

RESOLUTION

To Reject the Proposals of the "Blue Ribbon Committee on Funding the Mission"

Preamble

The Blue Ribbon Committee on Funding the Mission (Committee) recently released their report (Report), as mandated by the 2004 convention of the LCMS. The Committee was given the task of not only recommending a new funding model, but showing that the model it proposes is supported by Holy Scripture. While we appreciate the difficulty of the task set before it, the results have failed to achieve the objectives they were given.

In their only extended reference to scripture in the report, they note that "Giving is about grace", and "Giving is motivated by God's gracious act in Jesus Christ", yet they produce a funding model that relies largely on the law. In addition claims are made that have neither scriptural warrant nor support, including :

- "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." (Where in Scripture does it say this?)
- "It is time to GROW THIS CHURCH." (Compare to 1 Corinthians 3:6 " I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase.")
- It is a disgrace to our faith and practice that we are losing membership. (Compare to John 6:66 "From that time many of His (Jesus) disciples went back and walked with Him no more.")
- "If some of the storytellers are ordained they could offer sermonical proclamations that lift up the great work we are doing TOGETHER in missions." (Compare to 1 Corinthians 2:2 "For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.")
- "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 misrepresentation has significant funding implications." (The report neither explains what the funding implications are, nor explains how such a change is supported by Holy Scripture. This is also untrue - no congregation gets two votes at a synodical convention - we have a system of circuit delegates, which eases these discrepancies.)
- 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. (How does this do anything except increase travel expenses for Board meetings, unless the task force assumes that the new regents will be major donors as well. Is the Committee really suggesting that we follow a secular model and sell seats on the Boards of Regents of our seminaries? If so, they have offered NO scriptural support for giving such

advantages to the wealthy in our synod. "The first shall be last and the last shall be first.")

Beyond these unscriptural claims, the funding model presented by the report is of coerced dollars. Corporate Structures will be assessed a percentage of their income (including Concordia Plans, which would then be forced to pass the cost to Pastors.) RSO's would pay a yearly entry fee based on annual budget. Districts would be assessed a certain amount. Congregations would either pay based on membership or be denied access to synodical services.

The following handbook sections speak to these recommendations :

Regarding Corporate Structures : 3.6.1 The Synod in convention has authorized the creation of corporate and legal entities that are to be servants of and to the Synod and its members. Their purpose, function, and assigned areas of responsibility are set forth in these Bylaws. (Notice that the corporate entities *serve the synod* according to specific purposes. None of these specific purposes include fund-raising for or on behalf of the synod. Rather, they assist the synod in carrying out its responsibilities and objectives. They already exist for the benefit of the synod. The report seems to think they draw benefit from alliance with the synod, for which they should pay, rather than the other way around.)

Regarding RSO's : 6.2.1. The granting of recognized service organization status by the Synod signifies that a service organization, while independent of the Synod, fosters the mission and ministry of the church... (The RSO's exist to help further the cause of the synod, and for this reason they are formed. They do not, generally, exist first and then decide that they could raise extra money if they gained RSO status.)

Regarding Districts : 4.1.1. A district is the Synod itself performing the functions of the Synod. (Assessing a yearly fee to the Districts is playing a "shell game" with the money. Districts, facing less overall funds, would cut programs which are nothing more than "functions of the synod" to fund "functions of the synod" in a different location. Districts were created specifically to more efficiently carry out the work of the synod in individual locations. This report assumes that a central organization can do that work more efficiently. If that is true, why have districts?)

Regarding Congregations : Constitution : VII:2 Membership of a congregation in the Synod gives the Synod no equity in the property of the congregation. (Yet the synod is recommending taxing congregations.)

Whereas, the Committee has failed in its objectives and assigned duties, namely, giving scriptural support for funding system it has proposed, and

Whereas, the report would unnecessarily interfere with the fine work of RSO's and would impose additional burdens on the Concordia Plans, and other corporate entities, which already exist to serve the synod and her members, and

Whereas, recently published figures on executive salaries indicate that top-level executive officers of the synod are being given compensation packages which place them far out of alignment with the average parish pastor, who holds "the highest office in the church" (Walther, Church and Ministry, Thesis VIII) yet no recommendation was made that executive salary scales be brought into line with the honors accorded parish pastors, and

Whereas, the report suggests adding two new executive salaries to the synodical payroll, at a cost of \$200,000 per year, while offering no guarantees that the success of their efforts will be any better than the success of the Fan Into Flame efforts to raise funds for Ablaze! which so far have not recouped the startup costs,(Board of Directors Minutes, May 2006) and

Whereas, if the synod were to demand money from any entity, the advice of CFW Walther would be to withhold funds from the synod :

Therefore the Synod cannot impose taxes, not even a penny. If our Synod would ever say, "Every congregation must contribute one cent every year," 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.

Therefore be it

Resolved, that the Wyoming District Pastor's Conference memorialize the synod to reject the funding proposals outlined in the Report, for the reasons stated above, and be it

Resolved, that the Synod produce materials showing what percentage of its budget is allocated to executive staff, and what percentage is actually spent "in the field", and be it

Resolved that the Synod be encouraged to do as CFW Walther suggested, begging for the funds and making the case for the value of the work done by the national synod to the districts, and congregations of the synod, and that the districts and congregations of the synod be encouraged to give in gratitude from the resources that God has entrusted to them.

Adopted at the 2006 Wyoming District Fall Pastoral Conference