

THE LUTHERAN CLARION



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

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Welcome to *The Lutheran Clarion!*

For many years The Lutheran Concerns Association (LCA) has been a strong voice for true Confessional Lutheranism. Some would say that adding the word “true” in front of Confessional Lutheranism is redundant because the Lutheran faith of the Confessions is, by its nature, true. The Lutheran Confessions, we rightly claim, are a correct exposition of the Holy Scriptures and so they speak the truth.

The problem today is that there are many voices among Lutherans who are not Confessional, but who claim the term. I am reminded that while The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) insists that it is a Confessional Lutheran church body, our 2001 Synod in convention resolved, “we cannot consider them [ELCA] to be an orthodox Lutheran church body.” Indeed, Presiding Bishop Hanson of the ELCA laid claim to the faith expressed in the Lutheran Confessions in front of The LCMS Synodical Convention in 2004, even though that church body has made shipwreck of both the Scriptures and the Confessions.

In our own Synod some no longer want the Church of our Confessional grandfathers nor (for that matter), our Confessional Reformation fathers. While they wish to retain the mantle of “Confessionalism,” their positions and actions are inconsistent with Article II of Synod’s Constitution which states, “The Synod, and every member of the Synod, accepts without reservation:

1. The Scriptures...
2. All the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as a true and unadulterated statement and exposition of the Word of God.”

They want to keep the name “Confessional Lutheran” but would render the Synod lacking in its Lutheran substance.

The Lutheran Clarion is not such a voice of equivocation! Rather we of the LCA wish to embody the true meaning of the term “Clarion” in this publication. As my well-worn *Webster’s New World Dictionary* puts it, “...the sound of a clarion [trumpet], or a sound like this...clear, sharp, and ringing...to announce forcefully or loudly.”

It is our hope that **The Lutheran Clarion** will be that clear, sharp, ringing, and forceful voice for true Confessional Lutheranism in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. It is our goal to provide for the consideration of those who hold membership in The LCMS a thoughtful, provocative, well-written counterpoint to what often fills our mailboxes with a counterfeit of true Confessional Lutheranism.

We do this in the hope that our once faithful Synod will be able to recognize the often sugar-coated, “pop-Lutheranism” presented to us in the official media of the Synod, and by liberal political action groups within The LCMS, for what they actually represent: counterfeit Confessional Lutheranism. It is our sincere hope that **The Lutheran Clarion** will assist in the efforts of many within our Synod to restore our church body to its former faithfulness and the true meaning of being a Confessional Lutheran Synod.

Rev. Richard A Bolland
Chairman, LCA Editorial Committee



Now is the Time!

Imagine two-thirds of the U.S. Congress calling for a special Constitutional Convention in order to amend the U.S. Constitution. Proposals are drafted. According to Article V, the proposed amendments would need to be ratified by three-fourths of the states' legislatures. Although these proposed changes would make the nation's government more efficient and cost effective, the changes would remove a number of checks and balances in our system. Furthermore, they would remove rights you currently have. As a U.S. citizen, would you be apathetic about this? Wouldn't you study the issues? Wouldn't you strive to elect state legislators who represent your views? Wouldn't you contact your state legislators, expressing your views before they voted?

At the 2007 Convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, the Synod's President was authorized to call a special convention in 2009 to consider changes to our synodical form of government as proposed by a special Blue Ribbon Task Force on Synodical Structure and Governance. President Kieschnick decided not to call this special convention. Instead, the proposed changes will be brought before the regular 2010 synodical convention. This convention will be lengthened to address the proposed constitutional and bylaw changes, as well as other business.

To date, the proposed changes have not been disclosed. The proposals will be unveiled at the upcoming district conventions. Although there have been hints as to what some of these changes might be (possibly creating a larger number of smaller districts served by part-time district presidents, while then dividing the Synod into four or five larger regions and electing full-time regional vice presidents; or possibly creating a smaller number of larger districts with full-time district presidents; possibly decreasing the number of key synodical boards or commissions; possibly giving the Synodical President direct involvement in the selection of Executive Directors for synodical boards and commissions; possibly giving larger congregations greater representation at

“Now is the time for you to begin studying the issues and discussing them with your pastor and other members of your congregation.”

district and synodical conventions), we won't know for sure until the next round of district conventions.

The LCMS normally follows a three-year cycle in our polity that includes a synodical convention year (2007), a district pastoral conference year (2008), a district convention year (2009), and then the cycle repeats itself with a synodical convention (2010). Elections and other important decisions affecting the Synod and her districts occur during the district and synodical convention years. While a majority of the 35 districts have their conventions during the summer months, the first district convention (North Dakota) actually takes place in January 2009, only a few months away.

Thus, now is the time to get involved. Now is the time for you to begin studying the issues and discussing them with your pastor and other members in your congregation. Now is the time to start preparations within your congregation for the election of your lay delegate to your district convention – a delegate who will study the issues and who is concerned about doctrine and practice, who will take a Scriptural and Confessional stand, who is concerned about our Synod, and who will make a thorough report back to your congregation.

Although our synodical polity is inefficient in many ways, although Scripture does not mandate or direct us with respect to how a congregation or a gathering of congregations (a synod) should be governed, there is much to our current form of government that is biblically and confessionally sound. Through trials and struggles, our founding fathers infused our governance with a balance between church and ministry, between clergy and laity. The Scriptural and Confessional doctrines of Church and Ministry shape our view of representation at district and synodical conventions, on boards and commissions, together with other checks and balances we currently maintain.

Now is the time to get involved in preparation for the important decisions that will be made at the 2010 convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, starting with selection of your congregational representative at your upcoming district convention.



We Have Issues Over “Issues, Etc.”

Holy Week is normally a time of contemplation on the sufferings and death of Christ and leans toward the ultimate Christian festival of the Lord’s resurrection from the dead on Easter. During Holy Week, 2008, that contemplation was shattered for Rev. Todd Wilken of the very popular, flagship program on KFJO, “Issues, Etc.” Both Rev. Wilken and his producer, Mr. Jeff Schwarz, were summoned to the Human Resources Department at the International Center of The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod. Both Rev. Wilken’s divine call and Mr. Schwarz’s contract were summarily terminated on the spot, and they were not even permitted to return to their offices.

This action was all the more curious since Synod’s Board for Communications Services (BCS) Chairman, Earnest Garbe, and BCS Executive Director, Mr. David Strand had reported to the 2007 Synodical convention the following:

“KFJO’s AM’s premier national radio program, ‘Issues, Etc.’ travels about the United States, broadcasting from churches and other institutions. This and other select AM programs are distributed to more than 750 radio stations in North America...” (2007 Convention Workbook, p. 61)

The LCMS offered financial excuses for canceling the most popular show on the radio station, but it became obvious even to casual observers that the actual reason was political. Simply put, a person may well question whether the Synodical administration wished to silence the last voice of true Confessional Lutheranism still a part of the official media of the Synod. Indeed, Mollie Ziegler Hemingway wrote in the March 28, 2008, *Wall Street Journal*, “The program was in all likelihood a pawn in the larger battle for the soul of the Missouri Synod.”

Only three months after its cancellation, Issues, Etc. returned to the air as an independent Lutheran radio program. Issues, Etc. can be heard every weekday from 3-5 CST at www.issuesetc.org and in St. Louis from 4-5 on AM 1320 Bott Radio Network.

Rev. Wilken’s article in this issue pulls back the curtains of the new nature of the current Synodical administration. We commend it to you.

The LCA Editorial Committee

Being Well Informed Enables Wise Decision-making and Requires Funding

We at Lutheran Concerns Association hope that you appreciate the thoughtful and honest assessment of the current situation in The LCMS in this newsletter. Naturally, good information, well-formatted, and widely distributed isn’t free. It is only possible to continue to provide this publication to you with your help. If you’d like to be part of the solution to our Synod’s problems, then please consider funding future issues of *The Lutheran Clarion*. We literally can’t do this without you. **Thank you for your anticipated help!**

Tax Deductible Donations can be sent to:
Lutheran Concerns Association
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No Country for Old Men

Pastor Bolland asked for the truth. Here it is. Don’t expect anything profound; the truth seldom is.

By the way, if you’re an LCMS company man and you want to remain one, stop reading now.

My new favorite movie of all time is the story of a west Texas sheriff, hopelessly tracking a man, who is himself being tracked by a strange, sociopathic killer. The movie begins with the sheriff’s voice:

You can’t help but compare yourself against the old timers. Can’t help but wonder how they would’ve operated in these times...

The crime you see now, it’s hard to even take its measure. It’s not that I’m afraid of it. I always knew you had to be willing to die to even do this job. But I don’t want to push my chips forward and go out and meet something I don’t understand.

You can say it’s my job to fight it, but I don’t know what ‘it’ is anymore. More than that, I don’t want to know. A man would have to put his soul at hazard. He would have to say, “Okay, I’ll be part of this world.”

In the movie, everyone ends up dead except the sheriff and the sociopath.

“This is not your Grandfather’s church.”

The present predicament in “our beloved synod” didn’t begin with those words. It began long before. But those words, more than any others, describe our present predicament.continued.....

No Country.....continued

I always considered myself a son of the synod -- born to a Missouri Synod family, baptized in a Missouri Synod congregation, the product of synodical schools from kindergarten to seminary, a pastor for seventeen years.

After serving a parish for the first nine of those seventeen years, I went to work for LCMS Inc.

“I’m fairly certain that the old timers wouldn’t even recognize the church of their grandchildren.”

LCMS Inc.? That’s what I call the entrenched synodical and district bureaucracies and elected leaders of the corporation defined in LCMS bylaw 1.2.1.d,

Corporate Synod: *The Lutheran Church— Missouri Synod, the Missouri nonprofit corporation, including the departments operating under the supervision of the Board of Directors of the Synod and the program boards and commissions of the Synod.*

I call it LCMS Inc. to distinguish my erstwhile employer from that fellowship (such as it is) of congregations and pastors we call “synod.”

After almost a decade working for the corporation, I thought that I had learned all I could about how things worked at LCMS Inc. I was wrong. Turns out, the company still had a few lessons to teach me.

After almost a decade working for the corporation, I had learned that what counted first and last was the company’s image.

I’m not talking about liberals circling the wagons around the current administration. I’m talking about liberals AND conservatives who have confused doing what looks good with doing what’s right.

After almost a decade working for the corporation, I had learned about what I called “deception by mutual consent.” These were the lies told so many times that even those who told them believed them. Yes, a few honest men remain; but they are working in a system that appears institutionally incapable of operating transparently and truthfully.

After almost a decade working for the corporation, I had learned about the culture of fear in LCMS Inc. A few readers might be shocked by this. That a national church body’s leadership and agencies would operate by intimidation and threats *should* shock every reader. Let’s call it what it is: fear.

I had learned all these things. But the company had more to teach me.

Being schooled in “corporate realities” by your own church body is not something you anticipate when you make your confirmation vow, or when you kneel with all those hands on your head at your ordination.

I no longer consider myself a son of the synod. I think I’m more like a *grandson* of the synod.

“This is not your Grandfather’s Church.” It sure isn’t.

You can’t help but compare yourself against the old timers. Can’t help but wonder how they would’ve operated in these times.

I’m fairly certain that the old timers wouldn’t have operated like this. Walther, Wyneken, Schwan, Pieper, Pfothenauer. These were not company men. These were churchmen. These were servants of the Word.

The old timers are dead. They’re also willfully forgotten by all but a few. Remember, “This isn’t your Grandfathers’ church.”

I’m fairly certain that the old timers wouldn’t even recognize the church of their grandchildren. And, I’m *dead certain* that none of the old timers could be elected synodical president in the church of their grandchildren. This isn’t their church.

“Our beloved synod...” The Grandfathers used to say that. They had good reason. No, their beloved synod wasn’t pristine; it wasn’t perfect. But unlike what we have today, it was “synod.”

I don’t even know what to call what we have today. I do know that this isn’t “walking together,” and we’re not all on the same road. I do know this isn’t our Grandfathers’ church.

But I don’t want to push my chips forward and go out and meet something I don’t understand. You can say it’s my job to fight it, but I don’t know what ‘it’ is anymore. More than that, I don’t want to know. A man would have to put his soul at hazard. He would have to say, “Okay, I’ll be part of this world.”

“A man would have to put his soul at hazard.” I’ve come too close to that for my comfort. My soul isn’t mine to hazard anyway. It was bought out from under me a long time ago at a Baptismal font. That’s the way I’d like to keep it. After all, “what shall a man give in return for his soul?”

For now, I’ll wait and see. I’ll stay on the road where the old timers lived. I won’t forget our Grandfathers, or their church. I’ll try and figure out what “it” is. But I’m pretty sure that, like the sheriff, I don’t want to know.

As for being “a part of this world” that isn’t my Grandfather’s church anymore? Well, this is no country for old men.

Another Word on Full Disclosure

It is always good to have an honest and direct critique. The LCA received just that in response to our June 2008 mailing in which we reported on recent actions of the LCA Board of Directors and made observations regarding what we observed as a lack of full disclosure in the LCMS. One reader suggested that our comments on full disclosure could be interpreted as a criticism of Thomas Kuchta, the Vice President – Finance – Treasurer of the LCMS. While we do not believe this is a reasonable reading of our June 2008 mailing, we are happy to take this opportunity to address further the issue of full disclosure.

First, the Board of Directors of the LCA sees no room for criticism of Mr. Kuchta when it comes to the issue of full disclosure. Quite the contrary; he has been a breath of fresh air. Mr. Kuchta has brought to the LCMS incredible knowledge and ability on matters of finance, and has demonstrated openness, honesty, and professionalism at the same time. During these past years of financial difficulty, Mr. Kuchta has shown that he is not afraid to tackle the problems, make tough decisions, and propose reasonable solutions. He has significantly improved financial accountability and efficiency. The financial condition of the LCMS would be worse without Mr. Kuchta's persistence in pursuing improvement of the Synod's financial affairs. And he has done this while consistently honoring both the letter and intent of the by-laws requiring full financial disclosure. Mr. Kuchta is an excellent example of how full disclosure is beneficial to the LCMS.

But not all within the Synod follow the example of the LCMS Treasurer. Even in matters of financial disclosure – which is specifically required by Bylaw 1.5.4 – there are some agencies in the Synod that continue to resist fully disclosing their financial books and records. Disclosure of information that is not “financial” in nature is often even more restricted.

Perhaps one of the worst offenders of full disclosure continues to be the President. His lack of full disclosure comes in many forms. Often it involves a lack of candor. One example is President Kieschnick's repeated proclamations regarding the supposed great successes of the *Ablaze!* program. In reality, while there are certainly some in the Synod that

strongly support it, most of the membership seemingly remains unenthusiastic, or worse. *Ablaze!* is viewed as lying somewhere between an ineffective mission campaign from the President's office and a theologically flawed effort to change the way missions are conducted by the Synod. The point is that President Kieschnick continues to declare that *Ablaze!* has overwhelming support in the Synod, when the truth is otherwise. The lack of support for *Ablaze!* is illustrated in the underwhelming performance of *Fan into Flame*, another program whose popularity and success President Kieschnick continues to grossly exaggerate.

“Where is the openness and candor; where is the full disclosure?”

The President's Task Force on Structure provides another

example where President Kieschnick's characterization of the situation lacks full disclosure and departs from reality and the views of the vast majority of the LCMS. At the 2007 Convention, President Kieschnick, his Task Force on Structure, and others he selected to address the Convention made a powerful and concerted plea to have a special convention at a cost estimated as much as \$1,500,000 in order to fix what were described as significant flaws in the LCMS structure that needed to be corrected in order to carry out mission and ministry more effectively. But it is now more than a year later, the President's push for a special convention failed, and the President's Task Force on Structure has provided a report that still fails to identify the problem that the 2007 Convention was told urgently needs a solution. Where is the openness and candor; where is the full disclosure?

There is quite a contrast between Mr. Kuchta's history of full financial disclosure that has resulted in enhancing efficiency and professionalism with LCMS finances and the lack of full disclosure from the President's office that has led to mediocre results and failures. The President would provide a great service to the Synod if he took the same approach in his efforts to reform the LCMS that Mr. Kuchta has taken in addressing the financial issues of the Synod.

Christian A. Preus
President, LCA
Member of the LCMS Board
of Directors (1995-2007)



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Published regularly to support issues and causes within The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod which build faithfulness to true Confessional Lutheranism and to be a clear voice of Christian concern against actions and causes which mitigate against faithfulness to the One True Faith.

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

**1320 Hartford Avenue
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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 Street, Kansas City, Missouri 64118 (816) 519-3780. Articles should be approximately 500 words in length. Inquiries are welcome. Manuscripts will not be returned and may be edited.

**The Board of Directors for the LCA are:
Mr. Christian Preus – President, Rev. Richard Bolland, Mr. Walter Dissen, Mr. David Hawk, Rev. Thomas J. Queck, Rev. Daniel Jastram, and Dcs. Betty Mulholland.**

Lutheran Concerns Association

