

The Pattern of Pastoral Cooperation and Support in the New Testament

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Our consideration of the above-captioned topic begins not by asking, “What does the pattern of pastoral cooperation and support in the New Testament look like?” but, “What does it *not* look like?” In this way we are able to give the simple answer that you are already saying in your hearts and minds: “It does *not* look like the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.”

No, most assuredly, it does not. In the LCMS today we are under the dual barrage of “pastors don’t seem to trust one another anymore” and “whatever I have done is a matter of pastoral discretion, so you can’t really question it...especially since my ecclesiastical supervisor sees things *my way*.” We officially and formally bewail the lack of trust, yet at every turn we undercut the very basis of the trust that is supposed to obtain—the doctrinal unity of those who are to be ‘trusting one another’. Through the downplaying of the outward manifestations of doctrinal unity in a supposed war against legalism, namely unity of practice especially as regards the liturgy, fellowship—or, rather, the lack thereof—with those who confess and teach differently, the teaching of sanctification from a truly Lutheran understanding, the role of women in church governance and in the visible functions of the Church about which certain assumptions may be easily, even if incorrectly, made, and so on...it is the downplaying of the outward manifestations of doctrinal unity that *causes* the lack of trust, simply because a lack of unity in these are easily intuited as, and generally *do* point to a *genuine* lack of the assumed underlying unity or, at the very least, the lack of a shared understanding both of such unity and of its importance.

This is, in part, due to the misunderstanding of what the synod is to be, what the foundational principle of a synod is. The generally stated ‘meaning’ of ‘synod’ gives the impression of *cohesion*, but the fact of the matter is that the foundation is to be *adhesion*, rather than *cohesion*. That is, the synod is *not* to be a matter of us ‘walking together’, hanging on to *one another*—because, who knows but that we might well be walking together and advising one another right into Hell—but it is, rather, to be a matter of us walking the *same path*, the same road, clinging to the same Gospel “and all its articles”

(FC Ep. X:7 ThD, X:31). When Mary and Joseph expected the twelve-year-old Jesus to be on the way home to Nazareth with them, it was based on *this* principle: not that He would necessarily be walking *with* them, but on the same *road*, in the same *caravan* (which is, in Greek, *synodia*).

Notice that Mary and Joseph made an error here, having made such an assumption: they ‘trusted God’ for what they had no right to assume. God the Son—and *their* Son—would be where God had promised His presence always to be: in the Temple, in the preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments, regardless of testamental era. When they fulfilled their parental duty of looking for Jesus, they demonstrated the nature and function of a true ‘synodical’ relationship: we do not simply ‘trust’ that others are on the same path as we are, but are to *verify* that they are and continue to be—and that necessarily means, also, that we may find *ourselves* rightly rebuked if we and the Lutheran Church—Missouri Caravan are actually the ones not going the right direction, just as Jesus corrected His parents. (His going with them and being subject to them is an amazing thing in light of what He says to them, as one would think that they would have more rightly said, “Yes, you *must* be about your Father’s business; we will relocate to Jerusalem.”)

A properly functioning synodical relationship is one in which we trust one another and *verify* that trust, rebuking and encouraging—and *being* rebuked and encouraged—as necessary, and in which, since those who are rebuking and encouraging are *not* themselves Jesus, all conflicts arising from such would, of necessity, ‘return to the Temple’, return to Jesus and His teaching and to the historic Confessions of that teaching by His Church to establish or reject either party’s position or practice.

Once again, the sort of ‘walking together’ necessitated by a divergence is not a simple walking together without concern for that divergence or the thought that one way of walking or another might be chosen by the consensus of those walking, but it must be a walking to and on the one road given by God’s Word, even though that might cause the divergent to depart from us. Such an understanding would go a long way toward re-establishing trust in our midst...but instead, many seem more than content to repeat the ‘walking together’ line as a pious platitude, enforcing the post-Phoenix (conference) mantra of the Texas District, “I love you, I’m learning to trust you, and I affirm your ministry.”

No, the New Testament picture of pastoral support does not look like that which exists in the LCMS... a blind endorsement of one another based on the fact that we all once took the same Ordination vows, *and so on*...with the only real sin of non-support being the questioning of unscriptural and anti-confessional practices. (That sentence was supposed

to be longer; the “and so on” was supposed to be preceded by things like “use the same Sunday School and VBS materials, read books from the same publishing house,” and other similar things...but then I remembered that:

1. what comes out of our Concordia Publishing House, while improving over the past few years, includes many things too embarrassing to mention, as well as things by famous authors that contain more subtle false doctrine or partial statements that may lead to confusion...such as the recently released book by synodical vice-president Dr. Paul Maier on the life of Martin Luther that contains phrases that obfuscate the doctrine of God’s monergism in sanctification (“Our loving God helps His people turn from sin and error”) and that speak of the work of Christ as that of ‘reforming’ the world to save it, rather than of simply saving it from sin, death, and Hell (“In the New Testament, He even sent His own Son, Jesus Christ, to reform and save the world”); [Both quotes from the first page of text in *Martin Luther, a Man Who Changed the World*, CPH, 2004. Both of these quotes were found to be confusing by children and parents reading the book.]
2. more and more, too, we find that the pastors of the LCMS may, indeed, use *some* similar resources, but that those whom the majority in this room would refer to as ‘liberals’ also go to many of Reformed and neo-evangelical origin, such as the Alpha course, *Forty Days of Drivel*, and the like, or the decidedly ‘lite’ and pseudo-Lutheran fare of Faith Inkubators.

Again, what they use and do and study makes one *rightly* suspicious...and rightful suspicion should be dealt with in a right manner, that is, in a manner that *alleviates* suspicions—and does that by removing the causes for them, rather than simply silencing those who have them.)

And ‘silence’ is what is now done. 2004 Convention Resolution 8-01a makes this all the more true, because it has the practical effect of making the filing of charges to correct doctrinal error dependent upon whether the pastor noticing the error has a district president that a) *understands* the error, b) does not *endorse* the error, and c) is in a position to rebuke the error or proceed with charges *without damaging himself politically or damaging the district financially*. Even before this, there appeared to be a reticence for district presidents to support pastors in congregation conflicts; at best, a district president will seek another Call for the pastor.

Indeed, I am certain that there are pastors *in this room* that are in just such a situation, because they serve in ‘good’ districts where the district president is actually in favor of things like Closed Communion and the historic liturgy of the Church. Where that is *not* the case, the pastor is simply considered at fault and ‘hung out to dry’, seen as a problem

that has been solved by the ‘natural process’ of ‘God’s people’ having rejected such a doctrinal fascist, and so on. Creative euphemisms and epithets are created to justify such action or inaction on the part of the district presidents, such as the declaration that the pastor should not be disqualified from serving as a pastor since he is, for example, “not apt to teach” (which would open the district and its president to potential lawsuits), but that the congregation has a right to remove him if they do not accept his perfectly correct doctrine and practice because they have itching ears since, obviously, the man is “not apt to teach *in this place*.” Such nonsense to keep a rebellious congregation at bay—and on the district’s good side financially—even though a pastor’s family is put through Hell and the faithful minority (or, in some cases, even the faithful majority!) is dissuaded from their adhering to the pure and clear teaching of the Word of God and from practices that clearly proclaim the same.

Compare this with the risk that St. Paul was willing to take when St. Peter’s *practice*—not even his *doctrine*, but *his practice!*—was faulty, when Peter refused to eat with the Gentile converts in front of the Jewish Christians. While, granted, correcting Peter and being *right* could (and did) *enhance* Paul’s credibility, *falsely* or *incorrectly* confronting Peter *in public* about his alleged *public sin* was something that would have *destroyed* everything that had been said about Paul since he stopped being ‘Saul, the Persecutor of the Church’. Peter’s actions, though, gave a false impression, not only about the acceptability of the Gentiles as Christians, but about the whole doctrine of salvation, about the Person and Work of Christ and whether or not His death on the cross was sufficient to make an unbeliever into a full and equal heir of God’s Kingdom. Peter’s false practice had to be confronted in public so that (as the Large Catechism teaches, I: 274, 275, and, especially, 284) others could be warned away from it and from misunderstanding the Gospel because of it, as well as so that Peter could repent and be absolved. The souls of the *many*, however, were of primary importance—as they *should* have been with the correction of David Benke’s sinful prayer and comments at Yankee Stadium and his breaking of the conditions for membership in the LCMS, Article VI, by disregarding the LCMS’s scriptural doctrine of fellowship and participating in the sacramental rites of a heterodox church body (cf. Synodical resolution 01-03-21A), receiving the Lord’s Supper with Bishop Steven Boumann at an ELCA church. [Note: this was corrected after presentation from “at Boumann’s ELCA church” to its current reading, thanks to the Rev. Charles Henrickson.]

Yet, instead of this regard for souls that should mark all of our activity, Presidents Benke and Kieschnick have neither clearly presented what was wrong with Benke’s prayer and comments—the syncretism of his participation itself, aside—to correct the false impressions given by the false doctrine contained therein, nor apologized to the synod for

misleading the weak into thinking that it is okay to commune with the heterodox. Instead, these things remain covered up to this day and the weak are “stronger now, sisters and brothers” in affirming the errors these men have taught by their actions and inactions. (In one of their few good decisions of the last triennium, the Commission on Constitutional Matters ruled that Benke and Kieschnick—that is to say, *any* errorist and his erring ecclesiastical supervisor—are to correct the impression they have given and present the true doctrine and practice...but since there is no mechanism among us by which to make such a thing happen, they continue to flout both ‘the system’ and the teaching of God’s Word.)

No, ‘pastoral cooperation and support’ in the LCMS and in the New Testament are not even *close*; indeed, they barely seem even to be related.

In one case recently, not only would the district president not support a *pastor* who was teaching in accord with God’s Word when a tiny minority within the congregation banded together with some former members who, among other things, had confessed their rejection of unnamed LCMS teachings, their belief that “God would give [them] what [they] deserved” in eternity, their support of women’s ordination, and so on, but the district president even arranged for his representative to meet with these people to establish a conventicle and undercut not only the pastor, but the Board of Deacons, Church Council, and Voters’ Assembly of the congregation, even meddling in the congregation’s relationship with the Lutheran Church Extension Fund so that the congregation could not continue to meet its financial obligations. When the vast majority of the congregation was offended by being disregarded by the district president, in spite of the LCMS Bylaw (4.75) that requires a DP to go through “proper channels” in dealing with a congregation, they decided that their only means of survival and retention of their pastor was to depart and let the minority take over the church, since that minority was recognized as the ‘real church’ by the district. Because of their so doing, they have been vilified by district officials as well as by the pastors of their former circuit, who having believed gossip, want to meet with their pastor so they can ‘better understand his sin’ in continuing to lead those who Called him and wish him to remain as their pastor. Thus far, the district president hasn’t rebuked these ‘caring servants’ for their gossip-based attack, hasn’t defended the pastor who was thus attacked, hasn’t done anything to stop those slandering the members of the infant congregation, hasn’t done *anything* except encourage the gossip to continue and to worsen by his inaction.

We will see *worse* than that in this new triennium, though. Since Resolution 8-01a all but assures that the only way a charge will be sustained is by the favor of the district president (and that only with the concurrence of a second DP if the errorist is from a different district), we will likely see agitation by liberal pastors in liberal districts against

Confessional pastors, including more tampering within congregations, setting up of conventicles, and so on, while at the same time, we will see Confessional pastors prevented from launching any meaningful efforts to remove false teachers by the reticence of district presidents to follow up on their petitions, much less to sustain them. Good pastors will continue to suffer and to be let ‘fall through the cracks’ of the Missouri Synod, while those who push every foul perversion of doctrine and practice but have their ‘conservative’ members so cowed as to leave without complaining or to ‘get along and go along’ will continue to expand their unlutheran teaching and practice.

What will happen to the Confessional pastors? They will work at the Post Office, the pizza parlor, the sheriff’s department, the computer company, the local school, the radio station, delivering newspapers, and so on. Will they also serve congregations while doing these things? *That depends a lot on what is accomplished here this week.* The synodical structure of the Missouri Synod has failed and will continue to fail to take care of either faithful pastors who are unjustly without Calls or unfaithful pastors who deceive congregations into accepting their open communion and contemporary worship agenda by berating them for ‘not caring about the lost’ when they initially object to moving the congregation toward such man-focused, man-centered, and man-determined goals and practices.

It’s funny that we hear constantly in the LCMS about how today’s pastors cannot have a so-called *herr pastor* attitude, that they cannot ‘lord it over’ the flock, yet we see far more often district presidents ‘lording it over’ the pastors of their districts—and over the laity, as well!—by such heavy-handed tactics as noted above and their support of Church Growth Movement-driven pastors as just noted, by their fondness for being referred to as ‘bishops’, seeking also to retain the title of ‘pastor’ while they no longer serve congregations, and by their domination of the Call process, refusing to forward information on pastors and even ‘weeding out’ names suggested by the congregation if they don’t like how the congregation members got the names, if they don’t see the particular pastor as being in line with their own ‘vision’ for the congregation, and so forth. It’s funny, because when Jesus was talking about such ‘lording it over’ by the Gentiles, He was not speaking about pastors dealing with *congregations*, so much as about pastors dealing with *other pastors!* Here in Missouri, we now have an episcopacy based entirely upon how popular a particular pastor has become with the majority of the laity in the district, without regard to either his real qualifications or his ability to work with the pastors whom he is supposed to ‘supervise’...much less whether he even understands what such ‘supervision’ does and does not entail.

We have a *false* episcopacy in the LCMS, one in which some district presidents see only the other district presidents as their peers—such as when District President Benke told

those who filed complaints against him that he would discuss things with his “peers,” rather than with those little peon pastors, refusing to confess the truth against those who later accused these pastors and congregations of violating Matthew 18 and admit that that they had, indeed, tried to discuss these things with him. How does that compare with the old concept of the Church that a ‘bishop’ of a territory is simply ‘first among equals’—a teaching that finds its basis in the writing of the alleged ‘first pope’, 1 Peter chapter 5, where we find: “The elders which are among you I exhort, *who am also an elder*, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.” *There* is the example of New Testament cooperation and support among pastors: St. Peter exhorts the presbyters, the pastors, to do what he exhorts himself, also, to do, reckoning himself to be on the same level as his readers. They are his peers, even though they are not apostles, because they were to do the same basic thing as he: to feed God’s flock...the very thing that Jesus made clear to Peter before His ascension with the thrice asked, “Simon, do you love Me more than these” (St. John 21).

We should briefly note, too, that in the above cited 1 Peter 5:3, where the King James Version says that the presbyters are not to lord it over God’s heritage, that the word translated as heritage is *kleros*, which Melancthon renders as *clergy*—to “not domineer over the *clergy*”—in the *Tractate on the Power and Primacy of the Pope*, section eleven. This he uses to show that the pope has no primacy by divine right—nor does anyone else. The Comission on Constitutional Matters of the Missouri Synod has used this same Greek word as a description of the prerogatives of office for pastors and for district presidents, saying that pastors do not have the *kleros* of assisting congregations in the Call practice, but district presidents do...but that this didn’t mean that pastors necessarily couldn’t render such assistance (Opinion rendered March, 1997). Yet, it is in the reservation of such a thing to the *man-made* office of district president that much mischief abounds and much lording over takes place (in spite of the fact that the district presidents, to take them at their word, have no such ‘lording over’ desires). Perhaps when they see Melancthon’s treatment of this verse they think that it only means that the *synodical* pope is not to domineer the *district* popes...

It is interesting, too, in looking at the leadership of the Church in the New Testament, to see that it was not the ‘normal pastors’ who were in trouble in their congregations, with the leaders trying to soothe congregation members who would not hear their pastors, the Scriptures, and the Confessions of the Church, but it was the recognized leadership—the apostles—that were being opposed by the unbelievers and false believers everywhere

they went, and that those leaders had no tolerance for false teaching by the members of the congregations, but told the pastors to hold firm to the pure and solid Word and to see to it that others did, too. So, St. Paul reminds Timothy (1 Timothy 1:3) that he was left as pastor in Ephesus, in part, that he might charge others to not vary from the pure teaching, lest they make shipwreck of the faith and become those that must be “delivered to Satan” to learn not to blaspheme.

The hard word must be spoken by Timothy and those like him, dissuading the others from their dalliances with the religion of the Law (vv. 4,7), from their looking to teachers and teachings who do not hold the orthodox faith in all its articles, from using words in preaching, teaching, liturgy, or hymnody that do not follow the pattern of sound words (2 Timothy 1:13)—the hard word must be spoken, or a harder, a harsher, a final word would be spoken to them later...and Timothy and his brother pastors would *not* bear the glorious appellation St. Paul desires for them and promises them in 1 Timothy, chapter 4: “a good minister of Jesus Christ,” which is only applied to those who put others in remembrance of what God has given and what God has commanded against (vv. 1–6). It is for this Timothy is to take heed (epecho) of his doctrine, so that both he and his hearers are saved (v. 16); this is what he is to teach and to command (v. 11), and that he is to diligently (prosecho) read, exhort, and teach (v. 13), until Paul would come and lend his aid (v. 13). “Time is short and Hell is hot,” St. Paul is saying, “so continue, O Timothy, such incessant internal doctrinal purification as is necessary to keep anyone from being led there. Instruct those under your charge correctly, and charge other pastors with doing the same.”

Yes, the *‘synodical officials’* told the *pastors* to be ‘hard-nosed’, with the assurance of an apostolic backup if they met with any complaints. They weren’t worried about falling body counts, falling offerings for their programs, and the like, but about the Church you can see being as much like the Church that is hidden as possible—knowing that there will be tares among the wheat, but also knowing that there are weeds that are not as deceptive as tares, and that such are not to be tolerated...there are wandering sheep, and then there are wolves wearing sheep’s clothing to lead the sheep away from the Good Shepherd. For such, the apostles advocated no tolerance, and were ready, willing, and able to back up the local pastors who dealt with them. It appears to me that the LCMS may be somewhat lacking in this area...

What Paul told the pastors of Ephesus in Acts, chapter 20, is also instructive for us. Beginning in the eighteenth verse, St. Paul says of his service among them that from the very first it had been “with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews.” Think of that: a leader in the Church that is targeted by the false teachers, yet who “kept back nothing that was profitable unto

you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house”—a leader who said what needed to be said simply *because* it needed to be said, not because it could be tailored to his advantage or had finally been set up to be said after several years of political maneuvering at the expense of pastors who went undefended... a leader who so sought the benefit of his brother pastors—because such would be to the benefit of the Church—that he both instructed them privately in the truth and also proclaimed that same truth publicly so that none could gainsay those whom he had instructed by saying that they had never heard any such thing from him. Thus, Paul was “testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ,” because it was necessary *for the presbyters* that he do so, so that they could go forth unhindered in taking “heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.”

In this way also could St. Paul declare himself “pure from the blood of all men,” because he did not “[shun] to declare unto you all the counsel of God” (vv. 26–27), because he knew “that after my departing grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock,” and “also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them” (vv. 28–30). Again, we see the pattern of cooperation and support among pastors in the New Testament: it was, simply, a mutual confession of the true Gospel of Christ, unadulterated, uncompromised, from the Apostles to the ‘country pastors’, and a warning against those who would look like sheep, but really be wolves—who would appear as the Lamb, but speak like the Dragon (Rev. 13:11)—so that there would be no doubts in anyone’s mind or heart as to what the Gospel is and what the pastors are to teach and to do. *The chief evidence and practice of cooperation and support among pastors in the New Testament was the willingness to confess and practice the same thing, to exhort one another to continue to do so, even charging one another publicly if an error were suspected, and to accept rebuke and learn from it when they were in error.*

That is the chief thing we see *missing* in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod... both the ability and willingness to speak out by those at an official level and the humility to accept correction when it is necessary—but, then, *the chief characteristic of an institutionalized church is pride in the existence and furthering of the institution, rather than the humility that characterizes those whose only being, stay, and goal is Christ.* Were this not the case, both the past three years and the most recent synodical convention would have been far different. That’s not a commentary so much on those who were in the bureaucracy of the synod during the past triennium, either, but on those who were “in power” in the nine years that preceded it, as well as with the general culture of the

LCMS: error is not to be admitted, regardless of the cost or the end result, and one is not to condemn error ‘too strongly’, lest he lose his position for being a “troubler of Israel.” Thus, we have the aforementioned inabilities of Benke and Kieschnick to do the right thing now, and thus we have the inability of the Barry administration to do something as simple as correct the “What About...?” pamphlet that contains an unlutheran definition of the canon of Scripture or prevent those in Jewish evangelism from stating in a ‘Mission Focus’ insert that the Jews worship the same ‘God’ as Christians (no, this was not new with Benke and Matzat...it was already here under Barry); thus we have the new standard pseudo-apology of the Missouri Synod—“I’m sorry that you took offense at what I rightly, justly, and correctly said”—instead of any real apology, and thus we have the reversals of doctrine and practice—without apology—that have characterized this church body for at least the past thirty-five years, such as the decision by the Devnver convention (and the CTCR before it) that the LCMS’s teaching that women were forbidden suffrage in the congregational assembly *by Scripture* was actually incorrect...yet with no word of apology offered to the women for having ‘unjustly’ excluded them for over a hundred and twenty-five years. This year, we’ve decided that women are also not forbidden by the Bible to be presidents of congregations, elders, or whatever else we want to have—so long as we define away the traditional responsibilities of those offices—but are offering no apologies to the countless women we have offended by our one hundred and fifty-plus years of allegedly contradicting God’s Word (much less any public apologies to *God* for having so badly misrepresented *Him* for all those years).

By the way, just a brief note on this: by defining the office of president, elder, deacon, or the like as having no accountability for the pastoral office, we leave the sole accountability in the hands of the ‘ecclesiastical supervisor’, i.e., the district president or ‘bishop’, a man who may well be put into power under our current polity without a majority vote of the pastors. Thus, we have a bishopric *imposed* upon the pastors, the constituency of which bishopric is based upon who is able to represent himself in such a way as to be somewhat acceptable to the greatest number of people, regardless of what compromise of doctrine or practice such an ‘electability’ entails. Of course, we should also note that the office of ‘president’, going back to the *Didache*, refers to the office of ‘Senior Pastor’, or celebrant at the Eucharist, and that ‘elder’ or ‘presbyter’ is but another name for ‘pastor’ in the New Testament, and that ‘deacon’ is simply a job description for an order of the ordained clergy...but such things are for another paper and another day.

Speaking of the *humble* cooperation and support of pastors functioning in different roles in the early history of the Church, we see an excellent example of mutual submission and deference at the first special synod, or convention, of the Church, that which was

convened in Jerusalem at the behest of Paul, Barnabas, and the Church at Antioch. Several things are to be noted:

- this was a *public* meeting that was convened because of the *public* teaching of those who came to Antioch from Judea;
- it was a meeting of the pastors of the churches—that is, of the ‘elders’ or ‘presbyters’ who had been ‘ordained’ as such, as indicated in Acts 14:23 (cheirotonesantes)—that were to meet and discuss the matters at hand;
- the goal was the correction of error, whether of those coming from Judea or of Paul and Barnabas, as well as any error that might be being endorsed in Jerusalem;
- even while there is a distinction between the apostles and the presbyters—the local pastors—there is no indication that they hold an essentially different office, as all are allowed to speak on an equal basis and it is a non-Apostle who finally formulates and ‘moves’ the ‘resolution’ that ‘passes’...indeed, it seems to be the *pastor loci* of Jerusalem that brings a solution, so that the testimony of the apostles is given due weight, as is the spiritual state and conscience of the members of the ‘mother church’—and of the other Jewish believers in Christ throughout the world—showing proper sensitivity to both the freedom given by the Gospel and the sensitivities of those who might be attacked both by conscience and by their former co-religionists... a lesson that Paul carries forth in his dealings with the Gentile believers in Corinth (1 Cor. 8; 10:17-24).

Again, this is a picture of mutual submission and deference, both between those who were convened and between the representatives and those represented. This submission was based upon the trust that the representatives would actually represent—that the pastors would really seek what was best for their flock, as was shown by their willingness to submit to the correction of the rest of the gathered apostles and pastors, their submission to the Word of God as supreme. Without such confidence, the synod is paralyzed... and it seems that the synod is unwilling to establish any way to ensure competence in pastors, much less a proper attitude, so that the tension between clergy and lay grows. This is another area in which a Confessional Lutheran Ministerium would be of aid... and organization that so required a true confession and practice and that didn’t care about its own institutional perpetuation could exert a very positive influence upon the relationship between pastors and the people they serve in Christ.

We mentioned earlier St. Paul’s carrying forth the resolution of the convention in Jerusalem and applying its principles to the Church in Corinth. In so doing, we see the basis upon which, alone, the trust we all desire may be fostered: the commitment to passing on what he had received, as he says in 1 Cor. 11:23 and 1 Cor. 15:3. It is on that

basis—the humility that understood that *he* was not the originator of the Word of God, even of what he spoke or wrote (cf. 1 Cor. 14:36)—it is on this basis that he urged the Corinthian congregation also to function. Even as he says to any who would dispute with him on the matter of women’s role in the Church (ibid), so he also has committed himself to know nothing but Christ and Him crucified (1 Cor. 1:23, 2:2), namely the creed of 1 Cor 15:3 and following. So, his teaching on the Lord’s Supper and its practice is also what is handed down (1 Cor. 11:23), as is, also his whole counsel regarding worship (1 Cor. 14:36). Since he would know only Christ and Him crucified, and would have faithful stewardship of the Sacraments practiced (4:1-2), we see him write of decent, orderly worship—preferring not a thousand words in a disposable worship folder that are not retained, but ten that actually build up—i.e., a short snippet of God’s Word well-repeated week after week is of far more worth than a large portion of Man’s words...or, even, perhaps, *God’s Word unfitly* applied, given in such a multi-verse barrage and not repeated again so that it becomes either numbs the mind or becomes like the reading of common entertainment, like a newspaper or a magazine...or, perhaps like the unremembered writing or typing of a stenographer or transcriptionist.

In other words, liturgical agreement is necessary to maintain what has been received, to inculcate it, and, therefore, it is as necessary for both a synod and a ministerium as it is for an episcopacy.

Speaking of which word...in considering this matter of pastoral cooperation and support in the New Testament, we are, of course, doing so with a view toward the establishment of a ministerium—whatever we may determine the most beneficial meaning and application of that word to be within our context, surely something other than what it has been within the history of Lutheranism in America—there are things that all of us would *like* the New Testament to say, whether it would be a demand for lay participation—or even governance—or a full out episcopacy or modified papacy...but the New Testament provides us no such model, but merely the principles enunciated above, and the ‘mini-episcopacy’ and seminary-in-residence’ (Acts 14:23, Titus 1:5)) in which pastors are instructed to provide other pastors to serve with them (or, possibly, under them) in a relationship of mutual submission and deference to one another in love, under the canopy of submission to that which truly has primacy—namely, the Word of Christ—in accord with those principles. That aspect of what belongs to the pastoral office by divine right—which office, itself, belongs to the Church—is something that something that we have given over, by human right, to the synodical structure, but which is ours to reclaim if we find that the synod is not fulfilling its duty in accord with God’s Word and the Confessions. That is not to say that we are in such a state now, but only to keep in remembrance the fact that our synodical arrangement is voluntary and need not be

‘permanent’.

The point is, the *pastors* are charged with providing pastors, with training and certifying them, that the current arrangement is *not* mandated by God, and that if we find anything lacking in the system—whether with the seminaries or with the Council of Presidents or with the district interview committees—we should lovingly bring charges against those who are hurting the Church and work to correct the damage that they cause. So, also, when we consider the continuation of pastors within our fellowship: it is *our* duty to make sure that they remain faithful to God’s Word and its Confession, and we must bring the synod to recognize that this is the case, that brotherly admonition and even public rebuke are simply a part of the estate of *every* pastor; it is *our* duty, not the duty of some humanly established ‘ecclesiastical supervisor’ who isn’t always around, often knows neither what is being done nor the theology necessary to evaluate and correct is, nor necessarily cares to do such a *loving and divisive* thing, but *our* duty as we operate in love for one another and in this mutual submission and deference, preferring the good of our brethren both in the pulpits and in the pews far above our own comfort and synodical status.

There are so many more things we could—and should—address, if only we had more time and the gluteal resilience both to study and to listen interminably. For instance, we should consider Phil. 4:15-18 and the making of financial provision for the brethren in Christ in other areas...but those are things that we can more fully consider as we seek to develop a workable plan by which a ministerium that is truly beneficial to the *whole* Church, both laity and pastors, may be established and put into use, and I am confident that, by God’s grace alone, we will do so.