

The **LUTHERAN** **CLARION**



Lutheran Concerns Association
1320 Hartford Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55116

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Southern Illinois Convention: A Good Precedent to Follow

The 55th Regular Convention of the Southern Illinois District of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod was held February 19-21, 2009, at the Gateway Convention Center, Collinsville, Illinois. This was the second LCMS district convention to have been held this year, most of the rest being scheduled for the month of June. The weather was windy, as were some of the proceedings.

The Convention opened on the evening of Thursday, February 19, with Divine Service held at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Collinsville, with Rev. Michael Walther, pastor loci, presiding, and Dr. Gerald Kieschnick, President of the LCMS, preaching. Afterward a heavenly reception was held in the fellowship hall (there was no beer).

The business of the convention began at 7:55 a.m. on Friday, February 20 with opening devotions. As Chairman of the Nominations and Elections Committee, I had to be up front at all times. This made for a grueling experience, as I couldn't schmooze in the hallway with my pals like usual. After the district president's address, the first order of business was the balloting for district president. Electronic ballot keypads were used for the first time and went off without a hitch. Rev. Herbert C. Mueller, Jr., was re-elected on the first ballot. Other candidates were Rev. Tim Schaar, Dr. George Gude, Rev. Bruce Keseman, and yours truly. I myself had received a grand total of two nominations, but got no votes in the balloting. I asked Herb for a recount but he refused.

"These vague [BRTFS&G] proposals, which they seem to be making up as they go along, went over like a lead balloon with the...[SID]."

There followed the open balloting (by paper ballot) for vice-president of the district, as required by bylaw. This was a long, tedious process for the poor Elections Committee, and resulted in the same names as were left over from the presidential ballot. It's a dumb bylaw requirement, but what's the church about if not adhering to

dumb bylaws? Result: Rev. Tim Schaar (current 2nd veep) was elected 1st veep, and Dr. George Gude (current 1st veep) was elected 2nd veep. We could have just flipped a coin and saved a lot of time.

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Present among us was Bishop Tswaedi of the Lutheran Church of Southern Africa, with which the SID is in mission partnership. It was noted that SID has been involved in prison ministry since 1902, and has the biggest and most active network of prison chaplains in the LCMS. We will take good care of the spiritual needs of former Illinois governor Blagojevich when he arrives.

Pres. Kieschnick had a lot of face time at the SID convention. He gave a Synodical Report after the first round of elections, then later in the morning had a Q&A session. Pres. Kieschnick demonstrated considerable political skill in addressing each question while answering none of them.

By contrast, Rev. Matthew Harrison, Executive Director of the LCMS Board for Human Care, presented a dynamite theological essay on the convention theme, "One Sure Hope" (based on I Peter 1:3-4). He was engaging, funny, serious, and most of all *real*, speaking from the heart, and bringing the Gospel of Jesus Christ home to us. Unfortunately, he did not bring his banjo.

In the afternoon session Pres. Kieschnick went over the report of the Blue Ribbon Task Force on Structure and Governance. These vague proposals, which they seem to be making up as they go along, went over like a lead balloon with the pastors and laymen of the Southern Illinois District.

SID had one whole floor committee devoted to the matter of Synod and District Structure, which brought to the floor several pertinent resolutions. These opposed key proposals which Pres. Kieschnick was promoting:

* Res. 4-02 To Retain the Present District Structure of Synod. **PASSED.**

.....continued.....

- * Res. 4-03 To Retain Voting Delegates as Lay and Pastoral. **PASSED.**
- * Res. 4-04 Election of Delegate Pairs to Synodical Conventions (rejecting the Blue Ribbon proposal). **PASSED.**
- * Res. 4-05. To Retain Program Boards as More Than Advisory. **PASSED.**
- * Re. 4-06. To Retain Current Congregational Representation. **PASSED.**
- * Res. 3-01 To Participate in the "Fan into Flame" Appeal. **DEFEATED.**

Substitute Resolution 3-01 was adopted by a vote of 80-64:

SUBJECT: TO STUDY AND ESTABLISH OUR OWN DISTRICT MISSION APPEAL INSTEAD OF "FAN INTO FLAME."

WHEREAS: Our Lord commanded His disciples to "make disciples of all nations" by baptizing them "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" and teaching them "to observe everything He had commanded them" (Matthew 28:19-20); and

WHEREAS: Our Lord Jesus encourages us to use wisely our earthly money and mammon to help others get to heaven (Luke 16:1-13); and

WHEREAS: Our Synod's World Mission Department plans to increase the current number of professional, trained and deployed missionaries from 65 to 100 by 2013; and

WHEREAS: Our district has demonstrated that we can effectively, efficiently and directly support mission projects both inside our district and throughout the world with a minimum of administrative costs; therefore, be it

RESOLVED: That the Southern Illinois District give the authority to our SID District President in consultation with the SID Board of Directors, SID Board of Missions, and SID Circuit Counselors to establish a committee that will study and, if so desired, establish and coordinate a district wide mission appeal beginning in 2010 to fund word and sacrament mission projects within our own district and throughout the world, and, be it finally

RESOLVED: That we as a district not formally participate in the "Fan into Flame" appeal at this time.

In addition, Rev. Michael Kumm presented a floor resolution rebuking Synod for threatening legal action against SID pastor Todd Wilken over the use of the *Issues, Etc.*, trademark. The motion passed by a vote of 108-15 without amendment and without discussion.

Most LCMS district conventions will take place this summer. Confessional Lutherans in those districts will do well to study the precedent of the Southern Illinois District and

take appropriate action. The future of the Missouri Synod hangs in the balance.

Rev. Frederic W. Baue, Ph.D.
Pastor, Bethany Lutheran Church
Fairview Heights, Illinois.

[Ed. Note: The schedule of District Conventions is at <http://www.lcms.org/pages/internal.asp?NavID=13104> or <http://www.lcms.org> > President's Office > Districts > 2009 District Conventions.]

KFUO-FM, A "Crown Jewel" for Sale?

The *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* in its March 28, 2009, story on a possible sale of KFUO-FM, which is owned by The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, brings to the forefront a potential sale that the *Post-Dispatch* says has been simmering in "near-secrecy." Importantly, the possible sale of KFUO-FM raises multiple questions about the operation of both KFUO-FM and KFUO-AM including the oversight thereof.

The *Post-Dispatch* notes that KFUO-FM is known as "Classic99" and terms it St. Louis' only classical music station while KFUO-AM is described as "devoted to strictly religious programming." So, that raises the question whether KFUO-FM is essentially "Classical" music in nature, and if so, why is it essentially "Classical"? Does KFUO-FM not carry a Sunday worship service of a Missouri Synod congregation and daily early morning lectionaries with excellent Lutheran music? What board of the Synod has oversight of KFUO-AM and FM? Are the operations managers members of congregations of the Synod? Are faithful Missourians apprised of expenses, including cost allocations, and income? In the event of a sale, God forbid, will Synod's Board of Directors put the sale proceeds in an irrevocable trust with the income stream devoted solely to the operation of KFUO-AM or will we be treated to a debacle like an IOU from our Social Security tax withholdings? This is our Synod, for Synod is a creature of our congregations and the Synod is our servant, not "lord." The Board of Directors (BOD) and Board for Communications Services (BCS) must be faithful stewards and held strictly accountable for their actions and inactions!

"Would a sale of FM...present a theoretically convenient and plausible way to dump AM at a later date? Is the massacre of Issues, Etc., a reminder of how badly things

The Clarion urges its readers to review the report to the Synod from the BCS to the 2007 Synodical convention commencing at p. 59 of the Convention Workbook. There the BCS states one of its functions is: "Overseeing KFUE, both AM 850 and Classic99 FM." **The BCS also noted that in February 2006 the Synod's Board of Directors (BOD) declared a "...five year moratorium on any further discussion of the potential sale of either KFUE AM or FM."** (Emphasis supplied) Keep in mind that all reports and memorials appearing in the Workbook must be cleared by legal counsel for the Synod. So, is it not fair to ask if in our Synod today promises mean the same as "White Man" promises to Native Americans?

The writer, while investigating, heard allegations that FM is not essentially **Christian** radio. The BCS report, however, states: "Another argument – that although the classical music on KFUE FM is nice, it's not really a valuable Christian service to the community – would find plenty of people who'd beg to differ. Classic99 plays classical music, yes, but a good part of that music is sacred music. A good part of that music is *inherently* spiritual and often outwardly so. Have you listened to KFUE FM on Sunday mornings? Have you listened at Easter and Christmas time and during other festivals and high spots of the church year? Have you heard great choirs singing the hymns of Luther at Reformation time? If you have, you know that listening to Classic99 can be a religious experience, and a Lutheran one at that." The BCS calls KFUE a "crown jewel" of the Synod. *The Clarion* agrees. It must **not** be sold, irrespective of those who appear to be looking for a cash cow to provide an income stream while Missourians disgusted with **corporate Missouri** earmark usage of their generous donations or even divert them away from corporate Missouri.

Also deserving of inquiry is precisely why KFUE, whose studios are located on the grounds of Concordia Seminary along with its AM transmitter, should be assessed General and Administrative costs of corporate Synod located miles away at 1333 S. Kirkwood Rd., in Kirkwood, MO. Consider the BCS Minutes of August 4-5, 2008 pertaining to Treasurer Kuchta's responses to questions:

- * "KFUE has not been paying its fair share of the G&A assessment (ca. about 40% of the charge to departments located at the IC). Recent re-calculations placed the amount at ca. \$11,000 per employee for an increase of \$180,000 for 2008-2009."
- * "The KFUE budget increase for 2008-2009 is due primarily to a total increase of \$225,000 in G&A assessments and costs of fund raising."

Note well that these minutes also state that, **"Everything considered, there is a strong preference to retain the licenses."** [Note the plural usage.]

The *Post-Dispatch* quotes BOD Chairman Muchow as saying he had no problem with allowing a small group to make the decision [sale] unilaterally, "We're trying to reach 100 million people with the Gospel by 2017, and the board is looking at ways to do that." Think. The February 19-20, 2009 BOD minutes refer to Treasurer Kuchta stating that as of December 31, 2008 Fan Into Flame produced pledges of \$36,444,285; Cash received on pledges of \$16,678,345 and **"Amounts paid for fundraising expenses (\$12,417,265.)"** The BOD February 2009 minutes state that Treasurer Kuchta "...noted that KFUE paid \$188,000 to the LCMS Foundation for fundraising, resulting in \$240,000 in revenues. Revenue received from FM station advertising remained constant compared to the previous year." With fundraising expenses like that is it any wonder any thinking person will inquire why a sale of FM is something the BOD is receptive to and where any sale funds might be directed? Consider also that the BOD minutes of November 2008 and February 2009 reflect that the KFUE Committee gave its report in executive session. So much for transparency in the current Synodical administration! Is this the way trust is engendered in our beloved Synod?

Operationally, might KFUE wisely contract out some services such as custodial services? (Here, think of the \$11,000 per year per person G&A assessment.)

Operationally, might it not be wonderful to utilize part-time seminary student help except for the fact that a General and Administrative assessment of \$11,000 per employee per year by the Synod mitigates against such action purely on the basis of excessive cost?

Since AM and FM both have their operations in the same building, what assurance is there that all overhead costs have been fairly allocated to each operation? Clearly, if both income and expenses are not fairly allocated a warped result on profit/loss is a given. If either AM or FM gets sold, will the remaining station be a viable stand-alone operation? Would a sale of FM therefore present a theoretically convenient and plausible way to dump AM at a later date? Is the massacre of *Issues, Etc.*, a reminder of how badly things can go?continued....

We Need Your Help

We of the LCA appeal to our readers to assist us in our ongoing efforts to retain the Lutheran theology, practice, character, and the distinctiveness of Evangelical Lutheranism within the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod. This is not an inexpensive effort and we urge you to contribute to the LCA in support of *The Lutheran Clarion*. Please send your tax deductible donations to:

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If a secular FM Classical music station can introduce Chicago Symphony Bach music with sidebar comments on its meaning – even personal notes of Bach on a score – why can't a KFUE announcer do the same for is that not part of the history and meaning of a Bach composition as well as our Lutheran heritage? (What a tremendous asset it is for the seminary and KFUE to have the "Bach at the Sem" event every year.)

Can it not be honestly said that the ill-advised, sudden and unjustified termination of *Issues, Etc.*, AM's "premier national radio program" in the words of the BCS in its 2007 report to the Synod is intertwined in the current KFUE matter? The BCS then reported it "...and other select AM programs are distributed to more than 750 radio stations in North America."

In summary, the handling of KFUE has an odor to it. You are urged to write Synodical President Rev. Gerald Kie-schnick at 1333 South Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295, with a copy to Synodical Secretary Rev. Raymond Hartwig and the BCS strongly objecting to any sale of KFUE-AM or FM. **The BCS in 2007 very properly said: "KFUE – 'Forward! Upward! Onward' is a crown jewel of The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod."** (Emphasis supplied.) **That jewel needs to be lovingly buffed to spread the full beauty of the Gospel along with beautiful Christian music – not trashed by a sale.** That can be done by engaging competent operational people at KFUE who are very conversant with another Lutheran treasure – The Book of Concord – and completely committed to it. From there, proceed in 2010 to put into place a **new** Synodical administration.

Mr. Walter Dissen

Retired Corporate Lawyer, has served on various Synodical boards and one commission for 36 years.

Worship and Missouri

Fifteen years ago if someone had asked me what I thought was the potentially most divisive issue facing the Missouri Synod, I would have said it was the issue of closed versus open communion. I still think the difference in communion practice is seriously dividing us, but I think there is little question that today the variety of worship practices we are experiencing has become an even more divisive issue among us. This division is evident to anybody who visits LCMS congregations around the country. And the division is apparent not only **between** congregations in the different worship practices that are present but even **within** congregations as at one service a congregation will use a "traditional" liturgy and at another will use a "contemporary" or "praise" service.

I will mention just a couple reasons why this divergence is so harmful to the spiritual health of our church body.

- * The unity we once shared in our synod is being badly eroded by the lack of uniformity in our worship. Although nobody would ever think of insisting that every congregation in the synod should use precisely the same service each week, including hymns, prayers and so on, we are now experiencing so much diversity among us, it is often difficult to see from the way we worship that we have anything in common. This is sad and unfortunately underlines the truth that we actually do have less in common than in years gone by, not only in our worship practices but also in our doctrine and faith. It is undeniable that the worship in a given congregation reflects its beliefs. This observation leads directly to the next.
- * The content of the worship typically used in a so-called "contemporary" service or "praise" service is different from that of the services contained in *Lutheran Service Book (LSB)* and other previous LCMS hymnals. Although there are exceptions to the rule, generally those congregations using "contemporary" services have patterned their worship more after a typical Assembly of God or American Evangelical type of service than a Lutheran one. This practice has resulted, obviously, in services that are undeniably less Lutheran – both in style and in substance. The clear distinction between Law and Gospel is frequently blurred. The Lutheran emphasis on the Sacraments is usually seriously diluted. Finally, and most distressing of all, the Christocentric focus is alarmingly missing. The five divine service settings contained in *LSB* are remarkably focused on the person of Jesus. The doctrine of justification saturates these services as is appropriate for Lutheran worship. On the other hand, typical "contemporary" services, even those used in Lutheran congregations, have a lamentably mild emphasis on Jesus as the Lamb of God whose sacrifice on the cross has atoned for the sins of the world. Although there is frequently much use of His name, who He is and what He has done for our salvation receives little attention. The heart-breaking consequence is a poorer understanding of the Gospel on the part of many LCMS members and a corresponding weakening of their relationship to Jesus.

"At this critical time of liturgical meltdown in the life of the Missouri Synod, we desperately need strong leadership."

At this critical time of liturgical meltdown in the life of the Missouri Synod, we desperately need strong leadership. One of the healthiest and most Lutheran acts of leader

ship by a good synodical president would be to encourage all of our congregations to cease using worship materials from non-Lutheran sources and to agree to walk together in our worship by using the *LSB* or another previously approved LCMS hymnal in all the regular services of all our congregations.

Pastor Daniel Preus
 Director & President of the Luther Academy
 Former First Vice President of the LCMS

Hawking the Holy Spirit's Tool

"The Holy Spirit dignifies music as an implement for His ministry," said Martin Luther, who also ranked music next to the Word of God as "the mistress and ruler directing the movements of man's heart."

Luther was himself an accomplished musician, and no church body has lived up to the Reformer's artistic insights more robustly than the one bearing his name.

It is not difficult to recognize music as a tool of the Holy Spirit when we listen, for example, to Bach's chorales, cantatas and oratorios. Nathan Söderblom, the former Lutheran archbishop of Sweden, called Bach's St. Matthew Passion the fifth evangelist.

Even more astounding, though, is the faith-building power of Bach's most abstract works, such as the "Art of the Fugue." The late Canon Arthur Peacocke, a noted biologist and Anglican clergyman, suggested that the Holy Spirit Himself had dictated this masterpiece directly into Bach's plume.

Moreover, Bach's music -- ranging from the most "religious" to the most conceptual -- is known to have brought many Japanese and other Asians to Christ.

"...faithful Lutherans...gave America a magnificent gift; they added a classical FM station to KFUE, which is globally revered as the world's oldest Christian radio."

Masaki Yasuda, a former Japanese atheist, first discovered his interest in Christianity when he heard Canadian pianist Glenn Gould play Bach's Goldberg Variations. Yasuda is now a Jesuit priest

and teaches systematic theology at Tokyo's Sophia University.

When German and Scandinavian Lutherans found refuge in the United States, they brought with them their knowledge of music's role as the Holy Spirit's tool. They trained their young musically at home and in de-

nominal schools and universities quite unlike any other Christian denomination.

And finally faithful Lutherans -- individuals, not church bureaucrats -- gave America a magnificent gift; they added a classical FM station to KFUE, which is globally revered as the world's oldest Christian radio.

For 61 years KFUE-FM's Classic99 has brought joy to Christian and non-Christian music lovers alike well beyond the city limits of St. Louis, where it is beloved. It became living proof that the LCMS, in addition to possessing wonderful theological treasures, ranks among the more civilized and cultured church bodies.

Classic99 won awards; it made profit. It would be futile to speculate over its missionary accomplishments. But it is safe to assume that its musical broadcasts have triggered many a nonbeliever's interest in the Christian faith, just as Bach's and other Christian composers' music has done in Japan and other parts of Asia.

It is one of the incomprehensible tragedies of American Lutheranism that many of its practitioners, theologians included, have developed tin ears; that they have turned deaf to music's function as the Holy Spirit's device. There even exists one large Lutheran congregation in St. Louis that proudly announces, "In this church you will never hear the music of Johann Sebastian Bach."

Now we learn the devastating news that the Board of Directors of the The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod has authorized the sale of KFUE-FM; Luther would shout: **"You are hawking the Holy Spirit's tool!"**

Significantly, this decision coincides with deepening LCMS worries over the cost of an evangelization project aimed at reaching 100 million hitherto uncommitted people with the Gospel by the Reformation's Quincentenary in 2017.

The Christian Church teaches that faith, like life, is a gift from the Holy Spirit. This means that while having one of His implements hawked away, the Holy Spirit seems to have been assigned a production goal, much like decades ago the workers of the Soviet Union. The most celebrated among these workers was Alexey Stakhanov, a Soviet miner and jackhammer operator. Joseph Stalin's propagandists glorified Stakhanov (1906-1977) as a "hero of labor" for constantly exceeding production targets set by the Politburo. Stakhanov's greatest accomplishment, we were told, was mining single-handedly 227 metric tons of coal in one single shift.

Here we face a troubling question: Has the Holy Spirit suddenly become a Lutheran Stakhanov while being deprived of one of his essential tools? If so, does this not amount to mocking the Third Person of the Trinity?

This brings to mind Christ's warning: "Every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven, but the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven" (Matthew 12,31).

Dr. Uwe Siemon-Netto

Director of The Center for Lutheran Theology and Public Life and scholar-in-residence at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, received the 2009 Friedrich Hecker Freedom Award from the German American Heritage Society of Saint Louis.

How Can Confessionals Work Together?

On most days there's nothing better than being a confessional Lutheran. What a wonderful blessing to honor the Word of God, which makes clear His desire for the Church to be in agreement about doctrine, and to be of one mind, living in peace with one another. But as we're committed to pure teaching and confession of the faith -- reaching out boldly with the Gospel and speaking God's truth to the world -- sometimes we work together as well as cats and dogs.

The wide variety of Confessional Lutheran groups -- serving different communities in different ways -- is a strength. But it is frustrating to watch some of us put our own theological, political or personal hobby horses in front of important Synodical concerns.

Part of the problem is the result of an historical anomaly that lumped all conservative and confessional groups together in the infamous Seminex Battle for the Bible in the 1970's. Those differences, which have been obscured to this day, need to be clearly understood, delineated and discussed in the hopes of finding agreement on the basis of the Word of God. Some of the cooperation problems are the result of unfortunate personality traits, a sinful love of fighting and sometimes just plain stupidity.

No matter what the cause, here are some things to keep in mind when working in the public square of Synodical politics:

Consider the task at hand. We need to understand that there is a time and place for debating doctrinal issues with someone and for working with that very same person toward a common goal. Remember when to focus on right-hand kingdom issues and when to focus on left-hand kingdom issues.

Patience is a virtue. One of the obvious reasons for tempers flaring in Synodical fights is that we get frustrated by people who clearly should know their theology better. It helps to remember that none of us were born with a perfect understanding of Scripture or the Confessions and that many of us had remarkably patient men-

tors and teachers. Be patient with those who don't yet understand as much as you do.

Don't make the perfect the enemy of the good.

Dr. Luther and the other Reformers had fierce theological disagreements and occasionally found each other completely disagreeable -- and yet they found unity on the articles of our faith and did a masterful job working together to tell the people about Christ. And yet some of us who understand how to cooperate in secular politics or at the office with people we don't like or agree with on everything, completely lose the skill when it comes to church politics.

We may not agree with each other on everything, but we better learn how to work together before it's too late. We have serious problems that require everyone who cares about the Lutheran confessions to grow up, act wisely and work together for the common good.

Mollie Ziegler-Hemingway

Writer in Washington, D.C. and
Contributor to The Wall Street Journal



The SMP: A New Office for a New Synod

I recently saw a copy of the Concordia Theological Seminary *Facebook* for 2008-2009. Dr. Dean Wenthe, President of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, is one of our Synod's leading theologians and a long-time spokesman for the integrity of the Pastoral Office. He notes in his "Message from the President" in the *Facebook*, "An early Rabbinic saying suggests that it was necessary for the student to live with the teacher. Why? So that the student can see the lived-out reality of the teaching in the life of the teacher. The disciples not only heard the truth of Christ's teaching, but they were privileged to see what the perfect and God-pleasing life looked like. They saw the truth before their eyes. Morning, noon, and night -- day after day -- they beheld in word and deed the life of God's Son." What a beautiful and wise expression of the preparation and formation of a man for the Office of the Public Ministry!

The Lutheran Church -- Missouri Synod has long been blessed by two strong residential seminaries. Depending upon the needs of the Synod at any given time, these schools have provided programs of pastoral formation programs for multiple thousands of men who came to their campuses to offer their lives in service to the

Church. Taught by fellow sinners redeemed by grace who comprise a faculty, they studied together, prayed together, ate together, struggled together. Their lives were inalterably intertwined with one another, a fellowship that went with them as they left the campus with a Divine Call in hand. More importantly, their lives were forever altered by an engagement with Holy Scripture in Greek and Hebrew, by reading the ancient and reformation fathers, by intense study of the Lutheran Confessions and dogmatic theologians. They shared a formative experience that would follow them into their common life within the ministerium.

The 21st century has been a difficult time for our beloved Synod. Pressures from within and without have brought divisions among us that our leadership appears to be unwilling to acknowledge and unable to reconcile. A lack of confidence in the Synodical structure has resulted in a reduction of contributions to districts and Synod while, year after year, membership declines.

Desperate times call for desperate measures. Thus worship and preaching has been transformed into a poor imitation of American Evangelicalism with its numerical success. Like rearranging the deck chairs as the Titanic sinks, proposals are brought to restructure the Synod. Most importantly, a mission program called "Ablaze!" has been promenaded with great fanfare in the hope that its evangelism emphasis would be a unifying force for a divided Synod. It has not accomplished that goal but rather has become just another point of contention. All this while Missouri's greatest strength, her theology, is marginalized and subordinated to corporate and cultural values.

There is a keystone to this brave, new Synod's transformation into something unrecognizable as "your grandfather's Synod." Each congregation must be able to create its own path without the burden of responsibility to the historic Church or other congregations. That end can only be accomplished by transforming the parishes through their pastors and the way to do that is the Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) program.

A new kind of pastor is necessary for a new kind of Synod. If theological expertise is unnecessary or even detrimental to "growth," the SMP program permits entrance into the Holy Ministry with eight courses over two years with 8 more to follow after ordination. If a

pastor immersed in the universality of the Church through years of formation at a seminary restricts "creativity" and "relevance," the SMP program liberates the future pastor by use of computer monitors instead of a flesh and blood community of prayer and scholarship. If diversity of congregational practice in the new Synod is to be unencumbered by a sense of responsibility to sister congregations, the SMP program allows the formation of pastors in isolation from each other. Even if all other elements of Ablaze! were to cease today, the effects of its crown jewel, the SMP program, will remain.

As the Synod considers what it is to be, it must also consider what it has done. The real roadmap for the future has been with us all along and corporately we have ignored it. The purity of the Gospel and the right administration of the Sacraments have been and will always be the marks of the Church. To put it another way, the roadmap is the Blessed and Holy Trinity Himself as he has made Himself known to us in Christ Jesus. The Living Word has given to His Church the Holy Ministry as stewards of His mysteries and to guide us by the Written Word. These precious truths are all too easily subordinated to more culturally approved "truths" and when that happens, the Church is left mute before the world. Nothing could be more helpful than to spend the first day of the 2010 Convention as a Day of Humiliation and Prayer. "Repentance" is a word we do not hear too often these days – perhaps we need to hear it again. "Kyrie Eleison" is more than a familiar liturgical phrase. It is a cry from the Church's heart to her Lord's heart. And it is always met with forgiveness, grace and life.

"Nothing could be more helpful than to spend the first day of the 2010 Convention as a Day of Humiliation and Prayer."

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The principal place of business for all matters pertaining to the LCA is:

1320 Hartford Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55116

Other faithful Lutheran individuals who are members of LCMS congregations are invited to submit articles of approximately 500 words for consideration to:

Rev. Richard A. Bolland, 1608 NW 78th St.
Kansas City, MO 64418 (816-519-3780)

Articles should be approximately 500 words in length. Inquiries are welcome. Manuscripts will be edited.

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Lutheran Concerns Association

