

## Critical Race Theory (CRT) v. The Cross of Redemption and Transformation

by [Pr. K. Craig Moorman](#), Member of the board of Lutheran CORE



*“So Jesus again said to them ... ‘The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly. I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. He who is a hireling and not a shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf snatches them and scatters them.’” (John 10:7a, 10-12, RSV)*

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ —

My heart is broken. And no doubt, so is yours. Rarely, if ever (at least not since the 1860’s), have we experienced so much enmity and animosity rise up within our nation. It is especially evident within the Church, people groups, and our own families. There are many reasons for this. The purpose of this article is *not* to unpack a detailed history behind this cultural shaking but to name just one source of this great divide, *Critical Race Theory (CRT)*. Minimally, *CRT* serves as a catalyst for this all-consuming fire of chaos and confusion, truly exasperating an already significant rift in our nation’s union. Also, I hope to scratch the surface of why pastors and leaders of the Church should be deeply troubled and consider engaging in the conversation surrounding *CRT*. As I consider this issue, in light of my call as a ‘little shepherd’ within Christ’s Church (and my own family), I am quite aware of what

### In This Issue:

- What’s Dividing Our Nation?
- What Happened to Pioneer Evangelism?
- Testing the ELCA’s Honesty about Reconciling Works
- New Video Book Review for July
- Protesting for Religious Freedom
- New Digital Magazine for World Mission
- Surviving the Shortage of Pastors

### Inside this Issue:

<b>CRT v. CRT.....</b>	<b><a href="#">p. 1</a></b>
<b>Reconciling Works Wants?.....</b>	<b><a href="#">p. 2</a></b>
<b>Coming Events .....</b>	<b><a href="#">p. 2</a></b>
<b>Seminary Professors Give Solid Support for Traditional Views.....</b>	<b><a href="#">p. 3</a></b>
<b>Global Missions 2021.....</b>	<b><a href="#">p. 4</a></b>
<b>Video Book Reviews.....</b>	<b><a href="#">p. 5</a></b>
<b>Bible as the Word of God .....</b>	<b><a href="#">p. 5</a></b>
<b>Brother Hub ... Sister Spoke....</b>	<b><a href="#">p. 6</a></b>
<b>When ... Beyond Clergy.....</b>	<b><a href="#">p. 7</a></b>
<b>Protest at Finnish Embassy..</b>	<b><a href="#">p. 13</a></b>
<b>Celebrating Global Mission....</b>	<b><a href="#">p. 14</a></b>
<b>ALPB Piepkorn Books.....</b>	<b><a href="#">p. 14</a></b>

# What Does Reconciling Works Want?

by Pr. David Charlton, Vice-President of the Board of Lutheran CORE

Several years ago, I sent an email to Bishop Eaton sharing a concern that I had about seminarians with traditional views on human sexuality and marriage. Earlier that year, there had been a crisis at United Lutheran Seminary, when it was discovered that the seminary president had once considered homosexuality to be sinful. What was worse, she had belonged to an organization that advocated conversion therapy. The student body, along with ReconcilingWorks, demanded that she either resign or be fired. In addition, ReconcilingWorks withdrew its endorsement of ULS as an RIC (Reconciling in Christ) seminary. After the president's resignation, ULS worked diligently to regain that endorsement.

Given that a formerly traditional president was deemed unacceptable, I was concerned that ReconcilingWorks also considered traditional professors and students to be unacceptable. Therefore, I [wrote](#) to Bishop Eaton to ask whether traditional students were still welcome at ELCA seminaries. Bishop Eaton reassured me that they were indeed welcome. After all, she said, the goal of ReconcilingWorks was inclusivity. They wanted to make sure that all people were welcome in the ELCA. They were also committed to the notion that we could live together in spite of our differences.

I decided to find out if this was the case. I contacted my synod's branch of ReconcilingWorks. I told them that my congregation had traditional values on sex and marriage, but was committed to living together in spite of our differences. Could we become a RIC congregation? The answer was "No." Only congregations that are committed to the full inclusion of LGBTQIA+ people could be RIC congregations.

Since this contradicted what Bishop Eaton told me, I asked what ReconcilingWorks' expectations were for synods and seminaries. I was referred to the national office of ReconcilingWorks. They confirmed what I had been told about their expectations for congregations. When I asked about their expectations for synods and seminaries, I was told that they were different. I asked them to be more specific. Did ReconcilingWorks expect synods to weed out traditional pastors in the call process? Did they expect candidacy committees to weed out traditional candidates for ordination or rostered ministry? Furthermore, did they expect seminaries to refuse to hire professors who held traditional views, or refuse to accept applications from students with traditional



views? The spokesperson for ReconcilingWorks declined to answer those questions in writing. She offered to discuss it further by phone. Thinking that was a waste of time, I did not call her.

However, in 2021, I decided to try again. I contacted the same spokesperson and received the same reply. She was unwilling to answer my questions in writing, but was willing to discuss it on the phone. Unfortunately, when I called, there was no answer. I left a message asking her to return my call, but she did not. After further attempts, I gave up.

What I have concluded from all of this is that ReconcilingWorks is not committed to the inclusion of all people despite their views on sexuality and marriage. Instead, they are committed to the gradual conversion of all congregations, synods, and seminaries to their position. It isn't surprising that this is the goal of ReconcilingWorks, but at the least, we should expect them to be honest about it. More importantly, since the ELCA endorses ReconcilingWorks as a ministry partner, and consults them before making any important decision, it should be honest about the true agenda of ReconcilingWorks.

## Coming Events

**NEXUS Course** — July 11-17, 2021. Click [here](#).

**Protest at the Finnish Embassy** - July 31, 2021, Washington DC from 1-6 p.m. Click [here](#).

**Lutheran Week** @American Bank Center, Corpus Christi, TX — Aug 2- 6, 2021. Click [here](#).

**LCMC 2021 Annual Gathering and Convention** — @Upper Arlington Church, Hilliard, Ohio—October 3-6, 2021. [Click here](#).

# Seminary Professors Give Solid Biblical Support for Traditional Views

by [Pr. Dennis D. Nelson](#), Lutheran CORE Executive Director

Thank you to the three professors at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis (LCMS), who have written powerful, definitive, Scriptural, and confessional responses to documents from ReconcilingWorks, an organization that seeks to give a Biblical basis for affirming the LGBTQ+ lifestyle and for fully welcoming LGBTQ+ people into the life of the church, including as rostered leaders of the church.

I highly recommend their articles to you. Among the people who I believe would especially be interested are -

Those who hold to the traditional, Biblical view and who are looking for resources to help them defend and advocate for that view

Those who are genuinely seeking and wondering - with so many voices to the contrary - if the traditional, Biblical view is plausible and defensible

Dr. Thomas Egger, president of the seminary and professor of exegetical theology, has written a review of Reconciling Scripture for Lutherans: Sexuality and Gender Identity. A link to his review can be found [here](#). Dr. Egger's thesis, which he defends admirably and in great detail, can be found in the opening and closing paragraphs of his article. "*Reconciling Scripture for Lutherans* does not carefully listen to and apply the Bible as God's authoritative Word to the matter of human sexuality and gender identity, but rather ***offers creative ways to employ Biblical language and theological categories to confirm a set of convictions that have been arrived at on other grounds.***" (page 18)

Dr. Joel Biermann, professor of systematic theology, has written "An Evaluation and Reaction" to another document from ReconcilingWorks – Lutheran Introduction to Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Gender Expression. A link to his article can be found [here](#). A few phrases from his article will reveal his major point, which he makes clearly and supports strongly.

"Considering the remarkable prominence given the word Lutheran on the cover, it seems clear that the intent of the document is to provide teaching from and for Lutheran Christians. Yet after the first sentence, *Lutheran* appears once more (pg. 6), *church* makes a similar fleeting singular appearance (pg. 2), and the word *Christian* is absent. Most remarkable of all, perhaps, there is no reference or even allusion to Jesus or God anywhere in the document." (page 1)

"Another word noticeably, but unsurprisingly,



absent from the document is sin. Presumably, the discovery and celebration of one's individual, self-identified, identity offers no quarter for an idea like sin. . . . Given the suppression of sin in the document, it is hardly surprising that Jesus makes not even a cameo appearance. With no sin, what need is there of a savior; and with my identity and self-expression determined by myself who needs, or wants, a Lord?" (pages 2-3)

Dr. Timothy Saleska, professor of exegetical theology and dean of ministerial formation, has also written a response to Reconciling Scripture for Lutherans. A link to his article can be found [here](#). A friend of Lutheran CORE wrote, "It is at once thoroughly charitable in its response, humble and honest in self-examination, empathetic to the plight of LGBTQ+ persons . . . thoughtful in genuinely trying to understand the perspective of LGBTQ+ affirming persons . . . – and yet unflinching in telling the truth about homosexuality and transgenderism from a confessional Lutheran, traditional sexual ethics perspective."

As a retired pastor who is rostered in a Lutheran church body that has contained on the homepage of its website links to resources from ReconcilingWorks, and whose presiding bishop did not give me the courtesy of responding to my email when I asked her why the ELCA website never also contains links to resources with traditional views (thus violating the spirit and language of the 2009 social statement, "Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust," which acknowledged that people within "this church" hold a

Continued on [page 13](#)



# Global Missions 2021: How Did We Get Here ... What Now?

By [Bill Moberly](#), Founder and Director of Awakening Lives to World Missions

“The joy experienced during these months will never be forgotten,” he wrote, “the joy of telling people ‘The Old, Old Story,’ a story which they never before had heard. That joy cannot be described; it can only be experienced.” (Rev. Ralph D Hult, Lutheran pioneer missionary to Africa.)<sup>1</sup> Those stirring words echo Jesus’ teaching in Luke 15:7 *“I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.”* The powerful stories of the thousands of Lutheran missionaries who served the predecessor bodies that formed the ELCA, going back to the first missionary sent in 1842, are rooted in this truth and the call that compels us to *pray, send and go*.

<sup>18</sup> *Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup> Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”* Matt. 28:16-20

This is still the primary Global Mission task given to His Church by our Lord Jesus Christ: *to go and make disciples of all the nations (ethne)*! If your only frame of reference for global missions is the past generation, during the decline in the number of synodical Lutheran missionaries, and the increasing focus on the “accompaniment” mission model in the ELCA, it might surprise you to learn, for example, that China (including Hong Kong & Taiwan) and India have received more Lutheran missionaries since 1842 than any other country! Lutheran pioneer missionary efforts among the unreached and least reached over the decades have always included proclamation of the Gospel, discipleship, along with building schools, hospitals and other humanitarian efforts.

With my undergrad degree in history, I love looking at where we have been – both for the powerful stories of people living and serving – but also to learn from the past. When I heard for the first time in the early 1990’s about ‘accompaniment’ as the likely new ELCA global mission, I had just begun working more directly in global missions. In that role I was learning terms like ‘unreached people groups’ and



distinguishing between the *unreached* and *unevangelized*. My first thought on ‘accompaniment’ was, ‘how can the more than three billion unreached people, where the church barely exists - if at all - ever invite us to accompany them?’ Nearly half of the world’s population, the “all nations” still needing to hear the Gospel, were ignored. So, let’s look back to 1988.

When the ELCA formed, there were more than 780+ long term missionaries serving the three predecessor synods: ALC, LCA and AELC. By 2002 the collective number had dropped to 166. This now also included long term *and* short term missionaries (1-2 years). Now, according to the ELCA:

“there are 240 missionaries in four categories:

Long-term (usually four or more years)

Global Mission two-year program

Self-funded volunteer (varied length) - includes teachers and health care professionals

Young Adults in Global Mission (usually one year)

Personnel positions in long-term service meet core programmatic needs in the ELCA's global mission program... The number of long-term positions is limited”<sup>4</sup>

The long-term pioneer missionaries of past generations – who learned the local language, adapted culturally and toiled continually to bring the Gospel to new ‘tongues, tribes, peoples and languages’ – are no more. What happened? Dr. Robert Benne put it

Continued on [page 10](#)

## Video Book Reviews — July 2021

by [Pr. Dennis D. Nelson](#), Lutheran CORE Executive Director

Lutheran CORE continues to provide monthly video reviews of books of interest and importance. Many thanks to Maurice Lee for doing this month's video review. Dr. Lee is the pastor of Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Santa Barbara, California (NALC), a lecturer in theology for the North American Lutheran Seminary, and a member of the NALC's Commission on Theology and Doctrine. His review is about the book, *Loci Communes (1521)* by Philip Melanchthon. A link to his review can be found [here](#).



This year 2021 represents the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the publication of this book, which can be translated “Common Places” or “Common Topics.” This is the book that launched Melanchthon's reputation as a theologian in the Lutheran tradition. According to Dr. Lee, it “stands in the headwaters of specifically Lutheran theology. This work seeks neither to be exhaustive nor to draw attention to itself, but the themes it takes up — among others, law and gospel; faith and works; human nature and human sinfulness — and the ways Melanchthon explores them continue to be resonant and relevant today, 500 years after the original publication.”

This review, as well as seven others, have been posted on our YouTube channel. A link to the channel can be found [here](#). Many thanks to those who have made the reviews.

Our plan is to publish a new video book review during the first week of every month. Many of the books that are being and will be reviewed are described in the List of Confessional Resources on the Seminarians page of our website. That list can be found [here](#).



When you look at a video review for the first time, please click on the Subscribe button. As enough people do that, it will eventually help us to get a channel name that will include our organization's name.

## The Bible as the Word of God

by [Pr. Dennis D. Nelson](#), Lutheran CORE Executive Director



A recent discussion in Lutheran CORE's private and visible Facebook group had to do with whether it is appropriate to refer to the Bible as the Word of God.

The question was raised regarding Lutheran CORE's position on that issue.

We are fully aware of the fact that the real issue behind the issue is more often than not the authority of Scripture. Refusing to call God Father, rejecting evangelism as part of the mission of the church, seeing faith in Christ as only one out of many ways to God, and embracing the radical LGBTQIA+ agenda all result from rejecting the inspiration, reliability, and authority of the Bible.

[Here](#) is a link to Lutheran CORE's 2007 statement, which is entitled “A Lutheran Statement on the Authority and Interpretation of Scripture in the Church.” Although it was written within the context of the ELCA's Book of Faith Initiative, it clearly states that “the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments are the written Word of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob who has revealed himself most fully and completely in Jesus Christ.” This document can be found on the About section of our website. Click on [About](#), and then on [Historical Documents](#).



# Brother Hub Helps Sister Spoke: Everyone Wins

by [Pr. Chris Johnson](#), Secretary of the Board of Lutheran CORE

*This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you. ~ Titus 1:5*

Emphasized in *The Rise of Christianity* by sociologist of religion, Rodney Stark, much of the early Christian movement happened in and around cities. This makes sense since large groups of Jews in the Diaspora would have provided an entry way for the Gospel to be proclaimed. This is precisely what we see recorded in the book of Acts as Paul journeys to Antioch, Ephesus, Philippi, Athens, a myriad of other places, and finally ends up in Rome. Also, practically speaking, cities simply had more ears to preach to than the villages in the hinterlands of Greece, Italy, the Anatolian Peninsula, and other places in what is referred to the Levant. Most entrepreneurs starting businesses will have “test markets” in bigger cities for this very reason: more people.

But what about the rural folk, people “off the beaten path”? Don’t they need to hear the Gospel? Well, of course they do! The Church in due time made inroads into rural communities. This looked different in different places of course. At the risk of oversimplification we see two forms of rural outreach in Church history. Sometimes smaller villages would have a church along with a few monastics living on site. The community in which the church was planted would blossom, grow, and revolve around these small monastic outposts. This form of evangelism and growth of the Church famously dotted the ancient British Isles and followed the Silk Road east to China.

In other places, a church would be served by traveling pastors who would occasionally visit to preside at the Supper, Baptize, and provide pastoral care. These pastors would hail from larger congregations in nearby urban areas. This form of ministry, of a central congregation as a hub of a wheel, with spokes radiating outwards in all sorts of directions, is one which the Church utilized and still utilizes in a number of places. I saw this model of ministry being utilized with great success in Tanzania.

Currently, the congregation I serve as associate pastor has taken on such a model for ministry. We are located in a rather big city for North-Central Wisconsin, Wausau. We are also located within a manageable driving distance to a handful of smaller congregations. A couple of years ago one congregation reached out to us for pastoral support and services. At the time we had three pastors and they were strug-



gling to find pulpit supply. After much prayer, the meeting of the councils, congregational meetings, and a mutually agreed upon contract we started to share our pastoral services, support, and love with more brothers and sisters in Christ.

Our church is the “hub” church. What we refer to as our “sister church” is a “spoke” church, located about 15 miles east. Each church retains their own autonomy (councils, calendars, activities, etc.). And each church shares in the pastoral leadership and support of the (now) 2 full-time pastors and 1 part-time, retired pastor. Between the two churches, every single worship service is led by an ordained pastor. Shut-ins are visited. Sunday schools run unabated. Word and Sacrament are freely shared.

Much more could be said about the specifics of how well this model of ministry works for us, but both hub-sized and rural, spoke-like, churches might want to consider this option as well.

For the hub church and pastoral staff:

1. Pastors are to be the harvesters out among the wheat fields! As a pastor of a hub church, yes, you are primarily called to (and paid by) this congregation. However, don’t let that limit the scope of how you can serve Christ’s Church more broadly. There are “other sheep” out there.
2. Church councils care for the well being of their own church, and also the well-being of their pastor. Thanks be to God! But remember, Christ’s Church is bigger than your own slice of the kingdom. We must care for the “least of these, my brothers” who are without adequate pastoral support. What will the Lord say to us if we neglect

Continued on [page 11](#)

# When Congregational Ministries Might Need to Move Beyond Clergy

by [Dr. Don Brandt](#), Director, [Congregations in Transition](#) for Lutheran CORE

I was going to write about the challenge of discipling online worshipers. However, that topic will need to again wait for the next issue of this newsletter. Why? Because something quite urgent has come to my attention. It was a June 2<sup>nd</sup> (2021) fundraising letter from North American Lutheran Seminary, the seminary for the North American Lutheran Church. In that letter was this statement from the seminary President, Dr. Eric Riesen: “...Over the next ten years more than 70 percent of our current NALC pastors will retire.”

Reflect on the implications of that statement for just a moment. And keep in mind that this forecast is undoubtedly reflective of the clergy supply crisis facing not just the NALC, but the LCMC and ELCA as well.

I am convinced there are *three converging factors* which will create a “perfect storm” when it comes to the available supply of pastors for American churches.

**One factor** is the significant number of current, working pastors who have already reached or surpassed retirement age. We have not yet reached the peak of the exodus of pastors from full-time ministry for a couple of reasons: The pandemic; and the fact that some of these pastors just want to “keep going” despite their age. But the aging process waits for no one, including clergy. Like the full-time pastor who called me to talk about when he might want to start planning for his retirement. His age? 81 years old! And how does the *pandemic* impact retirements? Some pastors, understandably, didn’t want to leave their congregations until the worst of the pandemic was behind them. However, as we begin to enter a post-Covid environment many of these pastors are now about to retire.

A **second factor** contributing to an increasing shortage of pastors is decreasing seminary enrollment. This unfortunate cross-denominational trend has been going on for years, if not decades. Just one example: In that fundraising letter from North American Lutheran Seminary that I mentioned there was a photograph of the graduating class of 2021. Just four students.

A **third factor** in this developing shortage of pastors is clergy burnout. Thom Rainer’s coaching ministry, Church Answers, conducted a cross-denominational survey of over one thousand pastors just last fall. Close to 80% indicated they were

thinking of quitting. That’s right, 80%. No doubt some of this was due to the multiple ways the pandemic has contributed to the stress of church ministry. However, the trend of increasing pastor burnout preceded Covid and will undoubtedly persist post-Covid. Kate Shellnutt, in the July/August (2021) issue of *Christianity Today*, writes: “Across the country, pastors...have ushered weary congregants through virtual worship setups, lonely hospital stays, funerals, job losses, intense political tensions, and relentless debates over pandemic precautions.” She continues, “During the first months of the year, fewer than half of regular churchgoers in the US made it to an in-person service, according to the Pew Research Center, though more than three-quarters said their churches had reopened.”



All three of these factors are converging in the context of American congregations which are, more often than not, dealing with some level of institutional decline. Be it an aging membership, declining worship attendance, or far fewer baptisms, most churches are facing a decidedly uncertain future. Add the developing clergy shortage and the word “crisis” seems more than apt. The Body of Christ will, of course, endure. However, if we don’t confront this crisis in a proactive way a great many people will never be reached with the Good News.

Added to all these ministry challenges, American churches have, for generations, developed an unhealthy dependence on ordained, seminary-trained clergy to lead and serve their congregations. And as I continue, keep in mind that churches led by seminary-trained, ordained clergy was not the New Testament model for local faith communities. (1<sup>st</sup> Peter 2:4-10)

Consider, with me, one possible scenario where a *hypothetical* LCMC congregation makes the decision—after a frustrating and unsuccessful search for a new, ordained pastor—to embrace a ministry model that aspires, out of necessity, to move “beyond clergy”.

This hypothetical church is Grace Lutheran, and it is located in a small city in the Midwest. Grace’s call committee was organized in the summer of 2021;

Continued on [page 12](#)

# Critical Race Theory (CRT) v. Cross of Redemption and Transformation

Continued from [page 1](#)

Jesus speaks to us in John 10:7-10, “*Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and robbers; but the sheep did not heed them. I am the door; if any one enters by me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.*”

We must stand on the truth of what it means to be followers of Jesus Christ, the way of the Cross, and what *that way* conveys in terms of genuine and eternal Redemption and Transformation. This way of CRT (the Cross of Redemption and Transformation) is radically different in its eventual outcome from that of CRT (*Critical Race Theory*) which is rooted in a Marxist ideology and does not include (or allow) a Christ-like redemption or reconciliation but only unhealthy reparations in a spirit of revenge. It does not understand the Christ-like grace and healing experienced in authentic transformation but only that which ‘transforms’ through tearing down and building back something totally unfamiliar to orthodox Christians and traditional citizens of the United States of America.

In his excellent article, *Critical Race Theory: What It Is and How to Fight It*, Christopher Rufo explains why attempts to halt encroachment have not succeeded; one reason for this is that “... *Americans across the political spectrum have failed to separate the premise of critical race theory from its conclusion. Its premise — that American history includes slavery and other injustices, and that we should examine and learn from that history — is undeniable. But its revolutionary conclusion — that America was founded on and defined by racism and that our founding principles, our Constitution, and our way of life should be overthrown — does not rightly, much less necessarily, follow.*” (March, 2021, [Imprimis](#))

## Who’s shepherding our children?

Our hearts should be broken and our spirits in tremendous upheaval because of what CRT represents and how it is establishing itself as a ‘door’ to the hearts and minds of our children and our children’s children. It becomes “a hireling and *not* a shepherd!” (John 10:12) CRT’s agenda is to dismantle the ancient foundational markers and bring division not only to the family but the nation. Deuteronomy 4:9 reminds us, “*Only take heed, and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things which your*

*eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life; make them known to your children and your children’s children.*” An administrator in the public school system recently said, “*Like a cancerous tumor that has metastasized in the body, Critical Race Theory and its variants including social justice; Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI); anti-racism; cultural competency; and implicit bias have poisoned all aspects of public education and even some private schools. These hateful and racist philosophies have become entrenched in every level and aspect of American public education.*” (April 2, 2021, [American Thinker](#), “*I Work in the Public School System-Critical Race Theory Is Everywhere*”) This is only one of countless dozens who are on the frontlines of this intrusive assault upon their students (sheep) who are responding in a similar manner. While many are speaking out, it seems that the Church is relatively silent.

Admittedly, in the past I have not addressed this issue as I should. It would be so tempting and much easier to remain silent and not enter into ‘the arena’ of this particular public discourse. It is messy and may be costly! However, my gut is wrenching when I consider these words: “*Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were hung round his neck and he were thrown into the sea.*” (Mark 9:42) Those who are most vulnerable and malleable — this present generation — are at risk! How can we haphazardly and quietly watch *our children* be told lies, shamed, and coerced into living a life contrary to the Gospel?

## It’s all about the foundation

What has created this void of leadership, seemingly in all segments of our society, to allow such a corrupt and deceptive agenda to permeate the very core of our culture? How have our foundational underpinnings been compromised so terribly and brutalized so thoroughly to divide our nation so severely (cf. *The 1619 Project*, etc.)? “*Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and no city or house divided against itself will stand.*” (Matthew 12:25)

It was just six months into the new millennium, on July 4<sup>th</sup>, 2000, that I wrote down these random thoughts, slightly modified for this writing: “It’s all about the foundation ... As I watch my home being built, I’m mindful that in a few short weeks the insulation will be installed, the drywall stocked and put up, and the trim work finished, thus covering up much of what’s most important ... the electric,

Continued on [page 9](#)



# Critical Race Theory (CRT) v. Cross of Redemption and Transformation

Continued from [page 8](#)

plumbing, HVAC, the framing, and, of course, the foundation. The stuff we take for granted. For the most part we only see the externals. The glitz. The façade. In our society, much of what's most important is 'hidden' from our sight to the point of obscurity or even forgotten. On this first Independence Day of the new millennium our nation's economy is robust and prosperous. But something is not right. We are much 'too comfortable' as a people, which should create a great *discomfort* and uneasiness within our collective spirit, primarily because in the midst of all of our comfort, we are simultaneously witnessing our values, morals, foundational pieces (Declaration of Independence, Constitution, Bill of Rights, etc.) eroding away ... With so much emphasis upon the externals, we are in danger of forgetting what lies at the very core ... what is foundational for our country."

More recently, nearly twenty-one years after completing the construction of our home, we are now engaged in significant remodeling and renovation on many fronts; and once again, ironically, I find myself in a metaphorical and fairly introspective mood, especially as it relates to building on a solid foundation. Whether new building or re-construction, it really is all about the foundation, knowing that the foundation is the basis for all enduring construction which must be deep, bed-rock solid, and level. Before any construction project begins, a transit level (or builder's level) is set upon the proposed construction site. A transit level is an optical instrument, or a telescope, complete with a built-in spirit/bubble level that is mounted on a tripod, and used to establish a reference line. Once the transit is secured, all the subsequent construction of a building is necessarily impacted and the resulting foundation will be either solid or faulty.

## A beginning definition

As noted previously in this article, I'm gravely concerned about CRT and what it represents. I believe that it's a particularly *treacherous* 'transit level' that is being established across the landscape of this great country to supposedly create a new and more hopeful future; but, it must first utterly demolish and completely dismantle the old foundational moorings, beginning with our nation's history and divide us as a people. One of Rev. Martin Luther King's closest friends and advisers, Dr. Wyatt Tee Walker, clearly rejected CRT. One of the core principles of CRT begins with "blocs" (with each person assigned to an identity or economic bloc, as in Marxism). "*Human-*

*to-human interactions are replaced with bloc-to-bloc interactions. As Dr. Walker tried to make clear, thinking in terms of blocs of people, rather than of people as individuals, leads to a whole set of insidious results. How can two people bind together in friendship if they are members of power blocs that are presumed to be inherently opposed ... How can we ever find peace among the races and religions if we won't look to each other, person by person, based on actual facts and actual intentions?"* (RealClear Politics, "*The Civil Rights Legend Who Opposed Critical Race Theory*", Steve Klinsky, October 12, 2020)

In trying to remain objective in defining CRT, I've turned to a known and well-established source, the Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, June 16, 2021: "*Critical Race Theory (CRT), [intellectual](#) movement and loosely organized framework of legal analysis based on the [premise](#) that [race](#) is not a natural, biologically grounded feature of physically distinct subgroups of human beings but a socially constructed (culturally invented) category that is used to oppress and exploit people of colour. Critical race theorists hold that the law and legal institutions in the United States are inherently racist insofar as they function to create and maintain social, economic, and political inequalities between whites and nonwhites, especially African Americans.*"

The proponents of CRT use a variety of euphemisms to attract potential followers; i.e., *equity, social justice, diversity, culturally responsive teaching, white fragility, etc.* For example, "... *critical race theorists realize that 'neo-Marxism' would be a hard sell. Equity, on the other hand, sounds non-threatening and is easily confused with the American principle of equality.*" (March 2021, [Imprimis](#), "*Critical Race Theory: What It Is and How to Fight It*") CRT is being methodically and fiercely introduced and even inoculated into all segments of our culture, including government/military, mainstream media, public education, workplace, sports, religious institutions, etc.

We are presently witnessing the quick erosion — actually a *deliberate* eradication — of the foundational blocks of our country; except now, it's right at our doorstep. Somehow, like a very plump and happy frog luxuriating in a very broad and shallow kettle full of plenteous water but totally oblivious to the reality that the kettle is sitting on a seductively warm *fire* — lulling the frog into a deep sleep and

Continued on [page 13](#)

## Global Missions 2021: How Did We Get Here ... What Now?

Continued from [page 4](#)

this way:

“Convinced that all missionary activity was corrupted by western colonialism, the ELCA decided soon after its formation to forgo pioneer missionary efforts – bringing the Gospel to peoples who had never heard it before. Instead it opted for accompaniment, ie helping already established younger churches in whatever way they determined. While accompaniment itself is a noble enterprise, the refusal to carry the Gospel to those who have never heard it was a direct repudiation of the Great Commission. The number of missionaries plummeted, while social service helpers increased.”<sup>5</sup>

The number of missionaries declined sharply, and the core task also drastically changed. The words of Rev. Hult, above, stand in sharp and disheartening contrast to the words of another Lutheran missionary written nearly a century later:

“My job as a missionary in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is not to convert anyone to anything. The 'accompaniment model' for missionary work, to which we subscribe, is defined as walking together in solidarity, practicing interdependence and mutuality.”<sup>2</sup>

“I usually associate evangelism with an effort to convert nonbelievers to Christianity, something that makes me very uncomfortable. Too often the desire to bring about conversions grows out of a belief that nonbelievers need to be 'saved' from eternal damnation by adopting the Christian faith. To the extent that evangelism is about 'saving souls,' I want nothing to do with it. I approach matters of faith and belief with humility, unwilling to assert the superiority of my own religious beliefs over those of others.”<sup>3</sup>

The ELCA describes it this way, in the Living Lutheran at their website, in a post that has since been removed:

“Today, missionaries with the ELCA serve in 48 countries. . . Most missionaries from Europe and North America are now lay people with special expertise, rather than clergy intent on conversion.”

Essential to finding your way when you're lost is knowing where you are, and how you arrived there! Although many reading this may not agree at all with the loss of evangelism and pioneer missions, or some of the startling statements, the truth is that in many Lutheran congregations global missions *has diminished*, and in some cases virtually disappeared. That is the tragic 'new normal' that has emerged in many churches after nearly 30 years of accompaniment,

and a global missions decline that can be traced, in fact, back into the 1960's. I don't write here to cast blame or point fingers. Those persuaded that missions = colonialism, or church members in our pluralistic age that believe that all religions are roads to the same God, are probably happy with the state of things.

On the other hand, there also many of us who want our congregations to return, in words and in actions, to the priority of Jesus' global mission mandate! Rev. August Carlson, pioneer Lutheran missionary to India, anticipated a time like ours today when global missions would diminish. He urged the publication of a periodical solely on missions, “expressing the fear that missionary information might otherwise eventually come to be relegated to a less important place and missions itself come to be looked upon as secondary in importance”.<sup>6</sup>

The path forward for us is always found as we return to the Word of God and the Lord of the Church! Jesus said, *"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."* (John 14:6) The resurrected Jesus Christ said, *"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."* (Acts 1:8). Jesus' command to HIS church is still to go and make disciples of all the nations! This still starts in our congregations: in our worship, Sunday school, in teaching, in our gatherings of various kinds, and when our members, councils and teams meet to pray and plan. *Every congregation – rural or urban, large or small - is to be purposefully and personally engaged in helping fulfill the global great commission.* We are called to be actively engaged as prayers, givers and goers. After the effects of the last generation, in many churches it may have been so long that you don't remember how or where to start. To put it another way – the fact is that 'we don't know what we don't know'. But ignorance as people and congregations in knowing how to genuinely answer God's call to the nations *is not* bliss. Resources exist, the Lord is calling, and people are still waiting to hear the 'old, old story' of forgiveness and life in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

**Note:** For assistance with evaluating and energizing your global missions ministry, write Pastor Moberly at [missionshelp@alwm.org](mailto:missionshelp@alwm.org)

Continued on [page 13](#)

## Brother Hub Helps Sister Spoke: Everyone Wins

Continued from [page 6](#)

them at such a time as this?

3. You are a congregation with resources – thanks be to God! Those resources can be used in supporting smaller, rural congregations with leadership – pastoral, musical, educational, or otherwise.
4. This will make pastors a bit busier, but it is good to be busy for the sake of the Kingdom of God! Of course, one must weigh the demands of two (or more) congregations appropriately. Pastors can't be everywhere and do everything. This means the hub church will be willing to receive a little less attention from their pastor(s) because they are sharing them with another church.
5. It will be important for the membership of the hub church to know what their pastor(s) are doing at the spoke church. They are invested too and need to be kept in the loop.

### **For the spoke church:**

1. Help is *not* on the way. Pastoral shortages, baby-boomer retirements, and a myriad of other issues have brought us to where we are today. Grieve it and move on. This is one model (hub and spoke) which might be able to make things work given the current circumstances.
2. God loves your church, no matter what size. You exist to glorify God where you are at. God also loves bigger churches too. They can help you. Never be ashamed to ask for help from your brothers and sisters in Christ.
3. Having pastoral support is essential for keeping vitality in a church. Churches can flounder without a shepherd or waiting for one. If you are a rural church, you know how long it takes to get a pastor and chances are, depending on your denominational affiliation, you are low on the priority list. Be proactive – find a larger congregation in your vicinity that might be willing to share their pastor. You never know unless you ask!
4. If you do connect with a bigger church, know that the primary loyalty of the pastor will be to the congregation they are called to. Don't expect this pastor to now devote 40 hours a week to your congregation. An agreed upon contract will make clear what you can and cannot expect from a pastor or a pastoral team.
5. Be willing to be flexible to make things work. If you want a pastor to preach and preside at the

Supper, changing the time you worship, even if you've worshiped at that time for the past 50 years, might need to change.

6. You have resources too! Partnering with a larger church does not now mean their pastor is cheap labor. Be as heavily invested in this partnership as possible. Be generous in how you compensate the larger church in their pastoral support of your congregation. You may not be able to compensate a full-time, benefits included pastor, but you just might enable the larger church to do that very thing. Everyone wins!
7. Remember what is central for the Church: Receiving Jesus Christ and the gifts He gives in Word and Sacrament. Your worship life will have a renewed sense of importance because of this partnership. Worship will be the main area of concentration for the pastor who is helping you out.

More could be said but let this suffice for now. We are not entering uncharted territory. Nor are we entering into unprecedented times. The Church has weathered far worse challenges than what we face today. This doesn't make light of the current struggles, but puts it in a larger perspective. It is God's will that His Church grow and flourish. May this good and gracious will of God be done among us as we look at newer (or older!) models of making ministry happen.





# When Congregational Ministries Might Need to Move Beyond Clergy

Continued from [page 7](#)

about the time that the pandemic was finally winding down, and shortly after their pastor of 18 years announced his retirement.

Since Grace was a healthy and conflict-free congregation the call committee was confident they would be able to find and call the pastor “God had in mind” for their church. Mixed with the committee’s initial optimism there was, however, some anxiety. Grace Lutheran’s post-Covid weekly attendance in the fall of 2021 had shrunk to 85 compared to a pre-Covid 2019 attendance average of over 125. But the call committee forged ahead; confident that part of the attendance losses were simply due to their pastor’s retirement. Surely the “right” new pastor would help rebuild their attendance back to at least what it was in 2019.

However, the search process dragged on into the fall of 2022. The call committee in particular and the members in general were becoming demoralized. There was one brief period of optimism when the committee extended a call to an applicant they were truly excited about. But at the last minute this candidate decided to accept one of the other two calls he was “sitting on.”

It was after going through this frustrating search for over a year that the committee decided to engage the services of (you guessed it) a [Congregations in Transition](#) coach. This coach suggested a new, some would say even radical, strategy. While continuing their search for an ordained pastor the coach recommended that Grace Lutheran consider recruiting, training and hiring a *congregational member* to serve as their minister. Here were the steps their coach outlined for the call committee and church council:

1. First there was the matter of identifying the *right person* from among their members. The question posed by the coach was, “Does a particular male or female member come to mind as someone God might be ready to call—whether part-time or full-time—to be a minister here at Grace?” It would need to be someone who had the necessary gifts, faith, maturity, and integrity to fill such an important role. Also, this individual would need to have already established a reputation, among the members, of being a faithful and trustworthy congregational leader. With these qualifications in mind the call committee and council members were asked to pray and reflect on this question. After an extended time of prayer and reflection (weeks perhaps?) there was the difficult task of coming to a consensus as to which person

would be approached. This took place in a (one-day) retreat setting.

2. The next step—once a consensus was reached—was to approach the “candidate”. The question asked of this individual was this: Would he or she be willing to eventually accept such a paid ministry position if the congregation agreed to pay the cost of online ministry training? In addition to this training the future minister would be encouraged to establish a mentoring relationship with an ordained pastor. This could either be a CiT coach or a pastor living and serving within driving distance of Grace Lutheran.

3. Once this member agrees to pursue ministry training the church council and congregation would make this arrangement both public and official, commissioning (and celebrating with) this “minister-in-training” at a worship service.

4. In consultation with congregational leaders the chosen future minister would then decide on an appropriate online ministry training program. Possibilities considered might include St. Paul Seminary (St. Paul, Minnesota), the Institute of Lutheran Theology (Brookings, South Dakota), and North American Lutheran Seminary (Ambridge, Pennsylvania).

**Note:** If the person chosen is unable to commit to eventually work as a full-time minister the congregation should then be open to negotiating a worker-priest contract where this individual would be part-time and bi-vocational. It is imperative that the “right” person not be passed over simply because he/she cannot be a full-time minister.

The above hypothetical scenario does not by any means address all of the details that would need to be worked out by the leaders of a congregation like Grace Lutheran. These include the eventual job description, compensation, and whether this member-minister would be pursuing formal ordination (or not). However, this entire process could be monitored and, to an extent, led by a [Congregations in Transition](#) coach. By all means email me if you have any questions.

Grace and peace,  
Dr. Don Brandt  
[pastordonbrandt@gmail.com](mailto:pastordonbrandt@gmail.com)  
503-559-2034

## Critical Race Theory (CRT) v. Cross of Redemption and Transformation

Continued from [page 9](#)

eventual death as the temperature of the water overcomes the frog — we, too, have become totally unaware of our immediate surroundings, either because we have taken so much for granted and the water is way too familiar or we have become distracted by the trivialities and choices of life or just plain fell into carelessness in our inability to assess the spirit of the age. (1 John 4:1-6)

In Part II, I will unpack further the distinctives between the philosophical ways and intent of *Critical Race Theory* and the theological-biblical ways and intent of the *Cross of Redemption* and *Transformation*.

In Christ's love,

K. Craig Moorman  
Mission Developer/Pastor of *River's Edge Ministries*/NALC-LCMC  
Mt. Airy, Maryland

## Global Missions 2021: How Did We Get Here ... What Now?

Continued from [page 10](#)

Footnotes

### **1 -Three missionary pioneers and some who have followed them**

by [Swan Hjalmar Swanson](#) p. 120

2-(<https://www.thedailybeast.com/no-talk-no-peace-how-israels-separation-barrier-cuts-off-the-conversation0>) - Sept, 2013

3 -<https://www.exposingthelca.com/exposed-blog/archives/10-2013> The original quote from the Living Lutheran, used in the article footnoted here, is no longer available at the ELCA website

4: [Where We Work - Evangelical Lutheran Church in America \(elca.org\)](#)

5 - [<https://www.atlantic-nalc.org/about/our-history/>] by Robert Benne.

### **6 -Three missionary pioneers and some who have followed them**

by [Swan Hjalmar Swanson](#) p. 33.

## Protest at the Finnish Embassy for Dr. Päivi Räsänen and Rev. Dr. Juhana Pohjola

The above have been charged with "ethnic agitation" for their views on marriage and sexuality. Click [here](#) for more details.

3301 Massachusetts Ave  
NW, Washington, DC 20008  
on July 31st from 1-6 p.m.



## Seminary Professors Give Solid Biblical Support for Traditional Views

Continued from [page 3](#)

number of views, including traditional views, "with conviction and integrity,") I found it refreshing and encouraging that another church body would have professors at one of its seminaries that would write clearly and compellingly in support of traditional, Biblical, moral values.

I highly recommend these three articles to you.

## Celebrating Global Mission

By [Bill Moberly](#), Founder and Director of Awakening Lives to World Missions

CGM ([www.cgmmag.com](http://www.cgmmag.com)) is a new, free, web based publication that “*Informs, inspires & encourages Lutherans to take the Gospel to the nations*”! The compelling PURPOSE behind CGM is the Great Commission: Jesus’ timeless command to “Go and make disciples of all the nations (ethne)”. The HEART of CGM is the faithful, challenging, difficult and fruitful work of our founding global mission partners: World Mission Prayer League, Lutheran Bible Translators and Friends of Madagascar Mission. Their front line missionary stories will be featured on a regular basis, along with other Lutheran agencies that may join us in the future, in a wide-ranging collection of world mission themed articles published quarterly.

CGM is published by Awakening Lives to World Missions, in partnership with Bible Alive Ministries. The experienced team includes Rev. Bill Moberly, Editor; Rev. Kent Groethe, Consulting Editor (founding editor and publisher of Connections Magazine the first decade), and Joy Minion is Publishing Editor. She had the same role the first ten years of Connections.

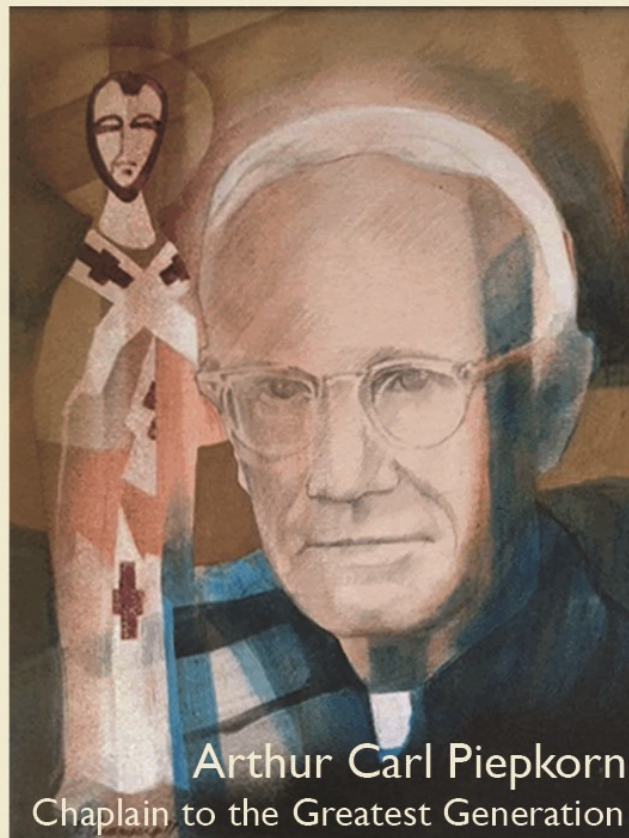
Rev. August Carlson was a pioneer Lutheran Missionary to India from 1878-1882. He had a profound love for Christ and was a clarion voice for the missionary needs among the unreached. As was common in the early days, many missionaries left the USA not knowing if they would ever return. He pleaded passionately in many letters to the Synod to send more workers. Rev. Carlson also “*advocated a periodical devoted wholly to missions, expressing the fear that missionary information might otherwise eventually come to be relegated to a less important place and missions itself come to be looked upon as secondary in importance.*” *That is where we are today in much of our Lutheran family! It is in that same Spirit that we commend to you CGM. The first issue was published in May. The second issue will be available mid July!*



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