

# Jesus First

2010 Convention News

## President Kieschnick Has a Pastoral Heart

By Pastor Greg Smith

My heart for ministry was shaped in Decatur, IL (CID) by men of solid doctrine and active evangelism – Rev. George Beiderwieden, Jr. of Pilgrim, Decatur, and Dr. Henry Eggold of the Springfield Seminary who served as Chancel Assistant at Pilgrim.

Now that I have been a parish pastor for 33 years, I believe solid doctrine and active evangelism to be Synod's work, God's work, and best done at the congregational level. From the very first moments of the Lutheran Church—Missouri synod, we have been a federation of congregations, called and gathered by the Holy Spirit around Word and Sacrament.

I am concerned about an approach to Synodical ministry from the radical right that is too narrow and too restrictive to effectively govern our Synodical family.

I am thankful and supportive of the ministry of Pastor Kieschnick. I see in him the pastoral and teaching heart of George Beiderwieden and Henry Eggold. I pray his ministry will be extended among us because:

- President Kieschnick's pastoral heart boldly proclaims God's Holy Word in his preaching, teaching, exhorting, and disciplining.
- Pastor Kieschnick has a passion to reach the lost with the Gospel of Jesus

Christ. Such a pastoral heart for the lost can be seen in his sermons, articles, and various writings. Most of all, face-to-face encounters vividly demonstrate his love for the lost and passion to reach and win them!

- Pastor Kieschnick's pastoral heart is shown in his love for all our congregations and the pastors who serve them, from the largest to the smallest, both urban and rural.

When I began pastoral ministry in the 1970's, there was much concern over biblical liberalism, the “subtracting” from Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions, e.g. unionism, open communion, and diminishing God's Word. Now in 2010 I appreciate those who caution us against *adding* to Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions, e.g. a WELS-like approach of overly restrictive fellowship and a too-narrow understanding of worship style.

I am also concerned over the growing practice of closed communion among the radical right, where truly repentant and believing family members, fellow LCMS members, and even fellow congregants worry they may be denied the Sacrament.

I was taught by Pastor Beiderwieden and Dr. Eggold that closed communion is just as wrong as open communion. I have taught as I have been taught, that “...our church (LCMS) practices

'close' Communion, limiting the Sacrament to those who understand the Sacrament and to those who share the same faith in Christ and in the words 'given and shed for you for the remission of sins.'" (*Called to Believe*, CPH, 1981, p. 166)

I have seen in President Kieschnick a pastoral heart on these matters; he is biblically wise and balanced. We can see his evangelical approach as:

- He consistently upholds our Synodical affirmation of inerrancy of Scripture, while cautioning those whose would “subtract from” or “add to” Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions.
- He delivered a firm, if not stern, word to the ELCA Convention on the negative consequences of gay ordination.
- He upheld our Synodical position on close communion in a recent *Reporter* insert.

I urge you to extend Pastor Kieschnick's ministry among us by re-electing him to the office of Synod President.

*Pastor Smith has served Christ Memorial Lutheran Church, St. Louis, MO since 1977. He has worked on numerous Synodical boards and commissions and is presently serving on the Board for World Relief and Human Care.*

# Synod Has Had Effective Mission Leadership

By Jonathan Coyne

President Gerald Kieschnick and First Vice-President Bill Diekelman have given great leadership to helping international mission work of Synod recover from a downturn and to expand in the last triennium. Let's look at the numbers.

## A Lagging Indicator

In economics we learn about leading and lagging indicators. Leading indicators are those signals indicating an upward or downward movement *prior* to the actual change in the economy. Lagging indicators are those signals appearing *after* a significant change in policy and highlighting the upward or downward effect of that policy.

Mission work is a lagging indicator highlighting the prior work of leaders in the LCMS. Mission work requires planning, training, and allocation of resources to be effective. Jesus noted that we should take an account of what we need to do prior to entering a battle, or in this case, entering the spiritual battle of the mission field.

Gerald Kieschnick became President of the LCMS in 2001. William Diekelman became First Vice-President of the LCMS in 2004. From 2001-2004, 12 full time missionaries were called into the international mission field. Similarly, from 2004-2007, 15 full time missionaries were called into the international mission field. In contrast, from 2007-2010, 42 full time missionaries have been called in over 20 countries of the world! In the last triennium, Synod has called more than twice the number of missionaries than in each of the previous two triennia. According to the numbers, we would have to conclude that LCMS Mission Services is highly effective. Our two top Synod leaders have certainly been mission-driven.

## A Lagging Economy

I live in Silicon Valley where the dot-com boom began and ended. During those halcyon days of high flying stock

prices it seemed that everyone would make money forever. The LCMS saw benefits at that time as well. From 1997 until 1999 the LCMS received very large grants from the Schwan Foundation that averaged per year \$4.8 million for missions and \$3.8 million for our seminaries.

However, in 2003 Schwan Foundation grants to the LCMS were down to \$1.6 million for missions and \$1.75 million for the seminaries. This type of major financial shift made for difficult decisions. Some will remember when in 2003 many missionaries were called home due to a lack of funding. From 2004-2008 Schwan Foundation grants to Synod were up again and averaged per year \$2.2 million for missions and \$2.3 million for seminaries. However, as the economy turned downward once again, in 2009 Schwan grants dropped to \$1.6 million for missions and \$1.8 million for seminaries. We do want to thank the Foundation for their continued generosity as we all learn to adjust to sharp downturns in the stock market. Similar difficulties have been faced in our congregations. From 2003 until today our congregations have faced health care costs that have more than doubled. Many congregations have been forced to cut their gifts to their districts because of financial difficulties. Have you witnessed financial stress in your congregation over those years? Similarly, districts were faced with rising costs, but without the offerings of the past from congregations. Many districts had to lower the amount of money they could send to the synod.

Finally, the LCMS was faced with lower offerings from districts and lower revenue from foundation grants as well as with higher costs for health care and numerous other items. Just two years after taking office, President Kieschnick faced the 2003 financial crisis that led to calling home so many missionaries. The economic troubles of 2008-2009 make 2003 look mild. Yet Synod leaders have reversed the trend, sending out twice as

many missionaries as before. How was this accomplished?

## A Vibrant Mission Department

LCMS World Mission Services responded to the crisis of 2003 in many creative ways. First, they began to connect the mission efforts of the LCMS to individuals and congregations. Short-term mission opportunities allowed pastors, congregations, and lay people to participate in foreign missions for short term assignments. When these people returned, they were different. They shared the joy of bringing the message of Jesus into a foreign country or culture. They encouraged others to see the power of the Gospel and to give of their time, talent and treasure. This created a large base of people and congregations who were willing to support mission work through special offerings and gifts.

The international budget for missions has increased over the past three years because of God's grace and the stewardship of God's people. The three-year increase is 15% or \$1.5 million more for the work of the Lord. Years of effort has changed our view of the mission field, our ability to participate in mission work, and our willingness to support missions.

## A More Efficient and Effective Method

Prior to the financial challenges of 2001-2003, Synod attempted to bring international students over to our American seminaries and we sent American missionaries to countries with the goal of building one or more mission stations in a community. The majority of internationals who came to our seminaries were unable to do effective mission in their home country. Some wanted the stay in the United States, while others struggled for acceptance when they did return.

American missionaries had been sent into foreign countries to start churches. A better strategy is to use them to help start and develop a whole church body there.

*"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."*



## Synod Has Had Effective Mission Leadership - continued

Consider our work in Venezuela, which began in 1951. Faithful missionaries began 19 rural parishes, but there were never enough pastors. Rev. Ted Krey arrived in 2001 and implemented a new model of leadership development with veteran missionary Rev. Rudolph Blank. From 2008 through 2009, 13 internationals were ordained in Venezuela, bringing the total to 19 men serving all of the rural parishes for the first time ever. By empowering our trained clergy to teach leaders in foreign countries, we are able to multiply our efforts, and to help partner denomination multiply their church planting efforts.

In other words, our missionaries no longer leave with a goal to plant one congregation, but to plant a church body that will expand. We no longer bring one man to our seminary, but send one trained man to *be* the seminary in that place to train many men. This change in emphasis allows our mission department to be more effective and more efficient as good stewards of God's gifts.

### **National and International Missions**

Originally the Blue Ribbon Task Force for Synod Structure and Governance (BRTFSSG) proposed a change from program boards to a pair of advisory commissions for national and international missions. The resolution coming to the convention now provides for a National and International Board for Missions. It is exciting to see that the delegates through their regional

meetings bring "grassroots" solutions to the process of modifying our governance and structure.

However, the most important part of the new emphases is a broadened understanding of "mission." Perhaps many still see our own country as something other than a mission field. I cannot do that, living in Silicon Valley, where less than 10% of all people attend ANY Christian church in a week. In many parts of our country we see less expression of Christian faith than many parts of Africa, Russia, and South America. Our LCMS leaders are helping us understand that all of our work is about the mission of Jesus Christ to bring saving faith to all people through God's Word and the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion. We need to refocus on the fact that we are all missionaries at home and in foreign countries.

### **A Comparison**

On June 5 John Wooden passed from this life into the glories of heaven. For those people who do not follow college basketball, John Wooden was the most successful college basketball coach of all time. He led UCLA to a remarkable 10 national championships, twice the number of any other coach and 7 championships in a row. I was watching the tribute show because an LCMS member from my congregation was a dear friend of John and helped him get his job at UCLA. I was surprised by one

fact – John Wooden did not win a championship for the first 16 years of his coaching career. In fact, he was nearly fired after a season when he almost lost more games than he won.

Can you imagine what would be missing at UCLA if the regents had decided to replace Coach Wooden with a new coach? The legacy of which they are most proud would never have happened.

President Gerald Kieschnick and First Vice-President William Diekelman have been serving for 9 and 6 years, respectively. They have led in a very difficult economic and social context. Some other large church bodies have split or are on the verge of splitting. Yet during these trying times, our leaders have not only held the church together, but they have created a peace which has led to more mission starts and more support from a broad base of God's people.

We stand at the moment in history when we can support our veteran leaders and see that a drop in support from districts has been balanced by the foresight of our leaders. Their wisdom is bringing an increase in direct gifts to mission work. More importantly, the LCMS, which is often called A Sleeping Giant, seems to be waking to the fact that all of us are missionaries and all of us can help bring the message of salvation to a world in desperate need of the Gospel.

# Welcome to Houston!

By Marie Meyer

After months of preparation the time has come to act on Blue Ribbon Task Force recommendations and elect future LCMS leaders. And, as the Convention Workbook reports indicate, there is so much more to the mission and ministry of our Synod.

It can be challenging to understand the Scriptural basis for a report because understanding often requires more than a few hours of listening to convention debate and studying the complete report and its Scriptural references. It is also important that delegates, clergy and lay, determine whether a report submitted to the convention addresses a given issue or assignment in a clear, coherent manner. If for some reason it does not, delegates are responsible to identify how or where the report may have hit a stumbling block or gotten side tracked and return it to the entity that submitted it.

Among reports to come before the 2010 convention is the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) study, *The Creator's Tapestry, Scriptural Perspectives on Man-Woman Relationships in Marriage and the Church*. The assignment, "To Prepare a Comprehensive Study of the Scriptural Relationship of Man and Woman," was given to the CTCR by the 1995 Convention (Resolution 3-10). At the 1995 Convention, forty overtures relating to the service of women had been submitted, some calling attention to division within the CTCR on what Scripture teaches about the conduct of women in the church. After much discussion, the Convention declined to adopt the majority CTCR opinion on women in congregational offices and urged further study of both the majority and dissenting CTCR opinions.

Given the emotionally charged atmosphere at the 1995 Convention and the confusion regarding women in the church, the floor committee prepared Resolution 3-10. The Convention overwhelmingly adopted the resolution. Questions embedded in the resolution offered guidelines for how the study might be conducted.

After ten years of exploratory work on the male/female relationship and the completion of reports on sideline issues such as inclusive language and women in combat; the CTCR still had not completed a Scriptural study on the relationship of man and woman. In December 2006, eight men and eight women were invited as consultants "to assist the Commission as it works toward the completion of its 1995 assignment." The first two consultations were devoted to identifying issues and concerns related to the relationship of man and woman. The marriage relationship was not identified among the top six concerns. As with the first consultation, the second consultation also ended without any Scriptural study.

Prior to the third consultation, a member of the CTCR wrote the first draft of *The Creator's Tapestry*. The writer, without offering a Scriptural or Confessional basis, concluded that the intimate marriage relationship of one man and one woman is the foundation for understanding God's design for the relationship of man and woman in the church. The final report under consideration by the Convention is based on the premise that the marriage relationship, where the Christian husband has authority over his wife and the wife shows respect for her husband's authority, is the model for the relationship of man and woman in the church. The final report, consistent with previous drafts, randomly

interchanges the husband/wife relationship with that of man and woman in the church. Such an approach ignores the fact that single men and women comprise an increasing percentage of our church body's population.

Given that Resolution 3-10 clearly asks that the Scriptural study begin with the man/woman relationship, and that the invited consultants did not themselves identify the marriage relationship as a primary issue, *The Creator's Tapestry* has taken a detour around the assignment in Resolution 3-10. Among the concerns intended for further CTCR consideration is "the relationship of man and woman [outside the context of marriage]," the original Resolution 3-10 assignment.

It has taken the CTCR 15 years to produce an incomplete report, a report that misses the original assignment and does not base its conclusions on a thorough Scriptural study. The 2010 Convention should return the report to the CTCR and ask that it focus fresh energy and insight on the assignment in Resolution 3-10, working with Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions as the basis for guidance and understanding. Because the church has waited too long for guidance on this important issue, it would be helpful if the Convention also suggested an appropriate deadline for the next CTCR report.

*Marie Meyer is a retired LCMS deaconess and was a consultant to the CTCR's study.*

Jesus **First**