

Excerpts from the “Convention Chronicles”

Still Our Great Commission: *“Make Disciples of All the Nations”*

Issue 1

Friday, June 25, 2021

Opening Devotion

Convention Chaplain David Schaller led the assembly in the opening devotion Thursday morning using the text Luke 7:36-50.

Jesus had been invited to dine with Simon the Pharisee. During dinner a woman of ill-repute interrupted the meal to anoint Jesus' feet with her tears and perfume. From where did this act of love arise? The woman, aware of her guilt, was turning to Jesus in love for the forgiveness He granted her. Forgiveness was the driving force behind her love. So it is with each of us who owe a tremendous debt to Jesus for His death and resurrection on our behalf. Simon, however, was upset by the woman's actions and found no comfort in Jesus' forgiveness, assured only by his own works.

How do we improve relationships in our lives? We do so by putting into practice the Gospel message of love by forgiving others just as we have been forgiven in Christ.

The devotion concluded with the singing of “God Loves Me Dearly.” (WS 709)

Essay #1

The theme of this year's convention is Still Our Great Commission: “Make Disciples of all the Nations.” Thursday evening the first essay was presented entitled “Jesus Provides the Means.” The essayist was Pastor Luke Bernthal of California.

The words of the Great Commission are meant for all of us! Too often, perhaps, we think they must apply to someone else, maybe the disciples of Jesus' day. However, there is no expiration date on the Great Commission. Certainly Jesus' original disciples could not preach to the “end of the age,” the Last Day. Nor could they “make disciples of all the nations” as Christ commanded. Therefore the Great Commission is Still Our Commission.

Much of the essay focused on the “power tools” that God provides His people in fulfilling this commission, namely, the Word and Sacraments – His means of grace. He uses weak people like us for His powerful purposes. He wishes us to make disciples by teaching all things that He has commanded us. All of God's Word is important. With the Gospel hearts are converted, souls are saved, and minds are changed. Though simple, the Word is described as a hammer, a fire, and a sword. It can also be a still small voice.

God knows our frailties, our tendency to doubt and forget. In addition to the Word, and yet in connection with His Word, He gives us the “power tools” of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. In the Sacraments Jesus comes to each one of us personally and unmistakably says, “This forgiveness I won, this grace I have given, it is for you. See it. Feel it. Taste it!”

The essayist concluded the paper with a discussion of the word “Go!” As we go about our daily walks of life we are to “make disciples” using the powerful tools at our disposal. Seek out opportunities to share the Word with the confidence that He gives, “I am with you always.” After prayer the assembly sang the closing hymn, “On Galilee's High Mountain.” (LSB 835)

President's Report

As is our tradition, the CLC President, Pastor Michael Eichstadt, presented a written address to the assembly Thursday morning. It was entitled “A Blessed Partnership in the Gospel!” He spoke of the greatest partnership in this world, that spoken of by the Apostle Paul to the Philippians, “I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.” (Phil. 1:3-5)

In convention we too rejoice in the blessed partnership of the gospel. In a world opposed to Christians it is uplifting to join together as one. This partnership is durable and fragile at the same time. God's promises are sure, but we are often weak and fail to love each other as we should.

President Eichstadt went on to express thanks to all those who worked tirelessly during the pandemic to do the work of the Savior. He acknowledged the concern over the lack of called workers in our church body, but also pointed to opportunities for laymen to step up and fill the void. He rejoiced in the confessional unity reached between the Bangladesh Lutheran Church and the CLC. He called upon us to continue to provide prayers and support on behalf of those in our fellowship abroad who are still dealing with the ravages of the pandemic.

His address continued with a brief history of how and why “A Joint Statement on the Termination of Church Fellowship” came about. Representatives of the CLC, WELS, and ELS met several times and submitted this document in 2015 to be examined by each synod. It was adopted by the WELS in 2016 and by the ELS in 2017. The CLC addressed it at its 2018 Convention but determined additional time was necessary to respond to the document. The goal was for a final disposition at the 2020 Convention. President Eichstadt states:

“A restoration of fellowship with the ELS and WELS based on full agreement on all the doctrines of Scripture is longed for by many and would without question be an amazing gift of the Holy Spirit. However, we need to remember that acceptance of the Joint Statement is not a declaration of fellowship. It would only be a “necessary first step” (Joint Statement preamble) toward that goal. There are other matters of doctrine and practice which would require careful discussion, including whether current confessions and actions of the ELS and WELS are consistent with the Joint Statement.”

His address concluded with a recognition of the 60th Anniversary of the CLC which occurred in 2020. It is only by God's grace that our small synod has weathered the storms of controversy and continues to fully proclaim the testimony of God.

Membership

Two congregations have applied for membership in the CLC:

Our Shepherd of Conroe, TX

St. Paul's of Melrose, WI

Individuals having applied for voting membership in the CLC:

| | |
|-------------|---------------------|
| Nathan Buck | Drew Naumann |
| Cory Drehle | Sam Naumann |
| Ben Hanel | Daniel Schierenbeck |
| Ben Hansen | Johnathan Schnose |

Four congregations have dissolved since the 2018 Convention:

Bethel of Humble, TX

Living Word of Blue Springs, MO

Mount Olive of Detroit Lakes, MN

Rock of Ages of Jenison, MI

Saturday Devotion

Chaplain David Schaller used Luke 9:18-24 as his text. The devotion focused our attention on what it means to “take up the cross” as followers of Christ. A Christian's cross is not simply experiencing difficulties in life, for all people suffer these crosses. The Christian's cross is the denying of oneself in obedience to God's will. It is saying no to temptations of lust, greed, and envy lurking in our sinful flesh, still clinging to us after conversion. This is difficult because self-denial does not come naturally to us. Each person carries different crosses. In our daily struggle we rely on Jesus' ability to faithfully complete the taking up of His cross on our behalf. His work is credited to us. We find courage and strength in knowing the joy of heaven that awaits. The assembly joined in the singing of “Take Up Your Cross.”

Essay #2

The second essay of the convention was delivered by Michael Schierenbeck, a member of Luther Memorial in Fond du Lac, WI. His essay was titled “Still Our Commission: Make Disciples of All Nations – Jesus Promises His Presence.”

Human promises are limited. Jesus' promises come with certainty and power. In the Great Commission Jesus states, “I am with you always.” This presence of Jesus with His people is nothing new, however. He has been with His people throughout history. In fact, His presence is even inside believers where He rules in their hearts. His presence is vital in our ability to carry out the enormity of “making disciples.” It is a work of both tremendous blessing and responsibility.

As sheep, we are surrounded by dangerous and powerful enemies, described as wolves, lions, dragons, and beasts in the Bible, united in their goal of leading us to hell. In addition we have our sinful flesh still clinging to us. Fear, doubt, prejudice, and a worldly focus can all hinder our effectiveness in fighting this war.

The essayist went on to describe how Jesus' many roles help us in fulfilling the commission. His roles as Shepherd, Brother, Husband, King, and Vine all provide us with the protection, strength, courage, and means to go about His work – which is our work.

Missions

Domestic Missions - We rejoice in the saving Gospel message our gracious Lord has gifted to the CLC for the last 60 years, and we look forward to His continued blessings in our current five domestic missions. We are thankful and celebrate with the members of Gift of God Lutheran Church, Mapleton, ND, at their planned release from subsidy at the end of this year.

Foreign Mission Coordinator – We agree with the Board of Missions that due to the expanding foreign mission fields, there is a great need for more coordination and uniformity in our approach to these various fields. We are thankful that Missionary Ohlmann has been appointed by the Board of Missions and has begun serving in this capacity. We pray that this effort will help further our Gospel ministry overseas.

Third Foreign Missionary – We encourage the Board of Missions to resume calling a third foreign missionary and concur with their financial plan. We wait on the Lord of the Harvest to send forth His laborer to fill this much needed position as current travel restrictions are lifted.

We praise the Lord for the healing He has given to Jyothi B., and for the time in the past He has given to our missionaries to work with our brothers in India, and for the dedication of Pastor Raju and his family to the proclamation of the Gospel in Nepal despite persecution, and for the work He is doing through Pastor Monotosh in Bangladesh. We encourage the resumption of Mission Helper Program trips to India, Africa, and Nepal when possible.

Building Proposal

On Friday after lunch Pastor Michael Roehl, representing the Long Range Planning Committee, presented a slideshow on the proposed new gymnasium building. If approved, it would be located on the lower campus where the softball field currently lies. There was also some information on how the current gym could be repurposed as a fine arts and chapel building. Different avenues to finance the cost of these projects were also presented.

Thanks be to God...

... for the years of faithful service of dorm supervisors Beth Sandeen and Gus Falkenberg, part-time instructor Kelly Beekman, and maintenance staff member John Fox. We also thank the Lord for the blessings provided by professors Paul Schaller, Paul Sullivan, and John Reim. We thank the Lord for filling these positions.

... that COVID-19 did not stop ILC from holding regular in-person classes during the 2020-21 academic year. We are grateful for the efforts of the ILC faculty to allow certain college-level classes to be taken by high school students.

Be it Resolved...

In regard to the efforts of the Committee of Partners in the Public Ministry (CPPM), be it resolved that the Candidate for the Reverend Ministry requirements remain as they are at Immanuel Lutheran College and Seminary for those pursuing the goal to serve in the full-time pastoral ministry in the CLC.; and that we encourage the Regents and the seminary faculty to promote the revised Limited Public Ministry program to help meet the future needs of our synod; and that we establish the position of a recruiter for the public ministry as described by the CPPM.

...that the operating budget of the CLC for FY22 be as follows [this is the final budget adopted on Sunday]:

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|-----------------------------------|--------------------|
| Education | 18,000 |
| Trustees | 75,000 |
| Missions | 426,430 |
| Regents(subsidy) | 740,000 |
| Regents (student revenue) | 708,120 |
| Total CLC Operating Budget | \$1,967,550 |

We thank the ILC planning committee (ILC-PC) for its hard work. Be it resolved that \$20,000 be allocated from the ILC Building Fund to the ILC-PC to complete the fieldhouse renovation plan, and be it further resolved that the ILC-PC present its plan for the gymnasium and chapel/theater arts/musical arts facility at the 2022 convention.

Memorial Service

Saturday morning a memorial service was held to remember the many called servants and spouses who have gone to heavenly glory since the 2018 Convention. Pastor Theodore Barthels of Austin, MN, officiated.

Teacher Alvin Sieg: November 21, 2018
 Pastor Rollin Reim: November 27, 2018
 Pastor Kevin McKenney: January 7, 2019
 Mrs. Eunice Roehl: January 19, 2019
 Professor Ronald Roehl: March 8, 2019
 Pastor Arthur Schulz: May 8, 2019
 Pastor John H. Johannes: November 21, 2019

Teacher Gerhardt Mueller: October 27, 2020
 Mrs. Doris Hallauer: November 29, 2020
 Mrs. Sonja Olmanson: December 11, 2020
 Teacher Desirae Naumann: January 3, 2021
 Pastor William Hartmann: March 21, 2021
 Pastor Warren Fanning: January 31, 2021
 Pastor Elton Hallauer: May 28, 2021

After the singing of “For All the Saints” (463) Pastor Barthels recounted his personal connections with the departed. Focusing on the words from Hebrews 13:7-8, he said how it was proper to remember those who have come before because they spoke the word of God to those they met. The Holy Spirit placed them in the lives of many of us. We now rejoice in the heavenly glory they are experiencing.

Following the singing of “Lord Jesus Christ, with us Abide” (TLH 292) the speaker used Romans 5:1-5 as his sermon text. His theme was: *Rejoicing in the Hope of the Glory of God*

- I. We Also glory in Tribulations
- II. Hope Does Not Disappoint

Due to sin, life is full of tribulation. That is true for all of us as well as those we memorialize today. Yet our text today tells us to “rejoice in tribulation.” The Apostle Paul, the author of this text, had tribulation too. Why rejoice in it? It is through tribulation that God builds perseverance and character in us in order to preserve us in the faith. Still, hope is greater than suffering. The world often sees hope as “wishful thinking.” Our “hope of salvation” is a sure thing because it is built on Christ's redemptive work and His promises. This Spirit-driven hope does not disappoint.

The service concluded with prayer and the singing of “My Hope is Built on Nothing Less.” (TLH 370)

Convention Service

A Convention communion service was held at Messiah Lutheran Church Saturday evening. A nearly full church thundered in singing the opening hymn “Praise to the Lord, the Almighty.” (TLH 39) The following served as worship leaders:

Liturgist: Pastor Andrew Schaller, Marquette, MI
 Speaker: Pastor Matthew Hanel, Dallas, TX
 Choir Director: Professor Paul Schaller
 Organist: Dan Sullivan

Joint Statement

The majority of convention floor time on Saturday was devoted to the report from the floor committee on doctrine, specifically items dealing with the *Joint Statement*.

Since 2015 the *Joint Statement* has been considered in our midst. We have wrestled with this matter in prayer, striving to be faithful to our Lord's Word and to be charitable toward the WELS and ELS in understanding where they stand on the doctrine of separation from those causing divisions and offenses. We have thus far been unable to adopt the statement as a resolution of the differences that have separated us since the formation of the CLC in 1960. The 2017 CLC General Pastoral Conference, the 2018 CLC Convention, and the 2019 CLC General Pastoral Conference have all found that they could not recommend adoption of the 2015 *Joint Statement*.

Whereas various understandings regarding the *Joint Statement* are threatening to cause division in our own midst, we discern that this approach to agreement is not the proper path to resolve the differences that separate us from the WELS and ELS. We believe it is wise to seek a clearer way to handle the word of truth. Therefore be it

RESOLVED that we decline to adopt the *Joint Statement* as a settlement of the doctrinal difference between the CLC and the WELS and ELS concerning the termination of fellowship, and prayerfully seek the Lord's guidance in His Word for a different approach.

Whereas progress has been made through the *Joint Statement* with regard to doctrinal clarity and rejection of false statements and points of controversy, and

Whereas the doctrinal principles of the *Joint Statement* are based on the CLC's historic doctrinal position, therefore be it

RESOLVED that we continue to use the doctrinal principles of the *Joint Statement* as a basis for discussion with WELS and ELS on the doctrine of termination of fellowship.

Whereas there are questions in our midst with regard to the role of admonition, and also what is necessary for complete settlement with the WELS and ELS regarding the termination of church fellowship, and

Whereas we desire to exercise brotherly love toward those with differing opinions on these issues in our midst, therefore be it

RESOLVED that the four-man CLC committee, in conjunction with the CLC Board of Doctrine, clearly define what is necessary for a settlement of the doctrinal difference between the CLC and the WELS and ELS concerning the termination of fellowship, and be it further

RESOLVED that the four-man CLC committee work with the Board of Doctrine to address additional questions in our midst (e.g., role of admonition, prerequisites for settlement, practice of the fellowship principle, the dangers expressed by Romans 16:18) and be it further

RESOLVED that these findings be brought before the 2022 Convention.

Whereas there are lingering concerns within the CLC over the WELS and ELS teaching and practice of the termination of church fellowship, therefore be it

RESOLVED that the four-man CLC committee, in conjunction with the CLC Board of Doctrine, continues to work with the WELS and ELS to settle these doctrinal differences on the basis of Scripture.

Sunday Devotion

Chaplain David Schaller led a devotion Sunday morning based on Luke 16:19-31. This Scripture contains the parable of “The Rich Man and Lazarus.”

In sports, it is possible to have one season followed by a season of opposite success, from worst to first, or vice-versa. The rich man in the parable had everything in this life – wealth, friends, royal clothing, food, fame, and honor. However, what happened to him after death? As one of the devil's followers he suffered the eternal agony of hell. We at times are like the rich man in the parable, putting creature comforts and attention to family and friends first in our lives.

The poor man had a turnaround too. He was a sore-covered beggar, licked by stray dogs with no earthly prospects it would seem. He died too. Yet he was carried by angels to Abraham's side in heaven to live with his God forever in bliss. We are like this man too. Troubled over sin, lowly in body and spirit. But God took us sinners to be with Him on account of Jesus' redemptive work on our behalf. What a Turnaround! The devotion concluded with the singing of “This Joyful Eastertide.”

Mission School?

We encourage the Board of Missions in the exploration of new preaching stations and congregations. We also direct the Board to support and encourage the use of Christian schools as a mission outreach tool. To that end we offer the following:

Whereas there seems to be a need for a new approach to domestic missions, and our current culture seems ripe for planting Christian schools, and Christian education lays a foundation for a strong and enduring church body, and Christian schools have shown themselves to be good outreach tools, and the current Board of Missions “Guidelines for Subsidized Congregations” states, “...mission congregations will not ordinarily be eligible to open a Christian day school (CDS)”; therefore be it

RESOLVED that the Board of Missions encourages domestic subsidized congregations to open Christian day schools and provide counsel and financial assistance as appropriate; and be it further

RESOLVED that the Board of Missions be directed to develop and implement a model for a CDS program as an outreach tool in domestic subsidized congregations; and be it finally

RESOLVED that the Board of Missions and the Board of Education & Publications with the help of the Standing Constitutional Committee explore other ways to make use of subsidized Christian day schools as mission tools and report their findings to the 2022 Convention.

General Fund Endowment (GFE)

We concur with the Trustees' recommendation and establish a General Fund Endowment (GFE) to be funded by direct contributions to the Endowment and undesignated bequests to the CLC.

Dates for the next Convention: June 23-26, 2022.

Elected CLC Officers (*Bold type indicates results of 2021 Convention Elections.*)

President: Pastor Michael Eichstadt (2022)
Vice President: Pastor Michael Wilke (2022)
Secretary: Pastor Wayne Eichstadt (2022)
Moderator: Pastor Paul D. Nolting (2022)

Board of Missions

Pastor Rob Sauers (2024)
Mr. Jeff Radichel (2024)
Pastor Nathanael Mayhew (2022)
Mr. Joel Krafft (2022)

Board of Regents

Teacher Matthew Thurow (2024)
Mr. Steve Ludvigson (2024)
Mr. James Burkhardt (2022)
Pastor John Hein (2022)

Board of Trustees

Pastor Michael Roehl (2024)
Mr. Neal Wietgreffe (2024)
Professor Jeff Schierenbeck (2022)
Mr. Tom Lentz (2022)

Board of Education & Publications

Teacher Seth Schaller (2024)
Mr. Rick Nelson (2024)
Pastor David Naumann (2022)
Professor Ross Roehl (2022)

Conference Visitors [elected by each conference]:

Great Lakes: Pastor Andrew Schaller
Minnesota: Pastor James Albrecht
Pacific Coast: Pastor David Naumann
South Eastern: Pastor Matthew Hanel
West Central: Pastor Michael Roehl

Convention Thanks

We give thanks and praise to the Lord during this COVID-challenged year for bringing our pastors, teachers, and delegates to this convention. We also ask Him for a safe return home and needed continued blessings as we return to His work in our home congregations, schools, and mission fields.

We also express our great appreciation for the dedicated efforts of those who have served this convention: the faculty and staff of ILC, the Praesidium, moderator, secretary, essayists, chaplain, instrumentalists, memorial service speaker, communion service liturgists, preacher, choir and choir director, the officers of the various boards, committees, and chairman, reporters and secretaries of those committees, and the countless others who worked behind the scenes in a variety of ways including, the prayers of our brethren not present at this convention.

Thanks were also expressed to Messiah, Eau Claire for the use of their sanctuary for the Convention Communion service.

The "Convention Chronicles" is produced by Prof. Joe and Julie Lau.

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