# "Final Report on Six Points of Dissent"

A Report on the 2007 Convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

#### Introduction

Decisions and actions by Synodical officials and commissions following the 2001 Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) Convention were contrary to the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions. Our congregation spoke up against these decisions and actions, but needed to wait until 2004 to see how the Synod would respond. The 2004 LCMS Convention did not discipline or correct those errors; instead, the LCMS changed her historic public profession to include these new false teachings. On January 9, 2005, Trinity Lutheran Church (Herrin, IL) entered a State of Confession in order to bear witness to these errors and not commune with error. Since that time we have followed the Synodically-mandated three-step Dissent Process in order to call the Synod back from six points of false teaching and undisciplined false practice. In the final step of the dissent process we submitted ten overtures calling for revision or rescission to the July 2007 LCMS Convention in Houston. The 2007 LCMS Convention did not correct her errors in even one point. In Christian love and in accord with the truth of God's word, we must sever our association with the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, because she is a heterodox church, tolerating falsehood.

I. Our Lord's Warning.--The Holy Gospel (Matthew 7:15-23) for the Ninth Sunday after Trinity begins with Jesus' words, "Beware of false prophets...." Our Good Shepherd not only preaches the truth, but also warns his believers about the very real attack from false teachers. Christians and their pastors are not to become complacent or lazy concerning false teaching. They are to be relentlessly on guard to preserve the purity of doctrine and life in their midst. Paul tells the congregation in Rome(16:17), "Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them." St. Paul warns Pastor Timothy(1 Tim 4:16) to "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."

The forefathers of our congregation paid heed to our Lord's warning. Even though the Preamble of our congregation's constitution says, "The Word of God requires that a Christian Congregation conform to this Divine Word in doctrine and practice..." and Article III sets down the Holy Scriptures as the sole rule of faith and life and the Lutheran Confessions as a correct and sound exposition of the Christian doctrine taken from and in full accord with the Holy Scriptures, congregational Bylaw X gives provisions for removing a pastor and Trinity's constitution, article X gives provisions for severing synodical affiliation. Our congregation's constitution, Article X says, "This congregation shall be affiliated with the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod so long as the confessions and constitution of said Synod are in accordance with the confession and constitution of this congregation as set forth in Article III." After many years of effort, it is time to acknowledge that our six points of LCMS false teaching and undisciplined false practice are not being corrected and falsehood is being tolerated.

Out of faithfulness to God's Word (Rom. 16:17, 1 Tim 6:3ff, Titus 3:10), we must let the Missouri Synod go its way and avoid it.

### II. The 2007 LCMS Convention

**1. Closed Communion.-**-Our congregation's dissent lists six points in which the LCMS is teaching and/or tolerating falsehood. The first point is that although the synod's official position on paper is **closed communion**, "widespread open communion practices are not disciplined." We submitted an overture asking that the District Presidents visit each congregation in their District to assess whether closed communion is being practiced. Our District submitted a similar overture(3-46), which also asked that "extraordinary situations and circumstances" be discussed and defined.

After no debate, the **2007 LCMS** Convention passed **Resolution 3-13**, "To Respectfully Decline (Six) Overtures," (including our overture 3-46), because District President visitation is already included in the bylaws. This is true. But if District Presidents were doing their job, then open communion wouldn't be practiced by so many congregations. Therefore, by passing Res. 3-13 (dismissing our concern), widespread open communion practices will not be addressed.

2007 Resolution 3-09, "To Address Administration of the Lord's Supper" commends a 1999 Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) document for study and asks the CTCR to prepare practical guidelines for responsible pastoral care in administering Lord's Supper. Without an acknowledgement of any false communion practices in the Synod, this resolution declares that the Synod urges "its pastors and congregations to continue to abide by the practice of close(d) Communion, which includes the necessity of exercising responsible pastoral care in extraordinary circumstances"—as if nothing is wrong. The resolution does acknowledge "social and cultural changes in recent decades have presented new challenges" and "contemporary application of our historic position necessitates continued practical guidance," so that we need more study. It's hard to object to a resolution asking for more study.

Although cognizant that we need to put the best construction on everything, the persistent and widespread practice of open communion as well as official documents and statements about "exceptions" make it clear that the Synod is not attempting to address the real problem. Part 1 of the Synodical President's 2007 Convention Report, explains that we have "Synod Solidarity in the Midst of Synod Conflict" (Convention Workbook(CW), p.5). In other words, the problem is not false doctrine, but a needless disagreement over how "closed communion" is practiced. The 2004 President's Report was cited and included as an appendix (CW, p.420-421) to the 2007 President's Report, because it expressed the President's observations and concerns. It says, "There is significant disagreement about what constitutes 'extraordinary situations and circumstances,' which some pastors and congregations interpret very broadly and others quite narrowly. This disagreement in practice has resulted in dissension and disharmony between pastors and congregations of the LCMS, even though they are otherwise agreed on the doctrine of the Lord's Supper." 2007 Resolution 3-09 is not about studying the Scriptures in order to correct false practices, it is a resolution which seeks to study the emerging (false) practices and contemporary applications so that we may justify them based on social and cultural changes and contemporary applications.

Some examples to illustrate this conclusion:

--At the 2006 Southern Illinois District(SID) Convention, Synodical President Gerald Kieschnick responded to a question about closed communion by first saying that closed communion was a practice and not a doctrine. Second, he explained that he fully supported our Synod's position on close(d) communion including pastoral responsibility in extraordinary circumstances. He gave the example of a layman, who was brought up and confirmed in the LCMS, but then moved away to a rural town, which did not have a Missouri Synod church, so he joined a Methodist church. Whenever this layman came home to visit, President Kieschnick said that this former LCMS layman might be communed as a valid exception.

--During the debate concerning **2007 Resolution 3-01**, "To Declare Altar and Pulpit Fellowship with the American Association of Lutheran Churches(AALC)," a delegate asked why the students and professors of the AALC who are on the campus of the Concordia Theological Seminary (Fort Wayne) were being communed the last few years, though the LCMS was not in altar and pulpit fellowship with the AALC. The Synodical President answered the question by stating that he had the approval of both of the Seminary Presidents, the Praesidium, and the Council of Presidents and this was the exercise of pastoral responsibility in extraordinary circumstances.

--Part III of the 2007 Synodical President's Report(Today's Business(TB), p.235) says, "There is little if any disagreement among us on the doctrine of the Lord's Supper.... But there is significant disagreement regarding the policies of admission to Holy Communion, namely, who should be allowed or even encouraged to receive the Sacrament at the Altar in our congregations, campus ministries and military chaplaincies." Even though the LCMS has never been in altar and pulpit fellowship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), many congregations commune visiting ELCA members. Even though the Synod in Convention declared in 1998 Resolution 3-08A that the ELCA is "Lutheran" in name only, but not in substance, many campus ministries have "understandings" that they commune all Lutherans. The last resolve of 2007 Resolution 1-11, "To Continue Assessing LCMS Campus Ministry and its Association with the ELCA," which passed with an 83.4% vote, says, "That the Praesidium continue to assess the LCMS campus ministries and their association with the ELCA and report to the next convention of the Synod (2010) any suggested changes." The last resolve of 2007 Resolution 1-06, "To Commend our Chaplains," "commends the Ministry to the Armed Forces for providing clear supervision and support for our chaplains." Nevertheless, 2007 Overture 1-17 (CW, p.137), "To Return to Reciprocal Word and Sacrament Ministry with Other Lutheran Military Chaplains" explains that the 2003 Pacific Southwest District Convention adopted R-THEO-06 which encouraged the LCMS Armed Forces Commission reconsider a return to "reciprocal ministry of Word and Sacrament with other Lutherans, so that the LCMS and ELCA chaplains at conferences gather round the Word and Sacrament just as LCMS and ELCA military people benefit from a shared ministry in other circumstances and military locations."

**2. Contemporary Worship.--**The second point of our dissent is that "the widespread use of revivalistic '**Contemporary Worship**' is not disciplined." We submitted an overture asking the Synod to rescind 2004 Resolution 2-04, which directed

the Commission on Worship to "initiate a process leading toward the development of diverse worship materials." **This overture was rejected** by the Synodical President and was not printed in the 2007 Convention Workbook at all. The Synodical President claims, "This overture contains information that is materially in error and is an apparent misrepresentation of truth and character." Though the Synod didn't see it, the overture was given to the floor committee, along with the President's comments. Included in the 2007 Convention Workbook were 5 overtures supporting and encouraging contemporary worship and 3 overtures asking for study of "our theology of worship." The SID Board of Directors resubmitted their overture(which was also rejected by the LCMS President) with changes and it was printed as a late overture(L2-26, TB, p.40-46).

In response, **2007 LCMS Resolution 2-01**, "To Foster Greater Understanding of Worship through Theological Conferences" passed with a vote of 76.3%. This resolution directs the Commission on Worship and the CTCR to organize a theological conference in order to "build a greater understanding of our worship and foster further discussion of worship practices that are consistent with that theology" (also from 2004 Res. 2-04). Once again, though it might appear that this resolution seeks to study the Scriptures and come to a decision about whether 'Contemporary Worship' is Scriptural or not, this is not the case at all.

Immediately following 2007 Res. 2-01, the Synod approved 2007 Resolution 2-02A, "To Provide Guidance and Direction for Use of Diverse/Contemporary Worship Resources," with a vote of 73.4%. The only resolve of this resolution, states, "That the Commission on Worship implement the recommendations included in its report to the convention (CW, p.54)." These recommendations include developing web resources, conferences, Seminary curriculum to train seminarians, a worship arts degree at a Concordia University, and a network of composers to promote Contemporary Worship. One of the delegates mentioned that we should not proceed with Res. 2-02A until the outcome of Res. 2-01 determined the appropriateness of Contemporary Worship. The committee chairman rebutted, "The LCMS does not have a diversity in the theology of worship, but a diversity of practice." A rather blunt amendment offered to remove the underlined words in the sentence "Many LCMS congregations are regularly making use of contemporary worship songs to the glory of God and the edification of His people," so that the sentence stated the fact that congregations use contemporary worship, but did not make any judgment about whether it was God-pleasing. The amendment failed with only 21.3% support.

3. Syncretism and Unionism.--The third point of our dissent is that the "renunciation of unionism and syncretism of every description" is no longer practiced or disciplined. We submitted overture 3-17 asking the Synod to rescind 2004 Res. 3-06A and 2001 Res. 3-07A, because they did not unambiguously renounce syncretism and unionism. We also asked for guidelines to be produced that would rule out any repetition of LCMS participation in syncretism and unionism in the future. 2001 Res. 3-07A was used to give approval for LCMS participation in government-sponsored events. 2004 Res. 3-06A denied the possibility of unionism and syncretism for serial prayers in which clergy take turns.

**2007 Resolution 3-04A**, "To Call for a Study of the Natural Knowledge of God and Its implications for Public Witness," was passed by the convention by a vote of 64.3%. The first resolve states, "That the Synod in convention reaffirm its confession that there is no salvation apart from Jesus Christ and that it is impossible to worship the one true God in spirit and truth(Jn 4:23ff) apart from saving faith in Jesus Christ" (underline added). The original resolution had the word, "properly," in place of the underlined "in spirit and truth(Jn 4:23ff)." On the floor of the Convention an amendment was proposed to strike the underlined section, in order to bring clarity. That amendment was rejected by a 64.3% vote.

So what is this all about? There are some in the LCMS who maintain that by "natural knowledge" non-Christians can worship the true God improperly, though they are not saved. Those who hold to this erroneous opinion, wish to use this improper worship with non-Christians as a point of evangelism. One of the delegates speaking against the amendment stated that he favored the new wording of 3-04A, because like the women at the well (John 4:23ff) non-Christians do worship the true God, just not in spirit and truth. We would maintain that the Scriptures and the Confession teach that apart from saving faith, non-Christians cannot worship the true God at all--though by "natural knowledge" they can know that there is a god.

The second resolution dealing with unionism was **2007 Resolution 3-05** "To Provide Further Discussion and Guidance on the Matter of Serial Prayer." One whereas states, "Congregations of the Synod have requested further clarification regarding serial prayer." The only resolve states, "That the Synod in convention assigns to the CTCR the task of providing further guidance for participation in civic events that include the offering of serial prayer." This resolution passed with an 85.2% vote. It may very well be that the delegates thought they were giving the congregations of the Synod what they wanted. Nevertheless, our congregation and some others declared that serial prayer was wrong. The innovation of "serial prayer" denies the possibility of unionism/syncretism by saying that people take turns praying. These resolutions build on the foundation laid by the CTCR document on Civic Events approved by the Convention in 2004 Res. 3-06A and the misinterpretation of 2001 Res. 3-07A.

**4.** Lay Minister (lay deacon).--The fourth point of our dissent is that "the unscriptural office of 'lay minister' (lay deacon) is not being removed, but recognized, affirmed, and encouraged." We submitted an overture asking that 1989 Res 3-05B, which established licensed lay deacons, and 2004 Res. 5-09, which affirmed District programs that equip laity for ministry, be rescinded.

2007 Resolution 5-01B, "To Establish Specific Ministry Pastor Program" (SMPP) established a separate office of "Specific Ministry Pastor," as opposed to "General Ministry Pastor." A Specific Ministry Pastor is given a very limited number of courses before call and ordination and then a very limited number of courses following call and ordination. This resolution was billed as a revision of the DELTO Program established by the 2001 Convention. A Specific Ministry Pastor is not allowed to take a call outside of his specific ministry context and also is placed under the supervision of a General Ministry Pastor and the District President. Although I would question whether a man who has been given such a limited education is "apt to teach" (1 Tim. 3:2), nevertheless this program is not theoretically against the Scriptures and the Confessions--this new

office is not a layman doing pastoral functions without a call. It needs to be said that this resolution does not address the unscriptural office of lay minister at all. Many conservative delegates have expressed the hope that the SMPP will attract present lay ministers and will eventually supercede the lay minister programs. Again, it must be stated that those hopes are just that, hopes. Nothing in the SMPP resolution speaks of this, nor has anything been passed which states anything like this.

The Synod did speak to the issue of lay ministers with **2007 Resolution 5-02**, "To Address Licensed Lay Deacons." The first whereas states that 1989 Res. 3-05B, which authorized lay men to serve in Word and Sacrament ministry was never intended to serve as an alternate route into the pastoral office. The second whereas states, "The need for such licensed lay deacons may still be present in those relatively rare and unusual situations where no ordained pastor is available, 'lest God's people be deprived of the opportunity for corporate worship and the celebration of the Sacraments." The only resolve states, "That the Board for Pastoral Education and the Council of Presidents be requested to study the situations currently served by licensed lay deacons to determine whether there continues to be a genuine need for this program within the Synod; and to present a report with recommendations to the 2010 convention of the Synod."

Executive Director of the CTCR, Sam Nafzger, in his presentation said, "The LCMS has understood that, according to the Treatise (on *rejecting* the Power and Primacy of the Pope), there may be...situations when laymen may carry out pastoral functions." A delegate from the convention floor stated that he questioned Dr. Nafzger's interpretation of the Treatise and asked Dr. Nafzger to read the entire context, paragraphs 69-72 of the Treatise. He mentioned that he is embarrassed to always have to explain to his people that lay ministers are in violation of Augsburg Confession, article XIV. And finally, the delegate said that the Synod needs to admit that it was wrong, and use this opportunity to set things right. The Convention did no such thing. The resolution was passed by a vote of 82.4%. By this resolution there will be absolutely no change with lay ministry in the LCMS. The only thing which this resolution does is provide a report of whether there is still a need for lay ministers to the next convention. As Dr. Nafzger said in his presentation to the convention, "Resolution 5-02 presumes that these lay deacons will continue to serve in their ministries."

5. Order of Creation.--The fifth point of our dissent is that "the 'order of creation' (that a woman is not "to have authority over a man," 1 Timothy 2:12), has been removed in order to allow a woman to serve as elder and congregational chairman." We submitted an overture to reject the unapproved 1994 CTCR report, "The Service of Women in Congregational and Synodical Offices," to rescind 2004 Res. 3-08A, which affirmed the conclusions of the same unapproved 1994 CTCR report, and to direct the LCMS to apply the Scriptural teaching on the Order of Creation to both the pastoral office and all humanly established offices. The Convention passed **LCMS 2007 Resolution 3-07**, "To Study Report Relating to the Service of Women in the Church," by a 75.3% vote. A substitute resolution(Over 3-68) "To Rescind 2004 Res. 3-08A, Withdraw (2005) Guidelines (for the Service of Women in Congregational Offices) and Study Orders of Creation and Redemption," which asked for the same action as our

submitted overture, failed to be considered with only 39.4% of the delegates in favor of considering it in place of the floor committee's resolution.

The first resolve of the approved 2007 Resolution 3-07 commends the synod to study Section 3 of CTCR Response to Expressions of Dissent (2004-2006). In Dr. Nafzger's explanation, the CTCR has received 25-27 expressions of dissent to LCMS 2004 Res. 3-08A. In Section Three(CW, p.405-406) the CTCR acknowledges that there is an order of creation (and applies it to the pastoral office), but does not agree with the dissenters concerning "the doctrinal implications and applications of the order of creation for the service of women in the church." Instead the CTCR states, "there is no 'thus says the LORD' about the implications of the order of creation for service in these offices."

This having been said, the CTCR opines that even in these humanly instituted offices "the congregation's polity should uphold the God-given family structure," which is rooted in the order of creation" (CW, p.406). So does the CTCR then apply their vague "family structure" to other church offices? No. Since congregational polity is adiaphora(neither commanded nor forbidden), the CTCR says that these decisions must be left to "individual Christians and congregations." They say, "But there is an important distinction between applications explicitly made by Scripture and applications that are left to our own ministerial use of reason." Thus, concerning other offices, there is not implication to follow the order of creation in the Scriptures. But if the order of creation is to be applied, it must be done individually according to "sanctified common sense." In the end, the CTCR denies the dissenters protest. "The CTCR... believes... we are bound to *Scripture alone* as the norm when it comes to making doctrinal judgments about the specific implications and applications of the order of creation for the service of women in the church." And in the CTCR's sanctified common sense, the order of creation is not implied, nor is it to be applied, except to the Pastoral office.

The second resolve of the approved 2007 Resolution 3-07 directs "that the Synod await the CTCR comprehensive report on the scriptural relationship of man and woman to be completed in 2008 and, upon its release, engage in a thorough, synodwide study of this report." Although, others will need to evaluate this report when it is finally released, the initial reports about it do not give great hope. The process used to develop this report includes 4 consultations with eight men and eight women. As of the convention, two consultations have been held and two are still to occur. Not only are some of the sixteen participants(CW, p. 66) supporters of women's ordination (as well as, supporters of *Jesus First*), but shouldn't a study of "the scriptural relationship of man and woman" be devoted to studying the Scriptures, not polling the opinions of men and women. Furthermore, the doctrines of God's Word do not change based on the gender of the interpreter. It is not a good sign when participants are chosen based on gender and not theological expertise.

Finally, it has been said that what kind of answer you get, depends on how you ask the question. According to Dr. David Lumpp, chairman of the CTCR subcommittee, the first consultation focused on "key questions that anyone who thinks theologically in the 21st century will need to address to give meaningful guidance to Christians regarding the relationship of man and woman." This is not a good starting point. Providing "Meaningful guidance" from or for 21st century thinkers is not the job of the CTCR. The key questions of 21st Century thinkers may be the wrong questions.

6. Ecclesiastical Supervision and Dispute Resolution.--The sixth point of our dissent is that "Ecclesiastical Supervision and Dispute Resolution now allows human councils to overrule the Word of God." We submitted several overtures to address some of these problems. We submitted overture 8-26 asking the Synod to rescind 2004 Res. 8-01A, which changed the Dispute Resolution and Ecclesiastical Supervision Process, giving the District President as ecclesiastical supervisor the sole right to judge the doctrine and practice of members of Synod. With 66.1% of the vote, the convention passed 2007 Res. 8-02A which resolved "that the members of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod honor their commitment to utilize Synod's dispute resolution process as the exclusive and final remedy to resolve any disputes, conflicts, disagreements or offenses within the Synod."

With the passage of **2007 Res. 8-05A**, "To Encourage the Study of CTCR Documents Relating to Public Rebuke of Public Sin," (with a high 88.6% of the vote) there was a partial concession, or at least a clarification, concerning the bylaw requirement of a face-to-face meeting "following the guidelines of Matt. 18:15" (as it said in 2004 Res. 8-01A). 2007 Res. 8-05A (TB, p.290) acknowledged that the face-to-face meeting described in Matthew 18 does not apply to cases of public sin. Nevertheless, though not scripturally required, the Synod will continue to require it for the Synodical Dispute Resolution process in cases of public sin. 2007 Res. 8-05A also went on to affirm 7 conclusions of the CTCR report "Public Rebuke of Public Sin." During the debate on 2007 Res. 8-05A, the Synodical President ruled that a substitute resolution(TB, p.377) which desired to rescind 2004 Res. 8-01A was "not germane to Res. 8-05A." His decision was upheld by a vote of 71.8%.

We also submitted an overture to rescind 2004 Res. 7-02A, which amended the synodical articles of incorporation so that the Synodical Board of Directors would not be allowed to overrule the opinions of the Committee on Constitutional Matters(CCM) in between conventions. In addition, 2004 Res. 7-02A overturned the LCMS Board of Directors action which declared CCM opinions (02-2296, 02-2309, 02-2320) to be "of no effect." You might remember that CCM opinions 02-2296 and 02-2320 stated, "The Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod do not allow or contemplate the expulsion of a member of the Synod on the basis of an action taken with the full knowledge and approval of the appropriate ecclesiastical supervisor." **Our overture was rejected** by the Synodical President as "materially in error" and was not printed in the 2007 Convention Workbook at all.<sup>2</sup>

**2007 Resolution 8-10** (p.151) "To Refer for Theological Study CCM Opinions 02-2296, 02-2309 and 02-2320" (to the CTCR in consultation with Council of District Presidents and Commission on Structure) passed with 77.9% of the vote. This resolution acknowledges that ten submitted overtures(8-47 through 8-57) expressed Scriptural concerns about these three CCM opinions, but denies that any of those overtures have "a substantive rationale" for those opinions being in error. Nevertheless, because there were substantive changes in "the means, methods, and manner of dispute resolution and ecclesiastical supervision" enacted at the 2004 convention, following these opinions, this resolution asks that these CCM opinions be reviewed "to show how the theological issues are addressed." In other words, the CCM opinions which helped to acquit those involved in the Yankee Stadium service and the 2004

overhaul of the Dispute Process, which only allows District President to file charges, will be referred to the CTCR. Why? Not because they are scripturally in error, but so that the CTCR can give a report to justify how these CCM opinions address theological issues.

During the debate on 2007 Res. 8-10, **a substitute resolution**(TB, p.378) was offered, which laid out the rationale for rescinding these opinions and asked that the Synod overrule them. By this time on Thursday, many delegates had left and the vote count was now down to only 801 votes cast from 1,200 votes a few days ago. Usually the person offering a substitute resolution is given two minutes to persuade the delegates to consider his substitute resolution and then the delegates vote on whether to consider it. The two-minute speech not only spoke about the reason for considering this substitute resolution and rescinding these opinions, but also spoke to the unfair tactics of the Convention Chairman and the floor committees.

I paraphrase his comments: "In submitting overtures, many members of Synod have expressed concerns to the convention. Those concerns are not being heard. In this issue alone, there are seven districts, nine congregations, two circuit forums, and one pastors' conference. The 2007 floor committee's resolution sidesteps the issue and does not address our concern. The 2004 Convention refused to directly address these CCM opinions. Now it is late on the final day of the 2007 Convention and many delegates have already left. Quite simple, we would desire real debate on the real issue, if that is even possible. Allow us to consider this substitute resolution so that we can discuss and then have an up-or-down vote on the real issue."

Instead of moving directly to a vote, the chair asked the chairman of the Committee on Constitutional Matters(CCM), Wilbert Sohns, to comment. Despite a challenge from the floor that the President was breaking Standing Rule 15 by calling on other speakers before a vote to consider the substitute resolution, the assembly voted 58.5% to allow the CCM chairman to speak. The CCM chairman appeared to read from notes, "The comments from the speaker are not quite correct. The 2004 Convention did deal with these opinions. The second resolve of 2004 Res. 7-02 gave an emphatic affirmation of these CCM opinions. In addition, this 2007 convention has already passed Res. 8-01A which provides a procedure for reviewing CCM opinions in between conventions." This substitute resolution failed to be considered as it governed only 46.8% in favor of considering.

[Note: Points 7 through 10 do not directly address our six points of dissent.]

7. Fellowship with the American Association of Lutheran Churches

(AALC).—Whenever 2007 Resolution 3-01, "To Declare Altar and Pulpit Fellowship with the American Association of Lutheran Churches," was presented both the floor committee chairman and the executive director of the CTCR, Sam Nafzger, gave presentations to assure the delegates that the AALC has the same view of the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions as the LCMS. He also assured the delegates that all past "concerns" have been resolved.

The delegates from the floor of the convention gave multiple examples of "concerns" that have not been resolved. Open communion and charismatic activity was reported by a survey sent to AALC congregations. An AALC congregation near one of the delegates is being served by a non-Lutheran pastor. A District President explained

that a pastor(there are 6 or 7 known cases), who he had removed from the LCMS clergy roster, was welcomed into the AALC and will now be able to preach and administer the sacraments in LCMS congregations. It would seem that after approving a three-word amendment asking the Synodical President to be responsible for implementing this (fellowship) relationship "and for reconciliation," (with these removed, but now AALC pastors and the LCMS congregations who were affected) the convention was satisfied. There was a question about Concordia Theological Seminary (Fort Wayne) already communing students and professors of the AALC the past few years as I mentioned on page 2 under "Closed Communion."

In the end LCMS delegates approved fellowship with the AALC by a 71% vote. There are only two logical explanations for this action. The first is that the delegates trust LCMS authority figures and do not trust the words of fellow delegates so that they consider the AALC to be both confessional and Lutheran. The other possibility is that the delegates don't really think it is necessary to be in agreement on these things, and thus simply voted to go into fellowship despite disagreements.

8. Doctrine and Practice.--2007Resolution 4-01A "To Plan Summit to Restore Harmony"(p.242) was approved with a vote of 85.7%. This resolution gives the Council of Presidents(COP: the 35 District Presidents) and the LCMS Board of Directors "the responsibility to initiate a specific plan to clarify... a strategy to restore harmony in our Synod." Everyone would desire that there would be harmony within the LCMS. However, there is a great difference of opinion concerning the diagnosis of the problem and thus the corresponding solution is different. 2007 Resolution 3-11, "To Endeavor to Keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace," passed with a vote of 90.1%. This resolution declares, "From the founding of our Synod 160 years ago we have been blessed with the gift of unity in our common confession and the articles of our shared faith." During the discussion of Res. 3-11 and at others times, it has been stated by the chairman and other floor committee chairmen(who are District Presidents) that the Synod is not divided in doctrine. When we take Resolution 4-01A and Resolution 3-11 together, we can see the approved official position of the Synod concerning synodical discord. According to Res. 3-11 the Synod is united in doctrine and needs only "to endeavor to keep the Unity," however the problem is expressed in the 5th whereas of Res. 4-01A which states, "personal opinions and differences regarding practical application of clearly stated doctrine have made for continued discord." Thus, it is thought that Synodical dis-harmony is caused by needless discord over acceptable differences in the application of doctrine. Our congregation sees things quite differently. In simple terms, we have called the synod heterodox; while the synod has responded by saying that we are schismatic (dividing over unimportant issues).

The Lutheran Confessions speak to the requirement of full agreement in doctrine and practice. Although human traditions need not be the same, Augsburg Confession, article VII, makes it clear that "it is enough for the true unity of the church to agree concerning the teaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments." Instead of maintaining that there must be complete agreement in the Gospel and all its articles, **the third resolve of Res. 4-01A** says that the synod is going to hold meetings "to define how narrow or wide the road we 'walk together' (synod) must be when it

comes to worship practice, the role of the laity, close communion, the role of women, and our interaction with fellow Christians."

9. Special 2009 Convention.—2007 Substitute Resolution 8-07, was passed by a 70.9% vote which said that the delegates stand ready to serve if the Synodical President and two-thirds of the District Presidents decide that a special convention is needed after District Conventions are completed in 2009. At a cost of \$2.5 million, this special convention is going to consider the work of the current Blue Ribbon Task Force on Synod Structure and Governance in order to make proposals to rewrite the LCMS constitution and bylaws. Substitute Res. 8-07 says the special convention will address "areas of overlap and duplication of responsibilities, declining resources from unrestricted funding, inequitable representation on elected boards and commissions, and other substantive issues." It is enough to say that the proposed changes are not yet written down, but the recommendations from the above Task Force are quite controversial.

## III. Response to 2007 LCMS Convention

Although we have been speaking up about many of our six points since at least 2001, it was the official actions of the 2004 LCMS Convention that prompted our State of Confession on January 9, 2005 and the simultaneous action of following the three-step Synodical Dissent process. As this report shows, despite our every effort to call the Synod back, the 2007 LCMS Convention did not correct the false teachings and undisciplined false practices of even one of our six points.

"To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven:

- ...a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;
- ...a time to keep, and a time to throw away;
- ...a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;
- ...a time for war and a time for peace" (Eccl. 3:1-8, selected verses).

At the beginning of our effort to call Synod back, we didn't know what the outcome would be. We simply knew that the Lord called us to be faithful to His Word and not to commune with falsehood. We thought that LCMS pastors and laymen would want to know the truth. We thought that there would be others like ourselves, who would want to keep the faith of our fathers and would desire to turn our Synod back to the truth. We thought that those given to supervision would seek to correct the errors within their Districts. We found out otherwise.

"Do not correct a scoffer, lest he hate you;

Rebuke a wise man, and he will love you.

Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser;

Teach a just man, and he will increase in learning" (Proverbs 9:8-9).

Over time, our members began to realize that some LCMS pastors and congregations had been embracing the very errors to which we objected for many years. In fact, they proudly promoted them. They were not going to change.

Second, many LCMS pastors and congregations simply did not care to hear any warning from God's Word. It was inconceivable that their home congregation, their pastor, their relatives, and especially that the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod could be in error. Reminiscent of the medieval Roman church objections to German monk,

the LCMS was confidently declared to be incapable of error. But more to the point, other things were simply more important—family ties, youth gatherings, four-color Synodical magazines, and aspirations of LCMS positions and stipends. Members spend countless hours putting on chicken dinners and trivia nights, but can't find time to learn and become informed about the actions of their own Synod.

Third, some LCMS pastors and congregations agreed with our six points of dissent, but would not fight against that falsehood with actions. 1 John 3:18, "My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth." For some the Synodical falsehood was not bad enough to warrant action, only complaining. For others their agreement with us was not an act of conscience based on faithfulness to God's Word, it was personal preference for what I grew up with. And sadly, for still others it was that the congregational member and the pastor were divided in their judgment on falsehood and thus no action was taken.

Over time, as we began to foresee the outcome—that our dissent would not be heeded—some members would ask if we could just leave the Missouri Synod right now. I would sigh and say, "No. We need to see the process through to the end, if for nothing else than, for the sake of our fellow Christians." Although our staying involved much more trouble and labor, danger and trial, and in addition it brought little of the world's gratitude and rewards, it was necessary for us and helpful for many others. By staying, we were convinced that we did everything that was required. Many others, who only had received official Synodical publications, have come to realize the presence and extent of the false teaching and undisciplined false practice within the LCMS. As a result of our efforts, we have left behind a paper trail of one congregation's State of Confession and Synodical dissent. We have exposed the falsehood. We have documented and provided references for the actions of the LCMS in convention resolutions, CTCR reports, commissions, and given example of what is common knowledge concerning widespread false practices. [In the next few weeks the many packets of audio CDs, papers, documents, etc. that we have been physically sending out, will be made available at our web site www.trinityh.org.] We have backed up our words with actions.

Now is the time to leave. It is not that we no longer wish to love our neighbor, but instead at this point the way that we love our neighbor in the LCMS is by leaving her. There finally comes a time in which we must act.

We do realize that there are some pastors and laymen who are just beginning to see the false teachings and practices. These brothers are investigating their options and will act upon them. Some of these brothers have asked us to stay and fight. Our heart goes out to them, because we know the ridicule and persecution that they will receive from others. However, if we stay, then we will have become that which we fought against. Just as our action over the past three years was to stay and fight for the truth out of love for our Missouri brothers, so now we must put our words into action and flee from falsehood(Rom 16:17) out of love for our Missouri brothers. In Titus 3:10-11, it says "Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned." There was a time to stay, but now there is a time to leave.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

We give thanks to our gracious God who has been pleased to use this Synod over many years. As a voluntary human organization and polity "to conserve and promote the unity of the faith," the Synod has assisted congregations and pastors as an instrument used in the service of the Gospel. Nevertheless, we dare not give her more honor than she deserves. When St. John fell down to worship an angel, it said, "See that you do not do that! I am your fellow servant..." (Rev. 19:10). An instrument is an instrument. Now, if that instrument is not being used rightly, we must not honor it, but cast it aside. St. Paul warned about an unfaithful servant saying, "But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed" (Gal 1:8).

Even in the midst of this conflict and strife over pure doctrine, we have a God who works out all things for the good. 1 Corinthians 11:19 says, "For there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you." We need not fear that things are out of control. Without this controversy, we would not have known those among us who believe, teach or practice falsely. We would not have realized that years of neglect in teaching the Word of God and the lack of discipline among our pastors had resulted in such widespread divergence in doctrine and practice. Our God is admonishing us so that we can become wiser still. Our God is teaching us to cling to His Word by taking away those things which had become our idols. "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me..." (Matthew 10:37). He is testing us to see whether we will cling to His Word and "flee from falsehood," or look the other way.

Some might say, "But where will you go?" We don't need to go anywhere. We are Lutherans. We don't have to run off looking for the church in some external church polity so that we may join her. The church is "holy believers and lambs who hear the voice of their Shepherd" (Smalcald Articles III, XII, 2). Furthermore, "Namely, where God's Word is pure, and the Sacraments are administered in conformity with the same, there certainly is the Church, and there are Christians" (Apology, VII and VIII, 5).

If Christ had compassion on the multitude who clung to His Word for three days and fed them by seven loaves and two fish, He can surely take our small store and make it more than enough to sustain a pastor and congregation. If Christ was faithful in such small things; He can surely be trusted in large things. With the forgiveness of sins, there is nothing that Satan and his dominions can do to us. Matthew 6:33, "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."

August 5, 2007

Pastor Michael D. Henson Trinity Lutheran Church (Herrin, IL) www.trinityh.org

# Trinity Lutheran Church (Herrin, IL) Resolution for August 19, 2007

Whereas, all Christians are commanded to avoid those who teach or tolerate falsehood in their midst (Rom 16:17, 1 Tim 6:3ff); and

Whereas, following the 2004 Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod(LCMS) Convention, we have identified six points in which the LCMS is teaching and/or tolerating falsehood.

- 1. Widespread open communion practices are not disciplined.
- 2. Widespread use of revivalistic "Contemporary Worship" is not disciplined.
- 3. The "renunciation of unionism and syncretism of every description," is no longer practiced or disciplined.
- 4. The unscriptural office of "lay minister" is not being removed, but recognized, affirmed, and encouraged.
- 5. The "order of creation" (1 Timothy 2:12), has been removed in order to allow a woman to serve as elder and congregational chairman.
- 6. Ecclesiastical Supervision and Dispute Resolution now allows human councils to overrule the Word of God; and
- Whereas, on January 9, 2005, Trinity Lutheran Church (Herrin, IL) entered a State of Confession in order to bear witness to these errors and not commune with error; and
- Whereas, since the 2004 LCMS Convention, Trinity Lutheran Church (Herrin, IL) has followed the synodically-mandated three-step Dissent Process in order to call the Synod back from six points of false teaching and undisciplined false practice; and
- Whereas, having submitted overtures to the July 2007 LCMS Convention, the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod did not correct her errors in even one point; therefore
- Be it resolved that on August 19, 2007, in accord with the truth of God's word and out of Christian love, Trinity Lutheran Church is severing our association with the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, because it is a heterodox union, tolerating falsehood.

Passed by a vote of 35 yes to 1 no.

In the third whereas that which is referred as being listed in Article IV of the Constitution is materially in error, as the conditions for acquiring and holding membership in the Synod are listed in Article VI of the Constitution.

In the fifth whereas, the statement, "it is no secret that our President has been heavily promoting the use of contemporary worship in our Synod from within his Ablaze! program," is a misrepresentation of truth as the president has not "been heavily promoting the use of contemporary worship." It is further a misstatement to refer to Ablaze! as "his program." Ablaze! is a proposal stemming from LCMS World Mission and its goals were adopted for action by the Synod in convention.

Also, in the fifth whereas, it is a misstatement of truth to state regarding the president that, "he sees the solution as having the synod approve and develop more of these methods," as the Synod in convention approves resolutions, not the president. Further in the same whereas to express such a lackadaisical attitude as reflecting the president's concern for and views on worship is misrepresentative of his character.

In the seventh whereas, misrepresentation of character and non-substantiated judgments of heterodoxy are cast upon Lutherans whose practice includes contemporary worship.

In the thirteenth whereas the statement, "Even when the excitement and novelty of Evangelical Protestant Revivalism does result in a short-term increase in attendance, enthusiasm, outreach, caring-attitude, etc, there is not a corresponding real growth in faith and Christian knowledge," cannot be substantiated or verified as truth, is judgmental conjecture, and calls into question the Word of the Lord in Isaiah 55:10-11, "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it."

<sup>2</sup> X8-11-02, This overture contains information that is materially in error (material in question is highlighted on overture). Namely, in the fourth whereas, the statement that "if a member of the Synod were to act contrary to Article XIII, but with the approval of his or her ecclesiastical supervisor, these CCM opinions would prevent a member of the Synod from being called to account publicly for his or her act," does not represent the full truth of CCM Opinion 02-2309, which states fully, "It would be inconsistent with the above constitutional provisions to place the membership of an individual or congregation at risk where that member relies on the ecclesiastical supervision and counsel of the person called and chosen for that role or function. If an act is in fact contrary to Article XIII of the Constitution, the member who acted cannot be charged since he or she acted according to the advice of his or her ecclesiastical supervisor. It should be noted, however, that when an ecclesiastical supervisor discovers error in his counsel, it is incumbent upon that supervisor to correct or amend it. The member should then be held to consider the corrected counsel. Failure to consider such amended admonition could form the basis for disciplinary action as provided in Article XIII." (See full CCM Opinion 02-2309 attached.)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> X2-01-05A - This overture contains information that is materially in error and is an apparent misrepresentation of truth and character. Some specific examples of that kind of information are noted below and are highlighted on the overture.