

# “Here we have no Continuing City”

A Report on the 2004 Convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.



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### Introduction

It has been said, “What is past is prologue.” Humanly speaking, the present is built upon the past; a chain of causation linking yesterday to tomorrow through today. A small surrender plants the seed of further capitulation in the future, while an act of faithfulness carries its influence farther than men may ever imagine. Thus every day we are shaping the future, whether in ways great or small, just as we are influenced by that which has come before.

Any honest effort to view events in their context would trace the roots of the troubles of the 2004 Convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod back many decades. As was observed following the 2001 Convention, the generations since the ‘Statement of the 44’ in 1945 have watched theological liberals steadily gather and build their support within the synod. It is the nature of doctrinal error that if it is not vigorously opposed, it will grow and threaten the Church. Thus St. Paul likened the deadly influence of false doctrine to the spread of a cancer, declaring to St. Timothy:

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness. And their message will spread like cancer. Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort, who have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some.

*(2 Tim. 2:15–18 NKJV)*

St. Paul observed the deadly fruit of such cancerous false teaching: "... they overthrow the faith of some." False doctrine is never an indifferent thing to the Church—just as cancer is not a small concern for the health of the body—because false doctrine endangers a person's eternal salvation.

Thus Holy Scripture emphasized the importance of clinging to the correct doctrine. As St. Paul admonishes in 1 Tim. 4: "Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you." (v. 16) Again, we read in 2 Tim. 1: "Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus." (v. 13) And Paul wrote in Titus 2: "But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine," (v. 1) and calls upon the young men to be "in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, sound speech that cannot be condemned". (v. 7–8)

As the true doctrine brings the message of salvation, and false doctrine brings a cancerous destruction which overthrows faith, there is, therefore, no room for accommodation between truth and error. St. Paul wrote to St. Timothy:

If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with dispute and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself. (1 Tim. 6:3–5)

God's Word declares in Titus 3: "A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject; knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself." (v. 10—11 KJV) We read in 2 Cor. 6: "Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?" (v. 14) St. John declares in his second Epistle: "Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him, for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds." (v. 9–11)

This clear biblical teaching is reflected in the writings of the fathers. Thus Martin Luther declared: “If one associates much with heretics, one finally also makes oneself partaker of their false doctrine, their lies, and their errors; for he who touches pitch soils his hands with it.” (*What Luther Says*, p. 646) And our Lutheran Confessions clearly proclaim, “churches will not condemn one another because of dissimilarity of ceremonies when, in Christian liberty, one has less or more of them, *provided they otherwise are in unity with one another in doctrine and all its articles, and also in the right use of the Sacraments*” (FC SD X:31).

Three years ago, the author was charged with the responsibility toward his congregation of reporting on the 2001 Convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. That reported, which is entitled *And what Communion has Light with Darkness?*, documented the substantial doctrinal errors promulgated in the resolutions of the 61st convention of the synod. Reporting such things is never easy, nor enjoyable, but it is *necessary* to the spiritual health of the Church. The format which follows is modeled on that previous report, to aid those readers familiar with it, while also providing a means for treating of several significant trends between conventions.

## Church Fellowship and Doctrinal Confusion

At the 2001 convention of the LC—MS, the synod made the controversial move of declaring fellowship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia (ELCL) and the Lanka Lutheran Church of Sri Lanka. Both of these church bodies were (and are) members of the liberal Lutheran World Federation (LWF). Many protested declaring fellowship with church bodies which remained in such a unionistic organization, especially when the ELCL has women serving as pastors and evangelists. The reason was simple: many pastors and laity believe that declaring fellowship with such churches proclaimed an indifference—even acquiescence—to their errors, and led many to be concerned that the LC—MS was heading toward membership in the LWF.

Instead of repenting of the unionism implicit in such a declaration of fellowship, the 2004 convention of the LC—MS strayed even further from a biblical doctrine of church fellowship. This time, the synod was consider-

ing fellowship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya (ELCK). The Missouri Synod's involvement with the LWF has become much deeper than most Missourians realize; the preamble to the fellowship resolution notes that "9 other partner churches of the Synod belong to the LWF"! (*Today's Business* 55) Bishop Obare, the leader of the ELCK, attempted to dismiss the matter claiming (as is repeated in the preamble of Res. 3-01) that the ELCK did not consider such membership to be 'church fellowship'. However, as Pastor Mark Eddy pointed out during open hearings preceding the convention, the constitution of the Lutheran World Federation is quite specific on this point, declaring in article III of its constitution: "The Lutheran World Federation is a communion of churches which confess the triune God, agree in the proclamation of the Word of God and are united in pulpit and altar fellowship." (p. 1) Despite the inherently unionistic nature of declaring fellowship with the ELCK, the Synod adopted the resolution by a 90.9% majority—repeating the error of the ELCL vote three years earlier.

Such a casual declaration of fellowship with yet another church body of the LWF made the vote on Resolution 3-07 ("To Continue Discussions with Evangelical Lutheran Church in America") all the more alarming. This resolution resolves:

*Resolved*, That we encourage the President of the Synod and our representatives on the Committee on Lutheran Cooperation (CLC) to pursue substantive conversations between representatives of the ELCA and the LCMS, in a continuing effort to bear witness to the truth of the Scriptures and the Confessions in the hope that agreement can be reached in those areas where we disagree; and be it further

*Resolved*, That the President of Synod report to the next synodical convention any recommendations concerning changes in joint activity with the ELCA; and be it finally

*Resolved*, That we commit ourselves as members of Synod to walk together in supporting the leadership of the President in consultation with the Praesidium of Synod regarding this relationship between conventions. (*Today's Business* 61)

One wishes that a benign interpretation could be given to these words, but that hardly seems prudent in light of the 2001 and 2004 conventions. The

exhortation to “walk together in supporting the leadership of the President” may prove a ‘blank check’ commitment to remain silent while President Kieschnick explores fellowship with the ELCA. One thing is certain: the resolution hinges on the notion the President will “report to the next synodical convention any recommendations concerning changes in joint activity with the ELCA”. In light of the record, and the warm reception ELCA Bishop Hanson received before and after speaking at the convention, Missouri’s relationship with the ELCA will become closer, not more distant, in the next three years. At the very least, one should not be surprised to see a revocation in 2007 of the 2001 convention’s declaration that the ELCA is a “heterodox” church body.

Of course, the most pressing issue of fellowship over the past three years was the scandal of Rev. Kieschnick’s blessing Rev. Benke’s participation in the Yankee Stadium worship service. Aside from Kieschnick’s inclusion of an attempt to ‘spin’ the event in his Sunday morning ‘Presidential Report,’ (*Today’s Business* 232–235) the matter was the ‘subtext’ of several resolutions. One such resolution was 3-06A, “To Commend CTCR Report on *Guidelines for Participation in Civic Events*”—a Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) document generated in the wake of the Benke scandal. One delegate observed that because of the late submission of the document, the bylaws of the synod required the approval of the president, first vice president and secretary of the synod before it could even be considered by the convention; Kieschnick simply waved off the reference to the Synod’s bylaws with an appeal to synod in convention. “Upon the request of the chair, the assembly agreed to consider the resolution [Y: 731; N: 432].” (*Today’s Business* 417) After twenty minutes of discussion—one of the longest of the convention—the resolution was adopted by a substantial majority (62.9%).

The adoption of 3-06A was reported the following day in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* as follows: “Most at issue was the finding that Lutheran ministers could sometimes participate in serial prayer—one person praying after another—even if the others involved were not Christian.” (p. B1) The report continued:

The synod has long held that church leaders should have formal worship only with those who agree in doctrine. That leaves out non-Christian faiths and all Christian churches in the United States, Nafzger said, but does not bar informal fellowship prayer with other

Christians. Though many delegates said they supported the report's opinion, some conservatives remained opposed to any type of prayer with non-Christians. The report's "yes, but no" opinion that serial prayer could sometimes be accepted rankled more than a few. (p. B4)

The bizarre doctrine of serial prayer maintains that if one person prays *after* another prays during a worship service, then they are not praying *together*. Truly, this is jesuitical sophistry, introducing a distinction without a difference which is readily apparent to any faithful person. Under such a philosophy, one may readily anticipate a joint service sometime in the future where a Satanist prays, followed by a Missouri Synod Lutheran, followed by a Buddhist (if it hasn't happened already). But it will all be okay, because, as Benke's supporters maintain, "It's Okay to Pray".

## **Disagreement Regarding Administration of the Lord's Supper**

It was observed following the last convention that in the Augsburg Confession, we teach "that one holy Church is to continue forever. The Church is the congregation of the saints, in which the Gospel is rightly taught and the Sacraments rightly administered." (VII:1) We are able to locate the true Church because the rightly preached Word and the rightly administered Sacraments are her identifying 'marks'. Indeed, it is through these 'marks' that the Holy Spirit creates and sustains faith, "for through the Word and the Sacraments, as through instruments, the Holy Ghost is given, who worketh faith where and when it pleaseth God in them that hear the Gospel..." (AC V:2)

The priority of making certain that the Sacraments are rightly administered is so important that our Lutheran Confessions state that such right administration is necessary for Church fellowship: "churches will not condemn one another because of dissimilarity of ceremonies when, in Christian liberty, one has less or more of them, *provided they otherwise are in unity with one another in doctrine and all its articles, and also in the right use of the Sacraments*" (FC SD X:31).

In light of this grave importance, profound offense was given to the Church at the last convention when Resolution 3-16 merely "encouraged" the

use of wine in the Sacrament of the Altar. As was observed in *And what Communion has Light with Darkness?*:

Do we merely “encourage” the use of water in Baptism? Do we merely “encourage” the proclamation of God’s Word (and not, for example, the Moslem Koran) in preaching? Do we merely “encourage” the use of bread in the blessed Sacrament? Jesus said “This do”—to merely “encourage” would be like reducing the Ten Commandments to Ten ‘Helpful Suggestions.’ ... As a doctrinal resolution, this is a statement of the LC—MS’s official position: The LC—MS now merely encourages the use of wine—merely encourages what Jesus commanded, saying, “This do.” Article VII of the Augsburg Confession declares “The Church is the congregation of saints, in which the Gospel is rightly taught and the Sacraments rightly administered” (§1) and that unity in the Church requires “agree[ment] concerning the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments.” (§2) Such unity concerning the administration of the Sacraments no longer exists in the LC—MS if some are now officially permitted to deviate from Christ’s institution, while others uphold it. (p. 13–14)

The 2004 Convention of the LC—MS took *no* steps to correct the wicked practice concerning the Lord’s Supper which was taught by the 2001 Convention. This issue *alone* is so grave as to threaten the life of the Church, for it undermines the Holy Sacrament, a means through which our Savior gives forgiveness of sins, life and salvation, as the Small Catechism confesses in such clear terms.

In fact, the 62nd Regular Convention placed the synod in grave danger of further submission to error through the adoption of a new hymnal, *Lutheran Service Book*. The many strengths and weaknesses of this hymnal could be discussed at great length. In this context, however, it must be observed that the hymnal would bring the Eucharistic Prayer into the divine service, an element deliberately excised from the celebration of the Sacrament at the time of the Reformation. For Romanists, the celebration of the Sacrament is seen as a “eucharistic sacrifice”—something offered to God—and thus the *verba* (Words of Institution) are contained within a prayer. At the time of the Reformation, Luther restored the understanding that the

Sacrament is the Triune God's gift to man; thus the Words of Institution are *proclamation*, not *prayer*. With the reinstatement of the Eucharistic Prayer, no matter how well-intentioned the authors of the hymnal may be, the adoption of *Lutheran Service Book* in Resolution 2-03A risks even a further corruption of the Holy Sacrament.

## Incorrect Teaching concerning the Office of the Holy Ministry

A fundamental confusion concerning the biblical Office of the Holy Ministry has troubled the LC—MS for decades. As was observed in the 2001 convention report:

Ever since the 1989 synodical convention in Wichita, the synod has wrestled to put an end to a practice which violates our confession. According to Article XIV of the Augsburg Confession, "Of Ecclesiastical Order, they teach, that no one should publicly teach in the Church or administer the Sacraments unless he be regularly called." Call and ordination are no minor matter: the Lutheran Confessions declare "it is manifest that ordination by a pastor in his own church has been appointed by divine law" (Treatise, §65)—matters of divine law should always be of great concern to the Church! Thus, the Confessions declare: "Wherefore it is necessary for the Church to retain the authority to call, elect and ordain ministers." (Treatise, §67. Emphasis added.) (p. 14)

The Wichita convention, citing an 'emergency' situation regarding a lack of ordained clergy, the convention created a category of 'lay ministers.' Such 'lay ministers,' lacking ordination and call, have been permitted to perform a number of roles in the Church, including the functions of Word and Sacrament ministry. It was noted at the time, and in the years which followed, that this was clearly in violation of the Augsburg Confession.

During his administration as LC—MS president, Dr. Barry endeavored to put an end to the unbiblical 'lay ministry' program. Again, we observed in 2001:

It was decided that the program would be phased out, and all participants would either be colloquized into the pastoral office, ordained, and called by a parish, or they would be removed. The final step was to be taken at this convention, with Resolution 3-08, “To Address Needs and Opportunities for Pastoral Ministry in Specialized Situations.” This would have required male participants in the lay ministry program to enter education programs leading to ordination, and that all would complete such training by December 31, 2004. All districts would have to shut down their lay ministry programs by September, 2002, and the resolution specifically stated, “Resolved, That after the last day of this convention no new or renewal licenses to serve as a lay deacon shall be offered;”. If the resolution had passed, it would have brought the synod out of its false practice. That, however, did not happen. (*What Communion...?*, p. 14–15)

However, that convention of synod utterly reversed this intention through a substitute resolution, 3-08B. This resolution endorsed the continued expansion of the lay ministry program—an expansion which continued at the 2004 convention.

A key element in the expansion of the lay ministry program was the adoption of Resolution 5–12A: “To Amend Commissioned Ministry Colloquy Bylaws” (*Today’s Business* 206–209). The colloquy bylaws are a very important part of the ongoing life of the synod, because they govern the circumstances by which a church worker from outside the fellowship of the LC—MS may enter service within the synod. The bylaw revisions included in 5–12A added colloquy rules for Directors of Christian Outreach, Lay Ministry, and Directors of Family Life Ministry (another new category of church worker added by this convention). Whereas 2001 Resolution 3-08B required a candidate for lay ministry to have been a member of an LC—MS congregation for at least *five* years, 2004 Resolution 5–12A stipulates that a candidate for colloquy need only have been a member of an LC—MS congregation for *two* years (*Today’s Business* 209). A mere eight courses make up the curriculum requirements for the program, followed by a one year internship. The convention approved Resolution 5–12A by 89.5%.

Resolution 5–09 (“To Affirm District Programs that Equip Laity for Ministry”) also addressed an expansion of ‘lay ministry,’ resolving “that

the Synod acting in convention recognize, affirm, and encourage the work of the Districts in developing ministry-equipping programs for the laity such as the Lay Leader Institute, Missionary Training Center, Training Leaders for Ministry, and The Alaskan Project” (*Today’s Business* 87). The resolution was amended to give some outside guidance, adding the input of the new Board for Pastor Education and the synod’s two seminaries to the process of developing a lay ministry curriculum. Nevertheless, the final resolve declared “That for the sake of good order the Council of Presidents of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and the new Board for Pastor Education and with the guidance of the seminary faculties develop a standardized core curriculum for District lay-training programs and coordinate a national listing of participants.” (*Today’s Business* 87) Again, the heart of the resolution was the *expansion* and *coordination* of ‘lay ministry’ in the LC—MS, with a “national listing” forming a roster of ‘lay ministers’ within the synod.

In short, the unscriptural ‘lay ministry’ will clearly continue to expand within the synod, if the resolutions are implemented. As the program expands, it seems safe to conclude that an increasing portion of the membership of the LC—MS will receive ‘ministry’ from individuals who are neither called nor ordained.

The expansion of ‘lay ministry’ dovetails with one of the most tragic ‘low points’ of the synodical convention—one which will have almost incalculable ramifications for the future of the LC—MS: a resolution passed on the last day of the convention, Res. 3–08A (“To Affirm the Conclusions of the 1994 CTCR Report: *The Service of Women in Congregational and Synodical Offices*”). Extensive debate swirled around this resolution because of the controversial nature of the report in question. The 1995 Convention had essentially batted the report aside by referring it for further study. Now, however, it was brought back in such a way as to continue to erode the Missouri Synod’s historic understanding of the role of women in the Church. The crucial resolved stated that “women may serve in humanly established offices in the church as long as the functions of these offices do not make them eligible to carry out ‘official functions [that] would involve public accountability for the functions of the pastoral office’”. The precise meaning of these words became clear as the discussions continued: the only office that would be forbidden was the divinely-established office of pastor. A substitute resolution which would have *excluded* women from serving as “congregational elders, congrega-

tional presidents or communion assistants” was *defeated*, receiving only 43.8% support. Even the issue of women reading a prepared sermon seemed to be in some doubt, as CTCR chairman Samuel Nafzger explained that the resolution did not give women permission to “publicly” preach, but then explained that he was using the term “public” to mean “officially”.

One female delegate explained that, as a former Episcopalian, she was nervous about what she was hearing, observing that the slippery slope is paved in small, incremental changes. Listening to the rancorous debate, it was hard not to agree with her.

It was observed in our report on the 2001 convention that with the declaration of fellowship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Latvia, “From the standpoint of history, it will probably be found that this is the moment at which the Rubicon has been crossed; the step has been taken which will eventually lead the Missouri Synod to ordain women. *None* of the overtures submitted to the convention calling for women’s ordination were rejected.” (p. 9) It is our view that this convention continued to advance that agenda.

## No Action Taken Regarding Charismatic Heretics

The existence of the Charismatic group “Renewal In Missouri” (RIM) has been a source of ongoing conflict within the synod. Discussions went on for years between LC—MS leaders and representatives of RIM, but finally, in 1998, Resolution 3-12A instructed President Barry to “report to the next convention of the Synod regarding the results of these continuing discussions and bring a recommendation so that a God-pleasing conclusion may be brought to this matter.” (2001 *Today’s Business* 16) After the death of President Barry, Interim President Kuhn reported to the 2001 Convention:

What needs to be said at this point is that it is extremely difficult to say exactly how much progress has been made with the members of this charismatic organization that continues to exist in our Synod. ... Further, both presidential appointees and RIM representatives stated during the discussions that there are no common understandings of key terms such as “tongues” and “prophecy” and

“revelation.” ... The bottom line clearly is this: the charismatic movement and the teachings of God’s Word are incompatible. There are some who may hope to “Lutheranize” charismatic theology, but finally it is not possible. (2001 *Today’s Business* 16)

However, as we reported in 2001, the 61st Regular Convention took *no action* on a resolution which would have asked RIM to disband. Since the election of Rev. Kieschnick, RIM has been quite supportive of his administration, and of his reelection. The 62nd Regular Convention *again* failed to take action concerning RIM; the proposed (but never acted upon) Resolution 3-12 (“To Bring Discussions with RIM to a God-Pleasing Conclusion”) would have taken a series of joint “Affirmations and Rejections” (apparently found to be inadequate when first drafted following the 1998-2000 discussions) to declare the conflict at an end. Again, the Synod in convention has failed to act on this matter. As was observed in our report three years ago: “The synod has not kept its own commitment to bring this matter to a conclusion; indeed, there is presently no sign that the RIM members will *ever* face the choice of either repenting or leaving the synod, especially when RIM claims the support of roughly one out of ten pastors in the LC—MS.” (p. 18) No developments in the past three years have provided a reason to believe this situation has changed for the better.

## **Elections and the Consolidation of Power**

In the months leading up to the synodical convention, a significant amount of attention was dedicated to nominations for various offices, boards and a commission of the synod. There is a tremendous responsibility to pick those who are well-suited for such responsibility, because such offices carry with them a tremendous capacity for influencing the life and doctrine of the synod. When faithful individuals are selected for office, one hopes that they will serve faithfully, seeking to uphold God’s Word. However, when those who are motivated by another agenda are selected, there is great danger to the Church. The selection of false teachers to serve in office is of particularly significance. As one of the great teachers of the Lutheran Church of the 19th

century, Dr. C. P. Krauth, observed in his magnum opus, *The Conservative Reformation*:

When error is admitted into the Church, it will be found that the stages of its progress are always three. It begins by asking toleration. Its friends say to the majority: You need not be afraid of us; we are few, and weak; only let us alone; we shall not disturb the faith of others. The Church has her standards of doctrine; of course we shall never interfere with them; we only ask for ourselves to be spared interference with our private opinions. Indulged in this for a time, error goes on to assert *equal rights*. Truth and error are two balancing forces. The Church shall do nothing which looks like deciding between them; that would be partiality. It is bigotry to assert any superior right for the truth. We are to agree to differ, and any favoring of the truth, because it is truth, is partisanship. What the friends of truth and error hold in common is fundamental. Anything on which they differ is *ipso facto* nonessential. Anybody who makes account of such a thing is a disturber of the peace of the church. Truth and error are two coordinate powers, and the great secret of church-statesmanship is to preserve the balance between them. From this point error soon goes on to its natural end, which is to assert supremacy. Truth started with *tolerating*; it comes to be merely tolerated, and that only for a time. Error claims a preference for its judgments on all disputed points. It puts men into positions, not as at first in spite of their departure from the Church's faith, but in consequence of it. Their recommendation is that they repudiate that faith, and position is given them to teach others to repudiate it, and to make them skillful in combating it. (p. 195-196)

Leading up to the convention, the Confessional *Lutherans United* and the liberal *Jesus First* organizations generated suggested voting lists, reflecting the respective agendas of the two groups. For *Lutherans United*, this list is called the United List; the *Jesus First* list is known as the One List. Having made this observation, we do not automatically judge the motivations held by every individual represented on these lists. We do, however, believe that *Lutherans United* and *Jesus First* believed that those whom they included on their

respective lists will act in a way consistent with the general principles and teaching of their organizations.

The first display of Kieschnick's power over the election process came following his presidential report (read: campaign speech) on Sunday afternoon. In his intensely political speech, Kieschnick again attempted to defend his and David Benke's actions regarding the Yankee Stadium incident then, with unintended irony, launched into an attack against those who "disrupt and disturb this very convention". The official minutes note:

A motion was offered that "in view of the President's very impassioned and apologetic [i.e., defensive] speech, the Rev. Wallace Schulz be given at least 30 minutes by the convention prior to elections to speak on the same issue, and that if he chooses he may also choose other speakers or substitute speakers, and that currently scheduled items on the agenda be moved to another appropriate time." (*Today's Business* 261)

The motion was decisively defeated by essentially the same margin which would shortly thereafter reelect Gerald Kieschnick. Kieschnick was reelected as President of the LC—MS with 52.7% of the votes cast on the first ballot, with most of the rest of the votes divided between three 'confessional' candidates. The *Jesus First* 'machine' was so well coordinated that a mere nine votes were cast for William Diekelmann (the Oklahoma district president, and ally of Kieschnick). Lest anyone imagine this represented a lack of support for Rev. Diekelmann, the convention then voted him in as the new first vice president (replacing Daniel Preus) on the second ballot for that office. Dr. Wallace Schulz was replaced by Paul Maier, and Dean Nasdasdy became third vice president and David Buegler became the fifth vice president. Robert King was reelected to the Praesidium.

Daniel Preus had been outspoken in his opposition to the Yankee Stadium incident. Wallace Schulz was the man who found David Benke guilty of heresy. William Weinrich, as Academic Dean of the Fort Wayne Seminary, was involved in that faculty's statement against the unionism and syncretism committed by David Benke. Every one of these men was removed. *Jesus First* had swept from office all vice presidents who might oppose the "Team Kieschnick" (as *Jesus First* actually called it!) agenda.

Although several of the United List's recommendations for the synod's Board of Directors were elected, other boards were swept by *Jesus First's* One List. *Jesus First's* victories include: All three positions on the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (which oversees potential doctrinal statements and works for fellowship with other Lutheran church bodies); all three positions on the Lutheran Church Extension Fund; three out of four positions on the Board for Mission Services; two out of three positions on the Fort Wayne Seminary board of regents; and three out of five positions on the board of directors of Concordia Publishing House. Those elected to the Fort Wayne board of regents included President Kieschnick's cousin John Kieschnick, and Miriam Hoelter, the first woman to ever serve on the seminary's board of regents.

Among the most surreal moments of the convention came on Monday of the convention during a discussion of possible floor nominations. Floor nominations are one means of placing candidates into consideration after the presidentially-appointed committee has made its selections for the official ballot. When the closing time for floor nominations was announced, one delegate asked to see the list of available candidates (since the floor committee possessed a list of those whose names would be permitted consideration for nomination). The following from the official minutes well-summarizes the exchange:

A delegate requested that a list of the pool of names from the nominations process be provided. The committee reported that it had made a decision not to release those names. A motion was introduced that the names be released in a printed format to those who have a desire to look at them. This motion failed [Y: 382; N: 778]. After further discussion, a motion to require the committee to post the names of the people who were nominated also failed. [Y: 538; N: 628] (*Today's Business* 293)

The usual Kieschnick majority essentially closed off even the possibility of considering other candidates.

In conclusion, although the One List did not deliver a 'clean sweep' of all offices, it did direct a substantial realignment of elected boards and commissions of synod to "Team Kieschnick." Although Kieschnick supporters

do not yet make up a majority on the synod's Board of Directors, changes to the synodical bylaws have further "reigned in" their ability to challenge him.

## Bylaw and Constitutional Changes and the Consolidation of Power

In the report on the 2001 convention, it was reported: "When Resolution 7-04A ('To Promote Truth and Integrity in Convention Overtures') was read, delegates observed from the floor that it would have a 'chilling' effect on the synod." (p. 21) The reason was that the resolution amended the bylaws in such a way that it gave the president sole discretion to reject any overture to synod which he deemed "contains information which is *materially in error*, or contains any *apparent* misrepresentation of truth or of character." (p. 22) President Kieschnick readily admits that he made use of this new authority, as he reports in the second part of his President's Report (*Today's Business* 18). But the rejection of overtures was only a small part of the consolidation of authority witnessed at this convention.

Reacting to sweeping proclamations during the past three years by the presidentially-appointed Commission on Constitutional Matters (CCM), the synodically-elected Board of Directors (BOD) had declared several actions of the CCM to be 'null and void.' However, due to Resolution 7-02A ("To Amend Synodical Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws Regarding Officer and Board Responsibilities," *Today's Business* 278-280), the BOD will be precluded from such actions in the future. The new bylaws, approved by the usual 54.7%, declare "The management authority and duties of the Board of Directors of the Synod shall be limited to the extent such authority and duties are delegated by the Constitution and Bylaws of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod to other officers and agencies of Synod" and "It [the BOD] shall have the right to call up for review and criticism, and to request modification or revocation of, any action or policy of a program board, commission, or council, *except opinions of the Commission on Constitutional Matters.*" (emphasis added) The power of modification or revocation is meaningless if the CCM remains beyond the reach of the BOD, because it will allow an appointed commission to act in a way which is accountable *only* to the president of synod.

However, the most stunning transfer of responsibility came with the adoption of Resolution 8-01A (“To Amend Bylaws on Ecclesiastical Supervision and Dispute Resolution”). No doubt many delegates found the discussion of this resolution to be quite daunting; after all, floor committee 8 released *three* different versions of this resolution, filling *sixty-two* pages of three editions of *Today’s Business*. Several delegates commented on the sheer *scale* of the changes—both in terms of size, and in terms of polity—which the resolution would bring to the LC—MS. Many delegates favored referring to the Committee on Structure, since the resolution proposed radically transforming the entire synodical dispute resolution. In the end, however, the usual “Team Kieschnick” majority refused the motion, with only 46% voting to refer the resolution to the Committee on Structure.

Other delegates noted that the “gag” order which the changes would place over discussions of public sin were in clear violation of the Word of God (e.g. 3 John, 2 Tim. 2, Gal. 3, 1 Cor. 5, and all of Jesus’ public rebukes of the Pharisees) as well as our Lutheran Confessions (Large Catechism, Eighth Commandment). Such appeals to God’s Word and the Book of Concord were, of course, futile, and the synod in convention approved the changes by a predictable 56.4%.

As noted before, it is the belief of this author that the adoption of Resolution 8-01A was a fundamental change in the polity of the LC—MS. The resolution owes much of its substance to the recommendations of Rev. Kieschnick’s “Blue Ribbon Task Force on Ecclesiastical Supervision and Dispute Resolution.” The report of that Task Force fills an additional eighteen pages of the Convention *Workbook*. The recommendations of the Task Force can be summarized as follows: the synodical president will be even less accountable to the members of synod than he has been at any time in the history of the LC—MS, and the district presidents and synodical president will have all authority to file charges against members of the synod. In the words of the Task Force: “Charges which could lead to the expulsion of a member from Synod can only be brought by those who have supervisory responsibilities for that member (i.e., the accused’s supervisor only initiates formal proceedings against the accused, with the exception set forth in C.4 [which exempts the synodical president from such oversight]” (*Workbook* 27) Or in the words of Res. 8-01A: “The action to commence expulsion of a congregation or individual from membership in the Synod is the sole re-

sponsibility of the District President who has ecclesiastical supervision for such member.” (*Today’s Business* 308) The new bylaws give the district president sole authority to simply dismiss charges: “...if the determination is not to initiate formal proceedings, the District President shall in writing so inform the accuser, any other District President involved, and the involved member, which shall terminate the matter” (*Today’s Business* 308) and the synodical president will have sole authority to determine whether the district president has a conflict of interest in any case of ecclesiastical supervision. If a district president makes the decision to expel a member, the suspended member may appeal...to a Hearing Panel of three district presidents.

However, a very different system exists to deal with possible charges against the synodical president. A complex series of rulings and votes by the district presidents stand between any charges against the president and the congregations of synod voting on such charges. The final vote by the district presidents actually requires a 75 percent majority for charges to proceed!

These changes, which were adopted with passage of Resolution 8-01A, when combined with rulings of the Committee on Constitutional Matters (CCM) leave the synodical president essentially accountable to no one. Although some might maintain that the president is still accountable through the reelection process, such an assessment precisely misses the point: the issue is *not* whether there is any means for removing a president; rather, it is a question of whether any member of synod is above direct accountability to his confessional subscription. Resolution 8-01A establishes an episcopal polity, no matter *what* the synod chooses to call it, with a hierarchy of bishops and an archbishop over the synod, with each level accountable only to those who are ‘above’ them. With the CCM establishing that no charges may be filed for any action taking with the approval of one’s “ecclesiastical supervisor,” and with the synodical president—the seemingly-ultimate “ecclesiastical supervisor”—beyond any meaningful accountability, Missouri, it would seem, has possibly returned to her roots and the absolute authority of the Saxon’s first ‘bishop.’

On the final day of the convention, the issue of *Lutherans United* carried a summary article on its front page entitled, “Power and Primacy of the Presidents” which read as follows:

If there’s one overriding theme emerging from the 2004 convention it’s this: Presidents have gained power. The Synodical Presi-

dent has gained power because he appoints every member of the CCM, which now has precedence over the Board of Directors. Yet this President does answer to another powerful group—the Council of Presidents. The COP will leave this convention strengthened by a new Dispute Resolution process that makes the Presidents police, judge and jury. Presidents stand at the beginning, the middle, and the end of that process. Without a President’s permission, you have no case, no verdict, and only one recourse—to appeal to a Committee of three other District Presidents.

Today, the delegates will be asked to take power away from the seminaries and give it to the Presidents: the authority to certify new pastors. Delegates will also be asked to give their approval to the Presidents’ power—as “ecclesiastical supervisors”—to grant advance permission. If this is adopted, different people will be held to different standards. Rules are likely to become outdated and rather irrelevant.

The Synod’s first President, Dr. C. F. W. Walther, was known as a champion of the lay people and the parish pastors. He helped a struggling group of Lutherans to survive the personal indulgences of a tyrannical bishop. How far we have come since then. (p. 1)

Perhaps it is not surprising, then, that with the triumph of Missouri’s new ‘bishops’ that the howls for more money have already begun. The ‘need’ to *double* funds received by synod (a jump from \$21 million to \$42 million) is already being proclaimed (e.g., the video “Sow What?” recently sent to every parish by the Board of Directors) and the convention approved the proposal for “Ablaze!,” which includes an *additional* \$100 million in fundraising by 2010. The convention thus passed Resolution 4-07 (“To Establish Blue Ribbon Task Force for Funding the Mission,” *Today’s Business* 72–73) in order to formulate a “funding model... that fully meets the financial challenges facing the Synod” (73). One would presume that indulgences and the selling of masses will *not* be considered.

## “Here we have no Continuing City”

God’s Word declares in Hebrews 13: “Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate. Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach. For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come.” (v. 12–14)

First addressed to those in the Church who were drawn from the Jews, one can readily appreciate how truly radical these words are. The Church has no enduring city in this world; she departs the gates of the Jerusalem below, bearing reproach in these last days, as we await the new Jerusalem, which will descend out of heaven. There is no shame in bearing reproach for the sake of Christ, for St. Peter teaches us: “If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified.” (1 Pet. 4:14)

We teach in the Augsburg Confession “that one holy Church is to continue forever. The Church is the congregation of saints, in which the Gospel is rightly taught and the Sacraments rightly administered.” (VII:1) The one holy Church *will* continue forever, but “here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come.” The one holy Church is found by her *marks*, not her *address*. The one holy Church does not have an ‘eternal city’ in this world—not in Rome, not in Wittenberg, and not in St. Louis. It is *vital* that all those within the LC—MS who truly desire to remain faithful Lutherans recognize the ‘pilgrim’ nature of the Church in this world.

Within the fellowship of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, many of us have forgotten our own heritage as a pilgrim people, a people so committed to the pure proclamation of God’s Word that our theological forebears left Germany for the untamed lands of Missouri so that they could freely express their faith. For far too many, the sense of ‘being Church’ is expressed in human terms—usual expressed in a mantra of “2.5 million members, over 6,000 congregations, with 10 colleges and 2 seminaries.” Some are so captivated by the so-called assets of the synod, that they do not fully appreciate what they are trading away in their fight for control of money and property: what is being lost is the pure proclamation of the Word of God and the right administration of the Sacraments.

Buildings do not save souls; neither do church extension funds, endowments, or status as the tenth largest Protestant denomination in America.' Martin Luther wrote in the Smalcald Articles:

We do not acknowledge them [the Papists] as the Church, and they are not; we also will not listen to those things which, under the name of Church, they either enjoin or forbid. For, thank God, today a child seven years old knows what the Church is, viz. saints, believers and lambs who hear the voice of their Shepherd. For the children repeat: "I believe in one holy Christian Church." This holiness does not consist in an alb, a tonsure, a long gown and other of their ceremonies devised by them beyond Holy Scripture, but consists in the Word of God and true faith. (III. Art. XII)

Do we still retain the faith of a seven year old child? Do we still believe in one holy Christian Church? Or do we confuse the LC—MS for the Church? If so, then we have become no better than cheap, 'knockoff' Romanists, peddling an 'infallible' synod, apart from whose membership there is no salvation.

"The Church is the congregation of saints, in which the Gospel is rightly taught and the Sacraments rightly administered." This is the Church of which we are members by holy Baptism. Our confirmation oaths bind us not to a perishable synod, but to the Word of God and its pure confession in the Lutheran Symbols—it is concerning them which we have sworn an oath to suffer all, even death, rather than to fall away from them.

There can be no evasion of the clear Word of God: "A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject; knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself;" (Titus 3:10—11) "Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?," (2 Cor. 6:14) "Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them." (Rom. 16:17)

*"And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD." (Joshua 24:15)*

