



The Augustana Ministerium

A pastoral association formed to preserve and promote Lutheran pastors and a distinctively Lutheran Ministry of Word and Sacrament to Lutheran congregations.



Stability in Post-Synodical Life

I was a pastor of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod for sixteen years. Other than for a couple of funerals and Augustana Ministerium meetings, though, I haven't been in a Missouri Synod church for over four years...I no longer really care what's reported in the *Reporter*; and the actions of synodocrats and the resolutions that pass at synodical and district conventions only interest me to the extent that I see them troubling Confessional pastors and parishes. It would be easy to conclude that I am living a 'post-synodical' life.

But, then again, I reckon that I've been living in a post-synodical age ever since I was at the seminary: while for some of you there may have been a day in which you thought you could trust your synod, I never experienced that. From day one, if it wasn't horrible Sunday School material (and thanks be to God that there has been an improvement there), it was unscriptural programming and propaganda coming from the district office; if it wasn't every parish in my circuit practicing open Communion, it was everyone choosing a different trend *du jour* from Neo-Evangelical circles to thrust upon their less and less Lutheran parishioners.

From the female president and elders of my vicarage congregation (including the pastor's wife), contrary to the synod's understanding of the Bible 'way back' in 1987, to the decision of the synod in 2007 that the Bible actually *does* support this false practice, the shifting sands of synodicalism were ever apparent. Outside of a minority of pastors who would gather every week for the study of Scripture and every month for the study of the Confessions when I served in Illinois, I never saw the much-vaunted 'walking together', but only heard the admonitions from officialdom that we must do so, trusting one another without regard to what anyone was actually teaching.

There is much that is damnable, much which we *rightly*

condemn...and much which we, no doubt *have* condemned. Yet, as we follow Christ, who came not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through Him, The Augustana Ministerium was formed so that we might do more than just condemn what is going on around us...so that, as Pastor Craig Stanford said at our inception (and countless times both before and since), we might stop thinking about the next convention and start thinking about—and working for the sake of—the next generation.

It is not given us to condemn merely for the sake of condemning, but to condemn for the sake of saving. The condemnation of our sin thus took place not simply in Jesus' preaching of the Law, but in His own flesh, as St. Paul writes in Romans 8, as He suffered what we deserved because of it. The greatest condemnation of your sin is

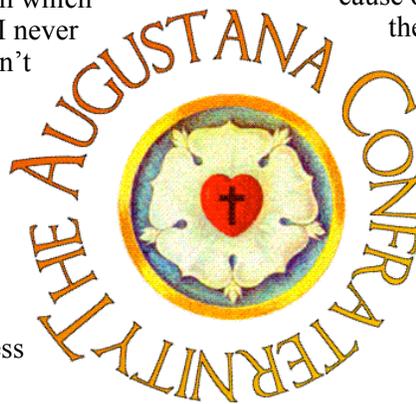
the condemnation that the Christ took upon Himself by taking your sin from you, the condemnation of the cross, of that mystery of God being abandoned by God...

through which abandonment, through which bearing away of your sin, you have been accepted and salvation has been given to you in place of what you have deserved.

So it is in our life in the parish, as well: we condemn only so that we may save; we

break what is weak only so that the blood of Christ may heal it and make it whole. That is (theoretically) easy for pastors to remember in the distinction

of Law and Gospel in a sermon, but the most difficult thing for pastors and laity alike when we feel the strain of battle; then it is easy for us to get so caught up in the maintenance of God's honor from a Law perspective that we forget that our Lord Himself sought a 'higher' honor by redeeming those who dishonored Him. 'Loving your enemies' when they are the members of your own parish (or 'synod') is far more difficult than when they are not, and it must be remembered that such love is not a matter of feelings, so much as of doing what is best for them and doing it in a way that conveys that what you are doing is, (cont. on Page 3)



**Confessional Lutheran Laity
Supporting Confessional Pastors**

Pastoral Care: What's Next?

What is the Augustana Ministerium and how does the Office of Pastoral Care in the ministerium relate to it?

If you check the web site of the Augustana Ministerium you will find this statement: The Augustana Ministerium is

a pastoral association formed to preserve and promote Lutheran pastors and a distinctively Lutheran Ministry of Word and Sacrament to Lutheran congregations.

Well and good, but how does this play out in the day-to-day grind of this world?

In the inaugural issue of this newsletter, the Rev. Michael Liese wrote to you regarding his ground-breaking work as the first Dean of Pastoral Care. I tell you, as I read his article I was amazed at the breadth of the work:

- Over 50 pastors received some form of financial assistance in the last triennium.
- Others received various forms of aid including the donations of an automobile, clothing, food, counsel, and general support
- Several pastors who were persecuted for standing up for the truth of the Gospel—and even removed from office—received pastoral care and support.

And I am excluding more than I am including, lest I be too repetitious.

But this listing of hurting pastors, families and unjust action ought not to startle us. Our times could easily be described as a time of persecution and rejection of the Gospel and the bearers of that message. Jesus, himself, reminds us that the students will receive the same treatment as the Teacher.

Thank you again Pastor Liese for your faithful work!

Now, that being said, where do we go from here?

Let me share with you a couple of goals that I have as Dean of Pastoral Care.

1. *I hope to set up an informal network* of members of the Ministerium who will intentionally aid pastors who need spiritual counsel, and/or other forms of aid. I will be able to call these men and they in turn will provide care as needed as well as keeping me informed. While our numbers are growing (over 100 members as of now) this will be a challenge. If you believe you can help, an email with your name, address, and phone number to strong@eosinc.com will be sufficient. Thanks!

2. *My second goal is to encourage the raising of money* through the Ministerium and Confraternity to increase the support that pastors forced, or being forced out, of office will truly be able to make ends meet and continue in their faithful work.

There, it's that simple!

Now, that is my goal. I admit it—it's mine! But I also hope that you might join me in meeting that goal. It is not

the *only* goal of the Ministerium and Confraternity, certainly, but it is, I believe, a goal thoroughly consistent with our stated purpose (and with our 2009 Spending Guideline, which calls for a 100% increase in aid to pastors).

How can these two goals be met? Let me mention a few ways.

1. *If you are inclined*, email me about helping to provide pastoral care. If you are the type that doesn't like your name on lists—you don't need to email me just do it!

2. *Recruit other pastors* who are like-minded to join the Ministerium.

3. *Recruit other laity who are like-minded to join the Confraternity.* Many people want to help their pastors and this is an excellent way to do so. Print the brochures for the Ministerium and Confraternity (available to print from our website or through the mail by contacting our Dean of Communications) and distribute them at your next pastors' conference, Circuit Forum/Convocation, or congregational gathering.

4. *Finally, if you are aware of one, or are one, of those who is suffering for the Gospel* and feel the need to talk to someone—call me! My cell number is 1-217-725-1717 and my home number is 1-217-787-1176.

Peace to all who love Jesus.

The Rev. Dr. Micheal M. Strong
Springfield, Illinois
Dean of Pastoral Care

Accounting, continued from back cover

letters, the establishment of our web and email presence, the mailing of such communications as must be in 'hard copy', legal and banking fees, and so forth.

In December, the Administrative Council also established a Spending Guideline for 2009. The largest part items, by far, are those for direct aid to pastors: \$20,000 for aid to those serving mission congregations and \$30,000 in emergency aid. That's an increase of 15% for missionary aid and 100% for emergency aid. Those are ambitious

goals, but they are in line with the needs that we see in the new year.

In addition, the Dean of Pastoral Recruitment has \$300 allocated for his work, Dean of Communications, \$1,010, and Dean of Education, \$2,000, while the administrative offices (Superintendent, Legate, Recording Secretary, and Bursar) have \$200, for a total Spending Guideline of \$53,510. May God grant us the ability to provide this much help—and more—to His suffering people!

indeed, in their interest, and not simply your own.

This, Christ has done with us, loving us enemies even unto death on the cross. He pointed out what we do not do precisely so that we could see that He does it all *for* us. We see this in Jesus' conversation with the rich young ruler. There, Jesus sets forth the commandments of the Second Table of the Law, in the hope that the young man would see his sin, only to be answered with a declaration of self-righteousness. Jesus then shows that for all the man's 'doing' that His heart wasn't right, He had made a god of his doing and of his possessions, so that he went away sad.

Our Lord says no less to us: in John 3, He declares us so damaged—so *dead!*—that we must be reborn. He does so by condemning even a teacher of Israel in this fashion, one whose moral and civil righteousness no doubt exceeds our own. Yet, Jesus does so in *just that way*: He puts it forth that we *must* be reborn, thereby saying that He provides us a way in which we *can* be reborn. Nicodemus questions how such a thing can be, and Jesus establishes the answer for all time: by water and the Spirit.

In Holy Baptism, you see the ultimate condemnation for your sin—you must be put to death—but as God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through Him, you see in your being put to death the ultimate *removal* of condemnation. In the putting to death of you, the sinner, God raises you to life just as Christ Himself lives again. The sting of death is taken from you, as the Law's ability to condemn you before God's throne has been ended.

While synodical life—along with the devil, the world, and the flesh—continues to swirl around us and we find ourselves in a post-synodical reality, with some leaving the old synods for newer—or *older*—things, that Baptismal reality remains constant, and the Lord of the Church shall continue to arm His Church for battle. May He grant us grace in these difficult times to get beyond both parochialism and counter-condemnations, so that by every means that He has provided us we may continue as His instruments who may, indeed, have to speak the words of condemnation, but always, only to give the salvation that is in the crucified Lamb alone.

The Rev. Eric Stefanski
Pastor, Holy Trinity Evangelical-Lutheran Church,
Harrison, Arkansas
Dean of Communications
<http://HolyTrinityLC.com>

4th Annual Theological Conference

The Fourth Annual Theological Conference and Plenary Session of The Augustana Ministerium will be held May

11–13, 2009, hosted again by Trinity Lutheran Church, Kearney, MO, and her pastor, the Rev. Drew Newman.

This year's conference will continue a discussion begun at last year's TAM conference concerning challenges of a confessional Lutheran ministry in a post-synodical age. A timely theological agenda, open to all—pastors and laity—is being planned that will explore several important aspects of pastoral supervision under the general theme: *Pastoral Supervision in a Post-synodical Age*.

Some Lutheran bodies in North America are exercising pastoral supervision that is increasingly being shaped by legal considerations, Church Growth thinking, and disregard for the divinely mandated nature of the Pastoral Office. In response to these distressing and challenging conditions, how can Lutheran pastors who serve faithfully in the Office be supported and supervised? What would such supervision require and how might it be carried out with attention to matters of polity that can best serve the Gospel? Four aspects of these questions will be slated for discussion as follows: 1) "Ecclesiastical Supervision in a Post-Synodical Age," Pr. James Heiser, facilitator; 2) "The Confessional in a Post-synodical Age," Pr. William Weedon, facilitator; 3) "Church Fellowship in a Post-Synodical Age," Pr. Eric Stefanski, facilitator; and 4) "Various Models of Church Polity and How They May Shape Ecclesiastical Supervision in a Post-synodical Age," Pr. Kent Heimbigner, facilitator.

As has well served TAM theological conferences in the past, these topics will not be covered by formal papers *per se*. Rather, topics will be explored by an open general discussion format with a facilitator moderating each session. Topic facilitators will also be responsible for researching and preparing pertinent background information on each topic, identifying appropriate issues, questions, and additional reading resources. A listing of these materials will be made available via *The Augustana Ministerium website* well in advance of the conference for individual preparation for the discussions at the conference. Such advance preparation by attendees is strongly encouraged for informative and beneficial discussion at the conference. This year's facilitators are very talented and knowledgeable, promising very stimulating and informative consideration of these important issues.

The scheduled theological portion of the program is open to members and non-members, clergy and laity alike. The Plenary Session of the TAM will be open to all attendees, except during an executive session, should one be called. The cost of the conference will be \$30. That cost is included in the paid 2009 dues for Ministerium and Confraternity members.

The Rev. Dr. Steven Hein, TAM Dean of Education
Concordia Institute for Christian Studies
Colorado Springs, Colorado

A Little More 'Accounting'...

In our last issue, we presented what The Augustana Ministerium had been doing in 2008 with regard to aiding pastors financially. As we attempted to demonstrate, The Augustana Ministerium seeks in its service to Christ's Church to be fiscally responsible with the gifts with which we are entrusted by Christ's people. Beside the gifts received for aid, though, we also seek to use the dues of our Ministerium and Augustana Confraternity members in the best possible way. In short, the Administrative Council takes that to mean, "spend as little on administration as feasible, and turn the rest over to the chief work of the Ministerium and Confraternity, the assistance of pastors in need." In spite of dues being collected specifically for administrative needs, it is our desire (and

yours, we are certain) that as much money as possible go to pastoral aid. *Note: we are talking **only** about dues here, **not** about gifts given for aid to pastors; 100% of gifts go directly to pastoral aid.*

For this reason, we are pleased to report that at the Administrative Council meeting in December, as we set about the work of establishing spending goals for 2009, we came to the conclusion that *most* of the dues of our Confraternity members could be moved from our Administrative Account to our fund to aid mission pastors and pastors with emergency needs. *In fact, \$35 out of each member's \$40 dues was moved from the Administrative Account to the General (i.e., Aid) Account.* That's 87.5% of each member's dues to the direct aid of pastors and 12.5% toward the education of both pastors and laity by the publication of our brochure and news- (cont. on Page 2)

Donation Info

Make checks payable to:

The Augustana Ministerium

c/o The Rev. Gregory J. Schultz, Bursar
311 W. Meyer, P.O. Box 246
Campbell Hill, IL 62916

Contact Info

The Augustana Ministerium

c/o The Rev. Kent Heimbigner, Legate
405 Piccadilly Circle
Burleson, TX 76028

Please see our website to download a PDF copy of this newsletter or to contact the ministerium via email:

<http://www.augustanaministerium.org>

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The Augustana Ministerium

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