

Report of the Blue Ribbon Task Force for Funding the Mission



July 2006

Mission Statement of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod

In grateful response to God's grace and empowered by the Holy Spirit through Word and Sacraments, the mission of the LCMS is vigorously to make known the love of Christ by word and deed within our churches, communities and the world.

A Summary of the “Funding System” recommended in the attached report of the Blue Ribbon Task Force for Funding the Mission

For 30 years a trend away from the predominantly “unified budget” approach to funding the work of our congregations, districts and Synod has evolved into a predominantly “direct giving” system. This shift has been a blessing by not only increasing the number of dollars given to the work of the Lord, but also connecting individuals, congregations and districts more directly to the work they have decided to support. But the shift has brought a greater and greater burden on the scope of work that can be done with the shrinking pool of unrestricted (unified budget) dollars.

Congregations are effected by individual direct giving...districts are compoundedly effected by congregational direct giving...and as the last one in the unrestricted feeding (funding) chain, Synod has reached a crisis as a result of individual, congregational and district direct giving. Resolution 4-07 of the Synod’s 2004 convention called for this Task Force to present a “funding system” to our church one year prior to the 2007 convention of the Synod. The attached report offers 11 recommendations that make up the **funding system** that is here summarized:

- ✓ We must work to resolve the dysfunctional behavior in our church body so that our resources (time, energy and funds) are expended to achieve the work we need to do for the expansion of the Lord’s kingdom.
- ✓ We encourage the Blue Ribbon Task Force on Synodical Structure and Governance to address some fundamental inefficiency in the LCMS so that we can focus on being good stewards of the funds entrusted to us.
- ✓ We must begin the educational reforms necessary to provide congregations, districts, church workers and other entities a better understanding of the “business (mission) of the LCMS” as a national church body.
- ✓ We must initiate a STEWARDSHIP RENAISSANCE within the church for the good of the church and to the benefit of those who would otherwise be lost for all eternity.
- ✓ We must promote the concept that “walking together” means more than wearing an LCMS lapel pin. We need our people and our leaders to understand not only the blessings of Synodical membership but also the responsibility of such voluntary membership.
- ✓ We need to impose upon those organizations that benefit from membership in the LCMS a reasonable expectation of support for the work the Synod has agreed to do together.
- ✓ We need to continue efforts to find efficiencies in our operations at every level so as to insure that waste is not a part of our Biblical stewardship principles.

The 11 recommendations of this Task Force call us to step back for a moment from the trend toward restricted giving that has developed in our church and bring some order out of the present distribution of funds chaos. The recommendations call us first of all to prayer and the study of God’s Holy Word. The result of such a spiritual foundation has led the Task Force to believe that the two areas of congregational service that have been nearly destroyed by the distribution shifts in funding must be restored: STEWARDSHIP AND EVANGELISM. If we were an outwardly and inwardly growing church many of the distribution of fund inequities would be compensated for by spiritual and numeric growth.

We also acknowledge in our report that the divisions in our church over the last 30 years have hampered our effectiveness no less than the factions in Corinth emptied that first century church of the power available to them. Add to that the fact that our structure has been created piecemeal over the last 100 years and needs to be addressed for maximum efficiency of the Lord’s resources. To that end, we are grateful for the study being done by the Blue Ribbon Task Force on Synodical Structure and Governance. However until any changes are made to our structure we must celebrate the blessing of 35 districts and 600 circuits and see in them the path for improving good relational communication that leads to wise distribution choices at every level. We are making several recommendations that begin at the Synodical level to more effectively disseminate information to inform the “person in the pew”.

The chain of that information process must be relational. We have to build trust. The Synod should interact more with district staffs and boards and provide them the material they in turn will provide to the congregations to inform the “person in the pew”. To challenge each level of the church in their distribution decisions the Synod will expect from districts the minimum amount of unrestricted dollars necessary to operate the synod’s “common good” ministries. Districts in turn will be given new ways to increase a trusting relationship and helpful communication with congregations pointing out to them the many blessings received by their being a part of district and Synod and eventually challenging them with a “fair share” amount that they should consider BEFORE they make their other decisions about direct giving. Congregations are already pretty good at doing this very thing with their members.

This new way of “operating together” will not happen over night. And some investment will have to be made in improving the process “up front”. For that reason we are suggesting some new funding be expected at the Synodical level from organizations and entities who draw benefit from being connected to the Missouri Synod, but at this time do not regularly support the “common good” activities of the synod.

We have a Great God...who has left us wanting for nothing. But we are challenged; “of whom much is given, much is required.” When it comes to our stewardship decisions, the Lord deserves our best. In the spirit of moving this great church body in that direction we commend to you our report.

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Report of the Blue Ribbon Task Force for Funding the Mission

(A) Background

The Task Force Commission

At the 2004 Synodical convention, Resolution 4-07 called for the formation of a Task Force to once again study, discuss and make recommendations for how the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod can best fund the work we desire (and are mandated) to do together. This is not the first time such a study has been done. As recently as the 1990's a national/district pilot was developed called "Expanding the Circle" to address the distribution of congregational/district and national funding. In 2000-2001 representatives of the Council of Presidents, the Board of Directors and the president's office met and discussed the challenges involved in presenting a plan for "Funding the Mission". The report that follows draws upon the work others have done and humbly offers recommendations that will enable us to address the challenge presented by the "whereas's" of resolution 4-07 that created this Task Force.

Whereas, A major purpose for having a synodical union is to fulfill our Lord's desire for utilizing the diversity of our many gifts for the common good and the development of His kingdom (I Cor. 12); and

Whereas, Many financial gifts are being received and given by our congregational members in diverse ways for the implementation, support, and maintenance of our various agreed-upon ministries and programs; and

Whereas, The basic funding pattern for the mission and ministry of the Synod has continually evolved over our 157 year history; and

Whereas, Our Synod's funding pattern during the past 30 years has gradually changed from a mostly unified-budget model to a mostly designated-giving model; and

Whereas, These changes in funding trends and sources are forcing the Synod at the national and district levels to rethink its funding systems; and

Whereas, An effective funding system needs to (1) evaluate and identify necessary costs associated with synod's common-good activities, (2) value input from congregations and districts for prioritizing areas of mission and ministry, (3) encourage and manage designated giving from individuals and congregations, and (4) at the same time fund in an adequate and equitable manner those common-good activities of the synod.

A Note About Financial Reports

In a report like this we could overwhelm you with spreadsheets, giving trends and financial reports. And as has been well proven, if there are enough numbers you can pick the numbers that best support the case you are presenting. Our task force had the excellent resources of our Synod's financial officers and spent significant time researching the financial reports necessary to fulfill our obligation to the church. We have decided however to include very few "numbers" in this set of recommendations. We commend to you many of the budget and financial reports that are available to you on Synod's web site. For now let us simply work with the following approximate totals from FY 2006 to partially depict our distribution challenge:

Total amount of annual revenue reported by our 6,000 congregations	\$1,400,000,000
Total amount of annual unrestricted revenue received by our 35 districts	\$ 70,000,000
Total amount of annual unrestricted revenue coming to Synod from the districts	\$ 20,000,000
Total amount of restricted revenue to Synod from "the church"	\$ 65,000,000
Corporate Synod's annual budget	\$ 85,000,000

That's A Good Question

The Preamble of our Synod's constitution states that the reason for forming a Synodical union is "*our Lord's will that the diversities of gifts should be for the common profit.*" We do certain things together for the good of all. A crucial question to begin with would be: **WHAT IS IT WE DO TOGETHER FOR THE COMMON GOOD?** If you asked 25 people to answer the above question you would no doubt get 25 different answers. We believe that somehow included in all 25 of the answers would be mention of:

- (1) World missions (defined as including work in North America),
- (2) Preparing and caring for professional church workers (including Ecclesiastical Supervision),
- (3) Resourcing and caring for Synodical congregations and Synodical "partners", and
- (4) Providing opportunities for the expression of Christian compassion toward human needs.

Fifty years ago those four areas of ministry (and the administrative costs of supporting them) made up the bulk of our Synod's budget. When funds were gathered at the congregational level and shared through support of "district/Synod" it was rightfully understood that the congregations were counting on the national Synod to manage these four national and worldwide ministries for the "common good" of the whole church. However even then the districts were doing a good deal of ministry in each of the above four areas using a portion of contributed unrestricted congregational dollars.

Resolution 4-07 from the 2004 Synodical convention has called for a new funding model for these "common good" activities since the formerly "unified budget" approach has now been replaced with a restricted/unrestricted model of distributing support dollars. Defining what "common good" activities we agree to do together as a Synod is becoming more and more difficult.

In 2001-2002 representatives of the Board of Directors and the Council of Presidents worked on a plan that isolated \$11,000,000 of Synod's \$85,000,000 budget as the very minimum "common-good" activities. This was the amount of the national budget that was necessary to support bylaw and convention mandated administration, ecclesiastical supervision, debt repayment and national communications. Under this plan most of the work of the above four activities (Missions-Higher Education-Congregational Services and Human Care -- \$74,000,000) was to be funded by direct congregational and individual gifts and/or from fees and grants available after the \$11,000,000 of "basic" common-good ministries were funded. This plan did not find final support because "*members of the Board believe that two of the main reasons for the founding of the Synod were not addressed, namely higher education and missions*" (Quote from 2004 convention workbook).

It is interesting to note that the original 1847 constitution of the Synod listed as the "reasons for forming a Synodical organization" many of the duties we now equate with administration and ecclesiastical supervision. And yet, we are fighting an uphill battle to communicate the importance of supporting this administrative and supervisory role of Synod when the culture all around us denigrates the institution, and in this society of global communication it seems that denominational structure and institutional administration are no longer needed. And we have even come to discover that for some church professionals, the greatest need for "Synod" is the preservation of their pension plan (and not much more than that).

Reality has demonstrated that the four "common good" activities that most people agree are still done best when we pool together our resources to accomplish together more than we could ever do alone, have in the last 30 years been supported more and more by "direct" giving. There is still joyful support for the following four areas of ministry:

World & American Missions
Preparing/Caring Church Workers
Congregational services
World Relief ministries

vigorously making known the love of Christ
to serve God's people in Word, service and sacramental ministry
strengthening our congregations in cooperation with our districts
vigorously making known the love of Christ by word and deed

As recently as 1990 the trend toward “direct (restricted)” giving was growing so rapidly that Synodical leaders predicted it would not be long before funding the work of Synod would cross the 50/50 line in terms of restricted and unrestricted giving. How prophetic those leaders were. And it happened faster than even they could have predicted. Today at the Synodical level the national budget is supported 75% by restricted dollars and 25% by unrestricted support. This trend presents many challenges not the least of which are:

- ++The difficulty of planning Synodical work each year based on the success of restricted development efforts. (Will the direct gifts given this year be there next year also?)
- ++The communication challenge that is necessary to ensure wise “distribution of funds” decisions at local and district levels. (How are individuals and congregations deciding which ministries to support directly? Do they have good information upon which to make those decisions?)
- ++The difficulty in funding the national bylaw and convention mandated administration and ecclesiastical supervision with steadily diminishing amounts of unrestricted dollars. (How will we fund the necessary work we need to do together that is not attractive in direct giving decisions?)

The following recommendations are presented with a celebration for all the direct restricted giving that the Lord is using to accomplish His purpose among us and with our enthusiastic desire to continue to commend direct mission support as a great blessing to the church. And yet we believe there are still some very essential “common-good” ministries that are the responsibility of all members of the Synod and are not attractive for direct funding gifts. We therefore present in these recommendations a funding model that celebrates the freedom of “direct giving” while at the same time acknowledges our responsibility to ONE ANOTHER to do our part in supporting all the work of the “common good.”

What happened to the “Unified Budget”?

In the 60's and 70's many factors collided with one another that impacted the way individuals, congregations and districts made decisions about the distribution of “at large” giving (the mission funds that traditionally had supported the national Synod's “common-good” activities. Various societal changes were impacting people's view of “institutions” negatively. Our own theological debates in the 60's and 70's impacted the denominational loyalty that had blessed us for the previous generations. At the same time in the mid 70's the country faced 10-20% cost of living increases. The first energy crisis caused congregations to face unusually large utility costs and the need to upgrade pastor and teacher salaries due to escalating cost of living issues for our workers. Those same years brought on the start of “run away” health insurance costs that have continued to this day. All of these factors (and more) caused congregations to keep more of the Sunday morning offerings for “local” missions and so “at large” giving didn't keep pace with cost of living issues.

In response to the need to support worldwide missions, by 1980 Synod embarked on a \$70 million special campaign called “Forward In Remembrance”. Begun in 1959, The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod Foundation expanded its development staff rapidly on behalf of Forward in Remembrance and a second effort called “Alive in Christ” with professional consultants who met with members of our congregations soliciting major direct gifts to support world missions, our Concordias and works of human care. Happening in the same 10-15 years was the expansion of several of our Concordias from 2-year junior colleges to 4-year liberal arts universities. To support the expansion of these programs (faculty and facilities) each of our schools of higher education engaged development personnel to meet with members of our congregations who might give direct support to their expansion programs. Add to all of this the growth in these same years of various television “ministries” that appealed to members of our congregations for direct support of these non-Lutheran Christian ministries and you begin to understand that the mostly “unified budget” approach to Synodical common-good activity support was now lost to a mostly designated-giving model.

Which came first? The chicken or the egg?

Many discussions have wasted a lot of time in debating if our church's present funding challenge has come as a result of Synod itself making all of these direct appeals to the people of the congregations. This has redirected potential funding away from the congregations and districts that otherwise could have been shared with the Synod to fund common-good activities. While the national office has demonstrated a decline in the percentage of support from district budgets over the last 20 years the districts are quick to point out the millions of dollars from their district members that have gone directly to world mission support, the appeals of our seminaries and Concordia University System, Foundation development and the appeals of LCMS World Relief and Lutheran Disaster Response. Some in Synod who react to the "Concordias'" desire for greater support from Synod's budget are saying it's because the "Concordias" have gone directly to the members of the congregations to support their expansion that there is less potential for congregations to support the Synodical budget that has in turn had to reduce Concordia subsidies. What a vicious cycle!!! So which came first? This report WILL NOT ascribe "blame" for the present challenge but rather rejoice in the opportunity to present a set of recommendations to the church that embraces present reality and seeks to move forward in FUNDING THE MISSION. **What we have among us is a DISTRIBUTION challenge.**

(B) – SOME ASSUMPTIONS

What is the Mission?

Our Synod's mission statement says that "in grateful response to God's grace and empowered by the Holy Spirit through Word and Sacraments, the mission of the LCMS is vigorously to make known the love of Christ by word and deed within our churches, communities and the world." This Task Force wishes to build our recommendations around what we believe this great church body desires, that is: To make known 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. 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. One of the biggest roadblocks to "funding the mission" is the lack of ownership by the people in the pews for the horrible tragedy of millions of people headed for an eternity in hell.

St. Louis "We've Got A Problem"

The above words are a paraphrase of a famous quote from astronaut James Lovell on Apollo 13 when he simply radioed command central and said "Houston, we've got a problem here". Over and over as our Task Force met we were confronted with a significant roadblock put up in front of every "Funding The Mission Model" we discussed. We were confronted with the division in our synod and the resultant mis-trust that seems to permeate and impact every level of funding decisions. Individuals, congregations and districts are making funding decisions partially depending upon "who is in control" at district and Synodical levels of authority. Our Task Force has a recommendation later in this report (Recommendation # 3) that may move us forward toward a more unified church body. And we have gone ahead with other recommendations understanding that the current state of division in our church is an "assumption" we will have to live with until it is dealt with. Our other recommendations can be carried out with the assumption that for now: "St. Louis, we have a problem". And our prayer is: **FROM SUCH DIVISION, GOOD LORD, DELIVER US.**

Raise up a “Coalition of the Willing”

This report also understands that Synod is a voluntary organization. We cannot “fund the mission” by coercing through legalistic regulation the districts and congregations of our Synod. The 2000-2001 committee considered “taxing” the districts and other organizations of the Synod, but emphatically stated that we should never “tax” or assess the congregations. We understand full well the words of C.F.W. Walther in 1879 to the Iowa convention; *“If our Synod would ever say, ‘Every congregation must contribute one cent every year,’ then the congregations should say, ‘Not even half a cent. You must beg; yes, we’ll gladly give to a beggar, but if you try to give us orders, our friendship is over. Because whether much or little—if we have conceded you a penny this year, you can demand a dollar next year, and even more in two years; for we would have then given you the right, the power, to tell us what to do.”* While that quote is often used to argue against congregational assessments for “work at large support” it would do us all well to ponder some of C.F.W. Walther’s words spoken later in that very same 1879 speech: *“Therefore anyone who joins a Synod knows in advance: ‘I am now becoming a member of an organization that is charged with the responsibility of supervising church affairs; I am also joining an organization that operates with a specific system of regulations, for without regulations it could not exist.’ Consequently, when someone joins such a Synod, he must do so with the firm resolve that he will gladly and wholeheartedly abide by its regulations.”*

What we seek through the following recommendations is to gather together a “coalition of the willing” who are in agreement with the importance of “common good” activities as a way to fulfill the Great Commission by the most efficient stewardship of the resources the Lord has bestowed upon us. As for those who are UNWILLING, perhaps there should be consideration of limiting the benefits available to them if they voluntarily reject the “common good” principle that they agreed to when they joined the Synod in the first place.

A few more guiding principals for this report:

The fields are ripe with harvest. This is the day the Lord has made! And that day is NOW !

This report will address two time frames.

1. We will recommend immediate and more urgent needs in the ways we “fund the mission”.
2. We will also recommend more long term solutions to systemic issues that need further study and will have to be dealt with by others before “funding the mission” issues are more fully resolved.

You can’t do the same things the same way and expect different results.

This report will offer significantly new approaches to the way we work together. For 20 years we have been trying to “tweak” the old system. The Task Force has started with a clean slate approach and are trying to offer an achievable new system of FUNDING THE MISSION.

(C) - SCRIPTURE, PRAYER, STEWARDSHIP & EVANGELISM

In the quest to influence funding distribution decisions at every level (personal, congregational, district & Synod) we far too often resort to quick fixes and legalistic tactics. All the while we should realize that while organizational problems can be fixed with organizational solutions spiritual problems need to be fixed with spiritual solutions. From the beginning our Task Force committed to the Biblical foundation that should guide every funding discussion in the church and we surrounded our work with prayer for the Lord’s wisdom and guidance. We offer, not as a perfunctory token, but as the very foundation to our recommendations the following Biblical insights from II Corinthians 8 and 9 and two historic prayers from LCMS pastors who have been blessings to our church.

The Floor Committee agreed to an amendment to Resolution 4-07 that was offered from the floor at the 2004 convention that *“the Task Force be instructed to demonstrate that the funding system it*

proposes is supported by Scripture.” We believe the same should be true with the entire issue of “Funding the Mission” for each of us individually for our congregational funding decisions for the work that is done at the District and organizational level.....and for all of Synod’s entities and agencies. For that reason we offer up the following “Theological Reflections on Stewardship” which are centered on Paul’s advice in II Corinthians 8 and 9.

- 1) **Giving is all about “grace”.** It was God’s grace that motivated the Macedonian Christians to provide gifts for their poor brothers and sisters in Jerusalem. This grace comes from God, flows into the Christian giver, and flows out to those who are in need. Giving is not determined by external circumstances. It is determined by the internal working of God’s grace in the life of a Christian. It is this grace that enables Christians to give beyond their natural ability. In fact, it prompts them to plead to participate in the funding process.
- 2) **Giving is about submission.** It involves giving one’s self first to God but then also to God’s people. These two “submissions” cannot be separated. Giving is not a theoretical matter. It is very practical. Giving produces financial gifts! However, both of these are to be understood as an “act of grace.” Excellence in giving money to fund the needs of others should be as desirous as wanting to be excellent in faith, speech and knowledge.
- 3) **Giving is a test of the sincerity of love.** It is a practical way of expressing love. As someone has suggested, “You can give without loving but you cannot love without giving.”
- 4) **Giving is motivated by God’s gracious act in Jesus Christ.** The One who had it all gave it all up so that those who deserve nothing could have it all. The Christian’s motivation to give is rooted in the poverty of the cross and empowered by the empty tomb.
- 5) **Giving is a discipline.** It is learned and practiced in real life events. The Corinthians were moved by God’s grace not only to make a decision to give but to actually give. They apparently followed Paul’s advice in this first letter to them when he wrote, “On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made.” Good intentions are followed by good actions when it comes to giving.
- 6) **Giving is done in light of one’s God-given capacity to give.** Giving is done in proportion to what one has been given. Proportionate giving promotes equality when it comes to Christian giving. When one has it he is to give it. When one needs it, others who have it can give it.
- 7) **Giving and the way the gifts are handled are to be above board.** They are to reflect integrity and honor the Lord Himself. Honesty is crucial when it comes to reporting what is given and how the gifts are used. The way in which this is done is to be “right, not only in the eyes of the Lord but also in the eyes of men.” Those involved are not only representatives of the church but are also to be an honor to Christ.
- 8) **Giving can be encouraged by the example of others.** The “enthusiasm” of the Corinthians had a profound impact on the other churches. Therefore, it is acceptable to hold up models for good giving in the church, but always out of honor to Christ.
- 9) **Giving is a matter of the mind, heart and body.** Christians need to know mentally the principles of sowing and reaping. Their emotions are involved. The mind and the heart come together to produce both “cheerful” givers and cheerful “givers”.
- 10) **Giving is a reflection of faith in God’s promises.** The promises of God are both material and spiritual. The greater the faith in these words: “And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, (the greater

the capacity to give), (they) will abound in every good work.” The Christian who comes to believe that God will make them rich in every way will be generous on every occasion.

- 11) **Giving is an act of service.** It obviously supplies the needs of people, but it also overflows in many thanksgivings to God. Why? Because when others either receive or see the generosity of good givers, they rejoice that people put their “money where their mouth is,” that is, it becomes an expression of obedience to God Himself. And the givers themselves are blessed.
- 12) **Giving, including our finances, for the sake of the mission of the Church, is a response to the indescribable gift the Church has received in the crucified and risen Christ!**

In addition to the power of the Scriptures to motivate faith-filled lives we lift up the **importance of prayer** to renew this church’s vision for mission and the subsequent funding of that mission.

We are bold to offer up two prayers written in the last 30 years by leaders of our church with the hope that prayer will fill our hearts as we seek the Lord’s blessing upon the ways in which we FUND THE MISSION.

Savior of all, Great Provider, we have so little faith. We are bound by the knowledge of our insufficiency and restricted by what we know are our small abilities. What indeed, are we in the face of the needs that challenge us? Teach us to trust Your miracle. Where our requirements exceed our capacity, remind us how You make out of little more than enough. Where our challenges tower over our competence, cause us to remember a hillside and a hungry crowd, five barley loaves and two small fishes. Your blessing puts into our hands twelve baskets more than we will ever need. We are stopped by lack of vision. We are limited by littleness of faith. We are slowed and rendered helpless because we are forgetful that Yours is the power and our walk is at Your side.

Move us to lay hold of all our meager resources and place them in Your hand. Help us expect a miracle. Our dreams for Your church and our expectations for Your kingdom are so restrained and our efforts so repressed. You have given us power to move mountains and we quail before the hillock. You have promised to protect us and we hide behind walls of our own making for our safety. Forgive us for our unbelief.

Lord of the valley and King of the hillside, make us equal to our opportunities. From manger to tomb You have expanded the little into much. Perform Your miracle on us and rally us to do Your will and make Your kingdom come. You make Your march through time not with the clash and clang of might and power, but quietly on human feet like ours. But with You going on before and following behind and surrounding us on every side, we will prevail.

Worker of miracles, provide to us that which makes us equal to our challenge, for Your name’s sake. Amen. (Dr. Arnold Kuntz)

Disturb us, O Lord, when we are too well pleased with ourselves; when our dreams have come true because we dreamed too little; when we have arrived in safety because we sailed too close to the shore. Disturb us, O Lord, when with the abundance of things we possess we have lost our thirst for the water of life; when having fallen in love with time we have ceased to dream of eternity; and in our efforts to build the new earth, have allowed our vision of the new heaven to grow dim. Stir us, O Lord, to dare more boldly, to venture on wider seas, where storms shall show Thy mastery, where losing sight of land we shall find the stars. In the name

*of Him who pushed back the horizons of our hopes and invited the brave to follow Him.
Amen.*

(Dr. W. Harry Krieger adapted from Sir Francis Drake 1577)

The Floor Committee that created what became Resolution 4-07 understood that a foundational problem that has contributed to the funding challenge Synod is faced with today is a diminishing emphasis on stewardship education and motivation in our church body. As their priority resolution to the 2004 convention they addressed that belief with Resolution 4-01. It was adopted as follows:

Whereas, God has richly blessed the individual members and congregations of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod with an abundance of resources; and

Whereas, opportunities for mission and ministry in the world have outpaced available funding in recent years, as evidenced by budget shortfalls and ministry reductions and all levels of Synod; and

Whereas, the need for Biblical stewardship education for all members throughout Synod is the foundation for addressing our funding challenges; therefore be it

Resolved, that the Synod promote a unified stewardship education initiative entitled "Stewardship Ablaze" in 2006 to raise awareness of faithful stewardship in all of the congregations; and be it further

Resolved, that each district be encouraged to conduct "Stewardship Ablaze" education conferences or events that would include all church leaders (ordained, commissioned, and lay); and be it finally

Resolved, that to ensure broad-based ownership, the Synod's District and Congregational Services Department shall collaborate with the Council of Presidents to implement this initiative.

TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATION #1: Stewardship

Our Task Force commends the work of Synod's stewardship department and the district stewardship executives who are working on the implementation of Resolution 4-01 and believe its importance is foundational to the other recommendations in this report. **As a matter of principle we believe that since this year's vacancy in the position of Synodical Stewardship Executive we should consider the need to REBUILD A SIGNIFICANT NATIONAL STEWARDSHIP DEPARTMENT for the support of our congregations. Funding allocated to the education and motivation of our pastors and laypeople in Biblical Stewardship will repay itself 10-fold and more in FUNDING THE MISSION.** Recent studies indicate that most pastors are ill equipped OR ill-at-ease to personally witness to ... let alone have the courage to lead their people in God pleasing stewardship living. Starting with the formation of and continuing education of our pastors we must look to them as the leaders in our congregations to build our sanctified lives around Biblical principles of stewardship living and giving. **Between the Synod, the districts, the seminaries, the universities, the Lutheran Church Extension Fund, Concordia Publishing House, Concordia Plan Services and the Lutheran Foundation we ought to be able to put together a NEW SET OF RESOURCES, TRAINING AND STRATEGIC COMPONENTS FOR THE LAUNCH OF A STEWARDSHIP REVIVAL IN THE LIFE OF THIS GREAT CHURCH.** We recommend the first Vice President of the synod coordinate the organization of this effort. We urge the Board of Directors to consider this need in the future budgets of our national church.

TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATION #2: Evangelism

Any congregation that is losing members has a difficult time funding their budget. Soon they are making cuts that only result in further decline in ministry. On the other hand, congregations that are growing and increasing not only the faith of the existing members, but adding new families each year are discovering a growing pool of resources to fund their mission. Our Synod has lost 400,000 members in the last 20 years and many of the new members we have gained are wonderful Christians, but they have not yet grown into healthy faith-filled Christian stewardship habits. Nor do many new Lutheran Christians have a “generational connection” to the value of the national church’s mission. Yet, while these trends have been occurring both national and district offices have “cut” evangelism from their staffing budgets. We have trusted that congregations will go out into the “open market” to emphasize, train and resource their outreach efforts. We believe that has been a bad decision. It is like cutting off your nose to spite your face. It is time to quit “cutting” evangelistic outreach leadership from our national and district programs. **It is time to GROW THIS CHURCH. As a natural outcome of the goals of ABLAZE and the investment of FAN THE FLAME dollars this Synod needs to organize a strategy to increase our membership by the 400,000 souls we lost in the last 20 years and STOP THE BLEEDING of those for whom our Lord bled and died. It is a disgrace to our faith and practice that we are losing membership.**

This Task Force therefore recommends....the Synod invest in the personnel and materials needed to support the goals of ABLAZE to equip the pastors and people of this church body to do the work of an evangelist. We recommend to the Board of Directors to fund a position in the next three years’ fiscal budgets to work in cooperation with the districts in their ABLAZE initiatives for the purpose of evangelistic outreach. We would urge cooperation with Lutheran Hour Ministries in their planned initiatives for congregational outreach. We need a department to be HELD ACCOUNTIBLE for this emphasis that is crucial to “FUNDING THE MISSION”.

Could it be that we are not reaping because we are not even sowing? *It’s time the LCMS got back out into the fields of our Lord’s harvest instead of sitting in the barn rearranging the straw.*

(D) - TRUST, COMMUNICATION AND STRUCTURE

Every single time our Task Force got together several systemic issues arose that were not a direct part of our charge and yet they have huge impact upon our ability to “fund the mission”. As a result we feel it necessary to pass these matters over to appropriate boards within our church in this report. If others do NOT address them, there will be a direct negative effect on the success of any “Funding The Mission” proposal. The three issues stated negatively are:

- + *Mistrust and division*
- + *Lack of good communication to the person in the pew, and*
- + *A complicated, inefficient and outdated structure*

The **quicker** we get to work on resolving these roadblocks the more successful will be our efforts to “Fund the Mission”.

*“Men’s hearts fail them
Fears assail them
Hear their sighing,
Souls are dying,
TIME IS FLYING !”* (Verse 1 “Arise, O Church of God Arise” - See Appendix A)

TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATION #3: Harmony in the LCMS

In the interest of moving forward in “Funding the Mission”, this Task Force believes that no funding plan we present is capable of fully succeeding in an organization that is seriously divided and engaged in issues that divert their energies away from the “mission”. It is the belief of this Task Force that the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod must take some intentional steps to become more united around the Great Commission of our Lord.

At the congregational level we have seen it happen over and over again. When a congregation has in front of it a major project that nearly everyone agrees is important, it's amazing how petty squabbles within the congregation disappear. The importance of everyone pulling together is contagious.

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.

Synodical President Kieschnick has given us a fresh interpretation of our mission statement with his vision of “ONE MISSION, ONE MESSAGE and ONE PEOPLE”. Former President A. L. Barry encouraged us to “TELL THE GOOD NEWS ABOUT JESUS”. The 2004 convention overwhelmingly adopted several resolutions that lifted up our ABLAZE mission goals for the next 12 years. When we divert our energies away from this mission and continue to tear one another down (when the work of the Holy Spirit is always to build one another up) we can have the finest “Funding The Mission” strategy in the world and it will never work.

There is NO faithful orthodoxy without a desire to “be Jesus’ witnesses to the ends of the earth” and there is nothing to witness if we fail to remain faithful and orthodox. We believe that it is time to de-emphasize our allegiances to personalities, political wings, institutions and voting lists and re-emphasize our mission statement:

In grateful response to God’s grace and empowered by the Holy Spirit through Word and Sacraments, the mission of the LCMS is vigorously to make known the love of Christ by word and deed within our churches, communities and the world.

Having said that, JUST removing “politics” as an issue that destroys trust among us doesn’t resolve some serious matters of doctrine and practice that we need to define more clearly. “Harmony” suggests different notes that blend together to form a unified symphony. Some among us would like us to sing in unison which prevents us from the fullness of sound the world needs to hear, while others want the freedom to play any note they want with no regard for what others are playing and that results in nothing but noise. Harmony is to take our unified confession and strike the chords of the variety of gifts that make up a song that gives praise to our God and His great work in the world.

A quote from the 1981 CTCR document on “The Nature and Implications of the Concept of Fellowship” speaks well to many other issues in our church when it says: *“It must be recognized that unusual and difficult situations can and do arise in this world. Responsible commitment to our mutually agreed-upon policies does not mean legalistic slavery to rules. Rather, this very commitment itself demands freedom for responsible pastoral ministry. When, in certain unusual circumstances, our regular ways of proceeding would get in the way of a ministry of Word and sacrament to a person in spiritual need, then an alternate way of proceeding must be sought. In such cases the advice and counsel of brothers in the ministry can be of inestimable value. **It should also 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.** It is imperative that pastors show a mutual respect for one another’s ministry. Uninformed and judgmental criticism of actions which appear to be violations of mutually agreed-upon ways of proceeding are destructive of the trust and confidence which fellow members of the Synod should have in one another. It should go without saying, however, that Christian love includes the exercise of loving admonition and doctrinal oversight, especially by those to whom this responsibility has been entrusted. **Freedom for responsible pastoral ministry goes hand in hand with***

responsible commitment to mutual decisions. It is impossible to have one without the other. A lack of responsible commitment invites the very suspicion and mistrust that inhibits responsible pastoral care. But genuine commitment to our agreed-upon procedures builds the atmosphere of confidence and trust in which freedom for pastoral ministry thrives (Bold print added for emphasis).

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” that demonstrates how this great church body can provide a God-pleasing witness of our confession and practice.

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. 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”.

The generation long divisions among us have frustrated us all. Allowing for proper dissent through by-law allowed procedures, we also recommend that those members of this Synod that cannot embrace the convention mandated mission of our church should feel free to leave this fellowship with truth-filled integrity and find another association with whom they can partner.

TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATION #4: Communication

The biggest lesson of the “Expanding The Circle” pilot test of the early 90’s was: To the extent you can get information about Synod’s mission to the person in the pew you received in return their enthusiastic response AND financial support. The success of every direct giving campaign that is going on in our church is due to a good communication of “the case”. How do we tell the 2.5 million baptized members of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod of “the case” to be made for our “common-good” activities? The Board of Directors in the last triennium tried to tell the story through a video called “Sow What?”. It was an attempt to share the complicated problems facing the church through decreased support of Synod’s unrestricted budget. It produced mixed reviews, and evidently did not result in increased revenue. We need a more aggressive communication plan that is both educational and motivational. Our Task Force met for a day with a renowned consultant to major Christian denominations in our country. Dr. David A. Roozen, the director of the Hartford Institute for Religion Research and a professor of Religion and Society has authored several books including *Church, Identity, and Change*; *Understanding Church Growth and Decline*; and *Church & Denominational Growth*. Dr. Roozen knows the Missouri Synod very well. From Dr. Roozen’s research we learned that in this new century the church will need to be more relational in our challenge to communicate the value of our “common good” activities supported with unrestricted budget dollars. We also learned from Dr. Roozen that we better first train the pastors about the meaning and the application of the message. This strategy also fits the pattern of most successful capital campaigns that are run throughout our church by professional firms:

- You need to develop a clear “case” for mission and ministry,
- You need the pastor on board,
- You start with a “coalition of the willing” your faithful givers,
- You produce high quality communication vehicles,
- You educate and motivate your leaders, and
- You then reach out to each family (relationally) one by one.

Our Synod in the last 20 years has had consultants come in and meet with focus groups, leaders at district and Synodical levels and attempt to determine a strategy for support and growth. Some reading this report may remember the Colerelli/Meyer research and the Church Membership Initiative

study. Both of them produced similar results. They both taught us that “one size” no longer fits all. They taught us that if we want good communication we must do it relationally....one by one by one. They took the lessons of successful parish organization and told us to put them to work on the district and Synodical level.

We believe that a communication revolution in our Synod should include the following three elements:

++ Develop a DVD/booklet package to be shared with every pastor in our Synod through either existing circuit forums or special pastoral training meetings. Making use of our district/circuit structure **we recommend the Synod President through a special task force revisit the things learned from the production of the “Sow What?” video and produce an outstanding pastoral training event on “FUNDING THE MISSION”**. It needs to be grace/mission oriented as opposed to finger pointing and legalistic. It needs to encourage joy in “walking together”. It needs to have statistical facts SIMPLY presented. It needs to celebrate the reason for a synodical union. This material should also become available to each of our seminaries for use in the formation of our future pastors. We don’t believe our pastors have adequate training in the OBJECTIVES OF OUR SYNOD, let alone the covenant we make to one another to freely support those objectives. This would not be a one-time training but an ongoing program to keep our pastors on the leading edge of making the case for our Synod’s common-good activities. The Executive Director of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations has already done a good piece of work on the original “objectives of the Synod”. Members of our task force would be willing to assist a team that should include the Chief Financial Officer of the Synod and some representatives of district offices.

++ In Luke 10 Jesus sent out 70 other than the disciples with some wonderful marching orders and by the end of that chapter we read, “the seventy returned with joy”. Seventy is a nice number for the size of our Missouri Synod. **We recommend the recruitment of seventy “story tellers” geographically scattered around the country (to cut down on travel expenses) who can be well trained at the Synodical/district level to be in our congregations every Sunday with a “minute man” talk or a Bible Study. If some of the storytellers are ordained they could offer sermonic proclamations that lift up the great work we are doing TOGETHER in missions.** We recommend a special volunteer task force be named to oversee the establishment of this “story teller” ministry. The seventy storytellers should be a “blue ribbon” quality group of people who can be the “face” of the Synod at the congregational level. This new venture should cost very little and yet have amazing potential reward. The seventy storytellers will be important to develop relational communication with our congregations and their people.

++ **We recommend a NEW printed communication piece (also available on the internet) be developed and put into every home and on the computer of the members of our congregations.** Let it be a spin-off from the new branding initiative being developed by the various boards of synod under the title, “**Christ’s Love Is Here For You**”. This needs to be a concise “REACH THE WORLD FOR CHRIST” mission driven periodical. This should not be a “news magazine” nor simply a rework of the LUTHERAN WITNESS. This needs to be a Synod/district wide “development device”. It should highlight successes, build mission momentum and give practical helps in each of the four “common-good” activity areas of Synod (missions, education, congregational services and human care). This periodical should be telling stories from the districts also. We are all in this together. Years ago there was an old periodical called “Advance” which was published in addition to the Lutheran Witness that was a great blessing to the church. It’s time to re-invent that old concept. We should have as a goal to put this periodical into every synodical family’s home (approx 800,000). It is estimated that the cost to make this membership mailing would be over a million dollars per year. There are many alternatives for funding this bold new initiative. Sell advertisements to corporations. Seek grants to launch the effort. Sell non-revenue producing assets to finance this endeavor. Work with Concordia Publishing House, if appropriate, and make this regularly published magazine so good that the added revenue and enthusiasm for mission growth in our church would easily pay for the magazine. As part of the pastor training (above) develop ways to secure the home addresses of all our congregational membersand while we are at it, develop a potential “e-mail” communication site for professional church workers and congregational members. Encourage “sign-up” Sundays

throughout the church to build a Synodical e-mail/snail mail address database. Don't let people tell you "it can't be done"!!!

In addition to the above 3 communication initiatives we must do a better job building mission relationships throughout our church body. We must improve communication through the natural structure that exists right now from our national Synod to the districts and then to the circuits and then to the congregations and finally to the person in the pew. Every stewardship executive knows that the best campaign is the EMV (Every Member –relational- Visit).

We believe that Synod can develop one to one relationships with 35 districts (staff and officers) and we believe that districts, in turn, can develop one to one relationships with pastors and congregations, but that does not guarantee that congregations will feel that relational ownership with the national Synod. Our previously mentioned consultant, Dr. Roozen, gave illustrations of how much smaller denominations than ours have sent a couple dozen national officials out “on the road” to visit every congregation on a regular basis. They listen, they share, they care, they tell the stories and they produce grass roots ownership for the national enterprise and the international mission.

We said to Dr. Roozen: “With 6,000 congregations that’s impossible”. He said, “Why? You have 35 district offices that are Synod in that place”. And yet, somehow it usually doesn’t work that way. We need to improve the role of the districts in communicating the Synodical story. Before the Structure and Governance Task Force brings it’s report in 3-7 years...we believe there are several ways we can use the existing structure of circuits, districts, ministry networks, etc. to develop closer relationships between the Synod and the local congregation.

We recommend more and more responsibility be placed upon the districts (Synod in that place) to be representatives of the national common good activities to the congregations. The Synod, in turn, should offer the districts the information and materials to “present the case”. Circuits should be a natural link in this chain of improved communication. Sad to say antidotal evidence tells us as many as half our circuit structures are dysfunctional. If that is true we should not be satisfied with that structural breakdown. **We recommend the Council of Presidents develop a strategy to improve communication through our existing structures until and if those structures are eventually changed.** We commend the Council of Presidents’ new program of offering circuit winks a united Bible Study series pilot test for invigorating circuit winks. The upcoming national circuit counselor’s conference can go a long way to re-emphasize the value of circuits in this relational communication process.

TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATION #5: Structure Concerns

Much of our Task Force’s early discussion centered on the potential duplication that exists in our current Synodical structure. Questions rose as to how many seminaries we need. Are two the right number? Should there be only one? Or should there be 4 or 5? And how should they be structured? Even more intense was our discussion regarding the number of universities in the Concordia University System that are necessary for the training of professional and lay church workers. If each district is doing mission work in their area of ministry then why do we need a North American Missions Department at the synodical level? Is a Black Ministry Commission still necessary? And what about other ethnic groups? And how many districts do we really need? Could we be more efficient with fewer districts in this age of technological communication? Or could we win more souls for the kingdom if we had more districts and just structured them differently? Some of our districts are very large and offer a wide range of congregational services. Other districts are so small that they cannot possibly offer the same services to their congregations. Who can best provide “congregational services” in these days of multiple resource venues? Are Synodical congregational services able to be provided by the districts? Or would we be better served with district reductions in congregational service staff and allow Synod to expand? Should the LCMS Foundation be restructured so that the “banking, trust and investment” part of their work come under LCEF and the development staff be deployed to the various Synodical entities that need their services? World Relief (Human Care) is

pretty much fully funded. Should they be simply “cut loose” as a “corporate entity”? **We recommend the legislative representation system that has served us since 1847 should be examined. In 1847 congregations were more similar in size. With the emergence of congregations in the 4,000-7,000 member range it is obvious that two votes for each congregation is not at all representative of the baptized membership of our Synod. This mis-representation has significant funding implications.**

We discussed these and many other structure questions believing that these issues have a great deal to do with the longer-range challenge of “funding the mission”. But we also understand that the Blue Ribbon Task Force on Synodical Structure and Governance is in the process of studying these issues. We have communicated to that Task Force our structure and governance concerns. In the meantime we commend various districts for ongoing discussions that are presently being held about cooperative ventures in staffing and missions. We commend discussions that are being held by the Michigan, Ohio and Indiana districts concerning cooperative ventures. Similar discussions are underway with the Kansas, Oklahoma and Rocky Mountain districts.

(E) - THE NATIONAL UNRESTRICTED BUDGET

RECOMMENDATION #6: Management Efficiency

Until the Blue Ribbon Task Force on Synodical Governance and Structure offers the Synod recommendations on what the structure of our Synod should look like, we believe that the current structure at the national level needs to undergo an operational audit that may reveal additional areas of operating efficiencies so as to assure the membership of the Synod that the national structure is operating as efficiently as possible. Much has already been done in recent years. We commend the Synod's Board of Directors for training Synod's Internal Audit staff with the necessary skills to conduct operational reviews. Each of the program boards has been audited for operating efficiencies. We also commend the Facilities Services Management Board for examining International Center operations for the purpose of creating efficiencies where possible. **We know that outsourcing of payroll, purchasing, technology support, building maintenance and cafeteria services need to be regularly examined for potential cost efficiencies. We encourage continual analysis of outsourcing to assure these functions are conducted in a cost effective manner. Significant savings may also be accomplished if purchasing was combined by Synod, its entities and the districts to achieve larger contracts (and potential savings) in the areas of insurance, technology support, benefits, etc. Every penny saved from the elimination of inefficiencies is an extra penny we have for funding the mission.** The last several years of unrestricted dollar reductions has caused the Synod's national office to eliminate thirty-five (35) full time equivalent positions. These staffing and operational efficiencies have achieved millions of dollars in savings. But the national operation has very little room left for “cut-backs”. **As important as it is for the national office of Synod to work at cost efficient management of the Synod's business, we also urge the districts to continue to aggressively search for operational efficiencies at their level of operations.**

RECOMMENDATION #7: Higher Education Support

A significant challenge in “funding the mission” is the huge transition our church has made in the last 40 years in the way we fund HIGHER EDUCATION at our seminaries and the schools of the Concordia University System (CUS). The words of our Synod's Chief Financial Officer written for the June, 2006 issue of the “REPORTER” puts this transition in perspective.

There was a time when our institutions of higher education received “subsidies” from the Synod. Even then, much of the schools' funding was from the schools themselves. In

those days, each school would send any “profits” to St. Louis, and St. Louis would redistribute those funds as needed. Such a model did not allow the schools to develop endowments to provide an ongoing financial foundation, however.

So, the funding model changed—subsidies from the unrestricted budget of the synod have been replaced by fund raising carried out by the schools themselves. LCMS people are still the contributors to higher education, which means support for the schools still is coming from the Synod at large. It’s simply taking a different route to get there.

That’s not to say, however, that the national Synod’s unrestricted budget gives nothing to higher education. Far from it. The current Synod budget includes \$3.3 million for the Board for Pastoral Education and \$7 million for the Board for University Education/Concordia University System (BUE/CUS)—all funds that benefit the schools. The seminaries get \$750,000 of that as direct subsidy.

Of the \$10.3 million total for the two boards, more than \$8.4 million is from undesignated revenue. That’s more than a third of the “Sunday-morning offering” funds from congregations that make their way through the districts to the national budget for the benefit of seminaries colleges and universities.

At one time, the corporate Synod itself owned the college and seminary properties, as well as the debt on those properties. Some years ago, the Synod gave the properties to the schools, but kept the debt. Nearly \$3.8 million of this year’s BUE/CUS budget is payment toward that debt.

The Synod also has established a “risk endowment fund” that is owned by CUS. Over the past four years, some \$6.6 million has been put into the fund for use by the schools in case of financial emergency. The insured value of the schools is well over \$1 billion.

Our Task Force commends the Board of Directors for the significant commitment they have made by directing \$8.4 million from unrestricted dollars to the support of our seminaries and colleges through direct subsidies, debt assumption and repayment, establishing a Risk Endowment Fund and guaranteeing lines of credit. We also commend the universities and seminaries for the outstanding development work they are doing. We commend them for aggressive steps being taken to operate with fiscal integrity. We commend them for the aggressive subsidy they build into their budgets for professional church worker scholarships as they keep preparing church workers for the future. **We recommend the 2007 convention support with appropriate bylaw changes the current efforts to increase the number of regents and/or advisors on our seminary and university boards through local appointments/elections.** And finally we commend the congregations and people of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod for directing millions of dollars of direct gifts each year for our Synod’s higher education needs and for the estate planning that will endow this important ministry for generations to come.

RECOMMENDATION #8: Support From Corporate Entities

During our history the Synod in convention has authorized the creation of 5 “corporate entities”. They are:

Concordia Historical Institute
Concordia Publishing House
The Lutheran Church-Extension Fund-Missouri Synod
The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod Foundation
Concordia University System

Each of these “corporate entities” derives blessings from their ministry partnership with corporate Synod. Corporate Synod in turn receives great blessings from the ministry of these “corporate entities”. In addition to these 5 “corporate entities” there exists in seven of our districts independent Church Extension Funds. There has also been established over the years a benefits corporation for the health insurance coverage/disability & survivor plans/retirement plans of the professional and support workers of our Synod now called The Concordia Plans. In addition the Board of Human Care has created a Housing Corporation to assist congregations to conduct low-income housing ministries.

We also rejoice in the partnership of our two synodical auxiliaries, the Lutheran Women's Missionary League and the Lutheran Laymen's League. Both have historically done and continue to do wonderful ministry in support of the Synod. We believe each of these entities should prayerfully and joyfully consider a portion of their annual budget to be given to support the unrestricted budget of the Synod who gave them birth. We commend Concordia Publishing House and the Lutheran Church Extension Fund for having made such contributions from operating profit for many years.

It is the recommendation of this task force that each of the above named entities should make a contribution from their annual budgets to the unrestricted budget of the national Synod. The amounts (or % of net operating results) that should be expected will be varied due to the nature of revenue generation that each entity uses to support their ministries. An action team made up of synodical officers and representation from each of these entities should be called together following the 2007 convention to determine the implementation of this recommendation.

RECOMMENDATION #9: Support From RSOs

The synod has, through its boards, dozens of wonderful ministry partners called Recognized Service Organizations (RSO's). Each of them derives blessings from their recognition by corporate Synod. **It is the recommendation of this Task Force that a "partnership fee" be built into each of the RSOs' annual budgets to be contributed to the support of Synod's unrestricted budget.** Not the least of the blessings received by these ministry partners is the right of calling professional church workers and the ecclesiastical supervision that comes with that rostered status. The professional and support staff of these RSO's are also eligible for the Concordia Plans. The RSO's may also make use of the services of the Lutheran Church Extension Fund, the Lutheran Foundation and are eligible for receiving LWML mission grants. Many other district and national services are available to the RSO's. The extensive ministry carried out by these RSO's is also celebrated throughout the church.

Synod's Secretary and Chief Administrative Officer has recently produced a report that shows the following number of RSO's under the supervision of the following boards:

Board for Mission Services	18
Board for Human Care ministries	131
Board for District & Congregational Services	
Schools	118
Camps	14
Other	14
Board for University Education	3
Board for Communication Services	1
Texas District Board of Directors	2
Lutheran Church Extension Fund	1
Total	302

The amount of the "partnership fee" is suggested to be:

\$ 250/year	for organizations with annual budgets under \$200,000
\$ 500/year	for organizations with annual budgets between \$200,000 - \$1,000,000
\$1,000/year	for organizations with annual budgets between \$1,000,000 - \$4,000,000
\$2,000/year	for organizations with annual budgets over \$4,000,000

This fee is not to be considered optional. If an RSO refuses to share this partnership fee for 3 consecutive years their RSO status should not be renewed. **We recommend the final design, communication and implementation of this recommendation be determined by the Synod's Chief Financial Officer and a representative of each of the synodical boards that recognizes these organizations.**

Other organizations that are deriving support from Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod membership and benefit from Synodical affiliation should also be encouraged to make a similar contribution to the common good activities of the Synod. Included in this “partnership” level should also be a large number of “Other Lutheran Associations” that derive benefit from Synodical partnerships. They should prayerfully and joyfully consider supporting Synod’s “common good” activities from their annual budgets (See page 711-712 of the 2006 Lutheran Annual).

RECOMMENDATION #10: Synod/District Fiscal Conference

The Synod has 35 districts, each doing ministry on behalf of their congregations. Each of the districts owes their existence to Synod and is enhanced in their ministry by the “common-good” activities of the Synod. The districts are the first in the chain of relationships that must honestly face the steady decline in unrestricted dollars that reach the national Synod.

In 2004, LCMS members contributed \$1.4 BILLION to their congregations. Congregations forwarded to their respective districts \$121.7 million, which is approximately 9.3% of total congregational offerings. Of this sum, the districts forwarded \$20.88 million for the work of the unrestricted budget of Synod. That’s 1.5% of total congregational contributions for the unrestricted work of Synod. [Of course the congregations also contribute significant other amounts directly to restricted causes promoted by the districts, Synod (missions, human care/world relief etc.) and her entities, colleges, universities and seminaries.]

With acknowledgment that we have shifted from a unified budget distribution of congregational contributions to a restricted model of giving, our **Task Force believes that \$20 million annually of unrestricted funds should be the low-point in the decline of unrestricted funds reaching the national office from the districts.** While presently there are huge disparities in the percentage of revenue that the 35 districts “pass on” to Synod’s “common-good” activities it is the **recommendation of this Task Force that an equalization formula be developed that is an honest reflection of the distinct sizes, challenges and potential of the districts to increase their levels of support. We recommend a “FISCAL CONFERENCE” (these were held years ago) be called once every 3 years to bring together synodical and district leaders. With God-blessed sharing of mission and ministry challenges this “Fiscal Conference” should be expected to adjourn with a synod/district agreement that will:**

- 1) **Determine the annual total amount of unrestricted dollars to be submitted to the national budget by the 35 districts;**
- 2) **Decide the fair share of each district toward the fulfillment of the commitment from step #1;**
- 3) **Plan ahead 3 years in advance to aid in district/Synod planning; and**
- 4) **Gradually increase the total amount submitted to a level of at least \$25 million by 2017.**

It will then be the challenge of each district to either communicate to their congregations the importance of supporting our “common good” activities through additional congregational distribution of offeringsor to find efficiencies in their district budgets or through the combining of services with neighboring districts to make this gradual increase in support funds available to the national budget. The Synod, in turn, should offer the districts the information and materials necessary to “present the case” to their congregations. Circuits could be a natural link in this chain of improved communication. (See the Task Force recommendation #4 regarding “Communication”).

We would encourage districts to communicate to their congregations their expected “fair share” of unrestricted dollar contributions through the districts (See Recommendation #11).

RECOMMENDATION #11: Improved Congregational Support

The Synod has 6,000 congregations whose historic support of synod's "common-good" activities has come through the "work at large" contributions they make to their districts (and then a portion of that to Synod) and any restricted direct gifts that are given to the various ministries of the Synod. The amount (%) that is given varies greatly. Sadly, way too high a portion of congregations contribute nothing (or nearly nothing) to the "common good" work we have covenanted together to do. According to the statistics for 2004, 22% of synod's congregations contributed less than \$1,000 to the unrestricted work of district/Synod. 12% of Synod's congregations contributed nothing to the unrestricted work of district/Synod. They may donate to direct causes (within and beyond the Synod). Anecdotal evidence suggests most of these congregations make their decisions not because they can't offer some support, but because they choose not to. Many congregations do not even submit statistical information to the synod. In the original 1847 constitution of synod one of the reasons for the formation of the Synod was to gather common statistical data. Congregations should not ignore their responsibilities to support the synod they have freely chosen to associate with. Especially when it is pointed out that each congregation receives many, many benefits from their synodical partnership. To name a few: Access for all workers to Concordia Plan Services,
Access to all LCMS Publications,
Access to all the services of the Lutheran Church Extension Fund,
Access to all the services of the Lutheran Foundation,
Access to trained church workers,
Access to legislative voice and vote,
etc.

Since the days when a "unified budget" approach to funding the mission is gone, our **Task Force recommends that each congregation of our Synod receive each year the kind of information that allows them to re-evaluate the blessings and the responsibilities of Synodical membership. Years ago many districts offered congregations a "suggested amount" of unrestricted support expected of the congregations. The districts best know the health and potential of the congregations, the historic giving patterns and the challenges of the congregations. It's time to go back to that.** It is clear we need an advocate for the district and Synodical need of unrestricted financial support. **It is the recommendation of this Task Force that increasing personal communication through the existing structures must be improved until there is a change in the existing structures.** In the first years of implementing this effort the Synod/districts should WITHOUT ANY REQUEST FOR MONEY simply share the long list of benefits derived from Synodical membership. The list is formidable. In future years some basic assumptions of what is expected from congregations as they covenant with their sister congregations should be shared. As this process is shared each year (perhaps all electronically) a set of added values for reasonable support might be added. If a congregation responds by meeting its financial expectations then additional services may be provided to those congregations without charge. If a congregation refuses to meet its reasonable financial obligation then it should be subject to a "fee for services" expectation for the many services it is receiving and yet not acknowledging with some degree of responsible fiscal support. The districts and Synod should work together to implement these changes.

(F) – A SUMMARY OF THE EFFECT OF THESE RECOMMENDATIONS

This report has come after two years of regular meetings by our Task Force and many assignments completed by members of the Task Force between meetings. Our task force included members from the Council of Presidents and Board of Directors and we have met with both groups on two separate occasions. In addition we presented portions of our report for feedback from the National Conference of Synodical Business Managers and a group of staff people from 6 districts in the south and central part of our Synod. We have interviewed any number of leaders in our church body including the leaders of several RSO's, entities and agencies. We met jointly with the Blue Ribbon Task Force on Synodical Governance and Structure and had the consultation of not only Dr. David Roosen, but also Dr. Lyle Schaller who shared with us what other denominations were doing with the challenge of funding national church operations. We studied extensively the work that was done by previous groups that worked on these same issues. We have had the ongoing assistance of the synod's Chief Financial Officer along with the synod's President and his assistants.

We believe the investment Synod makes in the “seeds” of this report (well sown and watered in the fields the Lord has given us to harvest) will yield 10-fold in additional support for the work we have chosen to do together as the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. Every recommendation of this report is important. They all connect to each other. Some will work independently of others but none will work alone as well as they all will work when fit together in the giant puzzle that is: “HOW CAN WE BETTER FUND OUR MISSION?”

(Here will follow a summary of the potential “dollar” cost of our recommendations)

- Recommendation #1**
Establish funding for a Stewardship Executive, Assistant, Travel and Materials cost = \$ 200,000
- Recommendation #2**
Establish funding for an Evangelism Executive, Assistant, Travel and Materials cost = \$ 200,000
- Recommendation #3**
Fund a summit of leaders for “Harmony for the Sake of the Great Commission” cost = \$ 50,000
- Recommendation #4**
Prepare a DVD/Training Booklet cost = \$ 100,000
No cost for Storytellers
- Funding for an Every Member Magazine cost = \$1,000,000
- Recommendation #5**
No cost involved
- Recommendation #6**
Costs already included in operating budgets
- Recommendation #7**
No cost involved
- Recommendation #8**
No cost involved
- Recommendation #9**
No cost involved
- Recommendation #10**
Cost to fund a Fiscal Conference cost = \$ 250,000
- Recommendation #11**
No cost involved

Appendix

Members of the Task Force

David Buegler	Avon	OH
William Diekelman	St. Louis	MO
Gloria Edwards	Portola Valley	CA
Kirk Farney	Hinsdale	IL
Merle Freitag	St. Louis	MO
Dwayne Jobst	Menomonee Falls	WI
John Kieschnick	Houston	TX
Keith Kohlmeier	Topeka	KS
Tom Kuchta	St. Louis	MO
Day May	Ft. Wayne	IN
Carol Olson	Afton	MN
Gary Thies	Mapleton	IA
Ed Trapp	Dallas	TX
Chad Woltemath	Ann Arbor	MI
Mark Zehnder	Omaha	NE

A Hymn of Encouragement

“Arise, O Church of God, Arise”

by W. Harry Krieger

Tune: Lasst uns erfreuen
Printed by Permission

*Arise, O Church of God, arise! Bestir thyself, lift up thine eyes.
See the nations in commotion. See tumult, warfare, earthquake, flood,
Sun turn to darkness, moon to blood! Men’s hearts fail them, Fears assail them.
Hear their sighing. Souls are dying. Time is flying!*

*Attend, O Church of God give ear! Thy King commands in accents clear;
Spread the tidings of salvation. As once My Father sent Me forth
So send I you thro’ all the earth. Rise, delay not, Go and stay not.
I who send you will attend you and defend you.*

*Fail not, O Church of God to heed the world’s sad cry, her anguish, need.
If thou bleed not, thou canst bless not. Despise not thou the servant’s place.
So came thy Lord in matchless grace. Christ most holy served the lowly.
Thus He taught us. He who sought us, Loved and bought us.*

*Exult, O Church of God, and bless the Lamb, the Lord our righteousness.
His the kingdom, His the power! To Him all laud and glory be
Thro’ time and thro’ eternity. Heav’n rejoices, Lift your voices.
Come before Him. Pray, implore Him. Praise, adore Him! Amen.*

To God Be The Glory!