

For the

# LIFE of the WORLD

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## For the LIFE of the WORLD

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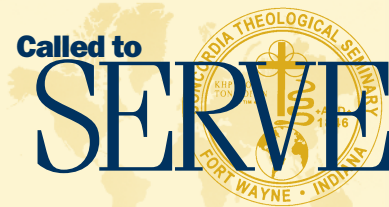
A Lutheran understanding of mission will point to God in His Trinitarian economy as the original and ongoing *source* of mission.

### 10 A Perspective of Mission Life

By the Rev. Theodore M. R. Krey, Missionary Pastor, church planter, and theological educator in Venezuela

One who is asked to teach courses at the seminary level, visit his members, evangelize, care for fellow missionaries, and interact with the national church quickly realizes that mission work is God's work and that anything that one is able to do and complete is only by the grace of God.

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# Doctrine and Not Either/Or,

Are you interested in missions *or* are you interested in doctrine? Sometimes today our doctrine and our mission are set in an adversarial relationship, as though it is an either/or proposition. At the very least, many folks appear to believe that one will emphasize either doctrine or mission in one congregation or pastoral ministry. Others might say that we should try and balance the two. But I still think that misses the point. What Scripture and the history of the church tell us is that there should be—in fact, *there is*—a complementary and inseparable relationship between doctrine and practice.

On this point our Synod has been very consistent. As a very young adult, I recall hearing Dr. J. A. O. Preus, President

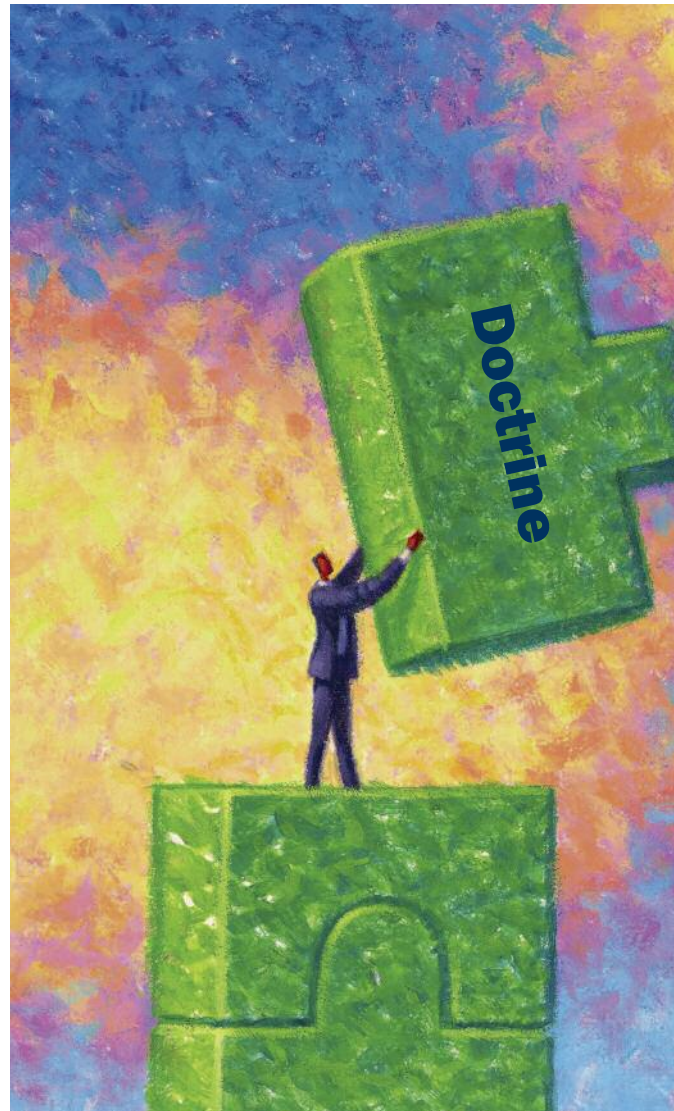
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**Emphasis on proclaiming the Gospel of Christ to a world in need has characterized our Synod from its inception. Even as it organized itself in April 1847, the newly formed Missouri Synod expressly made missions and evangelism a priority.**

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of the Synod from 1969-1981, describe the 1975 Synod Convention at Anaheim as an “evangelism convention.” Other presidents have encouraged the Synod to “Tell Everyone What He Has Done,” “Tell the Good News about Jesus,” and to be “Ablaze: To the Ends of the Earth.” That emphasis on proclaiming the Gospel of Christ to a world in need has characterized our Synod from its incep-

tion. Even as it organized itself in April 1847, the newly formed Missouri Synod expressly made missions and evangelism a priority. But should it not be *the* priority, some might ask?



My reading of the work of the founders shows that they did not see a negative or tension-filled relationship between doctrine and mission. Rather, they saw doctrine and mission as indivisibly connected. Doctrine *drove* their mission—not legalistically, but in the sense that what they firmly believed led them vigorously to confess. To put it another way, because they were convinced that the doctrine they had learned from the Lutheran Confessions was true, because it was based on the Bible, they could not but speak that

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By the Rev. Dr. Lawrence R. Rast, Jr.



message to a world that needed to know the transforming truth. While it is true that they were moved in part by a desire to correct the errors in the Lutheran church of their day, at the same time they had a broader view, a vision that included taking the Gospel to a world in need.

In this respect, even though the Synod was newly formed, it wasn't doing anything new. Those involved in the Synod's formation had already been enthusiastically involved in missions and evangelism based on

pure doctrine *before* they formed the Missouri Synod. When they did establish the Synod, they simply kept on doing what they had already done: preach the pure Word of God as rightly confessed in the Lutheran Confessions to nurture the faith of believers and to call the lost to Christ. While examples abound, no two are more noteworthy than F. C. D. Wyneken and August Crämer.

F. C. D. Wyneken came to the Fort Wayne, Indiana, area in the summer of 1838. Pressed to serve

as pastor of St. Paul in Fort Wayne and Zion in Friedheim, Indiana, Wyneken agreed on the condition that he be allowed to continue his missionary work. Wyneken immediately began his great work of seeking out the spiritually neglected Germans of the western frontier. Quickly realizing that the task was too large for one man, Wyneken appealed to Germany for help.

Many responded, but one no more robustly than Pastor August Crämer, who helped establish the colony of Frankenmuth, Michigan. Crämer and his coworkers had a twofold purpose: to organize congregations among the German immigrants and to reach out with the Gospel to the Native American population. While Crämer's work among the Germans remains visible today, his efforts among the Native Americans were only modestly successful. However, his vision for outreach characterized the remainder of his life's work. He was called to Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, in 1850 and there maintained the close linkage of doctrine and practice that Wyneken had helped establish when the seminary was founded in 1846.

Which is all to say, Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne (and St. Louis [1861-1875] and Springfield [1875-1976]) has been a missionary seminary from its beginning. And that strong relationship of doctrine and mission continues in the present. Today faculty continue to proclaim the Good News of

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**In His Word the Lord has revealed His truth to us and now calls us to share that truth with others. The more informed we are doctrinally speaking, the more energized we will be for mission. It's not either/or, it's both/and!**

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Christ crucified and risen again throughout the world. From Siberia to Africa to South America to the Orient and also in the United States, members of the CTS community continue to proclaim Christ and take the unchanging, pure Gospel to the ends of the earth.

Sometimes the founders of our Synod are criticized for being “parochial” and “shortsighted” because they placed so much emphasis on work

among the German population of the United States. It’s true, they did focus on Germans initially. At the same time there was a consistent awareness that they needed to expand their work as much as possible so that the message of Christ could be taken to the ends of the earth. Further, we must remember that when the Synod was formed, it was a very small enterprise (with a few thousand members), not the large Synod it is today (approximately 2.5 million members). Indeed, other Lutheran synods in America doubted whether it would survive at all. However, the conviction of the founders was that they would faithfully speak the Word in the various forums in which they found themselves, trusting that God would accomplish His purposes through this proclamation.

If we step back and think about it, we’ll realize just how indebted we are to them

for their faithfulness. God specifically used these gifted people to establish and maintain the proclamation of the Gospel in the context of our Synod. Personally speaking, a missionary of the Missouri Synod met my great-grandfather at the docks on his arrival from Germany in the late 1800’s. That missionary steered my great-grandfather to a Missouri Synod congregation in Connecticut. From that small meeting came great results. It is not too much to say that the fruits of that missionary’s efforts continue to be realized in the Gospel proclamation that I and others of my family have received and passed along throughout the more than 100 years since.

And that helps put things in perspective for us. Our faithful proclamation today will have long-standing effects in the lives of those with whom we share the Gospel. Fifty, 100, 150 years and beyond, the Good News we proclaim today will continue to transform lives as the Holy Spirit continues to call, gather, enlighten, and sanctify the whole Christian church on earth.

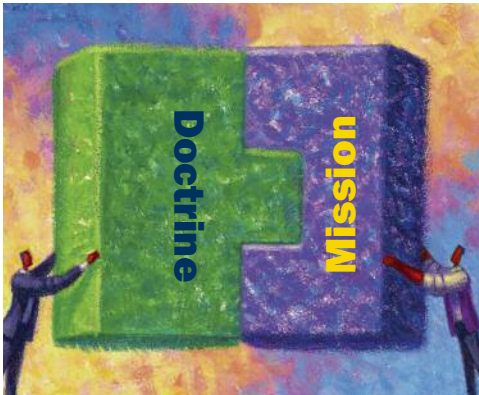
A quote from C. F. W. Walther, first President of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, captures this outlook well:

Let us above all and in all matters be concerned about this, that the pure doctrine of our dear Evangelical Lutheran Church may become known more and more completely among us, that it may be in vogue in all of our congregations, and that it may be preserved from all adulteration and held fast as the most precious treasure. Let us not surrender one iota of the demands of the Word. Let us bring about its complete rule in our congregations and set aside nothing of it, even though for this reason things may happen to us, as God wills. Here let us be inflexible, here let us be adamant. If we do this, we need not worry about the success of our labor. Even though it should seem to be in vain, it cannot then be in vain, for the Word does not return void but prospers in the thing whereto the Lord sent it. By the Word alone, without any other power, the church was founded; by the Word alone all the great deeds recorded in church history were accomplished; by the Word alone the church will most assuredly stand also in these last days of sore distress, to the end of days. Even the gates of hell will not prevail against it.<sup>1</sup>

I’m not more interested in doctrine than in missions—I’m interested in doctrinal missions. In His Word the Lord has revealed His truth to us and now calls us to share that truth with others. The more informed we are doctrinally speaking, the more energized we will be for mission. It’s not either/or, it’s both/and!

<sup>1</sup> “C. F. W. Walther’s First Presidential Address (1848),” translated by Paul F. Koehneke, *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly* 33 (April 1960): 20.

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