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THE OPENING SERMON
for the
Fifty-fifth Annual Convention
of the
CONCORDIA LUTHERAN CONFERENCE

Delivered by the Rev. Robert J. Lietz, Conference President

Text: **Acts 2:42**

My dear friends, as we this morning take note of fifty-five years of God's rich grace toward our Conference, we have many reasons to cheerfully declare: "*O give thanks unto the Lord, for **He is good, because His mercy endureth forever***" (Psalm 118:1).

The sermon text for this Service of Worship to our Triune God is Acts 2, verse 42: "*And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and in fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.*"

We should not tire of **hearing** the Law of God and the Gospel of Christ. Furthermore, we should not tire of **properly using** the Law and the Gospel, first of all, with ourselves, and, secondly, with others.

The Law of God is so necessary because it shows us and others its real **demands** and, thereby, always shows us and reminds us of our many sins (Romans 3:20; James 2:10). Does God in His Law really demand that we and all other human beings be perfect, holy, and sinless as He Himself is perfect, holy, and sinless? Yes, most certainly! In Leviticus 19, God said: "*Ye shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy*" (v. 2). Isn't this an unreasonable demand? Of course not! God **never** makes any unreasonable demands!

The Law of God is so necessary because it also shows us and others its announcement of real **damnation and punishment** on all who do not perfectly carry out all of its demands. Does God in His Law really mean what He says in Galatians 3, verse 10: "***Cursed [damned]** is everyone that continueth not in **all things** which are written in the book of the Law to do them*"? Yes, God most certainly stands behind and means every word of His holy Law! But isn't He too harsh when He speaks this way in His Law? Of course not! God is **never** too harsh!

In sharp contrast to the Law, the Gospel is so necessary because it makes **no demands at all** of us or of anyone; it only announces and declares to us that Christ Jesus has, as our Substitute, perfectly done everything which God's Law demanded of us. Jesus Himself confirmed this in Matthew 5, where He said: "*Think not that I am come to destroy the Law or the Prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill*" (v. 17). Does Jesus really mean what He says in this verse? Yes, without any doubt! What He says is always the truth (John 14:6); He "*cannot lie*" (Titus 1:2).

Furthermore, the Gospel of Christ is so necessary because it declares to us and to all that "*Christ hath redeemed us from the curse [the damnation] of the Law, being made a curse for us, for it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree*" (Galatians 3:13). Is this really true? Did Christ Jesus, by His death, really make full payment to God for all sinners so that they are now

set free and released from the damnation and punishment of God's Law? Yes, most certainly!

When this wonderful Gospel resurrects souls from spiritual death to spiritual and everlasting life (Ephesians 2:1), giving them a second, spiritual birth (I Peter 1:23; John 3:3-6), that Gospel-produced, living faith in Jesus as their Substitute and Savior before God **will show** that it is spiritually alive, just as a baby, at its first birth, will show that it is physically alive by crying, kicking its feet, and moving its hands and head.

In our sermon text, we have

The Visible, Outward Evidences of Invisible, Inward Faith in Jesus

(I) persistently persevering in *teaching*, (II) persistently persevering in *fellowship*, (III) persistently persevering in *the Lord's Supper*, and (IV) persistently persevering in *prayers*.

I.

After Peter, in his Pentecost sermon, accused his audience of crucifying Jesus (2:36), we are informed that "*when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do*" (v. 37)? Peter replied: "*Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call*" (vv. 38-39). And with many other words did Peter "*testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward [wicked, perverse] generation*" (v. 40). Then "*they that gladly received his word were baptized, and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls*" (v. 41).

Right after this we have the words of our sermon text: "*And they continued steadfastly.*" The newly converted Christians, as well as those who were already Christians, kept on sticking with the four things mentioned in our text; they continued to be intently engaged in these things; they did not stop being persistent in their perseverance in the areas mentioned.

First of all, they were persistently persevering in "*teaching.*" Teaching what? Whatever **they** felt like teaching? Whatever was **popular** at that time? What **they** liked? Whatever teaching was convenient for **them** and fit **their** lifestyle? No, they kept on teaching the doctrine of the apostles, the same teaching and doctrine which Jesus had taught the apostles. In short, they shared with others the same teaching, the same doctrine which the "*Master*" (Matthew 23:8), Christ Jesus, had shared with His apostles. And so, from generation to generation, we are to keep on teaching what our God and Savior have taught us in the Holy Scriptures: Parents are persistently to persevere in teaching their children the teachings of Scripture; our congregations are persistently to persevere in teaching and preaching the teachings of Scripture; our Conference, in its joint work, is persistently to persevere in teaching the teachings of God's Word in its periodical, *The Concordia Lutheran*, in its tracts, books, and other printed materials, in its seminary training, in its conventions, in its service to our distant brethren in Russia and Nigeria, and in all other opportunities which the Lord God graciously gives to us. After His resurrection, Jesus summarized what is to be taught when He said that "*repentance and remission of sins should be preached [proclaimed, taught] in His name among all nations*" (Luke 24:47). The Savior wants the Law and the Gospel to be proclaimed according to His Word, sorrow and shame over sin and the marvelous declaration that "*God was in Christ*

reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the Word of reconciliation” (II Corinthians 5:19). It is this marvelous declaration of what God has done for us and for the whole world of sinners through Christ Jesus which alone moves us, His dear, blood-bought believing sheep, willingly and persistently to persevere in teaching the doctrine of the apostles, the doctrine of our Savior, the doctrine of the Scriptures, even if that teaching produces little or no fruit in our eyes, and even if that teaching causes people to be offended and “turned off;” it is *“the love of Christ [which] constraineth us”* (II Corinthians 5:14) to confess that *“we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard”* (Acts 4:20) in the Holy Scriptures.

So, the first visible, outward evidence in our text of invisible, inward faith in Jesus is persistently persevering in teaching the doctrine of the apostles and of Christ Himself.

II.

The second visible, outward evidence in our text of invisible, inward faith in Jesus is persistently persevering in fellowship. Of the newly converted Christians and of those who had already been converted in the past, it is said that *“they continued steadfastly in fellowship.”* The fellowship spoken of here is that spiritual partnership, participation, association, communion, and sharing with their fellow believers as they persistently persevered in the right teaching of God’s Word. This fellowship with their fellow believers was an inevitable result and product of their fellowship, communion, participation, and association with the spiritual Vine, Christ Jesus. The Savior spells it out so clearly in John 15, where He says: *“I am the Vine; ye are the branches. He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit, for without Me ye can do nothing”* (v. 5).

Again and again the Word of God reminds and urges us to persistently persevere in and not neglect this fellowship, partnership, and participation with our fellow, faithful believers: **II Timothy 1** (the apostle’s words to Timothy): *“Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner”* (v.8); **Hebrews 10**: *“Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another, and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching”* (vv. 24-25); **Ephesians 4**: *“I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace”* (vv. 1-3).

This fellowship is inseparably tied to the right teaching of God’s Word. Nowhere in Scripture are we ever taught to have fellowship with those who persistently teach contrary to God’s Word or with those who persistently support such wrong teaching and teachers. On the other hand, we are most certainly and repeatedly taught to stand with, support, encourage, and not stand aloof from those who love and follow God’s Word alone. Such Godly fellowship, partnership, participation, and association are built on Scriptural principles, such as we have in I Corinthians 1, verse 10: *“Now I beseech you, brethren, 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.”* Our Savior did not stand aloof from us, but, instead, laid down His life for us, who were lost sheep (Isaiah 53:6; John 10:11), and *“for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross [for our sins], despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God”* (Hebrews 12:2), where He has graciously *“prepared a place for [us],”* and where He will someday receive us unto Himself, so that where He is, there we will be also (John 14:3). It is

this priceless fellowship which we believers have with our Savior on account of His substitutionary obedience and sacrifice for us which ought to move us to persistently persevere in our fellowship with those who hold to and follow the right teaching of God's Word, no matter what the cost might be for us in dollars and cents, no matter how far this takes us away from blood relatives who are not in Godly fellowship with us, no matter how uncertain this may make our future job status, at least in our own eyes. Our dear Savior's instruction and promise are never-changing and ever-comforting: "*Seek ye **first** the kingdom of God, and His righteousness [the righteousness of the Lord Jesus], and all these things [these earthly things] **shall be added unto you***" (Matthew 6:33).

III.

The third visible, outward evidence of invisible, inward faith in Jesus is persistently persevering in the "*breaking of bread,*" or the Lord's Supper. These newly converted Christians and those Christians who had earlier been converted also persistently persevered in the Lord's Supper, that is, they **did not neglect** or despise it, but they ate and drank the body and blood of Jesus, with the bread and wine, for the nourishment, feeding, and building up of their faith in Jesus, for their remembering of the death of Jesus for their sins, and for a testimony of their fellowship, partnership, communion, and association with their fellow believers who stood on and, by God's grace, were faithful to the teaching of God's Word. By coming regularly and frequently to the Lord's Supper, they were following the teaching of their Savior, who said of this sacrament: "*This do in remembrance of Me*" (I Corinthians 11:24c). Also, by coming to the Lord's Supper with their fellow, like-minded believers, they were giving evidence of their gratitude for the death of Christ. In I Corinthians 11, we are given this instruction: "*As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come*" (v. 26). By persistently persevering in the Lord's Supper, we show that we are also persistently persevering in the right teaching of God's Word and in the fellowship, partnership, association, and sharing with other like-minded believers.

IV.

The final visible, outward evidence of the invisible, inward faith in Jesus is persistently persevering in "*prayers.*" True, Christian prayer is an act of worship by which we bring our petitions and requests to God, and also bring our thanks and praise to Him for all that He has done for us, especially through the perfect active and passive obedience of His only begotten Son, Christ Jesus. God-pleasing prayers are a response and an evidence of saving faith in Jesus. Jesus says: "*If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you*" (John 15:7). Prayers by true Christians will follow the right teaching of God's Word, and because of that right teaching, will pray only **with** those who faithfully follow God's Word in what they believe, teach, and practice. God's Word teaches that we are to pray **for** all people, but not **with** all people. Listen to the apostle's words in I Timothy 2: "*I exhort, therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made **for all men**, for kings, and for all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who will have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth*" (I Timothy 2:1-4). On the other hand, we are taught in I Timothy 5: "*Neither be partaker of other men's sins*" (v. 22b). This is why we are not to pray **with** those who teach contrary to God's Word (I Timothy 6:3) or **with** those who support and go along with such wrong teaching (Romans 16:17-18).

So, as believers in the Savior, converted and born again by His rich grace and mercy, **I** let us persistently persevere by this rich grace of Christ (II Corinthians 8:9) in the right teaching of

God's Word and nothing but that teaching; **II**) let us persistently persevere, by God's grace in Christ (I Corinthians 15:10), in our fellowship, partnership, and participation with each other in that right teaching of God's Word and not neglect or think lightly of such Godly fellowship; **III**) let us persistently persevere, by the rich mercies of our God in Christ (Romans 12:1), in our regular and frequent use of the Lord's Supper, with those who stand on God's Word in the unity of the Spirit (Ephesians 4:3; Psalm 133:1) for the preservation of our saving faith in Jesus; and **IV**) let us persistently persevere in our prayers to the throne of God's grace in Christ Jesus (Hebrews 4:14-16). It is this rich grace of our God which teaches us believers "*that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and Godly in this present world, looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar [that is, special] people, zealous of good works*" (Titus 2:12-14).

Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria!

SERMON DELIVERED AT THE SUNDAY COMMUNION SERVICE

by

The Rev. Edward J. Worley, Pastor • St. Luke's Lutheran Church • Seattle, Washington

Text: **I Peter 5:2**

Dear fellow-redeemed sinners, purchased by the Good Shepherd in His own blood and thus ransomed for heaven:

It's not listed in the Table of Duties, or in "certain passages of Scripture for various holy orders and estates whereby these are severally to be admonished as to their office and duty" in Section III of Dr. Martin Luther's *Small Catechism*. But our text clearly states what the passages that are cited state (II Timothy 3:2, 3, 4, 6; Titus 1:9) as to the essential work of pastors. It was chosen because of the specific reference to "*the flock of God,*" the local congregation, in order to give the basis for admonition regarding *The God-ordained Participation of Christians in the Local Congregation*, the title of our doctrinal essay at this 55th annual convention.

May God open our ears and hearts to His Word as we hear

The God-Ordained Duty of Christian Pastors in the Local Congregation.

Our three main points are these: **I.** *What* must Christian pastors do for their individual flocks (the local congregations to which they are called), as God clearly ordains? **II.** *How* should they do this in a God-pleasing and faithful manner, as God enjoins? And **III.** *Why* should their flock desire and cheerfully receive such faithful shepherding from their pastor?

I.

Our text is I Peter 5:2: "*Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof,*

not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind.” **What** must Christian pastors do for their individual flocks? God, the Holy Ghost, says through the Apostle Peter: *“Feed the flock of God which is among you.”* At times the Lord uses a word that literally refers to providing food for the flock, as when our Lord told Peter in John 21: *“Feed my lambs...Feed my sheep”* (vv. 15, 17). The word that Jesus uses means to provide forage and pasturage so that the entire flock may eat to live and grow healthy. But here in our text we find a more general word that covers everything that a shepherd does for the flock. With a very strong imperative, God enjoins each pastor to *“shepherd”* the flock he has been called by God to serve, both lambs and sheep! Consider how extensive this is —how comprehensive! Since feeding is the chief duty, it is defined thus, but not to the exclusion of the rest of the work: to watch over the flock lest predators enter in, or enemies steal sheep and lambs, or individuals wander astray; to defend the sheep; to heal the wounded and minister to the sick; to seek out lost sheep and return them to the fold; in short, lovingly and unceasingly to do all that is necessary to take care of God’s flock as a good steward. The noun derived from this verb *“feed”* in our text is translated *“pastors”* in Ephesians 4:11 in reference to the only divinely-ordained office we now have (as a gift of the ascended Savior). Thereby we see that this comprehensive term defines the office; and one who does not do the work of *“shepherding”* is not truly worthy of the name *“pastor.”*

God has ordained the office of the Holy Ministry and clearly delineates what work is involved for the sake of His flock, that the Gospel prophecy of Hosea might stand fulfilled: *“Now the Lord will feed them as a lamb in a large place”* (4:16). All pastors are thus enjoined to declare the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27), teaching all that Christ commanded (Matthew 28:20), as they watch over the souls (Hebrews 13:17) entrusted to their pastoral care by the Holy Spirit through the Divine Call of their respective individual Christian congregations. Likewise, St. Paul writes to Timothy: *“I charge thee therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the Word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things; endure afflictions; do the work of an evangelist; make full proof of thy ministry”* (II Timothy 4:1-5). *“If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained”* (I Timothy 4:6). *“...Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.... Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all”* (I Timothy 4:13, 15). *“Take heed unto thyself and unto the doctrine; continue in them, for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee”* (I Timothy 4:16). *“Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers. Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth”* (II Timothy 2:14-15). The pastor himself must feed upon the green grass and still water of God’s Word in order to be able to teach others by word and example.

The charge, that is, the group entrusted to a pastor’s care, is very clear and specific: *“The flock of God which is among you.”* This is the local congregation to which he has been called. In its **Solemn Call**, the members of the congregation authorize and obligate their pastor-elect:

To proclaim to us, jointly and severally, the Word of God in its full truth and purity as it is written in the verbally-inspired canonical books of the Old and New Testaments and professed in the confessional writings of the Lutheran Church, to wit, the *Book of Concord*

of 1580 and the *Brief Statement* of 1932 (II Timothy 4:1-2); to administer the Holy Sacraments in accordance with their divine institution (Matthew 28:19; I Corinthians 11:23-29); to discharge toward all the members of our congregation the functions of a pastor, overseer, and curate of their souls; to feed the church of God, rightly dividing the Law and Gospel in teaching and application in accordance with Holy Scripture; in particular to visit the sick and the dying and to admonish indifferent and erring members (Ephesians 4:11-12; Acts 20:28; II Timothy 2:15); to guide us in applying the divinely ordained discipline of the church in accordance with the Word of God (Matthew 18:15-17; I Timothy 5:20; Galatians 6:1; Titus 1:9-13); to do whatever is possible to promote thorough Christian education in the congregation for both young and old; to instruct prospective members in the Word of God as this is rightly set forth in the *Small Catechism* of Dr. Martin Luther, thus preparing them for communicant membership (John 21:15-17; I Corinthians 11:28); and to continue edifying those who are communicant members by constant instruction in the Word of Christ (II Peter 1:12; 3:18); to urge us to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:3; I Corinthians 1:10); and to warn and guard us against all errors and errorists in doctrine and practice (Ezekiel 3:17-21; Matthew 7:15; Romans 16:17-18); to serve the congregation as an example by his Christian conduct and, by the grace of God, to do all that is possible for him to do, within the limits of his calling, for the upbuilding of our congregation and for the general advancement of the Kingdom of Christ (Titus 2:7-8; II Corinthians 3:4-6; 4:1-18).

This is a Divine Call, a call from God, issued not directly but *mediately* through the congregation. It must be so, for God Himself owns the flock. Yes, note well *who* owns the flock, *to whom* the flock belongs: “*The flock of God.*” A pastor is only a steward. He must answer to the “*Chief Shepherd*” (v. 4) of souls, the “*Good Shepherd*” (John 10:11), who purchased the flock for heaven “*with His own [holy and precious] blood*” (Acts 20:28). As the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, God incarnate, loved us and gave Himself for us a perfect sin-atoning offering, without spot, to God. This ransom sacrifice is Christ’s propitiation or wrath-removing appeasement for all our sins (I John 2:2)! The Good Shepherd was both priest and victim: He offered Himself on the altar of the cross, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God (I Peter 3:18), having redeemed us from all iniquity (Titus 2:14) and thereby having reconciled us unto His heavenly Father (Romans 5:10) by virtue of His shed blood (I Peter 1:19). You know this very well, sheep and lambs: The purchase price of your salvation is that precious blood of God’s Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot! (I Peter 1:18). In and through Him, God Himself proclaims this Gospel-absolution: “*Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool*” (Isaiah 1:18). “*I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for Mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins*” (Isaiah 43:25). Isaiah also declared in prophecy: “*O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God! Behold, the Lord GOD will come with strong hand, and His arm shall rule for Him: behold, His reward is with Him, and His work before Him. He shall feed His flock like a shepherd; He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young*” (Isaiah 40:9-11).

Every pastor must look at every lamb and sheep as God’s purchased possession in the beloved Good Shepherd, who gave His life for them, according to prophetic promise: “*All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.*” (Isaiah 53:6). Lest he be a hypocritical shepherd and, having preached to others, himself be a castaway (I Corinthians 9:27), every pastor should be under the constant conviction of the Spirit of God through the Gospel to believe that he, too, a fellow-sinner with the members of his flock, has been redeemed and therefore owes his own salvation to the

gracious work of Jesus, the Good Shepherd, “*who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness, by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls*” (I Peter 2:24-25).

Christ is the Savior of all men, but especially of them that, by the gracious operation of the Spirit through the Gospel, believe. So, pastor, do the work of a shepherd as a faithful steward of God’s flock “*which is among you,*” the local congregation that you have been called by God to serve. Beware of becoming a busybody in other men’s affairs (I Peter 4:15); stay out of other men’s flocks. Don’t steal another pastor’s sheep. Don’t become entangled with the affairs of this life (II Timothy 2:4) to the neglect of the work. Keep your political opinions to yourself, your economic theories, your private judgments on non-spiritual matters, as Luther admonishes: “God has given us charge of the areas of economics and statecraft. *There* you may hear jurists and doctors, who belong unto the court of kings. But speak not of such things in the bridal chamber [that is, in the congregation of believers]; there speak of that alone which is of Christ... In this secret chamber the rule is to be: Out with jurists, away with philosophers, no matter what they may teach; here only the Word is to be heard; for the church should kiss no one and embrace no one but her Bridegroom” (E. Plass, *What Luther Says*, Vol. III, p. 1115).

Speaking then “*as the oracles of God*” (I Peter 4:11), the faithful shepherd is “*taking the oversight thereof,*” namely, of the flock of God which is “*among [him]*” (Text), his own local congregation. Oversight is literally *looking upon* or over the flock, not only as they assemble themselves together for worship, but also in individual teaching and admonition. This same word is translated “*looking diligently*” in another location (Hebrews 12:15). He who is charged with this *looking upon* is the pastor, the “*overseer*” of the flock. One is reminded especially of Paul’s admonition to the pastors in Ephesus about their oversight over the congregation that was among them: “*Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood. 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. Therefore watch and remember that, by the space of three years, I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears*” (Acts 20:28-31). Like Paul, a faithful pastor is to be ever vigilant, even to the point of tearful warnings!

II.

And this brings us to our second point: **How** should pastors do what they should do? Our text says: “*Not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind.*” Pastors should serve, not because they must, not from force or compulsion, but because they want to. All truly good works are done without the coercion of the Law but motivated by the love of Christ and produced by a joyous and thankful heart, the believer’s faith working by love out of gratitude to Him who first loved us (I John 4:19). God works in our New Man both to will and to do of His good pleasure (Philippians 2:13), as it is written: “*Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness, from the womb of the morning...*” (Psalm 110:3). Indeed God loves a cheerful giver (II Corinthians 9:7); He expects us freely to give, as God has given freely to us (Matthew 10:8). David speaks of the power of the Gospel enabling him to be a prophetic witness, when he says: “*Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation; and uphold me with Thy free Spirit. Then will I teach transgressors Thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto Thee*” (Psalm 51:12-13).

Only the Gospel gives a Godpleasing desire for the office of the Holy Ministry and the willingness to do the actual shepherding of the flock! Pastors are to serve not for *dishonorable profit*, making the office a way to personal financial gain, but of a ready mind, a mind delighted to do it and to do it “*with joy*” (Cf. Hebrews 13:17). Our Lord brought this out when He challenged Peter to demonstrate his love for his Savior by feeding, that is by being a faithful shepherd to, His lambs and sheep (John 21:15-17). Every pastor is to emulate the gracious tender love of Christ toward each and every sheep and lamb entrusted to his care. Did Jesus ever neglect a sheep or lamb out of personal consideration for His own comfort? No, of course not. He never neglected a sheep or lamb for any reason! He perfectly ministered to the flock, even unto the death of the cross (Matthew 20:28; Philippians 2:8). All Christians, and certainly Christian pastors as examples to the flock (I Peter 5:3), are to be “*followers of God...and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us and gave Himself for us*” (Ephesians 5:1-2a), willing to even die for their brethren, if God so wills, as the ultimate expression of brotherly love (I John 3:16). Only the love of Christ can so constrain us (II Corinthians 5:14)!

III.

Finally, *why* should the flock desire and gladly receive such faithful shepherding? In a Divine Call the members of the congregation obligates themselves:

“To receive our pastor-elect as a minister of Jesus Christ, to accord him the love and honor which we owe him as such according to the Word of God (Hebrews 13:17; II Corinthians 5:20; Luke 10:16); to obey him in all things which he teaches us in accordance with God’s Word (II Timothy 4:2; Acts 20:28; Hebrews 13:17); to support the ministrations required of him in this call with our diligent and faithful prayers (II Thessalonians 3:1-2); to admonish him in accordance with the Word of God, should we find him erring in doctrine or life, bearing in mind the Scriptural distinction between private and public sins (Matthew 18:15-17; I Timothy 5:19-20; Galatians 6:1); to render the discharge of his duties pleasant for him by our cordial one-mindedness and willing readiness, by our peaceable conduct, and in every other way possible (I Thessalonians 5:12-13); to defray any and all expenses incurred by him in moving to our locality (I Corinthians 9:7a); to provide for his decent maintenance in our midst according to our ability and his needs, and to that end pay him promptly and regularly an adequate salary for his work (I Corinthians 9:7-14; Galatians 6:6-7; Luke 10:7; I Timothy 5:17-18; I Timothy 5:8).

Scripture admonishes the sheep and lambs: “*And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves*” (I Thessalonians 5:12-13). “*Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy and not with grief; for that is unprofitable for you*” (Hebrews 13:17).

God gives us pastors “*for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ; 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.*” Why wouldn't we want this? Peter admonishes us all: “*As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby, if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious*”

(I Peter 2:2-3). Ah, here is the key: The sweet taste of God's grace manifested in the Gospel should be so inviting, so delectable to our souls, that we should crave to have it regularly and consistently dispensed to us! When God asks: "*Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine?*" (Isaiah 28:9), every believer should cry out "Here am I, teach me!" How we should yearn to hear God's Word regularly and consistently in the local congregation! How we should cry out with the Psalmist: "*Lord, I have loved the habitation of Thy house and the place where Thine honor dwelleth!*" (Psalm 26:8). "*I was glad when they said unto me, 'Let us go into the house of the Lord!'*" (Psalm 122:1). As a newborn babe continuously yearns for its mother's milk, so we should yearn for the Means of Grace received from the steward of God, our Christian pastor. God's Word is all we need; it is a complete, wholesome, soul-satisfying meal!

"But what if I do not have a local congregation to attend with a pastor chosen by God Himself to proclaim to me His Word, to administer to me His holy Sacraments, to watch for my soul, to minister to my particular needs, and to give account for me as God ordains?" Do you really need to ask? God has not ordained the local congregation and its ministry of Word and Sacrament as a mere "option" which His people may exercise or ignore according to their own choosing. He fully expects them regularly and consistently to hear the Word which goes forth out of His mouth in the preaching of His ambassadors (Isaiah 55:10-11; Luke 10:16; I Corinthians 4:1; II Corinthians 5:20; Romans 10:14ff.). If, because of purely temporal circumstances, you find yourself at such a great distance from an orthodox Christian congregation that you cannot regularly assemble yourselves together with true brethren and participate in the blessings and work of a local flock, as the Lord bids you do in the motto of this year's convention, Hebrews 10:25, then do the right thing and "*seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness*" (Matthew 6:33), making whatever sacrifices of temporal things are necessary for you to join a local flock, to participate in a local congregation, so that *its* pastor can be *your* pastor and the shepherd you need to watch for your soul! God will bless you when you put His Word and your soul's needs first. This He promises and cannot lie! (Matthew 6:33; Titus 1:2). Choose the "*one thing needful*" as the first priority in your life (Luke 10:42). Do so because you have tasted the sweet grace of God in the Gospel (I Peter 2:3; Ephesians 2:8-9). True pastors stand ready, willingly and lovingly to do their duty as God ordains to take care of *your* soul with God's Word. Use them as God has so gifted them to *you* in the local congregation. Do not despise preaching and God's Word by "*forsaking the assembling of [yourselves] together, as the manner [that is, as the habit] of some is, but exhorting one another, and so much the more, as ye see the Day approaching*" (Hebrews 10:25). "*Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, 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. To Him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.*"

Soli Deo Gloria!

DOCTRINAL ESSAY

delivered to the

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of the

CONCORDIA LUTHERAN CONFERENCE

by

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

The God-ordained Participation of Christians in the Local Congregation

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In the prophecy of His servant, Amos, the Lord caused to be penned by inspiration of His Holy Spirit the following earnest warning: “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord; and they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it” (Amos 8:11-12). While we cannot establish definitively on the basis of the text that this warning is a “rectilinear” or direct-line prophecy of the famine that is raging in our own day and time, the *conditions* which the Lord describes through His prophet are strikingly similar to what is *commonplace* on our own spiritual landscape in this twenty-first century of grace. In these latter days of sore distress, as we see all around us the “*signs of the times*” (Matthew 16:3), the clear evidence manifested in the geo-physical, socio-political, and above all, psycho-spiritual conditions which our Savior described, for example, in Matthew chapter 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21, all pointing to the imminence of His return for judgment, we are struck particularly with the dearth of faithful Christian **preaching and teaching** on the part of those who purport to be His mouthpieces! And this dearth is widespread indeed—extending quite literally “*from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east.*”

“He that **hath** My Word,” says the Lord through Jeremiah, chapter 23, verse 28, “*let him speak My Word faithfully.*” It certainly goes without saying that one cannot preach and teach what he does not have at his disposal. Nevertheless, “*false Christs and false prophets*” (Matthew 24:24) cannot rightfully excuse their unfaithful preaching and teaching with the lame claim that the Word of God in its purity was not available to them. “*Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away*” (v. 35), said our Lord Jesus (Cf. Isaiah 40:8; I Peter 1:23, 25). The sad, yea, the shocking *irony* is that, in this technologically advanced age, the Word of God is *plentifully* “available,” so that virtually everyone is able to “*have*” it. Unlike circumstances in the world going back into antiquity, when manuscripts of the Scriptures, even of single books, were copied by hand onto sheepskins and kept locked away as treasures to be *owned* but seldom *used*, and in contrast to the situation after the invention of the printing press, when copies produced with moveable type were expensive and not in plentiful supply, we now have entire Bibles in print on paper, mass produced and marketed so inexpensively, that literally everyone can well afford to “*have*” his own personal copy of the Scriptures for as little as a dollar! Moreover, for those who have access to computers (as so many do today), the Scriptures in digital formats of all kinds are readily availability from diskettes, CD’s, and DVD’s, not to mention instant access from postings on the Internet. Yes, people “*have*” the Word of God in more plentiful supply than at any other time in the world’s history. But that ready availability of the Scriptures—in whatever format—has not resulted in an equally corresponding use of the Word; nor has the mere availability of God’s precious “*Oracles*” produced more wide-spread understanding of the doctrines which shine forth from its pages. And, more often than not, those whose office it is to “*speak*” the Word speak *about* it, as if they were referring to a textbook or reviewing a best-selling novel. They don’t *cite* Scripture passages as God’s own proof for what

they teach, neither do they *expound* Scripture in their preaching in order to set forth to their hearers “*the doctrine which is according to Godliness*” (I Timothy 6:3), the doctrine which rests firmly upon “*the foundation of the apostles and prophets*” (Ephesians 2:20). When such “preachers” give only lip-service to Holy Scripture, neither knowing nor understanding—perhaps not even *caring*—what the Word of God actually *says*, is it any wonder that they end up “*teaching for doctrines the commandments of men*” (Matthew 15:9), “*with good words and fair speeches deceiv[ing] the hearts of the simple*” (Romans 16:18)?? Indeed, those who speak and use God’s Word *UNfaithfully contribute* to the dearth or “*famine*” of the hearing of God’s Word, inasmuch as perverted and skewed Scripture is of no profit whatsoever but contributes only to the hearers’ “*destruction*” (II Peter 3:16b).

Where, if only here in our own country, “from sea to shining sea,” as our borders have been lyrically described, is the Word of God regularly and consistently preached and taught in its purity so that it can be both heard and learned with spiritual profit? I can recall at least eight such places, can’t you?? By God’s grace, we have eight state-side pastors who have studied to show themselves approved unto God, workmen that need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing between the Law and the Gospel as they proclaim and teach the Word of Truth (II Timothy 2:15). There *may*, indeed, be *others*, of whom we are not aware, others in whom we would greatly rejoice if we could learn their identity. But, at least there isn’t yet a TOTAL famine “*of hearing the words of the Lord.*” We have, at present, at least the eight! “*But,*” as Philip asked the Savior concerning those five barley loaves and two small fishes in the boy’s sack lunch, “*What are **they** among so many?*” (John 6:9). To say that there is “a shortage” of faithful pastors in our land would be a gross understatement. A panic-ridden person, “*run[ning] to and fro to seek the word of the Lord,*” would just about have to stumble upon one of them in order to find him. Fortunately we have a Conference web-site and a published church directory to make the search a bit easier for sincere seekers. “*The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are [oh, so] few,*” our Savior tells us (Matthew 9:37); nevertheless, by God’s grace, those few laborers have been *sent forth into His harvest* (v. 38) and are out there *to be found*. No one is hiding.

And yet there are those—and we hear *of* them (and occasionally *from* them) on a regular basis—who dismiss the impending famine and the scarcity of faithful preachers as a mere **inconvenience**. “It’s too bad that you people don’t have a congregation closer to where we live. We’d probably come if it weren’t such a long drive. We’ll just have to look for something closer—even if it’s not quite what we had in mind.” And they **keep** “*run[ning] to and fro to seek the Word of the Lord,*” and never find it where, in their estimation, the benefits of hearing God’s Word outweigh the inconveniences of getting there. And so, they make what many of them refer to as “the sacrifice” of not hearing the Word of God in its purity because of purely *temporal circumstances* which compete with *spiritual benefits* for top priority in their lives. Concerning this particular matter, more will be said later on in our essay when we explore, on the basis of Scripture, the validity of such choices.

One of the chief reasons for this essay is to address the claim of many far-flung “*sheep having no shepherd*” that, since they are “*scattered abroad*” (Matthew 9:36), they can take comfort in the fact that their hearing of the preached Word and their participation in a local Christian congregation is not truly **necessary**. They recognize according to Scripture that the Word of the Gospel, “*the Word of reconciliation*” (II Corinthians 5:19b), is the *means of grace* in whatever form and through whatever venue it reaches sinful men. It is an efficacious means of grace because of what it *IS* and because of what it both *ANNOUNCES* and *CONVEYS*, and its efficacy is in no way dependent upon the *form* or *manner* in which it is dispensed. Hence, the *preached*

Gospel (Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:47; Romans 10:17) is a means of grace, but so is the *written* Gospel (John 5:39; 20:31), the Gospel pronounced as a *personal absolution* (Matthew 9:2), the word of the Gospel *resident in the heart* (Romans 10:8), as well as the Gospel presented in *symbols, types, and pictures* (John 1:29; John 3:14-15; Galatians 6:14). And, of course, we do not, we cannot, dispute that blessed and comforting truth, because “*it is written*” (Matthew 4:4, etc.). Nor do we, nor can we, ascribe any special power and efficacy to the *preached* Word over the same Word in other forms. The reader may wish to consult Dr. Pieper’s extended discussion on this point (*Christian Dogmatics*, III, pp. 106-108), as well as the statement in our Lutheran Confessions (*Formula of Concord*, Thorough Declaration., II, *Triglot*, p. 901).

Nevertheless, one truth of Scripture never militates against another truth; for there are no contradictions either in God or in His Word (Numbers 23:19; John 10:35). The blessed truth that the Gospel (and the Sacraments which present and seal to us the promises of the Gospel) are the efficacious *means of grace* in whatever form and venue they are faithfully presented does not detract from or militate against or give cause to despise the blessed truth that God has established the assembly of the local congregation as the only divinely-ordained external fellowship, and that He has ordained that those whom He has *called out* [ἐκκλησία] of darkness into His marvelous light (I Peter 2:9) gladly participate in that local church. Neither does the blessed truth that the *means of grace* are efficacious when used privately detract from, militate against, or give cause to despise His command that His local flocks establish in their midst the pastoral office of public preaching, teaching and spiritual oversight for the edification of the body of Christ in that place and for the welfare of their individual souls and the souls of their children through the *public* ministration of the Means of Grace.

It is, therefore, to dispel all contrary views and to encourage those who are “*scattered abroad*” to seek out an orthodox congregation and faithful pastor with which to unite as fully-functioning members of a local church, that we offer this essay and present, on the basis of Holy Scripture,

The God-ordained Participation of Christians in the Local Congregation.

I.

In the first part of our essay, we shall explore how the Lord, out of lovingkindness to lost mankind in Christ, purposed to communicate to men His will and grace for the salvation of their souls, and how He intended His precious Word to be used jointly and severally by His people and proclaimed also to others. In this section, we will distinguish three specific periods in the history of the Christian Church and how God’s method of feeding “*the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand*” (Psalm 95:7) varied from time to time, became more specific as to its content, and finally resulted in His ordinance of the local Christian congregation and its pastoral ministry for the declaration of His entire counsel (Acts 20:27-28) and for the spiritual nurturing of His local flocks (I Peter 5:2-3).

We read in the opening verse of the Epistle to the Hebrews that God varied both the time and the manner in which He declared His Word and will unto men (“*God...at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers...*” Hebrews 1:1). Initially, He communicated to men *directly* and *orally*, as He did to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Before their wanton disobedience, whereby they fell into sin and lost the image of God in which they had been created, they enjoyed the perfect and blissful knowledge of their Creator and were perfectly attuned to His will as revealed to them in His Law, which He had written into their hearts when

He made them (Romans 2:15). But He had pronounced His blessing upon them *orally* (Genesis 1:28-30), instructing them in *words* which they could *hear* as to their procreation, as to their dominion over His creation, and as to their sustenance. He also specifically instructed them *in so many words* regarding the two trees in the midst of the garden to exercise and to test their willing obedience, stating His prohibition that they not eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, and warning them in plain words of the consequences that they would bring upon themselves, should they disobey Him. And, after they willingly yielded to the tempting voice of Satan and despised and rebelled against the Word of their God, He again dealt with them *orally* as, in the application of the Law in its fierceness, He pronounced His righteous wrath upon them and doled out His punishments —the very least of them being the *temporal* consequences recorded in Genesis 3:16-19. After all, “*sin [had] entered into the world, and death by sin*” (Romans 5:12). *Spiritual death* had been the immediate consequence (Genesis 2:17b), *temporal death* the natural consequence from that time on (Genesis 3:19b; Ecclesiastes 12:7), and *eternal death* the ultimate consequence (Romans 6:23). God also informed them *orally* of His plan of redemption, the first word of the Gospel [*Protevangelium*], according to which the woman’s SEED would destroy the power of the devil by freeing them from the guilt and consequences of their sins (Genesis 3:15). It was by faith in this *orally*-promised SEED and in the Word of Reconciliation *orally* committed to them for their comfort and assurance that Adam and Eve were restored to God’s family, adopted as His children, and made heirs of everlasting life. This was, properly speaking, the beginning of the Christian Church.

God continued to manifest Himself to fallen mankind, to make known to them His will and grace, to promulgate His Word to them, and thus to build His Church *orally*, for about 2,500 years. There were no *Scriptures*, no *written* Word of God; nevertheless Adam and Eve *orally* taught their children to know Him, to believe in the Savior, and to worship Him (Genesis 4:3-7; cf. also Hebrews 11:4); men began “*to call upon the Name of the Lord*” in organized preaching, teaching, mutual exhortation and worship already at the time of Enos, Adam’s grandson (Genesis 4:26). God *spoke* to Noah and revealed to him the coming deluge, and Noah preached repentance to the people round about him for 120 years, to no avail (Genesis 6ff.). God appeared to Abraham and revealed to him *orally* justification by grace, for the sake of his Seed (to be descended from Isaac), through faith; and “*Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness*” (Romans 4:3). God manifested Himself *orally* in a dream to Jacob at Bethel, confirming to him the promise of the Savior, and revealing to him by means of the imagery of a ladder between earth and heaven that promised Seed as the only Mediator between God and men, the only Way to everlasting life (Genesis 28:12-17; cf. also John 1:51). And finally, after about 500 years of virtual silence during the captivity of the Children of Israel in Egypt, God appeared to Moses and spoke to Him out of the burning bush on Mt. Horeb (Exodus 3), and called him to deliver His people out of bondage to Pharaoh and to bring them safely to the Promised Land of Canaan. The fact that God communicated to Moses *directly* and *orally*, as through a mediator, was of some comfort to the Children of Israel at that time, since they were essentially ignorant of God in spite of information presumably passed down to them by *oral tradition*. They feared His wrath because of their sins and had not yet learned of His longsuffering mercy and grace to them in the promised Redeemer (Exodus 20:19; Deuteronomy 5: 22-33). Moses himself had to ask the Lord on Mt. Horeb: “*Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, ‘The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you,’ and they shall say to me, ‘What is His Name?’ what shall I say unto them?’*”

But the *strictly oral tradition* was quickly to give way to a *written record* that the people could have held before their eyes, that they could have rehearsed for them, that they could keep

inviolable as His permanent revelation, that they could teach to their children and proclaim to their enemies. It was just after the Exodus from Egypt that God, *for the very first time*, committed His Word, specifically His holy Law, to *writing* with His own finger on two tables of stone (Exodus 31:18), and thereafter moved Moses, His prophet to whom He spoke face to face “*as a man speaketh unto his friend*” (Exodus 33:11) “*to write, and put into his mind the very thoughts which he expressed and the very words which he wrote*” (Cf. Q/A 10, *Exposition of the Small Catechism*, 1943 Ed. on “verbal inspiration”). The five books of Moses or *Pentateuch*, commonly referred to by the Jews (including Jesus Himself) as “*the Law*,” together with the Book of Job and the single psalm written by the Prophet Moses (Psalm 90), comprised the first “*canon*” of the Scriptures, God’s *written* revelation. The Old Testament Church was, from that time on, bound to that written Word, which was to be preserved and observed inviolable (Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:29-32; Joshua 1:7; 23:6; etc.). Only God Himself, from time to time and in various manners (Hebrews 1:1), added to those original Scriptures the writings of His other prophets “*given by inspiration of God*” (II Timothy 3:16), including also the poetical books of David and Solomon, and the historical books. It was that Old Testament “*canon*,” “*Moses and the prophets*” (Luke 16:29), “*the Holy Scriptures*” (II Timothy 3:15), which comprised God’s authoritative, inerrant, clear, and all-sufficient revelation to mankind until the writings of the evangelists and apostles, also verbally inspired by the Holy Ghost (I Corinthians 2:13) were added, and the entire Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments became the “*foundation*” upon which the Church was and is ever to be anchored, edified, and preserved (Ephesians 2:20).

Throughout the entire Old Testament era —beginning with the early period (up to about 1,500 B. C.) during which divine truth was revealed only by means of *direct oral communication* from God Himself, continuing through the middle period (1,500 - ca. 1,000 B. C.) during which only *the written Pentateuch* authored by Moses, namely, “*the Law*,” as well as early historical books (Joshua, Judges, Ruth, and I and II Samuel), and the poetical books (Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon), were the source and standard of spiritual truth, and finally the later period (ca. 1,000 - 400 B.C.) when the manuscripts of the major and minor prophets completed the Old Testament canon —throughout the Old Testament, the primary and day-to-day responsibility for *teaching* the Word and will of God to others lay with Christian parents, who were to “*teach them diligently unto [their] children, and ...talk of them*” in the course of their everyday lives, in their homes, on the street, from morning to night, “24/7” as we commonly speak today (Deuteronomy 6:6-7, etc.). And that responsibility still holds today, as Christian parents, particularly the fathers, are charged with “*bring[ing] up [their] children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*” (Ephesians 6:4). There was no Old Testament office of “*pastor and teacher*” (Ephesians 4:11) charged with the instruction and oversight of God’s people in local flocks. There were, however, “*prophets*,” men chosen by God to proclaim specific messages to the people at particular times, regarding particular coming events and visitations, and concerning particular circumstances, to admonish the people generally for their idolatry and unfaithfulness, and, most notably, to “*give witness [to the coming Messiah], that through His Name, whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins*” (Acts 10:43); but the prophets were not instructors, *Seelsorgers*, shepherds, and overseers.

The Rabbis, referred to in the New Testament Gospel accounts of Matthew and John were not incumbents of an ecclesiastical office, or of *any* office for that matter. They were what we would call today “laymen” who made their living at some trade or occupation but who were particularly well-versed in the Scriptures, perhaps specially trained and mentored by other Rabbis, and usually gifted with the ability to speak and to engage people in discussions. They were therefore well-respected in the local community as “teachers of the Law.” They read publicly from the

sacred scrolls, expounded the Scriptures, offered prayers according to a set liturgy or ritual that was commonly recognized from community to community and even from country to country where the Jews had been dispersed, and they conducted seminars about spiritual and ethical matters taught in the Torah as well as in other Rabbinical writings.

From what we know from the Scriptures, there was no Old Testament counterpart to the local Christian congregation. The word “*congregation*” in the Old Testament Scriptures usually refers to the entire *visible assembly* of God’s people (as determined by their heritage and/or profession) as they comprised a cohesive unit during their wanderings in the wilderness —true believers and hypocrites alike (See the repeated use of this word, for example, in the Book of Exodus). “*Congregation*” also designates the large assemblage of people gathered for public worship at the Tabernacle (“...*the tabernacle of the congregation*,” Exodus 33:7 and numerous other passages in Exodus and Leviticus) —and later at the Temple in Jerusalem (II Chronicles 29:28), also gatherings of the people for other purposes, political and social (as, for example, following the conquest of the city of Ai, Joshua 8), as well as gatherings of the decision-making assemblies in Israel (II Chronicles 30:1ff.). In general, therefore, the word in the Old Testament signified a *large assemblage* of the people, having “come together” or “congregated” for a particular purpose.

Scripture tells us nothing about the development of the *local synagogues* as to their origin, nor of any command of God to establish them. [The word “congregation” (from the Latin) and the word “synagogue” (from the Greek) mean basically the same thing.] They were, however, strictly *local* worship places and study centers where the Scriptures were read on the Sabbath day, discussions were held, guest Rabbis were given opportunity to speak, prayers were offered, and the local Jews conducted worship services on a regular basis. Even though it had eventually been rebuilt by Herod the Great, most Jews, because of distance, were able to visit the Temple in Jerusalem only rarely, perhaps only at the time of the great festivals (Passover, Pentecost, etc. Cf. Acts 2). When the 12-year-old Jesus with Mary and Joseph traveled from Nazareth to Jerusalem for the Passover, they were en route for probably the better part of a week on foot; and yet Nazareth was not regarded to be a great distance from Jerusalem. Jesus, as well as Stephen (martyred in Jerusalem), and especially St. Paul on his various missionary journeys, were frequent visitors and even invited guest preachers in the synagogues of the Jews, making use of such opportunities to testify to the person and work of God’s Messiah, the “*Son of David*,” Jesus Himself, and the truth of the Gospel. Historians tell us that synagogues originated during the Babylonian exile after the destruction of Solomon’s Temple by Nebuchadnezzar (about 586 B. C.) because sacrifices could no longer be offered, priests could no longer function at the altars, and the Levites could no longer chant the Psalms. Since the exiled Jews were anxious to keep alive for themselves and to enkindle in their children the knowledge of God and their remembrance of Jerusalem and of the Temple as the focal point of their heritage, they assembled regularly, but at least every Sabbath day, to read the Scriptures, to pray, and to comfort one another in the evil day (R. Brasch, *The Judaic Heritage*. New York: David McKay Co., 1969, pp. 226ff.). Assembly in the local synagogue was deemed a sacred privilege for every Jew; even hundreds of years later after the reconstruction of the Temple; and, since the Jewish church was still the true visible church of God when Jesus walked visibly among men and even in the early years of the Christian era (as witnessed by the participation of the apostles and other early Christians in its services, Acts 3:1ff., 18:21; 20:6, 16; 21:26-28; etc.), Jesus Himself was in regular attendance (Luke 4:16ff.; 6:6; 59; John 18:20-21), demonstrating in His *active obedience* His love for the Word of God and the place where His honor dwelt (Psalm 26:8; 122:1) —even though the synagogue, as such, was not instituted or mandated by God.

On the other hand, local churches or congregations of professing Christians, the local assemblies of those who confess Christ as the only Savior of sinful mankind and rely solely upon His vicarious sacrifice as that payment-in-full which propitiated God's justice and purchased remission of sins and reconciliation with God for every sinner, those congregations have been *ordained of God*, instituted by the Lord of the Church for very specific purposes. It is not our purpose in this essay to treat the Doctrine of the Church in all of its aspects. Nevertheless, for the sake of clarity and a right understanding of the nature and purpose of the Christian congregation and its pastoral ministry, a few summary statements concerning the Doctrine of the Church are certainly in order.

Early on in this section, we observed that the Christian Church had its beginning, properly-speaking, when God first proclaimed the Gospel of salvation to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. This signaled the establishment of His *Kingdom of Grace* in which He offers, gives and seals to penitent sinners the forgiveness, life, and salvation which, in eternity already, He decreed, granted and declared for the entire world in view of the perfect vicarious satisfaction of divine justice that His only-begotten Son would earn on behalf of every man (II Corinthians 5:19, 21; Romans 3:25; I John 2:2). The Gospel or "good news" of this accomplished reconciliation was to be not only the vehicle for announcing this salvation to all the world (Psalm 98:2; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47), but it was to be the very means whereby the Holy Spirit of God would work in men's hearts the faith to accept and believe, rejoice and take comfort in it (II Thessalonians 2:14; I Peter 1:23; Romans 10:17; Galatians 3:26). And it is *faith* and *faith alone*, that is, confidence of the heart in the mercy of God which remits sins for Christ's sake totally apart from the works of the Law, personal trust in the accomplished reconciliation of the world by God unto Himself in Christ, that makes a poor sinner a member of the **Holy Christian Church**, the **Communion of Saints**, the *Una Sancta*, the mystical and invisible body of Christ, and an heir of everlasting life. Nothing but faith makes a person a *member* of the Christian Church (Galatians 3:26; Mark 16:16a; Ephesians 2:19-22), and nothing but unbelief *excludes* and keeps him *out* of the Christian Church (Mark 16:16b; Romans 8:9). And since faith is resident in the heart (Romans 10:10a) and unable to be seen by man (Luke 17:20-21), only the Lord Himself knows who is and who is not a member of His Church (II Timothy 2:19).

The Scriptures also speak of "*the Church*" in a *local* sense, that is, the congregation of those believers who live in a *specific locality*, assemble regularly for the public use of the Office of the Keys, and establish the Pastoral Office in their midst according to God's institution (I Corinthians 1:2; Romans 16:16; I Corinthians 11:16; Acts 14:23, 27; I Corinthians 14:23; etc.). Scripture itself refers to this *local Church* as **God sees it** (who alone knows the hearts) when it speaks of the *true believers* in that place—as does St. Paul when he addresses the congregation at Corinth as "*them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints*" (I Corinthians 1:2). But Scripture also speaks of this local Church as **men see it**, consisting of those who *profess true faith in Christ* and function as true brethren assembled together in a body which can be identified, numbered, addressed, heard, seen, and dealt with (Matthew 18:17; Acts 2:42; I Corinthians 5:13; etc.). Hypocrites who assemble with the local congregation and artfully disguise their unbelief under a pretense of fellowship are not truly members of that church in the sight of God; and their charade, which is indiscernible to the rest, is a lie to God Himself, for which they alone, not their fellow-members, will have to give account (Cf. Ananias and Sapphira, Acts 5).

In clear opposition to the false, unscriptural position of the Wisconsin Synod, the Church of the Lutheran Confession, and any other body that joins them in supporting it, namely, their claim

that the local congregation has NOT been specifically instituted by God in contrast to other groupings of believers, we hold on the basis of clear Scripture that the formation of local Christian congregations or “*churches*” and membership is **ordained**, that is, **commanded** by God, and that the local congregation is the **only God-ordained external fellowship of believers**. (Titus 1:5; Acts 20:28; I Peter 5:2-3; I Corinthians 11:23-29; Hebrews 10:23-25; Colossians 3:15-16; Matthew 18:15-17; etc.)

Moreover, it is God’s will that professing Christians who regularly assemble together about the Word and Sacraments not only **form** *local churches* or congregations according to His divine ordinance (or to **join** them where they already exist), but also **call men** properly equipped with the qualifications set down in Scripture (I Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9) to undertake the **Public Ministry** among them and thus establish the **Pastoral Office** of preaching, teaching, and spiritual oversight for the public administration of the Keys in their midst (Titus 1:5; Acts 20:28; I Peter 5:2-3; etc.). Where this is NOT done, there is something “*lacking*” among them, St. Paul asserts in Titus 1:5.

As we noted previously, the *Means of Grace*, specifically the Gospel, and the Sacraments through which the Gospel promises and its benefits are offered, given, and sealed to men, are *efficacious* in whatever form and venue they are employed, provided they are used in their *purity*; for a perverted Gospel, and bogus Sacraments administered contrary to Christ’s own institution, are not means of grace *at all*. Thus, the Word of God *privately read and studied* dare not be deprecated as being less valuable, less efficacious, than the *preached* Word, lest the Office of the Ministry itself be made an *absolute necessity* which gives the Gospel its power unto salvation. The same warning applies in the case of Baptism. When a layman baptizes in a case of urgency (as well he should under such a circumstance), the blessings and power of Holy Baptism are in no way diminished merely because the Sacrament was not administered by “a called and ordained servant of the Word” [the wording of the absolution, *TLH*, p. 16]. Nevertheless, the Pastoral Office of preaching (II Timothy 4:2), of teaching (I Peter 5:22-3; Acts 20:28), of the stewardship of God’s mysteries (I Corinthians 4:1ff.), of spiritual oversight (Hebrews 13:17; I Thessalonians 5:12b), of public admonition (II Timothy 4:3; I Thessalonians 5:12c), and of the general care of precious souls committed to the Pastor’s charge by the Holy Ghost (Acts 20:28; etc.), should not be despised as superfluous. Luther comments rather bluntly concerning those whose attitude is: “The Ministry?? Who needs it??” He writes:

Some smart wisecracks say: But we have books from which we can read it just as well as hear it from the preacher in church. You read down the devil on your head, who is then controlling you. If our Lord God had known that the ministry was superfluous, He certainly would have been so wise and sage not to have had Moses preach to you. ...He would also in our day surely tell the preachers and pastors to stay at home. (Martin Luther, *Sämtliche Schriften*, St. Louis Ed., III, p. 1736.)

In these latter days, when we are struck with the *scarcity* of truly orthodox Christian **local congregations** and the *dearth* of faithful Christian **preaching and teaching**, and when many who are concerned about their souls’ welfare and their need for spiritual nourishment find themselves geographically isolated from an assembly of true brethren and the ministrations of a faithful shepherd, it is, oh, so easy to despise, that is, think little of, the local Christian congregation as the ordinance of God it is for the spiritual welfare of His people (Hebrews 10:25), and to lull oneself into an aura of false spiritual security by going into “denial” about the need for pastoral care and feeding, as if the lack of a faithful shepherd is not the lack that the

Lord Himself says it is (Titus 1:5)! God had ordained the local congregation so that His people can carry out the obligations and privileges which He has enjoined upon them for their own welfare and blessing and to the glory of His grace! And God has ordained the Pastoral Office of the local congregation so that His people can be regularly nourished and built up in their faith, cared for and watched over by a faithful undershepherd of the Lord Jesus, and comforted in times of trial and affliction. Therefore, it is not an *adiaphoron* as to whether those who claim to be Christians are “free” **to join or not to join** a local Christian congregation and to participate with their brethren in the exercise of discipleship. And it is not an *adiaphoron* as to whether a professing Christian “needs” to have the Word of God preached to him, to be taught the precious doctrines of Holy Scripture, to be watched over by a faithful shepherd, to be reprovved, rebuked, exhorted with all longsuffering and doctrine by one who has the rule over God’s local flock with His Word (II Timothy 4:2ff.). Rather, the Scriptures are clear as crystal in setting forth as a sacred responsibility and privilege **the God-ordained participation of Christians in the local congregation**. In the second part of our essay, we shall consider in detail *what* that participation involves and *why* God has ordained it.

II.

In order to determine *what participation* in the local congregation involves, we need to examine, on the basis of Scripture, what particular *functions* are assigned by God Himself to, and are served by the local Christian “*church*” or congregation as, an *assembly* of believers — functions which cannot be performed by an *individual* believer. What are those functions which, by their very nature, assume the existence of a *group* of Christians? What functions, in other words, using a *contemporary* expression to describe what is going on, — what functions are “interactive” and therefore are incapable of being carried out by a believer who is isolated from true brethren? We identify from the words of Scripture the following *group* or interactive functions:

1) God intends and had ordained that His Word not only be read in private study, but that it be *heard* with the ear and thus impressed upon the mind and heart, upon the intellect and will (Matthew 11:15; 13:9, 15; Mark 4:9 and 23; Luke 8:8; Revelation 2:7; Isaiah 55:3; Luke 11:28; Romans 10:14b,17; etc. Compare also Deuteronomy 30:10ff., as well as the frequent admonitions of God’s prophets to “*hear the Word of the Lord*” – e.g. Jeremiah 26:1ff., etc.).

2) God intends and has ordained that His people *gather together* or *assemble* with their brethren, not only for the hearing of God’s Word, but for mutual exhortation, instruction, and admonition of one another with the wisdom of Holy Writ (Hebrews 10:25; Colossians 3:16, etc.), with “*the doctrine which is according to Godliness*” (I Timothy 6:3), “*the apostles’ doctrine*” (Acts 2:42). See also II Timothy 3:16, etc. concerning the profitability of Scripture for such “interactive” (and not just individual) functions as “*doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness.*”

3) God intends and has commanded that His people “*submit*” themselves to spiritual “*overseers*” and “*watchmen*” for their souls (Hebrews 13:17; I Thessalonians 5:12-13) whom He has placed over them (Acts 20:28) for their souls’ nurture, edification and safety. That office presupposes the existence of a *group* or *assembly*, the “*church of God*” (Acts 20:28), the “*flock of God*” (I Peter 5:2), and assumes that the individual Christian is not to be his own overseer.

4) God intends and has commanded that, in the exercise of the Office of the Keys, particularly in *the admonition of manifest and impenitent sinners*, not only *individuals*, not only

“*one or two more*,” but “*the church*” or local congregation of the brethren be involved (Matthew 18:15-17) for the gaining of a brother from his sins for heaven. (See also James 5:19-20.) Note that the “*one or two more*” are NOT “*the church*” in Matthew 18:17, but are the assembly of even more brethren to whom they are to go in a last effort to rescue a sinning brother. Moreover, in the last extremity, when a manifest sinner is “excluded from the Christian congregation” (Luther), this is to be done by the assembled brethren, not merely “*one or two*” (I Corinthians 5:4-5)

5) God intends and has ordained that the Holy Sacrament of our Savior’s body and blood be celebrated as the exercise of *brotherly communion* and interaction in the context of the *local congregation* (I Corinthians 10:17; 11:17-21; 33). There is no command and not one instance recorded in Scripture of “self-communion” apart from those who “*come together*” (I Corinthians 11:20); and so-called “private communion” is really the *public* administration of the Sacrament by the Pastor on behalf and in the name of the entire congregation, not as the exercise of his personal authority and privilege (Roman Catholic).

6) God intends and has ordained that *sacrificial worship and the praise of His holy Name*, both with the voice and with offerings of love, be offered up “*in the congregation*,” that is, in the assembly of His people (Psalm 84; Psalm 66:13-14; Psalm 96:8; Psalm 116:12-14; etc.).

7) God intends and has commanded that His people give *testimony to their unity* in His Word and to their fellowship with one another on that basis of that unity by their joint worship, joint prayer, joint communion, joint church work, joint support of His kingdom, and the practice of joint benevolence, all in the context of the local Christian congregation. Note that the passages which prohibit fraternization with the *heterodox* infer fraternization with the *orthodox* (I Corinthians 1:10; Amos 3:3; Ephesians 4:3; Acts 2:42; II Corinthians 6:14-18; Galatians 6:6-7; Galatians 6:10; I John 3:17; 4:21; etc.)

8) God intends and has ordained that His people, *congregated*, that is, *assembled together*, as a local “*flock*,” establish in their midst *the Pastoral Office* as instituted by the Lord of the Church for the care, oversight and edification of His mystical body, the true believers, and that something is “*lacking*” when this office has not been established (Ephesians 4:11-12; Titus 1:5).

Moreover, the God-ordained, specified *qualifications* and *duties* of **Christian pastors**, as these are clearly set down in Scripture (I Timothy 3:2-7 and Titus 1:6-9; also Acts 20:28; I Peter 5:2-3), presuppose and infer a *gathering* or *assembly* (a *congregation*, a local *church*) to which the Keys have been especially entrusted, in the name and on behalf of which the Pastor, by virtue of his call, publicly administers those Keys as the servant of *Christ* and steward of His mysteries (I Corinthians 4:1), also as the servant of *the people* for Jesus’ sake (II Corinthians 4:5). Among **the duties of the Pastoral Office** we number, on the basis of Scripture, the following, which are specified in the *Diploma of Vocation*:

1) To proclaim to the members of the congregation, jointly and severally, the Word of God in its full truth and purity (II Timothy 4:1-2).

2) To administer the Holy Sacraments in accordance with their divine institution (Matthew 28:19; I Corinthians 11:23-29).

3) To discharge toward all the members of the congregation the functions of a pastor, overseer, and curate of their souls; to feed the church of God, rightly dividing between Law and

Gospel in accordance with Holy Scripture; in particular to visit the sick and the dying; and to admonish indifferent and erring members (Ephesians 4:11-12; Acts 20:28; II Timothy 2:15).

4) To guide the members of the congregation in applying the divinely ordained discipline of the church in accordance with the Word of God (Matthew 18:15-17; I Timothy 5:20; Galatians 6:1; Titus 1:9-13).

5) To do whatever is possible to promote thorough Christian education in the congregation for young and old; to instruct prospective members in the Word of God, as this is rightly set forth in the Small Catechism of Dr. Martin Luther, thus preparing them for communicant membership (John 21:15-17; I Corinthians 11:28); and to continue edifying by constant instruction in the Word of Christ those who are communicant members (Acts 20:28; I Peter 5:2-3; II Peter 1:12; 3:18).

6) To urge the members of the congregation to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:3; I Corinthians 1:10), and to warn and guard them against all errors and errorists in doctrine and practice (Ezekiel 3:17-21; Matthew 7:15; Romans 16:17-18);

7) To serve the members of the congregation as an example by his Christian conduct; and, by the grace of God, to do all that is possible for him to do, within the limits of his calling, for the upbuilding of the congregation and for the general advancement of the kingdom of Christ (Titus 2:7-8; II Corinthians 3:4-6; 4:1-18).

All of our congregations, at some time in the recent or remote past, sent a *Diploma of Vocation* or Call Form with these or very similar words to their respective pastors, conveying to them the Solemn Call of the Holy Spirit —mediately through the local Christian congregation— to undertake the public ministry of the Word and Sacraments among them. Such a call form cites both the passages upon which the Doctrine of the Call is based, the passages according to which we hold that the Pastoral Office is divinely instituted by God and the only divinely-ordained office in the Church, and the passages which prescribe both the Pastor’s duties toward the members of his flock and the duties of the members toward the ambassador of Christ in their midst. In Luther’s words, “this is no child’s play!” Both the local Christian congregation and the Pastoral Office of that congregation have been **ordained**, that is, **set up** and **commanded**, by God Himself. They are His creations, His institutions, for the ultimate welfare and salvation of precious souls; and they dare not be regarded as anything less!

Your essayist now respectfully begs your kind indulgence in permitting him the bluntness that we so admire in Dr. Luther. You no doubt recall the quotation from Luther cited earlier in our discussion. He began with this sentence: “Some smart wiseacres say: ‘But we have books from which we can read it just as well as hear it from the preacher in church.’” —We have heard “smart wiseacres” say a lot more than that concerning the local congregation and its ministry! Their “little knowledge” of “God’s Word and Luther’s doctrine pure” has become a snare to them; and they, echoing the “*gainsaying of Core*” (Jude 11b) [*i.e.*, Korah (Numbers 16:3)], take issue with our Scriptural position on **the God-ordained participation of Christians in the Local Congregation** and label it “legalistic,” “papistical,” “false doctrine and practice,” “*teaching for doctrines the commandments of men*,” and the like. “*Ye pastors take too much upon you* in requiring this of us, *seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them*. We are Christians, after all, kings and priests before God., right where we are, where God Himself has planted us —even though we’re isolated from any orthodox local congregation and pastor. Our participation in a local congregation, our having the ministrations of a faithful pastor, are not necessary for salvation! So don’t you dare lay such participation on our conscience, as though God Himself required it! *Wherefore lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord?!*”

You're making yourselves lords over God's heritage!" —Make no mistake about it: This is no exaggeration! Our files are *full* of such comments, such arrogant charges, such preposterous accusations! And the Wisconsin Synod and the Church of the Lutheran Confession, who claim that neither the local congregation nor the Pastoral Office has been ordained of God, have not done such "smart wiseacres" any favors! They have only fueled their fire and emboldened their sharp tongues with their false and pernicious doctrine. *The gainsaying* [the *opposition*] of *Korah* is a more common occurrence than one would imagine; but the punishment of God for such arrogant speech against the Lord and His servants is uncommon indeed, as we read of what happened to Korah and his mob in Numbers 13:32-33. The Lord tells us: "*He that hath My Word, let him speak My Word faithfully*" (Jeremiah 23:28); and we would be less than faithful, yea, we would be downright *unfaithful* and *unprofitable* servants, if we were to deny what God in His Word enjoins! This we refuse to do!

As to the statement that "membership and participation in a local congregation is *not necessary to salvation*," we have no argument with it —provided that it is not used as a smokescreen or "*sheep's clothing*" to cover over and to justify disobedience to clear injunctions of the Word of God. The claim that "having a faithful Christian pastor to preach and teach the Word in its purity, to admonish gainsayers, to warn against wolves, and to comfort the afflicted is *not necessary for salvation*" should not be regarded by me or by any other faithful pastor as a personal slap-in-the-face. The statement is correct *as it stands*. However, if that Scriptural statement is "*wrested*," that is, *twisted* (II Peter 3:16b), to infer that the Pastoral Office and its functions are not God-ordained, and that a Christian can just *ignore* both the office and its God-given responsibilities as inconsequential [or, as Luther said it best, "superfluous"], then the curtain comes down of the "show of right." The show is over, and the thoughts of the hearts stand revealed.

A few examples should suffice:

- Salvation is by grace alone through faith alone. Good works are the fruit of faith — God desires, yea, has "*ordained*" (Ephesians 2:10), "*that we should walk in them.*" But they're not necessary to salvation. So we can just forget about them altogether. Right??
- The Lord's Supper is not necessary to salvation *either*. So we don't need to partake of it— often or even at all. Right??
- Faith in the literal six-day creation of the world is not essential to salvation *either*. So we can just deny it. Right??
- Not letting the kids join the Scouts, making sure they don't attend dances, and keeping them virgins until they are married are not necessary for salvation *either*. So we don't have to be concerned about such things. The kids can just do what they *want*. Right??
- Keeping God's Law is not necessary for salvation *either*. So we can simply ignore His commandments. After all, we are not under the Law but under grace. Right??
- Avoiding false teachers and refusing fellowship with the heterodox is not essential to salvation *either*. So we can just forget about Romans 16:17 and Titus 3:10 and those

pesky “unequal yokes.” Right??

One of the differences we have with the Lutheran Churches of the Reformation centers on their claim that there are “exceptions” to God’s ordinances — exceptions that we can make on the basis of “extenuating circumstances,” the claim of “poverty,” “apostolic precept” (the L. C. R.’s idea that, since one or more of the apostles did not follow it, we don’t have to either), and so on. Here’s a “newsflash” for the L. C. R. theologians: **God requires what He requires** ...whether it is necessary to salvation or whether it is the expression of His will for us in our lives of sanctification. He does not give us the right to determine which of His laws and ordinances we may choose to obey (Deuteronomy 12:32), nor does He grant us “Christian liberty” to take exception to them. The L. C. R. makes “practical” use of this perversion of Holy Scripture when they do not require the full financial support of their pastors. Only a few of their fifteen pastors are fully supported; most have full- or part-time secular jobs in addition to their pastoral work. “But most of the congregations are so small!” “But the pastors want to show that they are not greedy of filthy lucre.” “But the pastors are willing to make that sacrifice for the good of the Lord’s kingdom.” “But the pastor needs to work so that he can help out the church’s bottom line.” “But the people just can’t afford to support their pastors.” “But the Apostle Paul sewed tents!” — “*Even so hath the Lord **ordained**,*” writes Paul himself to the Corinthians, “*that they which preach the Gospel should live [i.e., have their living] of the Gospel*” (I Corinthians 9:14). That is God’s ordinance. And the L. C. R. thinks that we have such a “strange” and “legalistic” teaching on this matter! Well, take it up with the Holy Ghost! “*To obey is better than sacrifice*” (I Samuel 15:22).

Now in our present day and age, when a person’s so-called “comfort zone” is more important to him than anything else, when his personal freedom to “do his own thing” is treasured above responsibility to others (even over responsibility to God), when his own “personal business” is no one else’s business (not even the Lord’s), when his job, his home, his lifestyle and his temporal welfare in general occupy a higher priority in the “grand scheme of things” than the health and security of his immortal soul, we can understand exactly what was “going down” when the invited guests in Jesus’ parable about “*the kingdom of God*” and the Gospel invitation to salvation “*with one consent*” —all of them agreed and “on the same page”— “*began to make excuse*” (Luke 14:18) —the standard Gospel Lesson for this Second Sunday after Trinity.

And what “*excuses*” did they make? Why, excuses that they apparently thought would be regarded as completely reasonable by their would-be Host —assuming that He was just as fixated on the mundane things of this life as they were! “*The first said, ‘I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it. I pray thee, have me excused’*” (v. 18). Everybody knows that a person’s **real estate** is the most important thing on his priority list! Right?? —“Sorry I can’t be in God’s House more regularly, Pastor, but you know what a long drive I have to come to church. I know it’s a sacrifice, but I live in such a great neighborhood; and I wouldn’t give that up for anything! I got a great house for the money, the schools are the best in the county, and the crime rate is so low out there. *I pray thee, have me excused.* —Besides, a person’s frequent attendance at services doesn’t get him into heaven any sooner, does it??”

“*And another said, ‘I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them. I pray thee, have me excused’*” (v. 19). A person has to take care of his **investments**. Everybody knows that. —“Sorry I can’t be at the voters’ meeting again this time, Pastor; but I bought this boat, and Sunday afternoons are the only time I have to work on it. Good stewardship, you know. Wouldn’t want to waste God’s money, right? *I pray thee, have me excused.* —Besides,

Hebrews 10:25 doesn't apply to voters' meetings, Bible Classes, and optional activities like that. It's only the regular worship service, right Pastor?? And I'm usually there, at least most of the time."

"And another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.'" This excuse assumes that it's the wife who doesn't want to come. Maybe that's true if the fella married a girl who wasn't a true Christian, who didn't "*love the habitation of [God's] House*" (Psalm 26:8), who wasn't "*glad*" when her groom said unto her, "*Let us go into the House of the Lord*" (Psalm 122:1). "Sorry, Pastor, that I can't be more active in things at church. It's my wife, you know. She wants to spend Sunday at her folks' place; and I can't really do anything about that. You know how it is, Pastor. You're married. It's a sacrifice you have to make sometimes to save your marriage. Marriage is an institution of God, you know; and there are only two legitimate reasons for divorce. And church attendance isn't one of them. *I pray thee, have me excused.* —Besides, participation in the local congregation isn't really necessary for salvation, right?"

That poignant parable of the Lord Jesus could have scripted a 21st Century soap opera entitled, "*Sorry, but you know how it is!*" —"*With **one consent**, **everybody agreeing** that "there are simply so many legitimate extenuating circumstances that should be understood, accepted, and validated as 'really important' excuses, that people ought not 'judge one another' about matters that are none of their business."* —But we ask such people: Why make the excuse in the first place, and even say you're "sorry," unless, of course, you're guilty and you know it? By stating the reason you have come up with, you make it another person's business because you now expect him to pass favorable judgment upon your completely *lame* excuse. Notice that Jesus did not validate even ONE of those excuses! The Host in His parable did not say, "You're right. I completely understand." He was justly angry and said: "*None of those men which were bidden shall taste of My supper!*"

"Do I **HAVE TO** participate in a local Christian congregation?? —Do I **HAVE TO** join the Voters' Assembly? —Do I **HAVE TO** be in church every Sunday?? —Do I **HAVE TO** partake of the Lord's Supper more than twice a year?? —Do I **HAVE TO** *hear* God's Word *in person*?? Can't I just get *tapes*? —Do I **HAVE TO** be in Bible Class?? —Do I **HAVE TO** fill out my Sunday School worksheet? —Do I **HAVE TO** learn ALL of the passages?? —Do I **HAVE TO** be in Confirmation Class for three whole years?? —Do I really **HAVE TO** come to church? Can't the church come to me —via the Internet? Or on tapes or CD's? How about a telephone hook-up? ...you know, so that I don't **have to** leave the comfort of my home and actually **go** somewhere?!" —What is the matter with such questions? ...for Christians? They are all motivated by the Law! They all express resentment at **having** to do something rather than gladly and willingly, yea, cheerfully and eagerly, taking part in those things that the Lord in love has ordained as **great privileges** for our soul's welfare and blessing, **not** to punish us but to strengthen and preserve us steadfast in His Word and faith unto our end. Would we expect *the same* questions regarding **temporal things** that are really **important** to us??"

How would *these* sound, for example? "Do I **HAVE TO** participate in order to be on the soccer team? —Do I **HAVE TO** join the union in order to get benefits?? —Do I **HAVE TO** go to work every day? —Do I **HAVE TO** eat a balanced meal more than twice a year? —Do I **HAVE TO** hear that singing sensation *in person* at her concert? Can't I just get *a tape*?? —Do I **HAVE TO** be *present* to win that drawing? Can't they just *send* me the prize? —Do I **HAVE TO** accept the entire Christmas bonus? —Do I actually **HAVE TO** go to the hospital for my surgery?? Why can't they operate on-line? Maybe they could just send me the instructions, and I could operate

on myself!! I wish I didn't **HAVE TO** go to the final game of the playoffs. I really appreciate these free tickets; but couldn't I just watch it on T.V.?"

If such questions seem so nonsensical regarding the things of this world, how can the very same questions or excuses seem right and completely legitimate when it comes to the things of the spirit?? The answer is simple: Jesus tells us in Matthew 6:21, "*Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*" A person will find time to do what he really values. He will make sacrifices for things that are important to him. He will travel hundreds of miles to take advantage of opportunities that are significant to him. Unless he is critically ill, he may even get out of a sickbed to participate in an event or activity that is "too good to pass up." A person will sell his house and move his family to another city for the sake of a job promotion. A student will leave home and relocate cross-country, to a place where no one even knows his name, to attend a prestigious college or university —especially if he has a free-ride scholarship. A father will spend literally thousands of dollars to take his children to *Disney World* —in addition to the thousands he already spends on park district programs, tennis, swimming, or piano lessons, soccer shoes, and that *Play Station*. *Why??* Because all those things are **important** to him. Why will he **not** make the very same sacrifices of time, travel, relocation, and money for the things of the spirit?? Three verses after the Savior's statement above, he tells us: "*No man can serve two masters. For either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.*" Note that the Savior does not forbid us to have money, to make investments, to own a house, to buy our children tennis lessons, to send them to soccer or band camp, to pay their way through college. and provide them with a pricey wedding reception. BUT He does NOT permit us to let such earthly things **compete** with our **service to Him and His kingdom** so that we feel we have to choose between them. He points out in that well-known text that anxiety over and service to the things of this world is **idolatry** —fearing, loving, and trusting in other persons or things as we should fear love and trust in *God alone*. "*Seek ye FIRST the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*" Notice that the Savior's guarantee does not run the other way around!

Instead, He urgently bids us to invest in the things that belong unto our peace (Luke 19:42), to our spiritual welfare for time and eternity, saying in Isaiah 55: "*Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto Me, and eat ye that which is good; and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto Me. Hear, and your soul shall live. And I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David*" (vv. 1-3).

When professing Christians "*with one consent...make excuse*" for not participating in the local congregation —in spite of the *ordinance of God* that they do so out of gratitude to their Savior for His grace, out of love to Him for His Word, and out of concern for their own great blessing, they demonstrate to *themselves*, to *their children*, to *their brethren*, and to *the world* that "their heart is not in it." What an offense! (Matthew 18:7). "*This people draweth nigh unto Me with their mouth, and honoreth Me with their lips; but their heart is far from Me,*" said our Savior in Matthew 15:8, quoting the Lord through Isaiah in the 29th chapter of his prophecy, verse 13. Their problem is that they do not appreciate the Gospel, and they despise God's precious means of grace.

But what is even more grievous an abomination than the loss of "*first love*" (Revelation 2:4) and the love of many "*wax[ing] cold*" in these last evil days (Matthew 24:12) is that some actually

dare to blame God Himself for the conditions in their lives which make their participation in the local congregation a sacrifice too great to make. Adam, up-in-the-face of God Himself, dared to accuse Him in similar fashion, Genesis 3:12, saying: “*The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.*” Well, shame on God!! If He hadn’t in love provided Adam with a *perfect* helper, created her in *His own image*, and brought her unto the man for his comfort and loving companionship, Adam would never have sinned! Rubbish!! But we have in very recent years heard the same vicious twist laid on God Himself as the efficient cause for people ignoring His divine ordinance that they participate in the local congregation. We have paraphrased here some striking examples of this kind of reasoning: “**God** gave us these circumstance which now keep us from assembling ourselves together with true brethren for mutual exhortation in the Word.” “**God** gave me the health problems which keep me from coming to His House.” “**God** ‘planted us’ here in the city where we live far away from an orthodox congregation; and our relocation would despise His ‘planting’. **He** obviously doesn’t want us to move.” “We have lived here for so many years that, if we moved, we would **die!**” “**God** has caused the real estate market to be so ‘soft’ that we can’t get a good price for our land. So it is **He** that is keeping us from selling out and moving elsewhere.” “God has shown us that electro-magnetic force fields in metropolitan cities are dangerous to our health, and so **He** wants us to stay out here in the ‘boonies’ where that errant power is not so strong.” —Do such people think that God is some kind of ‘nut’ that He would ordain something for the good and blessing of His children and then **prohibit** them from utilizing it! “*God is not a man that He should lie! ...Hath He said, and shall He not do it? Or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good??*” (Numbers 23:19).

We have explored these **questions** in our discussion and have discovered in the precious pages of our Bible these **answers**:

- **Has God *ordained* the participation of Christians in the local congregation?** Yes, of course He has, as we have clearly seen from the abundance of passages we have studied.
- **Has He *ordained* that participation for *good and salutary reasons*, namely, for the welfare of our souls and for our great blessing in time and eternity?** Yes, indeed He has, as is clearly evident in the passages we have explored.
- **Has He *ordained* that participation as a *legalistic and punitive measure* to upset our lives, **OR** as a *great and glorious privilege* that we should value and exercise in joy and gladness of heart?** Clearly the latter, according to all the passages that we have considered.
- **Does He fully expect us to *comply* with that ordinance *out of love to Him* who first loved us?** Yes, this is His will for us, His children by faith in Jesus, even our sanctification, as is plainly evident in His Word.
- **Has He permitted us, for whatever reason, to *set aside* His ordinance in favor of some other *expedient*?** He has NOT. Exceptions to God’s ordinances are made by God Himself, and we see no such exceptions in His Word regarding *this* ordinance.
- **Does He expect us to *make sacrifices* in order to bring forth fruit in this area of sanctification?** He does indeed, and the passages are numerous to demonstrate that as we well know.

• **Has the Lord promised *abundant gracious blessings* to us Christians as the result of our participation in His local church and our shepherding by its pastor?** He certainly has—blessings both *temporal* and *spiritual*, enumerated in a whole host of clear and absolutely certain texts of His Word.

In summary then: The local Christian congregation and its ministry have been *ordained by God* for the **welfare and blessing** of His dear children here in this world—**for the regular hearing of His Word**, whereby faith is created and strengthened in the heart (Romans 10:17; Isaiah 55:10-11; Luke 11:28; etc.); **for the nourishment of our souls** on the “*milk of the Word*” for growth in grace and knowledge, so that we can increase in strength of faith (I Peter 2:2; Colossians 3:16; John 5:39; II Peter 3:18; etc.); **for our careful feeding and oversight** by Christ’s chosen undershepherds, His pastors, whose duty it is to feed us in the pure pastures of His Word and to watch for our souls (Acts 20:28; I Peter 5:1ff.; Hebrews 13:17); **for regular celebration of the Lord’s Supper with our brethren** in accordance with Christ’s command (Luke 22:19ff.; Acts 2:42; I Corinthians 10:17; 11:20ff.); **for sacrificial worship and praise of God** in our joint prayers, in our hymns of praise and liturgy, and in our thanksgiving for all His benefits to us, both with our words and with our offerings of love (Psalm 66:1-2; 13-15; Psalm 84; Psalm 96:8; Psalm 116:12-14; etc.); and **for the opportunity to testify to our unity** with those with whom we worship (Amos 3:3; Ephesians 4:3; Acts 2:42; I Corinthians 1:10; Romans 16:17; etc.).

Knowing what great blessings our gracious God and Lord richly and daily provides us in our local churches under the watchfulness of faithful shepherds and stewards of His mysteries, how *grateful* we should be for their existence, how *eager* we should be for their continuance, how *enthusiastic* we should be for our own participation in their functions, how *dedicated* we should be in their support, and how *careful* we should be that we never take them for granted. If and when we are ever confronted with the prospect of having to relocate our residence, of choosing a college or university to attend, of volunteering for service to our country in the armed forces (particularly when such service is not required of us), let our FIRST consideration be, regarding ANY prospective location: **Is there in that locality a truly orthodox Christian congregation with which I can unite and in which I can be an active participant according to God’s ordinance?** If not, STOP! Do not deliberately forsake the assembling of yourself together with your brethren contrary to your Lord’s earnest plea and exhortation! To do so would be to commit a terrible sin against your God, who earnestly desires your salvation; and you would thereby place your soul in jeopardy of damnation! Hear once more the exhortation of the writer to the Hebrews, whose words were penned by inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and consider them together in their proper context:

“Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; for He is faithful that promised. And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner [or habit] of some is, but exhorting one another, and so much the more, as ye see the Day approaching. For, if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses’ Law died without mercy under two or three witnesses. Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden underfoot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of Grace?”

And yet, the motivation for our confident and cheerful compliance with this ordinance of God, in spite of inconvenience, difficulty and even the necessity of great sacrifice, dare never be the threats and compulsion of His Law —clear and certain though they be— lest we bring upon ourselves His wrath and displeasure, but “*the love of Christ [which] constraineth us*” (II Corinthians 5:14) “*both to will and to do of His good pleasure*” (Philippians 2:13-16) to the praise of the glory of His grace. For THAT is the test of true discipleship: Continuing steadfast in His Word and faith unto our end (Luther, 3rd Petition), not because we have to, but for His great love’s sake, confessing with His Apostle John: “*Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*” (Revelation 1:5-6). To that blessed end we pray with the hymnwriter:

Lord, may Thy pastors faithful be,
not laboring for themselves but Thee!
Give grace to feed with wholesome food
the sheep and lambs bought by Thy blood,
to tend Thy flocks, and thus to prove
how dearly they the Shepherd love!

Oh, may Thy people faithful be,
and in Thy pastors honor Thee,
and with them work, and for them pray,
and gladly Thee in them obey,
receive the prophet of the Lord
and gain the prophet’s own reward.

So may we, when our work is done,
together stand before Thy throne,
and joyful hearts and voices raise
with one united song of praise
with all the bright celestial host,
to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost!

Amen.

(TLH 493, 2, 3, 4)

Soli Deo Gloria!

MINUTES OF THE 55th ANNUAL CONVENTION
of the
CONCORDIA LUTHERAN CONFERENCE
June 23, 24, and 25, 2006

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FRIDAY, JUNE 23
THE MORNING SESSION

THE OPENING SERVICE:

The 55th Annual Convention, held at St. John's Lutheran Church, Lebanon, Oregon, officially began at 9:30 a.m. with a Divine Worship Service of Convocation in which the local pastor, the Rev. M. L. Natterer, served as liturgist, and the Conference President, the Rev. Robert J. Lietz, delivered the keynote sermon. He chose as his text **Acts 2:42**, taking as his theme: **Four Visible, Outward Evidences of Invisible, Inward Faith in Jesus**, namely, **I.** Persistently persevering in teaching, **II.** Persistently persevering in fellowship, **III.** Persistently persevering in the Lord's Supper, and **IV.** Persistently persevering in prayers.

Following the service, the first session of the convention was called to order by the President at 11:14 a.m. according to the customary usages. Hymn 179 was sung, followed by the reading of John 8:31-32, a prayer, and the usual opening exhortation.

APPOINTED CONVENTION COMMITTEES:

According to the convention **PROSPECTUS**, the following committees were appointed by the President for the carrying out of convention business:

- A. Auditing Committee:** Pastor David G. Redlin, Chairman
Mr. Tom Fedor (Trinity)
Mr. Phillip DeWitt (Faith)
- B. Committee on Registration and Excuses:** Pastor Paul E. Bloedel, Chairman
Mr. Stephen Richter (St. Luke's)
Mr. Phillip Martin (Peace)
- C. Committee on Nominations and Elections:** Pastor Ross A. Mahan, Chairman
Mr. Karl P. Mensing (Peace)
Mr. Mark Natterer (St. John's)
- D. Resolutions Committee:** Pastor David T. Mensing, Chairman
Mr. Raymond Kusumi (St. Luke's)
Mr. Joshua Redlin (Good Shepherd)

INITIAL REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON REGISTRATION AND EXCUSES:

The committee reported the following delegates present and seated for this convention:

From **FAITH, Jackson:** Rev. Ross A. Mahan, Pastoral Delegate; Mr. JC Perry and Mr. Phillip DeWitt, Lay Delegates; no Alternates — 3 votes.

From **GOOD SHEPHERD, Tucson:** Rev. David G. Redlin, Pastoral Delegate; Mr. Martin

Hermann and Mr. Joshua Redlin, Lay Delegates; no Alternates — 3 votes.

From **PEACE, Oak Forest:** Rev. David T. Mensing, Pastoral Delegate; Mr. Philip R. Martin and Mr. Karl P. Mensing, Lay Delegates; Mr. Michael L. Mensing, Alternate — 3 votes.

From **ST. JOHN'S, Lebanon:** Rev. M. L. Natterer, Pastoral Delegate; Mr. Mark Natterer and Mr. Mark R. Fitzwater, Lay Delegates; Mr. Paul Natterer and Mr. Dwight Eslick, Alternates — 3 votes.

From **ST. LUKE'S, Seattle:** Rev. Edward J. Worley, Pastoral Delegate; Mr. Raymond Kusumi and Mr. Stephen Richter, Lay Delegates; Mr. Dan Ellis and Mr. Jerry C. Sidwell, Alternates — 3 votes.

From **ST. MARK'S, Sauk Village:** Rev. Paul E. Bloedel, Pastoral Delegate; no lay delegates — 2 votes.

From **ST. STEPHEN'S, Wilmot:** No pastoral or lay delegates. — 0 votes

From **TRINITY, Oak Park:** Rev. Robert J. Lietz, Pastoral Delegate; Mr. John Breinig and Mr. Tom Fedor, Lay Delegates; no Alternates — 3 votes

Total number of votes to be cast: **20**. Total attendance at the opening service: **128**. The offering received to benefit the General Conference Treasury was \$ **1,531.45**. The committee also reported that an excuse for reasons of ill health had been received from Pastor Mark W. Dierking of Wilmot, South Dakota. No excuses had been received for absent lay delegates. It was moved and seconded that the Committee's initial report be adopted, that Pastor Dierking be recognized as excused, and that all delegations be seated as indicated in the report. This motion was unanimously carried.

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT:

In reviewing the Conference fiscal year 2005-2006, President Lietz first noted that, according to our *Constitution*, Article VI, the Concordia Lutheran Conference is “an advisory or service body.” It exists, first and foremost, as a service body to God Himself in gratitude for all His gracious service rendered to us; but it also exists as a service body to our member-congregations and even to those outside our fellowship to defend, protect and preserve our precious heritage of Scriptural doctrine and practice for our own congregations and as a testimony to those outside our Conference. In the name of the Conference, he specially offered thanks to God for the faithful service of each of the officers and standing committees in carrying out their respective tasks, as well as offering their cooperative efforts, in carrying out the various important projects of the Conference during the past year of grace. He then cited various personal as well as e-mail contacts with pastors outside our Conference which permitted us to render Godpleasing, appropriate testimony concerning our Scriptural position in doctrine and practice. He also noted that the increasing average age of our present pastors should cause us to consider the need for future pastors in our congregations, so that we earnestly solicit students, train them now without cutting any corners for the sake of speedy preparation, and commit the outcome to the Lord of the Church for His blessing. The President then briefly referred to the illness of Pastor Dierking, which has caused him to miss our convention this year, and he thanked Pastor Worley for standing in for Pastor Dierking as the preacher on Sunday morning. He also thanked God for His gracious protection of

Pastors Mahan and Worley during their visit to our Russian brethren last summer, and he briefly outlined again the purposes and desired outcomes of the trip planned for him and for Pastor Mensing to Nigeria, now scheduled for January, 2007. Finally, he noted with praise to God the excellent financial condition of our Conference as evidence of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ in the hearts of our people, and he suggested that they consider, as part of their estate planning, to remember our Conference and its important work when planning bequests in their last will and testament as a final proof and evidence of love for Him who loved them first. In closing, he cited I John 4:9-11 and 19 regarding God's great love for us and ours for Him as the result. —It was moved and seconded to accept this report subject to the usual review. The motion was unanimously carried, and the Vice President appointed as the **Committee to Review the President's Report:** Pastor Ross Mahan and Mr. JC Perry.

THE CONVENTION AGENDA:

The President then laid before the Convention for its consideration the official AGENDA. It was moved and seconded to adopt the Agenda as printed. This motion was carried, and the Agenda was officially adopted.

REPORT OF THE PRESS COMMITTEE:

This committee, composed of the local pastor and the Conference Secretary, reported that no special advance announcement of the convention had been given to the press. It was moved and seconded to receive the report, and the motion was carried.

The Agenda for the Friday morning session having been completed, the President declared the convention in recess at 12:03 p. m. for the noon meal.

THE AFTERNOON SESSION

The afternoon session was opened at 1:15 p.m. with a brief devotion conducted by Pastor David G. Redlin. Hymn 23, verses 1-3 was sung, followed by the reading of Psalm 95:1-7a, and a prayer. The devotion concluded with the singing of the last stanza of the hymn and the Apostolic Benediction.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

This year there were no specific resolutions or recommendations laid before the Convention by the Board of Directors.

INITIAL REPORT OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE:

The initial report concerned, first of all, the past fiscal year, as Mr. Robert G. Bloedel, the Conference Treasurer, presented the *Financial Report* for fiscal year 2005-2006. The report showed a beginning cash balance of \$61,002.50 in the General Fund plus total receipts of \$33,940.74, yielding total cash available of \$94,943.24. Expenditures totaled \$34,847.84, leaving an ending cash balance as of May 31, 2005 of \$60,095.40. The report also showed an increase in the Student Aid Fund from \$28,639.12 at the beginning of the fiscal year to an ending balance of \$33,101.03 on its closing date, May 31, 2006. It was then moved and seconded to receive, subject to audit, the *Financial Report* of the Treasurer concerning the past fiscal year,

and to thank him for his faithful work on behalf of our Conference. This motion was carried.

The Treasurer then distributed the Finance Committee's *Budget Worksheet* for the new fiscal year, June 1, 2006 through May 31, 2007. It showed a beginning cash balance of \$60,095.40 and anticipated receipts (including the pledges of our congregations) of \$25,981.45, for total cash available of \$86,076.85 in the General Fund. Projected budgetary expenditures totaled \$45,050.00 divided among the following items: *Scriptural Publications* — \$3,500.00; Special Printing Grant — \$3,500.00; St. Stephen's Subsidy — \$8,400.00; Ekaterinburg Subsidy — \$7,200.00; Ekaterinburg Facilities Rental Subsidy — \$2,400.00; Archival Subsidy — \$1,500.00; Telephone Expense — \$500.00; Convention Expense — \$1,000.00; General Travel Expense — \$5,000.00; Nigeria Travel Expense — \$6,000.00; Miscellaneous Expense — \$2,000.00; Seminary Instructor's Salary — \$4,050.00. It was moved and seconded to accept the preliminary budget proposal, subject to any subsequent amendment by the delegates in Convention assembled and pending final approval later in the Convention. This motion was unanimously adopted.

REPORT OF THE EDITORIAL COMMITTEE:

Pastor Worley, chairman of the **Editorial Committee** and Editor of the *C. L.*, expressed at the outset his thanks to God for blessing the work of the committee and all the contributing writers of the *Concordia Lutheran*, so that our people may benefit spiritually from the testimony of God's Holy Word. He noted, however, the persistent tardiness on the part of our pastors in submitting assigned articles; and he expressed the hope that a Spirit-engendered and Gospel-motivated effort on the part of all concerned will result in a more timely product. He also noted that the Book and Tract Editor, Pastor Mensing, had reviewed several more books for possible re-publication and had also generated several new tracts. He encouraged the pastors to submit appropriate material for publication as tracts, limiting the text to about 800 words for a trifold pamphlet, and asked our people, pastors and laymen, to suggest topics for articles, tracts and re-prints and to offer any help possible to the Editorial Committee. —It was moved and seconded to adopt the report; and, after some discussion about the special benefits that accrue both to the writers and to the readers of our periodical, the motion was carried.

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON MISSIONS:

Pastor Ross Mahan, the chairman of the **Committee on Missions**, then first briefly reviewed Pastor Schurganoff's situation in Ekaterinburg, Russia, and summarized the Conference's efforts, both as an organization and through its congregations directly, during the past year to help him and his congregation financially. He also read a letter of appreciation from Pastor Schurganoff for all our efforts but especially for our fellowship in the truth of God's Word and our mutual faithful profession. Pastor Mahan besought the Conference's continued support of the Russian brethren, both in the prayers of our people and with their offerings. The Committee also recommended the continuation of subsidy to the Russian congregation at the same level as last year; and it also recommended that, upon its request, we continue our subsidy of St. Stephen's congregation in Wilmot, South Dakota, which is unable fully to support its pastor due to its small size.

- It was moved and seconded that we continue in fiscal year 2006-2007 our subsidy of the Russian brethren at the same level as last year, namely, \$7,200.00 toward Pastor Schurganoff's

salary, and \$2,400.00 toward the rental of their chapel facility. This motion was unanimously carried.

- It was then moved and seconded that we also continue our subsidy of St. Stephen's congregation in Wilmot as requested at the same level as last year, namely, \$8,400.00 toward Pastor Dierking's salary. This motion was unanimously carried.

It was moved and seconded to receive the report; and the motion was carried.

A brief recess was observed at 2:40 p.m. both for refreshment and to permit the Committee on Missions to set up a slide show reviewing last summer's trip to Ekaterinburg by Pastors Mahan and Worley.

The convention reconvened at 3:10 p.m. to watch a slide presentation on the trip to Ekaterinburg. It was extremely informative and sparked a great deal of discussion. At 4:00 p.m. we briefly recessed for a stretch-break.

At 4:25 we reconvened to hear the report of the board of control of *Scriptural Publications*.

REPORT OF THE PUBLISHING HOUSE BOARD OF CONTROL:

Pastor Lietz, the chairman, summarized the activities of the publishing arm of our Conference, including this year **a)** the printing of the *Concordia Lutheran*, **b)** the production of tracts, **c)** the reprinting of our *Sketch* with corrected typos, **d)** the publication of *Scriptural Publications'* first hardcover book (A. L. Graebner's *Outlines of Doctrinal Theology*), **e)** the possibility of reprinting the *Advanced Bible History* with the permission of Concordia Publishing House upon payment of \$950.00 in royalties, **f)** monthly meetings of the committee for planning and execution of its program, **g)** the development and management of the Conference Website, **h)** production of the 2005 Proceedings, **i)** publication of Doerffler's *Treasures of Hope*, **j)** grateful use of its Conference subsidy, and **k)** the suggestion that our people remember *Scriptural Publications* in their last will and testament. The goals of *Scriptural Publications* for the coming year include: **a)** pre-publication work (and possible publication) of three devotional books, **b)** encouraging the congregations to establish their own Websites tied to the Conference site, **c)** writing new (and reprinting "old") Law-and-Gospel tracts, **d)** reprinting 100 copies of *Advanced Bible History*, **e)** reprinting the latest, amended Conference *Constitution*, **f)** exploring the possibility of reprinting the 1943 Synodical Catechism and the 1941 *Lutheran Hymnal*, and **g)** encouraging our congregations' increased use of *Scriptural Publications* for their ongoing needs for Scriptural books, materials, and supplies. The presentation was interspersed with lively discussion from the floor, as the delegates and visitors showed genuine interest in the work of our publishing house. —It was moved and seconded to adopt this report, and the motion was carried.

REPORT OF THE BUSINESS MANAGER OF *SCRIPTURAL PUBLICATIONS*:

In the absence of David J. Mensing, the Business Manager, his printed report was presented by Phil Martin, the Print Shop Manager. Total receipts for the fiscal year were \$4,995.12, leaving total cash available of \$17,521.78. Expended was \$12,746.91, leaving an ending cash balance of \$4,774.87. (The detailed balance sheet is found elsewhere in the *Proceedings*.) It was moved

and seconded to adopt the report, and the motion was carried.

REPORT CONCERNING THE CONFERENCE ARCHIVES:

Pastor Mensing, the Conference Secretary and custodian of the Conference records (*Constitution*, Art. VIII, 3, b), reported that, with the \$1,500 grant authorized by the 2005 Convention, he has begun the process of digitizing the first ten years' *proceedings* of the Conference as text files for ease of editing, formatting, and restoration. Since many of those were mimeographed and are of poor quality, this project is of great importance in preserving the record of our heritage. It was his recommendation that the grant be renewed at this convention to enable this project to continue. He also urged that the pastors in particular, who have extant official correspondence from the past still in their possession, be urged to turn it over to the Secretary for imaging and storage as evidence to "*establish every word*" (II Corinthians 13:1) in lieu of parole testimony for the documentation of our history. It was moved and seconded to receive the report, and the motion was carried.

REPORT CONCERNING THE SEMINARY BOOKSTORE:

Mr. Phillip Martin reported briefly that *Scriptural Publications* continues to acquire on behalf of the Seminary Bookstore out-of-print "treasures" to keep in store for the ultimate purchase of seminary students and new pastors who are endeavoring to build up their professional libraries with time-honored, orthodox books and other materials. The books purchased are screened by the Committee on Theological Education for their appropriateness to be included in the collection, and the remainder, usually used books, are sold off at cost by *Scriptural Publications* to other pastors among us or to interested laymen. It was moved and seconded to receive the report, and the motion was carried.

Due to the immediate readiness of the evening meal, the reading of the minutes of the Friday session was deferred to the following day; and the Friday sessions adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

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S A T U R D A Y, J U N E 24

THE MORNING SESSION

The session was opened at 9:00 a.m. with a devotion led by Pastor Paul E. Bloedel. Hymn 477 was sung, followed by the reading of Scripture in Acts 2:42-47, and a prayer. The devotion concluded with the singing of Hymn 264.

The first business conducted was the reading and review of the minutes of Friday's sessions. These were read by the Secretary in their entirety. Thereafter, it was moved and seconded to adopt the minutes as read; and the motion was unanimously carried.

THE ESSAY: "The God-ordained Participation of Christians in the Local Congregation" —Part I Pastor David T. Mensing

The introduction of the essay began with a citation of God's warning through His prophet Amos that the days would come during which there would be a "*famine...of hearing the words of the*

Lord,” that such a dearth of Christian preaching would be extensive, “*from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east,*” and that people searching for that elusive preaching would not be able to find it (Amos 8:11-12). The essayist pointed out that such a famine ALREADY EXISTS to a great extent, simply because most preaching today is not *orthodox* preaching and therefore NOT, properly-speaking, the preaching of “*the words of the Lord*” but preaching with actually contributes to the “*famine.*” In spite of the shortage, however, there are at least eight outposts of faithful Christian preaching where the proclaimed Word of the Lord can still be heard, namely, the local congregations of our precious Conference. The claim that the heard Word is not essential for salvation but that the Word of the Gospel is efficacious in whatever form or venue it is used dare not be allowed to detract from, militate against, or give cause to despise God’s institution of the office of preaching and His ordinance that the pastoral office of preaching be established in local congregations for the edification and oversight of the body of Christ through the publicly-administered Means of Grace.

In Part I the essayist explained how the Lord purposed to communicate to men His will and grace for the salvation of their souls —at first *orally* as He spoke to His people directly; then, after the exodus of the Children of Israel from Egypt, also *in writing* as His Word, “*the Law,*” was penned by Moses and other early *historical* and *poetical books* were committed to paper; and finally, after the time of David and Solomon, as the writings of the *major and minor prophets* were added and the Old Testament canon was completed. Throughout the Old Testament era we find no record of what we call today “local congregations” as assemblies in which the Word of God was regularly and consistently preached, and the first local assembly and assembling *place* called a “synagogue” was, according to historians, established after the Babylonian Captivity; and, while the synagogue was not ordained by God, Jesus and His apostles regularly assembled there and participated with the “congregations” that came together for the hearing and learning of God’s Word. Nevertheless, after Pentecost, God Himself ordained the establishment of local Christian congregations and instituted the Pastoral Office for the proclamation of the Gospel, the nourishment of His flocks, and their spiritual oversight.

A brief recess was observed at 10:35 a.m. in accordance with the printed agenda.

At 10:50 a.m., Pastor Mensing continued the first section of his essay to the top of his seventh page. This portion of the essay was accompanied by a great deal of lively discussion from the floor on the part of delegates and visitors alike.

At 11:45 a.m., the presentation of the remainder of the essay’s first part was deferred to Sunday afternoon, when it, together with Part II, would be completed.

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON LUTHERAN UNION:

Pastor Worley, the chairman, reported that the committee had not been involved in any official discussions with any other church bodies or with independent congregations, neither has it been contacted by such for the purpose of discussing doctrine and practice; and the committee’s review of the doctrine and practice of other Lutheran groups via the Internet and other sources has not detected any positive changes among others but only a further degradation. He also besought the brethren to be alert to any contact that may yield possible fruit and to inform the Committee through one of its elected members.

It was then moved and seconded to receive the report, and the motion was carried.

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE TO REVIEW THE PRESIDENT'S REPORT:

The committee, having examined the President's Annual Report, found it accurate, informative and edifying and recommended its adoption. Moved and seconded to accept this report and to receive the President's Report thus approved into record. This motion was carried.

Since the noon hour was approaching, the convention stood in recess at 11:55 a.m. for lunch.

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THE AFTERNOON SESSION

Following the noon meal, the afternoon session began at 1:20 p.m. with a devotion conducted by Pastor M. L. Natterer. Hymn 427, verses 1-6, was sung, followed by the reading of Scripture in Isaiah 40, and a prayer. The devotion concluded with the last stanza of the hymn.

REPORT OF THE AUDITING COMMITTEE:

The committee reported that, in an audit of the Treasurer's books and the financial records of *Scriptural Publications*, it found both sets of books in good order. The committee thanked both Robert G. Bloedel, the Treasurer, and David J. Mensing, the publishing house Business Manager, for their diligent service to the Conference. It was moved and seconded to receive this report, and the motion was carried.

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION:

Pastor David T. Mensing, chairman of the C. T. E., reported for the committee on its work during the past year and on its proposed theological training program for the coming academic term beginning in September. He first of all pointed out our duty and great privilege to train for the ministry qualified men who will be fit and prepared to undertake the Pastoral Office at the call of the Holy Ghost. He then briefly summarized the changes in the mechanics of our program that were put in place by the action of the last convention and the greater degree of flexibility afforded us in training both single and married men utilizing "local" and not just "peripatetic" instruction. Nevertheless, in fulfillment of his pledge NOT to eliminate peripatetic instruction where such was possible, the chairman reported that he had re-qualified the peripatetic instructors for all five years and that they had received the permission of their respective congregations to serve in that capacity. Moreover, when the constitutional referendum passed, he also qualified four first-year instructors for the new system of local study, and they too were granted the permission of their congregations to teach theological courses in addition to their local church work. And finally, he reported with praise to the Lord of the Church that, as of this convention, we have two applicants for matriculation into our seminary program, desiring to commence their studies already in September: Mr. Jason A. Mabe of Park Forest, Illinois, a member of Peace in Oak Forest, and Mr. John Breinig of Oak Park, Illinois, a member of Trinity. Both have applied for *part-time* study; and the C. T. E. has decided to offer them at first two basic courses, namely, New Testament Greek (3 hrs.) and Dogmatics I (3 hrs.) to determine, as they progress, how many hours they can reasonably, comfortably and competently carry per semester. A typical schedule for these students might require 1.5 hours for each course on a Sunday afternoon or evening and 1.5 hours of instruction for each course on Thursday evening, totaling three class hours per course per week. As to the instructor(s), the

Committee is considering Pastor Mensing for the *first year* courses (See the five-year curriculum in the seminary catalog, p. 4ff.), inasmuch as he has already taught these and is thus already prepared to undertake them. It is envisioned that Pastor Lietz will then teach the *second year* curriculum, having in the meantime sufficient opportunity to get ready. The possibility of a summer session for an intensive immersion course in German is also being considered for next year. The Committee recommended that the delegates include on each slate of candidates for the new C. T. E. at least one member, preferably a layman, from the Northern Illinois area for the purpose of on-site observation of instruction. In closing, Pastor Mensing reminded the delegates and visitors of the age of their professors—both are sixty-six—and begged them to remember them in their prayers for good health and strength both for the present and for many years to come; and he urged those pastors who have not yet been tapped as instructors to study and ready themselves even now for the prospect in the future. Pastor Mensing then introduced Mr. John Breinig, who was present. Mr. Jason Mabe's wife, Gina, just delivered their first baby, a son, this past week, making it impossible for Jason to be in attendance. The chairman, however, referred to each one's application dossier, shared his statistical information with the delegates, and read aloud the recommendation of each one's pastor supporting his matriculation.

It was moved and seconded to receive the report; and, after spirited discussion, this motion was unanimously carried.

FURTHER REPORT OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE:

There were no amendments to the committee's *Proposed Budget* for the new fiscal year, June 1, 2006 through May 31, 2007, but changes are still possible before final ratification. It was moved and seconded to accept this interim report, and the motion was carried.

A brief recess was observed at 2:40 p.m.

At 3:00 p.m., the convention proceeded immediately to the election of officers and standing committees.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS AND STANDING COMMITTEES:

OFFICERS—

PRESIDENT: Nominated—Pastors Lietz, Worley, Mahan, and Mensing.
Elected—**Pastor Edward J. Worley**

VICE PRESIDENT: Nominated—Pastors Mensing, Mahan, and Lietz.
Elected—**Pastor Robert J. Lietz**

SECRETARY: Nominated—Pastors Mensing and Bloedel.
Elected—**Pastor David T. Mensing**

TREASURER: Nominated—Messrs. Robert Bloedel and JC Perry.
Elected—**Mr. Robert G. Bloedel**

BOARD MEMBER-AT-LARGE from the Far West: Nominated—Messrs. Ray Kusumi, Daniel Bloedel, and Paul Natterer.

Elected—Mr. Raymond Kusumi

BOARD MEMBER-AT-LARGE from the Middle West: Nominated—Messrs. Jason Mabe, John Breinig, JC Perry, Mark Mensing, Karl Mensing, Lloyd E. Martin

Elected—Mr. JC Perry

STANDING COMMITTEES—

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE:

SLATE A—Pastor Worley, Pastor Mensing, Mr. Paul Natterer

SLATE B—Pastor Mensing, Pastor Lietz, Mr. Jason Mabe

SLATE C—Pastor Worley, Pastor Mensing, Stephen Richter

Elected—SLATE B

COMMITTEE ON LUTHERAN UNION:

SLATE A—Pastor Lietz, Pastor Mensing, Pastor Natterer, Mr. Phillip Martin

SLATE B—Pastor Lietz, Pastor Mensing, Pastor Natterer, Mr. Jason Mabe

Elected—SLATE A

COMMITTEE ON THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION:

SLATE A—Pastor Lietz, Pastor Worley, Mr. Daniel Bloedel, Mr. Stephen Bloedel

SLATE B—Pastor Worley, Pastor Natterer, Mr. Daniel Bloedel, Mr. Stephen Bloedel

SLATE C—Pastor Lietz, Pastor Natterer, Mr. Stephen Bloedel, Mr. Erik Roe

SLATE D—Pastor Worley, Pastor Natterer, Mr. Erik Roe, Mr. Stephen Bloedel

Elected—SLATE D

COMMITTEE ON MISSIONS:

SLATE A—Pastor Mahan, Pastor Redlin, Mr. Martin Hermann, Mr. JC Perry, Mr. Joshua Redlin

SLATE B—Pastor Mahan, Pastor Redlin, Mr. Raymond Kusumi, Mr. JC Perry, Mr. Paul Natterer

SLATE C—Pastor Mahan, Pastor Bloedel, Mr. JC Perry, Mr. Raymond Kusumi, Mr. Paul Natterer

Elected—SLATE B

FINANCE COMMITTEE:

SLATE A—Mr. Robert Bloedel, Mr. Phillip Martin, Mr. JC Perry, Mr. Paul Natterer

SLATE B—Mr. Robert Bloedel, Mr. Phillip Martin, Mr. JC Perry, Mr. Mark Natterer

SLATE C—Mr. Robert Bloedel, Mr. JC Perry, Mr. David J. Mensing, Mr. Mark Natterer

SLATE D—Mr. Robert Bloedel, Mr. John Breinig, Mr. JC Perry, Mr. Mark Natterer

Elected—SLATE C

PUBLISHING HOUSE BOARD OF CONTROL:

SLATE A—Pastor Lietz, Mr. David J. Mensing, Mr. Phillip R. Martin

SLATE B—Pastor Worley, Mr. David J. Mensing, Mr. Phillip R. Martin

Elected—SLATE A

The balloting having been completed, it was moved and seconded to make all elections unanimous. This motion was unanimously carried.

The Saturday minutes were read by the Secretary in their entirety. Thereafter, it was moved and seconded to adopt the minutes as read; and the motion was unanimously carried.

After several announcements on the part of the *pastor loci*, the convention stood in recess at 4:45 p.m. for the supper hour.

SUNDAY, JUNE 25

SUNDAY MORNING — The Divine Worship Service with Holy Communion

The *pastor loci*, the Rev. M. L. Natterer, again served as liturgist; and the Rev. Edward J. Worley of Seattle, Washington, preached the sermon based on **I Peter 5:2**. His theme was: **The God-ordained Duty of Christians Pastors in the Local Congregation**, divided into three parts: **I.** *What* must Christian pastors do for their individual flocks — the local congregations to which they are called— as God clearly ordains? **II.** *How* should they do this in a God-pleasing and faithful manner as God enjoins? **III.** *Why* should their flock desire and cheerfully receive such faithful shepherding from their pastors?

Delegates and visitors from the congregations of our fellowship then partook of the Lord's Supper together as guests of St. John's Congregation —for the remission of their sins, for the strengthening of their faith and of their walk in sanctification, and in testimony of their blessed unity in the Word of their Savior. Immediately following the service, delegates, visitors, and the local members walked two blocks down the street to the local Senior Center, where the congregation had arranged to serve a catered noon meal.

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THE AFTERNOON SESSION

The afternoon session began at 1:55 p.m. with a devotion conducted by Pastor Ross A. Mahan. Hymn 392, verses 1-3, was sung, followed by the reading of Scripture in Psalm 32, and a prayer. The devotion concluded with the third stanza of the hymn.

THE ESSAY: “The God-ordained Participation of Christians in the Local Congregation” — Part I, continued, and then Part II Pastor David T. Mensing

The first portion of the *DOCTRINAL ESSAY* was then completed by Pastor Mensing, after which he proceeded immediately to the second and final portion. This portion first set forth a few summary statements concerning the Doctrine of the Church, including the establishment of the *local Church* or congregation, both as **God** alone can see it —all *true believers* in a certain locality— and as **men** see it, comprised of those who profess the Christian faith and gather regularly in one place with their avowed brethren for the public administration of the Means of Grace. According to the passages cited (and there were *many*), the local congregation is not just one-of-many “options” open to Christians to join or not to join, all of which are “church” with the same duties, rights, and privileges [W.E.L.S./C.o.L.C.]. Therefore to join or not to join is not an *adiaphoron*, neither is the participation of Christians with their brethren in the exercise of discipleship. In Part II, the essayist identified eight God-ordained “interactive” **functions** of the *local congregation* which cannot be carried out by individual Christians apart from an

“assembly” (“congregation”) of fellow believers. He then also set forth the seven specific **duties** incumbent upon *Christian pastors* to serve and to enable the functions of the congregation. And finally, he addressed the *excuses* (Cf. Luke 14:18ff.) that people commonly make for their lack of participation in the local congregation, excuses that don’t “wash” with the Lord of the Church, and excuses which clearly demonstrate a person’s lack of appreciation for the treasure of the Gospel and his dismissal of the congregation and its ministry as “unnecessary” for salvation. Moreover, those who refuse (or question the necessity of) participation in the Christian congregation deliberately deprive themselves of the blessings that God earnestly wants to bestow upon them and challenges His right to require that of them (“Do I HAVE to??). Deliberately sinning, after having received the knowledge of the truth, is a damning offense (Hebrews 10:26ff.), and not just a sinful “misdemeanor.” The essay concluded with stanzas 2, 3, and 4 of Hymn 493. —Following spirited and fruitful discussion of this section, it was moved and seconded that we adopt this informative and edifying essay with thanks to the essayist, subject to polish and the usual subsequent review of the *praesidium*. This motion was carried unanimously.

Following the essay, a brief recess was observed at 4:07 p. m.

FINAL REPORT OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE:

There were no amendments to the committee’s *Proposed Budget* for the new fiscal year, June 1, 2006 through May 31, 2007. It was moved and seconded to accept the *proposed* budget as the **Final Fiscal Budget**; and this motion was unanimously adopted. (The final budget can be found in its entirety elsewhere in these PROCEEDINGS. Please see the **Table of Contents**.)

REPORT OF THE CONFERENCE STATISTICIAN:

Mr. Raymond S. Kusumi delivered the statistical report for fiscal year 2005-2006. —It was moved and seconded to receive this report. Carried. —It was also moved and seconded that Mr. Kusumi be reappointed to the position of **Conference Statistician** for the coming fiscal year with thanks for his continued faithful service. This motion was unanimously carried.

FINAL REPORT OF THE RESOLUTIONS COMMITTEE:

Since Mr. Joshua Redlin of Tucson had left the convention early without notice, Mr. Phillip Martin was asked to fill the vacancy this created on the convention’s Resolutions Committee. The Committee submitted drafts of the following resolutions to the Convention for its consideration and moved their adoption: (Please see the **Table of Contents** for their location in these PROCEEDINGS.)

- #1: Thanks to the outgoing officers and standing committees;
- #2: Thanks for the doctrinal essay prepared and presented by Pastor Mensing;
- #3: Thanks for the sermons by Pastors Lietz and Worley;
- #4: Thanks for the opening devotions conducted by the pastors;
- #5: Thanks to Mr. Stephen P. Bloedel, the organist of St. Luke’s Lutheran Church, for the

special organ music which beautified the services and devotions held at this convention.

#6: Thanks to Pastor and Mrs. M. L. Natterer and to the host congregation for their loving and generous hospitality.

All of the above resolutions were unanimously adopted.

FINAL REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON REGISTRATION AND EXCUSES

As noted in detail in the Committee's initial report, seven congregations had been represented at this convention by seven pastoral delegates, twelve lay delegates, and five alternate delegates who were actually present. Total number of votes to be cast on any measure was 20. Pastor Dierking had asked to be excused due to health reasons. Total attendance at the Friday service was 128, and at the Sunday service 165. Total offerings received at the Friday service amounted to \$1,531.45, and at the Sunday service, \$ 3,232.67. Communed were 112. The report was adopted.

TIME AND PLACE OF THE 56th ANNUAL CONVENTION:

Peace Ev. Lutheran Church of Oak Forest, through its lay delegate, Mr. Karl Mensing, extended to the Conference its invitation to host the 56th Annual Convention. (Dates— Pastoral Conference: Tuesday and Wednesday, June 19 and 20; Board of Directors Meeting: Thursday, June 21; The Convention: Friday, Saturday and Sunday, June 22, 23 and 24, 2007.) It was moved and seconded to accept this kind invitation with thanks, and the motion was carried.

The minutes of the Sunday sessions were then read by the Secretary. It was moved and seconded that the minutes be adopted. This motion was carried.

ADJOURNMENT AND CLOSING DEVOTION:

After several brief announcements, the chairman entertained a motion to adjourn the convention. This motion was made, seconded, and unanimously carried; and adjournment followed at 4:50 p.m. with a closing devotion conducted by President Worley. Hymn 609, verses 1-2, was sung, followed by a prayer, the Lord's Prayer, the third stanza of the hymn, the usual closing formula, and the Apostolic Benediction.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. David T. Mensing, Secretary

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT

Dear Brethren:

We all need so much the reminders of Psalm 103: *"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is*

within me, bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits; who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases [all spiritual diseases], who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies” (vv. 1-4). And how true are the words of the Prophet Jeremiah: *“It is of the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not; they are new every morning; great is Thy faithfulness”* (Lamentations 3:22-23). In our on-going work together, who of us does not need the light and lamp of Philippians 4: *“Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, Rejoice. Let your moderation [your gentleness] be known unto all men; the Lord is at hand. Be careful [be worried] for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus”* (vv. 4-7).

Our Conference is properly called “an advisory or service body” (*Constitution and Bylaws of the Concordia Lutheran Conference*, Article VI, 1, page 6). It exists, first and foremost, as a service body to God Himself, in gratitude for all the perfect, everlasting, and gracious service He has rendered to us, especially through His Son, our Savior, Christ Jesus. When Zacharias, John the Baptist’s father, had his speech restored after approximately nine months, his first words were: *“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He hath visited and redeemed His people, and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David; as He spake by the mouth of His holy prophets, which have been since the world began, that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us, to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember His holy covenant, the oath which He swore to our father Abraham, that He would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life”* (Luke 1:68-75). So, also for us, our merciful God, through the Horn of our salvation, Christ Jesus, has mercifully and completely delivered us from those fierce enemies of sin, the devil, and the curse of the Law, all so that as His dear children through faith in Christ, we are equipped, on account of His everlasting victory over these enemies, to serve Him with thanks by being *“steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as [we] know that [our] labor is not in vain in the Lord”* (I Corinthians 15:58).

Secondly, our Conference exists as a service body to our member congregations and also to those outside of our fellowship. We exist, by God’s grace, to defend, protect, and preserve our precious heritage of Scriptural doctrine and practice for our own congregations and for a witness to those outside of our Conference. In his little one-chapter epistle, Jude urges us to *“earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints”* (v. 3). We are never to stop *“abhor[ing] that which is evil, [and] cleav[ing] to that which is good”* (Romans 12:9), ever remembering that *“a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump”* (Galatians 5:9). Our Savior sets before us His changeless instruction and His encouraging promises when He says to us in John 8: *“If ye continue in My Word, then are ye My disciples indeed, and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free”* (vv. 31-32). And so, for 55 years, our God, in His great grace and marvelous mercy, has helped us to boldly teach and pointedly apply the truths of His Word in our on-going work and life. This bold teaching and pointed application of the Word of God is illustrated so well in this year’s convention doctrinal essay. We encourage all of you to be present, if at all possible, to hear, take to heart, and gladly submit to the Scriptural teaching and application in this essay as it is presented tomorrow and Sunday afternoon. The sheep of Christ will not only hear, but will also follow the voice of their good Shepherd as He speaks to them in His Word, as the Savior Himself made clear in John 8, John 10, and John 18: *“He that is of God heareth God’s words”* (v. 47); *“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow*

Me” (v.27); “*Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice*” (v. 37).

I want to take this opportunity, in the name of our Conference, to thank God for the service rendered during the past year: 1) by our vice-president, Pastor Worley, who is always so helpful for consultation and counsel, and in that office, also faithfully serves as chairman of the Committee on Lutheran Union, as well as chairman of our Pastoral Conference, which meets for two days before each convention, and then for three days each fall; 2) by our secretary, Pastor Mensing, who, also, is always so helpful for consultation and counsel, as well as providing us with accurate and complete minutes for both our convention and our pastoral conferences, plus distributing those Pastoral Conference minutes to our pastors and the *Convention Proceedings* to our congregations, all of which is no small task; 3) by our treasurer, Mr. Robert Bloedel, who is so cooperative and competent in his office, providing us throughout the year with monthly financial reports, and then presenting to us at each convention a proposed budget for our consideration; 4) by the Board of Directors, the legal representatives for our Conference, all of whom have shown themselves to be faithfully committed to the responsibilities given to them; 5) by our five committees, namely, **a. The Editorial Committee**, with Pastor Worley as the chairman. This committee is charged with the editing of *The Concordia Lutheran*, as well as the editing of other materials put out by our Conference. Pastor Mensing serves as a “second pair of eyes” in the editing process, with Mr. Paul Natterer as the lay member. We very much appreciate all of their work during the past year. **b. The Committee on Theological Education**, with Pastor Mensing as its chairman. This committee is to “facilitate the work of both the faculty and student body of our Seminary. ...The right to engage qualified instructors from among our pastors and, with the consent of their respective congregations, employ them as theological professors, compensating them appropriately for their labors (Jeremiahs 22:13b; Luke 10:7; I Corinthians 9:11), shall be vested in this Committee in the name of our congregations” (*Constitution and Bylaws of the Concordia Lutheran Conference*, Article IX, 2, page 11). Pastor Worley is also on this committee, with the lay members being Mr. Dan Bloedel and Mr. Stephen Bloedel. We are very grateful for the past year’s labor by this committee. **c. The Committee on Missions**, with Pastor Mahan as chairman. This committee is involved in gathering information concerning our sister congregation in Russia and our sister congregations in Nigeria, as well as receiving requests from congregations for financial subsidy, and making recommendations regarding such requests to our Conference at this year’s convention. Other members of this committee are Pastor Redlin, Mr. Martin Hermann, Mr. JC Perry, and Mr. Joshua Redlin. Many thanks to this committee for its efforts since our 2005 Convention. **d. The Committee on Lutheran Union**, with Pastor Worley as the chairman. This committee is to collect accurate information regarding the doctrine and practice of other Lutheran church bodies, which requires subscribing to various periodicals to accurately collect such information. Also, if the opportunities present themselves, this committee will consider meeting with or communicating with individuals from other Lutheran bodies or official representatives of such. The secretary of our Conference, Pastor Mensing, is also an “automatic” member of this committee, as well as one seminary instructor, who is Pastor Natterer, and also one layman, Mr. Phillip Martin. We must extend a hearty “Thank you” to all who served on this committee for the past twelve months. **e. The Finance Committee**, with Mr. Robert Bloedel as the chairman. This committee is to study and analyze the finances of our Conference, report periodically to our member congregations, solicit pledges from our congregations for the next fiscal year, and prepare a budget for presentation to the convention. The other members of this committee are Mr. Phillip Martin, Mr. JC Perry, and Mr. Paul Natterer. We are most appreciative for the diligence of this committee during the past year. **f. The Board of Control of Scriptural Publications**. The purpose of our publishing house is to stock, publish, print,

reprint, 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” (*Constitution and Bylaws of the Concordia Lutheran Conference*, Article XII, 2, page 16). Those on this Board of Control are a very competent business manager, Mr. David J. Mensing, the print shop manager, Mr. Phillip Martin, who does so much in the work of printing and reprinting for our Conference, and yours truly. We will look forward to more detailed reports from these five committees and the *Scriptural Publications* Board of Control later during this convention.

Correspondence directed to our Conference during this past year from outside of our fellowship has come about mainly, but not exclusively, as a result of our Web site on the Internet. This correspondence has been handled by our vice-president, our secretary, our treasurer, the business manager and the print shop manager of *Scriptural Publications*, and yours truly. This is a very important part of our Conference’s work, but it can also be very time-consuming. We are striving to encourage those who correspond with us to come in person, if at all possible, to one of our pastors and to one of our congregations to meet in person and to discuss their questions and concerns face-to-face. This can save huge amounts of time involved in written correspondence. During the past year, contact has been made with three pastors from the Lutheran Churches of the Reformation, two of these contacts being face-to-face. There has also been extensive e-mail contact over a period of about five months with a former LC-MS pastor in Norman, Oklahoma. In short, our Web site provides almost unlimited access to our Scriptural doctrine and practice for almost anyone in the whole world. We thank God for this far-reaching technology in the work and witness of His kingdom of grace!

Currently, four of our eight pastors in the United States are over 65 years of age. This makes abundantly clear the great, urgent need for men studying for the pastoral office. Our Committee on Theological Education will report to us on the number of men who have applied to begin studying this fall for this office, spoken of in I Timothy 3 in this way: “*This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop [a pastor, an overseer of souls], he desireth a good work*” (v. 1). We fervently beg our God and plead with Him, according to His wise and good will, to preserve the lives and health of our current pastors until a faithful man is ready, willing, and able to “to fill their shoes.” This does not mean that we will “cut any corners” in our seminary training, neither will we, by God’s grace, “cut any corners” with those from outside of our fellowship who may be interested in our Conference after having served as a pastor in a heterodox congregation of a heterodox church body. In the meantime, we will not panic, nor will we get stressed out over this great need, but we will fervently appeal to the men in our Conference to consider studying for this office, we will “*cast [this] burden upon the Lord*” (Psalm 55:22), and we will trust and put our confidence in the Lord God’s own words: “*Is anything too hard for the Lord*” (Genesis 18:14)?

Pastor Mark Dierking from St. Stephen’s, Wilmot, South Dakota, is not with us during these days because of his health. He wanted so much to be present for our Pastoral Conference and for our Convention. His assignment was to preach the Sunday Convention sermon, but his back-up, Pastor Worley, will now carry out that responsibility. We do miss our brother, Pastor Dierking, and, at the same time, we thank Pastor Worley for so willingly filling in for this coming Sunday.

We thank God for His faithful protection of both Pastors Mahan and Worley during their trip to

visit our Russian brethren last August. The detail concerning that trip will come in the report from the Committee on Missions.

The trip to Nigeria by Pastor Mensing and yours truly, was approved by last year's convention. Originally, this trip was scheduled for last January or February, but because of tension in certain parts of Nigeria where we would be traveling, Pastor Fyneface suggested rescheduling the visit for this fall. Now, because of the beginning of seminary classes this fall at Oak Forest, the visit is being considered for January/February 2007, the normal semester break for the seminary class "year." The six congregations and seven pastors in Nigeria, our brethren in this far-away nation, are greatly looking forward to our visit. This trip, for us on our end, is also very important 1) for the conducting of theological discussions with the six pastors whom we have not met, 2) for the demonstration of our real interest in these Nigerian brethren and our genuine support of their efforts to endeavor, together with us, to *"keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace"* (Ephesians 4:3), 3) to explore more effective, efficient, and secure ways to improve communications between them and us, and 4) to determine what is the best and most economical way to transfer funds, if needed, to these Nigerian brethren.

The regular financial reports by our treasurer during this past year have indicated generous support for the work of our Conference. Five out of eight of our congregations exceeded their pledges during the past year, a very encouraging evidence of the grace of God working mightily in hearts and souls, leading them to generously give in gratitude for the generous and rich grace of our Lord Jesus Christ (II Corinthians 8:9). For the future, vital work of our Conference, we want to encourage you, if you have not already done so, to remember the work of the Concordia Lutheran Conference in your last will and testament, to give proof and evidence of your love for Him who first loved you. Let us all focus on and be truly edified by the words of our dear brother in the faith, the Apostle John, in his first epistle, the fourth chapter: *"In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. ... We love Him, because He first loved us"* (vv. 9-11, 19).

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Robert J. Lietz, President

INITIAL REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON REGISTRATION AND EXCUSES

According to the credentials files with the Conference Secretary, the following delegates are present and seated for this convention:

From **FAITH, Jackson:** Rev. Ross A. Mahan, Pastoral Delegate; Mr. JC Perry and Mr. Phillip DeWitt, Lay Delegates; no Alternates — 3 votes.

From **GOOD SHEPHERD, Tucson:** Rev. David G. Redlin, Pastoral Delegate; Mr. Martin Hermann and Mr. Joshua Redlin, Lay Delegates; no Alternates — 3 votes.

From **PEACE, Oak Forest**: Rev. David T. Mensing, Pastoral Delegate; Mr. Philip R. Martin and Mr. Karl P. Mensing, Lay Delegates; Mr. Michael L. Mensing, Alternate — 3 votes.

From **ST. JOHN'S, Lebanon**: Rev. M. L. Natterer, Pastoral Delegate; Mr. Mark Natterer and Mr. Mark R. Fitzwater, Lay Delegates; Mr. Paul Natterer and Mr. Dwight Eslick, Alternates — 3 votes.

From **ST. LUKE'S, Seattle**: Rev. Edward J. Worley, Pastoral Delegate; Mr. Raymond Kusumi and Mr. Stephen Richter, Lay Delegates; Mr. Dan Ellis and Mr. Jerry C. Sidwell, Alternates — 3 votes.

From **ST. MARK'S, Sauk Village**: Rev. Paul E. Bloedel, Pastoral Delegate; no lay delegates — 2 votes.

From **ST. STEPHEN'S, Wilmot**: No pastoral or lay delegates. — 0 votes

From **TRINITY, Oak Park**: Rev. Robert J. Lietz, Pastoral Delegate; Mr. John Breinig and Mr. Tom Fedor, Lay Delegates; no Alternates — 3 votes

Total number of votes to be cast: **20**. Total attendance at the opening service: **128**. The offering received to benefit the General Conference Treasury was **\$ 1,531.45**. The committee also reported that an excuse for reason of ill health had been received from Pastor Mark W. Dierking of Wilmot, South Dakota. No excuses had been received for absent lay delegates.

FINAL REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON REGISTRATION AND EXCUSES

As noted in detail in the Committee's initial report, seven congregations had been represented at this convention by seven pastoral delegates, twelve lay delegates, and five alternate delegates who were actually present. Total number of votes to be cast on any measure was 20. Pastor Dierking had asked to be excused due to health reasons. Total attendance at the Friday service was 128, and at the Sunday service 165. Offerings received at the Friday service totaled \$1,531.45, and at the Sunday service, \$ 3,232.67. Communed were 112.

Respectfully submitted,

Pastor Paul E. Bloedel, Chairman
Mr. Stephen Richter
Mr. Phillip Martin

FINANCIAL REPORT for 2005-2006

---General Fund---		Student Aid Fund
Balances	Pledged	Balances

Cash Balance, June 1, 2005:	\$ 61,002.50		\$ 28,639.12
Add Cash Receipts:			
Faith, Jackson	\$ 1,950.00	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 0.00
Good Shepherd, Tucson	577.50	500.00	0.00
Peace, Oak Forest	6,600.00	7,200.00	0.00
St. John's, Lebanon	6,530.00	4,800.00	50.00
St. Luke's, Seattle	7,600.00	3,600.00	3,800.00
St. Stephen's, Wilmot	0.00	0.00	0.00
Trinity, Oak Park	6,957.00	6,000.00	
Schurganoff Gift	1,528.75		
Interest Income	1,264.51	500.00	661.91
2006 Convention Collection	932.98	757.98	0.00
Miscellaneous Receipts	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total Receipts	\$ 33,940.74		\$ 4,461.91
Total Cash Available	\$ 94,943.24		\$ 33,101.03
Less Disbursements:			
<i>Scriptural Publications</i> Subsidy	\$ 3,500.00	\$ 3,500.00	
St. Stephen's Subsidy	8,400.00	8,400.00	
Yekaterinburg Salary Subsidy	7,200.00	7,200.00	
Yekaterinburg Rental Subsidy	2,400.00	2,400.00	
Conference Archives Subsidy	1,500.00	1,500.00	
Convention Expense	0.00	1000.00	
Telephone Expense	0.00	500.00	
Travel Expense	3,111.73	4,000.00	
Yekaterinburg Travel Expense	\$ 6,148.19	5,000.00	
Nigeria Travel Expense	0.00	6,000.00	
Miscellaneous Expense	1,059.17	2,000.00	
Schurganoff Gift Disbursement	1,528.75	0.00	
Total Expenditures	\$ 34,847.84		\$ 0.00
Cash Balance, May 31, 2006	\$ 60,095.40		\$ 33,101.03
Total Cash, All Funds:	\$ 93,196.43		

Respectfully submitted,

Robert G. Bloedel, Treasurer

REPORT OF THE AUDITING COMMITTEE

Dear Brethren:

On June 23, 2006, the Auditing Committee reviewed the books of both the Conference Treasurer and the Business Manager of *Scriptural Publications*. The committee found both sets of books to be in good order.

The Auditing Committee would like to thank Mr. Robert Bloedel and Mr. David Mensing for their diligent and faithful service to the Conference.

Respectfully submitted,

Mr. Phil DeWitt
Mr. Thomas Fedor
Rev. David G. Redlin, Chairman

REPORT OF THE EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Dear Brethren:

As the chairman of the Editorial Committee and editor of the *Concordia Lutheran*, I wish to thank our gracious God and Savior for blessing the work of the committee and all the contributors so that our people continued to benefit spiritually from God's Holy Word, rightly divided and applied to the sheep and lambs of our congregations, as well to readers from without, through the *Concordia Lutheran* and other theological literature under our purview and oversight.

Your editor has, once again, attempted to get the various issues published according to the agreed upon, well-publicized, schedule; but sadly, we have not been successful. A further complication resulted in an even longer delay when the printer in Oak Forest suffered a mechanical break-down and a necessary part was mis-shipped. It is hoped that a Spirit-engendered, Gospel-motivated family of brethren who contribute to our periodical will make a renewed effort, by God's ever- and all-sufficient grace, cheerfully to follow the directives of the new *C. L.* editor to enable the production schedule to be met, in a timely fashion, to the glory of our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ.

The Book and Tract Editor, Pastor David T. Mensing, has reviewed several more titles again this past year, and samples of authorized publications are available for perusal on the *Scriptural Publications* table. Please take a few minutes to examine the current offerings available for your edification. We encourage the pastors to submit appropriate material for publication and use in our midst. Tracts should be 800 words or less to enable them to be printed in a tri-fold form with

type large enough to be easily read. The Committee also solicits from members of the Conference suggestions for articles, tracts, re-prints of orthodox material, etc., and deeply appreciates any help in this regard that may be provided to it.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Edward J. Worley, *Concordia Lutheran* Editor
Rev. David T. Mensing, Book and Tract Editor
Mr. Paul Natterer, Lay Member

REPORT OF SCRIPTURAL PUBLICATIONS BOARD OF CONTROL

Dear fellow workers and supporters of the vitally-important work of *Scriptural Publications*:

We willingly must, at the beginning of this report, give due praise and thanks to our God for all that He has done during this past year to help us in our service at *Scriptural Publications*. How can we do otherwise than to declare: “*O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good, because His mercy endureth forever*” (Psalm 118:1). “*The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad*” (126:3). “[*We*] are not worthy of the least of all the mercies and of all the truth which Thou hast showed unto Thy servant[s]” (Genesis 32:10). “*By the grace of God [we are] what [we are]*” (I Corinthians 15:10).

Now, we want to give you an overview of the past year at *Scriptural Publications*:

1. The printing and distribution of six issues of *The Concordia Lutheran*. Not only is the content of each issue pleasant and edifying to the heart and soul of the child of God, but the exceptional appearance of each issue, including the use of color at times and the well-chosen graphics, make this periodical of our Conference a true reflection of the truly pleasant-to-behold work of our Savior and the satisfying edification of His substitutionary obedience and sacrifice for us. Can we ever sufficiently thank the two who are mainly responsible for the printing and distribution of the *C.L.* since our last convention, namely, Mr. Phillip Martin, the Print Shop Manager, and Pastor David Mensing, who work together so well in getting each issue into our hands? We are always keeping our “eyes open” for others who can be mentored as “back-ups” and eventually take over this important process of the careful printing and efficient distribution of this valuable tool, *The Concordia Lutheran*, in bearing witness to the precious truths of God’s Word for our own people and also for those outside of our fellowship.

2. The adding of a very basic Law and Gospel tract, with the title: “*If you died today, where would you end up?*” This tract can be used for mission outreach, for sharing with those who visit our congregations, for inclusion in certain letters we write, and in countless other ways. This new tract has been printed in a pocket size and can be customized with the name and address of your congregation on it. How about ordering this tract for **your congregation**? Some of our other larger tracts have been reduced to pocket size and are also available for use **in your congregation**. You may examine these tracts at this convention by going to our *Scriptural*

Publications display area, and then also place an order for them.

3. The reprinting of *A Sketch of The Doctrinal Position of the Concordia Lutheran Conference*. This was done to correct some typos and to make some updates on formatting. Copies of this important document are now available and may be ordered for use in and by **your congregation**.

4. The printing of *Scriptural Publications*' first hardcover book, *Doctrinal Theology*, by Professor August L. Graebner, with a CD of the book included with each purchase. This was a huge project, carried out almost single-handedly by Mr. Phil Martin. You may at this convention order a copy or copies of this valuable hardcover book. A soft-cover edition will, the Lord-willing, also be available in the near future. In gratitude for the changeless doctrines of Holy Scripture, especially and most of all the priceless doctrine of the Gospel of God's grace and mercy in Christ Jesus, we want to reprint and reproduce, as we are able, books and other written materials which faithfully set forth those doctrines but are no longer available in print for us.

5. Another valuable book which is no longer available is the *Advanced Bible History*. Since Concordia Publishing House holds the copyright to this book, we communicated with them to obtain permission to reprint and reproduce it. Just recently, a contract was signed giving us permission, for a designated royalty, to reprint 100 copies of this book. This undertaking is also intended to continue providing for our congregations God-pleasing materials for the faithful feeding of the flock, that flock "*purchased with [the Savior's] own blood*" (Acts 20:28).

6. Monthly meetings. These meetings each month, from July through this month of June, were held at Oak Forest and were extremely profitable, helping us to get regular updates on our projects, to do short-term and long-term planning, and to enjoy coffee and some special treats served to us by Mrs. Melissa ("Missy") Mensing, our business manager's dear wife. The cooperation and openness at these meetings have been profound. Our business manager, Mr. David J. Mensing, during this past year, has worked very hard to tabulate all of the inventory for *Scriptural Publications*, to update the catalog, and, in general, to do as much as possible to improve the business end of *Scriptural Publications*. Mr. Phillip Martin, our Print Shop Manager, has likewise worked very hard in preparing materials for printing (a big job in itself), doing the actual printing, and, in addition to these tasks, negotiating with those on the outside who help us in certain areas (putting a hard cover on *Doctrinal Theology*, getting the best price for a "run" of covers for *The Burden Made Light*, *The Yoke Made Easy*, and *Treasures of Hope*, etc.). We thank God for these faithful servants, willingly serving Him who **first** served them (Matthew 20:27-28). For stability and continuity in the on-going work of *Scriptural Publications*, I urge the delegates to give serious consideration to re-electing these two men. (I would be remiss in this report of the past year's work if I did not take note of the great help of Mrs. Melissa "Missy" Mensing in assisting her husband, Davey, in the immense work of methodically and literally "counting" our inventory so that we know exactly what we have on hand, and, in addition, gathering together complete sets of all 50+ years of *The Concordia Lutheran*. This "behind-the-scenes" work was much needed and is much appreciated by us.)

7. Our Web Site. This Conference Web Site is extremely valuable as an avenue to bear witness to the truth of God's Word, and, furthermore, to provide contacts with people outside of our fellowship who are interested in the pure doctrine of Scripture. We have much cause to thank Mr. Lee Roller for serving our Conference under the oversight of *Scriptural Publications* once again during the past year as our technical advisor and web site developer in working on and

striving to continue to improve our Web Site in every possible way. His efforts are much appreciated by us.

8. *Proceedings for 2005.* Our Conference Secretary has the responsibility of “putting together” the *Proceedings* (gathering the documents, typing or otherwise inputting them into a word processing program, and formatting them for publication), but *Scriptural Publications* does the printing and distribution of them to our congregations. Although the 2005 *Proceedings* got into your hands only a short time before this convention, it is our never-changing goal to get each year’s Convention *Proceedings* “out” as soon as possible following the actual convention. Toward this goal, it will be helpful for everyone presenting papers, sermons and reports to have them in the Secretary’s hands at or immediately following the Convention, preferably in electronic format.

9. The third book of the Doerffler series, *Treasures of Hope*, has just been reprinted and is available for ordering.

10. Thanks for the subsidy. *Scriptural Publications* is very grateful to our Conference for the subsidy provided during the past year. We not only want to be faithful managers of this subsidy, which is really the Lord’s “*silver and gold*” (Haggai 2:8), but we want to use our funds to produce the very best “product” possible. This requires the best possible equipment and upkeep of such equipment within the constraints of our budget. We desire this in order to show our gratitude for the perfect salvation and righteousness of our Savior which we, by faith, receive and enjoy for our genuine comfort and our real certainty (John 19:30; Jeremiah 23:6; Romans 5:1; 8:37; I Corinthians 15:57-58).

11. Remembering *Scriptural Publications* in your last will and testament? Have you given thought to including *Scriptural Publications* as one of the heirs of your estate, as one way to show your great gratitude for the inheritance of heaven, reserved and waiting for you on account of the fulfillment of God’s Law by your Substitute and Savior, Christ Jesus, and, furthermore, on account of the perfect and complete payment to God by Christ Jesus for all of the damages, offenses, and consequences of our sins and the sins of the whole world (I Peter 1:3-4; Matthew 5:17; Galatians 4:4-5; I John 2:2; John 1:29; II Corinthians 5:21; Isaiah 53:5-6)? May I be so bold as to suggest that you consider, in your last will and testament, the on-going, very necessary, and extremely important work of *Scriptural Publications*, as well as other, on-going, and very important projects of our Conference? This is one very small way to show your profound thanks for “*the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, [who], though He was rich, yet for [our] sakes He became poor, that [we] through His poverty might be rich*” (II Corinthians 8:9). I urge you carefully to consider ways to “*seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness*” (Matthew 6:33) in your last will and testament, ever remembering the confession of the Apostle Paul: “*According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain*” (Philippians 1:20-21).

Now, we want to set before you the goals of *Scriptural Publications* for the next year:

1. Do the needed work for reprinting three additional devotional books, *Daily Bread*, *Family Altar*, and *Crumbs*, as well as the old *Lutheran Book of Prayer*. The work involved is sending all four books, a total of almost 1,500 pages, to *Books2bytes*, a firm that takes the books and puts them into digital text files, that is, takes the books, scans the pages, and converts the images to

text files that can be edited and formatted for printing. For this service, the cost is approximately \$2.25 per page. This is why, for this new budget year, *Scriptural Publications* is requesting an **additional \$3,500.00**, a special request this year just for the reprinting of these four books. Our goal is to provide more Scriptural devotional materials to use in home/family devotions, so that “*the Word of Christ [may] dwell*” (Colossians 3:16) more and more richly in hearts and souls.

2. Encourage all of our congregations to have their own Web site, with very basic information, “tied” into our Conference site. Eventually, we want to encourage and include also the congregations in Russia and Nigeria. Mr. Lee Roller will be our expert helper and our faithful counselor for this undertaking!

3. Write new and reprint old, truly Scriptural Law and Gospel tracts. We will inform you when such tracts are available for ordering and use. A special gift of \$200.00 has been given for the production and distribution of tracts.

4. Actually reprint 100 copies of the *Advanced Bible History*. This is a big project, requiring much planning and work before the actual reprinting. We, of course, will inform you when the final product is available for our congregations’ use.

5. Re-print our Conference Constitution with the 2005 Amendment of Article IX, Section 2, the *Committee on Theological Education*. After this amendment is incorporated, the Constitution and Bylaws will be reprinted and made available. It will be a while before this task is completed.

6. Preliminary work on the possibility of reprinting Luther’s 1943 *Small Catechism* and *The Lutheran Hymnal*. Both of these books may soon be out-of-print. CPH just recently announced workshops to see the First Sampler of the *Lutheran Service Book*, the new proposed hymnal for The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod. This new hymnal may mean the not-too-distant-in-the-future end of *The Lutheran Hymnal*’s publication.

7. Our congregations’ increased use of *Scriptural Publications*’ books, tracts, and other needed materials. We urge you to turn to *Scriptural Publications* for your needs. At least, phone or e-mail your need to us. We are striving to make the “turn-around time” as short as possible, that is, the time between the order coming in and the order going out. Our goal is Scripturally to serve our congregations through all of our planning, printing, reprinting, and distribution at *Scriptural Publications*.

As we continue to plan and execute, by God’s grace, the vital, on-going work of faithfully sharing God’s Word through *Scriptural Publications*, let us be encouraged and emboldened by the never-changing promise of our dear, merciful Savior: “*Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world*” (Matthew 28:20).

Gratefully and respectfully submitted,

Rev. Robert J. Lietz, Chairman
Mr. David J. Mensing, Business Manager
Mr. Phillip R. Martin, Print Shop Manager

REPORT OF THE BUSINESS MANAGER OF *SCRIPTURAL PUBLICATIONS**Financial Summary for 2005-2006*

Cash Balance, June 1, 2005 **\$ 12,526.66**

RECEIPTS (Year to Date):*Concordia Lutheran—*

Subscription Renewals	\$ 50.00
New Subscriptions	45.00
Donations	200.00

Book Store/Publishing House—

Sunday School Materials	0.00
New Book Sales	603.42
Used Book Sales	0.00
Booklet and Tract Sales	3.60
Proceedings Sales	443.10
Conference Subsidy	3,500.00
Miscellaneous	150.00

Total Receipts **\$ 4,995.12**

Total Cash Available **\$ 17,521.78**

EXPENSES (Year to Date):*Concordia Lutheran—*

Postage	\$ 489.77
Printing and Supplies	1,394.64
Printing Hardware	0.00
Miscellaneous	0.00

Bookstore/Publishing House—

Postage and Shipping	111.78
Printing Supplies	1,717.59
New Book Inventory for <i>SP</i> Catalog	790.56
Out-of-Print Purchases	0.00
Printing Hardware and <i>SP</i> Capital Outlay	2,993.88
Outsourced Printing Expense	683.75
Miscellaneous	1,271.76
Web Page Fees/Internet Expense	1,043.98
Lease Contract on <i>Ricoh</i> Printer	2,249.20

Total Expenditures **\$ 12,746.91**

Cash Balance, May 31, 2006 **\$ 4,774.87**

Respectfully submitted,

Phillip R. Martin, Business Manager

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON MISSIONS

Dear Brethren:

“Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). The Lord of the Church has commissioned His people to preach His Word, both Law and Gospel (cf. v. 16), to the entire world to the intent that, according to His primary will, all men be saved and come unto the knowledge of the truth (I Timothy 2:4).

The Committee on Missions has continued its work with Pastor Roman Schurganoff and the Orthodox Lutheran Church of Ekaterinburg, Russia. In the spring of 2001, our Conference began supporting Pastor Roman Schurganoff that he might be able to make full proof of his ministry in Ekaterinburg. At the end of our annual Convention in 2004, the Board of Directors decided that two of our pastors should travel to Russia to meet our brethren there in person. In August of 2005, Pastors Worley and Mahan traveled to Ekaterinburg to visit with Pastor Schurganoff and to meet his people. Brother Roman provided us with an interpreter, and together we enjoyed a tour of much of the area. On the following Sunday, we had the privilege of worshipping with our Russian brethren in their divine service, after which I gave a greeting to them from our Conference churches with the help of our interpreter. We also presented to their church new altarware as a gift from our churches, which they appreciated very much.

In light of the spiritual condition of the Russian nation, Pastor Worley and I were truly amazed that an Orthodox Lutheran church had sprung up and continues to survive in a country where Communism and atheism were officially taught and practiced by the government for seventy years. But God in His grace has planted a small remnant of believers that continues to bear witness to the truth of God’s pure Word in Ekaterinburg. Even though our Russian brethren are very poor by our standards, they expressed to us their determination to see their church survive and continue to grow by the grace and power of God.

In January of 2006, several Conference churches sent Pastor Schurganoff a combined gift of \$1528.75 to help in the repair of his flat, which is in such a state of disrepair that Roman’s wife, Elena, does not want their son Nikolai to live there because of his ongoing health problems. She and Nikolai are currently living with her parents some distance away, a situation that Pastor Schurganoff hopes can be remedied as soon as possible.

On behalf of his congregation, Pastor Schurganoff has requested subsidy for the coming year in the same amount as last year, \$800.00 per month (\$600.00 in general subsidy particularly toward the pastor’s support and \$200.00 toward the rental of chapel facilities); and we recommend granting this request of our sister congregation. The following is a letter that Pastor Schurganoff sent for me to read at this conference.

Dear Brothers in Christ,

I greet all of you name of Christ. I am glad the opportunity has been given to me again to address your blessed assembly, and not only from me personally, but from all members of our church. We remember the kind dialogue with brothers Ross and Ed last summer. Unfortunately, not all members of our church could meet them because of summer occupations on garden sites. But as all of us are in a spiritual unification also it was not the big problem.

All this time our church has continued to work. We had some difficulties in the winter when the temperature was lower than -35 degrees sometimes, at that time one of our services had to be cancelled, but this test has strengthened and encouraged us. All our people sincerely give thanks to the conference for financial support for rent of our place for services. It is necessary to recognize that this place not always completely satisfies to our needs, however other place would cost to us more expensively.

Within last year two persons have studied confirmation courses and baptized. Once in two weeks I continue to make meetings for people who is interested in a Lutheranism, in one of city libraries. Usually on such meeting 2-3 persons come. Some time back I started to work with small group of people (about 5 persons) which formerly were members of a New Age movement. Now this movement gathers force in our city here again there are many organizations of this sort. On my understanding this doctrine completely denies, that people are sinners and require salvation in Christ. I try to explain to such people the important value of Gospel of Salvation and necessity of acceptance of Christ through faith.

I am grateful to Conference for support of my service, as pastor, and also to those people who made offerings for repair of my flat. I have received about \$1500. I wanted to use this money for replacement of two windows, but I do not have full sum. (It is required about \$2500.)

We continue to pray for continuation of kind contacts in unity of belief with all of you. We wish good health to all brothers and strong standing in our true confession.

In Christ,
Brother Roman

We pray for the continued willingness and resolve to support our Russian brethren and the church in Ekaterinburg. Pastor Worley and I would like to thank the Conference for sending us on this mission as your representatives to our brethren. We truly enjoyed the trip and hope to have the opportunity to visit our brethren in the future.

The Conference has also subsidized St. Stephen's Congregation in Wilmot, South Dakota, to augment the salary of Pastor Mark Dierking, whose church was torn apart by a schism and rendered unable to fully support their pastor. In that regard Pastor Dierking and his congregation have once again applied for Conference subsidy in the amount of \$700.00 per month. Your committee recommends that their request be approved and budgeted by this convention.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Ross A. Mahan, Chairman
Rev. David G. Redlin
Mr. Martin Hermann
Mr. JC Perry
Mr. Joshua Redlin

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

Dear Brethren:

The Apostle Paul exhorted Timothy: “*The things which thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also*” (II Timothy 2:2). By way of those words given by the Holy Ghost and “*written for our learning*” (Romans 15:4), he teaches also **us** in these latter days concerning **our DUTY** and **GREAT PRIVILEGE** to **train** for the office of the ministry qualified men who will be fit and prepared to undertake the office as “*work[men] that [need] not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth*” (II Timothy 2:15). The Lord Jesus also states, as if in understatement, “*The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few*” (Matthew 9:37). We have work to do, brethren, a lot of work in perhaps a short amount of time, to **train** well-qualified laborers for the Lord’s vineyard. Jesus continues: “*Pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth laborers into His harvest*” (v. 38). Truly, He *sends* the laborers; but He does not *train* the laborers, nor does He promise to do so. That’s **OUR** job as His instruments, whose work we beseech Him to bless! And that is the task that is before us today, as we meet once again to plan our training strategies and to execute the seminary program which we in our beloved Conference have designed. May the Lord of the Church richly grant His blessings upon our labors, that the sheep and lambs of His local flocks in our precious fellowship may never lack a faithful shepherd’s leading!

At our last convention, we resolved in the fear of God upon *several changes*, not in the content of our curriculum but in the mechanics of our program, changes which will permit us more efficiently to undertake the training of more men —specifically of married men with families, who must support them according to God’s ordinance (I Timothy 5:8), faithfully discharge the duties incumbent upon the head of a household, and bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4), and of men who must work at some secular job in order to “*eat their own bread*” (II Thessalonians 3:12) while studying for the ministry. To that end we made our program more flexible, no longer requiring students to relocate from place to place in *peripatetic* fashion but making it possible for them to be trained where they are by their respective local pastors. And, in order to “qualify” our experienced pastors as instructors, we asked each of them to assess and evaluate his own ability to teach the various theological courses, to report the results of his self-assessment to the committee, and to seek and, if possible, to gain the written consent of his local congregation to be co-opted and employed for this important work in addition to his pastoral duties. We also fine-tuned the duties and responsibilities of the Committee on Theological Education by means of a constitutional amendment unanimously passed by the delegates to our convention and ratified in a referendum of our congregations, and we went on record as committing ourselves to the reasonable compensation of our theological instructors as commanded by God Himself (Jeremiah 22:13). Shortly after the convention, on June 30th to be precise, your chairman sent out to the pastors who had served as *peripatetic* instructors a “self-assessment” form, soliciting their willingness to serve again in the same capacity, should the need arise. This request was made to fulfill the chairman’s commitment to the convention that he would not eliminate *peripatetic* instruction as a possibility but would seek to ascertain the willingness of our former instructors to teach their same respective year’s curriculum in a *peripatetic* rotation should students enroll for that mode of instruction. Since Pastor Stallings, the former 3rd year instructor, left our fellowship in 2004, your chairman solicited Pastor Worley as a possible replacement. As of this writing, the following pastors have positively responded regarding *peripatetic* instruction; and their respective congregations have granted approval for their participation in that program:

- 1st Year — Pastor David T. Mensing (as of 11/13/05)
 2nd Year — Pastor Mark W. Dierking (as of 9/24/05)
 3rd Year — Pastor Edward J. Worley (as of 5/19/06)
 4th Year — Pastor M. L. Natterer (as of 8/19/05)
 5th Year — Pastor David T. Mensing (as of 11/13/05)
 — Pastor Robert J. Lietz (as of 6/13/06)

Then, when it was evident that the referendum on the proposed constitutional amendment had passed by the required margin, your chairman, on October 20, 2005, solicited the experienced pastors of the Conference regarding their ability and willingness to teach *first year students*, should such apply for admission in their geographical location and be unable to move from place to place in the typical peripatetic rotation. A “self-assessment” form was enclosed, as well as the portion for the pastor’s congregation to indicate its approval or disapproval and the list of first-year courses and the typical textbooks and other materials to be used. As of this writing, the following pastors have responded positively regarding *local first year* instruction, certifying themselves to be qualified to teach the courses of the *first year curriculum* (with the exception of German in three out of the four cases), and including the signed, written approval of their respective congregations for their participation in that program:

- Pastor David T. Mensing (as of 11/13/05)
 Pastor David G. Redlin (as of 2/3/06)
 Pastor Edward J. Worley (as of 5/19/06)
 Pastor Robert J. Lietz (as of 6/13/06)

With praise to the Lord of the Church we joyfully report at this time the application of TWO prospective students for matriculation into our theological program: **Mr. Jason A. Mabe**, a communicant member, voting member, and secretary of Peace Ev. Lutheran Church in Oak Forest, Illinois, and **Mr. John F. Breinig**, a communicant member, voting member, trustee, deacon and treasurer of Trinity Ev. Lutheran Church in Oak Park, Illinois. Both men have applied for *part time* study beginning in September, 2006. At present, their application dossiers are incomplete; but any missing forms and/or exhibits are in process of being completed.

It is anticipated that, until the men determine by way of experience how many credit hours of course work they can handle on a part time basis, we offer them two of the most basic and fundamental courses from the first year curriculum, namely, **New Testament Greek** (3 credit hours) and **Dogmatics I** (3 credit hours). A three-credit-hour course normally meets three hours per week (unless an “accelerated” program has been approved); and, because of the work schedule of these particular brethren, we are suggesting for consideration two days per week for instruction with classes running 1½ hours each in length. A typical schedule might be (subject to final approval and mutual workability):

SUNDAY	THURSDAY
3:00 - 4:30 p.m. — N. T. Greek	6:00 - 7:30 p.m. — N. T. Greek
5:00 - 6:30 p.m. — Dogmatics I	8:00 - 9:30 p.m. — Dogmatics I

As to the choice of instructor(s), either one prof (teaching both courses) or both profs (dividing the coursework) would be reasonable. Both Pastor Lietz and Pastor Mensing are qualified for both courses and have their respective congregations’ approval to teach. However, due to the

fact that Pastor Mensing has *already taught* the first year curriculum and has made the preparations necessary to teach all the courses on that level, while Pastor Lietz would have to work up his preparations on the basis of previous experience in the F. L. C.'s theological program, the committee is considering Pastor Mensing as *first year* professor for ALL the courses, and Pastor Lietz as *second year* professor for all the courses on that level. This would give Pastor Lietz approximately two years to have his preparations completed (given the fact that the students are proceeding on a part time schedule). Looking ahead then, while Pastor Lietz is teaching the *second year* courses, Pastor Mensing would be preparing to teach the *third year* curriculum, etc.

The possibility of a summer session will be considered during the course of the coming year, perhaps to offer one course with intensive instruction over the two months, July and August. Suggested for this mode and intensity of study has been German – two years in eight weeks.

Regarding the composition of the new C. T. E., we would respectfully suggest that the delegates consider inaugurating as a matter of policy that, in determining slates for election, at least one member, preferably a laymen, be slated from the local geographical area where classes are currently being held, so that the committee can ascertain firsthand the activities of our on-going courses by means of periodic personal observation in the classroom.

Brethren, as one can easily see from even a brief look at the five-year curriculum offered in our seminary program, it will take at least *twice that long* to complete the curriculum on a *part time* basis —depending upon how many courses our students can reasonably, comfortably and competently handle per semester. Our proposed professors are both sixty-six years of age as they begin instructing these students, and we beseech the Lord of the church to grant both of them continued health and strength for the present and for many years to come, that they may be able, on behalf of all of us, to commit what they have been taught to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also (II Timothy 2:2). In the meantime, those of our pastors who have no theological student at present should study even now with zeal and diligence to show themselves approved to undertake this important work on short notice. We desperately need men who sincerely “*desire the office of a bishop*” (I Timothy 3:1) to begin earnest and committed theological study without delay, considering the time it will take to prepare them. We dare not take our present pastors and their health and strength for granted! We need to prepare pastoral candidates **now** so that competent workmen will be available confidently to answer the Holy Spirit's call: “*Here am I! Send me!*” (Isaiah 6:8). God grant it for Jesus sake! Amen.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. David T. Mensing, Chairman
Rev. Edward J. Worley
Mr. Stephen P. Bloedel
Mr. Daniel M. Bloedel

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON LUTHERAN UNION

Dear Brethren:

The Committee has not been involved in any official discussions with any church bodies showing interest in the doctrine and practice of our Concordia Lutheran Conference during the past year. Nor has the Committee had any official contact with independent congregations.

The continued review of the doctrine and practice of other Lutheran groups via the Internet and hard-copy sources has not detected any positive change among others but only a further degradation.

If anyone knows of any contact that may yield possible fruit (without even the hint of sheep-stealing or being a busy-body in other men's matters) or comes across some significant item of interest, particularly with respect to church bodies, that would warrant the investigation of the Committee on Lutheran Union, please do not hesitate to inform the Committee through one of the members currently elected.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Edward J. Worley, Chairman
Rev. David T. Mensing
Rev. M. L. Natterer
Mr. Phillip Martin

REPORT CONCERNING THE SEMINARY BOOKSTORE

Dear Brethren:

Besides keeping on hand copies of the "standard texts" still available from their publishers for use in our seminary, we are always looking for copies of out-of-print "treasures" and acquire these for *Scriptural Publications* when they are reasonably priced. We then inform the chairman of the Committee of Theological Education of newly-acquired titles, so that the C. T. E. has the first opportunity to purchase any of these for the inventory of the Seminary Bookstore. Since the original purpose of the Seminary Bookstore included the desire to make available to theological students volumes that should be in the working library of every pastor, it is Conference policy that the inventory of the Seminary Bookstore be kept under lock and key, and that volumes be made available for purchase only by current seminary students and by members of the Seminary faculty. Only as a rare exception, and only with the express permission of the C. T. E., will *others* be permitted access to the collection. We also accept donations of books, acquired by others and/or generously contributed by pastors from their own shelves; and we are always eager to hear of such willingness to help our future pastors build up their libraries with books that are truly profitable to read and study.

Respectfully submitted,

Mr. Phillip R. Martin, Business Manager
Scriptural Publications

REPORT CONCERNING THE CONFERENCE ARCHIVES

Dear Brethren:

Pursuant to my duties as Conference Secretary, which include being the official custodian of all Conference documents [*Constitution*, Article VIII,3,b], I have, with the help of a grant authorized by last year's convention, begun to put into digitized format the early proceedings of our church body, beginning with the first ten years. Since many of those documents were originally mimeographed on paper that does not hold up well with the passage of time, especially fifty-some years, and the type in the "originals" was often lacking in clarity because the mimeograph stencils were either brittle or the typewriters on which they had been "cut" were out of adjustment, it seemed wise not just to *scan* them and store them as "image files" (which may not even be readable), but also to have them *digitized* as text files so they are capable of being edited, restored to better than their original condition, and then reprinted. There are several commercial establishments that specialize in this kind of work and who guarantee their accuracy to about 99%, but the cost is something over two dollars a page. Nevertheless, we considered this a worthy investment; and, when these are finished, we are confident that all of our people will be happy that we went in this direction.

We are asking the Conference in convention assembled to *renew* its grant for the *next* ten years' proceedings, which should bring us up to 1971, and to make this project a priority item each year until ALL of the proceedings—which are, after all, the permanent, contemporaneous record of our Conference—are capable of being printed afresh and are rendered profitable to all our people, particularly in their essays and in the sermons preached at the services. To that end, we already asked Brother Bloedel and the *Finance Committee* to include our request as part of their "draft budget" for fiscal year 2006-2007; and we trust that the delegates will approve this important item.

We are also considering scanning extant correspondence, exchanges between Conference officers and others to fill in the "record" for the sake of our accurate history. In some cases, Conference officers left quite a "paper trail" to "*establish every word*" (II Corinthians 13:1) in the absence of parole witness; but much of this correspondence is still "buried" in their personal filing cabinets. Brother Natterer in particular was very helpful to your Secretary in documenting the "1955 Kretzmann Controversy" for the 2002-2003 historical essay by providing him with an entire box of treasured paperwork. This is, incidentally, in safe keeping. Therefore we will be respectfully requesting our "old timers" (among whom I include *myself* nowadays at "three-score years and six") to relinquish this evidence to the Conference Secretary for archival purposes—or, in the case of surviving families, requesting *them* to do so. And, since your Secretary was, several years ago, authorized to update the Conference's official history, such evidence will be an invaluable resource in establishing facts and in documenting sources. We heartily thank all parties concerned—in advance—for their brotherly kindness and cooperation in sleuthing out appropriate materials.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. David T. Mensing, Secretary

ANNUAL CONFERENCE BUDGET for FISCAL YEAR 2006-2007

Cash available, June 1, 2006 **\$ 60,095.40**

ANTICIPATED INCOME:

Source	Amount
Faith , Jackson (Pledged)	\$ 1,500.00
Good Shepherd , Tucson (Pledged)	650.00
Peace , Oak Forest (Pledged)	7,200.00
St. John's , Lebanon (Pledged)	4,800.00
St. Luke's , Seattle (Pledged)	3,600.00
St. Mark's Sauk Village (Pledged)	0.00
St. Stephen's , Wilmot (Pledged)	0.00
Trinity , Oak Park (Pledged)	5,000.00
Seminary Tuition Payments	1,200.00
Interest Income (Estimated)	300.00
Convention Collection (Friday Service)	1,531.45
TOTAL Pledges and Other Estimated Income	\$ 25,781.45

TOTAL Cash and Pledges Available for the Purpose of Budgeting **\$ 85,876.85**

ANTICIPATED EXPENSES:

Budget Item	Budgeted
<i>Scriptural Publications</i> Subsidy	\$ 7,000.00
St. Stephen's Subsidy	8,400.00
Yekaterinburg Salary Subsidy	7,200.00
Yekaterinburg Rental Subsidy	2,400.00
Conference Archives Subsidy	1,500.00
Telephone Expense	500.00

Convention Expense	1,000.00
Travel Expense	5,000.00
Miscellaneous Expense	2,000.00
Nigeria Travel Expense	6,000.00
Seminary Instructor's Salary	4,050.00
TOTAL BUDGET for 2006-2007	\$ 45,050.00

RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED BY THE 55th ANNUAL CONVENTION

Resolution #1:

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

WHEREAS the labor of those who faithfully served our Conference this past year has 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 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 #2:

WHEREAS our convention delegates and visitors were edified by Pastor David T. Mensing's thoroughly Scriptural and instructive doctrinal essay entitled "The God-ordained Participation of Christians in the Local Congregation;" and

WHEREAS Pastor Mensing showed through his examination of the topic the God-ordained institution of the local congregation as the only divinely-instituted outward fellowship in which the sheep of His pasture are to be fed, nourished, strengthened and preserved in the true faith by the public ministration of the Means of Grace;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that we convey our sincerest thanks to Pastor Mensing for his essay that provided us with needful spiritual food for our souls' eternal welfare.

Resolution #3:

WHEREAS we were privileged to hear the edifying sermon given in the Friday morning opening service by our Conference President, Pastor Robert J. Lietz, centering our attention particularly on the visible, outward evidences of invisible, inward faith in Jesus; and

WHEREAS Pastor E. J. Worley's sermon in the Sunday morning divine service reminded us of the duty of Christian pastors to shepherd the sheep and lambs of God's local flocks entrusted to their care, as well as the duty and privilege of His people to receive the ministrations of their shepherds with eagerness and joy;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that we express our sincere gratitude to Pastors Lietz and Worley for their careful preparation and powerful delivery of these exhortations from the Word of God, having thus, as good stewards and faithful undershepherds of the Savior, fed and nourished our souls with the Bread of Life.

Resolution #4:

WHEREAS each session of our convention was opened with an edifying devotion by Pastors Redlin, Bloedel, Natterer, and Mahan respectively;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that we thank each of these men for providing us with spiritual nourishment from God's Word for our souls' meditation.

Resolution #5:

WHEREAS the divine services and devotions conducted during our convention were enhanced by elegant organ music provided by Mr. Stephen Bloedel;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that we thank Mr. Stephen Bloedel, the organist of St. Luke's Lutheran Church for leading us in our hymns and songs of praise to the Lord for the enhancement of the services to God's glory during this Convention;

Resolution #6:

WHEREAS the planning and hosting of a conference convention requires untiring devotion, loving cooperation, and selfless personal service on the part of both the pastor and members of the host congregation and

WHEREAS St. John's Lutheran Church of Lebanon, Oregon, has shown itself to be a gracious host to our 55th Annual Convention, by opening their homes to delegates and other guests, and by providing transportation each day as needs required; and

WHEREAS the host congregation so graciously prepared and provided the delicious meals served 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 pastors, delegates and visitors a particularly pleasant and enjoyable experience, and

WHEREAS the cooperative effort of all our congregations manifests the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace that exists among brethren when the Word of God is correctly preached and taught in their midst and applied in their lives;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Concordia Lutheran Conference in convention assembled express heartfelt gratitude to Pastor and Mrs. M. L. Natterer and the members of St. John's Lutheran Church for their special service to their brethren and for all they did by the grace of God and to His glory to make our convention a success.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we all lift up our hearts to the Lord in grateful thanksgiving that, through His Word, He has graciously enabled us diligently to preserve within our midst the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we give all praise, honor, and glory to our Triune God for His continued blessings upon our Conference, as He feeds us with His precious Word, strengthens us through the same in faith toward Him and fervent love toward one another, and promises by means of His pure Word and Sacraments to keep us His own unto His everlasting Kingdom of Glory, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

“For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall My Word be that goeth forth out of My mouth; it shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.” —Isaiah 55:10-11

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STATISTICAL REPORT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2005-2006

Membership	Faith Ev. Lutheran	Good Shepherd Ev. Lutheran	Peace Ev. Lutheran	St. John's Lutheran	St. Luke's Lutheran	St. Mark's Ev. Lutheran	St. Stephen's Ev. Lutheran	Trinity Ev. Lutheran	TOTALS
Baptized Members	47	42	61	85	113	36	15	48	447
Communicant Members	37	34	38	43	72	16	10	42	292
Voting Members	18	10	16	18	26	3	5	5	101
Children in Sunday School	8	8	16	12	29	0	0	7	80
Adults in Bible Class	25	15	30	30	60	23	0	16	199
Received by Transfer	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	4
Received by Confirmation/Profession	6	1	0	2	8	0	0	0	17
Lost by Transfer	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	3
Lost by Other Circumstance	4	0	4	3	1	4	0	0	16

Official Acts

Infant Baptisms	0	0	1	2	3	0	0	1	7
Adult Baptisms	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Confirmations of Children	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	0	4
Confirmations of Adults	7	0	0	2	5	0	0	1	15
Marriages Solemnized	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	3
Funerals or Burials	2	0	3	1	0	2	0	1	9

Auxiliary Staff

Sunday School Teachers	2	4	4	2	7	2	0	3	24
Elected Auxiliary Officers	3	5	12	9	7	2	5	2	45
Organists	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	7
Choir Members	0	0	12	0	12	0	0	0	24

Property

Church Facilities Owned	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	7
Church Facilities Rented	No	No	Yes ¹	No	Yes ²	No	No	No	2
Acreage (with or without bldg)	1.0	4.0	3.2	1.47	.67	5.0	2.3	.75	18.39
Value (in thousands of \$\$)	\$150	\$600	\$975	\$200	\$970	N/A	\$175	\$1750	\$4820

¹ Remote chapel facilities in Midland, Michigan ² Remote chapel facilities in Victoria, BC, Canada

Congregations: 7 Pastors: 7 Congregations/Pastors in Fellowship: 2 Available Candidates: 0