

# The **LUTHERAN** **CLARION**



**Lutheran Concerns Association**

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## **Alternate Routes to Ministry: Not the “Last Frontier”**

The State of Alaska faces significant challenges in delivering medical care to residents in remote areas. There are too few doctors, and many communities are too small or remote to support a physician. In response to this, various measures are employed, including telemedicine and the use of “health aides” with only very basic medical training. “A rural doctor pointed out, ‘It is not a question of whether the villagers shall be treated by completely qualified medical personnel or persons with less than full qualifications, but a question of whether they shall be treated by persons with limited qualifications or go untreated altogether.’”

This analogy, though imperfect, can be applied to pastoral formation in the LCMS. People are dying without hearing the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ, perhaps in remote areas. Are we then justified in creating pastors, as quickly, cheaply, and easily as possible, to share the Gospel and administer the Sacraments? Under some limited circumstances, perhaps, but the exception cannot become the rule. Much like the false dichotomy of “mission versus doctrine,” we cannot fall into the trap of “mission imperative versus complete theological formation.”

There are currently eight (!) “alternate” routes to ordination outside the residential Master of Divinity (M.Div.) program. In alphabetical order, they are the Center for Hispanic Studies (CHS), Colloquy, Cross-Cultural Ministry Center (CMC), Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology (EIIT), Residential Alternate Route (RAR), Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) program, Specific Ministry Pastor-Español/English program (SMP-EsE), and Specific Ministry Pastor to General Pastor Certification (GPC).

The 2023 Convention Workbook contains overtures from a number of districts seeking to expand the scope of some of these programs.

For example, Ov. 6-18 urges expanded enrollment in the SMP program. Ov. 6-22 urges the Synod to remove (among other things) the requirement that students be involved with a “culture-crossing ministry” to enroll in the “Cross-Cultural Ministry Center,” a primarily online program operated at Concordia University Irvine. Ov. 6-23 urges an increase in the number of students in existing distance study programs (but not in the residential M.Div. program).

Other overtures call for adding even more routes to Word and Sacrament ministry. Ov. 6-25 and Ov. 6-26 encourage colloquizing men who “are long-time members in good standing in congregations of the LCMS” but who attended non-LCMS seminaries. (One may ask: why would a “long-time member” of an LCMS congregation not seek a degree from one of our

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## **Higher Education: Challenges and Opportunities for the Confessing Church**

*The presentation below was given by Gerhard H. Munding, MD, at the LCA Conference on January 17, 2022. Previous parts of the article were published in the preceding July, September, November, January and February issues of the Clarion.*

How can schools and congregations enhance the value of a Church service vocation? While our parochial schools cannot find enough LCMS certified teachers, we realize that there is need to help congregations improve pay scales to make this vocation more attractive to prospective students and help those graduates we do have from being lured by better paying teaching jobs outside of the Church. This is an area where members in the audience can be helpful. We need to help our congregations understand the value of our schools for the long-term benefit toward individual congregations that faithful schools will bring. We encourage all in the audience who have not been on a Concordia campus lately to do so. Experience the benefit and good that the Lord does there. Visits by pastors are encouraged. Presidents will be happy to have you call them with concerns or questions.

Let me speak for a moment regarding **7-03 and LIMOS (Lutheran Identity and Mission Outcome Standards)**. This process morphed out of the 5-01 Resolution about eight years ago after more than two convention cycles and an inability to find consensus for a new governance model for the Concordias. The implementation of Lutheran identity standards did come out of 5-01. Major and continued areas of discussion have continued around the source and number of regents, regent catechesis and training, presidential election, theological education and worship integrity, independence regarding fiscal and non-religious matters, continued church worker training, and increasing support and awareness from congregations to mention a few.

Approximately five years ago, the presidents and representatives of the CUS began regular in-person and monthly zoom meetings, looking at ways to better serve the Church and collaborate. This led to evaluating possible models of governance that might achieve the goals and desires of synod and at the same

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### Alternative Routes to Ministry

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two fine seminaries?) There are even overtures to reactivate the Licensed Lay Deacon program.

Each alternate route was created to serve a specific purpose, and when used appropriately, can be beneficial to the Church. However, misguided attempts to expand these routes beyond their core purpose could cause more harm than good.

A child in an Alaskan village who breaks his leg may have a splint applied by the local health aide to address the emergency, but the child is then transported by Medivac to Anchorage for surgery. No one suggests that trained physicians at the hospital in Anchorage – medical school graduates – should be replaced by health aides “trained in their context” who are part of their communities and know the local culture very well, but whose medical expertise is limited to “months of community aide training.”

One of Alaska’s significant natural resources is gold. Our Synod has riches in our doctrine and practice, which we deliver through the treasures of our two seminaries. The Synod in Convention has resolved that “residential seminary education is the preferred option for the preparation of men for pastoral ministry.” The Synod has also affirmed that “the most complete means of preparing a man for the general responsibilities of the pastoral office and a lifetime of service is the master of divinity route at our two seminaries;” indeed, the “full residential experience has always been our ‘gold standard’ for pastoral formation.” The “gold rush” should be TO the residential M.Div. at our seminaries, not AWAY from our seminaries and toward “contextual formation” (sometimes called “learning in ministry”).

Residential formation of pastors offers many benefits:

- As in Matthew 4, men focus entirely on the preparation for the Office of the Holy Ministry.
- It enables learning consistent and unified doctrine from a variety of professors, rather than the siloed “mentor model” that creates “lone rangers.”
- It takes men from their own “context” and exposes them to a different people and places, thus preparing them for service anywhere in the broader church.
- Living and breaking bread together creates a learning community beyond the classroom, creating interpersonal bonds that provide better churchmanship and mutual accountability for service in the Holy Ministry.
- It provides for more effective learning; anyone who’s observed “online school” versus live classes, or online meetings versus in-person, knows the limits of distance education. The work of the Office of the Holy Ministry is an in-person undertaking.

The attacks of the world on our laity require the best-trained pastors we can provide with God’s help: it is, in fact, a matter of spiritual life and death. This is not to say that distance learning has no value, nor that we don’t appreciate men formed for the ministry in that way. Local Alaskans greatly benefit from their health aides, who can perform life-saving work. But we should strive for the highest and best formation we can give our future pastors. An inadequately trained pastor can do much harm. We should seek to deliver the best and trust God to provide the needed resources, not recalibrate and reverse-engineer

our pastoral formation to what we feel is easy, fast, convenient, or what we are willing to pay for.

The SMP program, in particular, is not operating the way it was originally promoted and as directed by 2013 Res. 5-04B. It was promoted for circumstances – like the Alaskan village – where a residentially trained pastor isn’t available or able to serve. However, an analysis of recent SMP placements from Concordia Seminary and congregational information on the Synod web site shows that about 75% of the men are placed at congregations (many very large) that already have one or more residentially trained men serving, and not at small, remote congregations. These men can and should obtain the M.Div. They, and their future parishioners, can only benefit from a deeper and richer theological education.

The alternate routes also vary greatly in academic requirements. About 98 semester credits are required for a residential M.Div. In contrast, only 32 semester credits and no bachelor’s degree are required for general roster status through the Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology (EIIT). The number of courses varies from 16 (SMP) to 24 (EIIT). One may ask why we should not encourage “ethnic immigrants” to enroll in our residential M.Div. degree programs – with guaranteed tuition – rather than looking to expand certificate programs that have lesser academic requirements.

Like Alaska, our resources (provided by God’s grace) are big enough to provide the highest quality, full-time residential theological education to the men God has called to be pastors, from whatever context they come. We should put the alternate route expansion overtures into “Seward’s Icebox.”

*Mark O. Stern is an attorney, and a member of the Board of Regents of Concordia Seminary. This article represents his personal views and does not speak on behalf of Concordia Seminary or the Board of Regents.*

<sup>1</sup> See, generally, Walker, Jennifer, “Improving Access to Healthcare in Alaska’s Rural Villages,” *AAPA News*, October 7, 2022, available at <https://www.aapa.org/news-central/2022/10/improving-access-to-healthcare-in-alaskas-rural-villages/> and Hudson, Heather E., “Rural Telemedicine: Lessons from Alaska for Developing Regions,” *TeleMedicine and e-Health*, Volume 11, Number 4, 2005, available at <https://anthc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Rural-Telemedicine-Lessons-from-Alaska-2005.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> Hudson, *ibid*, p. 462.

<sup>3</sup> 2023 Ov. 6-18, *2023 Convention Workbook*, p. 331.

<sup>4</sup> 2023 Ov. 6-22, *2023 Convention Workbook*, p. 333.

<sup>5</sup> 2023 Ov. 6-23, *2023 Convention Workbook*, pp. 333-334.

<sup>6</sup> 2023 Ov. 6-25 and 6-26, *2023 Convention Workbook* p. 334-336.

<sup>7</sup> See, e.g., 2023 Ov. 6-31 and 6-32, *2023 Convention Workbook* p. 339.

<sup>8</sup> Walker, *ibid*.

<sup>9</sup> *2019 Convention Proceedings*, Res. 6-02, pp. 158-159, which was adopted by the Synod in Convention by a vote of 71% to 29%.

<sup>10</sup> *2016 Convention Proceedings*, Res. 6-03, p. 168; see also “Report of the Res. 5-14A Task Force,” *2016 Convention Workbook* R64, p. 271.

<sup>11</sup> *2007 Convention Proceedings*, Res. 5-01B, pp. 133-138; *2013 Convention Proceedings*, Res. 5-04B, pp. 139-140.

## Lutheran Schools

The following message from the Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola, President of the Mid-South District of the LCMS, appeared in the March 2023 issue of the *Encourager* (District News) and is used with permission.

In his essay, “Why LCMS Schools Are Struggling and What To Do About It,” Rev. Stephen Kieser brings a bright light of understanding to the decline of many of our Lutheran schools. It doesn’t take more than a casual observer to recognize our Lutheran schools are struggling. Finances, teacher shortages, and declining enrollments are common across our Synod and all denominations. It’s not because of tuition or curriculum. It’s not because private education is undesirable to the general public. Our Lutheran schools face a multifaceted issue that can and will be solved.

Kieser notes that the report on Lutheran education to the 2019 Synod convention stated, “Aging population, family size, lack of denominational loyalty, younger families leaving for non-denominational churches, weakened catechesis, ineffective leadership, lack of strategic planning and decreased funding [are the conclusive causes of decline]. Increased divorce, breakdown of the family, weakened economy, a substantial increase of educational alternatives during the last two generations of students, secularization of America, and increased funding for public education [add to the decline].”

The Blue Ribbon Committee on Lutheran Schools (2019) also noted that only one-third of the teachers in our Lutheran schools are actually rostered teachers, making it necessary for

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### Who in the Synod is Ginny Valleau?

Who indeed! Everyone who receives and reads the flagship publication of the Lutheran Concerns Association, *The Lutheran Clarion*, knows her well! That is to say at least they know her work.

Ever since its beginnings over 15 years ago, working with the editors, she is the one who made sure words were spelled correctly, punctuation was correct, content went where it belonged, the font was consistent within each article, and it was reader-friendly.

Ginny and her husband John have graciously shared the connections they have with their business (JG Printers LLC) for printing and mailing out this star publication. Ginny has also compiled and kept updated a spreadsheet of clientele who receive the *Clarion* in digital format.

Times change and Ginny is moving on to other ways to serve our LORD and our Synod. Thank you, Ginny for your dedication and work for the *Clarion* readers.



### Higher Education: Challenges & Opportunities...

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time achieve better fiscal and academic flexibility for the schools. After considerable discussion and input from regent chairs and other major stakeholders, a proposal was made to the Board of Directors by the presidents, which manifested itself as the 7-03 Resolution.

The 7-03 Committee was established by the Board of Directors with Christian Preus as the chair and has had broad representation from the Synod, including representatives from CUS, BOD, regents, secretary and president of synod, as well as three university presidents. These members are listed in the cover letter which was sent out with the 7-03 draft resolution for dissemination and comment. The 7-03 Committee requested CUS to prepare a pro forma of characteristics to be considered in any new policy manual for the proposed CUE (Commission on University Education). That committee established by CUS was chaired by Rev. Dr. Jon Bruss and known as EADC (Ecclesial Accreditation Drafting Committee) and which over months and many meetings created the LIMOS (as noted above: Lutheran Identity and Mission Outcome Standards). That committee also had broad representation from the synod and the universities and was weighted for theological and academic experience. The list of participants is listed on the cover letter accompanying the LIMOS document. This committee’s document was approved for distribution by the CUS board and sent to the 7-03 Committee for dissemination by 7-03 as it deemed appropriate.

In concept the governance model is straightforward. The schools would become affiliates of the synod, and would have greater independence particularly in fiscal and academic matters (often viewed as left hand kingdom) while maintaining fidelity to the Church and her confession (often termed right hand kingdom). The Church through the action of CUE would provide ecclesial accreditation to maintain fidelity in the mission of the schools.

As a given, it was understood that the kingdom of the right always is involved in left hand kingdom expression. (As an example, an individual does not go to church and Bible study on Sunday, and then live the rest of the week bereft of that influence.) Several months after the documents were disseminated, a three-day meeting at the end of November 2021 in St Louis allowed for further discussions among the COP, university presidents, and CUS, then with the presidents and boards of regents’ chairs, and finally, with presidents, boards of regents’ chairs and 7-03 Committee. Subsequently the 7-03 Committee met to discuss the input it had received and is deliberating until the convention overture assignment is completed. 7-03 reviewed all written comments received as well as input from Concordia plan services and LCEF. There was much consensus for moving forward. The governance model allows the schools to become affiliates of synod. This offers them greater flexibility to be financially and administratively independent functionaries.

The Church is interested in faithfulness by the universities in mission of and for the Church. The LIMOS are both formative and summative for an institution’s self-expression in accord with the DNA of Synod. Ecclesial accreditation (another synonym may be exchanged here in the future) is the Church’s ability to place its imprimatur so that the institution functions in accord with the doctrines and practices of the Church. However, unlike academic accreditation in which the schools might be participants in the visitation teams, here the Church’s independ-



ence from the schools per se is important in making the determination regarding the faithfulness of the schools. Under the concept of **always being reformed** (*semper reformatur*), the schools have a set of guidelines for self-evaluation, dialogue with the Church and ability for self-reporting of how they are fulfilling the Church's metrics of faithfulness, not unlike the self-reporting now going on with Lutheran identity under CUS policies.

The intent is for the schools to very much remain part of the Church and to evince the underlying principle of the mercy of Christ unto salvation in all their activities through their day-to-day operations. As individuals, in positions of governance in the Church and in the schools, undergo daily reformation in Christ, so also should the schools, as they continue to serve out their education service to students on the Church's behalf. This will help grow trust on both sides. The mechanism of cyclical visitation by CUE (Committee for University Education) is set up similarly to what is currently outlined in the policy manual for CUS, absent major fiscal review or planning. The Church maintains specific interests in Church worker training as its only academic oversight. This approach acknowledges that the Church and all the stakeholders of higher education in the Church desire to be the Church. Unlike what happened to schools in the UCC article, we are blessed with faithful presidents, boards of regents, faculty and staff who want to be and serve the Church. The intent of this governing model is to aide that faithful service into perpetuity. In this manner the personal confessional approach of daily living will be requisite for good outcome and the maintenance of our Lutheran distinctives. It is hoped that best practices will continue to evolve, and that schools will increasingly benefit from increasing congregational support and admiration. The Church will realize the beauty and strength they receive from the graduates produced. The confidence thus expressed will, *Deo Volente*, engender further support from Church leaders and pastors. We will need to bear patiently each other's burdens. Discipline by CUE or the Church should be restorative and not punitive, always looking to generate best outcomes, running the race in a disciplined fashion keeping our eye ever on the prize promised.

Should a school determine that it no longer wants to be part of the Church but wants to continue independently as an institution of higher education, there must be "real teeth" in place to dissuade them and their board of regents from going down the UCC path. (This is a different situation from a school that closes from financial concerns.) Certainly, as synod contemplates this governance model, penalties for willful non-compliance could include loss of use of the Brand, loss of access to LCEF funds, with consideration of requiring immediate repaying outstanding loans. Loss of ability to institute new policies with Concordia plan services could be considered for a school whose administration would willfully leave accreditation.

The generosity of the faithfully departed of the Church, who for more than a century and over multiple generations financially supported these schools to be functionaries of the Church, must be valued. This, as well as the direct subsidies given by the Synod to the schools up and through the 1990's, must be remembered. These schools are not just the schools of and for the current generation but were established in perpetuity to serve the Church's needs.

Current bylaws and policies make the following declarations: Article XI E (2) of the Constitution of the LCMS provides in part, "The Board of Directors is the legal representative and custodian of all property of The Lutheran Church — Missouri

Synod directly or by delegation...." And Bylaw 3.3.4.7 "the Synod BOD is the custodian of all the property of Synod...." Bylaw 3.6.6.4 (i) gives further authority to the CUS BOD with respect to consolidation, relocation, separation or divestiture. In addition the BOR in Bylaw 3.10.6.4 (i) "shall operate and manage the institution as the agent of the Synod...." Responsibilities are noted in subparagraphs 1, 5, 7 and 9. And specifically in subparagraph 7, it says regarding the BOR: "but having no power without consent" from the CUS BOD and the BOD of Synod to "close or sell all or any part of the property ..." Furthermore, the Synod Board Policy Manual Section 5.4.1.2.2 specifically states: "each institution of higher education of the Synod shall hold title to properties presently owned or at any time hereafter acquired by it subject to a reversionary interest or possibility of reverter in favor of the Synod in such form and stating such conditions as shall be established by the board of Directors of the Synod. The Board of Regents and officers of each institution of higher education of the Synod shall, and are hereby directed to, take all actions and execute all deeds, resolutions, statements and legal documents necessary to carry out the terms of this resolution where permitted by law..."

Can a current BOR independently assume it owns all of the assets should it decide that the school is to leave the Church? Should there be an exit tax in place if they do? It is my belief that no schools or current presidents desire this outcome, and they have worked very hard to find a mechanism acceptable from which they can garner better flexibility, and economic stability while improving their service for the Church. In cases where CUE visitations and self-evaluation might note areas in need of improvement, CUE would be encouraging and supportive to make corrections and improvements, again patiently bearing with one another. There has in the past been a desire by schools for greater independence, particularly with respect to expanding their boards. There are good fiscal arguments to be made for doing so.

Some have suggested the complete independence of a BOR from Church influence or for the consideration of self-perpetuating boards, and even adding non-Lutheran members. Careful consideration of potential pitfalls needs to be examined if these ideas were ever to be considered. As of this writing, the 7-03 has felt no current change in numbers of board members, their make up or how boards are created, should be presently undertaken.

Remembering the UCC history demonstrates the potential risk inherent in changing current BOR structure and election. Boards without a sense of commitment to the Church and Her vision or foundations with large numbers of members who do not understand or align with the Church will request a voice in government for the funds they provide. That scenario could derail the Church's mission to something more akin to those seeking primarily a "social justice" mission to be established. Maintaining a board, a president, and administration committed to the Church, is the most likely way for schools to remain as faithful stewards for the UNA SANCTA. Under this governance scenario, then the question: "can a school be affiliated but not accredited?" becomes moot. In addition, so do complaints about the Church having "undue outside influence or control." What faithful school rightly would see the Church's influence as "outside its mission" or dialogue with the Church as "undue" interference if it is actively pursuing the educational mission of the Church in accord with Her wishes, scripture and Her confessions?

Now regarding the financial consideration related to student

enrollment numbers and finances: I would posit the following for thought: Faithful people in the pew will support that which is clearly perceived to help the youth of the Church and the health of our community together. We currently have an incredible number of hard working committed people at all of our schools, dedicated to providing excellence in academics, committed to the students' welfare, growth and spiritual formation. As school leaders continue to maintain faithful instruction protocols for staff and faculty and maintain policies in accord with the Church's teaching and practice, we must continue along this path of faithful service and improve ways to communicate this to the members in the pew. Through the help and commitment of pastors and leaders in support of the schools of higher education we can aide in their financial stability.

Many economists point to the large transfer of wealth that will occur during transition from my generation to the next. The "For the Sake of the Church Campaign" during the last decade demonstrated a great desire from members in the Church to support faithful higher education. Highlighting the blessing that our schools have been and can be for the Church and improving a sense of participation by those members in the mission of our schools could go a long way to build financial stability for the future and help distance our schools from worldly influence. This means that those of us, particularly in roles of leadership, must help put the best construction on one another's endeavors, not acquiescingly accepting falsehood, but helping each other always to be daily reformed in Christ.

Parents must be informed that there is a safe place for their sons and daughters to attend college, where they can grow up in their faith as they learn about vocation and receive a quality academic education equal to or better than that received from a secular university. Schools must remain distinct and clear beacons of Light for the unchurched or marginally church-ed students coming to campus. Parents must also be catechized by their pastors that seeking the "best school" and the false satiating prizes of this world may not be best for their child. Seeking the best education solely for the best job to make the most money may be just the mammon leading to glorification of self, that

interferes with their offspring's ontology, that will lead to a very disappointing teleology, leading to a very unpleasant eschatological end! With increased support from congregations and people in the pew, our schools will increase the potential to expand their academic offerings into all fields. They should be able to expand their boards, faculty and staff with those committed to the Lutheran ethos of education.

It would be my hope that at some point we would be able to say to all parents: **"Send your child to a Concordia! We have all the meats! And they are right and salutary! They can study well whatever academic interest they desire and they will do so under the umbrella of the wisdom of Christ."** This will produce lay and professional leaders for the Church that have a broad skill set to support the great commission of Matthew 28: That as you are going about in your daily lives, you will be supportive in the making of disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and teaching them to observe all (not some) that Jesus commanded His apostles to do. These values so much already taught and appreciated by our students will become better known, thereby enhancing student numbers, as well as congregational support.

We for now will leave the tares alone as we support the wheat, leaving it for our Creator's judgement, as we offer to students from every nation, tribe, peoples and languages to participate in the academic, faith-forming educational experience that can be had in the LCMS. Come find your Ontology, live your Teleology in the mercy of Christ unto a blessed Eschatological end!

*Soli Deo Gloria*

Gerhard H. Munding, Jr., MD FACS LL.D.

### Student Aid Endowment Fund Concordia Theological Foundation, Inc.

In early 2018, in honor of Mrs. Ginny Val-leau's contributions to the publication of the *Lutheran Clarion*, a Concordia Theological Seminary Student Aid Endowment Fund was established at Concordia Theological Foundation, Inc., a 501(c)(3) organization. Contributions are tax deductible. As of April 30, 2023, the fund assets were \$29,781.



The Board of Directors of the Lutheran Concerns Association invites *Lutheran Clarion* readers to contribute to the Fund which can be done by sending your check marked Valleau Endowment Fund to:

**Concordia Theological Foundation, Inc.,** Box 15810, Fort Wayne, IN 46885

or to: **Lutheran Concerns Association,** 149 Glenview Drive, New Kensington, PA 15068-4921. Donors will receive receipts for their gifts.

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#### Lutheran Schools

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the Lutheran schools to contract non-Lutheran teachers to cover the other two-thirds of the teaching faculty. In some locations, there are only one or two LCMS rostered teachers on the entire teaching staff.

Kieser points out that the Blue Ribbon Committee also noted that many Lutheran schools "...have abandoned robust Lutheran catechesis. They have forgotten the best part of their orthodox Lutheran history. Some have taken 'Lutheran' out of their name in order to bolster a marketing scheme that attempts to name a Lutheran school according to the non-Lutherans they serve, rather than identifying themselves as Lutherans..." "In an effort to be all things to 56 million children in the US, they have not sought first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness (Matthew 6:33)."

Martin Luther was concerned about public education in his time, and even shared his distress with parochial education. He was convinced unbridled educational systems drove people away from the Gospel of Christ – trick of Satan (AE45:347, ff.) In Luther's Large Catechism he writes, "therefore let all Christians regard their baptism as the daily garment that they are to wear all the time. Every day they should be found in faith and with its fruits, suppressing the old creature and growing up in the new. If we want to be Christians, we must practice the work that makes us Christians, and let those who fall away return to it." (LC 4 Part 84-86, KW, p, 466).

Luther and his compatriots in the Reformation supported education of the youth from the perspective that their education is a doctrine of biblical theology. When our beloved Synod was founded in 1847, the leaders made provisions that catechesis and a well-rounded general education was an essential part of our Christian duty and privilege. Teacher candidates for the Lutheran schools were examined for their knowledge in Scripture, Lutheran doctrine, church and world history, and the "... German language, arithmetic, penmanship, geography, history,

and music." (Wayne Schmidt, *The Lutheran Parochial School*, p. 56).

Kieser cites an example where, in the early Twentieth Century, Horace Mann, Maria Montessori, Benjamin Bloom and Lev Vygotsky led public schools toward a more modified means of general liberal arts education. In his book, *Serpents in the Classroom*, Rev. Dr. Thomas Korcok explains how rejection of the doctrines of original sin, Godly authority, Christian catechesis, and other foundational teachings of the church were jettisoned "...the theological premises upon which their pedagogical ideas were built and still remain." (Thomas Korcok, *Serpents in the Classroom*, p. 7).

In his essay, Kieser makes an observation of what the LCMS and its member educational ministries strive to accomplish in our schools. He notes, "On the LCMS webpage under 'School Ministry,' a number of reasons are given for sending your child to a Lutheran School: Lutheran Schools...

- Are driven by a commitment to the Gospel and focused on a mission of bringing hope and healing to students and families;
- Are governed by board members who clearly understand their roles and focus on the vision and board policies that effectively govern the operation of the school;
- Meet or exceed state and national academic standards at all grade levels;
- Have educators who model visionary leadership. They practice the stewardship of resources, building up others, and empathize with others;
- Have educators who model servant leadership. Do those served grow as persons; do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants?
- Have educators who model spiritual leadership. They study God's Word, share their personal faith story, apply Law and Gospel appropriately, exhibit passion for ministry, act courageously, equip God's people for service, care for others, demonstrate integrity, and pray."

The future of the Lutheran education ministries is a vital ingredient in making positive steps in the direction of securing teachers, pastors, DCE's, deaconesses, and many other vital professional church workers for the next generations. Understanding the unparalleled value of Lutheran educational ministries is our responsibility to future generations. Training, supporting, and honoring our valued educators is essential. This is an effort that is not to just have a school; but to have a school that fully embraces the doctrines of the Lutheran Confessions, reach into the community it serves with the Gospel message, and bring about the teaching of the values of our church – *Pro Deo et Patria* – For God and for our Country. Kieser concluded with a remark from Johannes Bugenhagen about Lutheran catechetical distinction: "If you know Jesus well, it is sufficient, if you do not know other things. If you do not know Jesus, it is nothing, if you learn other things."

Thanks be to God for our faithful Lutheran educators and the congregations committed to supporting high quality Lutheran education for our members and to the communities they serve. [Copies of Kieser's essay can be acquired from the Association of Confessing Evangelical Lutheran Congregations.]

Your servant in Christ +

Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola



# The Everlasting Gospel

The following article was written by ND District President Arie Bertsch and appeared previously in the October 2022 issue of the ND District News and is used with permission.

Revelation 14:6: **“Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth; to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people.”**

Last month would have marked the 500th anniversary of one of Martin Luther’s most important literary achievements: the publication of his German translation of the New Testament, popularly known as his ‘September Testament’. This publication, in the autumn of 1522, paved the way for other translations of the Bible into the vernacular (the language of the people), making it accessible for people both at church and in their homes.

Luther completed this project while hiding in the Wartburg Castle in Eisenach Germany. He was condemned in May of 1521 by Emperor Charles V as a heretic for making his stand on God’s Word alone rejecting the councils of men when they contradicted the teachings of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The last translation of the Bible was the Latin Vulgate in the 4th century and was not readily available to the common people both in language and the printing of books. But with his translation into the German language people purchased Bibles and began reading God’s word for themselves.

This month we celebrate the Reformation. When Luther faithfully proclaimed the pure Gospel that sinners were justified and saved by God, through faith alone in Christ their Savior and not on account of their deeds or merits, but solely on account of the obedience and suffering of Jesus, he was labeled a dangerous heretic. He was told to recant (that is take back or deny) his teachings. He refused. He was put under the ban by the emperor. That meant that anyone could kill him. He had no rights anyone needed to respect.

The Reformation was no accident. God watches over His Church (you are His Church.) It may appear at times as if He neither knows nor cares what’s going on in and to His Church, but she is the apple of His eye and she always will be. The Church is the bride of Christ and Jesus loves you, His bride.

The everlasting Gospel will keep the Church the Church. Because it is about Jesus Christ, born of the Virgin Mary, who suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried, and on the third day rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven.

You see, the Gospel is very specific. It is the gospel of Christ and Christ alone. It is the good news on which the Church relies and from which she is born in Christ: who He is, what He has done, what He is still doing for us. Only Jesus has destroyed sin and death and opened for us the door to everlasting life. The Gospel is about Jesus, or it is not good news at all.

The Gospel is also very specific concerning what benefits it promises. It is not good news for any bad situation. The Gospel doesn’t promise a good job, worldly success, or good health. The Gospel is not a how-to method of making friends and influencing people. The reason people (us included) prefer such pseudo-gospels is because they/we don’t face the reality of their/our own sin. We are easily influenced by our own

thoughts. We refuse to bow before the revealed Word and will of God. We define idolatry away as we bow down to gods of our own imagination. We think selfishness is virtuous and praiseworthy. We lust and commit adultery (even if just in our heart and mind.) We covet and steal. We hate and murder. But we deny we do anything wrong because our lust, covetousness, and hatred remain bottled up inside of ourselves. Filled with wicked desires and thoughts we point the finger at others and want a gospel of empowerment instead of the Gospel of the forgiveness of sins.

The Gospel is the good news of God’s full and free forgiveness of sins for the sake of Christ’s most holy obedience and suffering. It tells you that your gracious God laid your sins on Jesus who took them away. It tells you that God is reconciled to you for Christ’s sake. It announces peace on earth and goodwill toward men. The Gospel promises you that heaven is your home. The Gospel tells you that you are free from the guilt of sin, free from the judgment of God’s law, free from fear of death and hell, free to be God’s children. It is all because of Christ’s obedience. **“For God made Him (Jesus) who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him (Jesus) we might become the righteousness of God.”**

All of this is yours through faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Without the proclamation of the Gospel you would not have what the Gospel gives. Indeed, without the proclamation of the Gospel there would be no holy Christian Church on this earth, but we would all remain blind in sin, wandering through life not knowing where we were going, and ending up in hell. The Church is the ark of salvation on account of the everlasting Gospel that is proclaimed to her, in her, and through her to the whole world: every nation, tribe, tongue, and people.

Luther showed from the Bible (and made it available to the people in their own language) that if our salvation depends to any degree at all on our own merit and works then we cannot be confident of making it to heaven. We cannot know that we are in a state of grace. We must always doubt and never know where we stand with God.

Therefore, firmly hold on to the truth revealed in the everlasting Gospel taught by St. Paul and proclaimed by Martin Luther that the righteousness of God is from faith in Jesus Christ alone. It is not a righteousness that you do. It is not a righteousness of faith in your faith of yourself. It is a righteousness that Jesus did.

We pray that God will always provide us with faithful messengers who will proclaim the saving truth of the everlasting Gospel! That is, the Good News that is yours today, because you have the forgiveness of all your sins through Jesus Christ; and where there is the forgiveness of sins there is life and salvation. This eternal Gospel will keep you the Church safe from all harm.

## The Lutheran Clarion—We Need Your Help!

The *Lutheran Clarion* is in its 15th year. We have NO paid staff or writers. We unabashedly strive to present and uphold God’s inerrant word. Inflation has now taken hold. We want our readers to be informed about issues that will face the 2023 Synod!

**Your continued and enhanced help is needed.** We urge you to help with the costs of preserving Confessional Lutheranism. Use the enclosed envelope. Mail your tax-deductible gift to Lutheran Concerns Association, 149 Glenview Drive, New Kensington, PA 15068-4921. Do it now. **Thank you!!**

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