

Trinity Te Deum

The official newsletter for Trinity Lutheran Church

1207 West 45 Street Austin, Texas 78756

Rev. Paul R. Harris – 512-453-3835 Church

Sunday School and Bible Study 9:15 AM – Divine Service 10:30 AM

April 1, 2018 Volume 20 Issue 2-3

April 2018 – July 2018

“Should I Stay or Should I Go”

So sang a 1981 song by that title. Below is a paper written by Rev. David Rohde, a classmate of mine who has been a vice-president of the Texas District and spent his entire ministry at the same congregation. This speaks to both his ability and stability. He in September 2007 gave the following defense of staying in the Missouri Synod.

Following his defense you will find my response published in my blog in October 2007. See how his arguments stack up to mine and if mine answer his.

One thing is for sure by deciding nothing we are in reality deciding everything.

“Why Stay?”

Free Conference

Grace Lutheran Church

Brenham, Texas

September 7-8, 2007

Introduction:

The topic I was assigned is really a question. “Why Stay” in a synod which appears to be traveling down a road many other Christian denominations have traveled in the past 40 years with devastating consequences? “Why Stay” in a denomination where the Scriptures and Confessions appear to have taken second place to the Constitution and Bylaws of a human institution? “Why Stay” in a church body where those who practice differently from the approved resolutions of the synod are commended for their growing congregations while those who seek to be faithful to the Scriptures and bring an end to practices like Open Communion are labeled unloving and uncaring? To be honest, it would have been much easier to accept a presentation convincing you to leave such a church body.

Those who know me well understand that I am not a person who seeks the easiest way out of situations. The task of this paper and the goal of this presentation have been compounded by events at the most recent synodical convention in July.

Allow me to begin with two quotes that I find important around which to frame the next couple of days. The first is a quote from our current synodical president Gerald Kieschnick. During his first term in office he made the statement: “This isn’t your grandfather’s church anymore.” The purpose of this quote was to convince the members of the synod that matters in our world

today are somehow so vastly different from the past that we cannot expect the Church to survive, let alone grow in the same ways as our grandfathers believed. In other words, because our world is different today the church must also be different. There is always a certain level of arrogance when we honestly believe that our time in the history of this world is so vastly different that things need to be changed if we are to survive. Truth is, the sins which plague our world today are in no way different from those of any era in history.

This brings me to the second quote spoken by an American philosopher named George Santayana: “Those who forget history are doomed to repeat it.”¹ If we are to believe that this isn’t our grandfather’s church anymore we may also assume that our grandfather’s history is also unimportant to our life today. Now don’t jump off the deep end and assume I’m speaking about those in the synod who have forgotten our heritage and want to chart a new course. I’m here to talk to you! Conferences like these only attract people who already agree. I’m here to present a side which seeks to motivate you to remain. It is not my intention to disparage those who have already left or are considering leaving the synod. I understand their reasons. I sympathize with the decisions they have been forced to make. And in many ways I agree with them.

¹ George Santayana, *The Life of Reason*, Volume 1, 1905
http://www.quotationspage.com/quotes/George_Santayana

I bring up the quote about history because it is my intention to look back at the history of the Church and hopefully convince you the answer for our present situation is not for those who are called shepherds to round up the sheep and leave the fold; rather our responsibility is to identify the wolves and drive them out of the sheep pen.

For this reason, my presentation will be framed within four sections. Tonight we will deal with the history of Athanasius and how the events of his life can provide us with comparisons in our history today as well as a plan for how to combat the theological problems of our synod. Secondly, I would like to draw your attention to certain prophets and apostles within the Scriptures and show you how they were called to deal with rebellious civil, political, and religious leaders as well as an entire nation who had gone after other gods. In the third section it is my hope to identify some of the problems we face in the synod and explain the root causes of those problems. And finally, I find it essential to take a look at ourselves as confessional, conservative, Biblical Lutherans and examine how we have so miserably handled the difficulties in the synod which have aided in bringing us to this day.

I'm very confident that there will not be even one person who will agree with everything I say. However, I'm not here to win a popularity contest nor do I see any good coming out of a gathering which seeks only to hear what they want to hear so they can "feel good" about themselves. We must be willing to accept some responsibility for the current situation in which we find ourselves as members of this synod. So, with this as a framework let us begin with some interesting history.

Historical – Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria

There were various divisions during the time of Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria. Not only are we familiar with the division within the Church between supporters of Arius and those of the Nicene Formula, but there were also concerns about the influence of the emperor being involved in spiritual matters. Hosius of Cordova writes to Emperor Constantius after receiving an order to communicate with the Arians in 355:

“Intrude not yourself into ecclesiastical matters, neither give commands concerning them; but learn from us. God has put into your hands the kingdom; to us he has entrusted the affairs of his Church; and, as he who would steal the empire from you would resist the ordinance of God, so likewise fear on your part lest by taking upon yourself the government of the Church, you

become guilty of a great offense. It is written, ‘Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and unto God the things that are God’s.’ Neither, therefore, is it permitted unto us to exercise an earthly rule, nor have you, Sire, any authority to burn incense.”²

Today we call this the distinction between the Kingdom of the right and the Kingdom of the left. However, as it was in the days of Athanasius so it is beginning in our own day. We see the government continually involving itself in what should be strictly ecclesiastical matters. The New York City Mayor’s office took upon itself ecclesiastical rites when it advertised a gathering at Yankee Stadium following the tragic events of September 11, 2001. Many claimed it was nothing more than a civic event. However, its official title was “A Prayer for America: An Interfaith Service for the Families and Colleagues of the Victims of the World Trade Center Tragedy.”³ This is an interesting title in itself, which we will come back to in a later section of this paper.

There were also obvious divisions within the Church as there are today not only within Christendom but also within the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod. Again, some claim that we in the synod are in agreement doctrinally. What separates us is merely how we put this doctrine into practice. I would rather quote the words of Jesus when he said of those who claimed to be believers but whose life told a different story, “By their fruits you will know them.”⁴

Instances abounded during the Arian Controversy which helps to show how our present conflict is in keeping with the conflict fought by Athanasius. Listen to this quote and see if you don’t find a similar connection within the recent history of our synod: “the ‘Eusebians’ are not a heresy, not a theological party or school; they are the ‘ring,’ or personal *entourage*, of one man, a master of intrigue, who succeeded in combining a very large number of men of very different opinions in more or less close association for common ecclesiastical action.”⁵ Such a description could easily be attached to those who call themselves “Jesus First”, a group of people who continue to be very successful in “combining a very

² J.G. Davies, The Early Christian Church: A History of Its First Five Centuries (Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI, 1965) 163.

³ Mayor Rudolf Guiliani
<http://home2.nyc.gov/htm/om/hrml/2001b/pr315-01e.html>

⁴ Matthew 7:20 New King James Version, Thomas Nelson Publishers: Nashville, TN 1990

⁵ Philip Schaff and Henry Wace Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Volume 4 (Hendrickson Publishers, Inc: Mass., 2004) xxxiv

large number of men of very different opinions in more or less close association for common ecclesiastical action.”

During the Fourth Century there were parties which sought to gain control through the use of fabricated rumors about Athanasius as a means to sully his name and reputation among the people. One such story deals with Ischyras whose ordination as presbyter was declared null and void by the Alexandrian Council of 324. Athanasius sent a representative in order to explain the situation to poor Ischyras, however, the supporters of Arianism said that the representative burst into the church while Ischyras was elevating the chalice for consecration. It was ripped from his hands and smashed unto the floor; the blood of Christ spilling out everywhere. After a while the rumor changed so that it was not Athanasius’ representative who burst into the church smashing the chalice, but Athanasius himself who carried out this reprehensible act.

Another rumor which spread about Athanasius centered on a man named Arsenius who had been bribed by the Arians to go into hiding. The rumor stated that Athanasius was such a hateful man that he had Arsenius killed and cut off his hand. A severed hand was shown as proof of the dastardly act. However, supporters of Athanasius discovered Arsenius hiding in a monastery. After making peace with Athanasius the plot was revealed as a hoax.

Having referenced these rumors and personal attacks within the history of Athanasius I must stop and provide a warning to those on every side within our synod today. We also have not been successful to keep the discussion on the theological issues facing us and have joined in many personal attacks. This should not be among us for it is not only detrimental to our cause but sinful in nature.

Why all this talk about Athanasius? My purpose is one. It is to show us that even in the midst of heresy in connection with the Person of Christ there was no thought of creating another body of believers as a way to escape conflict. Athanasius was personally willing to subject himself to various forms of hatred. His own life was in jeopardy countless times but he would not relent from a staunch support of the Nicene formula.

Athanasius fought against the Arian heresy first as deacon and assistant to Alexander, bishop of Alexandria and then throughout his own entire time as bishop. He is exiled five times between the years of 335 and 366 ad. The longest uninterrupted years as bishop were the almost ten year span between the second and third

exiles. Yet, even in exile Athanasius was an influence in the grand scheme of the Church. He is protected by those who have grown to love and respect him for his faithfulness to the truth. He oversees the Alexandrian believers who support him to the point of rioting when hearing the news of his exile.

Nothing was ever easy for Athanasius. Listen to a description of the make up of those who attended the Council of Nicaea taken from the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers and tell me if it doesn’t also fit a description of any of our recent synodical conventions. “Between the convinced Arians and their reasoned opponents lay the great mass of the bishops, 200 and more nearly all from Syria and Asia Minor, who wished for nothing more than that they might hand on to those who came after them the faith they had received at baptism, and had learned from their predecessors. These were the ‘conservatives,’ or middle party, composed of all those who, for whatever reason, while untainted with Arianism, yet either failed to feel its urgent danger to the Church, or else to hold steadily in view the necessity of an adequate test if it was to be banished.”⁶

It is my personal opinion from having attended a number of synodical conventions that the majority of the delegates cannot possibly be adequately informed concerning the various resolutions which come before them. There is a tendency simply to believe the administration of the synod, whether it is labeled conservative or moderate or liberal; unless they can be convinced that things are just not right. At Nicaea the Council was gathered to discuss and come to an understanding on one major problem. Arius was attempting to define the Person of Christ. His definition, however, denied the full divinity of Jesus as the eternally begotten Son of God. This was the core focus of the Council.

For us today synodical conventions deal with a myriad of issues which tend to cause delegates both confusion as well as exhaustion. Toward the end of the convention delegates become frantic and begin simply to pass things without any real discussion. This is a very chaotic way to decide important issues. Like the 200 bishops at the Council of Nicaea there is a desire among the vast majority of delegates at conventions to be faithful even if naïve.

What is also interesting about the history of Athanasius and his continual battles against the Arians is that the matter may have been settled at Nicaea but it took decades for the Arian teaching to be fully suppressed.

⁶ Schaff and Wace, xviii

Various Councils were called by the emperors which led to confusion and frustration. A Council of Dedication was called by Julius in 341 as a reaction against the Nicene formula. During this council the “eternal reign of Christ was strengthened ... but the Nicene anathemas were skillfully adapted so as to ... admit the Arian doctrine of the divine Sonship.”⁷ In other words, a resolution was written in such a way so that every party in the dispute could define it in their own way. Today also it seems that Floor Committees write resolutions in such a way so as to allow various interpretations which seek to appease all sides but in the end create only more frustration and anger.

With so many Councils being called and used by the parties which either reacted against the Nicene Formula or supported the Arian cause the end result was a multiplicity of creeds which pleased no one. It is my personal opinion that when memorials are submitted to the synod and Floor Committees write resolutions with an attempt to please everyone it ends by pleasing no one. Examine the Convention Workbook. There are times when congregations send in memorials against a certain practice in the synod, but the Floor Committee develops a resolution supporting the opposite of the memorials.

My own father is a member of Trinity Lutheran Church in Herrin, Illinois. The pastor is Rev. Michael Henson. Following the participation in Yankee Stadium this congregation followed every detail of the official dissent process in the Handbook of Synod. The last step was to bring their dissent to the convention. How can a congregation in an official State of Confession have the convention deal with their issues of dissent if a convention Floor Committee has the power to develop resolutions without ever actually dealing with the matters of dissent? One of the reasons why this congregation is no longer a member of the synod is because the convention was never given an opportunity to theologically deal with their issues of confession.

This congregation didn't just fly off the handle and begin writing memorials and overtures. They followed the procedure for over five long years. Perhaps what should have happened in this case is that the congregation be allowed to write its own resolutions dealing with the matters of dissent and bring them unedited by a floor committee to be presented before a convention of the synod. Such a procedure would show compassion and concern for this congregation as well as provide for discussion and decision by the delegates.

By the third exile of Athanasius Arianism appeared to be victorious. History, however, proves the case is actually the opposite. “The third exile of Athanasius marks the summit of his achievement. Its commencement is the triumph, its conclusion the collapse of Arianism. It is true that after the death of Constantius the battle went on with variations of fortune for twenty years, mostly under the reign of an ardently Arian Emperor (364-378). But by 362 the utter lack of inner coherence in the Arian ranks was manifest to all; the issue of the fight might be postponed by circumstances but could not be in doubt. The break-up of the Arian power was due to its own lack of reality; as soon as it had a free hand, it began to go to pieces. But the watchful eye of Athanasius followed each step in the process from his hiding-place, and the event was greatly due to his powerful personality and ready pen, knowing whom to overwhelm and whom to conciliate, where to strike and where to spare.”⁸

Following the victory at Nicaea the Arian bishops were removed from their Sees and sent off into exile. In essence the Church was purged. The reaction was not a positive one for the West since most of the Arian bishops were in the East. There was a sense of getting even with the West and especially with Athanasius. From this Athanasius developed the ability to overwhelm some but conciliate others. He learned when to strike and when to spare.

But the personal attacks persisted. Eusebius of Nicomedia was intent on getting Athanasius deposed from his position as bishop in Alexandria. Three years after the Council Constantine recalled Arius from exile and gave him a pardon with the assurance that Arius agreed with the faith of the Synod. This was Eusebius' moment. He wrote to Athanasius “requesting him to admit Arius and his friends to communion ... Athanasius refused to admit persons convicted of heresy at the Ecumenical Council. This brought a letter from the Emperor himself, threatening deposition by an imperial mandate unless he would freely admit ‘all who should desire it ...’ Athanasius replied firmly and, it would seem, with effect, that ‘the Christ-opposing heresy had no fellowship with the Catholic Church.’ Therefore Eusebius played what proved to be the first card of a long suit.”⁹

As confessional conservatives what does the above incident have to say about our use of pastoral discretion, for instance, in the administration of the sacrament? We often hear the phrase “pastoral discretion” used in connection with the admittance to the sacrament. Why

⁷ Schaff and Wace, xlv

⁸ Schaff and Wace, li

⁹ Schaff and Wace, xxxviii

shouldn't the phrase also be used in connection with a refusal to commune those who are persistently and adamantly in opposition to us theologically? For all practical purposes Arius was in fellowship with the Church due to his pardon by the emperor. Still Athanasius refused to commune him due to his confession against the Person of Christ.

Both for the sake of the cause and for the ultimate effect, it might help conservatives to be more like Athanasius. We are perceived as a group which is heartless and insensitive. We must learn from Athanasius. As we deal with issues in the synod we do ourselves great harm in our writings as we include sweeping references to entire groups. We must learn to distinguish between striking and sparing. We must learn to deal with the issues theologically and restrain ourselves from personal attacks. But when pressured into doing something which we know to be inconsistent with the faith are we really willing to put ourselves on the line like Athanasius who even refused the order of the emperor?

A significant question for us today is, "Where is our 'Athanasius'?" Where is the person with great theological knowledge who is willing to put his own reputation and life on the line for the sake of the truth of God's Word? Where is the person who can communicate in such a way so that the common lay person can fully understand the issues presented?

As I discussed this point with a trusted colleague of mine he responded, "Where are you when it comes to being our Athanasius?" He made me pause and contemplate his question. Perhaps one of the reasons why no one is willing to step forward and become our Athanasius is because we do not give such a person public support. I can recall voicing my opinion at Texas District Board of Directors meetings and even requesting that my negative vote be recorded in the minutes of the meeting. When the minutes were published I would receive e-mails and phone calls of support and encouragement. However, no more than three actually wrote a public letter to the District Board communicating their displeasure with the Board's action and their support of my position.

Perhaps the reason why even one District President is unwilling to become our modern day Athanasius is because he sees and reads how we confessional conservative Lutherans fail so often to possess the ability to discern when to condemn and when to conciliate; when to strike and when to spare. To twist a saying of our Lord a bit, we treat the specks of our conservative brothers and sisters as though they were logs like our moderate brothers and sisters.

It must not be forgotten that even at the Council of Nicaea the party of Bishop Alexander and his deacon Athanasius was in the minority. The vast majority just wanted peace in the Church. But God's truth won out because it was clearly communicated. This is the first reason I offer to you for us to remain in this synod. I honestly do not believe we have truly found a way to communicate with the laypeople of this church body so that they can understand the theological issues of controversy. We have spent way too much time on personality issues and practical issues. We have not been effective in teaching the laypeople how our practice affects our theology and how our theology alone must form our practice.

The time span of our present controversy has not been long enough for us to even tell whether it will be reversed, yet we are so willing to give up the fight. Athanasius had within his knowledge a passage like Romans 16:17 but he never used it as a way out. Instead, he viewed those who persistently adhered to heresy as the ones against whom he writes and teaches. His ultimate purpose is to retain the truth of God's Word and to cleanse the Church of false teaching. His single goal was not to remove the sheep from the wolf; but rather to identify the wolf and have it removed from the sheep pen.

And yet, here we are some 1,600 years later with the visible church splintered into so many heterodox church bodies. It is unrealistic to compare our struggles today with the history of Athanasius. Perhaps it is. But where does it stop? We break away and start another church body until it becomes heterodox and another split occurs. As hard as we may try, we cannot make the invisible church visible. We can stay and fight the good fight, contend for the faith and run the race with endurance trusting the Lord of the Church fights with us as he certainly did with Athanasius.

An Appeal to the Scriptures:

This brings me to the second reason why I believe we need to remain. There appears to be a dichotomy between those who believe the primary purpose of the Church is to safe guard the truth of the Word of God and those who believe that its' primary purpose is to do missions. A certain manipulation takes place from both extremes. Those who desire to safe guard the Word accuse those who are interested in missions of being neglectful of the Word. Those who emphasize the importance of missions accuse those who safe guard the Word as not being concerned about the lost in the world. If we are to falter, it is my contention that we should falter on the side of the Word. It is the pure Word of God through which the Holy Spirit works in the lives of

people. If we dilute the Word we also dilute the power of God's Spirit to bring people to repentance, faith and salvation. Let me explain.

What is the "will of God"? Is He primarily interested in His Word being kept pure or in our outreach to the lost in the world? In theological terms we speak of God's antecedent and consequent will. On the one hand "God wills all to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth."¹⁰ On the other hand, God will not force anyone into His kingdom and allows them to receive the consequences of their unbelief.

I've always found it interesting that God commands His people Israel to kill all those within the city of Jericho except Rahab and her family. Verse 21 of Joshua 7 clearly says, "And they utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, young and old, ox and sheep and donkey, with the edge of the sword."¹¹ If one were to view this passage missionally you would have to ask: "Doesn't God care about the lost in the world?"

We also come upon the account of Elijah and the prophets of Baal in 1 Kings 18. What is fascinating about this account is that it was used by those who wished to support what Dr. David Benke did by involving himself in the "Prayer for America" worship service at Yankee Stadium. "See," they said, "even Elijah gathered in worship with the prophets of Baal." What is different between the Yankee Stadium incident and the Mount Carmel incident is that by the end of the day the prophets of Baal were all killed. Again view the passage missionally and you must ask yourself, "Doesn't God care about those poor lost people?"

Time after time in the Old Testament as God brings His people into the land of promise they are commanded to destroy all the heathen. Why? Could it be that given the sinful rebellion, God used the sinners to make a point? Could it be that the purity of the faith is more important than the destruction of that faith by compromise with heathen worship? It's not that God does not care about their souls, but He cares more about His Word. It is His Word which the Holy Spirit uses to create and sustain saving faith. Compromise the Word and you lose the power God uses to save anyone.

I tell the people at St. Paul in Wilson we could fill this church building for every single service whether it be on Sunday or during our Wednesday Advent or Lenten services. We just pay them to come. Give everyone \$10.00 and we could fill the building. However, if we

insisted on remaining an orthodox, liturgical Lutheran congregation giving everyone \$10.00 would not continue to work. People would tire of the Biblical preaching and teaching found in the liturgy, the creeds, the readings and the sermons. In order to keep them we would be forced to do one of two things. Either we would have to give them all \$20.00 or we would have to dilute the teaching so it isn't so offensive. Obviously increasing the pay would put a tremendous strain on the church budget. So, the so-called solution ultimately rests in the dilution of the doctrine.

In the Washington Times on July 28, 2004 an article appeared entitled, Worship 'lite' questioned: Churches see failure at altar of modernity. In this article Mr. T.A. McMahon says, "The Scriptures in some cases are not even preached because they don't want to offend the unchurched ... watering down and undermining what the Scriptures actually teaching ... They're weaning people off the word of God. In addition to modern music and a laid-back atmosphere, contemporary churches also make greater use of technology – with theater-style lighting and computer-generated graphics as well as sermons light on brimstone and heavy on pop culture. The trouble with these methods ... is that treating churchgoers as consumers is at odds with the Bible." The conclusion of the article states the tragic results we see today in many contemporary congregations, "Their need is forgiveness from sin, and if nobody points out the errors of society and the sins of society, the people aren't any better, even though they're going to church."¹² Who is Mr. McMahon? Is he some raving conservative Lutheran who is biased against contemporary worship? No, he is the executive director of the Berean Call, an Oregon-based Christian ministry.

Those who believe we don't have a problem with diluting the Word for the sake of growing the church need only point to an article in the Detroit paper about an LCMS congregation that replaced an altar with a bed for a so-called sermon series on sex. Is the answer to all of this leaving the synod?

Let's continue on with the Elijah account in 1 Kings. After his tremendous victory over the prophets of Baal, Elijah expects everyone to repent and turn to the mighty God of Israel. He considers himself to be a faithful and dedicated prophet. Perhaps he expects to be lavished with praise. Instead, he receives word that Jezebel has made a vow against him. "So let the gods do to me, and more also," she says, "if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time."¹³

¹⁰ 1 Timothy 2:4

¹¹ Joshua 7:21

¹² Deb McCown "Worship 'lite' questioned" Washington Times, 28 July 2004

¹³ 1 Kings 19:2

Yes, Elijah receives a death threat for carrying out the Word of God. And what is his response? He runs away and wallows in self-pity wishing to die. Notice this ... he runs away. God's prophet is willing to throw in the towel and he speaks from his sinful nature. "I have been very zealous for the Lord God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life."¹⁴ The truth is the children of Israel have, indeed, done all these things. They have forsaken the covenant, torn down the altars and killed the prophets. But is the answer found in Elijah's running off?

He is the man God has chosen to be His prophet. In the end God comes to Him in a whisper and tells him to "Go, return". He reminds Elijah, "I have reserved seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him."¹⁵ Notice that is it God Himself who reserves the faithful in Israel.

So often we get caught up in numbers and percentages. I've heard it said that 40% of the synod is still conservative. Others dispute that figure. I don't know what good that does for the cause in which we find ourselves. Like Elijah we tend to wallow in self-pity; especially after conventions. We discuss whether to leave or stay (as we are doing now). But Elijah was sent back to confess the truth and to support the seven thousand God had reserved.

Some will say, "Oh, that's the Old Testament. In the New we have plenty of passages which speak about separating from false teachers." Well, let's see. For example, let's look at the situation concerning St. John when he writes three letters to congregations who were falling under the influence of Gnostic teachers.

In the Second Epistle of St. John he writes: "If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds."¹⁶ The situation which prompted John to write these three short letters is that Gnostics have not only influenced this congregation but had actually gained control of it. One of the Gnostic teachers is mentioned by name, Diotrephes.¹⁷ Evidently John was sending faithful missionaries but they were not allowed to meet with the congregation. On the other hand, the Gnostics were also filled with an ablaze

missionary zeal and people in this particular congregation were expected to receive them and care for them in their homes. Anyone who refused would be thrown out of the church.¹⁸ There isn't a hint of John encouraging the faithful to leave this congregation. Rather, he commands them not to take part in false teaching or even to aid the false teachers in any way. Is St. John here being schismatic? Or are those teaching and practicing the Gnostic heresy the ones who are creating schism? Keep this distinction in mind for a latter discussion.

I would like to make a few comments concerning the passage from Romans 16:17. I'm not intending to try and delve into its meaning for that was the assignment given to Pastor Huebel. I would like to just make the observation that as we examine the Early Church Fathers it is interesting that throughout all the major theological controversies of the early church you find relatively few references to this particular passage.

To go back to an earlier illustration, the idea of the shepherd gathering up his sheep and taking them to a different pasture is foreign to the Scriptures as well as the Early Church. In every case the idea of marking and avoiding was understood as a means of identifying the wolves, many dressed in sheep's clothing, and in extricating them from the sheep pen.

An appeal to Current Issues in the Synod:

In this third section I hope to point out how the members of the synod have been deceived. In the spring of 1986 I was in Lubbock, Texas visiting one of my members in the hospital. After a devotion with communion, prayer and benediction I wished her God's blessings and proceeded to leave her room. Getting on the elevator I met a man who asked if I were Pastor Rohde from Wilson. I told him I was and found out he was a retired American Lutheran Church pastor. During the course of our brief conversation he said to me, "Our church body began to go wrong when we allowed society to determine our practice rather than the Scriptures." I never saw the man again; but I've never forgotten those words. "Our church body began to go wrong when we allowed society to determine our practice rather than the Scriptures." It is my contention the problems we face today are caused by a denomination which seeks to bow at the altar of political correctness, rather than be guided by the Holy Scriptures.

I have no doubt the present difficulties are built upon foundations laid back in the 1960's and 70's. During the history of Athanasius following the victory at Nicaea

¹⁴ 1 Kings 19:10

¹⁵ 1 Kings 19:18

¹⁶ 2 John 10-11

¹⁷ 3 John 9

¹⁸ 3 John 10

many of the Arian bishops were deposed and replaced. This did not sit well with the supporters of Arius and history shows us for the most part they kept quiet for the remainder of the reign of Constantine. However, following his death Arianism sought a comeback; at one point even holding the majority of sees in the Church.

Think about that for a minute and consider our present situation. At one point the majority of bishops sided with Arius. Today we can examine the Council of District Presidents and see that the majority of them side with the current administration. Many of them actively campaigned for the re-election of President Kieschnick through their contact with their own district delegation. The picture appears hopeless to us. But remember the quote earlier concerning Arianism's victories: "The break-up of the Arian power was due to its own lack of reality; as soon as it had a free hand, it began to go to pieces."

If we were to examine the current make up of the Council of District Presidents we find the following distribution: 18 are graduates from the St. Louis seminary; 10 graduated from Springfield; 5 are graduates from Ft. Wayne and 2 are Colloquies. Of the 18 District Presidents from St. Louis half are pre-walkout graduates. This means that 25% of the current sitting District Presidents graduated before the 1974 walkout. 20% or 7 of the 18 graduated in 1972 and 1973. I do not bring this up for the purpose of innuendo. But I know the great respect and love students develop with those who instruct them.

As I said earlier, following the victory of Bishop Alexander and his deacon Athanasius at the Council of Nicaea the Arian bishops were deposed and sent into exile by the emperor. This did not sit well and for a while the Arians remained quiet waiting for their time. Following the death of Constantine their time had come and they used every effort to seek control of the Church and have the bishops who supported the Nicene Formula deposed with Athanasius himself being exiled five times.

Many who seek to push forward the agenda from the 60's and early 70's are growing older. Time is running out for them. It is not surprising that efforts are being made to irreversibly change this synod before their time comes to an end. Brothers and sisters, the shadow of death is already looming and fear strikes the heart. Rather than political and constitutional change taking place a change will occur by reason of life's end.

We have so focused upon the person who holds the position of Synodical President. In reality the power of the Synod today rests in the hands of 35 District

Presidents. They have independently issued decrees that usurp the rights of the congregations to call their own pastors. They withhold pastoral profiles and self-evaluation tools from calling congregations because they claim they're outdated. Why shouldn't they pass them on and let the congregation ask the church worker if anything has changed in his or her profile? They independently decide among themselves that any congregation which does not follow their guidelines will not be given a call list. They have developed documents without any convention instruction or approval. Despite what was published in a Jesus First mailing they do manipulate a congregation's call list. But many of them are aging. Now is not the time for us to throw in the towel. Now is the time to expose the deception and the lies to the truth of the Day.

In a certain sense, we are playing a deadly game. We have allowed ourselves to be duped. We have also become lazy and have forgotten our own history. We have not been adept at pointing out subtle changes that have been taking place in the recent history of the synod. We have been out-manuevered. We have tried to play fair with a group who isn't interested in being fair. I can think of no other word to use but deception. Such deception is no reason for us to leave.

Women in the Church:

Allow me to illustrate a few of the deceptions that plague us. In 1985 the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) published a document entitled, Women in the Church. The basic point of the document states that the Bible no where limits the service of women except in regard to the holding of the pastoral office and its distinctive functions. Contrary to the CTCR's position, the Scriptures do provide such examples but they are ignored and dismissed for the sake of being politically correct.

One example is found in Acts chapter six. A conflict arose between the Hellenist and the Hebrew members of the church concerning a fair distribution for the widows. The twelve apostles are called together and they summon the multitude of disciples. Now listen to what they say, "It is not desirable that we should leave the Word of God and serve tables. Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Word."¹⁹ Clearly, here is a distinction between the pastoral office and its distinctive functions carried out continually by the

¹⁹ Acts 6:2-4

apostles and this business of seeing after the physical needs of the widows.

This point was brought up to Dr. Samuel Nafzger, the Executive Director of the CTCR when I spoke with him on the phone. His response to me was in the form of a question, “Does the text say that they could not have chosen a woman if they wanted to?” Not having a Greek New Testament at the time I was unable to recall which word was used in the phrase, “choose seven men among you.” Was it the more generic term “*anthropos*” which could have allowed a woman to be chosen or was it “*andras*” a gender exclusive term which could only be translated and understood as a male? After I returned home I opened my Greek text to find that the word used in Acts 6:3 is indeed “*andras*” not “*anthropos*.” Therefore the answer to Dr. Nafzger’s question is “no.” The disciples could not, and therefore do not, choose a woman to fill or carry out this responsibility outside of the pastoral office and its distinctive functions.

It might also be interesting for you to know that when the 2004 Synodical convention adopted resolution 3-08A, “To Affirm the Conclusions of the 1994 CTCR Report: The Service of Women in Congregational and Synodical Offices” it violated a resolution already passed at the Synodical convention in 1998. In 1998 the delegates at the 60th Regular Convention of the Synod adopted resolution 3-22 “To Encourage the Continuation of the Commission on Theology and Church Relation’s Comprehensive Study of the Scriptural Relationship of Man and Woman.” Listen to the last resolved of that particular resolution: “Resolved, that as they await the completion of this study, congregations of the Synod abide by its position as stated in the 1970 opinion of the Commission on Constitutional Matters that congregations may allow women to hold congregational offices except those of chairman, vice-chairman, elder, and any other board or policy-making committee ‘whose chairmanship the congregation might wish to restrict to men.’”²⁰ There was an attempt to amend this resolution by removing this resolved but it was defeated and the resolution passed unamended.²¹

The Synod in convention had spoken clearly. Everything was to remain in accord with the 1970 CCM opinion until the CTCR completed its work on “The Comprehensive Study of the Scriptural Relationship of Man and Woman.” A draft was completed and submitted to the CTCR before the 2004 convention. However, this draft did not reach the pre-conceived conclusions expected by some on the Commission and

therefore was rejected. If you would like to see the draft written by Dr. Nathan Jastram it is published in the January 2004 issue of Concordia Theological Quarterly. To be fair, the document in the Fort Wayne seminary publication is not exactly the draft submitted. Dr. Jastram was willing to make some amending of the original in order to comply with certain questions and suggestions made by members of the CTCR. However, in the end, no amount of changes could be consciously allowed by Dr. Jastram so as to make the draft acceptable to those on the CTCR whose intention was to produce a document in agreement with the 1985 and 1994 documents on Women in the Church.

Earlier this year the CTCR announced that another draft was submitted, however, before being released it was to be presented and discussed by a selected panel. A question ought to be considered with regard to this new kind of procedure. Why does the objective teaching of the Word of God concerning the relationship of man and woman; or for that matter on any subject, need to be approved by a select panel before it is released to the church? Can it be that the CTCR wants to test the waters to see how much friction this draft is likely to create in the synod? To some this new procedure helps show how current culture has more influence on God’s Word than does the Word’s own intended sense.

Issues of Open Communion:

Another area which has been affected more by our culture than the Word comes in the practice of Holy Communion. Both Dr. Nafzger and President Kieschnick have quoted from the third volume of Dr. Francis Pieper’s “Christian Dogmatics.” They love to use the following quote: “Christian congregations, and their public servants, are only the administrators and not the lords of the Sacrament. The Lord’s Supper is not their institution, but Christ’s ... On the one hand, they are not permitted to introduce ‘Open Communion’; on the other hand, they must guard against denying the Sacrament to those Christians for whom Christ has appointed it.”²² I do not deny that Dr. Pieper wrote these words. However, inferences are being made today that Dr. Pieper’s words should be applied to another quote we hear quite often. “We must understand that people today do not have the same denominational loyalty as they did 50 years ago.” The inference is that a person can belong to the First Baptist Church of Anywhere, U.S.A. and still hold to the doctrine of the Real Presence. For some reason we are led to believe that a person can receive a worthy sacrament while visiting a

²⁰ Today’s Business, 1998 53

²¹ Convention Proceedings, 1998 37

²² Francis Pieper Christian Dogmatics Volume III (Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis: 1953) 381

Lutheran congregation only to go back home and receive communion at their Baptist church.

The CTCR has written about this issue in a 1999 document entitled, “Admission to the Lord’s Supper.” I quote, “While it is a possibility that an individual Christian may be personally prepared to receive the Lord’s Supper worthily and to his or her own personal blessing, we may not classify Christians only as individuals. Rather, all Christians adhere to a confession (or choose to reject all formal confessions), and the terrible doctrinal divisions in the visible church must, tragically, be reflected in the teaching concerning admission to the Lord’s Supper.”²³ Within this quote the CTCR has stated, “we may not classify Christians only as individuals.” For someone to say they are a member of the First Baptist Church of Anywhere, U.S.A., means they hold to the teachings of that particular church. If they, indeed, do not hold to the teachings of the Baptist Church they ought to be challenged to leave, to receive instruction in the Lutheran faith and then invited to join in the reception of the Lord’s Supper.

In reality, many of our pastors and congregations today view participation at the altar more in the area of evangelism and missions than in a fellowship based on a confession of the unity of faith. Again the CTCR has written, “In keeping with the principle that the celebration and reception of the Lord’s Supper is a confession of the unity of faith, while at the same time recognizing that there will be instances when sensitive pastoral care needs to be exercised, the Synod has established an official practice requiring ‘that pastors and congregations of The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, except in situations of emergency and in special cases of pastoral care, commune individuals of only those synods which are now in fellowship with us.’”²⁴

In many of our congregations today the exception has become the rule. Congregational communion announcements that simply print out the four questions listed in the question and answer section of the catechism as the only requirements for communing are being unloving and deceptive. Why don’t such congregations turn the page in the catechism and quote the answer to the question “To whom must the Lord’s Supper be denied?” Answer: “To those of a different

faith, since the Lord’s Supper is a testimony of the unity of faith.”²⁵

Perhaps one of the reasons this is not done in congregations, that for all purposes, practice Open Communion is because the lesson has been taught to them from synodical officials who love to quote only what Dr. Pieper writes in volume three on page 381 that “Christian congregations and their public servants, are only the administrators and not the lords of the Sacrament” without also turning the page to quote what Dr. Pieper writes on page 383: “However, not even all Christians are to be admitted to the Lord’s Table. To be admitted are: ... 3. Only such as believe the words of institution, hence believe both that they receive the true body and blood of Christ in the Lord’s Supper and that Christ gives them this priceless gift for the remission of their sins. This provision excludes the Christians from Reformed denominations.”²⁶ What is really being confessed by anyone who communes at a Lutheran altar by confessing faith in the Real Presence only to return and commune at the Baptist Church? Do they believe in the Real Presence or in a Symbolical Presence? We are only left to guess.

Even our Lutheran Confessions state: “And to the true unity of the Church it is enough to agree concerning the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments”²⁷ What of that Baptist who shows up for communion in a Lutheran Church confessing faith in the Real Presence but denying infant baptism? Is such a person truly in unity of faith so as to commune at our altars?

Let’s return to the two phrases mentioned earlier. “People do not have the same denominational loyalty as they did 50 years ago” and in connection with the administration of the Lord’s Supper we have 1986 Resolution 3-08 “To Maintain Practice of Close Communion” which includes the ambiguous resolved about “exercising responsible pastoral care in extraordinary situations and circumstances.”²⁸ The pastoral care issue is admirable and I believe can be used properly. However, what we experience today is the abuse of the phrase “pastoral care” in order to allow for “Open Communion.”

We see the same thing occurring in our society with the area of abortion. Late term abortions were to be done

²³ Admission to the Lord’s Supper: Basics of Biblical and Confessional Teaching (CTCR, Nov. 1999) 32

²⁴ Theology and Practice of the Lord’s Supper (CTCR, May 1983) 22

²⁵ Edward W.A. Koehler, Luther’s Small Catechism: Annotated (Concordia Theological Press, Ft. Wayne 1981) 312

²⁶ Pieper, 383

²⁷ F. Bente Concordia Triglotta (CPH, St. Louis 1921) 47

²⁸ Convention Proceedings, 1986 143

only if a doctor determined they were necessary to save the life and health of the mother. Some doctors claim that this includes the mental state of the woman whose life would be hampered by delivering the child. Therefore any excuse was considered reasonable for the abortion. So another life was sacrificed for the sake of expediency.

Until we come to grips with the words of St. Paul in 1 Corinthians that people receiving the Sacrament unworthily receive it to their judgment we will never seriously become united around the practice of Closed Communion.

Let me provide one last comment in the area of communion before moving on to another subject. Let's give credit to those who continue to say that people today do not have the same denominational loyalty that they did 50 years ago. Let's assume that is true ... and I believe it is true. With this being the case, pastoral care would warrant the questioning of anyone outside our own congregation who desires to receive the Sacrament in our church. After all, they may hold membership in an LCMS congregation; but since they do not hold the same denominational loyalty they may not continue to confess the doctrine of the Real Presence. Is our unity today really based on agreement in the faith or is it more of an association within an earthly institution called synod?

Unionism and Syncretism:

The participation of synodical and district officials in worship services following the terrorist attack of September 11, 2001 brought more disunity to an already divided synod than any other. Some were very pleased to see the inclusion of representatives from the LCMS in media coverage. Others still cannot understand what the big deal was all about. For us as confessional Lutherans their participation only helped to lift the sheet off of our divisions.

There was so much attention focused on the participation of a District President in "The Prayer for America" worship service at Yankee Stadium on September 23, 2001 that many didn't even know about another unionistic worship service that took place at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, an ELCA congregation in New York City. The service folder was titled, "A Light to Lighten Our Darkness: An Occasion for Prayer, Hope, and Remembrance After the Events of September 11th, 2001." Again the claim was made that it was not a worship service. Yet liturgical responses were made, prayers offered, Scripture readings read, choirs sang, hymns were included and sermons – termed "reflections" were preached by both ELCA and LCMS

clergy. Some have claimed this wasn't a worship service since the candles were not lighted, the clergy were not vested, the altar was not used and a creed was not spoken. If this is the definition of whether something is a true worship service or not it sounds to me like some of our more contemporary congregations don't have worship on Sunday mornings.

Ablaze: Not a Movement, but a Business

I am amazed how often we get distracted from the core issue. Take for example the whole Ablaze Movement. We have focused upon it as though it were a theological issue. I fell into the same trap until I was asked to write an evaluation of the Ablaze Movement for our local ministerium.

I began the paper: "The task which was suggested for this presentation was to write an evaluation of the 'theology' of the Ablaze Movement. It sounds like this would be something easily accomplished. However, in reading the various materials from the LCMS website about Ablaze the assignment proved much more difficult. The problem appears to be found in the fact that Ablaze is not really based primarily on theological principles; but rather upon marketing techniques."

I then went into basic concepts of mass marketing and statistical expectations of how many pieces of mail will be opened and read as well as how many people are apt to respond to the mass mailing. Ever wonder why the number of people to be reached with the Gospel is exactly the same as the number of dollars to be raised? Coincidence? I think not!

If you really want to know the impetus of Ablaze you must read the article written by Dr. Robert Scudieri printed in a publication from Concordia University at Seward, Nebraska. It is titled: Ablaze! – A Theology of Mission in Action. In this article Dr. Scudieri tells a story about an LCMS church that was helping build congregations in Kenya. Scudieri asked the pastor, "I didn't realize the Board of Missions had work in Kenya."²⁹ The truth is that the congregation was ahead of the LCMS Board for Mission and had taken the responsibility onto itself to fill the need in Kenya. What the Board of Mission realized in the 1990's is that organizations had sprung up outside the LCMS structure by LCMS people who were doing the work of the LCMS World Mission. As Dr. Scudieri states: "In one sense we were becoming irrelevant."³⁰

²⁹ Robert Scudieri Issues in Christian Education (Concordia University at Seward, Volume 39 No.2 – Fall 2005) 8-14

³⁰ Scudieri 8-14

So how does an entity which sees itself becoming irrelevant change to become relevant? Thus you have the beginnings of the Ablaze Movement. The reality is that every attempt to explain the Ablaze Movement is nothing more than “marketing language” wrapped in “God talk.”

Within this article we find the following statement: “**We thought our first need was to begin gathering a monetary offering.** The firm Skystone Ryan was engaged to help us think through this project, which at the time we were calling ‘The Quantum Leap.’ The question for Skystone Ryan was ‘Can we raise \$100 million in the LCMS?’ The company conducted a survey of LCMS leaders and came back with their answer: Yes, \$100 million would be a drop in the bucket for a denomination as wealthy as the LCMS, but first we would have to make clear how the funds would be used. To do that we would have to make clear **to our constituents** what our mission goals were.”³¹ (**Emphasis added**)

Take note of the priority of LCMS Mission. It is about monetary offerings. The only question asked of the outside consulting group had to do with money. The answer deals with money and a suggestion that in order to raise the money the LCMS World Mission would have to make clear to their “constituents” their mission goals. It is no secret that if you desperately want a resolution passed at a Synodical or District convention you just tie it somehow to missions or evangelism. Such manipulation will get tiring.

Gospel Reductionism:

Another real issue which continues to plague the LCMS comes in Gospel Reductionism. After people questioned Dr. Benke and filed charges against him for unionism and syncretism many put forward the statement: “Thank God Dr. Benke was at Yankee Stadium among the false teachers. The people in the stadium as well as the millions around the world, at least got to hear the Gospel.” Such a comment also appeared for a short time on the Synod’s own webpage.

Once again, we turn back to our grandfather’s church and listen to an early CTCR document which still remains the only CTCR document to become the official position of our synod by virtue of a synodical resolution. The document is titled: Theology of Fellowship. Listen to what our grandfather’s document has to say on the true proclamation of the Gospel. “The doctrine of the Gospel is not here to be understood as one doctrine among many, or as a bare recital of John 3:16, but rather

as a doctrine composed of a number of articles of faith. For the doctrine of the Gospel cannot be understood or preached without the Article of God, which the Lutheran confessors say they teach mango consensus, (AC.1), The Article of Original Sin, which shows man’s need for the Gospel, the Article of the Son of God, who became incarnate and redeemed man.”³²

Read any one of the three different versions of the prayer Dr. Benke spoke during the Yankee Stadium service and ask yourself how in the world did he proclaim the Gospel? I asked this question to a number of people who defended what Dr. Benke did by claiming that he shared the Gospel. They all responded the same way. “He prayed in Jesus’ name.” According to our own CTCR document and the official position of our synod this does not constitute a true proclamation of the Gospel.

Try reading some of what are called “Gospel witnesses” on the Ablaze Webpage with the quote from the Theology of Fellowship document in mind. Then ask yourself, “Is this really a proclamation of the Gospel?” Rather than cause guilt and confusion among the priesthood of all believers in sending them out to proclaim the Gospel; they should be thoroughly instructed to confess the faith. Rather than reduce the Gospel to some trite phrase like “in Jesus’ precious name. Amen”, we are called to proclaim “the whole counsel of God”³³

This Gospel Reductionism is the cause of many of our divisions today. The Gospel is held out as though it is the primary doctrine above all others. For the sake of the Gospel we need lay ministry. For the sake of the Gospel we need to have faster track avenues into the pastoral office. For the sake of the Gospel we need to include women in all leadership positions of the Church. Once again we have forgotten our own history. In another CTCR document Gospel and Scripture we find this statement: “Lutheran theology does not appeal to the Gospel in such a way as to relativize the rest of the Scriptures. Gospel is not norm in the Scriptures in such a way as to make only the Gospel the norm of theology. This is a ‘Gospel reductionism’ that Lutherans condemn as a repudiation of the authority of the Scripture.”³⁴ “As a repudiation of the authority of the Scripture” brings us back to the conflict of Historical Criticism we fought ... and I believe we are continuing to fight ... in the Synod.

³² Theology of Fellowship (CTCR 1965) 25

³³ Acts 20:28

³⁴ Gospel and Scripture (CTCR Nov. 1972) 10

³¹ Scudieri 8-14

The Confusion of the Pastoral Office with the Priesthood of all Believers:

If you don't believe such a thing is happening in the synod then take a look at lay ministry. At the Synodical Convention in 1989 at Wichita, Kansas the office of "lay minister" was created in direct violation of Augsburg Confession XIV. To be truthful, according to the resolution's own wording there were already "approximately 135 'lay ministers ... presently serving the Synod in an ongoing Word and Sacrament ministry'" by the time the issue was raised in 1989.³⁵ In an addendum to the resolution Dr. Samuel Nafzger stated: "Therefore, it is consistent with this position to recognize that at the present time, with the blessing of the Synod, there are 125 lay ministers carrying out ministries of Word and Sacrament."³⁶ One has to wonder how Dr. Nafzger can conclude that this practice was being carried out "with the blessing of the Synod" when the Synod had yet to authorize such a practice!

Then, Missouri District President Paul Spitz made the point, "It has come to the attention of the District Presidium that non-ordained workers in the District are being invited to preach on occasion from the pulpits of our congregations during the regular divine services. Such invitations place these workers in an awkward position, since they are not called by the congregations of the District to perform the ministry to which ordained pastors have been called. Our Confessions state, 'Our churches teach that nobody should publicly preach in the church or administer the sacraments unless he is regularly called' (Augsburg Confession XIV)."³⁷ Clearly, by the time of the 1989 Synodical convention the issue of lay ministry was not being discussed based on Scripture and Confessions; rather it was being decided on the basis of making some current practice valid.

If we were to examine the resolution from 1989 it is apparent that the committee sought to deceive the delegates. An example of such deception comes in the sixth Whereas, which reads: "WHEREAS, The Bylaws of the Synod provide for the licensing of certain men 'for special Word and Sacrament ministry, under the supervision of ordained pastors' (Bylaw 6.97 f)."³⁸ In referring to that particular Bylaw in the 1989 Synodical Handbook one discovers that this bylaw speaks of the Pastoral Colloquy program. The specific reference to bylaw 6.97 f begins with these words: "In the case of **men who have been educated in foreign lands**

(*emphasis added*) with differing educational and ecclesiastical requirements who are expected to serve ethnic and special linguistic groups in The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, the seminary colloquy examining committee is authorized to ..."³⁹ This is a far cry from the way the bylaw was used in the resolution on lay ministry.

Being a delegate at that particular convention in Wichita I was struck by the discussion which revolved around Acts 6:1-7 as the foundation for this practice of lay ministry. As I contemplated that particular passage I was puzzled as to how in the world such a passage advocated the practice of "Lay Ministry" in the Synod. The passage appears to teach the very opposite as seven men are appointed in order that the apostles should give themselves "continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Word."⁴⁰

As an aside, rather than bloat the synodical and district bureaucracies with more ordained clergy and train pastors to be C.E.O.'s in their congregations, the Synod would be more wise to provide training to laymen in leadership roles so that pastors can "continually give themselves to prayer and to the ministry of the Word." In this way, those who hold the Office of the Public Ministry may be freed up to provide Word and Sacrament ministry to other congregations who are without a pastor.

As stated above in connection with the Gospel we now live in an age of Pietism and Rationalism whereby certain doctrines are pitted against other doctrines in order to accomplish what are perceived to be unique situations in the life of the church. Dr. Chris Reinke does this very thing when he writes in his paper about "Ultimate vs. Penultimate goals" and says, "If these passages (namely John 20:30 and Matthew 28:18) define the **ultimate** purpose of the church, then placing **any other purpose or doctrine above them** is giving the penultimate more authority than the ultimate ... The salvation of souls should always be **more important** than the doctrine of the ministry"⁴¹

If we discuss the issue of the pastoral office only as function then we can see how and why others bring into the discussion the movement to women's ordination and as for the ELCA, the ordination of clergy engaged in homosexual activity. If we see only the functional view of the ministry, then Dr. Reinke's statements are rational and we should give up this notion of the limiting powers

³⁵ Convention Proceedings 1989, Resolution 3-08B 111

³⁶ Convention Proceedings 1989 114

³⁷ Convention Proceedings 1989 114

³⁸ Convention Proceedings 1989 111

³⁹ 1989 Handbook 120

⁴⁰ Acts 6:4

⁴¹ Dr. Chris Reinke [The Alaskan Model](#)

of other “penultimate” doctrines for the sake of the “ultimate” purpose.

The Office of the Public Ministry isn’t just about “doing” it is also about “being.” This is why a strict “functionalist view” of the ministry tends to lead the church astray as we have seen in most mainline denominations.

Throughout Holy Scripture God has provided for His people an established structure. In the Old Testament that structure was handled by the Levitical priesthood whose responsibility it was to “minister” before the Lord. At the time of Jesus, that structure was established by Him through the calling of the Twelve. Following His ascension, the Church continued the process of filling the apostolic ministry of Judas Iscariot with Mattias as well as placing conditions for men who sought to hold the divinely instituted office of Pastor/Teacher. So how did we ever come to the confusion of the Priesthood of all Believers with the Office of the Public Ministry? The answer may be found in an examination of Ephesians 4:12.

J.T. Mueller in his *Christian Dogmatics* defines a *sedes doctrinae* as “a truth which is derived from the proof-passages, that is, **from the clear and unmistakable passages** in which the particular doctrines are set forth.” Mueller warns, “If the theologian goes beyond this, if he presents his own personal views as the teaching of God’s Word, he is no longer a Christian theologian, but a false prophet”⁴²

To be sure, this is a serious matter. And yet, many times those who strongly espouse the concept of lay ministry point to one passage as though it is a *sedes doctrinae*. That passage is Ephesians 4:12 which appears to be quoted ad nauseum by those who advocate this notion of lay Word and Sacrament ministry.

Before 1971 the Revised Standard Version of Holy Scripture translated this passage as “for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” In other words, the God established offices mentioned in verse 11 were commissioned to do three distinct things, namely 1) to perfect the saints; 2) to work the ministry; and 3) to build up the body of Christ. This was always understood as the faithful preaching of the Gospel and the correct administration of the Holy Sacraments.

After 1971 the Revised Standard Version changed its translation to read, “for the equipping of the saints for

the work of the ministry and for the building up of the body of Christ.” Now, suddenly the work of the divinely established offices were to do nothing more than train the laypeople to do the work of the ministry. It is easy to see how some congregations can view their “pastor” as a C.E.O. His responsibility is simply to get the laypeople to do the ministry. This is a far cry from what we hear from St. Paul who refers to himself (and those who hold the apostolic/pastoral office) as “servants of Christ and stewards/managers/caretakers of the mysteries of God”⁴³

As we examine more closely the passage from Ephesians 4:12 it is important to understand some of the words which St. Paul uses. Words such as “perfect” or “equip” do not really do justice to the etymology of a Greek word like *katartismos*. This is a medical term which refers to the setting of a fracture.⁴⁴ One wonders how many people with a fracture would seek out a doctor who instead of setting the fracture would rather teach the patient how to set their own fractures.

Those who hold the pastoral office are not instructed by St. Paul to teach the saints how to deal with their own spiritual brokenness. Nor does he instruct pastors that they should turn the Gospel into a 12 step program on sexual fulfillment in marriage or how to be financially successful. Pastors are called to apply the healing salve of the Gospel through Word and Sacraments and in this way “perfect the saints.” We recognize that as we come to verse 13 the church in this world will always be in need of spiritual healing or *katartismos*. It is only in verse 13 where we come to the end of the process, the *teleion*.

This concept of the pastor caring for the sheep is born out also in our Lord’s command before His own ascension. He speaks to Peter in John 21 and says words like “feed my lambs,” “tend my sheep,” and “feed my sheep”⁴⁵ Peter must have understood these words for he passes them on to us when he writes, “Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by constraint but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly ...”⁴⁶ This comes out also in the command of St. Paul, “Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to **shepherd** the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.”⁴⁷ What we have here is a pastoral concept of care, concern, love, dedication to

⁴³ 1 Corinthians 4:1-2

⁴⁴ Colin Brown *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* Volume 1 (Zondervan Grand Rapids, MI 1975) 302

⁴⁵ John 21:15-17

⁴⁶ 1 Peter 5:2

⁴⁷ Acts 20:28

⁴² J.T. Mueller *Christian Dogmatics* (CPH St. Louis 1955) 83

the flock which has been purchased and bought through the blood of the Great Shepherd Jesus Christ.

Of course, the problem with the Ephesians 4:12 passage lies basically with the little preposition *eis* found twice within this verse. A reading simply of the dictionary portion of the third edition of the Aland Greek New Testament provides the following for *eis*. “prep, with acc. *Into, to; in, at, on, upon, by, near; among; against; concerning, as.*” Then we have this interesting point of syntax. “*Eis to* with inf. denotes purpose and sometimes result.”⁴⁸ As we examine the Greek text of this verse the definite article is missing from both uses of the *eis* and there is no infinitive in sight.

In reality, none of the prepositions should be translated with the word “for.” The apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors/teachers are gifts to the church to do three things ... heal the saints, work the ministry, build up the body of Christ until that day when Christ comes again. This is in agreement with Dr. Luther who writes, “Out of the multitude of Christians some must be selected who shall lead the others by virtue of the special gifts and aptitude which God gives them **for the office**. Thus St. Paul writes (Ephesians 4:11-12): ‘And His gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the equipment of the saints’ (this means those who are already Christians and baptized priests), ‘for the work of the ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ’ (that is, the Christian congregation or church).

“For although we are all priests, this does not mean that all of us can preach, teach, and rule. Certain ones of the multitude must be selected and separated **for such an office** ... When he is no longer able to preach and serve, or if he no longer wants to do so, he once more becomes a part of the common multitude of Christians. His **office** is conveyed to someone else, and he becomes a Christian like any other.”⁴⁹ How can it be said that a person can do the public ministry of Word and Sacrament without being in the **office**? There is no such thing from the viewpoint of the Scripture, Confessions, or even Luther.

Throughout Holy Scripture the Lord has established a distinct Office to carry out the work of the public ministry as a service to Him and His people. Although all believers are priests of God, they are not all given the responsibility of the Public Ministry of Word and Sacrament. Dr. Martin Luther wrote in, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, “The diaconate is the ministry,

not of reading of the Gospel and the Epistle, as is the present practice, but of distributing the church’s aid to the poor, so that the priests may be relieved of the burden of temporal matters and may give themselves more freely to prayer and the Word. For this was the purpose of the institution of the diaconate, as we read in Acts 6:1-6.”

Today what we see in the Synod is a great confusion not only between proper Christian witnessing and the functions of the Office of the Public Ministry; but also between the role of the Priesthood of all Believers and the Pastoral Office. The Scriptures and The Lutheran Confessions are clear: Only pastors do Word and Sacrament ministry; and Word and Sacrament ministry is only done by pastors.

The Abuse and Manipulation of Bylaws:

In July of 1989 I was privileged to attend a meeting in Wichita, Kansas during the Synodical Convention. Dr. Robert Preus spoke a few words to the group. He said the following: “When I first joined the Synod everyone attending a convention knew to bring their Bibles for we would be talking about the Word of God. After a few years I learned to leave my Bible at home and to bring the Book of Concord for we would be discussing the Confessions. Now, brothers, it appears that we need to leave our Bible and Confessions at home and bring our Synodical Constitution and Bylaws.” In 1989 Dr. Preus was exactly right. The conventions of both District and Synod were no longer discussing issues based on either Scripture or Confessions. What became preeminent was the Synodical Handbook.

We see the abuse of bylaws most clearly in the addition of exemptions by the Synodical President. To be honest, the President of Synod does not possess the authority to generate any exemption and it is unjust for us to suggest that he has such authority. Exemptions are requested of him by District boards of directors. I can also attest to the fact that Dr. Barry did send a memo while he was still president which stated that he would grant an exemption for any electoral circuit which met one of the two requirements. However, even after such a memo had been sent we know that Dr. Barry had a certain criterion upon which to grant an exemption for he did not grant them all.

Why was the privilege of requesting exemptions by districts and granting exemptions by the synodical president originally allowed? It was for areas like West Texas and districts like Montana and Wyoming where congregations are geographically distant from each other. The exemption clause was never intended to apply to major metropolitan areas in order to increase

⁴⁸ Kurt Aland et.al The Greek New Testament (United Bible Society: West Germany 1975) Dictionary page 53

⁴⁹ Jaroslav Pelikan Luther’s Works: Selected Psalms II (CPH, St. Louis Vol. 13 1956) 332

their representation. Yet, this is how the bylaw is being manipulated today.

I am now in a position today to complete Dr. Preus' saying: "Brothers and sister, I'm afraid we have reached the point where we not only leave behind our Bible and Confessions, but also the Handbook of Synod. Bylaws are being twisted and now even ignored for the sake of pure politics.

It comes as no surprise that there are many in the synod who believe representation at both District and Synodical conventions needs to be changed so that larger sized congregations may be granted more representation. Logically this sounds fair and right. However, the Church does not abide by logic or even fairness. The Church abides by the Word alone.

Before we look at the Word, let's look at logic from a different perspective. There are many congregations which claim to have 4,000 or 5,000 members. These congregations are usually found within counties of 1 or 2 million people. Smaller rural congregations are found in more sparsely populated areas. If we were to look statistically at the percentage of membership within any given congregation based on the population of the county in which a congregation is located the rural congregations have a higher percentage of its county as members than do the larger metropolitan congregations. In other words, statistically the rural congregations are doing better. Yet, our rural churches will be treated with fewer delegates simply because they are not located in heavily populated counties. That does not appear fair either.

So what is the solution? Let us allow our Confessions to define the Church for us. Article VII of the Augsburg Confession defines the Church around the Gospel and Sacraments. These are the marks of the Church. Even the 2001 Synodical Convention passed a resolution which re-affirmed Walther's Church and Ministry as the official position of our Church body.⁵⁰ Listen to Thesis V of Church and Ministry. "Though the true church in the proper sense of the term is essentially [according to its true nature] invisible, its existence can nevertheless be definitely recognized, namely, by the marks of the pure preaching of God's Word and the administration of the sacraments according to Christ's institution."⁵¹ A small rural congregation which possesses the true Gospel and administers the Holy Sacraments rightly is just as much Church as a larger sized gathering of believers.

⁵⁰ Convention Proceedings 2001 172-173

⁵¹ C.F.W. Walther Church and Ministry, trans. J.T. Mueller (CPH St. Louis 1987) 20

To grant more representation to larger-sized congregations implies that they are more Church than a smaller congregation. In reality, the possibility exists that the smaller congregation, faithful to the Gospel and Sacraments, may be more Church than a larger-sized congregation where the Gospel is diluted and the Sacraments compromised for the sake of numerical growth. Therefore, any attempt to grant congregations more representation simply because they claim more members would in reality create a two tiered system of Church. Such a system would be completely contrary to the Scriptural and Confessional understanding of Church.

Ethnic Ministry and Contemporary Worship:

Within this next section I would like to combine the topics of ethnic ministry with contemporary worship because they share something in common. Both seek to place self above the community of Church. St. John in his revelation describes for us the Church gathered around the throne of God in heaven. "After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, 'Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!'"⁵² The Church in heaven is united as one singing the same words in the throne-room of God. Yet here on earth we have created a structure which divides the faithful and plays the game that ethnic heritage and personal expression is to be placated for the sake of growth.

One of the reasons this has occurred comes from a twisted view of the Historic Liturgy. I've heard people refer to the liturgy as Germanic or Western European. Anyone who seriously studies the history of the liturgy knows that it comes from Holy Scripture and many parts of it stretch back to the time of early Christian worship. Perhaps rather than identify the liturgy with any particular ethnic group we should view it as the language and culture of the Church. Gathered around the liturgy we do not enter the sanctuary as Anglos, Hispanics, African Americans, African Immigrants, and Asians. We enter as sinners in need of the forgiveness of sins which is declared to us all through the culture and liturgy of the Church.

And yet, we must be honest about our hymnody which is in large part Western European. I don't think we should

⁵² Revelation 7:9-10

be opposed to hymns from various ethnic cultures so long as those hymns help to teach the faith contained in Holy Scripture and confessed by the Church.

In essence we all leave our particular culture behind as we enter the door of the Heavenly Sanctuary on earth. We enter into a different culture, with different language, and a different set of rites than the ones from the world. This is what the liturgy expresses to us. And the liturgy may be done in a variety of tongues throughout the world; but it is still the same liturgy, the same ecclesiastical rites, the same sinners who gather for the same forgiveness poured from the wounds of Christ onto the head in baptism, into the ear through absolution and into the mouth through Holy Communion.

What is said concerning ethnic ministry also applies to the area of contemporary worship. It is, for the most part, self serving. Let me prove it! Congregations who provide both traditional as well as more contemporary services usually have the traditional service as the early one. The people who make up the traditional service are the older members who find it more difficult to get themselves up and going in the mornings due to their age and physical limitations. The contemporary service is made up mostly of younger people. Although I've been seeing many younger people leave the contemporary services of other churches to make the drive out to St. Paul in Wilson for liturgical worship.

Why don't these congregations have more compassion on their older members and place the traditional service later in the morning? They insist their members want to be Lutheran but also want contemporary services. Really? Contemporary Lutheran congregations know full well that if they displayed an ounce of compassion for their older members and moved the contemporary service earlier in the day those people who so want to be both contemporary as well as Lutheran would flee in droves to any congregation who provided them contemporary worship at their desired time. This is why I believe that contemporary worship is something which is completely self-serving.

An Appeal to our Problems:

It sounds like I have made a pretty good case for our leaving the synod by mentioning all these problems. In fact, my point will be just the opposite. Notice that our problems do not consist of a denial of the Trinity, or the divinity of Christ, or the Virgin Birth, the Resurrection, the miracles of our Lord, or even his bodily ascension into heaven. Many of our problems revolve around practical issues. Where President Kieschnick goes wrong is

when he continues to insist that we have no theological divisions within our synod. One need only read certain memorials and overtures submitted to conventions to realize how diverse the synod is becoming theologically. Scan the webpage of a group like DayStar and you find articles and papers espousing the ordination of women to the pastoral office by rostered Missouri Synod pastors.⁵³

In 1975 the Synod began a terrible practice at its conventions. For expediency sake it created a category called "Resolution B." Resolution B states:

"WHEREAS, The Synod in convention has already spoken to certain proposals addressed to this convention; and
WHEREAS, There seems to be no compelling reason to amplify or to revise that previous convention action; therefore be it
RESOLVED, That in the following instances the petitioners be referred to previous convention action as indicated:"⁵⁴

Allow me to explain why such a resolution should be abolished. Let's take the subject of Women's Ordination for example. Let us assume that in 1969 such a resolution was defeated with a 99% vote. For succeeding conventions any resolutions which called for the ordination of women were simply placed into the category of Resolution B and no debate or discussion had taken place. Now comes Synodical Convention 2013 and a resolution is placed before the convention for the ordination of women. Thankfully it is defeated but the vote against the resolution is a mere 51%. A slow, gradual transformation was taking place in the Synod from 1969 through 2013; however, Resolution B prevents us from seeing that gradual change in time to address it theologically until it is too late.

Perhaps Resolution B is fine for certain issues which have already come before the convention. But such a category could be potentially dangerous if the Synod in convention is prevented from seeing

⁵³ Karl Wyneken (<http://www.day-star.net/journal/3-3-wyneken.htm>)

⁵⁴ Convention Proceedings 1975 179

a gradual change theologically because it has not been allowed to vote on certain practical resolutions with tremendous theological significance. All our practical issues have at their root a theological dimension. To say the synod is united in doctrine but divided merely in practice is to be either naïve or simplistic.

Of course some of you may be saying such words like naïve and simplistic may apply to me. Let me assure you I am not either naïve or simplistic. I know the gravity of our situation should we remain. And should we remain it will entail a change in how we relate to others within this church body called The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod. Many of our so-called brothers and sisters have labeled us as “legalists.”

We have heard this word thrown around quite a bit during these days against those who seek to hold the Synod to its historic, biblical theology and practice. An interesting quote comes out of the CTCR document Theology of Fellowship from 1965. “An essay by Dr. George Stoeckhardt, delivered in the Central District in 1895, indicates that theologians of other Lutheran bodies often spoke critically of the confessional position and the resulting practice of the Missouri Synod. He writes: ‘As the doctrinal position of the Missouri Synod, so also Missouriian practice has, as it were, become proverbial. Our ecclesiastical opponents understand by it a harsh, rigoristic, legalistic practice. The same accusation is also made against our doctrine ... This accusation does not fit ... Some call our practice legalistic for the very reason that it is in accord with the Word of God, in particular with the Gospel.’”⁵⁵ Today such accusation of legalism not only comes upon us from those outside of the Synod but also from those within the Synod who, quite frankly, have forgotten our history and who desire to change our theology and practice.

Whether we stay or leave the terms “schism” and “schismatic” will be applied to us. Once again we dare not let terms sway us from our confession. Like St. Peter and the apostles, “We ought to obey God rather than men.”⁵⁶ Should we remain it is crucial that we begin Mission Alliances like the

Lutheran Mission Alliance here in Texas which seeks to form confessional, liturgical Lutheran congregations in places throughout the district. We must create a network like that of Jesus First which sets aside particular interests for the sake of the common good. We must identify faithful people who can write on a level understood by the laity. And we absolutely must learn the lesson of Athanasius “knowing whom to overwhelm and whom to conciliate, where to strike and where to spare”⁵⁷ We have spent way too much time and effort crucifying each other in this conservative movement. Why would any of us think that we could somehow unite together if we left?

Conclusion:

It was Dr. Martin Luther who wrote about the Theology of the Cross and distinguished it from a Theology of Glory. Our sinful nature always seeks the glory; but we are called to the cross. We are not yet in the Church Triumphant but in the Church Militant. It is always easier to flee; but we are called to fight. We are called to protect the sheep from the wolves which enter the sheep pen. We are not called to gather up the sheep and think that we can create another sheep pen. We are called to “mark and avoid.”⁵⁸ But why “mark and avoid” them? The answer is found in the faithful shepherd who marks the wolf and instructs the sheep to avoid the wolf while the shepherd does everything possible to either kill the wolf or drive the wolf away from the sheep.

I’m certain that my presentation may sound like I’ve given much evidence for leaving. But my intention was to show from history the fight which Athanasius put up against the heresy of Arianism. It was to indicate the fight God called the prophets and apostles to endure as they contended for the faith. It was to show the problems we face today are not even on par with those of the Early Church nor with those that many other Christian denominations face today. And finally my call to stay rests in the reality that we have really yet to even begin to fight.

On January 16, 1991 the United States together with allies from Arab nations began Operation Desert

⁵⁵ Theology of Fellowship (CTCR 1965) 30

⁵⁶ Acts 5:29

⁵⁷ See footnote 8

⁵⁸ Romans 16:17

Storm in an effort to free the people of Kuwait. By March 3, 1991 the war was over and we had won. However, tensions in Iraq rose to such a level that a second military effort was begun which continues today.

I would like to use this bit of current and ongoing history as a means of making a point. We are grateful to our “old soldiers” who fought the fight against Historical Criticism in the synod during the 1970’s. It appeared as though we had won. However, the problems which plagued us in the 1970’s have raised their ugly head today. The basic root of our conflict in the synod is not practical as some like to propose. Its root continues to be steeped in a question concerning the authority of Holy Scripture. And so a second war has begun over the same issue. It is this war that we younger soldiers are called to fight.

I began with two quotes one about this church body not being our “grandfather’s church” and the other a warning about “forgetting history.” With this in mind allow an extensive quote from C.S. Lewis in his essay ‘Miserable Offenders’:

“One of the advantages of having a written and printed service, is that it enables you to see when people’s feelings and thoughts have changed. When people begin to find the words of our service difficult to join in, that is of course a sign that we do not feel about those things exactly as our ancestors. Many people have, as their immediate reaction to that situation, the simple remedy – ‘Well, change the words’ – which would be very sensible if you knew that we are right and our ancestors were wrong. It is always at least worth while to find out who it is that is wrong.”⁵⁹

My confessional brothers and sisters, President Kieschnick is right when he says “this is not your grandfather’s church anymore.” Our grandfather’s church has been hijacked and the call goes out to us, for the sake of our grandfathers ... for the sake of Holy Scripture ... for the sake of the truth .. and for the sake of Christ ...for us to “put on the full armor of God” that we “may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against

flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” therefore let us “take up the whole armor of God” that we “may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with the truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.”⁶⁰

We pray: “Lord Jesus Christ, before whom all in heaven and earth shall bow, grant courage that Your children may confess Your saving name in the face of any opposition from a world hostile to the Gospel. Help them to remember Your faithful people who sacrificed much and even faced death rather than dishonor You when called upon to deny the faith. By Your Spirit, strengthen them to be faithful and to confess You boldly, knowing that You will confess Your own before the Father in heaven, with whom You and the Holy Spirit live and reign, one God, now and forever. Amen”⁶¹

Pastor David W. Rohde
St. Paul Lutheran Church
Wilson, Texas

⁵⁹ C.S. Lewis God in the Dock Essays on Theology and Ethics (Eerdmans Publishing Co. Grand Rapids, MI 1970) 120

⁶⁰ Ephesians 6:11-18

⁶¹ Lutheran Service Book (CPH St.Louis 2006) 306

An Answer to Pastor David Rohde's "Why Stay?"

When I learned that a paper on why to stay in the LCMS was being given at a free conference in Brenham, Texas, I told one of my members he should go and hear it. He is contemplating going to seminary, and he needs to know what the best reasons for staying in the LCMS are.

He went to the conference. When he came back he got a copy of the paper from its author. He asked me to read it. I replied that I would read it if he would go back through all the Convention Workbooks for the Texas District and the LCMS from 1984 to date to see how many resolutions were submitted from St. Paul, Wilson, Texas while Pastor Rohde was pastor there, 1984 – to the present. He found one resolution submitted by that congregation in 2004. One resolution in 23 years from the man who says, "It is always easier to flee; but we are called to fight" (p. 22). Warfare for the Synod or a district takes place nowhere else other than the convention, and it is waged by resolutions. True enough, as Pastor Rohde points out, those in power manipulate the process to make our resolutions (My congregation submitted 6 to the last district convention and 7 to the last synodical one.) of no effect, but as Pastor Rohde points out, we are called to suffer such indignities. I was not going to read his paper, but then my conscience was bothered by the fact that this young man went through a mountain of Convention Workbooks. I read "Why Stay?" I sent it to my elders saying it deserves a response. This is that.

Rev. Pastor Rohde says on page 1, "[T]he answer for our present situation is not for those who are called shepherds to round up the sheep and leave the fold; rather our responsibility is to identify the wolves and drive them out of the sheep pen." If my sheep and I leave the LCMS, we aren't leaving the fold. We are the fold complete with sheep and a shepherd. Synod is as Pastor Rohde describes it on page 13 "more of an association within an earthly institution." We don't cease to be Church if we leave the LCMS.

Pastor Rohde uses the Arian controversy to show "that even in the midst of heresy in connection with

the Person of Christ there was no thought of creating another body of believers as a way to escape conflict" (p. 3). This is a favorite argument of those wishing to stay and "fight." Arguing from the nascent days of the Church to us is akin to arguing from the days of the Patriarchs to the New Testament. People ask in Bible class how come they had so many wives, and why doesn't the Lord judge them for it? The 6th Commandment was not yet written in stone. We benefit from centuries of having the 6th Commandment preached, taught, and lived among us. The Patriarchs were surrounded by paganism. Athanasius lived during the time the Church was clarifying the Biblical confession of the Holy Trinity. We have centuries of clarity of thought on this issue. Being willing to pray with pagans in any fashion after so many years of enlightenment is much more serious than what Athanasius was faced with. Even as now we could not bear with a member having multiple wives without imperiling our own salvation, so we cannot bear with those willing to let Jesus appear to be one option among many gods. No matter how much they proclaim Jesus is the only way to be saved their actions belie that confession.

Pastor Rohde deals with Romans 16:17 in the same manner that the Statement of the Forty-Four did in 1945. They concluded that it was not to be applied to erring Christian brothers. Pastor Rohde concludes that since Athanasius never used it "as a way out (p. 6)," we aren't to use it either. What are we to do with our officially adopted "Brief Statement" which cites Romans 16:17 as the proof text for separating from a heterodox church body? Does Pastor Rohde wish to argue that the LCMS is not a heterodox church body? Does he wish to argue that our current crisis is nothing more than the "casual intrusion of error?"

Pastor Rohde says the 3 epistles of John support staying in the Synod. Two passages we have historically used to teach sheep are to judge shepherds and leave unfaithful ones, are used to support the opposite. He says the situation is that Gnostics have gained control of the congregation. I don't think the Gnostics are in control of the church

John writes to anyone more than the “super apostles” were in control of the church at Corinth. But Pastor Rohde uses his assumption to prove his point. “There isn’t a hint of John encouraging the faithful to leave this congregation. Rather, he commands them not to take part in false teaching or even to aid the false teachers in any way” (p.8). So Pastor Rohde has us picture faithful Christians listening to false teaching as they try to remove the false teacher. Contrast this with Franz Pieper’s view. “It is important to point out again and again that in all Scripture there is not a single text permitting a teacher to deviate from the Word of God or granting a child of God license to fraternize with a teacher who deviates from the Word of God” (Vol. III, 422).

Pastor Rohde seems to respond by saying in effect, “Our teachers aren’t deviating that much.” He says on page 20, “Notice that our problems do not consist of a denial of the Trinity, or the divinity of Christ, or the Virgin Birth, the Resurrection, the miracles of our Lord, or even his bodily ascension into heaven. Many of our problems revolve around practical issues.” I would say that the LCMS vindicating David Benke’s participating in a syncretistic prayer service is a denial of all these things in that it regards Jesus as just another deity to be prayed to. Besides it is the way of postmodernism not to deny what other people are asserting but to assert that their views can be regarded as true alongside contradictory ones. Rodney King has become the chief theologian of the LCMS: “Can’t we all just get along?”

On page 9 Pastor Rohde brings out an argument I first heard in 1985 from the now sainted Pastor Rehwinkel, a leader of the conservative movement in the LCMS during the 60’s and 70’s. He too argued that time was running out for the liberals to remake the Synod. Rehwinkel told us that 1989, 1992 at the very latest, would be the high water mark for them. If we could just hold out till then, we would be the majority. 1992 is 15 years in the rearview mirror. In 1985 we argued over accepting unionism. Now we argue about accepting syncretism. In 1985 we still argued about women voting. Now we have women elders, presidents, readers, and communion assistants. In 1985 we

knew lay ministry was an oxymoron. Now we’ve sanctioned this alchemy. In 1985 we argued about the doctrine of closed communion. Now we argue about the *practice* of open communion.

The good ship Missouri, which Professor Marquart assured us in that same meeting in 1985 was turning, has hit the rocks and is now sinking into ELCAism. Pastor Rohde styles those leaving the Synod as fleeing Elijahs, hardly a flattering similitude. It does sound nobler to be captain-like and go down with your ship, but the LCMS was never my ship. Is it yours?

If anything Pastor Rohde’s arguments prove too much. If he is right, we shouldn’t have broken with the ALC in 1983. In fact, we should declare altar and pulpit fellowship with the ELCA right now. Can’t we say about it what Pastor Rohde says about us: “Notice that our problems do not consist of a denial of the Trinity, or the divinity of Christ, or the Virgin Birth, the Resurrection, the miracles of our Lord, or even his bodily ascension into heaven. Many of our problems revolve around practical issues.” Does the ELCA deny any of these things in their convention? How about the Roman Catholics?

It seems to me that the weight of our own theology will necessarily break us off of the LCMS tree unless we start to repudiate it. What I was taught about the differences between heterodox and orthodox churches, fellowship, and false teaching only leads to one conclusion. So the question is was I taught wrongly? Perhaps as Pastor Rohde believes Romans 16:17 and 2 John 9 don’t apply to erring Christians. Maybe it is only a casual intrusion of error for the LCMS to allow praying with pagans, women to be readers in church, laymen to administer sacraments, and open communion as another way to practice communion. I can only stay in the LCMS if I distance myself from the theology I was taught in her seminaries.

Pastor Rohde believes it’s easier to go than stay, I think the opposite. By staying he doesn’t face the loss of his health insurance, his income, his way of life, but does he face the loss of his own soul? I can’t speak for him, but this is my fear, not for him, but me.

Trinity Lutheran Church
 1207 West 45th Street, Austin, TX 78756 512.453.3835 www.trinityaustin.com
 Trinity Te Deum is published bi-monthly. **Deadline for all articles is the 15th of the odd months.**
 All articles must be approved by Rev. Paul R. Harris. Articles with no author are written by him.


April 2018

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Jr. Confirmation 5 PM	—————→				
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
VACATION			Romans 7:15 PM			
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
	Jr. Confirmation 5 PM		Romans 7:15 PM			
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
COUPLES	TRIP TO	PORT	ARANSAS	—————→		
29	30					
Congregational Meeting What Next? NOON	Jr. Confirmation 5 PM					

May 2018

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
		1	2	3	4	5
			Romans 7:15 PM			
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
			Romans 7:15 PM			
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
			Romans 7:15 PM			
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
Pentecost Pizza & Pints Party 12 PM		Elders Meeting 6:30 PM	Romans 7:15 PM			
27	28	29	30	31		
			Romans 7:15 PM			

June 2018

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
		VOTERS MEETING 7 PM	BIBLE STUDY 7:15 PM			
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
			BIBLE STUDY 7:15 PM			
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
			BIBLE STUDY 7:15 PM			
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
		PASTOR	ON	VACATION		
						

July 2018

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
		PASTOR	ON	VACATION		
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
	PASTOR	ON	VACATION			
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
		ELDER'S MEETING 7:00 PM	NO BIBLE STUDY	Deadline for Aug-Sept Newsletter Articles		
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
	V	B	S			
			NO BIBLE STUDY			
29	30	31	AUGUST 1	2	3	
	HIGHER	THINGS	CONFERENCE	TACOMA	WA.	
			NO BIBLE STUDY			
