



DP Vantage Point

*For Christ and for His world SWD Magnifies partnerships,
Multiplies ministries, and Maximizes resources.*

November 10, 2015

From fall 2015 Pastors' Conference on Amos 5

Brothers in Christ:

Perhaps we should look at ourselves carefully. Do we crave our Lord's mercy? Do we rejoice when we go to the house of the Lord? Do daily put into practice our baptism using God's Word to put to death the old sinful nature in us. If we have lost our craving for repentance and forgiveness, can we expect more from the people we have been called to serve? In such an environment as we struggle with our own sinfulness, our divine calling is to stand with the nine who were slain at the Oregon College to say "I AM A CHRISTIAN",

1. "I am a Christian." Great words because being a Christian is about Christ Jesus and the grace that God showers upon us because of His Son. He calls sinners to repentance, washing their sins away in the blood of His Son. Repentance, not just for the world in which we live; but also, most importantly for you and me. You are forgiven because of the suffering and blood of Christ.
2. "I am a Christian". You and I are called by our Lord to honor the vocation that He has given us through His church. We are called to lead the Church in its repentance, in its confession of faith, and in how that confession is lived out. Dare we remain silent? Jesus Christ is Lord. More than words a way of life and living.

It was obvious from the way that the people of Israel were living that they have no true faith in God. They were not clinging to the promises that that God had made Abraham at Beersheba and Jacob at Bethel. The promise was the same: Your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south, and in you and your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed. That promise had become empty/worthless for the Israelites. They had lost the Gospel. You can see it from the way that they live. Listen to God's indictment:

- They hate him who reproveth in the gate, and they abhor him who speaks the truth. Therefore because you trample on the poor and you exact taxes of grain from him, you have built houses of hewn stone, but you shall not dwell in them; you have planted pleasant vineyards, but you shall not drink their wine.

There is no care and compassion for anyone else. The weakest and most vulnerable in society suffer the most. There is no mercy. Everyone is concerned only about himself or herself, wanting and hoarding God's gifts for themselves.

Sound familiar? That strange dualism can easily infect the church. Spiritual matters are divorced from care for those in need, divorced from social concerns. Much like the people of Israel people these days we can compartmentalize our lives; keeping one hour for church on Sunday morning, with the rest of the time for me. And it can even happen to us, the servants of the church. We can be so obsessed with the desire "to win souls for Jesus" that we forget to care for those whom our Lord has entrusted to us. We can be consumed with the desire "to win souls for Jesus" that we overlook the physical needs of those around us. Oh, we are quick to pitch in when there is a disaster somewhere else.

But what about the needy in your own community...the hurting in our church? We have been called to care for the whole person. Consider the early New Testament church by way of example. In Acts 6 the word *διακονία* is used in three different ways: 1)waiting on tables, 2)the service, the *διακονία* of the Word, and 3) the “daily *διακονία* of the widows”. That was an important part of the church then. Is that an important part of the church today?

Here is another story from the Dominican Republic. During one presentation we heard from Vicar John, studying for the ministry, chaplain to the Lutheran school in Palmar Arriba. During his presentation he said something timeless. *Lex orandi Lex credendi*. And then he gave us this definition “What the church practices is what she believes.” It fit in the context. He was talking about caring for the poor and teaching the children, caring for the developmentally disable. Then he said, “Always Jesus in first place all the time.”

Consider these words from Reed Lessing’s commentary on Amos:

- Christians in this life are called, as they have opportunity in their vocations, to intercede for the helpless, assist needy orphans and widows, heal the diseased, uplift the lowly, empower the disenfranchised, and reach out to all the vulnerable and lowly people, even as our Lord showed concern for such people during his earthly ministry. See, for example, Mt 15:22–28 (the healing of the Canaanite woman’s sick daughter); Mk 10:46–52 (the healing of blind Bartimaeus); Lk 8:41–56 (the raising of Jairus’ dead daughter and the healing of the woman with the flow of blood).

It would be easy for us to blame the culture and then to commiserate in our declining congregations; but perhaps it is best for us take to heart these words of the Prophet as we set out to honor the vocation that our Lord has given us. He has called us both to be Christians and to be the *διακονία*, that is the servants, of His church. We are the proclaimers, the leaders, those who set the example for the believers to follow. Again a quote from Herman Sasse who lived in a time very much like our own:

Thus remains the Lutheran office of the pastor. Where the secular protections of the church have been forever destroyed, where the church governments cannot help...where the old societal organizations of Lutheranism leave us in the lurch, where the congregation is too weak, there the Lutheran office of the pastor remains.

So crucial is our vocation for the church. How will we answer the call? We could just go about doing our own thing, suffering in silence as it has been called. Or we can honor our calling as we honor our Lord. This is not a time to be silent. This is not a time to be paralyzed with fear. It is our divine calling as pastors in the church to stand and say “**I AM A CHRISTIAN**”, regardless of the consequences.

In these days when the church is no longer recognized as important to society, our continued, gracious and defining confession of faith provides a powerful witness to the culture in which we find ourselves! Thanks for your confession!!

May our gracious Lord have mercy!
Rev. Dr. John C. Wille
President LCMS-SWD

The full sermon is attached.

A Word from Luther, On Government, Volume 39, page 18.

Since the beginning of the world it has been true, and it remains true, that spiritual and temporal authority are more often given to the Pilates, Herods, Annases, and Caiaphases than to godly men such as Peter, Paul, and others. There are always more evil men than godly ones in the government as in all other estates. Moreover, it cannot be supposed or hoped that we shall ever inherit a purely pious government. Indeed, if a good regiment, government, or blessed use of power is to be had at all, it must come as pure grace, or through special prayer and merit. For God punishes evil subjects with evil rulers, as he says in Isaiah 3[:4], "I will make boys their princes, and childish people shall rule over them," and, "I will take from them every mighty, brave, wise, and able man," etc. [Isa. 3:2]. Since to have incapable or evil rulers is God's punishment, and there are so many among us who deserve such punishment, we should not be surprised when the government behaves tyrannically toward us and misuses its power over us. Indeed, we should wonder and thank God when the government is not tyrannical and does us no injustice.

17. Because of the abundance of horrible sins, the world is now overburdened with young, imprudent, and inexperienced rulers, mostly in the spiritual estate. Therefore our age is extraordinarily perilous, and we must act very wisely and see to it that we hold government and power in the highest honor, just as Christ honored the power of Pilate, of Herod, of Annas, of Caiaphas, and even of secular princes. We must not let such grave misuse and childish governing of the prelates move us to despise authority. Otherwise, we despise not only the unworthy persons who rule but their power itself. Rather, we should joyfully bear everything it imposes, or humbly and respectfully refuse to bear it. For God neither likes nor tolerates blasphemous and wanton resistance to authority, as long as it does not drive us to act against God or against his commandment—although it [authority] itself may act as much against God as it wants to, or hurt us as much as it wants to. He himself intends to judge and to condemn those who are great and powerful tyrants, as well as to help those who are oppressed sufferers. That is why we should yield to his will and let the tyrants fall under his sword and judgment. On the other hand, we should let ourselves be helped by him, as St. Paul says in Romans 12[:19], "Oh, dearest brethren, do not avenge and protect yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God; for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine alone, and I will repay everyone, says the Lord.' "

SWD News and Tidbits:

1) Current SWD Financials:

The latest SWD financials are attached; viz. the congregation intentions as well as the Statement of Activities. I thank each of you for your generosity and the generosity of God's people whom we serve. That generosity allows us to accomplish much together for the Kingdom of our Lord. Thank you!!

- 2) **2016-2017 Congregational Intention forms:** The forms are being sent out in the next couple of weeks. Please make sure that you read the material carefully. My prayer is that each of our congregations under your leadership will respond as generously as our Lord is blessing. These intentions are about our common work together as the Body of Christ in South Wisconsin. St. Paul writes these words regarding the gather to help the poor in Jerusalem: "I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich." 2 Corinthians 8:8-9

- 3) **Planning for the 2016 LCMS National Convention** continues. On Tuesday, December 8th there will be a meeting of our local coordinators with leadership from the International Center at the SWD office to lay out what services and how many people we in SWD need to supply to make the July 2016 LCMS

Convention a success. Please keep your eyes open for the list of needed volunteers. We will need a lot of help to pull this together!

4) Congregational Assessment for the LCMS Convention: Talking with Herman, our SWD Business Manager, while we don't have the final numbers from the LCMS on the costs for this summer's national convention, it is estimated that they will be approximately the same as three years ago. For the sake of budgetary purposes we are suggesting that congregations whose budget comes due soon plug in the number of \$1.40 per communicant. If you need more information, give Herman a call!

5) Congregational Visitation Continues:

Most of our Circuit Visitors are aware that I am making the rounds to their congregations as part of President Harrison's visitation emphasis. In some cases I am preaching, in others I am meeting with their elders or main board. However, it is not merely the congregations served by CV's. I have been at a great many others as well, as you can see from my calendar below. If you would like me to visit your parish, talk with your leadership, and/or preach in Sunday worship, give Karen a phone call. She can get it on my calendar. I would be honored to be there!

6) My travel calendar highlights for the next few weeks, plus a variety of meetings at the SWD office:

- November 2 visitation, Divine Savior, North Fond du Lac (Almost hit some venison on the way home. Thank the Lord for guardian angels!)
- November 4 visitation, St. Paul's Wild Rose
- November 5 visitation. Oklahoma Ave Lutheran Church Call Committee
- November 6 CUW Board of Regents, as well as planning for January "Passionate Believers" Conference
- November 7- 8 preach at the 125th anniversary of Bethlehem Lutheran Sheboygan
- November 9 Mayo Clinic follow up
- November 10 Happy Birthday Martin Luther!!
- November 11-13 North-South Wisconsin District Teachers' Conference at the Dells
- November 14-23 Council of Presidents' meeting and LCEF Fall Conference in Atlanta
- November 24 SWD Team meeting.
- November 26 Thanksgiving. "Oh give thanks unto the Lord!"

7) Calls and Vacancies:

Vacant and Calling Congregations:

- Beloit – Messiah (evaluating)
- Cedarburg – First Immanuel (associate)
- Delevan – Our Redeemer (associate pastor)
- Franklin – Risen Savior (evaluating)
- Grafton – St. Paul (associate)
- Mayville – St. John (senior)
- Milwaukee – Hope
- Milwaukee – Oklahoma Ave. (evaluating)
- Random Lake/Batavia – Immanuel & St. Stephen (evaluating)
- Sheboygan Falls – St. Paul (associate)
- Wales – Bethlehem
- Wauwatosa – Our Redeemer

- Wauwatosa – Pilgrim

Pastors considering a call

- Neil Carlson – Christ the King/Holy Cross, Racine to St. James, Baltimore, Maryland
- Neil Carlson – Christ the King/Holy Cross, Racine to Trinity/Zion, Sidney, Nebraska
- Mark McCrory – First Lutheran, Chattanooga, Tennessee to St. Paul, Sheboygan Falls
- William Mueller – Sub Bethlehem, Fort Wayne, Indiana to St. John, Mayville

Pastors accepting a call

- Shane Cota – Trinity, Boulder Junction, Wisconsin to Trinity/St. Thomas, Town Wilson/Waldo
- Gregory Koepsell – Alive, Monticello, Minnesota to Good Shepherd, Oshkosh
- Christopher Lockie – Immanuel, Davenport, Iowa to Prince of Peace, Racine

8) SWD Prayer List:

- Peter Kelm as he continues cancer treatments

May our Lord bless!!

Rev. Dr. John C. Wille
President, South Wisconsin District-LCMS
Office: 414.464.8100
Mobile : 414.839.9162

Confessing Christ for the Next Generation

*It is time for us to be distinctly Lutheran, to plant new churches, to honor our vocation,
and to embrace our communities.*