

“The Presuppositions Guiding the 2007 LC-MS Convention”

“One must say: Churches that indeed teach false doctrine but have not sworn to uphold pure doctrine are not as bad [as those who have sworn to uphold pure doctrine but do not do so]. They are better because the people are not so deceived by them. So when a church says: ‘Here Lutheran doctrine is doctrina publica!’ and you don’t hear it proclaimed, that church is a miserable sect, regardless of what it claims to be” (C.F.W. Walther, Duties of an Evangelical Lutheran Synod, Essays for the Church, Vol. 2, p.20).

Introduction

The preliminary minutes of each day’s convention business are already available and the official “Convention Proceedings 2007” should be arriving in the mail. The decisions of the 2007 Lutheran Church Missouri Synod(LC-MS) Convention are already being put into action—“Kieschnick outlines priorities for new triennium” (July 31, 2007, LCMSNews, No. 54). Pastors and congregations are beginning to assess whether the public profession of the LCMS, as determined by the Synod in convention, is in agreement with the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions, and finally whether that public profession, if correct, is actually being practiced by examining the actual teaching from her member’s pulpits, divine services, publications, and the proclamations of Synodical leaders.

With this paper, I will not attempt to prove the heterodoxy of the LC-MS, nor will I press the matter that these errors are not simply a casual intrusion, but are entrenched and are not being removed. Papers and overtures showing those things have already been written by myself and others. Having been in attendance in Houston as an observer, I have already given my final report¹ to Trinity Lutheran Church (Herrin, IL) on July 22, 2007. In response, my congregation and I resigned from the LC-MS on August 19, 2007. This paper is being given at a Theological Colloquium of which many are not members of the LC-MS, are independent, or are members of the Evangelical Diocese of North America (ELDoNA). In this paper, I will seek to provide the presuppositions, theological or not, which guided the actions of the 2007 LC-MS Convention.

Presupposition #1. *Ablaze!* is Job One

Although most delegates find it a daunting task just to read the 371 submitted overtures or even the 97 floor-committee proposed resolutions, nevertheless the reports included in the Convention Workbook(CW) of the LC-MS Convention can tell us about the thinking or presuppositions behind the proposed resolutions. A cursory reading of the reports and resolutions will lead you to realize that *Ablaze!* (which is sometimes simply synonymously called “mission”) is easily the most important ideology behind the actions of the LC-MS Convention.

On Saturday, Sep. 8, 2001 and then again in Part I of his 2007 President’s Report, President Kieschnick said, “Let it be known, with no equivocation or uncertainty of any kind, that accomplishing the mission of the church to disciple and teach the nations of the world will be Job One in this administration. We do not have the luxury, even if we wanted to, of ‘fiddling while Rome is burning’” (CW, p.3). The August 2002, *Jesus First* publication gives it’s second with an article entitled, “Let’s keep focused on the main thing.”²

I realize that the official *Ablaze!* movement was dreamed up in 2002 by LCMS World Mission and approved at the 2004 Convention, and thus President Kieschnick in 2001 was not directly referring to *Ablaze!*. However, the theological ideas behind *Ablaze!* were already present.³ Dr. Daniel Mattson alludes to this in the Fall 2005, *Issues in Christian Education*, published by Concordia, Seward. This issue, boldly entitled “*Ablaze!*: Origins, Theology, Structure, and Impact,” has become the after-the-fact rationalization and justification for the *Ablaze!* initiative.

Dr. Mattson writes, “Especially significant here is President Gerald Kieschnick’s involvement in the *Ablaze!* movement. In his inaugural address, before he (or anyone else) was even aware that LCMS World Mission was beginning to consider the challenge of reaching 100 million uncommitted and unbelieving people, he urged the LCMS to make the evangelization of the world its first priority. Since that time he has been a tireless, unwavering proponent of the *Ablaze!*”

initiative, speaking with passion to district conventions and in countless other settings of the need for Lutheran Christians to be intentionally involved in what he describes as the 'Critical Event': the sharing of the Good News of Jesus with an unreached or uncommitted person to the extent that it provokes a response from the person addressed."⁴

As seen in the reports and overtures of the 2007 Convention, you will find that *Ablaze!* is explicitly referenced as the justification and reason for many actions. The Report of the Blue Ribbon Task Force for Funding the Mission, says,

"This task force wished to build our recommendations around what we believe this great church body desires, that is: To make know the love of Christ to all (lost and saved) while it is day, before the night comes. We build this report around the other resolutions of the 2004 synodical convention that embraced the goal of the *Ablaze!* movement to reach 100,000,000 souls by the year 2017" (CW, p.20).

Quite obviously, the LCMS World Mission report is completely *Ablaze!* (CW, p.39-45). The Lutheran Hour Ministries report declares they are "an active *Ablaze!* participant..."(CW, p.48). The Board for District and Congregational Services states, "In addition, the Board for District and Congregational Services was mindful of the *Ablaze!* initiative in its work, and especially in grant-related projects" (CW, p.49). The list goes on.

Following the Convention, the President said that at the top of his list of priorities is "keeping the main thing the main thing."⁵ Kieschnick said he wants to ensure that "we as a church understand that our focus is mission..." If we want to understand the present LC-MS (and the actions of the 2007 LCMS Convention) and then desire not to be carried about with every *Ablaze!* wind of doctrine, we need to understand what *Ablaze!* is.

Presupposition #2. *Ablaze!* is Mission

Speaking of *Ablaze!*, the 2007 LCMS World Mission report(CW, p.39-45) said,

"This worldwide Lutheran mission movement, empowered by the Holy Spirit, began as a vision of LCMS World Mission in 2002 and was adopted and affirmed by the 2004 Synod convention, 29 international partner churches, and by individual districts, congregations, mission societies, and other groups and individuals who have collectively pledged their commitment and personal involvement toward reaching the goals of the movement."

Although it sounds impressive, it really doesn't tell you much. A bunch of people have agreed to work toward reaching the goals of the movement. So what are the goals?⁶ Dr. Robert Scudieri, explains that, first and foremost, "*Ablaze!* is an effort to begin a global mission movement among confessional Lutherans, resulting in the sharing of the Gospel with 100 million people by the 500th anniversary of the Reformation."⁷ Later on he explains that goal saying,

"One of the major themes of *Ablaze!* is taken from 1 Peter 2:9, 'But you are a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, *that you may declare the praises* of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.' This was not spoken only to pastors. Every Christian is not only authorized but also required, as a result of whom they are, to share the Good News of God's love with friends, co-workers and neighbors. Pastors are authorized for public ministry of the Word; this cannot preclude the community of all the baptized telling the story of God's love to those around them in non-public settings."

Ablaze!'s main goal is nothing other than the duty of every Christian to "declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light," taken from 1 Peter 2:9. To put it even more succinctly: for baptized believers "to share the Gospel." Is there anything wrong with believers "sharing the Gospel," or "witnessing to people?" No. No one denies that every baptized Christian has the general call to proclaim the Gospel of God(1 Pet 2:9, Rom 10:9, Eph 5:19, etc.). The problem with *Ablaze!* is that you can't build the official missiology(the theology of missions) of the LC-MS upon one task which has been given to the priesthood of all believers.

In the past, real Lutheran mission was concerned that non-Christians might obtain the forgiveness of sins, righteousness before God, and faith in Christ.⁸ The "goal"(objective) of the church was to make disciples, that is, "holy believers and sheep who hear the voice of their Shepherd."⁹ "Sharing the Gospel" is not a goal, but one of the means God has provided to bring non-Christians to Christ and His church. Furthermore, the task of lay "witnessing" was seen within the larger concern of "making disciples by baptizing and teaching." Not only did the work of the priesthood flow out of the Divine Service of Word

and Sacraments, but their vocational work drew people back to those same Word and Sacraments, served up by the ministers in the Pastoral Office.¹⁰

Ablaze! is not really about Christ's mission. Christ's mission makes disciples by baptizing and teaching¹¹, so that these disciples continue "steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers."¹² *Ablaze!* is about getting the individual believer to do one of his priestly tasks, that is, "sharing the Gospel." What about the other tasks of the priesthood of all believers? Priests are to "admonish one another" (Col 3:16), and "reprove the unfruitful works of darkness" (Eph 5:11), and "comfort one another" (1 Ths 4:18), and "bring up their children in the training and instruction of the Lord" (Eph 6:4). Do we want the LCMS World Mission to build its theology of mission around only one task of the priesthood, so that it "drives every move of the organization?"¹³ Furthermore, is it the mission of the church to get the baptized to do their vocation of "declaring God's praises?"

Presupposition #3. The people need a Vision(*Ablaze!*)

Goals are fine. Impressive goals (which include the words "100 million") are even better, I guess. How will all of these *Ablaze!* people reach these *Ablaze!* goals? LCMS World Mission responds, "A strong emphasis has been placed on witnessing to "unreached" or "uncommitted" people—those who are not already believers in Jesus Christ." Alright, that's the same thing: "Sharing the Gospel" is "witnessing." Much of the *Ablaze!* materials repeat that line again and again, no matter what question is asked. But if you are diligent you will get some answers. So we ask again, "What are the means and methods used to accomplish this task?" Here is the answer:

"Ablaze! is not a program or a campaign. It began as a mission vision with the hope of starting a mission movement. Each participating congregation, group, mission society, partner church, individual, etc. is challenged to pray about its own particular situation and the part of the mission endeavor it can impact and to design its own strategy to contribute to reaching 100 million people. LCMS World Mission is asking the church to develop mission models that work and can be shared with others. *Ablaze!* is not an answer...it's an invitation!"¹⁴

Technically, *Ablaze!* does not have a stated means or method of reaching their goals. *Ablaze!* is only about setting goals. *Ablaze!* is about holding up the vision, for which people are to strive. Those who agree to pursue these goals, determine their own means or methods. "*Ablaze!* is not an answer...it's an invitation!"¹⁵ Rather than an LCMS World Mission which acts on behalf of and with congregations in order to send called and ordained missionaries to provide the Gospel and the sacraments¹⁶, now the LCMS World Mission sees its job as giving others a vision. What this means is that LCMS World Mission has a job for you, the individual believer, to do.

Presupposition #4. *Ablaze!* has ways of getting you to work.

Although the bare *Ablaze!* initiative may be a goal without means and methods, we need to examine the materials ("mission models that work and can be shared with others,"¹⁷) which are being produced by LCMS World Mission and other *Ablaze!* groups.¹⁸ In practice, I have found that the means and methods *Ablaze!* employs look not-so-surprisingly like the means and methods of the Church Growth Movement (CGM). This statement may need some explanation.

The CGM was about using human methods in order to bring people into the church. After finding out the felt needs of the non-Christian, the CGM sought to provide for those needs. Everything which the church did needed to be changed in order to meet those needs. The liturgy and liturgical music was chucked because the "seeker" wanted contemporary worship. Authoritative doctrinal teaching by the pastor was replaced with less intimidating lay-led studies on topics. Individual prayer is preferred over the impersonal and corporate church's prayer offices. Small cell groups provided for relational and social needs. The pastor is only one person. Instead of the pastor being a servant of the Word, giving out the gifts, the CGM turned the pastor into someone who would "equip the saints for ministry."¹⁹ The pastor's job was casting a vision so that others can pick up the task. Doesn't this sound just like the LCMS World Mission in Presupposition #2 above? In other words, the pastor has a job for you.

If you take a brief look at the materials being produced to assist with *Ablaze!*, you will consistently find contemporary worship, lay-led small group Bible studies, vision-casting pastors, and individual prayer. While the CGM mistakenly thought that they could make the church grow by applying human methods, *Ablaze!* has had no such delusion. Dr. Scudieri said, "One of the criticisms we have heard is that no goals were set for baptisms or confirmations or worship attendance. However, as Lutherans we understood this to be something only the Holy Spirit could determine—"The Spirit blows where it will."²⁰ Since *Ablaze!*

proponents learned that you can't make God work, they decided to start a movement to make God's people work. *Ablaze!* set out to retool the church. Everything must be reinterpreted according to *Ablaze!*'s limited definition of mission.

Presupposition #5. The LC-MS can't be *Ablaze!* without change.

There is a reason that this is not your grandfather's church. In order to accomplish a new limited definition of mission, called *Ablaze!*, the LC-MS needs to change. Listen to the voices for change:

--Dr. Scudieri said, "Could a culture shift occur that would turn LCMS churches outward, to become more passionate about bringing the Gospel to those without faith in Jesus?"²¹

--The 2007 Report of the Blue Ribbon Task Force for Funding the Mission said, "This report believes that form follows function and money follows mission. We want the function of this report to reflect the mission statement of this church" (CW, p.20).

--The 2007 Report of LCMS World Mission said, "LCMS World Mission has set a goal of assisting 2,000 LCMS congregations in mission revitalization." (Convention Workbook, p.39) See 2007 Res. 1-01, "To Support Revitalization of LCMS Congregations."

--The 2007 Report of the Blue Ribbon Task Force on Synodical Structure and Governance said, "President Kieschnick's June 10, 2005, letter to the newly appointed Task Force members gave the following charge: 'I am asking the task force to do a thorough, zero-based assessment of the entirety of the system of governance and organizational structure of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and to make recommendations' to the Synod" (CW, p.29). By a 70.9% vote, delegates passed 2007 Substitute Resolution 8-07, which said that the delegates stand ready to serve if the Synodical President and two-thirds of the District Presidents decide that a special convention is needed after District Conventions are completed in 2009. At a cost of \$2.5 million, this 2009 Special Convention is going to respond to the work of the current Blue Ribbon Task Force on Synod Structure and Governance just mentioned above.

If you want to know how much change is envisioned, examine page 30 of the Convention Workbook in which the provisional draft changes, don't get past the very first words of the Preamble and Article II—which is the Confessional article of our Synod!—without proposing changes. By way of example, the present two reasons for forming a Synodical Union are the example of the apostolic church (Acts 15:1-31) and the use of the "gifts" of the whole body of Christ, including the pastoral office and the priesthood of believers as found in 1 Corinthians 12:4-31. The proposed three reasons for the existence of a Synodical Union are: "1. To participate together in God's mission... 2. To work together in proclaiming the Gospel message, in encouraging and urging the Gospel mission... 3. To make effective use of the different gifts in the Body of Christ for the purpose of serving one another in God's mission..." It is the ideology of *Ablaze!* (sometimes called, "God's Mission") which will cause these changes.

Presupposition #6. *Ablaze!* makes Purpose-Driven²² Mission Outposts

In his President's Report, part I, Kieschnick speaks about 2004 Res. 1-02, "To Promote 'Mission Outpost' Attitude," saying, "I ... have encouraged all congregations, schools and entities to see themselves as mission outposts and their communities as mission fields." Dr. Matteson says, "Perhaps the most significant goal of all was the convention's resolution that every LCMS congregation and institution should grow in its understanding of itself as a mission outpost, as a community of believers in the midst of a wilderness of unbelief, prepared to go out into that wilderness to share the life-giving Good News of Jesus (2004 Resolution 1-02)." In the Southern Illinois District, the District President does not see anything terribly wrong with *Ablaze!* (as he allows that individuals, congregations, and entities may use it), nevertheless he has refused to embrace it in his District, because he thinks it would become divisive due to President Kieschnick's involvement. Therefore, the Southern Illinois District President determined to do *Ablaze!* in substance within his district, but without the name *Ablaze!*. Thus he used the term, "Mission Outposts." The theme of the 2006 Southern Illinois District Convention was, "Jesus Gives Life at 100+ Mission Outposts."

Lutherans do not define the church as—that is, endeavor to see themselves as—"mission outposts." A mission outpost is a training camp to go do 1 Peter 2:9. The church is not a work-out center to train Christians to do sanctification. The church is centered in justification, the forgiveness of sins for rotten sinners. Through law and Gospel the church is a distribution center for the gift of faith in Christ, as it says in Augsburg Confession Article V, "to obtain such faith God instituted the office of the ministry, that is, provided the Gospel and the sacraments." Furthermore, we cannot confuse the distinction between the mission of the Church and the vocation of the believer, which is the sanctified life. We cannot collapse the

mission of the Church into sanctification and certainly not into one duty of the priesthood as found in 1 Peter 2:9.

The members of Christ endeavor to see themselves as “holy believers and sheep who hear the voice of their Shepherd.”²³ No, it’s stronger than that. The church’s mission is to baptize and teach. The church through her pastors, proclaim the pure Word and distribute the sacraments according to Christ’s institution. The individual member of the church believes that he is a child of God, a saint, a believer, a forgiven sinner. The person believes it, because God said he was such in the promise made to him in his baptism, in the words of institution by which Christ gives us His Body and Blood, by the word of the called and ordained servant divinely called by Christ through the congregation. That member of Christ does go out into his vocation and “declare the praises of Him who called him out of darkness into His marvelous light.” However, there is a great difference in the means used for bringing forth the 1 Peter 2:9 work of sanctification.

Some will respond and say that we need to emphasize this 1 Peter 2:9 work of sanctification and that the (Lutheran) approach I put forth in this paper is unconcerned with “sharing the Gospel.” I couldn’t disagree more completely. Instead of justification by grace through faith being the central article, *Ablaze!* desires to build the Synod around the Lord’s command for all believers to share the Good News. This change is a serious error that replaces justification with sanctification. To be sure, the message of Christ’s forgiveness is not completely absent from this new *Ablaze!* ideology. However, the message of forgiveness is no longer the comforting announcement of Gospel for the sinner, but a message, which the worker must share (law). This “mission outpost” idea is none other than the Methodist emphasis on the Christian life and sanctification. By keeping the church’s mission according to Christ’s mission, justification will create and strengthen faith so that the priesthood will be active in their vocation, including “sharing the Gospel.”

Now I realize that there are some, like the Southern Illinois District President, who are trying to baptize the “mission outpost” ideology of *Ablaze!*. Look closely how he adds the phrase, “Jesus Gives Life at” before the words, “100+ Mission Outposts.” On paper it does change the focus from “a missionary training camp” to “the church as a dispenser of God’s gifts.” However, the practical outcome of this is that simple lay people are confused. (I pause and ask, “When I read the three ‘mission outpost’ statements above, how many of you saw any difference?”) I would liken it to calling Lord’s Supper, an altar call. Yes, you could make a “cute” theological point of it, but everyone knows what a Baptist altar call is. And if there were some Lutherans going around doing Baptist altar calls, you surely wouldn’t pick up that language, lest others think you approved of their false teaching. For the sake of God’s people, we need to speak clearly.

Presupposition #7 *Ablaze!* revitalizes your congregation with Contemporary Worship

The means and methods of *Ablaze!* are forcing radical changes in the congregations of those who participate in *Ablaze!* The congregation which I serve, Trinity Lutheran Church (Herrin, IL), submitted an overture to address Contemporary Worship and it was rejected by the Synodical President as being “materially in error,” and thus was not printed in the 2007 Convention Workbook. The third paragraph of the President’s letter says,

“In the fifth whereas, the statement, ‘it is no secret that our President has been heavily promoting the use of contemporary worship in our Synod from within his *Ablaze!* program,’ is a misrepresentation of truth as the president has not ‘been heavily promoting the use of contemporary worship.’ It is further a misstatement to refer to *Ablaze!* as ‘his program.’ *Ablaze!* is a proposal stemming from LCMS World Mission and its goals were adopted for action by the Synod in convention.”

The paragraph is technically correct. *Ablaze!* is “a vision of LCMS World Mission in 2002 and was adopted and affirmed by the 2004 Synod convention” (CW, p.39). However, this so-called global movement called *Ablaze!* has many tentacles.

- Fan into Flame*, the LC-MS effort to raise money \$100 million to support the mission efforts of *Ablaze!*.
- Groups Ablaze!*, to support congregation by small group resources, studies and training.
- Friendship Ablaze!*, which includes a contemporary worship friendship Sunday, small group studies and other resources.
- 50 days Ablaze! Outreach Journey*, which is a purpose-driven program which includes a contemporary worship service and small group studies.

--*Ablaze! Igniting a Vision*, which includes a small group study, *God's Grace... Our Response*, a seven series video study on the Seven Mission Responses—Learn, Pray, Give, Tell, Send, Go, and Celebrate—developed by LCMS World Mission.

On the one hand these programs above are not technically *Ablaze!*, because *Ablaze!* is a movement. On the other hand, *Ablaze!* takes credit for inspiring them.

So has the Synodical President been heavily promoting Contemporary Worship from within his *Ablaze!* Program? Let's connect the dots.

1. From an LC-MS web page on the Office of the President, it says, "The President's office is undertaking an initiative, "One Mission Ablaze: Igniting Congregations," to challenge the congregations of the Synod to reach more people with the Gospel message."²⁴
2. In President Kieschnick's Letter to Pastors (Aug 1, 2005) he says, "These Igniter Events will focus on active mission mobilization and increasing weekly worship attendance.... To learn more about these exciting gatherings and to register online, go to www.centerforusmissions.org and click on 'ABLAZE! Igniting Congregations Events.'"
3. The web site for The Center for U.S. Missions²⁵, which hosts these igniter events, says, "Four Igniting Congregations events, {and} regional mission and ministry team gatherings²⁶, are part of LCMS President Gerald B. Kieschnick's *Ablaze!*--Igniting Congregations initiative."

The Center for U.S. Missions²⁷ is a partnership between LCMS World Mission, Concordia University Irvine, and the North American Mission Executives of the LCMS, and is listed as needing funding of \$180,000/year for LCMS World Mission. I quote from their web page site,

"With the addition of National Worship Consultant Rev. Michael Zehnder to our staff in August 2006, the Center now offers a growing number of services, resources and seminars to help congregations and other ministry bodies apply worship diversity to congregation renewal which in turn, fuels mission outreach. (My Note: Let me emphasize what the *Ablaze!* ideology is-- Contemporary Worship renews congregations and that increases mission outreach. I could stop the quote right here, but there is more.)

Offerings include:

- Worship Consultations regarding worship health, personnel searches, expanding current practices to a desired outcome, etc.
- Worship Resources - worship planning tools, worship flow tools, song commendations and analysis, links to useful external sites, orders of worship, etc.
- Worship Seminars - to help grow congregations, circuits, and districts in areas of worship diversity, etc.

In 2004, Lutheran Church Missouri Synod Convention Resolution 2-04 affirmed respect for diversity in worship practices, and encouraged pastors, musicians and worship leaders to exercise this freedom responsibly and biblically. This new ministry of the Center for United States Missions has been created to assist congregations and ministries navigate the exploration of diverse worship practices."

In the end, it wasn't actually *Ablaze!*, which belongs to LCMS World Mission. It was *One Mission Ablaze!: Igniting Congregations*, a initiative from the President's Office. And Pres. Kieschnick wasn't heavily promoting it, it was the Center of U.S. Mission, who hosted and organized his initiative, which was heavily promoting contemporary worship as one of the ways to increase mission. Not unlike offshore partnerships for Enron, which kept certain transactions off the books and concealed the true financial condition to shareholders, these actions are unbecoming of church leaders.

The liturgy of the Divine Service, led by the servant of the Word giving out the gifts and God's royal priesthood receiving the gifts with thanksgiving and praise, was too balanced for the ideology of *Ablaze!*. In *Ablaze!* congregations, Contemporary worship has replaced the liturgy of the Divine Service. Each individual priest (layman or laywoman) has to become personally involved in Sunday worship by using or displaying their talents. Contemporary worship is used to excite the troops and motivate them to share the Gospel. Instead of the Divine Service being the instrument for delivering the law to point out sins and deliver the comforting Gospel, Contemporary worship is used as a bully pulpit to whip the troops into shape. Lay readers, lay addresses ("Mission minutes"), lay-led bands and singers, lay dramas replacing sermons, lay testimonials, etc. have become the norm. Whether "Friendship *Ablaze!*" or the other *Ablaze!* "models that work," contemporary worship is one of the marks of *Ablaze!*.

Presupposition #8 *Ablaze!* makes the Pastor an enabler

With *Ablaze!*, the integral connection between the divine office of the Pastoral Ministry, through which God builds up His church²⁸ on the foundations of the apostles and prophets²⁹ and the resulting church, called the priesthood of all believers, who declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light, is separated. Worse than that, the pastor and the laity are pitted against each other.

According to *Ablaze!*, the office of pastor is now seen as oppressive, stifling, and impeding the spread of Christianity. It is thought that we need to return to the “so-called” ancient and freeing “witnessing” and “sharing of the Gospel,” by the non-professional laity. Dr. Scudieri tells us, “Laity on the Board for Missions understood the challenge. They also believed that a movement in the LCMS to bring missions to a new height would have to be spurred on by laity.”³⁰ The “everyone’s a minister” of the Church Growth Movement is now “...every Christian is, by baptism, a missionary, a ‘sent one.’”³¹ It doesn’t matter that the LCMS is supporting fewer missionaries (a term formerly reserved for a called and ordained minister), because we have many more laity who are serving as “missionaries” when they teach English as a second language, build a home, or lead a lay Bible study in a foreign country during a two-week missionary trip. Instead of working to establish congregations to support the Office of Word and Sacrament, we simply “plant churches” by lay witnessing and piously dub them “communities of faith,” which I assume is, groups of laity without pastors.

Presupposition #9 *Ablaze!* uses Redirection

The Blue Ribbon Task Force for Funding the Mission was directed by the 2004 Synodical Convention to study, discuss, and make recommendations for how the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS) can best fund the Synod’s work, which they define as the Synod’s Mission Statement. In this report to the 2007 Convention it acknowledges that “division in our Synod and the resultant mistrust” (Convention Workbook, p.20) is a roadblock to raising funds and working together. President Kieschnick in Convention Report, Part 1 identifies, “Close Communion, Church and Ministry, Traditional and Contemporary Worship, Participation in Events or Services with Other Christians or Non-Christians” as “still matters of concern among us in our Synod today” (CW, p.5).

In the June/July *Lutheran Witness* article on those nominated for Synodical President, four of the five candidates speak of this division. John Wohlrabe says, “Our Synod is divided over doctrine and practice.” Wallace Schulz says, “Christ’s Church has always struggled to remove discord and division.” Daniel Preus says, “We seem to be more divided over our doctrine and practice than we have ever been.” Although Gerald Kieschnick sees Mission as the most pressing issue facing the LCMS, he does admit that the “Integration of doctrine and practice” is one of the other issues that need to be addressed. Only William Diekelman fails to mention it. Overall, the voices seem to agree that “division” is a problem in the LCMS.

We need to find out just exactly what this “division” is. 2007 Resolution 4-01A, “To Plan Summit to Restore Harmony,” which passed with 85.7% support, clearly says, “personal opinions and differences regarding practical application of clearly stated doctrines have made for continued discord.” In other words, the problem is not that the LCMS is teaching false teachings or practicing false practices, it is personal opinions and differences that are dividing our Synod. In theological terms we would call this schism. A schism is an unnecessary division among Christians for non-Scriptural reasons.

Returning to the *Lutheran Witness* report we see that though all of the candidates use the phrase “doctrine and practice” to describe our “division,” they are not all speaking about the same thing. Some of them are speaking about the undisciplined false teaching and false practices of many congregations and Synodical entities. While others, like President Kieschnick, are not referring to false doctrine or false practice at all. He goes on to say, “Integration of doctrine and practice, acknowledging our doctrinal solidarity while addressing any disagreements over how to put doctrine into practice in a culture largely indifferent or hostile toward Christianity.” President Kieschnick sees our division as refusing to work together over non-essentials (legitimate and perfectly allowable disagreements on application). The Task Force for Funding the Mission cites a 1981 CTCR document which says, “It should be recognized that individuals equally committed to the scriptural principles of fellowship might not always come to identical conclusions regarding specific ways of proceeding in administering pastoral care in such exceptional cases.” According to President Kieschnick, the problem with our doctrine and practice is that we don’t understand that despite the LC-MS having doctrinal unity, we quibble over differing, but perfectly acceptable divergent practices.

When I ask the question, “What are we going to do about it—that is, the division?” The solution will be different depending on how you define “division.” Our congregation has an early childhood learning

center attached. One of the methods used to deal with conflict is called, “redirection.” If two children are fighting over one toy, you might redirect the attention of one of the children to another toy. Redirection doesn’t actually deal with the problem, i.e. selfishness, but it does often work to provide some peace for a while. According to Task Force Recommendation #3, redirection is the solution. We must “become more united around the Great Commission of our Lord.”

“Amidst the many squabbles (perhaps too soft a word) that divert our energies as a Synod (and have for the last 30 years) our task force believes THE major challenge that we all agree is important enough for us all to “hang together” on is reaching the lost with the treasure of the Gospel that has been preserved among us in all of its truth and purity. The goals of the *Ablaze!* movement can be the unifying principle that will strengthen our funding motivation throughout the Synod” (CW, p.23).

If the divisions are only petty squabbling over equally valid methods, then perhaps we need to redirect our attention to something more important—witnessing about Jesus Christ, according to 1 Peter 2—then we will forget about our petty doctrinal disagreements.

Presupposition #10 The Unity of *Ablaze!* is Agreed Diversity

According to *Ablaze!*, these disagreements over practical applications may not be a bad thing, but a good thing, if only we can all work together under the *Ablaze!* banner. The report of the Blue Ribbon Task Force for Funding the Mission sees diversity-working-together as the restoration of harmony. They say,

“This task force believes the Council of Presidents and the Board of Directors are the elected ‘leaders’ of the Synod that should be given the responsibility to initiate a specific plan to clarify for the sake of the whole church a strategy to restore harmony in our Synod. We encourage them to consider bringing together a representative group of respected leaders throughout this church for a summit. At the end of this summit these church leaders should author a unanimously adopted ‘symphony’³² that demonstrates how this great church body can provide a God-pleasing witness of our confession and practice” (CW, p.24).

The Lutheran Confessions speak to the requirement of full agreement in doctrine and practice for there to be fellowship among Christians. Although human traditions need not be the same, Augsburg Confession, article VII, makes it clear that “it is enough(*satis est*) for the true unity of the church to agree concerning the teaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments.” Instead of maintaining that there must be complete agreement in the Gospel and all its articles, this Task Force will let the representative leaders determine how much agreement is necessary. They say,

“Let them deal with current topics to define how narrow or wide is the road we ‘walk together’ (Synod) must be when it comes to worship practice, the role of the laity, close Communion, the role of women, and our interaction with fellow Christians.³³ But let the product of their coming together be to honor the Scriptures (including the Great Commission) and Confessions and dishonor the work of Satan that diverts us from the ‘way of the Lord’” (CW, p.24).

These two sentences just quoted are an example of that “symphony.” The first sentence puts the representative leaders in charge of determining which part of God’s Word is honored and which isn’t. The second sentence declares that we are honoring the Scriptures. Together, they form a symphony of truth and falsehood all united under *Ablaze!*

Presupposition #11 *Ablaze!* is the Result of Years of Disagreement

Dr. Daniel Mattson said, “In nearly every respect , the *Ablaze!* initiative is not new, not something that the LCMS never thought of before.” In this article, Dr. Mattson, cites a 1986 Resolution 3-02 which prompted the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) to write, “A Theological Statement of Mission” in 1991. Dr. Robert Scudieri tells of the importance of the Board for Mission Services initiative, “Blueprint of the 90’s,” which was adopted by the 1992 LCMS Convention. However, these roots have not yet gotten back to the source.

Pr. Klemet Preus in an unpublished paper entitled, “Pietism in Missouri’s Mission: From Mission Affirmations to *Ablaze!*” (Easter 2005) seems to have put his finger on the disease which is causing all kinds of unpleasant symptoms in the Synod. He convincingly connects the 1991 CTCR document, “A Theological Statement of Mission” with “The Mission Affirmations” of 1965. Furthermore, he references a Daystar Mission Conference, entitled, “Renewing the Mission of the LCMS,” held in Chesterfield, Missouri, on January 12, 2004 in which Robert Schmidt, Ed Schroeder, Don Muchow, Tom Zehnder, David Benke and Marie Meyer praised The Mission Affirmations of 1965 on the occasion of their 40th

anniversary. In a speech from that conference, David Benke, who sat on the Blue Ribbon Committee, which produced the *Mission Blueprint for the 90's*, gives first-hand testimony that “This is a legacy that can be granted both to Mickey Kretzmann, and to the President of the LCMS in the 80s through the very early 90s, Ralph Bohlmann³⁴. The intentional movement of the church in mission was always the design and desire.” (Preus, p.18)

Despite the glowing report from Benke, Scudieri, and Mattson, there have been those who opposed this ideology under whatever name it appeared over the years. On page 12, of the Fall 2005, *Issues in Christian Education*, beginning a section entitled, “Theological Issues,” Dr. Scudieri admits that for some time the LC-MS has not been in complete agreement on the present official LC-MS missiology. He says,

“In my opinion, *Ablaze!* provides us with the opportunity to discuss topics that have been in disagreement, at least in ‘confusion,’ in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. This is a great moment to take time and talk to each other, in love, about issues where there has been disagreement.”³⁵

In order to respond to *Ablaze!* opposition, the LC-MS Web site³⁶ asks FAQ #4,

Q: It seems to me that *Ablaze!* simply is about telling others the Good News of Jesus, but I hear that some people say there’s something theologically wrong with it. Is *Ablaze!* theologically sound?

A: Four theological leaders in the Missouri Synod, including the presidents of the Synod’s two seminaries, say they find nothing in the theology of the *Ablaze!* initiative to be inconsistent with Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions.... ‘I am very happy to see this statement get wider distribution than it has to this point, because there still are some opponents of *Ablaze!* making unfounded claims that there are theological concerns regarding this movement,’ said Dr. Robert Roegner, executive director of LCMS World Mission.”

In the Fall 2005, *Issues in Christian Education*, Dr. Scudieri attempted to show that *Ablaze!* continues the work of Martin Luther (p.8). In a letter to Pope Leo, Luther says, “So I published a disputation list and invited only the more learned men to see if perhaps some might wish to debate with me. Behold, this is the fire with which they complain the whole world is *ablaze*” [italics by Scudieri]. According to Scudieri this shows that “For Luther and for *Ablaze!* the main concern was and is to spread the Gospel of God’s free grace, acquired through faith alone, to the whole world.” For some reason, when I think of the Reformation, justification by grace through faith come to mind. The Reformation doesn’t seem to be a fight over whether laymen can witness according to 1 Peter 2:9 or not.

The reward for the most creative proof for *Ablaze!* is when Scudieri takes an old word and gives it a new meaning. The Nicene Creed which confessed the “one, holy, catholic and Apostolic church,” had always assured us that the writing of Christ’s chosen instruments—the Apostles—faithfully recorded the life and teachings of our Savior. Now we are told that “somewhere along the way we lost the ‘missionary’ meaning of ‘apostolic.’” Dr. Scudieri laments saying, “What a difference it would make if in our confession of the creed we would say, ‘We believe in one, holy, catholic and missionary church.’”

Everything must be reinterpreted according to *Ablaze!*’s limited definition of mission. If the *Ablaze!* movement was simply the misguided efforts of uninformed persons, who lack theological training, then we could teach them the truth and show them the way back to pure doctrine and practice. If the *Ablaze!* movement was simply the short-sighted decision of otherwise orthodox teaching and practicing men, then the false teaching would not cause so much damage. However, the evidence shows that even though the italicized word with an exclamation mark—*Ablaze!*—was not used until 2002, the ideology of *Ablaze!* has been making inroads into LC-MS teaching and practice for years. The ideology of *Ablaze!* is the intentional design of those who presently support or are supported by Jesus First and Daystar. Although there were times in the past, when this ideology was slowed or checked by opposition, now the present administration, with the aid of Jesus First and others, has secured a clear majority within the LC-MS. *Ablaze!* is the official missiology of the LCMS until at least 2017. *Ablaze!*, like cancer, is the fast growing movement in the LCMS.

Presupposition #12 The Peace and Unity of *Ablaze!* lovingly trump Pure Doctrine

At the beginning of his presidency, Gerald Kieschnick repeatedly said things like, “The church ‘cannot afford to waste time on incessant internal purification at the expense of the lost in the world.’” His analogy of how some desire to take the beautiful vase of the Gospel out of the case and show it around, but others only want to lock the Gospel up lest it get dirty or chipped, reveals how he would pit pure doctrine against *Ablaze!* ideology.

In 2007, President Kieschnick has learned to speak differently. It may be that he got tired of those pure doctrine quotations from Walther, like, “Is not a farmer properly concerned about good fruit when he is solicitous about getting good seed? Just so a concern about pure doctrine is the proper concern about genuine Christianity and a sincere Christian life.”³⁷ The reports of the 2007 LC-MS Convention do not include any *Ablaze!*-trumps-doctrine quotes. Instead of pure doctrine fighting with *Ablaze!* ideology, the new way of saying things is that we need pure doctrine lovingly communicated.

In Part III of the President’s Report it says,

“...it is imperative that we speak with one voice, in Christian love.

Regarding this necessity, Dr. Walther said at the first convention of the Iowa District in an essay titled ‘Duties of An Evangelical Lutheran Synod’: ‘My dear brothers, let us be on our guard! Satan is sly. Right now we are brothers, living together in peace and love. But Satan will lay for us snares by which he hopes to destroy the sweet, brotherly love we now have in our hearts. We dare never think that it is enough if we just remain united in our faith and our doctrine ... It is frightening what harm can result when members of a church organization do not vigilantly guard their fraternal love.” (Essays for the Church by C.F.W. Walther, Vol. II, p.56, CPH, 1992.)

Again, regarding the vital importance of purity of doctrine communicated in peace and unity, Dr. Walther states: ‘A fifth major duty is that it (the Synod) strive for peace and unity in the truth in its midst.’ He quotes Luther: ‘Where there is no love... doctrine cannot remain pure!’ Then Walther says, ‘We dare never think it is enough if we just remain united in our faith and doctrine.’ (Essays for the Church Vol. II, CPH, 1992)” (Today’s Business, p. 237).

From President Kieschnick’s position—which has become the present public profession of the LC-MS—the Synod has not done anything wrong. By means of *Ablaze!* she is communicating that pure doctrine in love and fulfilling “God’s Mission.” However, “the division in our synod and resultant mistrust” (CW, p.20) are “hindering our effectiveness in outreach to the world.... As was so poignantly noted in the Report of the Blue Ribbon Committee on Funding the Mission, no plan ‘is capable of fully succeeding in an organization that is seriously divided and engaged in issues that divert their energies away from the mission’ (CW, p.23)” (President’s Report, part III, p. 237). That same report says, “Individuals, congregations and districts are making funding decisions partially depending upon ‘who is in control’ at district and Synod levels of authority.” When pastors and people around the synod say that the divisions are only “political,” I know where they got that idea. It would only make sense for Pres. Kieschnick to quote from Walther’s fifth thesis in which he deals with unnecessary disputes in which Walther’s solution is to bear each others burdens and live in peace and unity.

From my perspective, we need to examine the other five theses in Walther’s essay, “Duties of An Evangelical Synod.” By means of the presuppositions of *Ablaze!*, the LC-MS has departed from the truth. When brothers have departed from the truth or conceal their falsehood, Walther does not urge peace and love. Walther quotes Luther who says, “Therefore just don’t talk to me about any love or friendship where one departs from the Word or faith” (“Duties...,” p.24). “When members of a congregation get together with those false teachers, they should not for the sake of politeness keep their opinions to themselves, for that is denial and betrayal” (“Duties...,” p.13). In other words, speak up and reveal the divisions which the false teachings cause. “It would be much better if they would honestly declare: ‘the old Lutheranism of *The Book of Concord* is out of date...’ But they maintain, ‘No, we are the ones who are truly faithful to the Confessions.’ You have to marvel at God’s great patience that allows such men to continue living in peace” (“Duties...,” p.11-12).

-Concerning **communion**: Walther said, “It is, therefore, not enough that such a synod pledge itself to the Symbolic Books without reservation... No, such a synod must then also have fellowship only with church bodies that are faithful to the Confessions” (“Duties...,” p.21). “If a synod were to practice fellowship with other unorthodox [church] bodies, it would shamefully deceive its congregations and commit a horrendous sacrilege” (“Duties...,” p.23).

-Concerning **church**: Walther said, “This is why I hope that this {the Iowa} District will also recognize that its primary duty is to be faithful to the Confessions, just as our fathers have been” (p.9). “The unity of every church body should consist in a unity of doctrine, and that, in ‘all articles’” (“Duties...,” p.22).

-Concerning **ministry**: Walther said, “In other words, no one should be ordained unless he has first been tested and you are satisfied that he intends to and is capable of proclaiming the pure Word of God. A synod is not truly Lutheran if it picks up vagrants on the street, so long as they can mouth a few pious phrases, inducts them into the office of the ministry, perhaps even gives them a license

so they can mess around (*hantieren*) with congregations for awhile to see if they can prove themselves” (“Duties...,” p.14).

Concerning **worship**: Walther said, “It is not enough to have a Bible lying in the vestry, but it must be proclaimed from the pulpit... In the best cases there are still good pledges of allegiance to the Confessions, but very few preach accordingly from the pulpit... One is Reformed, another is Methodist, rationalistic, yes even atheistic...” (“Duties...,” p.19).

[Concerning **the roles of women and men**: (*None found in this essay.*)]

Concerning **outreach to the world**: Walther said, “The only distinction which the Lutheran Church makes between itself and other church bodies is that it has the pure doctrine, the pure confession...” (“Duties...,” p.12). “In other words, it {the synod} should cooperate with every organization of both home and foreign missions for the spreading of the holy Scriptures. That also applies to the establishment and preservation of institutions for the preparation of pastors. In short, a synod is to be a living member of the body of Christ, and together with every other living member of that most sacred body in the whole world, it must do whatever it possibly can to spread Christ’s kingdom and, wherever possible, to win for Christ and to lead into His sheepfold all those whom Christ has bought with His precious blood, and ultimately to lead them into the salvation of everlasting life” (“Duties...,” p.62).

It would appear that someone forgot to tell second LC-MS Vice President, Paul Maier about the new approach of encouraging love and peace and not down-playing doctrine. The August 2007 StewardCAST e-news included a reference to Maier’s Convention Bible study on July 16, 2007.

“Maier said his dream for the LCMS is that, if Jesus were addressing this convention today, He might say something like, ‘I understand your concerns about communion, church, ministry, worship, the roles of women and men, and your outreach to the world, but in the name of the cosmic God who created this marvelous universe, get over your quarrels and be about your Father’s business!’”

At another point in his study, Maier said, “Even the remarkable Synodical initiative *–Ablaze!*– has been faulted by ultracritical ‘purists’ in our church. How very sad! ...”

Where’s the love for the ultracritical purists? Walther says, “How we are slandered, what nasty names people call us, how horribly we are portrayed as loveless, contentious, arrogant, proud spirits, who regard themselves alone as orthodox and infallible!... Regardless of how repugnant it may be [to people] in this age of religious unionism and religious indifference to remain aloof from those who do not teach pure [doctrine]: **God’s Word demands it.**” (“Duties...,” p.22)

Conclusion: Words and the Eighth Commandment

The pastor is given a divine office to “encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it” (Titus 1:9). This is not an easy task, and no man of God is fit to administer rightly this great and responsible office without God’s aid and counsel. Thanks be to God that our Lord is gracious in providing for our need. “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work”(2 Timothy 3:16-17).” With that Word in hand, each pastor is prepared.

In my evaluation of the presuppositions of the 2007 LC-MS Convention, I cannot see into the heart, nor do I judge the motivations of the heart. Nevertheless, I will judge words and actions. Whenever possible I will put the best construction on everything. However, when a faithful shepherd has discovered, in the midst of his flock, a wolf in sheep’s clothing, he is not to put the “best” construction on it saying, “That wolf does have a fine costume. After all, the wolf is probably only lonely and wants to have some conversation with the sheep.” We need to make a distinction between those controversies which are “mere misunderstandings or disputes concerning words,” and those who stubbornly hold to their falsehood, which are “of such a nature that the opinion of the party in error cannot be tolerated in the Church of God, much less be excused or defended” (Formula of Concord, SD, Intro, 9).

There are some within the Missouri Synod who continue to put their hope in the endless proliferation of theological conferences, as well as Scriptural and Confessional studies. Having been personally involved in many of these endeavors, it became quite clear that the teaching of God’s Word and the Lutheran Confessions were not going to convince. We discussed *ad nauseum* but we never got beyond the words, the meanings of the words, and the applications of the meanings of the words. The impediment to confessing the truth was not the clarity of the Word or the Confessions, but the presuppositions of some

who came to the table. As Luther once said, “You have a different spirit.” We must come to realize that not all people, even fellow pastors in the church, desire to hold to the sound doctrine or be taught the truth.

1 Timothy 6:3-5 says, “If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such {false teachers} withdraw yourself.” This judgment concerning others is not about “looking into the heart,” those who are Christians, especially teachers, will desire to be corrected and will cling to the “sound words” of the truth. “By their fruits you will recognize them” (Mt 7:20).

St. Paul tells St. Titus(3:10-11), “Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned.” Our loving God knew that it would not be helpful to continue to warn a divisive person (Titus 3:10-11). R.C. H. Lenski states it this way, “Such a man will not even approach healthy words, ‘being sick with a morbidity’ for all kinds of investigations and disputes about thing valueless, that lead to nothing but endless word-battles.”³⁸ It is time to leave aside endless word-battles, and apply God’s Word of refuting and rejecting those who do not consent to “sound words.”

August 28, 2007
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¹ See “Final Report on Six Points of Dissent,” www.trinityh.org.

² *Jesus First* distributed buttons at the 2007 Convention which simply said, “*Ablaze!* is Job #1”

³ I will show later in this paper under Presupposition #11, that origins of what is now called the *Ablaze!* movement goes much further back than 2001.

⁴ “*Ablaze!*: Strategy and Structure,” Dr. Daniel L. Mattson, *Issues*, Fall 2005, p.22.

⁵ July 31, 2007, LCMSNews, No. 54, entitled, “Kieschnick outlines priorities for new triennium”

⁶ First, it is to “share the Gospel with 100 million ‘unreached’ or ‘uncommitted’ people...by 2017.” Second, “plant 2,000 new communities of faith in the United States...” Third, “assist(ing) 2,000 LCMS congregations in mission revitalization.” (CW, p.39)

⁷ “*Ablaze!*—A Theology of Mission in Action,” Dr. Robert Scudieri, *Issues*, Fall 2005, p.8.

⁸ Augsburg Confession, IV

⁹ Smalcald Articles, III, XII and John 10:3.

¹⁰ Augsburg Confession, V, “To obtain such faith God instituted the office of the ministry, that is, provided the Gospel and the sacraments....”

¹¹ Mt 28:19-20

¹² Acts 2:42

¹³ LCMS World Mission Report, (CW, p.39).

¹⁴ <http://www.lcms.org/pages/internal.asp?NavID=5248>.

¹⁵ It could be that it is this lack of details which accounts for the guarded positive review from Seminary Presidents(Drs. Wenthe and Meyer), and the CTCR(Dr. Nafzger), and Board for Pastoral Education(Dr. Hempelmann): “We are committed to and engaged in mission and outreach and are eager to be a resource for the entire church in sharing the Gospel. Following a review of the *Ablaze!* Initiative we do not find anything in it to be inconsistent with the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions. To be sure, while some might raise legitimate questions about certain points not included in this initiative, as well as about certain exegetical details, we feel that the materials prepared by the Board for Missions sufficiently answer these concerns.” (Pastoral Leadership insert in the June 2007 Reporter).

¹⁶ Augsburg Confession, V

¹⁷ <http://www.lcms.org/pages/internal.asp?NavID=5248>.

¹⁸ <http://www.lcms.org/pages/internal.asp?NavID=5249>

¹⁹ Misinterpretation of Ephesians 4:11-13

²⁰ “*Ablaze!*—A Theology of Mission in Action,” Dr. Robert Scudieri, *Issues*, Fall 2005, p.10-11

²¹ “*Ablaze!*—A Theology of Mission in Action,” Dr. Robert Scudieri, *Issues*, Fall 2005, p.9.

²² The idea for this heading came from LCMS 50 days of *Ablaze!*

²³ Smalcald Articles, III, XII and John 10:3.

²⁴ <http://www.lcms.org/pages/internal.asp?NavID=623>

²⁵ <http://www.centerforusmissions.org/index.php?page=IgnCong.html>

²⁶ The Center for U.S. Missions produced or supports many LC-MS *Ablaze!* conferences and resources.

For example:

--Mission Planters Institute held in Orlando, FL and Irvine CA are trained by them.

--“Edge” and “Advancing the Edge” gatherings

--“GroupsAblaze!” church revitalization ministry

--“Igniting Congregation” events

--“Friendship Ablaze!”

²⁷ 2007 Res. 1-04 says, “Whereas, the Lord has raised up many exciting ministries and partnerships under the umbrella of the Board for Mission Services such as the Center for U.S. Missions, the Advisory Group for National Missions, and the *Ablaze!* Connection.”

²⁸ Ephesians 4:11-13

²⁹ Ephesians 2:20

³⁰ “*Ablaze!*—A Theology of Mission in Action,” Dr. Robert Scudieri, *Issues*, Fall 2005, p.9

³¹ “*Ablaze!*—A Theology of Mission in Action,” Dr. Robert Scudieri, *Issues*, Fall 2005, p.13

³² The wording “a unanimously adopted ‘symphony,’” was incorporated by Floor Committee #4 into 2007 proposed resolution 4-01 (Today’s Business, p. 79). Due to complains that wording was removed from the resolution, before it was passed as 2007 Res. 4-01A.

³³ Once again, the floor-committee proposed wording of 4-01 which included, “to define how narrow or wide the road we ‘walk together’ (synod) must be...” was removed from the resolution, before it was passed as 2007 Res. 4-01A.

³⁴ Ralph Bohlmann, a former LC-MS Synodical President is a Jesus First supporter, speaks at a Daystar Conference, and is praised by Benke as the father of *Ablaze!* ideology.

³⁵ 1. Pastor Klemet Preus uncovered an LCMS Mission Board Report from the 1973 Convention Workbook, which admitted the terrible flaws and the lack of clarity included in the Mission Affirmations of 1965 (Preus, p.11. Although his paper is unpublished, Preus concludes that *Abaze!* is pietism, as can be seen by his title.).

2. In paper, entitled “The LCMS—Its Past and Future” (April 2007), Wallace Schultz says, “In fact, for discussion starters, I would rewrite Dr. Matson’s statement to say that the *Ablaze!* initiative is a 21st century outreach effort NOT consistent with Lutheran theology and practice and NOT an example of the mission emphasis that has characterized The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod from the beginning” (p. 17, bold, underline and capital letters are original).

3. The floor-committee proposed 2007 Resolution 1-12, “To Respectfully Decline Overtures,” included Overture 1-12, “To Correct the Theology of *Ablaze!*.” Due to time constraints Res. 1-12 was not considered by the 2007 Convention. The reason given for declining this overture was, “Addressed by Board of Pastoral Education, Commission on Theology and Church Relations, and two seminary presidents, acting in concert as follows: ‘Following a review of the *Ablaze!* initiative we do not find anything to be inconsistent with the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions.’” (For the full text see endnote #17)

³⁶ <http://www.lcms.org/pages/internal.asp?NavID=8151>

³⁷ C.F.W. Walther’s third lecture on *The Proper Distinction between Law and Gospel*.

³⁸ *Commentary on the New Testament*, “The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistles to the Colossians, to the Thessalonians, to Timothy, to Titus and to Philemon,” R.C.H. Lenski, Hendrickson Publishers, 2001, p. 700.