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## THE MISSION OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN THE WORLD

### *A Review of the 1965 Mission Affirmations*

#### Introduction

##### *Reasons for This Study*

The Commission on Theology and Church Relations has undertaken this brief study of the mission of the church for a number of compelling reasons:

1. The task of the church is a subject which has claimed the attention of the Christian world in an increasing measure for more than two decades. But as interest increases, it is becoming apparent that the focus of mission activity is steadily being broadened. Primary emphasis is being placed on the church's involvement in the political, social, and economic problems of society both on a national and an international level. It is suggested that circumstances are forcing the church to change not only its definition of mission but even its theology.

The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod recognizes that it has an obligation to the whole man but is deeply concerned lest emphasis on the proclamation of the Gospel be blunted. In order to describe more fully the task of the church in our modern world, Synod adopted the Mission Affirmations in 1965, in which it sought to define the proper relation between our ministry to the spiritual needs of mankind and our involvement in humanity's physical and social problems.

Apparently there have been some misunderstandings regarding various statements in the Mission Affirmations, since a number of memorials have been addressed to subsequent conventions requesting clarification.

2. As early as 1967 concerns were expressed by a number of congregations in the Synod "regarding improper interpretation and use of the Mission Affirmations" (*Convention Workbook*, 1967, pp.77-78). In response the convention at New York adopted Resolution 2-20, which sought to clarify the Mission Affirmations in order to avoid all misunderstandings.

3. However, again in 1971 overtures were submitted to the convention at Milwaukee requesting Synod to draw up new affirmations because of the "serious ambiguity" in the Detroit Mission Affirmations (*Convention Workbook*, 1971, pp.105-107). As a result, Resolution 2-33, which sought to clarify relevant parts of the Mission Affirmations, was submitted to the Board of Directors "for study and report to next convention." (*Convention Proceedings*, 1971, p. 123)

4. The president of Synod, acting for the Board of Directors, requested the Commission on Theology and Church Relations through its executive secretary to make a thorough study of the Mission Affirmations with a view toward clarifying those parts which appeared to be ambiguous and supplementing the document where it was needed in view of recent developments in Christendom.

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5. In 1973 the Board for Missions in its report to the convention at New Orleans (*Convention Workbook*, 1973, pp.9-10) considered it advisable to prepare a set of theological principles intended to clarify further the Mission Affirmations and suggested that they serve as major guidelines for the church's mission activities. In response the convention adopted Resolution 1-06, which commended the Board for Missions for "the theological principles . . . intended to undergird and amplify the Mission Affirmations" and urged them to "maintain and uphold the policies and practices of our church in mission throughout the world." (*Convention Proceedings*, 1973, p.103)

6. A final consideration which prompted the Commission on Theology and Church Relations to address itself again to the mission of the church is the realization that since 1965, when the Mission Affirmations were adopted by Synod, there have been significant developments within the World Council of Churches and within Christendom in general with respect to the mission of the church.

### *Recent Developments*

We mention only a few of the more important developments of which we should be aware and to which we must address ourselves as we look at the task of the church at home and abroad in the immediate future.

As we noted above, it is being suggested that if the church is to regain its influence in the lives of people in our modern world, it must be ready to involve itself more deeply in the social, political, ethical, and economic problems of modern society. This has led to a growing uncertainty on the part of many Christians with respect to the church's primary mission. An increasing number is assuming that the church's most pressing task today is to improve man's existence on this earth.

With this has come also a new approach to the church's mission throughout the world. This new and different approach reasons as follows: Christ's mission in the world is one; therefore, the mission of the church should not be denominational in nature but ecumenical. Less emphasis should be placed on denominational doctrines and forms. Instead, church bodies should take their places alongside one another and together seek to further Christ's one mission. A program of communication should be initiated "to break down the opposition against ecumenical involvement in all phases of mission, and the engendering of a sense of adventure as we become involved in the total life of the Christian Church in a given culture" (Martin Kretzmann, *Theological*

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*Education, A Presentation to the Board of World Missions, Lutheran Church in America, 1968, p. 11*). Thus the task and mission of the church should become a common cause in which there is full cooperation among Christians of all denominations.

The deemphasis on doctrine has also led to a new and different understanding of the Lutheran view concerning the centrality of the Gospel. According to some, belief in the centrality of the Gospel implies that other doctrines (creation, miracles, inerrancy of the Scripture, the physical resurrection of the dead, immortality of the soul, etc.) are not essential to the church's mission. Therefore, different views regarding these articles of faith should not be considered divisive of fellowship. In this way the centrality of the Gospel becomes a kind of Gospel-monism (Gospel *only*).

While in some areas of Christendom there has been a trend toward Gospel-monism, in others there is a tendency in the direction of neo-universalism. In response to the Leuenberg Concord evangelical theologians both in Europe and in America recently published the Frankfurt Declaration, in which they expressed deep concern over the new universalism which is being embraced in many areas of the organized Christian church. It is a universalism which appears in many forms, but essentially it assumes that the sinner can attain salvation without coming into contact with the verbalized Gospel of the grace of God in Christ Jesus.

There is a growing tendency to define the message of the Gospel in terms of social and political action rather than in words which articulate the good news of man's salvation through the blood of Jesus Christ shed for sin on the cross. The term "salvation" assumes a new meaning if it is identified with social change, moral improvement, and economic progress. The word "religion" is defined as a set of doctrines and cultic practices rather than a relation to Jesus Christ by faith.

During the past decade and a half there has been a strong emphasis in certain parts of Christendom on the miraculous and the supernatural. This often appears in the form of neo-Pentecostalism, which claims that the church today possesses the same miraculous gifts which were given to the apostolic church of the first century. In the non-Christian community there has been a resurgence of the cults, of spiritism, and various forms of Eastern mysticism. Apparent is also a new missionary zeal and vigor on the part of such religious systems as Mohammedanism, Buddhism, and Hinduism.

Finally, there is today a strong tendency to obscure the differences between the church and the world. Many fail to understand that Christ called the church out of the world, that the world without Christ lies under judgment, and that the church's principal task according to Matthew 28:19-20 is to return to the world with the message of forgiveness and salvation in Jesus Christ in order that sinners might believe and through faith be saved. Of course, this is not intended to undervalue the need for Christians to live according to the

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laws of God, performing deeds of love toward their fellowmen and manifesting an active interest and participation in the sociopolitical world.

These are only a few of the more important developments that have taken place within the past decades which challenge the organized church to study its task on the basis of the Scripture and to articulate its message in the clearest possible terms. It is with these developments in mind that we now turn our attention to the Mission Affirmations.

### **I. The Church Is God's Mission**

The Mission Affirmations seek to challenge our Synod to see its mission task in terms that are relevant to the needs and conditions of our modern world. In doing so they highlight the important fact that the task which is to be carried out by the organized church is actually God's mission. It is He who originated this plan and made it part of His eternal plan of salvation. Just as it was God who created the world, and just as it was He who sent forth His Son into the world to redeem mankind after the fall into sin, so also it is the triune God who has commissioned His church to go into all the world to proclaim the good news of reconciliation through the death of Jesus Christ. It is the same God who has also promised His church the gift of the Holy Spirit so that it can effectively perform its mission even until our Lord's return. Therefore, the mission of the church is not optional. It is the Lord's work. A church which is not interested in God's mission is a disobedient church. This is indeed a most important emphasis.

But in view of recent trends in Christendom, with less interest being shown in the doctrine and content of the Christian faith, it is the opinion of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations that the Mission Affirmations should articulate more fully that God has not only given His church an important mission to perform, but that He has in His grace also prepared and equipped it for its task. Behind the mission of the church stands God's eternal plan of salvation in its entirety – all of it is essential to the successful completion of Christ's mission in the world.

The plan to involve the community of believers in Christ's mission to the world had its beginning already in eternity when a gracious God chose and destined sinners to become His sons through faith in Jesus Christ. Even at that time He chose them for a purpose, that they should show forth the praises of Him who called them out of darkness into His marvelous light.

To make it possible for His church to serve Him in His kingdom, God sent forth His only begotten Son into the world to take on human flesh and blood in order that He might offer His life as a sacrifice for sin upon the cross. Thereby He has brought peace between the sinner and God, as witnessed by St. Paul in 2 Cor. 5:18-19:

All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not

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counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.

Sin was atoned for. God was reconciled to man through the death of His Son.

When we were estranged from God, dead in trespasses and sins, and burdened with the weight of misery and guilt, the Lord sought us out to involve us as individuals in His mission.. When we were rebellious and going astray, He changed our hearts. Through the means of grace, the Word and the sacraments, the Holy Spirit brought us personally into a saving relationship to Jesus Christ by creating within us faith and trust in God's promises of grace and forgiveness. God declared us righteous through the full and free forgiveness of sins and by giving us the righteousness of His own Son. (LC II, 28-31; Ap IV, 305 ff.)

To equip and prepare us as individuals for mission, Christ has come to dwell within us. Though we are still plagued by sin, we can now rise with Him to newness of life. Through repentance and Baptism we also have the gift of the Holy Spirit. By faith He lives in us with His grace and blessing. We are now new creatures. He has given a new direction to our lives, with new desires, new attitudes toward our fellowmen, new strength to serve, new willingness to labor in His kingdom. (LC II, 37-38; Ap IV, 122 ff.)

Having redeemed us and having created us anew, our Lord now exhorts us to employ our gifts and to use our new strength in the furtherance of His mission. He urges His church: "Be My witnesses" (Acts 1:8). But He also promises: "Lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age" (Matt. 28:20). Thus, behind the mission of the church stands God's eternal plan of salvation. It is this divine plan that gives Christians the will and the strength to commit their lives to their living Lord and moves them to become involved in His mission. And it is His continuing presence that guarantees its success. (LC II, 19, 51-53, 62)

Finally, it is the opinion of the Commission on Theology that two additional points be made for the purpose of clarification:

1. When the Mission Affirmations assert that mission is not an optional activity on the part of the church, this is not intended to imply that mission, in the sense of ministering to the physical needs of the poor and underprivileged, is a mark of the church, as has been claimed by the World Council of Churches. According to the Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions, the only marks of the church are the Gospel and the sacraments. (AC VII, 1; Ap VII-VIII)

2. Furthermore, in stating that "the Father and the Son together sent the Holy Spirit into the world as the great Missionary until our Lord's return" (The Mission Affirmations, I), it is not the intent of this statement to permit the view that the Holy Spirit works faith in the hearts of men apart from the means of grace. In order that the church may perform its function in the world, the Lord has given it the Law and the Gospel, the Law

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declaring all men to be sinners under the wrath and condemnation of God, the Gospel promising that all who repent and believe in Jesus as the Savior from sin are delivered from its power and consequences and have the assurance of life eternal.

### **II. The Church is Christ's Mission to the Whole World**

In accord with the second part of the Mission Affirmations, we Christians recognize and affirm that God has commissioned His church to conduct its mission in all the world. Having died for the sins of the whole world, Christ now sends His followers out into the world to "make disciples of all nations" (Matt. 28:19). Thus, the object of Christ's love and of His redemptive work is all mankind.

We acknowledge also that God is active in the lives of all men through His providential care, through the Law written in their hearts, and through the revelation of Himself in nature. In this respect Christians do have a common humanity with all men. They also have a common sinfulness and rejoice over a universal redemption won for all by Christ through His suffering and death on the cross. Therefore we consecrate ourselves with everything that we are and have to the task of witnessing to the Lord Jesus Christ by proclaiming the Gospel of forgiveness through His precious blood, and we determine with the help of the Holy Spirit to support our message also by acts of Christian love.

In the face of the great unfinished task of making disciples of all nations, we rejoice when the Gospel, as it is revealed in the Scriptures, is proclaimed also by Christians of other denominations.

However, when we declare in these affirmations that "a universal redemption" has been won for all in Jesus Christ (The Mission Affirmations, II), this is not to be understood as though all men by virtue of Christ's death have in fact eternal life and are saved, irrespective of a personal faith based upon a knowledge of the saving act of Christ on the cross.

Furthermore, these affirmations are not intended to proclaim a gospel which tells of God's love but does not root and ground that love in Christ who was delivered for our offenses and raised for our justification (Romans 4:25). Such a gospel is unknown in Scripture and cannot bring men salvation.

Finally, these affirmations are intended to reject all forms of universalism, including the views which assume that sinners, apart from the articulated message of the Gospel, can encounter Christ and find salvation and that the Savior is evident to the world also in historical changes, in deeds of love, and even in acts of revolution. (AC IV; XX, 23; Ap IV, 43-46; FC Ep II, 4-5; FC SD II, 5)

### **III. The Church Is Christ's Mission to the Church**

As the Mission Affirmations assert, "every Christian by virtue of the saving faith which the Holy Spirit creates in his heart is bound to His Lord and enters into a real

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and living unity with every other member of Christ's holy body, the church." Christians, therefore, should constantly seek to strengthen one another by a forthright witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. As members of the body of Christ, they

should speak the Word of God to one another as they nurture, edify, and educate one another for Christian faith and life. Therefore as a Synod we value our strong tradition of Christian education and seek to extend it throughout life, for laity and clergy. Far from employing agencies of Christian education primarily in our own institutional self-interest, we will endeavor to make them ever more effective tools in equipping God's people for His mission. (The Mission Affirmations, III)

Being interested in building the body of Christ, we as a Synod should treasure the fellowship which we enjoy with sister churches and seek to foster this fellowship

by remaining steadfastly under the power of the Gospel in Word and Sacrament . . . since Christian fellowship can be nourished and sustained only by the Gospel which created it... [and] by applying the corrective measures of the Law and the healing powers of the Gospel whenever the church is invaded by errors in teaching and preaching . . . and by schismatic and separatistic tendencies which impede Christian fellowship. (*Proceedings*, 1965, pp.271-272)

As a Synod we will work zealously for the extension of fellowship by engaging in doctrinal discussions with other churches where this can be done without compromising sound doctrine (*Proceedings*, 1965, p. 288). Christians will recognize that divisions and disunity in the institutional church are caused by the intrusion of false doctrine and by man's sinfulness, while true and God-pleasing unity among God's children is brought about by the Spirit who works through the Word. The Gospel, therefore, becomes the only means by which true unity among Christian people can be attained.

The Lutheran Confessions can serve an excellent purpose in attaining true unity since they not only articulate our faith accurately and clearly, but they also warn against teachings which are contrary to the revealed will of God as it is stated in the Holy Scriptures.

We recognize that there are areas of life and service in which we can work together with Christians in other denominations. These are described for us in synodical resolutions and in documents that have been adopted by conventions. (See "Theology of Fellowship," *Proceedings*, 1965, p. 289)

However, as we declare our genuine concern for other Christians and our desire for unity of the Spirit, our affirmations are not intended to offer license for unionistic relations with other denominations nor to tolerate teachings and practices that are contrary to the clear teachings of Scripture. Our intention rather is to emphasize our responsibility to other Christians in the body of Christ and our opposition to all forms of separatism which militate against Christian love. (Preface to *The Book of Concord*, p. 10; Ap Preface, 16, 19; Conclusion to the Ap, *Concordia Triglotta*, p. 451; SA II ii; Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope 42: EC SD XI 95-96: XII 40: EC En XI 22-23)

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Furthermore, by expressing our genuine desire for true unity with other Christians in order that we may work together in furthering Christ's mission to the world, our intention is not to endorse an approach to missions which is unionistic in the sense that it tolerates among church bodies a diversity of views regarding doctrines which are clearly revealed in the Bible.

### **IV. The Church Is Christ's Mission to the Whole Society**

As children of God and as members of the institutional church we recognize that we have a responsibility both to our fellow Christians and also to society in general. Our responsibility is to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ and also to serve our fellowmen and our God by an honest occupation, by working together with our fellow citizens to promote peace, justice, social acceptance, and the general welfare of not only those within our own nation but also of those in other lands, regardless of race, nationality, or creed.

However, in all issues of a social and political nature, our Synod has ordinarily distinguished between the responsibilities of the individual Christian and those of the institutional church.

We acknowledge that Jesus is Lord over all the world and that there is no area of man's existence which is secular in the sense that it is removed from the lordship of Christ and from His providential care. However, we also recognize that Christ exercises His lordship in a twofold manner. Lutherans are accustomed to distinguishing between His kingdom of power and His kingdom of grace. To function in His kingdom of power the Lord has instituted civil government or the state, and to promote His kingdom of grace He has established His church. Both are divine institutions. (AC XXVIII, 4-5; Ap XVI, 54-55, 58-59)

When we speak of the two kingdoms of Christ, we imply that there is a distinction between the two, even though there is no absolute separation. They are distinct especially in their functions and with respect to the tools or instruments which they use in the performance of their specific tasks.

To the state the Lord has given the task of maintaining order, keeping the peace, providing justice for all, and in general promoting the physical welfare of its citizens. It performs these tasks through its laws, which threaten punishment for the offender. To the church the Lord has given the task of proclaiming the love of God in Christ through the message of the Gospel. The church performs its functions through the means of grace. (AC XXVIII, 8-20; Ap IV, 22-24; LC I, 150; III, 74-75; Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope, 31)

This is not to imply, however, that since the Lord has entrusted to the state the task of maintaining peace, justice, and the general welfare of its citizens, therefore Christians as members of the church need not concern themselves with the poor and underprivileged. As Christians we are deeply concerned with both the physical and the spiritual needs of our fellowmen. In



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this we are motivated by the Gospel. Thus Christians seek the good of others, not primarily because we share a common humanity, nor because we are all sinners, but because of our Christian faith. The love which we manifest toward others in their misery and need is a fruit of our faith and a product of our new birth by the Holy Spirit through the Word. (AC XX, 27-29, 35-39; LC I, 189-196, 250-253; FC SD IV, 11-12)

However, in view of the popular trend to substitute social involvement for the proclamation of the Gospel, we find it necessary to offer the following clarification:

1. In declaring that the church is Christ's mission to the whole society, the intention of this affirmation is not to suggest that the task of the church is determined by the physical needs of the world or by the ferment for social improvement. While the church must be alert to society's problems and injustices, we do not favor the popular view that if the church is to be relevant, it must "allow the world to write its agenda." This obscures the world's need for the Gospel and is apt to make the primary goal and function of the church social and political in nature.

2. We reject the type of reasoning which argues thus: As Lord of the earth, Christ is at work wherever there is social ferment, wherever there are men and women striving for liberation from prejudice and injustice. Therefore, the church's principal task is to direct attention to areas where Christ is at work and mobilize the church for active and vigorous participation. This accent fails to take into account that the mission of the church has been determined by Christ when He told His disciples: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." (Matt. 28:19-20)

As a fellowship of Christians, the institutional church is also concerned with the general well-being of all men. It, too, has certain responsibilities over against the social order. Since it acknowledges that civil government is God's servant instituted for the purpose of maintaining peace, justice, and the general welfare of all of its citizens, the church implores God's guidance and protection in behalf of all who are in authority. It seeks to support the state by instructing and activating its members to be good citizens "subjecting themselves to the higher powers" (AC XVI, 5-6; Ap XVI, 57-58; LC III, 74; Table of Duties, 5). In times of unrest and civil disturbance, the church may seek to assist the state in restoring peace and good order by means of good counsel and peaceful persuasion rather than by force. As needs have arisen, it has in times past organized programs of aid and assistance for the ill, the victims of war, of floods, and of similar disasters.

Under certain circumstances the church may claim its right to be heard also on controversial issues, especially on matters where moral questions are involved. The church is deeply concerned that a proper level of civil

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Our churches are not to engage in partisan politics, in lobbying for national issues, in competing with secular organizations "for a place in the political sun," nor in seeking to impose on society the church's particular beliefs and regulations, making the Gospel into a new form of law.

Our church recognizes that many political and social issues of the day (war, welfare programs, certain racial questions, etc.) are very complex in nature. It should realize that any human program is fallible and ought to refrain from absolutizing any solution to a social problem. Especially when the church endeavors to speak on certain political and social issues about which the Scripture is silent, it ought to exercise great care and restraint lest the Gospel be blamed and the cause of Christ suffer. Especially a Christian minister should realize that the world considers him to be a representative of the church and not simply a private citizen.

There may conceivably be times when the state goes beyond its God-given authority and requires of its citizens that which is contrary to their consciences and their individual religious convictions. In such cases the church reserves the right to protest. However, since the church always acknowledges the state to be a divine institution, it does not resort to force. From the Biblical point of view violence, force, rebellion, and revolution are rarely justified.

### **V. The Church Is Christ's Mission to the Whole Man**

As Christians we recognize that God's love reaches out to man in his entire being. Our body, soul, and mind have all been created by God; they have been redeemed by Him, and as Christians we have by the Holy Spirit been brought to faith and newness of life in our total person.

We also acknowledge that our Lord in His life here on earth ministered to the needs of the entire man, forgiving sins, healing illnesses, feeding the hungry, and in other ways providing for both the spiritual and the physical wants of man. We acknowledge further that Jesus has placed upon His followers the responsibility of ministering to the needs of the total person.

In accord with the Mission Affirmations we therefore assert that the church's mission encompasses man in his entire being. "Wherever a Christian as God's witness encounters the man to whom God sends him, he meets someone whose body, soul, and mind are related in one totality. Therefore Christians, individually and corporately, prayerfully seek to serve the needs of the total man." (The Mission Affirmations, V)

We acknowledge that when God's children thus demonstrate their love toward their fellowmen, such acts may gain a hearing for the Gospel among the people of the non-Christian world. However, deeds of love and service cannot add power to the Gospel since such power comes from the Holy Spirit who works in and through the Word.

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In declaring that man is a being consisting of body, soul, and mind, these affirmations do not intend thereby to imply that man is an indivisible unit and that when he dies his body and mind and soul go into the grave as a unit, there to await the resurrection. According to Biblical teaching, death consists in the unnatural separation of body and spirit after which "the dust returns to the earth as it was and the spirit returns to God who gave it" (Eccl. 12:7). In 1967 the convention at New York adopted Resolution 2-20, which states:

The affirmations, in emphasizing the "Church's Mission to the Whole Man," do not thereby imply any improper conclusions regarding man's state of existence between death and resurrection . . . the affirmations rather stress that our loving concern for man be that of Christ: a love not only for a man's soul but also for his body and mind, which God has created and redeemed (Matt. 4:23). (*Convention Proceedings*, 1967, p. 93)

### **VI. The Whole Church Is Christ's Mission**

We affirm also that every Christian is a missionary through Holy Baptism. By water and the Word we have not only been baptized into Christ's death and His resurrection but also into His body, which is the church, and into His mission. Through faith we are united with our Lord and with all Christians everywhere in the one, holy, Christian church.

As members of the body of Christ we regret that the institutional church has not attained to the oneness in faith and profession which expresses itself in acts of Christian fellowship. We, in accord with the affirmations, deplore any kind of clericalism that "views a congregation primarily as God's instrument to sustain the ordained ministry," thus undervaluing the variety of gifts which the Holy Spirit has given His people to serve the body of Christ. "We deplore the laicism that chafes under the shepherding by which a loving God seeks to equip His children for His mission" (Mission Affirmations, VI). We deplore all forms of racism both in society and in the church. We likewise deplore the many divisions which exist within the institutional church and the multiplication of sects, which bear testimony to man's unwillingness to obey His Word. We regret all forms of violence, wars, civil strife, and political struggles which set nation against nation, people against people, and often even Christians against one another.

We recognize that strife, divisions, bitterness, and all forms of disunity both in the church and in society are caused by sin, disobedience, and error. We repent and ask God's forgiveness where we have contributed to disunity.

In accord with Christ's commission we affirm that our church must hold before the eyes of its people the never changing fact that the primary goal and function of the church is to bring men to faith and obedience to His will.

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Especially in an age like ours when universalism and syncretism are so dominant, this goal should guide and govern The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod as it evaluates its methodologies and institutions and plans and administers programs for the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in all the world.

In a day when there is much doctrinal uncertainty, when theological novelties are being substituted for the Gospel of Jesus Christ, it is essential for a mission-minded church to be able to discern the spirits that have gone out into the world in order to determine whether they are of God or not. The church must clearly recognize that such religious systems as Mohammedanism, Hinduism, and Buddhism are not valid substitutes for the message of the cross, since there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved except the name of Jesus. (Acts 4:12)

At the same time we give thanks to God who in His grace continues to preserve His church on earth and grants to sinful mankind the Word and sacraments by which His kingdom is extended and His church is built.

We acknowledge with gratitude His love in making us members of His kingdom and sincerely trust in His mercy to preserve us in the faith.

We recognize God's purpose for His church as it is expressed in Ephesians 5:25-27:

Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

To that end we pray constantly for a full measure of God's Holy Spirit, for a clear understanding of His Word as it is set forth in the Holy Scriptures, for a genuine love for lost mankind everywhere, and for zeal to bring them the saving Gospel.

NOTE: Scriptural quotations are taken from the Revised Standard Version. All citations of the Lutheran Confessions are taken from *The Book of Concord*, edited by T. G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), except when noted to the contrary. The following abbreviations have been used:

AC - Augsburg Confession

Ap - Apology of the Augsburg Confession

Ep - Epitome of the Formula of Concord

FC - Formula of Concord

LC - Large Catechism

SA - Smalcald Articles

SC - Small Catechism

SD - Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord

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### APPENDIX

#### The Mission Affirmations

##### I.

#### The Church Is God's Mission

WHEREAS, The Father sent forth His Word to create and preserve the world; and

WHEREAS, Upon man's revolt the Father sent His Son into the world to redeem the world; and

WHEREAS, The Son in obedience to His Father's commission laid aside His glory, became a man to serve men, and died on the cross to reconcile all things unto God; and

WHEREAS, The risen and victorious Lord sent forth His church on His mission when He appeared to His disciples on the day of resurrection, declaring: "Peace be unto you; as My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you"; and

WHEREAS, The Father and the Son together sent the Holy Spirit into the world as the great Missionary until our Lord's return; therefore be it

*Resolved*, That we affirm in faith, humility, and joy that the mission is the Lord's; He is the great Doer and Sender; and be it further

*Resolved*, That we affirm that the mission is not an optional activity in the church, but the church is caught up in the manifold and dynamic mission of God; and be it further

*Resolved*, That we thank the Lord of the church for all the ways in which He has graciously used us and our church body in His mission, blessing us and making us a blessing unto many; and be it further

*Resolved*, That we repent of our individual and corporate self-centeredness and disobedience, whenever it has caused us to regard our local congregations or our Synod as ends in themselves and moved us to give self-preservation priority over God's mission; and be it finally

*Resolved*, That we affirm that the church is God's mission. The church's ministries of worship, service, fellowship, and nurture all have a missionary dimension. We rejoice that for Christ's sake God forgives us our sins of self-centered disobedience, and we place ourselves, our congregations, and our Synod into His loving hand as willing instruments of His great mission to the world.

*II Corinthians 5:16-21*

*Exodus 19:5-6 and 1 Peter 2:9-10*

*John 20:21-23*

*Matthew 5:13-16*

*II Corinthians 8 and 9*

##### II.

#### The Church Is Christ's Mission to the Whole World

WHEREAS, God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life; and

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WHEREAS, Christ has sent His disciples out into all the world, saying: "Go ye and make disciples of all nations"; therefore be it

*Resolved*, That we affirm that the church is Christ's mission to the whole world. Christians will approach men of other faiths in humility and love. They joyfully acknowledge that God is active in the lives of all men through His continued creative and providential concern, through the Law written in their hearts, and through God's revelation of Himself in creation and nature. Christians affirm a common humanity with all men. They confess a common sinfulness. They rejoice over a universal redemption won for all in Jesus Christ; and be it further

*Resolved*, That we reconsecrate ourselves with everything we are and have to the task of witnessing Christ in deed and word to all the world, thankfully making full use also of the communication tools which God is offering to the church through science and technology for this age of the population explosion; and be it further

*Resolved*, That in the face of the great unfinished task we rejoice over all faithful Christian efforts to witness Christ to all the world; and be it finally

*Resolved*, That we recognize that our sister mission churches in other lands have been placed by God into other circumstances and are subservient not to us but to the Lord, who makes His church His mission to the whole world.

*Ephesians 1:11-23*

*Matthew 28:18-20*

*Romans 10:8-17*

*Colossians 1:3-29*

*Philippians 1:12-19*

### III.

#### **The Church Is Christ's Mission to the Church**

WHEREAS, Every Christian by virtue of the saving faith which the Holy Spirit creates in his heart is bound to His Lord and enters into a real and living unity with every other member of Christ's holy body, the church; and

WHEREAS, The same Word of Christ that bids Christians to go and teach all nations also instructs them to teach their fellow Christians all things whatsoever Christ has commanded them; therefore be it

*Resolved*, That we affirm that the church is Christ's mission to the church. In obedience to the church's Head and in sanctified loyalty to his congregation and his church body, a Christian will be ready with good conscience both to witness and to listen to all Christians. Like the Bereans, the Christian will search the Scriptures to test the truth of what he hears and what he says; and be it further

*Resolved*, That we affirm as Lutheran Christians that the Evangelical Lutheran Church is chiefly a confessional movement within the total body of

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separation. The Lutheran Christian uses the Lutheran Confessions for the primary purpose for which they were framed: to confess Christ and His Gospel boldly and lovingly to all Christians. While the Confessions seek to repel all attacks against the Gospel, they are not intended to be a kind of Berlin wall to stop communication with other Christians; and be it further

*Resolved*, That we affirm that by virtue of our unity with other Christians in the body of Christ, we should work together when it will edify Christ's body and advance His mission, refusing cooperation, however, on such occasions when it would deny God's Word; and be it finally

*Resolved*, That we affirm that because the church is Christ's mission to the church, Christians should speak the Word of God to one another as they nurture, edify, and educate one another for Christian faith and life. Therefore as a Synod we value our strong tradition of Christian education and seek to extend it throughout life, for laity and clergy. Far from employing agencies of Christian education primarily in our own institutional self-interest, we will endeavor to make them ever more effective tools in equipping God's people for His mission.

*John 17:1-26*

*Ephesians 4:1-16*

*1 Corinthians 12:1-31*

*1 John 4:1-21*

*1 Peter 4:7-11*

## IV.

**The Church Is Christ's Mission to the Whole Society**

WHEREAS, Jesus Christ is Lord of all the world and in every area of life; and

WHEREAS, The Christian recognizes no area of life that may be termed "secular" in the sense that it is removed from the lordship of Jesus Christ, though it may not be under the control of the institutional church; and

WHEREAS, The Christian does God's work in the world through various vocations in the home, church, and state as distinguished by Dr. Martin Luther; therefore be it

*Resolved*, That we affirm that the church is Christ's mission to the whole society; and be it further

*Resolved*, That we recognize the difficulty of understanding in every instance whether God desires Christians to act corporately or individually or both in His mission to the whole society; they will, however, seek His will through prayer and mutual study; and be it further

*Resolved*, That Christians be exhorted to serve God in every honest occupation, recognizing that all of life is the arena of a Christian's ministry to God and man; and be it further

*Resolved*, That Christians be encouraged to seek the peace of the city, as God commands, working together with their fellow citizens of the nation and of the

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*Resolved*, That Christians be encouraged as they attempt, under the judgment and forgiveness of God, to discover and further His good purposes in every area of life, to extend justice, social acceptance, and a full share in God's bounty to all people who are discriminated against and oppressed by reason of race, class, creed, or other unwarranted distinctions. Christians recognize that all their fellowmen come from the Father's creating hand and that His Son's nail-pierced hands reach out in love to all of them.

*James 2:1-17*

*Colossians 3:8-17*

*1 Peter 2:11-17*

*Romans 15:1-13*

*Romans 12:1-21*

## V.

**The Church Is Christ's Mission to the Whole Man**

WHEREAS, The Scriptures teach us that God's love reaches out to the whole man, for God the Father lovingly creates and preserves man; the Son redeemed him in body, soul, and mind; the Holy Spirit brings him to faith and moves him to use body, soul, and mind in God's great mission; and

WHEREAS, Our Lord became a man and ministered to the needs of the whole man, forgiving sins, healing the sick, feeding the hungry, and even providing wine for a marriage feast; and

WHEREAS, Our Lord at His return will solemnly report whether or not we fed, clothed, and visited Him in the least of His hungry, naked, and forsaken brethren; therefore be it

Resolved, That we affirm that the church is God's mission to the whole man. Wherever a Christian as God's witness encounters the man to whom God sends him, he meets someone whose body, soul, and mind are related in one totality. Therefore Christians, individually and corporately, prayerfully seek to serve the needs of the total man. Christians bring the Good News of the living Christ to dying men. They bring men instruction in all useful knowledge. They help and befriend their neighbor on our small planet in every bodily need. They help their neighbor to improve and protect his property and business by bringing him economic help and enabling him to earn his daily bread in dignity and self-respect. Christians minister to the needs of the whole man, not because they have forgotten the witness of the Gospel but because they remember it. They know that the demonstration of their faith in Christ adds power to its proclamation.

*Matthew 8:1-17*

*Matthew 25:31-46*

*Luke 16:19-31*

*Hebrews 13:1-21*



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## VI.

**The Whole Church Is Christ's Mission**

WHEREAS, Every Christian is commissioned a missionary through baptism, for through the selfsame water and Word the Holy Spirit makes us both God's children and His witnesses to the world when He says: "Go ye and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you"; and

WHEREAS, All who are baptized into Christ are baptized into His death and resurrection, into His mission, and into His body; therefore be it

*Resolved*, That we affirm that the whole church is Christ's mission. Therefore we deplore anything that seeks to divide what God has joined together. We deplore the clericalism that views a congregation primarily as God's instrument to sustain the ordained ministry, thus smothering the diverse gifts of the Holy Spirit to His people. Equally we deplore the laicism that chafes under the shepherding by which a loving God seeks to equip His children for His mission. We deplore the racism which refuses to repent of its sin and denies the unity of all Christians in Christ and His mission. We deplore the desecration of Christianity by the multiplication of sects as though the Gospel were a religion of human design instead of God's outreach after men in the giving of Himself. The divisions in the institutional church are as real as the unity in Christ's body which joins all Christians together. We deplore the wars and political struggles that set Christians and other people in one nation against those in another. We recognize that the Christian lives in the tension between his own imperfect understanding of God's truth and his knowledge that in spite of errors and divisions he is joined together in Christ's body with all who truly believe in its Head. The Christian lives in the tension between Christ's lordship, which is perfect, and his own discipleship, which is not. The Christian rejoices over the existence of every fellow believer in Christ his Savior, because thereby Christ is preached and His mission is implemented, for the whole church is Christ's mission.

*1 Corinthians 1:10-31*

*Hebrews 11:1-39*

*James 3:1-18*

*Ephesians 2:1-22*

*Romans 14:1-23*

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