

Congregational leadership in challenging times

Passionate Believers Conference
Rev. John C. Wille, SWD President
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Charles Dickens: These
are the best of times and
these are the worst of
times.” Tale of Two Cities

ARE THOSE WORDS TRUE
TODAY?



Let's think back to the church of yesterday. Or the church of 20 years ago.

The America we grew up in?

Was it different? How?

WE LIVE IN CHALLENGING TIMES.

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We can talk about what is
different inside of church?

WE LIVE IN CHALLENGING TIMES.

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What is different outside of church?

- In the community?
- In the culture?

WE LIVE IN CHALLENGING TIMES.

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How would you answer this question?

- “My organization does not discriminate on any unlawful basis in either hiring/employment practices or in the administration of programs and services.”

WE LIVE IN CHALLENGING TIMES.

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How would you answer this question?

“My organization does not discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity in hiring/employment practices.”

WE LIVE IN CHALLENGING TIMES.

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Would you lie? Would you tell
the truth?

What would you say?

What would you want your
pastor to say? Your church?

WE LIVE IN CHALLENGING TIMES.

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Those questions come from an application for email hosting on: Google Non-Profits.

If you do not check the box, your application will be rejected out of hand.

WE LIVE IN CHALLENGING TIMES.

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TIMES.

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Would you lie? Would you tell
the truth?

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The world in which we live is
different.

WE LIVE IN CHALLENGING
TIMES.

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“Decided on June 26, 2015, Obergefell overturned Baker and requires all states to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples and to recognize same-sex marriages validly performed in other jurisdictions. This legalized same-sex marriage throughout the United States, and its possessions and territories.”

wikipedia

WE LIVE IN CHALLENGING
TIMES.

Ways to protected the congregation and ministry:

- Constitutional safeguards
- Policies and guidelines regarding property usage and employment
- Background checks on all employees
- Check with your insurance company
- Legal counsel

WHAT DO WE DO?

Have you ever stood at the back of your church and noticed the color of most everyone's hair is gray?

Where are the younger folks?

WE LIVE IN CHALLENGING
TIMES.

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shifting gears...

What does your community look like?

What is the demographic of your community?

WE LIVE IN CHALLENGING
TIMES.



Do we see the changing
demographic?

Are we engaging and
embracing the new
immigrants?

WE LIVE IN CHALLENGING
TIMES.

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These are challenging times in the church. Where we used to grow from within, our families are not replacing themselves. The birth rate is down.

Where once we planted new church and we could expect people to come, now that is not the case.

WE LIVE IN CHALLENGING
TIMES.



- A culture that grows increasingly hostile
- Declining attendance.
- Changing demographic
- Apathy and conflict.

WHAT DO WE DO?

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There is no silver bullet, no magic wand to wave.

Is this Luther's "passing rain shower" of the Gospel?

Do we close congregations and schools one by one, constantly in retreat.... until....???

WHAT DO WE DO?

The only thing necessary for evil
to prevail is for good me to do
nothing.

For us to stay silent.

For us to go underground.

For us to.....

WHAT DO WE DO?

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The church has faced opposition
and persecution before.

Remember the lions?

Remember the Reformation?

Remember the Prussian Union?

WE LIVE...BY FAITH IN THE
SON OF GOD.

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On this rock I will build my church,
and the gates of hell shall not prevail
against it. I will give you the keys of
the kingdom of heaven, and
whatever you bind on earth shall be
bound in heaven, and whatever you
loose on earth shall be loosed in
heaven. Matthew 16:2

WHAT SHALL WE DO?

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It is time for us to understand who we are, and to remember who our Lord is.

“In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” John 1:4-5

WHAT SHALL WE DO?

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Time for us to be who we are.

As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 2 Peter 2:5

WHAT DO WE DO?

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But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

2 Peter 2:8ff

WHAT DO WE DO?

If we want to arise out of this distress, then we must first of all blame ourselves for the failure of the past years and not the world. We are to blame for the failure to make our thoughts and desires reality. It is absolutely necessary that we remind ourselves that up to this point every true renewal of the church has begun with a movement of repentance. This repentance includes our readiness to place all of our plans, and especially all of our pet ideas, under the judgment of God's Word.

HERMAN SASSE

That means that it has no other objectives, but that it actually does have this one purpose, namely, to do what the apostles were charged with, to preach the pure Gospel, to administer the Sacraments instituted by Christ, and nothing more. Only from such a profound understanding can there come a renewal of the office of the ministry.

Sasse

WHAT DO WE DO?

Real renewal in the church,
like we hope for after this
great war, presupposes a
renewal of the pastoral office.
Sasse

WHAT DO WE DO?

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Every renewal of the church's confession of doctrine must, if it is to lead to a real renewal of the church, be a renewal of the liturgy, of prayer, of the Sacrament, and of the office of the keys. Sasse

WHAT DO WE DO?

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The renewal of the Christian congregation and her Divine Service therefore begins, in a way that most theologians today still find incomprehensible, when we once again seriously learn and teach what the NT and the catechism say on Baptism and the Supper. Sasse

WHAT DO WE DO?

The renewal of the doctrine of the Sacrament, which we are experiencing today with astonishment, will be followed by the renewal of the correct celebration of the Holy Supper. And if this renewal is carried out first in a few places, and in smaller circles, if it is really the rightly understood and rightly celebrated Sacrament of the Altar, then the church will necessarily be renewed through it. For the church, which is the body of Christ, is built on earth when Christ feeds his community [Gemeinde] which truly believes in him with his true body and blood.

Sasse

WHAT DO WE DO?

- ▶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.
Romans 1:16

WHAT DO WE DO?

For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some.

1 Corinthians 9:22ff

HOW BEST CAN WE WITNESS?

Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life.

Philippians 2:14

HOW BEST CAN WE WITNESS?

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together.

Hebrews 10:23ff

HOW BEST CAN WE WITNESS?



They were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.

And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. Acts 2:45-

47 HOW BEST CAN WE WITNESS?

And the Lord added to their
number day by day those
who were being saved.

Acts 2:47

WHAT CAN WE DO?

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Confessing Christ for the next generation

- 1) This is our time to be distinctly Lutheran
- 2) This is our time to honor our vocation
- 3) This is our time to plant new congregations
- 4) This is our time to embrace our communities

HOW BEST CAN WE WITNESS?