convention Collection	622.20	622.20	0.00
1997 Proceedings	0.00	0.00	0.00
Other	0.00	0.00	0.00
 Total Receipts	 \$ 14182.42		 \$ 6259.36
 Total Cash Available	 \$ 42722.87		 \$ 31305.53
 Less Disbursements:			
<i>Scriptural Publications</i> Subsidy	3000.00	3000.00	--- --
St. Stephen's Subsidy	8100.00	6000.00	--- --
Telephone Expense	595.55	2000.00	--- --
Convention Expense	635.50	1000.00	--- --
Travel Expense	3607.79	4000.00	--- --
Miscellaneous Expense	304.97	1500.00	--- --
1998 Proceedings Production	500.00	500.00	--- --
Seminary Bookstore	500.00	500.00	--- --
Conference Archives Subsidy	500.00	500.00	--- --
Other	0.00	0.00	--- --
Student's Support	--- --	--- --	2550.00
 Total Expenditures	 \$ 17743.81		 \$ 2550.00
 Ending Cash Balance, May 31, 1999	 \$ 24979.06		 \$ 28755.53
 Total Cash, All Funds:	 \$ 53734.59		

Respectfully submitted,

V. K. Bloedel, Treasurer

REPORT OF THE AUDITING COMMITTEE

Dear Brethren:

We have reviewed the financial records of our Conference Treasurer, Mr. Victor K. Bloedel, and have reviewed also the financial records of the Business Manager of Scriptural Publications, Mr. Phillip R. Martin. The audit covered the fiscal year 1 June 1998 through 31 May 1999. All records were found to be accurate and in excellent order. We wish to express our sincere gratitude to the Treasurer and to the Business Manager for their diligent and exacting efforts in their respective offices during the past year.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. David G. Redlin
 Mr. Lloyd E. Martin
 Mr. John Steinke

REPORT OF THE EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

“Speaking the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15).

Dear Brethren:

According to our Conference Constitution, your Editorial Committee is authorized to make available tracts, Sunday School lessons and materials, and other printed matter. However, the chief duty and responsibility of our committee is the publication of our official Conference periodical, *The Concordia Lutheran*. For those of you who have been in our Conference from its founding days, it has been evident that our periodical has undergone very few changes. Even our cover has never changed. We see no need to change for the sake of change. Our goal is not to cater to the eyes, but to the heart. Our aim is to present faithfully that changeless Word of God in all its truth and purity. Our purpose is to confess Christ, who is *“the same yesterday, and today, and forever”* (Hebrews 13:8).

The only real change that your editor is aware of occurred long before he came along. That one “new” addition is the now long-standing segment called, “Around the World, with Editorial Comment.” Your editor has marveled how Pastor Natterer finds those sometimes shocking, sometimes bizarre, sometimes improbable news items which he then evaluates on the basis of Scripture. An excellent example is found in the current May-June issue. The very first entry relates of the shocking blasphemy of media magnate, Ted Turner.

The other regular entry of our theological journal is “The President’s Column.” At times it is a bit longer than the typical column; but, no matter what its length happens to be, it always challenges the heterodox bodies to see their grievous errors and to return to the full truth of God’s Word. Moreover, while often praising and thanking God for his grace upon us, the “President’s Column” does not refrain from putting our own Conference under the impartial scrutiny of Holy Writ to ensure that we do not fall into that dreaded dead orthodoxy. Then, of course, there are the various theological articles written by pastors of the Conference or, on occasion, by one of our laymen. Concerning the latter, we had in our November-December issue an interesting and educational article by Stephen Bloedel entitled, “Some Reflections about Martin Luther as a Hymnwriter.” All of our pastors’ articles exemplify our convention theme, *“Speaking the truth in love.”* Although such speaking the truth does not always sound like love, there is nothing more loving than the truth. May the Lord preserve this among us without change.

In closing, we would be remiss if we failed to recognize the untiring labors of Mr. John Steinke, the lay member of our committee, who has done such excellent work in assisting our editor by formatting the *Concordia Lutheran* during this past year.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. E. R. Stallings, Editor
Rev. M. L. Natterer, Assistant Editor
Mr. John M. Steinke, Lay Member

REPORT OF SCRIPTURAL PUBLICATIONS BOARD OF CONTROL

Dear Brethren:

“Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give glory, for Thy mercy, and for Thy truth’s sake!” Psalm 115:1. These words of the Psalmist express very particularly the sentiments of the Board of Control of your publishing house as we briefly survey our activities of the past fiscal year and look forward, in anticipation of the Lord’s continued abundant blessings, to projects in the planning stage for the immediately coming year. In summary, we list these for your current information, discussion, and consideration as follows:

I. This past year, *SCRIPTURAL PUBLICATIONS*...

- ...developed and sent out the schedule of Sunday School Lessons for the year;
- ...established a publishing house account at the local bank;
- ...received and filled an order for Sunday School materials from a congregation outside our Conference;
- ...received several new and renewal subscriptions to the *Concordia Lutheran*, including just recently a blanket subscription from our sister congregation in Jackson, Michigan;
- ...set up wholesale accounts with Concordia Publishing House and Northwestern Publishing House, temporarily under the name of the seminary bookstore, but with the view toward establishing a full-service Conference bookstore under its publishing house;
- ...requested and received as electronic files available past *C. L.*’s from the former business manager, as well as miscellaneous copies of older tracts and documents;
- ...requested and received from Pastor Stallings the remaining copies of the *Sketch of the Doctrinal Position of the Concordia Lutheran Conference* to fill incoming orders;
- ...explored the practicality of time-sharing use of Peace Congregation’s *Risograph* duplicator for the production of Sunday School materials, booklets and tracts, the *Prospectus* and *Agenda* for this convention, and last year’s *Proceedings*, and found this to be an equitable arrangement. Print quality is acceptable (300 dpi), but not as sharp as offset and laser printed copy would be;
- ...reprinted several tracts and documents which were no longer in stock (name them) and several fliers representing our Conference and its position, the content of which was taken from our existing documents;
- ...printed the *Prospectus* and *Agenda* for this present convention, as well as last year’s *Proceedings*;
- ...sought copyright information and permission to reprint several out-of-print books;
- ...developed a “hot list” of titles, both of books previously available but now out of print,

and of suggested tracts for future publication, for recommendation to the Conference as publishing targets for the future;

...contacted two book publishers regarding pricing schedules for the production of both soft and hard cover books;

...explored the possibility of acquiring a Conference-owned high capacity duplexing laser printer, a ream trimmer, a comb binder, and a flat-clinch booklet stapler for Conference production of tracts, booklets, and comb-bound volumes.

(Samples of projects produced this year are on display for the delegates' examination.)

II. This coming year, *SCRIPTURAL PUBLICATIONS* intends, God willing, ...

...to continue to provide a timely and yet advisory schedule of the Sunday School Bible Lessons in close conformity with the church year;

...to continue to duplicate and to provide at reasonable cost to subscribers *outside* our Conference the Sunday School materials currently in use by the congregations of our fellowship, not primarily as a business venture but as an effective witness to others of the sound Scriptural instructional program developed by our Conference;

...to provide a competitive bid to the Editorial Committee for the more economical printing of the *Concordia Lutheran* and, at the same time, by means of funds otherwise sent outside the Conference by the out-sourcing of that printing, to defray in one year the acquisition of a high-volume laser printer for the publishing house;

...to make our facilities available especially to the Secretary of the Conference for the printing of the 1999 *Proceedings*, as well as next year's *Prospectus* and *Convention Agenda*;

...to complete a refreshed set of reproduction proofs of the Sunday School leaflets for Series I, as recently re-edited chiefly by Pastor Bloedel with some graphics assistance from Paul E. Bloedel, and to make these available to the congregations of our Conference beginning with the 1st Quarter of 1999;

...to complete a refreshed set of reproduction-proofs of the Sunday School worksheets for Series I, as re-edited chiefly by Pastor Mensing, and to provide these to the various congregations of the Conference beginning with the 1st Quarter of 1999;

...to secure permission from Concordia Publishing House to reprint in limited quantities orthodox materials from by-gone days which can still profitably serve the congregations of our Conference as appropriate instructional and devotional aids;

...to secure the assistance of the Pastoral Conference at its semi-annual meetings in suggesting, rating, evaluating, and prioritizing projects targeted for publication, and thus to seek its advice as to the appropriateness and usability of materials by our congregations;

...to print materials as far as possible in the order of their established priority, as funds and

time are available;

- ...to encourage the convention to establish under the administration and name of *Scriptural Publications* a Conference bookstore for the purpose of maintaining an inventory of orthodox books and materials for purchase by our Conference laymen, by their pastors, and by their congregations. Such a bookstore, operated primarily as a mail order outlet, will satisfy a need of long standing as expressed in various resolutions of record in the history of our Conference. For the sake of demonstrable economic advantages, this bookstore should maintain certification as a reseller from Concordia Publishing House, from Northwestern Publishing House, and from other publishers of appropriate products;
- ...to publish and make available to the pastors and congregations of the Conference, as well as to individual laymen upon their request, a catalog of books, tracts, and other materials either warehoused by *Scriptural Publications* or available for purchase through it. This catalog (similar to the Seminary Bookstore catalog distributed as a sample at this convention) may be issued annually or more frequently depending upon the current inventory and/or availability of materials.
- ...to incorporate, by authorization of the convention, the Seminary Bookstore under the larger umbrella of *Scriptural Publications*, specially for the sake of the economic advantages to be realized, with the understanding that the textbook inventory be kept separate from the general inventory and available only to students and their instructors (as originally decided when the Seminary Bookstore was established);
- ...to acquire as funds permit items of equipment which will facilitate the publication of books, tracts, and other materials. The purpose of such equipment is twofold: a) to make the publishing work less labor intensive (particularly since at this stage most projects will be undertaken with donated labor), and b) to increase the quality and usability of the finished product. Desirable production equipment would include such basic items as a saddle stapler, a flat-clinch heavy duty stapler, a ream trimmer, a heavy duty three-hole punch, and a comb binder; and
- ...to make the facilities of *Scriptural Publications* available to our congregations (as our time permits) as a brotherly service for the printing of materials generated by their own respective pastors, not as official Conference publications, but for the consumption of their own people.

III. We also propose the following for consideration by the Convention:

A. That the Conference in convention assembled authorize the establishment of a Conference Book Store under *SCRIPTURAL PUBLICATIONS*, to provide a constant and consistent supply of orthodox books and materials for purchase by our people;

B. That the Conference consolidate the present Seminary Book Store within and under the Conference book store, requiring, however, that the inventory reserved for purchase by seminary students and their instructors be set aside for that purpose and not offered to the general public for purchase;

C. That the Conference in its budget this year set aside \$ 5,000.00 as a one-time grant to permit *SCRIPTURAL PUBLICATIONS* to acquire an inventory of orthodox books, particularly those in danger of being taken out of print, so that these can be preserved for availability to our people;

D. That from henceforth the *CONCORDIA LUTHERAN* be made available to the members and congregations of our Conference at no charge, inasmuch as by their regular contributions they are already funding this effort of the Conference;

E. That the Conference discontinue the *ad hoc* committee for the maintenance of the Conference Web Page and place the administration of the Web Page under the publishing authority of *SCRIPTURAL PUBLICATIONS*, authorizing the chairman of the Board of Control to appoint technically competent personnel to maintain the page under his oversight.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. David T. Mensing, Chairman
 Rev. E. R. Stallings
 Mr. Raymond S. Kusumi
 Mr. Phillip R. Martin

SCRIPTURAL PUBLICATIONS

(Concordia Lutheran Conference)

Financial Report

6/1/98 - 5/31/99

Cash Balance, June 1, 1998 **\$ 837.53**

Add Cash Receipts:

Books and Tracts (Purchases)	\$ 17.50
Concordia Lutheran Subscriptions	188.00
Conference Subsidy	3000.00
Donations	220.00
Sunday School Lessons	117.00
Miscellaneous	100.00

Total Receipts **3,642.50**

Total Cash Available		\$ 4,480.03
Less Disbursements:		
<i>Concordia Lutheran</i> Postage	553.42	
<i>Concordia Lutheran</i> Printing and Supplies	2403.06	
Mailing Supplies	0.00	
General Postage	136.91	
Printing Supplies	246.84	
Miscellaneous	119.00	
Total Expenditures		<u>3,459.23</u>
Cash Balance, May 31, 1999		\$ 1,020.80

Respectfully submitted,

Phillip R. Martin, Business Manager

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON MISSIONS

Dear Brethren:

In accord with our Constitution your committee is authorized "to survey the field and general circumstances of congregations requesting financial subsidy from the Conference and to make recommendations regarding such requests to the Conference at its conventions, with the view both to assisting truly needy congregations and also to using the Conference treasury in the wisest way for the extension of the Savior's Kingdom" (Constitution, Article IX, c, 3).

Your committee has received a request for subsidy from our sister congregation, St. Stephen's Evangelical Lutheran Church, in Wilmot, South Dakota. This request, dated May 2, 1999, referred to the fiery trials through which they have had to pass during these last years. Because of Pastor Dierking's adherence to God's Word there were those who opposed him and through their agitation succeeded in gaining others. Ultimately some 50 members left the congregation. At the present time the congregation consists of 12 souls, counting the Pastor, and one adult in instruction class. Five men constitute the Voters' Assembly.

In their request for subsidy they ask us to bear in mind that they are growing internally through the regular preaching of the Word and that there is still mission work to be done in Wilmot.

Although we are assured that the remaining members of St. Stephen's earnestly desire the preaching of God's pure Word and reveal this in their faithful church attendance and also by

their sacrificial contributions, it is obvious that they simply do not have the needed funds to support the ministry in their midst. Moreover, because of staggering medical bills Pastor Dierking found it necessary to hold down a full-time job in the community in order to whittle down these debts incurred through no fault of his own. By God's grace, these debts have now been reduced to such an extent that he is now able to resign from his secular job so that he can carry out the command of the Apostle to "*make full proof of thy ministry*" (II Timothy 4:5).

Having carefully and prayerfully considered the request our committee herewith recommends we continue the subsidy of \$600.00 a month for another year.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. M. L. Natterer, Chairman

Rev. David Redlin

Paul E. Bloedel

Paul Steinke

Mark Natterer

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

Dear Brethren:

St. Paul instructed Timothy: "*Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth*" (II Timothy 2:15). These words apply to ministers, and, finally, to all Christians; they also apply to men studying for the ministry. And with great joy and thankfulness to our loving and gracious God, who has heard and answered our fervent prayers in the affirmative, we are privileged to report on the progress of a young man who has been studying for the ministry in our Conference peripatetic seminary program under one of our Conference pastors the past school year and the semester previous to that. Judging by the grades that have been sent us, and by a brief conversation with our student and a report on his work at last fall's Pastoral Conference in Tucson, our student certainly does not need to be ashamed of his work. In fact, he, and all of us, can take humble pride in his work. Now, as of this June, according to the curriculum of the peripatetic seminary of our Conference, our student has completed his first-year studies under Pastor Mensing in Oak Forest, Illinois and will undertake his second-year studies in the coming school year under Pastor Dierking in Wilmot, South Dakota.

On behalf of the Conference we thank Pastor Mensing for his special labor in teaching our student the past year and a half. Pastor Mensing is also "*a workman that needeth not to be ashamed.*" And our prayer is that we will soon have others who will begin their studies under Pastor Mensing. We also ask God to grant both Pastor Dierking and our student the health and

strength to enjoy a fulfilling and prosperous *second* seminary year in Wilmot under the Lord's continued blessing.

And now, since I could only guess as to what all transpired at our seminary in Oak Forest during the past one and a half years, we ask our Professor, who is also a member of our Committee, to report to you in his own words; followed perhaps, by observations of our student, Paul E. Bloedel.

Respectfully submitted,

Pastor David G. Redlin, Chairman
Pastor David T. Mensing
Mr. Daniel M. Bloedel
Mr. Phillip R. Martin

INTEREST REPORT OF THE SEMINARY INSTRUCTOR

Dear Brethren:

With all glory to God for His abundant, enabling grace toward our Conference, toward our student, toward my congregation, and toward me personally, I rejoice greatly in the privilege of having been able to commit what I once learned to a faithful young man in our Conference, who shall, at the conclusion of his training, be properly equipped and able to teach others also (II Timothy 2:2) and to undertake the ministry of the precious Word of God and the Holy Sacraments, *“that the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children, that they might set their hope in God”* (Psalm 78:6-7).

As the first-scheduled instructor on our peripatetic rotation, I was privileged to teach over the past three academic semesters all the courses prescribed in the Seminary Curriculum for first-year students. This work, while arduous in the amount of personal study required and sometimes staggering in the time necessary for preparation of lessons and appropriate materials, was so gratifying to me personally and the source of so much joy in the Lord that, if I were presented with the opportunity to begin immediately anew the instruction of another student, I would enthusiastically jump at the challenge and rejoice in the privilege! I must also say at this juncture, not to the personal praise of the student (who would not accept the credit in any case) but to the glory of God, that in over twenty-five years of teaching in the public school system, from elementary grades to junior college, I have never had a pupil so diligent in attention to his studies, so dedicated to quality work, so consistent from day to day and week to week, so tireless in his efforts, so humble in his attitude, so hard on himself in the pursuit of real mastery, and so determined under God to bring honor and glory to his Savior in what he has accomplished. His academic performance has been consistently of the highest caliber; and, to the credit of God's grace, this reflects Paul's high regard for his Savior's Word, his love for precious souls, and his mindfulness of the heavy responsibility which the Lord lays upon His ambassadors that they be *“workmen that need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth”* in their preaching, teaching, and oversight of the flock committed to their charge.

We note with some interest that the three-semester attendance of Paul Bloedel (instead of the usual two), which we thought at the time was due only to happenstance (in that he matriculated in the winter of 1998), has resulted, under the Lord's blessing, in a positive outcome for him. The extra semester, particularly for the study of the languages, took off a great deal of pressure and permitted the student to progress at a more reasonable rate with a more solid grasp of the grammar and vocabulary. I would personally recommend that, before the next first-year student matriculates into our program, the Committee on Theological Education give serious consideration to the permanent expansion of the initial year to a unit of three semesters instead of the present two.

In his *practicum*, which is one of the finest features of our Conference seminary program—the on-going internship in pastoral work under the tutelage and guidance of the local pastor—Brother Bloedel gained considerable experience in the practical aspects of the parish ministry. Besides the mundane tasks of bulletin production, the maintenance of the bulletin board, and the servicing of the altar candles and the posting of hymn numbers, the student was assigned a Sunday School class to audit, to teach, and then to supervise; an advisory seat on the Board of Elders; and the opportunity to officiate in the opening devotions of the Sunday School/Bible Class hour each Sunday, the reading of Epistle and Gospel lessons in Sunday divine services, and participation in the liturgy and the reading of the Passion History in the Midweek Lenten Services. He also assisted the professor, who was also the chairman of the Committee on Lutheran Union this year, in studying specific matters of doctrine and practice in which other groups differ with our Conference and of helping to draft position papers and discussion outlines for use in Lutheran union negotiations. He also attended with his professor, and participated in, several Lutheran union dialogs, as an official observer, and was very helpful in articulating clearly the position of our Conference in doctrine and practice.

As Student Bloedel now moves on to Wilmot, South Dakota, to continue his studies under Pastor Mark Dierking, his new instructor and mentor, I wish him the Lord's continued blessings in his studies and upon his life, as he prepares to "*show [himself] approved unto God*" as a well-qualified candidate for the Office of the Holy Ministry. I will miss him sorely, as a student, as a sheep of my flock, as an exemplary member of our Voters' Assembly, as a dear friend, and, even at this early stage of his preparation, a valued and trusted "junior colleague" in the Lord's Work. I look forward to the day in the not-too-distant future when, having studied the art of Christian *Homiletics*, Brother Paul comes back here to Oak Forest to fill this pulpit as a guest preacher, to proclaim to us here at Peace the precious Word of His Savior in its truth and purity to the edification and salvation of our souls!

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. David T. Mensing, Professor

INTEREST REPORT OF THE SEMINARY STUDENT

Dear Brethren:

During this past year of seminary studies the majority of my in class subjects were the same as my first semester, so I will, in this interest report, mention some of my *practicum* work which

differed more significantly from last year's seminary experience.

One enjoyable aspect of my *practicum* was the chance which I was given to be a part of the Sunday School Staff here at Peace and teach our levels II through IV. This experience was very beneficial for me. It required that I become more comfortable with bringing God's Word of Truth to a very young age group; to apply the Law as a mirror to these young children; to express the joyous Gospel in simple language; and to show them how the Law applies to them as a rule for their own lives, while encouraging their obedience to flow from gratitude for the life, suffering, and death of their dear Lord Jesus. I also had the opportunity to break in a new Sunday School teacher—my replacement—who, since the first Sunday after Easter, has had total control over my former class.

Another new experience in my *practicum* training was the public reading of the Passion History during our Wednesday evening Lenten Services. As if this were not traumatic enough, my professor, at this same time, assigned to me the chanting of the opening liturgy in those vesper services, as well as the Sunday morning opening devotion for Sunday School and Bible Class. I have continued to take the opening devotion every Sunday since.

Under the heading of *practicum* would also come the profitable occasions on which I joined Pastor Mensing on various C.L.U.-type meetings with pastors outside of our fellowship.

As my last days here in Oak Forest disappear, I pray that God would move more young men to enroll in our seminary and begin training here with Pastor Mensing very soon. I have really enjoyed my stay here, and have appreciated the private, comfortable, and conveniently located subterranean cloister in which I have been living during the past year and a half. Though it lacks windows and natural sunlight it truly is an ideal habitat for seminary students who are serious about studying.

I now wish publicly to thank all the members of Peace Ev. Lutheran Church, both here in Oak Forest and up in Midland, for their brotherly love and hospitality which they have extended to me since the start of my training here up through the present time. You always made me feel at home, and as a dear brother in your local, Christian family. Without a doubt, I will miss you all very much.

Of course, most of all, I will miss my good friend and cousin whom, through daily exposure, I have come to love and respect so very much; namely, my dear pastor and professor, who, for the past year and a half, has imparted priceless instruction and counsel to me from God's Word. I sincerely thank my gracious God for giving him the physical, mental, and spiritual ability faithfully to instill in my heart and mind a thorough and correct understanding of the subject-matter under the various courses which had been assigned to him to teach in our peripatetic seminary.

I want to thank all my brethren in the Concordia Lutheran Conference for their support, and for their effective prayers. I also earnestly request your continued prayers in my behalf that God would keep me faithful to Him and to His Word as it will, by His grace, continue to be taught to me in its full truth and purity by my future professors.

Respectfully submitted,

Paul E. Bloedel, Seminarian

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON LUTHERAN UNION

Dear Brethren:

“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!” Psalm 133:1. This expression of the Psalmist, praising the blessedness of a fellowship based on the true unity of the Spirit, was the watchword of your Committee on Lutheran Union this year as we pursued our task of searching out other Lutherans truly concerned about purity of doctrine and practice and, if possible, of making contact with them to explore their position. However, instead of taking the easy and popular tack of pursuing union at the cost of unity, we also followed, by God’s grace, the motto of our convention this year, *“Speaking the truth in love,”* Ephesians 4:15, to the intent that, testifying forthrightly to the truth, we would eventually find ourselves in the company of others of like mind, *“all speak[ing] the same thing...[with] no divisions among [us], ...perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment”* I Corinthians 1:10.

Your committee’s efforts this year centered on two main projects, one of long standing, the other a new inquiry into the position of our Conference from an independent congregation in Jackson, Michigan—now happily known among us, by God’s grace, as dear brethren. The project of long standing involved our efforts over many years now to establish an exploratory dialog with the Fellowship of Lutheran Congregations and to determine to the best of our ability what issues stand between us as impediments to Godpleasing fellowship.

For quite a few years, our efforts to engage the Fellowship of Lutheran Congregations in meaningful talks had fallen, in *our* estimation at any rate, on deaf ears. Even after we had assured the F. L. C. years ago already that we were, for sound reasons, no longer pursuing the Lutheran Churches of the Reformation (from which they had split in 1974), and after they had studied at length and examined the Sketch of our Doctrinal Position, they failed year in and year out to respond to our overtures. Past reports of our Committee document our frustration at not being able to establish any official dialog with them. From *our* perspective, based on what we were able to glean from their published position papers, the *only* matter of difference that *we* noted between our two groups was the F. L. C.’s application of Matthew 18:15-18 in the matter of Christian Church Discipline. They hold (and this dates back to their split from the L. C. R. as the principal *status controversiae* between the groups) that verse 17 of that passage requires a Christian congregation to have had a face-to-face confrontation with a manifestly impenitent sinner before he can be recognized and declared to be *“an heathen man and a publican.”* Unless such a face-to-face meeting takes place, they claim that the Christian congregation is “powerless to act.”

Your chairman had several personal conversations with the F. L. C. President, Pastor Robert J. Lietz, over the past two years during which we discussed this matter *informally*; but apparently no new in-depth study of the passages involved was undertaken by him; and our suggestion to meet for an exegetical examination of Matthew 18 was held in abeyance. Finally, late in the summer of 1998, we set up a mutually-suitable date for a brief meeting between us that coming September; and, with Pastor Lietz’ permission, I arranged to bring Seminarian Bloedel along—both for proper witness (II Corinthians 13:1) and for the experience to be gained by him as part of his *practicum*. We spent the better part of a week prior to this meeting studying the passage *ourselves* and writing up an exegetical analysis of it in a catechetical format. The exercise proved valuable for both of us, since we were also studying New Testament Exegesis in the seminary at that time. In our meeting together, which lasted no more than an hour or two, we went through that study paper point by point with Pastor Lietz; and we were frankly *awed*

at the power of God's Word so quickly and completely to convince a "gainsayer" of the truth! There was nothing in *our* verbiage or in *our* presentation that struck him and made the difference; it was solely the passage of Holy Writ laid out word by word and phrase by phrase in its precious simplicity that gave Pastor Lietz the proper "*understanding*" of that which for twenty-five years had been wrongly applied in their fellowship. And his candid reaction could not have been predicted, exceeding even our fondest hopes and most fervent prayers: "We were wrong on this," he said. "Our position is in error. It has to be corrected. And the offenses caused by our false understanding of this passage have to be removed." He agreed to bring this immediately to the attention of Pastor Boyer in their upcoming Pastoral Conference in hopes of convincing him as well and thus getting our respective groups well on the way to Godpleasing unity. For our part, we brought the study paper to *our* Fall Pastoral Conference in Tucson in October for the examination of our own pastors; and, on the basis of our study together, our pastors wrote up and unanimously adopted a brief series of summary theses to present to the F. L. C. men for their reaction and hopefully for their approval.

The mutually arrived at "plan" for the immediate future (even though this was completely unofficial) included the presentation of an essay on Matthew 18:15-18 by Pastor Boyer at the Spring, 1999, convention of the F. L. C., hopefully an expression of agreement with us on the proper understanding and application of that passage in Christian Church Discipline, and thereupon perhaps a definitive course of action on the part of the F. L. C. to set the record straight with the L. C. R. and to remove any outstanding offense given to individuals and congregations involved in the split of those two bodies back in 1974. Pastor Lietz noted in this regard that the F. L. C. will in any case NOT be returning to its former relationship with the L. C. R., inasmuch as it, like us, has since marked the L. C. R. as heterodox on numerous *other* counts; but it would express appropriate repentance for unscriptural, schismatic actions which split Trinity Congregation in Oak Park back in 1974 and resulted in its called pastor being deposed without just cause. Barring any other unresolved conflict, this would then set the stage for an imminent recognition of fellowship between us and the F. L. C.

Toward the end of April this past spring, your chairman, accompanied by Seminarian Bloedel, attended the convention of the F. L. C. in Des Moines, Iowa. Pastor Lietz had informed us ahead of time that Pastor Boyer had NOT been able to get his essay on Matthew 18 ready for the convention and that the matter would not be on the meeting's formal agenda this year. We nevertheless hoped that, if we attended the convention, we might find an opening to have at least an informal discussion with both pastors and, by God's grace, make some progress. Toward the end of the first day's sessions, Pastor Boyer gave the report of their Doctrinal Committee in which he focused on the efforts underway to explore fellowship possibilities between the F. L. C. and our Conference. He read to delegates our letter of intention to attend the convention, together with the expressed disappointment of the C. L. C. that the matter of Church Discipline would not be dealt with this year, at least not in a formal essay. Pastor Boyer expressed regret at not having been able to undertake and complete the essay, and he begged our understanding. He said that he and Pastor Lietz had been discussing the matter of Matthew 18 and its application in their pastoral conferences, but that he personally had not had the time to study our presentations in any detail. He did plan, however, to complete the essay assigned for the convention in 2000. At the conclusion of the day's meeting, we suggested at least an *informal meeting* to discuss the doctrinal and practical issues between us, and under the Lord's blessing this suggestion proved to be very fruitful. We expressed the hope that simply examining the *text* of the passage in question would focus on the problem between us, namely, that the F. L. C. has historically inserted into the procedure established by our Savior an idea that is simply not in the

text and that prevents a Christian congregation carrying out the Lord's own final judgment against a manifest and impenitent sinner who refuses to "*hear the church.*"

For the purpose of the discussion, the group of three pastors, three seminarians, and several interested laymen focused on the catechetical treatment of the exegesis of this passage originally written up for our discussion with Pastor Lietz in September of 1998. Not all the questions were read and discussed, but only those which highlighted the F. L. C.'s viewpoint. The discussion was frank but always charitable, and all remarks were centered on the text itself and relevant ancillary passages of Scripture. As the discussion progressed, the F. L. C. men followed carefully the points of our presentation, and Pastor Boyer in particular (with whom we had had no personal discussions previously) said that he now better understood the nature of our objections. After about an hour, it was acknowledged by both Boyer and Lietz that their position may have gone beyond the text and was, at least in part, based on the views expressed by Walther, Fritz, Otto, Romoser and others in connection with church discipline. They did, however, want to examine the entire matter further to determine precisely to what extent their position needed to be corrected and how. They also acknowledged that this one particular matter seemed to be the only blockade to our eventual fellowship. The other F. L. C. men present appeared to agree with this assessment and seemed gratified that at least some substantive progress had now been made. Your chairman pointed out that the Concordia Lutheran Conference was not trying to be "pushy" in this matter or attempting to hurry the F. L. C. inordinately into a reversal of its position, but that, if in all other respects the two bodies were in agreement, and in this matter too an understanding were truly in sight, it would certainly tend toward sinful separatism for progress to be delayed for no weighty reason. All appeared to be in agreement on this, and the F. L. C. pastors assured us that they had not been deliberately "foot-dragging" on this issue but merely wanted to have sufficient opportunity to study it carefully. The F. L. C. pastors said that they would endeavor to bring a brief report concerning our discussions to the floor of their convention prior to its adjournment so that all the delegates and visitors would be updated on any progress made. The informal meeting concluded on very cordial and positive terms, with the understanding that, as a prelude to their formal essay in 2000, the pastors of the F. L. C. would be working on a summary statement regarding the matter to inform our Conference in the meantime of their studied conclusions on the application of Matthew 18:15-18. They also assured us of their intention, if at all possible, to attend our convention in June, and of their hope to see a final resolution of the differences between us at least by their 2000 convention. In any case, final disposition would have to await the action of their delegates in convention assembled. The positive note with which our informal discussion meeting concluded boded well in our estimation even for the immediate future.

The next day, Pastor Boyer indeed made a brief report on the floor of the F. L. C. convention and summarized the progress that had been made by God's grace the previous afternoon. He too had now come to the conclusion, as had Pastor Lietz earlier on, that the F. L. C.'s published position was in error in that it went beyond the text of Scripture, and that this position had to be corrected and then taught correctly in the congregations of the fellowship. We were all gratified at this report and we, as well as the F. L. C. men, mutually expressed our anticipation of a speedy resolution of the barriers between our respective groups; and our delegation returned home, praising and blessing the God of all grace, with high hopes for this expressed anticipation to find fruition. Sadly, only two weeks later, Pastor Boyer, in a letter to all the participants, *retracted* and *withdrew* his report as having been "premature" and "a personal report based on an incompleting examination and discussion of a study paper." The matter now lies again in the hands of the pastors of the F. L. C., promptly to study and hopefully to resolve any outstanding questions and disagreements between them, so that the positive outcome that seemed so near at the close of their

convention may yet be realized.

The second major project with which your chairman in particular was intimately involved this past year was the inquiry of Pastors Ross Mahan and Martin Kalish of Jackson, Michigan, concerning our Conference and its doctrinal position. Mahan and Kalish were co-pastors of a small and only recently established congregation in Jackson; and they expressed interest in exploring and comparing our respective doctrine and practice with the view toward possible fellowship. Seminarian Bloedel was also an active participant in several exploratory meetings we held and gained a great deal of practical experience in the matter of Lutheran union activity. He also spent a goodly number of hours with your chairman studying, analyzing, documenting, and refuting a controversial position taken by Pastor Kalish in a dispute on so-called “self-love” with the Church of the Lutheran Confession, with which he formerly had been aligned. As it soon became evident, Pastor Mahan did not share Pastor Kalish’s extreme position, one based on a combination of human reason and the interpretation of certain comments by Luther, Walther, and others. Upon examination, Kalish’s position was found to be wholly subjective, based not upon Scripture but upon a slavish adherence to citations from the fathers—citations often taken out of context or considered as definitive conclusions apart from the rest of their writings on the same subject. Kalish eventually accused us of interfering in his congregation and of confusing both Pastor Mahan and his people on this matter—a charge which was completely unjustified and patently false, as Pastor Mahan and the congregation have testified. Unwilling to discuss anything face-to-face and reticent to make a defense of his doctrinal position before the congregation, Pastor Kalish suddenly resigned his pastorate, leaving Pastor Mahan the sole pastor of the flock—a move, however, that Kalish had contemplated as early as the previous December and had communicated to the congregation in a letter, stating then already that his secular employment left him little if any time to devote to the care of the congregation. Soon thereafter he also resigned his membership and terminated fellowship with Faith Ev. Lutheran Church in Jackson.

Pastor Mahan and his congregation continued to study carefully the position of our Conference, epitomized in the *Sketch of our Doctrinal Position*, and we met with the pastor on several occasions both to answer his questions about us and to ask questions of our own concerning his doctrine and practice. We were also in almost daily e-mail and telephone contact for several months concerning this mutual exploration. Then, just before Easter, Faith Ev. Lutheran Church of Jackson, Michigan, formally declared fellowship with our Conference on the basis of its full agreement with us in doctrine and practice. For this blessed development we praise the Lord of the Church for His grace in bringing together those who are “*perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment*” (I Corinthians 1:10) for the practice of truly Godpleasing fellowship. At this present convention, Faith Ev. Lutheran Church of Jackson, Michigan, has now also joined our Conference as a member-congregation; and we look forward to a long and happy, fraternal relationship between us to the glory of God, as we work together for the welfare of His Kingdom!

Respectfully submitted,
 Rev. David T. Mensing, Chairman
 Rev. Mark W. Dierking
 Rev. M. L. Natterer
 Mr. Lloyd E. Martin

FINANCIAL REPORT—SEMINARY BOOKSTORE AND CONFERENCE ARCHIVES

(June 1, 1998 - May 31, 1999)

Cash Balance, June 1, 1998		\$ 472.37
Add Cash Receipts:		
Subsidy for the Archives	\$ 500.00	
Subsidy for the Seminary Bookstore	500.00	
Used Book Purchases	186.70	
Reimbursements	100.00	
Total Receipts:		<u>1,286.70</u>
Total Cash Available		\$ 1,759.07
Less Disbursements:		
Stamps	\$ 33.00	
Book Purchases	383.57	
Miscellaneous	100.00	
Total Expenditures:		<u>516.57</u>
Cash Balance, May 31, 1999		\$ 1,242.50

Respectfully submitted,
Phillip R. Martin

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION
(As Recommended by the Board of Directors)

Recommendation #1 of the Board of Directors— That the following proposed amendment to the Constitution be laid before the Conference in convention assembled, to wit:

Add the following preface or preamble to Article VIII:

Article VIII

OFFICERS

Eligibility to offices and chairs of standing committees shall be determined as follows— a) Offices reserved for pastors may be held only by incumbents of the pastoral office of a member congregation and those who, if they have come into our midst from without our fellowship, have successfully passed a colloquy. b) Offices reserved for laymen may be held by any voting member in good standing of a member congregation.

The officers of this Conference shall be: ...

Recommendation # 2 of the Board of Directors— That the following proposed amendment to the Constitution be laid before the convention, to wit:

Substitute for Article IX, Section 1, the following wording:

Article IX

STANDING COMMITTEES

1. EDITORIAL COMMITTEE. This committee is charged with editing all Conference periodicals and all new and revised tracts and educational materials which are to appear under the auspices and name of the Concordia Lutheran Conference. *Previously published material, which is already the property of the Conference, may be reprinted without submission to the Editorial Committee, provided that no change in its content has been made; and official documents approved by the Board of Directors and/ or a Plenary Pastoral Conference may likewise be published without editing by this committee.* This committee shall consist of two pastors and one layman. Its chairman shall be a member of the Board of Directors.

Its chairman, who is a pastor, shall be the editor chiefly responsible for soliciting content material for official Conference periodicals, for editing their copy, and for laying out their format for printing. If he deems it necessary, he may appoint a technically experienced layman to serve as his layout editor to prepare approved copy for submission to the Print Shop Manager of *Scriptural Publications*.

The second editor, who is also a pastor, shall be chiefly responsible for soliciting and/or receiving proposed tracts, booklets, and other educational materials, for editing their copy, and for laying out their format for printing. If he deems it necessary, he may appoint a technically experienced layman to serve as his layout editor to prepare approved copy for submission to the Print Shop Manager of *Scriptural Publications*.

The lay member of the committee shall be solicited by the editors for input regarding topics for articles and tracts in order to insure a broader interest perspective for the publications of the Conference.

Recommendation #3 of the Board of Directors— That the following proposed amendment be laid before the Conference in convention assembled, to wit:

Substitute for Article XII the following wording:*

Article XII

PUBLISHING HOUSE

1. NAME: The Conference shall maintain a publishing house under the name *SCRIPTURAL PUBLICATIONS (Concordia Lutheran Conference)*.

2. PURPOSE: The purpose of the publishing house shall be to stock, publish, print and disseminate orthodox Lutheran books and other literature chiefly for the use of the members of our Conference in their homes, congregations, and educational institutions, and, as a service both to our own people and to those outside our Conference, to maintain a Web Page on which can be “published” a variety of materials, witnessing our Scriptural position in doctrine and practice to the community at large.

3. OWNERSHIP: The publishing house shall be owned exclusively by the Conference. It shall be self-sustaining and organized not for profit. The financial records of the publishing house shall be open at all times to the Board of Directors of the Conference, shall be subject to annual audit at the close of each fiscal year, and shall be reported on at each regular convention.

4. ADMINISTRATION: The publishing house shall be operated under the direct supervision of the Conference through a Board of Control elected by the Conference at each regular convention. Its members and their respective duties shall be the following:

a. A Chairman, a Conference pastor who preferably is not a member of the Editorial Committee. He shall be responsible for the overall operation of the publishing house and for implementing the publication and dissemination of all materials that shall appear under the auspices and name of the Concordia Lutheran Conference. (See also Art. IX, 1, par. 1, italicized portion.) Aside from articles to be printed in Conference periodicals, all new material shall be submitted to the chairman for publication, and he shall in turn submit it to the appropriate editor for examination before implementing its printing and dissemination. The chairman shall also exercise ultimate responsibility for all advertising and public relations, as well as for the administration of the Conference's Web Page on the Internet. He shall appoint and oversee technically competent personnel to build and maintain the Web Page and shall exercise constant vigilance over this project. All material posted to the Web under the auspices and name of the Conference shall have his prior approval. He shall be a member of the Board of Directors.

b. A Business Manager, a Conference layman who shall be in charge of all funds and monetary transactions, have custody of all official papers and financial records, receive and account for all subscriptions for Conference periodicals, manage the inventory and sales of the bookstore, and be responsible for the shipping of all materials. Because of his day-to-day management of the bookstore and the funds of the publishing house, the Business Manager should reside near to its location. He shall, with the approval of the Board of Control, solicit such other help as may be necessary to carry out his duties.

c. A Print Shop Manager, a Conference layman, who shall be in charge of the physical production of all authorized projects and for the proper operation and reasonable maintenance of all equipment used in the print shop of *SCRIPTURAL PUBLICATIONS*. He should have sufficient technical experience to use word processing and desktop publishing programs efficiently, as well as printers, scanners, and other electronic equipment, so as to complete in a workmanlike manner the various projects required of him. He shall, with the approval of the Board of Control, solicit such other help as may be necessary to carry out his duties.

* NOTE: The above wording of **Article XII** includes verbiage **added** by the delegates in convention assembled concerning the inclusion of oversight over the Conference Web Page under the administration of *Scriptural Publications*. (See **Resolution #2**.)

Disposition: The text of these amendments, as adopted by the Convention, was submitted to the congregations of the Conference for approval in a **referendum** (Article XIII, 1); and the referendum **passed** with the *unanimous consent* of the congregations, thus ratifying the recommended changes (Fall, 1999).

REPORT OF THE *AD HOC* WEB PAGE COMMITTEE

Dear Brethren:

This past year the web committee has continued its publishing and mission efforts by making enhancements to the Conference web page. Some of the things we have done:

- 1) We have added convention proceedings to the Archives section, focusing for the present on the convention essays.
- 2) We have continued to register the various web pages with many of the Internet search engines on the web.
- 3) This spring we tested a search engine that would search the text of our Conference web site exclusively. This feature would allow visitors to our site a quick and easy way to search out key words and documents. This searching capability will be added permanently to the Conference site soon after the convention.
- 4) On our *Scriptural Publications* page we have joined with Barnes and Noble Online as an affiliated member of their web site bookstore. With this affiliation *Scriptural Publications* can receive a percentage of Barnes and Noble sales when visitors on our Conference web page use our link for Barnes and Noble. In the future we would like to form affiliations with other appropriate online organizations mainly for the benefit of our Conference brethren.

Future Projects:

For the coming year there has been a suggestion that we have an area on the web page for the youth and parents of our Conference. For the youth section it would include at least the current Sunday School lesson for that week and supplemental materials. For the parents there would be suggestions for teaching the Bible stories, devotions and other Scriptural truths. This involves old (OLC) and new material that would need to be reviewed by the chairman. Once this page is established, we would register the page with the various search engines so that the page would come up in searches when you use key words such as "Parents," "Family," "Parenting," "Education," etc. We will be looking into this and designing a prototype. This will expand our mission efforts and witnessing to the general public. We encourage our brethren to let the committee know of any suggestion to this page that you might have.

As we begin only our second year of having a Conference Web page, the committee seeks your suggestions and comments so that our Web page may be a continued benefit to our Conference brethren and a profitable witness and testimony to those outside of our Conference.

Respectfully submitted,

Raymond Kusumi
Phillip Martin

**Concordia Lutheran Conference
FISCAL BUDGET ADOPTED FOR 1999-2000**

Cash Balance, June 1, 1999 **\$ 22,679.06**

1999-2000 Pledges and Other Estimated Income:

Faith, Jackson	\$ --- --
Good Shepherd, Tucson	375.00
Holy Scripture, San Antonio	750.00
Peace, Oak Forest	5,400.00
St. John's, Lebanon	2,800.00
St. Luke's, Seattle	2,400.00
St. Stephen's, Wilmot	0.00
Interest Income	1,000.00
Proceedings 1998	400.00
Proceedings 1999	400.00
1999 Convention Collection	231.00
Total Pledges and Other Estimated Income	\$ 13,756.00

Total Cash Available for Budgetary Purposes **\$ 36,435.06**

Expenditures:	1998-1999 Expenses	1999-2000 Budget
<i>Scriptural Publications</i>	\$ 6,500.00	\$ 6,500.00
St. Stephen's Subsidy	7,200.00	7,200.00
Conference Archives Subsidy	0.00	500.00
Telephone Expense	759.50	2,000.00
Convention Expense	0.00	1,000.00

Travel Expense	3,095.16	4,000.00
Miscellaneous Expense	631.80	1,500.00
Total Budget Adopted by the Convention		\$ 22,700.00
Anticipated Cash on Hand, May 31, 2000		\$ 13,735.06

Respectfully submitted,

The Finance Committee

Victor K. Bloedel, Chairman
 Mr. Luke Dierking
 Mr. Mark Mensing
 Mr. Jerry Sidwell

RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED BY THE 48th ANNUAL CONVENTION

RESOLUTION #1:

WHEREAS, out of concern for the spiritual welfare of our people, we should earnestly endeavor to stock in our Conference book store only such works as can be unequivocally recommended for their purchase and use; and

WHEREAS, particularly in the case of books and other materials *not regularly used* in our congregations and educational institutions, their content may not be familiar either to our pastors or our laymen;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that books to be acquired by *SCRIPTURAL PUBLICATIONS* for the Conference book store be examined and reviewed ahead of time by the President, the Book and Tract Editor, and the chairman of the Board of Control, so that, if necessary, an appropriate comment can be included in the catalog description of works whose content poses a danger to the unsuspecting reader. The chairman of the Board of Control shall see to it that such review is made on a consistent basis.

RESOLUTION #2:

WHEREAS the Conference Web Page publishes current and archival material which represents to the world our Scriptural doctrine and practice, history, polity, and programs; and

WHEREAS the “publishing arm” of the Conference has been and continues to be *SCRIPTURAL PUBLICATIONS*, the institution logically and practically suited to the administration of the web page in addition to the production of print media;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Conference Web Page be included among the various publishing responsibilities and activities of *SCRIPTURAL PUBLICATIONS* for administration under the oversight of the chairman of the Board of Control, and that this inclusion be specified in Article XII of our Conference CONSTITUTION, Sections 2 and

4a, in the following words, italicized in this resolution for ease of identification:

“2. PURPOSE: ...and educational institutions, and, *as a service both to our own people and to those outside our Conference, to maintain a Web Page on which can be “published” a variety of materials,* witnessing our Scriptural position in doctrine and practice to the community at large.”

“4, a. A Chairman, ...The chairman shall also exercise ultimate responsibility for all advertising and public relations, *as well as for the administration of the Conference’s Web Page on the Internet. He shall appoint and oversee technically competent personnel to build and maintain the Web Page and shall exercise constant vigilance over this project. All material posted to the Web under the auspices and name of the Conference shall have his prior approval.* He shall be a member of the Board of Directors.”

RESOLUTION #3:

WHEREAS this convention has elected officers and standing committees to serve during the coming fiscal year; and

WHEREAS the labors of those who faithfully served our Conference this past year have been greatly appreciated by their brethren as having been done to the Lord’s glory and for the welfare of His Kingdom;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that we express our sincere gratitude for all that the previous officers and members of committees have accomplished in the Lord during the past year for our mutual benefit and to the praise of His grace; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we earnestly beseech the Lord’s gracious blessings upon the labors of our newly elected officers and committees, as they undertake the various tasks for which they have been chosen.

RESOLUTION #4:

WHEREAS we were privileged to hear the edifying and instructive sermons from our Conference President, Pastor Paul R. Bloedel, in the opening service on Friday morning and from Pastor M. L. Natterer, who preached the sermon in the Divine Service on Sunday morning;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that we express our sincere gratitude for their having fed and nourished our souls with the Bread of Life.

RESOLUTION #5:

WHEREAS our convention delegates and visitors were blessed to hear most instructive and edifying essays titled *“The Downward Slide of the Missouri Synod into Heterodoxy, 1932-1947”* presented by Pastor David T. Mensing; and *“The Need, Purpose and Function of*

Christian Discipline in the Local Congregation” presented by Pastor E. R. Stallings;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that we convey our sincerest thanks to Pastors Mensing and Stallings for their fine Scriptural essays which set forth not only important spiritual information for our learning but also provided wholesome nourishment for our souls.

RESOLUTION #6:

WHEREAS each session of our Pastoral Conference and Convention was opened with an edifying devotion by Pastors Mensing, Bloedel, Natterer, Redlin, Mahan and Dierking respectively;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that we thank each of these men for his opening devotion.

RESOLUTION #7:

WHEREAS the services and devotions were enhanced with spiritually uplifting music provided by Mr. Lloyd E. Martin, the organist of Peace Ev. Lutheran Church, and the Sunday worship service was beautified by the singing of the local choir under his direction, augmented by the voices of other Conference brethren in attendance;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that we thank these brethren for using their musical talents in the loving service of the Lord of the Church and to the glory of His grace.

RESOLUTION #8:

WHEREAS Peace Ev. Lutheran Church of Oak Forest, Illinois, has shown itself to be a most gracious host to our 48th annual convention; and

WHEREAS the host congregation so graciously provided and served delicious meals to all those in attendance at the Pastoral Conference, the Board meeting, and at this convention; and

WHEREAS most generous and sacrificial Christian hospitality was demonstrated by the members of this congregation, making the stay of the delegates and visitors a particularly pleasant and enjoyable experience;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that we express our gratitude to Pastor and Mrs. David T. Mensing and the members of Peace Ev. Lutheran Church for all they did and sacrificed by the grace of God and to His glory to make our convention a success and to contribute to our spiritual edification, our pleasant Christian sociability, and our physical comfort.

Respectfully submitted.

The Resolutions Committee

Rev. David T. Mensing

Mr. Robert G. Bloedel

Mr. Joshua Redlin

STATISTICAL REPORT for Fiscal Year 1999-2000

MEMBERSHIP	Faith	Good Shepherd	Holy Scripture	Peace	Saint John's	Saint Luke's	Saint Stephen's	Total
Baptized Members	30	38	35	73	87	92	11	366
Communicant Members	24	32	23	48	45	54	9	235
Voting Members	13	12	11	18	16	22	5	97
Children in Sunday School	6	5	8	15	20	26	1	81
Adults in Bible Class	19	15	20	47	30	54	7	192
Received by Transfer	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	2
Received by Confirmation and/or Profession	5	0	2	1	0	0	1	9
Lost by Transfer	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	4
Lost (Other Circumstance)	4	0	2	7	3	0	1	17

OFFICIAL ACTS

Infant Baptisms	2	2	0	2	4	0	0	10
Adult Baptisms	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	2
Confirmations of Children	0	0	0	1	2	0	1	4
Confirmations of Adults	5	0	3	0	0	0	0	8
Marriages Solemnized	1	1	1	0	2	1	1	7
Funerals or Burials	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	4

AUXILIARY STAFF

Sunday School Teachers	2	3	4	6	3	7	1	26
Elected Auxiliary Officers	3	12	6	12	9	15	5	62
Organists	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	8

Choir Members	0	0	0	8	6	12	0	26
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PROPERTY

Church Facilities Owned?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Church Facilities Rented?	No	No	No	Yes*	No	Yes**	No	Totals
Total Acreage	.75	7.5	.43	3.20	1.47	.67	2.25	16.27
Value (in thousands of \$\$)	\$ 125	\$350	\$150	\$900	\$180	\$600	\$225	\$2,530

Number of Congregations: 7 Number of Pastors: 7 Available Candidates: 0

*Remote chapel, Midland, MI

**Remote chapel, Victoria, BC

Respectfully submitted,

Raymond S. Kusumi, Statistician