

# REPORT OF THE CONFERENCE PRESIDENT

## 48th Annual Convention of the Concordia Lutheran Conference

Dear Brethren,

Once again, and evidently for the last time, I have been given the distinct privilege of addressing you in convention assembled as the President of the Concordia Lutheran Conference. How the years have literally flown by since Pastor Natterer and I, fifty years ago, left Concordia Seminary, Springfield, Illinois, to embark upon our life's work. We helped in the organization of our Conference at Okabena, Minnesota, in the Fall of 1951, then known as the Orthodox Lutheran Conference, and continued to be involved in its reorganization in 1957 as the Concordia Lutheran Conference. We both refused to sign the Constitution of the heterodox Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, and the synodical officials tyrannically invaded our congregations and moved them to depose us as pastors of the respective flocks over the which the Holy Ghost had made us overseers. We were both deposed on the evening of the self-same day, namely, Reformation Day, October the thirty-first, nineteen hundred and fifty-one: Pastor Natterer being removed from his office as pastor of Trinity Ev. Lutheran Church at Lansing, Illinois, and I from my office as pastor of Christ and Centennial Ev. Lutheran Churches in Wilmot, South Dakota. O how the Lord graciously helped and strengthened us through those “dreadful years,” humanly speaking, and turned them into blessed years, years of joy and happiness in His service.

We have seen pastors, lay people, and entire congregations come and go in the history of our Conference, some, because they were not truly with us in the Lord and His Word to begin with, others because they followed the inclinations of their sinful flesh and not the Lord Christ, and still others because the Lord took them from us to their eternal rest in heaven. These things should never be discouraging to us as long as, by God's grace, we remain steadfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, preaching and teaching His Word and it alone in its full truth and purity, thoroughly instructing both young and old in our congregations, knowing that such labor is not in vain in the Lord, and that it is through His Word alone that the Lord Jesus adds to the Church such as should be saved. Thus *“speaking the Truth in love”* may the members of our Conference never be blown about by every wind of doctrine but become ever more mature and settled in their Christian faith, *“grow[ing] up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.”*

In my report to you this year, there are several things I wish to emphasize. These are simply the observations of an old man, which I would wish both our pastoral and lay delegates to take to heart, to observe at this convention and perhaps draw from it something to act upon in the future. One of my concerns has to do with the voting on the part of our delegates for the incumbents of the various offices and standing committees. Perhaps at this convention, at least, we could observe better decorum, more orderly behavior and propriety, less levity, and more seriousness of purpose when writing and casting our ballots. In order to guide you in this important aspect of your work as delegates, I would like to call your attention to the following facts:

First of all, it is important for our delegates to know that the President's office is one of the least demanding offices in our Conference. It may be the most prestigious office and the one which carries with it the most responsibility, in the final analysis; but it has a tendency to be far overrated. As long as the work of the various committees is being carried out according to Constitutional guidelines and convention directives, the President has actually very little to do. He does not need to and ought not to interfere with the work of the standing committees or to be concerned about the regular work being carried out properly and efficiently by these committees between conventions. If any of the standing committees needs or desires his input

during the year, he is available as an *ex-officio* member of each committee. This, of course, does not mean that he is responsible in any way to guide the work of the respective committees so that the committees may not act on their own without the President's specific approval or sanction. Our Conference then would not need any committees. We would need only a President; and that's not the way our Conference is set up constitutionally.

Secondly, the Vice-President holds a very important position. He is the chairman of our Pastoral Conference, but, of greater importance, he is the chairman of our standing Committee on Lutheran Union. As the CLU chairman he is to keep abreast of the doctrine and practice as well as the inter-synodical relationship between other Lutheran bodies and independent Lutheran congregations. Here you want to vote for a man who has special gifts and talents in this very important area of our Conference work.

Thirdly, the work of Conference Secretary is a job which seems unending in its demands upon the time as well as upon the mental and physical stamina of the incumbent. His duties include the recording of careful minutes of every session of our CLC convention, of the meeting of the Board of Directors, and of the Pastoral Conference sessions, with the exception of the period designated for cases of casuistry. He is to see to it that these minutes are made available to congregations, board members, and pastors respectively in a timely fashion and to submit copies of all reports, sermons, and essays, together with the minutes of the convention, to the President and Vice-President for their careful review before publishing the Proceedings. All this, together with other minor matters listed in the Constitution, should make you think carefully about the gifts and abilities of the pastor you select for this important office, upon whom will depend a careful record of the yearly activities of our Conference.

Fourthly, our Treasurer is to be a layman who is able to keep an accurate, up-to-date, permanent record of all moneys received and disbursed by our Conference, to keep the congregations informed as to the financial affairs and condition of our Conference, and to have his books properly audited for each regular convention or to be examined at any time by the request of a majority of the Board of Directors. He is a member of the Board of Directors and the chairman of the Finance Committee whose work is set forth in our Constitution. Think carefully and vote for a layman who is qualified, in your estimation, to handle this important work and responsibility!

Fifthly, vote carefully for the members of the Editorial Committee. Be sure, in your own mind, that the pastoral members who are the editor and assistant editor of our Conference periodical, as well as the layman on the committee, are able to produce an official organ for our Conference which is second to none, a theological journal which has appeal, is well written, carefully planned and neatly produced, thoroughly edited in the light of God's Word, timely and edifying. This is a committee whose work continues throughout the year and must be able, as nearly as possible, to meet publication deadlines. Think carefully before voting for the incumbents of this committee.

Sixthly, voting for our Committee on Theological Education should not be done without careful thought. Two pastors and two laymen are on this committee whose job it is to supervise both the faculty and student body of our seminary and, together with the faculty, to determine the curricula, courses of study, admissions, and all seminary activity in general.

The Board of Control for our Publishing House is also a vitally important committee. It has been searching through our archives and making available valuable tracts and documents in neatly printed form, even on the Internet. Great progress has been made this past year, in this area of

Conference work, by our incumbent Publishing House Board. In this respect I wish to give special recognition to Pastor David T. Mensing, who is the chairman of the Publishing House Board of Control, for his unselfish and untiring labor not only in this capacity but also as the Vice-President of our Conference, chairman of our Committee on Lutheran Union, and our only active full-time professor, teaching a loaded schedule of difficult courses in our Seminary. His leadership, dedication, and help in various areas have been invaluable to our Conference for which it is difficult to express sufficient gratitude.

Our delegates are asked to take special note also of the Standing Committee on Missions whose chairman, a pastor, is a member of the Board of Directors, and whose work is chiefly, at this time, to review and submit a subsidy request for St. Stephen's congregation at Wilmot, South Dakota.

Now, my purpose, dear brethren, in going through the work of these important offices and committees is to urge you to use sound and prayerful judgment in your selection of men and in casting your ballot in the election of our officers and committees. Try to know who they are personally, what kind of work they have done, if any, for our Conference in the past, how at home they are in Scripture and in their ability to discuss God's Word with others, how active in the work of the Lord they have been in their home congregations and their general upright behavior and conduct. Be also concerned in your voting as to where the officers and chairmen of the various committees are located so as not to have the work of the Conference being carried out chiefly at one place. We are a Conference **of congregations**, not a Conference which delegates all its work to be done only by one or two pastors or laymen and in one or two of our congregations. Now may the Lord bless our efforts in our elections, this year, to His glory, to the extension of His Kingdom among us, and to the promotion of our unity in attaining the goals of our Conference together.

Dear brethren, the Constitution of the Concordia Lutheran Conference has been a valuable document in guiding us in our work together toward goals which we could never accomplish as individual congregations. There are, however, a few Articles which are obviously in need of revising or updating. I am therefore recommending that at this convention you are given an opportunity to review our Constitution with a view toward amending Article VIII, especially section 2b, Article IX, section 2, and all of Article XII, perhaps also an Article relating to our Conference Web Page.

As our Convention proceeds, during the next three days, you will hear the reports of our various standing committees. Listen to them carefully and feel free to ask questions so that you know what every committee has accomplished and desires to accomplish in the year to come, that you may cast a knowledgeable vote on any resolution which a committee report may evoke and be able to convey the activities of our Conference to your respective congregations for their concurrence.

On Sunday, you will be privileged to receive the Lord's Supper for the strengthening of your faith and as a testimony of our God-given unity, as guest communicants of Peace Ev. Lutheran Church here in Oak Forest. Make your intention to come to the Lord's Supper known to your pastor, and he will, in turn, announce you for Communion to the local pastor, Pastor Mensing.

And now, dear brethren, let us, by God's grace in our Savior Jesus Christ, be steadfast and unmovable in our Christian faith, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that our labor here on earth is not in vain in the Lord (I Corinthians 15:58).

Respectfully submitted,

Paul R. Bloedel, President

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**REPORT of the COMMITTEE TO REVIEW THE PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

It is with great reluctance that we accept President Bloedel's report as giving his report "for the last time." But we recognize that we must abide by the constitution of our conference which states that "the President of the conference may not be elected for more than three consecutive terms" (Art. XI). During these three years Pastor Bloedel has very ably fulfilled all his responsibilities as President, especially his chief obligation in leading the conference "in guarding its confessional position and in stemming public offence" (Art. VII 1:b). We thank our dear heavenly Father who so graciously provided him with the needed wisdom and strength to fulfill his duties so conscientiously as his reports during these last three years so clearly reveal. Having examined this last report, we once again observe his genuine concern to preserve our sacred heritage and his diligent and timely encouragement to maintain decorum in convention assembled with prayerful consideration to all decisions made in our conference and to know the people we elect. We pray that the Lord of the vineyard would grant Pastor Bloedel with health that he may continue to serve us in the years before us with his God-given gifts and talents.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rev. M. L. Natterer  
Mr. Lloyd E. Martin

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