



DP Vantage Point

*For Christ and for His world SWD magnifies partnerships,
multiplies ministries, and maximizes resources.*

Trinity Sunday, June 11, 2017

Dear Brothers in the Office of the Holy Ministry:

What follows is a selection from the sermon which I preached on Pentecost Sunday as Good Shepherd Tomah celebrated the 35th anniversary of the ordination of Pastor Mark Benning. The text was the Gospel lesson for the day, John 7:37-39. The sermon is .

What makes a good and faithful pastor a noble thing; a precious treasure? Some might say that it is powerful and charismatic personality. Oftentimes mega-churches are built on the personality, the passion, and the vision of the senior pastor. They seem larger than life. Hundreds, sometimes thousands of people, come to hear such a pastor preach. But when the pastor leaves, the congregation crumbles into nothing. That can happen in any church, in any denomination.

The truth of the matter is neither the congregation nor the pastoral office are about the individual who serves as the pastor. It is not about his magnetic personality, not about his powerful messages. When that happens, there can be a strange kind of idolatry that takes place; the pastor, a man, becomes more vital than Christ; more vital than forgiveness or eternal life, more integral than the cross or the empty tomb.

The truth of the matter is; the church and the pastor office are about what our Lord Jesus says here, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink" .

Much like the desert through which the Children of Israel wandered, the world in which we live is a sin-scorched and death-ridden environment. Life can suck a person dry, leaving only hopelessly dead bones. You have all experienced that in one way or another. Rejection. Loneliness. Failures, sin and its dreadful consequences. Barren surroundings which give birth to hopelessness. Want to add anything to that list?

Where is there relief from such a parched existence? When we find ourselves surrounded spiritual jackals of a guilty conscience, the stinging serpents of temptation, the dry mouth that comes with hopelessness, where is there relief? Where? Listen to the words of the Psalmist:

- As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. Psalm 42:1-2
- O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water. [David] Psalm 63

Where is there relief? Jesus says, says here, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink" Relief lies in our Lord and His Word. Here as the Word of God is proclaimed from this pulpit. There at the altar as the Sacraments, as the visible Word of God, are administered.

And who proclaims that Word? Who administers the Sacraments? It is the pastor whom God has called through you to serve in this congregation: Pastor Benning. And yet, it is not about the man; but rather the Office and the Word. Martin Luther puts it this way:

A true pastor thus contributes to the well-being of men in body and soul, in property and honor. But beyond that see how he also serves God and what glorious worship and sacrifice he renders. For by his work and word there are maintained in this world the kingdom of God, the name and honor and glory of God, the true knowledge of God, the right faith and understanding of Christ, the fruits of the suffering and blood and death of Christ, the gifts and works and power of the Holy Spirit, the true and saving use of baptism and the sacrament, the right and pure teaching of the gospel, the right way of disciplining and crucifying the body, and much more. Who could ever adequately praise any one of these things? And what more can still be said? How much he accomplishes by battling against the devil, the wisdom of this world, and the imaginations of the flesh; how many victories he wins; how he puts down error and prevents heresy. For he must strive and fight against the gates of hell [Matt. 16:18] and overcome the devil. This too is not his own doing; it is accomplished by his office and his word. These are the innumerable and unspeakable works and miracles of the preaching office. In a word, if we would praise God to the uttermost, we must praise his word and preaching; for the office and the word are [the Lord's] (Luther's works, vol. 46: The Christian in Society III. Vol. 46, pp. 227-228.)

Luther hits the nail squarely on the head writes, "There is no dearer treasure, no nobler thing on earth or in this life than a good and faithful pastor and preacher." For example, each day through him many souls are taught, converted, baptized, and brought to Christ and saved, and redeemed from sin, death, hell, and the devil. Through him they come to everlasting righteousness, to everlasting life and heaven, so that Daniel [12:3] says well that "those who teach others shall shine like the brightness of the firmament; and those who turn many to righteousness shall be like the stars for ever and ever." [Vol. 46, page 223]

What I said there in Tomah, is true of you and your ministry: I thank my Lord and His grace for each of you, good and faithful pastors and preachers in SWD!! Thank you for all you do as you serve our Lord and His people, as you proclaim the Gospel and administer His Sacraments!! Doing so, you are a blessing to God's people and to me! Thank you!

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A Word from Luther on 2 Corinthians 3:4-11 for Trinity Sunday:

É 29. On the other hand, when St. Paul calls the Gospel "an office of the Spirit," he does this to point out its power, because it works much differently on human hearts than does the Law, namely, that it brings with it the Holy Spirit and makes a completely new heart. When a person who has been driven into fright and anxiety through the preaching of the Law hears this preaching, it no longer tells him what God demands from him, but rather what He has done for him, and points him not to his works, but to Christ's works. It tells him to believe and be certain that for the sake of His Son He will forgive his sins and accept him as His child.

When he accepts and believes this preaching, his heart is immediately lifted up and comforted, so that he no longer flees from God but turns to Him. Because he finds and senses grace and mercy with Him, he immediately begins to feel friendly toward Him, to call on Him from the heart, and to regard and honor Him as his dear God. The more such faith and comfort is strengthened, the more his desire and love for and obedience to His Commandments increases. For that purpose, God always wants the Word of the Gospel emphasized to awaken the human heart, so that it recognizes this and remembers God's great grace and kindness, and thus the Holy Spirit becomes stronger and stronger. All of this is not the power and work of the Law or of man, but a new, heavenly power of the Holy Spirit, who presses Christ with His works into the heart and makes a true booklet out of it,

which is not letters and mere writing, but truly life and action. [Luther's Works, Volume 79 (Church Postil V) (Kindle Locations 777-788). [CPH.]

SWD News and Tidbits:

1. ***SWD Office Parking Lot:*** If you recall, the SWD blacktop was quite cracked and breaking up. Last fall we began the process of replacing it. However, because the ground beneath was so saturated with water it couldn't finish it until this year. This last week the black toppers finished their work, the striping has been applied, and we have a new surface. An interesting factoid, going back to the late 1980's no one can remember when the parking lot was last paved; so, we certainly got our money's worth out of that parking lot [good stewardship]. Special thanks to Herman who over saw the project and to all the SWD congregations whose support made this new blacktop possible!!
Thank you!!
2. ***Concordia Portland: rumors and facts.*** The LCMS rumor mill is an interesting machine. Lately I have been receiving questions about why the LCMS is cutting Concordia Portland loose to be on their own. Well, here is a statement from Rev. Michael Kumm who chairs the LCMS Board of Directors, which I pray will help to clarify the matter:

COMMUNICATION AND RESPONSE TO RECENT STATEMENTS MADE BY CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY- PORTLAND

No decision, proposal or recommendation has been made by Concordia University System or by The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod regarding any significant changes at Concordia University of Portland.

Under Synod Bylaws, Concordia University System's Board of Directors (CUS) would have to make a recommendation to the LCMS Board of Directors concerning certain types of major changes, such as a divestiture or sale, before any changes could occur. If such a recommendation were to be made by CUS, no action would be taken unless both the LCMS Board of Directors and one of either the Concordia University Portland (CUP) Board of Regents or the Council of Presidents voted to accept the recommendation.

The recent CUP Facebook posting and other communications sent out by CUP's Board of Regents concerning possible changes in ownership and governance reflect the fact that CUS President, Rev. Dr. Dean Wenthe, and CUP President, Dr. Charles Schlimpert, recently met to discuss how they might work together to meet complex challenges that are facing campuses like CUP in this turbulent environment that currently characterizes university education. Rev. Dr. Wenthe invited Dr. Schlimpert to meet with him in St. Louis to discuss these challenges, particularly in the area of ongoing capitalization. They discussed a variety of ideas on how they might explore potential solutions that would benefit both CUP and the LCMS, but no definite proposals were made. However, CUS President Rev. Dr. Wenthe and CUS Board Chairman Dr. Gerhard Munding supported Dr. Schlimpert's suggestion that he would be willing to postpone his retirement in light of the potentially significant changes that could occur with respect to CUP.

3. ***Ecclesiastical Supervision: rumors and facts...Additional Clarification.*** You may have heard bits and pieces regarding some news regarding the new set of LCMS Bylaws regarding an accuser's right to appeal to the LCMS president. A couple of letters that I have recently seen have attempted to rewrite the history of ecclesiastical supervision in the LCMS. I mention it because such letters have gone out from several venues and contain what I regard to be, contrary to fact information. In an effort to redact our history several of those letters wrongly state: *"You will read articles that will*

declare that the SP has always had this responsibility for every member of the Synod. People might tell you that there's nothing new about this, but that is not true. This significant change represents a centralization of power and control in one office – that of the President of the Synod.

However, here is the simple black and white snapshot of the matter. As TV Detective Joe Friday (Dragnet) used to say, "Just the facts, sir!" Here is a snapshot of the historical facts.

The 1956 LCMS bylaw states: *If the District officers fail to act, the President of Synod, by virtue of the power given him in the Constitution (Article XI, B, 1, 2, 3) may on his own initiative institute proceedings, take administrative action, and, if necessary, present charges to the District Board of Appeals.* (1956 Bylaw 5.23, Handbook, n.p.) [Cited from CCM Opinion 16-2791]

Previous to that this section from the **1854 LCMS Constitution and Bylaws**, which were in German, state:

Er hat die Oberaufsicht in Betreff der Lehre, Praxis und resp. Amtsverwaltung über sämtliche Synodalbeamte und sämtliche Prediger und Lehrer innerhalb des gesammten Synodalsprengels, über die einzelnen Districts=Synoden, als solche, über die Pastoral Conferenzen und über die einzelnen Gemeinden der Districts=synoden. Des allgemeine Prases, 1864 Constitution, 6. E. 3.

My translation: "He has the superintendence (oberaufsicht, *oversight*) in the subjects of teaching, practice and Office administration over the entire (sammtliche, *each and every*) Synod official and each and every preacher and teacher within the entire synodical district, over the individual district as such, the pastoral conferences and over the individual congregations of district synod. The General President, 1854 Constitution, 6. E. 3. (Der Lutheraner 9, 1853 no. 22:145) [Translation by Rev. Dr. Brian Saunders, IDE president]

The Proceedings from the 1849 LCMS Convention state:

If in between Conventions public offense is given by individual pastors of the Synod whether voting or advisory members-in respect to doctrine or life, and after admonitions by the President and other officers this is not confessed with a repentant heart and no improvement is pledged, then the President is empowered to temporarily suspend the membership of such pastors until the next session of the synod and is also to make such suspension public. The President is empowered in urgent emergencies to announce previously [prior to the temporary suspension] that a particular member is under investigation. (Proceedings 1849, page 10.) [translated from the German.]

An unbiased reading of the LCMS Constitution and Bylaws dating back to the founding of our synod demonstrates that there has been an ebb and flow regarding the direct and indirect involvement of the synod president in ecclesiastical supervision regarding members of synod.

Historically there is a preponderance of evidence to support what has been restored to the LCMS bylaws regarding the ecclesiastical supervision of the synod president as a result of Resolution 12-01a and 12-14. The latter adopted by the synod in convention July 2016, and implemented in May 2017 as the LCMS Board of Directors adopted the supporting bylaws.

CCM Opinion 16-2791 states:

Moreover, this review finds the change of the Bylaws in 1989 and subsequently (namely, to remove the right of appeal for action to the President, should district officials fail to act, and to replace it first with an appeal to the Presidium and then with an appeal to a Referral Panel) to conflict with the Constitution of the Synod. This change unconstitutionally deprived the President of the Synod of procedures for exercising a power granted him in Constitution Art.

XI B 163. That this power to receive appeals for action, in case of the inaction of district officials, is one of the means constitutionally at [the President's] command to promote and maintain unity of doctrine and practice in all the districts of the Synod (Constitution Art. XI B 3) was the opinion of the Synod in convention in 1956. It expressed this opinion explicitly and with its unique and final interpretive power. It must therefore be the opinion also of this commission.

Study the facts and weigh them for yourselves.

For me, the bottom line of all this is that if the district president does what he has been elected to do, none of this will affect the district president, the local congregation or a called church worker. The restored bylaws serve only as a check and balance to ensure that proper ecclesiastical supervision takes place; an additional tripwire to prevent the LCMS from drifting into dark nether world of heterodoxy (and that is something which we all want). The synod president may not unilaterally insert himself into a matter of ecclesiastical discipline.

4. **500th Anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation, "It is Still About Jesus":** Please keep us informed about what your circuit is doing to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. There are local, circuit and wider celebrations happening. At present there are several regional celebrations planned. Our intention is to keep SWD informed about these through our various publications. So if your congregation and/or circuit are planning something, please let us know so that we can share the information with others. Thanks! Moving forward, we would like to get all these celebrations listed on the SWD Website.
7. **Update on the Search Committee for the SWD Mission Exec position:** The search for the right man continues. In Acts 1 as the early church replaced Judas, they prayed, "*You, Lord, who know the hearts of all, show us which one you have chosen to the place in this ministry.*" In the next couple of weeks the committee will interview another candidate, Rev. Jonah Burakowski who at one time served the saints at St. John's Beloit. There may be additional interviews of candidates. Please keep this matter in your prayers!!
8. **SWD Financials are attached for your review.** Please take a look at the attached reports. The dollars which we spend in pursuit of "Confessing Christ for the Next Generation" are shared with us through your precious financial gifts. I thank you for each of those precious gifts!!
9. **Our Fall Circuit Visitors' Gathering is on the calendar for Monday, September 25:** Please mark your calendars according, if you are a CV or a VP. While the agenda is a work in progress at this point, the new CV Manual should be approved and available by that time. Also, David Totsky will be with us that day, as the SWD Secretary, to speak about the Circuit Forums that need to take place before the 2018 SWD Convention.
10. **Bethesda raising buildings:** Attached are two documents which detail the decision of Bethesda's board of directors to demolish all of the buildings on the Watertown campus, except for the administration building. If you have roots in Watertown as I do, the memories of Bethesda's history in Watertown run deep. As a child growing up, there are memories of Bethesda's residents out in the fields working, friendly and waving. I actually worked there for a time as a ward-parent; my wife, Lynn, was a nurse. It's where we met. Wonderful memories. But all things change. The state mandates a different care model. Even the chapel is coming down. If you are interested in an organ or stained glass windows, please take a look at the attachments.

11. DP's Preaching and travel schedule: Some highlights from the next few weeks. There are a couple of open weekends; if you would like me to preach about our *õConfessing Christ for the Next Generationö*, please give Karen a call. I would be honored to have that opportunity!!

- a. June 11, Jim Roemke's 10th anniversary of ordination. Pastor Tom Chryst preaching
- b. June 12, Circuit 4 Winkel, First Immanuel Cedarburg
- c. June 14, All SWD Staff meeting
- d. June 15, Roger Laesch day at SWD office
- e. June 17, Ordination of Adam Barkley at Luther Memorial Sheboygan
- f. June 19, pastor visits, as well as Immanuel Sheboygan, Call Committee mtg
- g. June 26-27, Interview for SWD Mission Exec: Rev. Jonah Burakowski
- h. June 20, Circuit 17, Tomah
- i. June 22-25, LWML National Convention at Albuquerque, New Mexico
- j. June 28, pastor visits, as well as Call Committee mtg at St. John's Berlin
- k. June 30-July 7, Wille Family vacation
- l. July 11, All Staff meeting, SWD office
- m. July 12, Bart Day in town for RSO visit to LUMIN
- n. July 14-22, Manitoba fishing with a bunch of Lutherans from the Dakotas
- o. August 3, SWD 2018 Convention Planning Committee
- p. August 7, SWD Church Worker Golf Outing, Horicon (*Please see attached form.*)
- q. August 10-12, CSL Regents, St. Louis
- r. August 14-16 SWD Executive Staff Planning Retreat
- s. September 25, Monday, Fall Circuit Visitors' meeting at the SWD Office

11. Pastoral Calls and Congregational Vacancies:

Pastor calls & vacancies

- É Berlin ó St. John
- É Brookfield ó Immanuel (associate)
- É Clinton ó Christ (evaluating)
- É Franklin ó Risen Savior
- É Hilbert ó St. Peter (evaluating)
- É Janesville ó Mt. Calvary
- É Mayville ó St. John (associate)
- É Menomonee Falls ó Grace (senior)
- É Milwaukee ó Mt. Olive (senior)
- É Racine ó Grace
- É Sheboygan ó St. Paul (associate)
- É Sheboygan Falls ó St. Paul (associate)
- É Waukesha ó Christ the Life (sole)

Pastors considering a call

- É Karl Gibbs ó Our Savior, Milford, Illinois to Risen Savior, Franklin

Pastors accepting a call

- É Timothy Heath, Jr. ó St. Peter, Hilbert to Zion, Owego, New York
- É Timothy Heath, Sr. ó Christ the Life, Waukesha to St. John, Aliceville, Kansas
- É Travis Schmidt ó Candidate to Trinity, Erie, Pennsylvania
- É Adam Sorenson, Candidate to Trinity, Willoughby, Ohio

Pastors declining a call

É Paul Crolius ó St. Peter, Reedsburg to Mt. Calvary, Huron, South Dakota

É Adam Sorenson ó Candidate to Trinity, Zanesville, Ohio

É Paul Mundinger ó Faith, LaCrosse to St. John, Berlin, Wisconsin

Pastors retiring: The following ordained brothers have announced their retirement. We thank our gracious Lord for their good and faithful service all these years!!

- Pastor Thomas Krueger, Trinity West Allis, July 17
- Pastor Ed May, Trinity Beloit, July 31
- Pastor Maurice Lind, Good Shepherd East Troy, July 31
- Pastor Adam Scheblein, Immanuel Sheboygan, September 30

Candidates placed

É Adam Barkley ó Luther Memorial, Sheboygan (Saturday, June 17, 10am)

É David Nieman ó St. John, West Bend (Sunday, June 25, 11am)

Vicars assigned

É Kyle Brown ó St. Peter, Arlington

É Marin Cerchez ó St. Paul, Janesville

É Kevin Koester ó Trinity, Howards Grove

É Edmundo Rosales ó Primera Iglesia, Racine

10. SWD Prayer List:

- Rev. Don Johnson, recovering from prostate cancer surgery
- Rev. Peter Kelm, as he continues his battle against cancer
- Rev. Dan Quinn, formerly of SWD now in Texas battling an aggressive cancer

May our gracious Lord bless!!

Rev. Dr. John C. Wille

President, South Wisconsin District-LCMS

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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.*