

The Concordia Lutheran



"The Scripture cannot be broken." John 10:35

"Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path." Psalm 119:105

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"In Thy presence is
fulness of joy;
at Thy right hand
there are pleasures
for ebermore."

—Psalm 16:11



**OFFICIAL ORGAN
of the
Concordia Lutheran
Conference**

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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE:

To set forth in simple and plain language the pure doctrine of God's Word as taught by the true Lutheran Church in full accordance with the *Book of Concord of 1580* and the *Brief Statement of 1932*.

To show, on the basis of Scripture, what true Christians are to believe and how, out of love for their Savior Jesus Christ, they are to lead Godly lives.

To furnish aids for Bible study and articles for Scriptural devotion and meditation.

To demonstrate, by our Scriptural stand, that our Concordia Lutheran Conference is not a sect or false church body, but that the congregations which form it confess, teach, and practice the Word of God in its full truth and purity and use the Sacraments according to Christ's institution. All who do this are the true visible Church on earth.

To seek out all who truly share our Scriptural position in doctrine and practice, and to urge the mutual public acknowledgment of such God-given unity. Thus we shall be able thereafter to practice a God-pleasing fellowship with them.

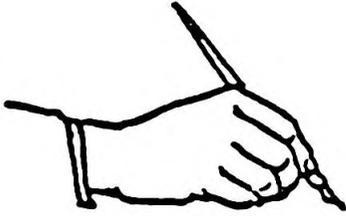
To show that we do not have among us a mixture of divergent teachings but that we are "perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."

To set forth pertinent historical information which has a bearing upon the Church and to expose modern philosophical thought and the so-called scientific theories which contradict the Word of God.

To expose particularly the false teaching and practice of the various so-called "Lutheran" church bodies by comparing their teachings and practices with what is plainly recorded in the Word of God, in the Lutheran Confessions, and in the old orthodox Lutheran writings.

To expose false teaching and practice wherever it makes its appearance and to keep abreast of the current happenings in the church and among the nations as signs of the times.

To be truthful and factual in our reporting and freely to correct any misinformation of which we are not aware and which has been called to our attention. Also to clarify any information or statement of doctrine or practice which may be unclear to our readers or which may create a wrong impression.



The President's Column

Our readers are asked to look back to the previous page which contains our masthead. For those of you who are regular readers, you will notice several changes. We have a new Editor of this periodical, and a new Vice-President, a new Treasurer, and a new President of our beloved Conference. Some of these changes are noteworthy. Permit me to highlight them briefly.

First, the office of Vice-President was actually vacated prior to our recent convention. The Lord in His wisdom saw fit to take from us the Rev. Paul R. Bloedel. (Please take the time to read "*In Memoriam*" following this column.) From this you will understand what a loss the departure of Pastor Bloedel is to our Conference. Ours is, however, a true and blessed consolation in that our departed brother is at peace and rest with the Lord. Furthermore, he leaves behind an excellent example of what the Apostle Paul stated, namely, "*I will very gladly spend and be spent for you*" (II Corinthians 12:15). Not only the members of his flock saw this in their departed pastor, but also the other pastors and congregations saw the cheerful but untiring labors of one who truly was willing to spend and be spent for the Lord and His Word. Now he is at rest. Now he enjoys the blessedness of those who fall asleep confiding in their Savior: "*Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them*" (Revelation 14:13).

Secondly, we have a lay person whose name is now absent in the office of Treasurer. For some seventeen or eighteen years, Mr. Victor K. Bloedel has been our very faithful Treasurer. This year he asked not to be nominated as he has personal concerns which deserve and warrant his loving attention. Vic would, of course, have been a "shoo-in" to serve again, but we all respect his most proper decision and thank him for his diligent, longstanding service. And how very fitting and appropriate that his son, Robert G. Bloedel, is now the new Treasurer, who will ably carry the torch forward.

Our new Vice-President is Pastor M. L. Natterer. He had been President for three consecutive terms and was constitutionally not able to run for a fourth term. He served most faithfully as President and will do the same as Vice-President. We ought also to inform our readers that Pastor Natterer recently celebrated fifty years as Pastor of St. John's Lutheran Church in Lebanon, Oregon. His grateful congregation joined him in marking this event in a most lovely and edifying special anniversary service with all the pastors of the Conference present to share in their joy. Congratulations, Pastor Natterer!

Our new Editor is Pastor David T. Mensing. Indeed, new blood was needed in this position as the outgoing editor, the undersigned, served much too long. With Pastor Mensing, our readers will no doubt enjoy a fresh, new infusion into our official periodical. May the Lord bless his labors in this capacity!

Indeed, with all these changes, what should we conclude? First, in God's kingdom of grace, the beloved children of the Lord all have their allotted time on earth. *"My times are in Thy hand"* (Psalm 31:15). The Lord has told us that we are but strangers and pilgrims on the earth. What is more, even during the course of our earthly sojourn, the Lord makes changes, giving us varying tasks; this task for a season, that task for another season. Yet in the Lord's wisdom these changes in tasks and positions are all in accord with what is best for the Kingdom. Even when a pastor is privileged to serve in the ministry his whole life, it is not always with the same flock. And it is not uncommon that a congregation may have had over its many years of existence several pastors! What is more, even in auxiliary offices, the incumbents are constantly subject to change: New church officers, new board members, new voters. Has it not ever been this way? Even in Old Testament times, God wrought changes in leadership. Moses was replaced by Joshua. David was replaced by Solomon. Elisha succeeded Elijah! Yet no matter what course and change the Lord lays out before us, we know that by His grace in Christ *"all the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep His covenant and His testimonies"* (Psalm 25:10). This is why we should pray with the Psalmist David: *"Show me Thy ways, O Lord; teach me Thy paths. Lead me in Thy truth, and teach me; for Thou art the God of my salvation"* (Psalm 25:4-5). Indeed, no matter what changes the Lord makes, they all *"work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose"* (Romans 8:28).

Moreover, let us rejoice that, undergirding all the changes which the Lord brings about in our lives and in His Church, is the fact that we have a changeless God and Savior! *"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever"* (Hebrews 13:8). We as sinners are so fickle and vacillating, but our changeless and ever-faithful Savior is constantly with us in His mercy which is *"from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him, and His righteousness unto children's children; to such as keep His covenant, and to those that remember His commandments to do them"* (Psalm 103:17-18). As Jeremiah wrote: *"It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is Thy faithfulness"* (Lamentations 3:22-23).

Therefore let us recognize with Luther how good it is that the Church is in Christ's hands and not ours! In his sacristy prayer, Luther prayed: "Thou seest how unfit I am to administer rightly this great and responsible Office; and, had I been without Thy aid and counsel, I would surely have ruined it all long ago. Therefore I invoke Thee." Brethren, let us all humbly invoke our Lord Jesus Christ for the good of our Conference of congregations and for the good of our souls. Amen.

—E. R. S.

In Memoriam...

Pastor Paul R. Bloedel

Paul Richard Bloedel was born on October 6, 1925 in Hamlet, Indiana, to Pastor Gustav Bloedel and his wife, Clara née Jungkuntz. As an infant, he was baptized into the Christian faith by his father, who also carefully instructed him in the chief doctrines of God's Word and confirmed him as a youth. After completing high school in Hamlet, young Pauli, as he was affectionately known by his family and friends, attended preparatory school at Concordia College in Milwaukee, Wisconsin in its pre-theological program, and then in 1944 entered Concordia Theological Seminary (Missouri Synod) in Springfield, Illinois, to prepare for the pastoral ministry. Following his graduation from the



seminary in 1949, he married Helen A. née Brei, whom he had met during his vicarage year in Bloomington, Illinois. This union was blessed with four children, all of whom survive him. His dear wife, Helen, departed this life on April 29, 1968, after a brief illness. In October, 1970, he married Lucille D. née Wikre, who survives him, as do their seven children.

Pastor Bloedel's first call into the Holy Ministry was to Igloo, South Dakota, in 1949; and shortly thereafter he accepted a call to Wilmot, South Dakota. The fact that the young pastor had, for conscience' sake, refused to sign the Missouri Synod's constitution and thus to join that church body upon his graduation from the seminary was a source of considerable frustration to the synod's hierarchy. Moreover, because he had marked the synod as heterodox in view of its persistent toleration of error in doctrine and practice and its adoption of the *Common Confession of Faith* with the American Lutheran Church in 1950, and because he had in September, 1951, joined other protesting pastors in forming the Orthodox Lutheran Conference (which, after a sizeable defection in 1956, reorganized itself as our present **Concordia Lutheran Conference**), he was, at the instigation of Missouri Synod officials, unscripturally deposed from his Wilmot pastorate on Reformation Day, 1951. Nevertheless, recognizing his call still to be valid before God, a faithful remnant of the congregation followed him and formed St. Stephen's Ev. Lutheran Church. After about five years in Wilmot, Pastor Bloedel accepted a call to St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Empire (Coos Bay), Oregon, a sister-congregation in the Concordia Lutheran Conference, which he served until 1959. It was then that he received and accepted a call to the then tiny **St. Luke's Lutheran Church** in Seattle, Washington, which he served for almost forty-three years until his death. Pastor Bloedel was privileged to witness the growth of his congregation from only two families at the beginning of his tenure there to almost a hundred baptized members, growth which, he constantly emphasized, had occurred solely by the power of the Holy Ghost through the precious means of His grace.

Pastor Bloedel served our precious Concordia Lutheran Conference for over half a century in various capacities of leadership and service. He was for many years the editor and printer of our *Concordia Lutheran*, had served several terms as President and Vice President,

had held various other posts as chairman of Conference standing committees and as a member of the Board of Directors, and at the time of his death was scheduled to begin his tenure as the fifth-year instructor in our **Concordia Theological Seminary**. By God's grace, Pastor Bloedel remained steadfast in God's Word and in the true faith until his death on June 15, 2002. His scrupulous orthodoxy, constant vigilance, evangelical preaching, pastoral diligence, and brotherly counsel with the Word of God will be sorely missed among us. But we comfort ourselves with the sure and certain expectation of the glorious bodily resurrection of all true believers to the mansions of heaven on the last great Day of the Lord and, in the meantime, with the precious assurance of His never-failing Word, that our dear brother is even now experiencing "*fulness of joy [and] ...pleasures forevermore*" at the right hand of God for Jesus', his Savior's, sake (Psalm 16:11). Concerning the blissful state of departed believers there can be no doubt; and we hold in cherished memory, to the glory of God, Pastor Bloedel's constancy and faithfulness, as we look for and hasten unto the end of our own conversation by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith!

— D. T. M

Official Announcement

This is to announce the interim appointment of Pastors Robert J. Lietz and David T. Mensing to fill the fifth year chair as co-instructors in our **Concordia Theological Seminary**. This chair was left vacant by the illness and death of Pastor Paul R. Bloedel, who was scheduled to teach the fifth year courses beginning with the fall term. This appointment was made after consultation with the pastors named, as well as with Pastor Bloedel's successor in Seattle, Washington, Pastor Edward J. Worley, who was also considered. The *Committee on Theological Education* was unanimous in its decision, and the appointment also received the unanimous consent of the Concordia Lutheran Conference in its annual convention assembled, June 30, 2002. A permanent appointment to this chair will be considered after the close of the 2002-2003 academic year.

Pastor Mark W. Dierking, Chairman
Committee on Theological Education

Convention Digest

MOTTO: Man's Sin Merits Death — God's Grace Gives Life

Already on the weekend prior to the convention itself, delegates and visitors began to arrive in the beautiful Willamette Valley of Oregon for the **Fifty-first Annual Convention** of the *Concordia Lutheran Conference*, hosted by St. John's Lutheran Church of Lebanon, the Rev. M. L. Natterer, Pastor. According to custom, the convention was preceded by the summer plenary **Pastoral Conference** on June 26 and the annual meeting of the **Board of Directors** on June 27, and the members of the host congregation were busy all week providing loving hospitality to many of the guests in their homes and to all of them in the church's fellowship hall for sumptuous meals each and every day. What had been anticipated to be the usual two-day Pastoral Conference was shortened to just one in order that the pastors, lay delegates, and visitors might first travel north to Seattle, Washington, to attend the funeral service and Christian burial of Pastor Paul R. Bloedel, whom the Lord had graciously taken to Himself in heaven on June 15. [Please see the *obituary* elsewhere in this present issue.] One of the founding members of our beloved Conference, Pastor Bloedel was discovered to have what appeared to be terminal cancer about the middle of May and was mercifully spared protracted suffering when his Savior called him home within a month of his diagnosis.

The convention itself began on Friday, June 28th, with a service of convocation at 9:30 a.m. The local pastor, who was also the Conference President, both served as liturgist and preached an edifying keynote sermon on the basis of Matthew 9:1-8, taking as his theme the absolution of the Lord Jesus upon the man sick of the palsy: "*Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.*" He divided his message into two parts, namely, **I. These are words of the greatest comfort**, and **II. These are words which we can trust.**

Following the service, the first session was called to order with a brief devotion conducted by the President. During this first session, *ad hoc* convention committees were appointed; the delegates were officially seated; and the assembled convention heard the *Annual Report of the President*. In it President Natterer briefly capsulized the activities of the Conference throughout the year and his duties in particular. Fol-

lowing that report and the appointment of Pastor Edward J. Worley and Mr. Michael L. Mensing to review it, the convention first considered its *Agenda*. Inasmuch as the *Committee on Theological Education* was still grappling with the appointment of an interim instructor to fill the fifth-year chair in our Seminary program, the post suddenly left vacant at the death of Pastor Bloedel, and since the committee needed more time to meet and to deliberate upon its choice of a successor, it was unanimously decided to hear that report on Sunday afternoon. After a brief report of the *Press Committee*, the convention stood in recess for the noon meal.

The afternoon session opened with a brief devotion conducted by Pastor Dierking of Wilmot, South Dakota. This session was then highlighted by the presentation of the *HISTORICAL ESSAY*, delivered by Pastor David T. Mensing of Oak Forest, Illinois. This essay, the fourth in a series of historical retrospectives commemorating the Fiftieth Anniversary of our Conference, chronicled with documentation the first four years of its existence as the *Orthodox Lutheran Conference* and the circumstances leading up to a tragic split in its fellowship at the end of 1955. The first part of the essay treated the characteristics that made the Orthodox Lutheran Conference unique in its focused one-mindedness. Unlike so many other church bodies, all were perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment (I Corinthians 1:10). Doctrinal discipline was maintained, and orthodoxy was more than a word. It was, by God's grace, the "chemistry" that kept our Conference focused, functioning, and flourishing under the Lord's gracious blessing. The second part of the essay took up the question of how the precious fellowship of our Conference was jeopardized by the appearance of a strange "soft spot" in the otherwise rock-solid doctrinal, confessional, and practical position of the Orthodox Lutheran Conference. This was not properly-speaking an "inconsistency" in doctrine and practice (for that would have been quickly spotted and corrected on the basis of Scripture). Instead, it was a kind of *paradox* or seeming contradiction in our expectations of how and when certain injunctions of Holy Scripture should be obeyed. And that "soft spot" cut some "slack" to those in other church bodies who regarded themselves as "conservatives" and even "orthodox" but who were sitting on the fence concerning their readiness to obey God's Word in Romans 16:17 and other passages. It gave them, as it were, an "out" for their slowness to act, for their reticence to "*avoid them*" who by persistence in false doctrine and practice had made their church bodies *heterodox*. —The

essay was interspersed with and followed by lively and edifying discussion on the floor, particularly on the part of those for whom this period in our history was completely new. Unfortunately the wealth of documentation included in this portion of the essay made it impossible to complete it in the allotted time. Therefore it was unanimously decided to adopt the portions presented thus far with thanks to the essayist for his painstaking research and presentation, and to have the balance of the essay presented, with its documentation, at the **52nd Annual Convention** next June.

Following the historical essay, the *Treasurer's Report* concerning the past fiscal year was given by Robert Bloedel as the designated reporter for his father, Victor K. Bloedel, who was unable to be present. This was adopted, as was also the *Initial Report of the Finance Committee* with its preliminary proposed budget for fiscal year 2002-2003.

Due to his illness, Pastor Bloedel had not been able to write the report of the *Committee on Lutheran Union* in advance of the convention. A summary oral report was therefore given by Pastor Mensing, the second pastoral member of the committee. Included in this report was a brief summary of the controversy with **Pastor Ivaldi** of Argentina resulting from his insistence that we revise the *Sketch of our Doctrinal Position* to include the heretical idea that the soul of the believer sleeps with the body in temporal death and does not consciously enjoy the pleasures of heaven. Also included in the report was the overview provided by **Pastor Schurganoff** of his congregation's activities in Russia and its humble request for an increase in its subsidy to cover rental of space for worship services and also to augment his salary. The committee referred this subsidy request to the Finance Committee for its consideration in the preparation of its final budget proposal. Finally, the report recognized with praise to God the *declarations of fellowship* made by the independent Mighty Fortress Orthodox Evangelical Lutheran Church of Anaheim, California, and by the constituent congregations of the *Fellowship of Lutheran Congregations*, namely, Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, Oak Park, Illinois; St. Mark's Evangelical Lutheran Church of Sauk Village, Illinois; and Faith Lutheran Church, Stover, Missouri.

On Friday evening, following the supper hour, the delegates and visitors, together with the members of St. John's Lutheran Church, gathered in the church's sanctuary for a special commemorative service

recognizing both the congregation's fiftieth anniversary and Pastor Natterer's fiftieth consecutive year as the shepherd of that flock. It had been a carefully guarded secret as a surprise for their pastor. All the pastors of the fellowship participated in the service; and Pastor Mensing, at the request of the congregation, preached a homily based on Pastor Natterer's confirmation text, Matthew 10:32. His theme: "Confession of Christ and His Word before men, as the fruit of saving faith, is the duty and privilege of every Christian; but it is particularly so for every faithful pastor." The service was followed by a festive reception for Pastor and Mrs. Natterer in the church's fellowship hall.

The Saturday morning session was opened with a devotion conducted by Pastor David G. Redlin of Tucson. Thereupon Pastor E. R. Stallings of San Antonio began his *DOCTRINAL ESSAY* entitled "*The Doctrine of Sin and Its Significant Relation to Salvation by Grace in Christ*" In a brief introduction, the essayist pointed out that the teaching of the Doctrine of Sin finds its ultimate purpose in preparing the hearts of the impenitent to see the need for salvation in Christ alone without any merit or worthiness on the part of the sinner and in reminding also us Christians why we continue to stand in need of the grace of God in Christ Jesus. —In the first part of the essay, the essayist briefly but thoroughly reviewed the many facets or components of the Doctrine of Sin, including the definition of sin, the origin and cause of sin, the consequences of sin, and the doctrines of original sin and actual sin. This part of the essay was enthusiastically received as very informative and edifying, and it was accompanied with lively discussion and wide participation on the part of the delegates and visitors. The first part was unanimously adopted with thanks to the essayist. The second part of the essay, which was scheduled to be delivered on Sunday afternoon, would then take up the application of this first section in how the doctrine of sin relates directly to salvation by grace in Christ.

Pastor Ross Mahan then summarized on behalf of the *Committee on Missions* its work during the past year, as well as the consistent witness to the truth of God's Word by our members individually and collectively, as the evidence of His grace in their hearts. Pastor Mahan then specifically cited the testimony of the official "voices" of the Conference web site, of its official organ, the *Concordia Lutheran*, and of *Scriptural Publications*, as well as our efforts, by means of subsidy dollars, to support the ministry of Pastors Dierking and Schurganoff in their local congregations. The committee's only specific recommenda-

tion was for the continuation of “home missions” subsidy for St. Stephen’s in Wilmot, South Dakota, at the same level as last year. (The subsidy for Russia is at present under the auspices of the *Committee on Lutheran Union*.)

The *Seminary Instructor’s Interest Report* was given by Pastor M. L. Natterer, the 4th year professor in our peripatetic rotation. The report briefly summarized the course work and activities carried out during the fourth full year of the program. Professor Natterer specially cited the practical church work to which the student was exposed and which he also carried out in his *practicum* in the local congregation. The convention then also heard the *Seminary Student’s Interest Report* by Seminarian Paul E. Bloedel, who gave an interesting and informative summary of his courses and activities during the past academic year in Lebanon, including the happy personal note that he had fallen in love with and had become engaged to one of the young ladies in the congregation there, Miss Laura Fitzwater. He also characterized as a “joyful event” the recent entrance of his father, Pastor Paul Bloedel, into the fullness of heavenly bliss, and of the longing that we all have, by God’s grace, to go where he has gone to be with our dear Savior. Seminarian Bloedel also expressed his eagerness to begin his final year of seminary training.

The convention then heard the *Report of the Editorial Committee*. The chairman, Pastor E. R. Stallings, began his report with a historical retrospective concerning the publishing work of the late Pastor Paul Bloedel as the printer and sometimes editor of the *Concordia Lutheran* and of its “predecessor,” the *Orthodox Lutheran*. He dedicated his report to the glory of God in grateful remembrance of Pastor Bloedel’s monumental contributions to our official organ. He also highlighted several issues of the past year’s *Concordia Lutheran* for their specially edifying content and thanked his “team” of assistants, John Steinke and Ray Kusumi, who functioned as the technical staff for the formatting and printing of the *C. L.* Finally, he briefly also cited the fine work of the Book and Tract Editor, Pastor Natterer, and he expressed his appreciation particularly for the latter’s “President’s Column” and “Around the World” feature.

The convention next heard the *Report of the Publishing House Board of Control*, which regulates *Scriptural Publications*, the publishing arm of our Conference. Pastor Mensing, the chairman, presented an overview of the successes achieved under God by our publishing house in provid-

ing orthodox and edifying material in print for the consumption of our people. Besides the regular printing of the *Concordia Lutheran* and of our *Sunday School Bible Lessons*, a special accomplishment this year was the second reprinting of Alfred Doerffler's book of meditations for those suffering personal crosses, *The Burden Made Light*, and pre-publication work being done on several other major works including a book of family devotions and Graebner's *Outlines of Doctrinal Theology*. *Scriptural Publications* continues to manage the Conference web site, the Conference archives, and, on behalf of the C.T.E., the Seminary bookstore. The chairman noted in particular the able and invaluable assistance of Pastor M. L. Natterer, the Book and Tract Editor, for his willingness to give editorial review of such projects a high priority on his busy schedule. Depending upon available funding, *Scriptural Publications* hopes to be able to acquire book binding and trimming equipment during the coming year to enable it to produce more books "in house" rather than outsourcing their production. The report concluded with special thanks for the selflessness of those whose help, both in terms of time and money, contributed under the Lord's blessing to the success of our publishing efforts. Thereupon, the Business Manager of *Scriptural Publications*, Mr. Phillip R. Martin, presented his report on the financial aspects of the publishing house.

In the afternoon, following a devotion led by Pastor David T. Mensing of Oak Forest, Illinois, the convention first heard the *Further Report of the Finance Committee Concerning the Budget* and the *Report of the Auditing Committee*, before proceeding to the election of officers and standing committees for 2002-2003. The following were elected:

PRESIDENT: The Rev. E. R. Stallings

VICE PRESIDENT: The Rev. M. L. Natterer

SECRETARY: The Rev. David T. Mensing

TREASURER: Mr. Robert G. Bloedel

BOARD MEMBERS-AT-LARGE:

Midwest—Mr. JC Perry

Far West— Mr. John Okamoto

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE: Pastor Mensing, *Concordia Lutheran* Editor; Pastor Natterer, Book and Tract Editor; and Mr. Paul Natterer, Lay Member.

COMMITTEE ON LUTHERAN UNION: Pastor Natterer, Chairman; Pastor Mensing; Pastor Dierking; and Mr. Phillip Martin.

COMMITTEE ON THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION: Pastor Dierking, Chairman; Pastor Mahan; Mr. Mark Natterer; and Mr. Daniel Bloedel.

COMMITTEE ON MISSIONS: Pastor Mahan, Chairman; Pastor Mensing; Mr. Ron Lake, Mr. Aaron Dierking, and Mr. Brett Swinney.

FINANCE COMMITTEE: Mr. Robert Bloedel, Chairman; Mr. John Steinke, Mr. Phil Martin, and Mr. Michael Schrader.

PUBLISHING HOUSE BOARD OF CONTROL: Pastor Mensing, Chairman; Mr. Phillip Martin, Business Manager; and Mr. Raymond Kusumi, Print Shop Manager.

At the Sunday morning service, the host pastor again served as liturgist, and Pastor David T. Mensing of Oak Forest, Illinois, preached the sermon on **Romans 6:23**. His theme was: **The Knowledge of Sin and Its Wages Is Indispensable for the True Appreciation of the Gospel**. He divided the sermon according to the text itself, which division incidentally also restated the motto of the convention, namely, **I. Man's Sin Merits Death**, but **II. God's Grace Gives Life**. In his message, Pastor Mensing focused upon that function of God's Law which, as a mirror, shows man his sin, his total depravity, and his utter helplessness, and thus creates in the sinner's heart **THE NEED** for salvation by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith. Delegates and visitors from the congregations of our fellowship then partook of the Lord's Supper together as guests of St. John's Congregation—for the remission of their sins, for the strengthening of their faith and of their walk in sanctification, and in testimony of their blessed unity in the Word of their Savior.

After a sumptuous dinner, sessions reconvened with a devotion conducted by Pastor Mahan of Jackson, Michigan, after which Pastor Stallings presented the final portion of his essay entitled "**The Doctrine of Sin and Its Significant Relation to Salvation by Grace in Christ.**" In this portion, the essayist pointed out how the Doctrine of Sin relates directly to salvation by grace in Christ. Specifically noted were the following truths:—The Doctrine of Sin shows us man's condition of being

a lost and condemned creature and therefore the absolute necessity of salvation by grace. —The sin of man made absolutely necessary the substitutionary work of Christ. —The sin remaining in us as sinner-saints is why we must continue to trust only in the grace of God for our salvation. And finally, —God's grace in Christ is magnified by how it ever abounds over sin in our lives. He concluded his essay with the prayer of the Psalmist: "*Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me; and lead me in the way everlasting*" (Psalm 139:23-24). —Following spirited and fruitful discussion of this section, this edifying essay was adopted with thanks to the essayist, subject to polish and the usual subsequent review by the *praesidium*.

Then followed the *Report of the Committee to Review the President's Report*, read by Mr. Michael Mensing, in which the committee took special note of certain comments in the annual report of our outgoing President, called particular attention to the declarations of fellowship by Mighty Fortress (Anaheim) and of the constituent congregations of the *Fellowship of Lutheran Congregations*, and recognized God's gracious will in the "transfer" of Pastor Paul Bloedel from the Church Militant to the Church Triumphant. Finally, the committee thanked God for His grace in enabling our President to perform his many duties as a faithful steward on our behalf to the glory of our Redeemer. Also heard was a brief *Report on the Conference Archives* by Mr. Phillip Martin, in which the pastors in particular were urged to submit either original documents or at least clear copies of documents of significance to our Conference and its history for safe storage on behalf of the generations to come. These may one day be digitized and made readily available for general study.

The *Report of the Committee on Theological Education* was then presented and discussed. It centered chiefly upon the committee's responsibility to select and call a successor to Pastor Bloedel, whose completely unexpected terminal illness and death suddenly left vacant the fifth year chair on our Seminary faculty. Under normal conditions, such a vacancy would be filled after a rather time-consuming nominating process. Since, however, only about two months remained until the start of the fall term, and the designated instructor(s) would need every bit of that time to ready themselves for the task at hand, the committee deemed it necessary to select an interim replacement at once. Moreover, the lengthier process would have the undesirable effect of delaying the

start of instruction, of shortening the academic term, and perhaps of compromising the student's readiness to be colloquized by the summer Plenary Pastoral Conference in June, 2003. With two congregations presently vacant and urgently in need of pastors, it was deemed prudent by the Committee to make an *interim* appointment for the 2002-2003 academic year based upon the only nominations that had been suggested, either by congregations, by the Pastoral Conference, or by the Board of Directors, and to proceed with a *permanent* appointment after the conclusion of the 2002-2003 term. The committee met with the nominees, Pastors Worley, Lietz, and Mensing, and explored both their willingness to serve and their ability under their present circumstances reasonably to fulfill the fifth-year teaching assignment of five courses plus the *practicum*. Considering first of all the personal expressions of the pastors themselves but then also the circumstantial factors involved, it was the *unanimous decision* of the committee to call Pastors Mensing and Lietz to *share* the fifth-year professorship as an interim appointment for the 2002-2003 academic year, and that thereafter a regular fifth-year professor would be called through the normal procedures. All three pastors involved concurred in this decision wholeheartedly. After brief discussion, the report of the *Committee on Theological Education* was unanimously adopted by the convention.

Concluding the business of the convention were the *Final Report of the Finance Committee* and adoption of the 2002-2003 Fiscal Budget, the *Final Report of the Resolutions Committee*, the *Final Report of the Committee on Registration and Excuses* and the *Report of the Conference Statistician*, Mr. Raymond Kusumi, who was reappointed to that post with the thanks of the convention.

The convention also unanimously accepted the gracious invitation of Peace Ev. Lutheran Church of Oak Forest, Illinois, to host the **52nd Annual Convention (June 27, 28 and 29, 2003)**, immediately preceded as usual by the *Plenary Pastoral Conference* on June 24 and 25, with the possibility of a third day already on Monday, June 23, and the *Board of Directors Meeting* on June 26. Our people are encouraged **NOW ALREADY** to mark these dates on their calendars so that they can plan ahead to attend.

Before adjournment, Pastor Robert J. Lietz was granted the floor to give a special interest report on the *Fellowship of Lutheran Congregations* and its current situation. He first briefly described the three constituent congregations of the *F. L. C.* as to their location, history and current

membership, and expressed joy in the Lord at the fact that all three have, as of May, 2002, declared themselves in fellowship with our Conference. He also noted that two congregations in Minnesota had separatistically left the *F. L. C.* in December, 2000, rather than share the Scriptural position on Matthew 18:15-17 which the body had adopted in June of that same year. Eight months later, the same two congregations *sued* the *F. L. C.* in court, claiming that *their unilateral action* signaled the “dissolution” of the body, thus making them eligible to claim their “proportionate share” of the body’s financial assets. In point of fact, the *F. L. C.* did NOT dissolve. It continues to function as a religious corporation and church body to this day. The Minnesota congregations are not constituent members of it by *their own* action and therefore have no legitimate claim upon its assets (any more than a person who quits a church can claim a “refund” of all the contributions he had made while he was a member). God willing, the lawsuit will be disposed of within the next month or so, and the justice of our brethren’s cause will be vindicated.

The convention then adjourned with the customary closing devotion led by President Stallings. It had been a most brotherly and constructive meeting; and the delegates and visitors returned to their respective homes edified by the Spirit in His Word, strengthened by the Holy Sacrament of their Savior’s body and blood, encouraged by the good and pleasant fellowship that He had mercifully created and graciously preserved among them, and determined by His grace to “*keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*” (Ephesians 4:3) in faithfulness to the precious “*Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever*” (I Peter 1:23).

Respectfully submitted,
Rev. David T. Mensing, Secretary



NOTE: In response to several inquiries as to the author of the article in the May-June issue entitled, “*The Myth of the Papacy*,” this was written by Pastor Mensing. His initials were inadvertently omitted in formatting. —Ed.

Churches in Fellowship with the Concordia Lutheran Conference

Mighty Fortress Orthodox Evangelical Lutheran Church

1557 West Katella Avenue

Anaheim, CA 92805

Worship Service 9:00 a.m.

Sunday School & Bible Class 10:30 a.m.

THE REV. EDWARD J. WORLEY, Vacancy Pastor

804 South Verona Street

Anaheim, CA 92804

(714) 995-6301

Faith Lutheran Church (F. L. C.)

Highway N

Stover, MO 65078

For the time of worship services, please

contact **Stephen Richter** at (314) 376-3221.

THE REV. ROBERT J. LIETZ, Vacancy Pastor

233 North Cuyler Avenue

Oak Park, IL 60302

(708) 386-4145

St. Mark's Ev. Lutheran Church (F. L. C.)

22012 S. Torrence Avenue

Sauk Village, IL 60411

Telephone: (708) 758-6222

Worship Service 5:45 p.m.

Sunday School & Bible Class 7:00 p.m.

THE REV. ROBERT J. LIETZ, Vacancy Pastor

233 North Cuyler Avenue

Oak Park, IL 60302

(708) 386-4145

Trinity Ev. Lutheran Church (F. L. C.)

300 North Ridgeland Avenue

Oak Park, IL 60302

Telephone: (708) 386-6773

Sunday School & Bible Class 9:00 a.m.

Worship Service 10:15 a.m.

THE REV. ROBERT J. LIETZ, Pastor

233 North Cuyler Avenue

Oak Park, IL 60302

(708) 386-4145

From our brethren in **RUSSIA**



Pastor Roman G. Schurganoff, our dear brother in the faith, reports that his little congregation, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Yekaterinburg, now numbers about twenty-five members. However, due to extremely cramped quarters, only about half of the congregation has been able to assemble together for worship at any one time. This is, of course, most unfortunate. Therefore, at its recent convention, our Conference unanimously voted to defray the cost of renting more adequate facilities both for worship services and for Bible study classes and office space.

Since the pastor was relieved of his secular work by the subsidy which our Conference authorized at its 2001 convention, his full-time ministry of the Word and Sacraments has been richly blessed by the Lord of the Church. He and his people have been able to undertake intensive mission work in the city of Yekaterinburg, in one of the city prisons, and in a regional city about an hour away by suburban train where Pastor Schurganoff has established a preaching station. He is hopeful that, by God's grace, another Lutheran congregation of our fellowship will one day be established there. The congregation also sends out Bible lessons by mail; and this effort too has been greatly blessed. Fifteen prisoners have been baptized, and four people reached through mission work in one of the city libraries are regularly attending services and have begun adult instruction preparatory to confirmation.

Pastor Schurganoff and one of his active members, Mr. Sergey Solovyov, have been studying English this past year at a special language school in the city. It is the fervent hope of both men that their work in English, underwritten by our Conference, will in time enable them to pursue further theological training at or at least through our Conference seminary.

The pastor's family has been enduring severe crosses by reason of ill health. Their one-and-a-half-year-old son, Nickolai, suffers from developmental problems since his birth, including motor and speech difficulties;

but he is progressing “normally” for his condition, the doctors say. His treatment is very expensive in terms both of medicines and procedures. Mrs. Schurganoff [Elena] has also been ill, suffering with heart problems which became aggravated in connection with Nickolai’s birth. Let us pray the Lord, for Jesus’ sake, to relieve these dear brethren if it be His will and to strengthen them not only physically but above all *spiritually* to bear with patience the loving chastisements of their heavenly Father and to rely upon His grace which is made perfect in weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9). Let us also cheerfully and richly support the Lord’s work in their midst with generous offerings for the mission work of our Conference and, if possible, also with special gifts for the needs of the Schurganoff family—all to the praise of God’s grace to us poor sinners in Christ Jesus, our Savior!

—D. T. M.

A Fifty Year Milestone at Lebanon, Oregon

On Friday, June 28, St. John’s Lutheran Church in Lebanon, Oregon, celebrated its fiftieth year as a congregation and the fiftieth anniversary of the Rev. M. L. Natterer as its shepherd. In a special vesper service held in its sanctuary in conjunction with the 51st Annual Convention of the Concordia Lutheran Conference, the members of St. John’s were joined by the pastors of the Conference and by delegates and visitors to the convention as they gave thanks to God for all His blessings upon their flock over the past half century of His grace, and very particularly for the faithful and diligent service of Pastor Natterer, who accepted the Holy Spirit’s call to serve them in May of 1952.



Pastor Natterer graduated from Concordia Theological Seminary (LCMS) in Springfield, Illinois, in 1949 and had served briefly in Fessenden, North Dakota, and in Lansing, Illinois. It was in Lansing that the young pastor, who had marked the *Missouri Synod* as a heterodox church body, was persecuted by the officials of the synod’s Northern Illinois District because he refused to join it. Instead, in September, 1951, he and other brother pastors became founding members of the *Orthodox Lutheran Conference*, the parent body of our present Confer-

ence, even though they knew that they would pay a heavy price for their faithfulness to the Word of God and for their obedience to its clear injunction in Romans 16:17. On October 31, 1951, the officials invaded Trinity Ev. Lutheran Church in Lansing, falsely accused its pastor of unfaithfulness, and had him thrown out of the office into which the Holy Ghost had placed him. Temporarily without a call, Pastor Natterer, his wife, Waltraut, and their two toddling daughters were members of Peace Ev. Lutheran Church in Tinley Park, Illinois (now of Oak Forest, Illinois), where he served as secretary of the congregation.

Then in May of 1952, Pastor Natterer accepted the call to St. John's in Lebanon, where he has spent the past fifty years as its shepherd. By God's grace and with His help, the pastor has preached the Word of God in its purity, faithfully nurtured his sheep in its precious doctrines, remembered them in his prayers, admonished them for their sins, comforted them with the sweet balm of the Gospel, and tenderly borne them in his heart. His people regard him lovingly as a precious gift of God.

Following the service in which all the pastors of the fellowship participated, a festive reception was held in the church's fellowship hall with refreshments, grateful testimonials, best wishes, and some very special gifts. The entire celebration was a complete surprise to Pastor Natterer, our dear brother in Christ Jesus, and an expression of love and gratitude on the part of his dear flock.

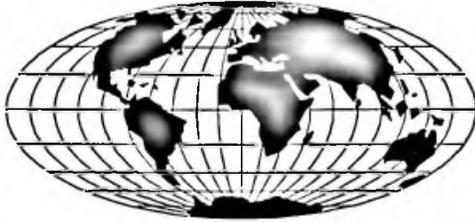
—Ed.

*O bless Thy Word always,
our souls forever feeding;
and may we never lack
a faithful shepherd's leading!
Press onward with Thy Word
till pastor and his fold
through faith in Thee, O Christ,
Thy glory shall behold!*

TLH, 485 (adapted)



Around the World



with editorial comment

by M. L. Natterer

True Christians, says radio evangelist Harold Camping, should not go to church. They should drop their church memberships, leave their congregations, and just listen to the radio...The idea has its appeal to many Americans. Sleeping in on Sunday. No worship services. No meetings. No obligations...Mr. Camping, who operates the Family Radio network, bases his teaching on his idiosyncratic end – times theology. Despite his earlier mistakes – he once proclaimed that the world would end in 1994 – he is undaunted in his millennialist certainty. According to his allegorical interpretation of Revelation, he maintains that Satan has now set up his throne in the church. This is reflected in the apostasy of churches, bringing judgment even against faithful congregations. The bottom line is that “the Church Age” is over. What the Bible says about pastors, elders, congregations – that is for a previous dispensation. Now, Christians don’t need any shepherds or church order to rule over them. It is fine to meet in each other’s homes, but there is to be no worship, as such, no organization or offices....Does Mr. Camping have a point? Apostasy does rage in many churches. Mainline Protestant denominations have long ago rejected the authority of Scripture.... Even many evangelical and conservative churches are adjusting their teachings and their practices to fit the dominant culture, downplaying doctrine, softening the Bible’s moral demands, and teaching that the Gospel is not necessary to salvation. At the same time, the moral failures of so-called Christian leaders have become a world-wide scandal...Some Catholic priests...some Protestant ministers too, ...are guilty of the rankest sexual immorality, including the sexual abuse of those under their spiritual care....Still, Mr. Camping’s teachings...are shot down by clear statements of the Word of God. Christians are told directly not to neglect meeting together – especially “as you see the Day drawing near” (Heb.10:25)...Saying that this and other texts about the church do not apply anymore is just another way to deny the author-

ity of Scripture, making Mr. Camping just another liberal theologian. (From *WORLD*, April 20, 2002).

According to Scripture, it is God's will and ordinance that Christians should establish and maintain local churches, because without them the following Christian obligations cannot be performed: a) the regular hearing and learning of God's Word as it is proclaimed by the divinely called ministers who are to feed the flock over which God has placed them (Acts 20:28; Titus 1:5; Ephesians 4:10-12; I Peter 5:2-3; Acts 2:42-47; 14:23). b) the regular celebration of Holy Communion under the loving and careful watchfulness of the divinely-called shepherd (I Corinthians 11:23-29; 10:17; Acts 20:28). c) the continuous exercise of the duties of Christian fellowship and love (I Corinthians 11: 33; 1:10; Colossians 3:15-16; I Corinthians 9:7-14; Galatians 6:6-7; Hebrews 10:23-25; Ephesians 4:3-6; Acts 6:1-6). d) the careful, evangelical exercise of church discipline as commanded by the Lord in Matthew 18: 15-17). (From "*This Scriptural Position We Still Hold*," adopted and ratified by the member congregations of the Concordia Lutheran Conference, 1968)

A Brief Note about Our Cover Text...

Scripture clearly teaches that all who, by the grace of God (Ephesians 2:8-9), die as believers in Christ, will immediately receive the merciful (Lamentations 3:22-23) judgment (Hebrews 9:27) of "*paradise*" (Luke 23:43) with Christ (See also Philippians 1:23.). It is the Savior Himself who said to His believers: "*I go to prepare a place for you, ...that where I am, there ye may be also*" (John 14:2-3). So, when the believers die, they are with Christ, the heavenly Father, and the Holy Spirit in heaven. And how does the Messiah Himself describe the paradise of heaven? He says through the Psalmist: "*In Thy presence is fullness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore*" (Psalm 16:11). Being with Christ in heaven after death is "*far better*" (Philippians 1:23) for the believer even than the joyful task of serving the Lord in His kingdom of grace on earth because in heaven is perfect, full, and complete joy; there are everlasting pleasures with God at His right hand. Therefore, we must, on the basis of these revealed truths from Holy Scripture, reject "*soul sleep*," the false teaching held by the Seventh Day Adventists and others, that after death souls are neither in a state of bliss nor in condemnation, but are in a state of unconsciousness until the resurrection. Instead, with many thanks to our dear and only Savior, who has given us "*the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace*" (Eph. 1:7), all believers can declare: "*In Thy presence is fullness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore.*" This is most certainly true!

—R. J. L.