

**Foundation and Mission**  
**Southern Illinois District Convention Essay, 2021**

**[SLIDE 1:] PART ONE: Foundation for Mission**  
**OR Mission: Why?**

When we celebrated Reformation500 in 2017, we were only beginning what turns out to be quite a series of half-century observances for significant Reformation events. In April of last year, it was exactly 500 years since Martin Luther appeared at the Diet of Worms. Our Synod celebrated April 18, 2021 as “Here I Stand” Sunday.<sup>1</sup>

“Here I stand” language implies a foundation. You had better stand on a foundation, a firm one, or you won’t keep standing very long. Jesus said as much at the very end of the Sermon on the Mount, when He talked about building on the rock.<sup>2</sup>

Mission needs a foundation. Churches need a foundation. Addressing the church at Corinth, St. Paul harkened back to his mission work there. [SLIDE 2:] By inspiration, he wrote: “In accordance with the grace that God gave me, I laid a foundation as an expert master builder.” Of course, Paul was not thinking about just any foundation. He had in view THE foundation. He went on that “no one can lay any other foundation than the one that is already laid, and that is Jesus Christ.”<sup>3</sup> Paul reminded the Christians at Corinth that the Good News about Jesus – the promise of forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation on account of Christ – formed the foundation for their life in the Lord and their life together as church.

Because of the church’s one foundation, Jesus Christ her Lord, the church is characterized by mission. [SLIDE 3:] Wilhelm Loehe, in probably his most famous words, affirmed that “. . . mission is nothing but the one church of God in motion. . . .”<sup>4</sup> Why mission? Because of the church-creating promise of Jesus Christ!

[SLIDE 4:] This first part of the essay will center around the fact that *promissio* forms the foundation for *missio*.<sup>5</sup> [SLIDE 5:] Here is the outline for today: First, I will note that underlying *missio* is *promissio*. Second, I will expand on that a bit and point out that

God's *promissio* for all results in *missio* to all. Third, and finally, I will caution us all that without the concretely available *promissio*, what comes about is a new *missio*.

[SLIDE 6:]

#### **A. *Promissio* underlies *missio***

When I was young, my father made me many promises. I'd guess you could say something similar. Some of my dad's promises were about big things, and others were relatively small. Certain of them applied pretty much to the short run, while others were for the long run. All these promises had this much in common, though: I could only take them in faith.

So it is with every promise. You cannot do anything to make a promise any more true or certain. You can't work on a promise. You cannot make it so, even by trying really, really hard to believe it. When my dad made me a promise, any promise, I could only take him at his word. Now, I could have refused to believe what he said. But I had grown to know him as trustworthy, so I trusted him. In any case, there is but one way to appropriate a promise, and that is by faith.

The Lutheran Confessions called attention to this. [SLIDE 7:] In making the point that forgiveness of sins is obtained only by faith in Christ, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession noted that "the forgiveness of sins is something promised on account of Christ. Therefore it cannot be received in any other way than by faith alone, since a promise cannot be received in any other way than by faith alone." The Apology went on to quote Romans 4, verse 16. [SLIDE 8:] This passage says, "For this reason it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed." The Apology elaborated: "If the matter depended on our merits, the promise would be uncertain and useless since we could never determine when we had earned enough merit."

How good it is for us that God gives His grace through a promise, and not by our merits! Because it comes through a promise, it cannot be received by our works, which will never amount to enough in quantity or show themselves good enough in quality. A promise has to be received in faith. And this makes it all the more certain that the entire reality of our salvation comes from God's grace, His unmerited love for sinners in Christ.

[SLIDE 9:] The Apology went on to quote Galatians 3, verse 22: “But the Scripture has said that everything is a prisoner of sin, so that the promised blessing might be given to believers through faith in Jesus Christ.”<sup>6</sup> The Apology observed that this was “Paul’s chief argument, which he often repeats,” and that it was “based upon the nature of a promise.”<sup>7</sup> God’s gift of salvation through a promise, *promissio*, can only be received through faith.<sup>8</sup>

Now, I can remember one promise my dad broke. He had promised to play touch football with my brother and me after he got home from work one summer’s day, but he did not do so. In fact, he never returned to our house. That day, he died in an accident at the chemical plant where he worked.

Scripture calls death the last enemy. Death is a cold and cruel interrupter. It interrupts life, as people live life together with one another. Among other things, it blocks the keeping of promises, and it does so quite effectively. Unless the Lord comes first, you and I will die. And when we die, who knows how many promises we will leave unkept – to utility companies (to pay our bills), to spouses, friends, children or grandchildren, to churches? However many promises we have broken throughout our lives, death will force us to break some more.

[SLIDE 10:] For His part, though, our Lord Jesus Christ breaks no promise. Think of Luke 24, the story of Jesus and the two bound for Emmaus on the first Easter. Those two said, in effect: “We thought this Jesus of Nazareth was the One!” Yet now Jesus was dead, which pretty much spelled an end to their fond hopes. So, forgetting it all, they were going home. Then Jesus told them – while they still did not know that it was Him with Whom they spoke! – that the Christ had to suffer all these things before entering into His glory. Then from Moses and all the prophets, He told them what all the Scriptures had said about Him, promise after promise. The plan of salvation called for Him to keep every single one of those promises, including those that specified for Him the very worst treatment at the hands of men and even abandonment by God.<sup>9</sup> He gave His life as a ransom for all.<sup>10</sup> Then God brought Him back from the dead as Victor, Lord of everyone and everything. In Jesus, only in Jesus, could death turn out to be a way to *keep* promises, yes, God’s most vital promises to a world of guilty, dying, hell-bound

sinner. Christ was put to death for our transgressions and raised for our justification.<sup>11</sup> Now, Scripture says, all the promises of God are YES and AMEN in Him.<sup>12</sup>

When my dad died, the biblical promises of forgiveness of sins and peace with God and eternal life comforted my family and me. Assurance of salvation, for my dad and for ourselves, did not depend on our own feeble works. Nor did it grow out of some eternal principle like the undying nature of God. No, it rested squarely on the flesh-and-blood death and resurrection of Jesus, the Man Who is also God. Baptized into Christ's dying and rising, the Holy Spirit gave us faith to believe that like my dad, we too will be gathered around the throne of the Lamb in the endless day of eternity.

[SLIDE 11:] Here lies the foundation, which also serves as the springboard, for all the church's mission work. Underlying *missio* is *promissio*.

Put differently, *promissio* becomes the secret to *missio*. The secret is not any movement deep inside of you, like a spiritual awakening complete with a rush of emotional energy. [SLIDE 12:] No, the crucified and now risen Lord breathed on His disciples and said, in John 20: "As the Father has sent Me, so I am sending you . . . Receive the Holy Spirit. Whenever you forgive people's sins, they are forgiven; whenever you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."<sup>13</sup> There is *missio* – and at its heart, *promissio*!

The foundation for mission is none other than God's Good News from and in the Christ Who died for us and rose again. This revealed word forms the reason for mission, and it gives us the motive power to engage in mission. [SLIDE 13:] Martin Luther observed that "God does not deal with us, nor has He ever dealt with us, otherwise than through the word of promise, and we in turn cannot deal with God otherwise than through faith in the Word of His promise."<sup>14</sup> *Promissio* underlies *missio*.

Sometimes the promise seems to be *all* that provides the bedrock foundation for mission. And that is not bad. These days, it would indeed be quite a stretch to say that someone should affiliate with the church to gain standing in society or to join in building a cultural empire. Those days are gone, and they need not be lamented. It really is good for the church to be thrown back on the promise of God. Whenever we make various external props out to be foundational for our mission, or integral to it, we mislead

ourselves. If apparent success comes our way, we can be tempted toward triumphalism. Because of the results we might seem to be getting, it can look like God is in His heaven and all is right with the world! On the other hand, if events take a turn for the worse, a melancholy can set in that impedes mission. You might not even want to get out of bed in the morning, let alone do mission work.

So how can the church maintain a level-headed approach in which victories do not result in false pride and setbacks do not detour us onto the road toward despair? Well, recall what we have been saying so far – that what underlies *missio* is *promissio*. Then we will walk by faith, not by sight.<sup>15</sup> Then too, we can live, in Paul’s words from 1 Corinthians 7, “as though not.”<sup>16</sup> That is, we can act as if the external circumstances do not matter, whether they appear positive or negative.<sup>17</sup>

My dad’s favorite football player was Johnny Unitas, the Baltimore Colt quarterback. John Unitas typically walked off the field calm and composed, whether he had just thrown a touchdown pass or an interception. Let that serve as just a little illustration of what I am talking about. [SLIDE 14:] Luther observed that “the true understanding and fulfillment of the First Commandment is a faith which is neither elevated by prosperity nor cast down by adversity.”<sup>18</sup> Neither external circumstances, nor immediate results or the lack of them will either make or break the church’s commitment to mission when the church recognizes the foundation for *missio* in *promissio*.

[SLIDE 15:]

## **B. *Promissio* results in *missio***

*Promissio* constitutes the foundation for *missio*, and *missio* results from *promissio*. A promise that is *for* all results in a mission *to* all. [SLIDE 16:] After Jesus rose, He said: “This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day; and on the basis of His Name, repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached to all nations.”<sup>19</sup>

Years ago, a St. Louis seminary student in a class on preaching had to deliver a sermon in front of a video camera for viewing by his instructor, a pastor from Southern

Illinois named Dale Meyer. So that the student would have a living person to look at, as well as the camera, he recruited for his taping session an audience of one. This was another student – in this case, one who had been up all night working on a paper.

Imagine the scene: the camera, the tired one-man audience, and the preacher who had rehearsed everything, from his various gestures down to a carefully practiced scowl. That scowl was supposed to come when the student preacher reached a high point in his proclamation of God's Law, when he said that without Christ we are all on the way to hell. In the actual recording session, the student was nearing this key point in the sermon. He spoke his climactic Law-line – without Christ, we are all on the way to hell! At just that moment, the one-man audience – the guy who had been up all night – could not contain a yawn. Well, the student preacher saw that, and instead of his deliberately planned scowl, he involuntarily broke out into a big smile.

Watching the video later, Dale Meyer did not fail to note that smile. Of course, Dale did not know why the student preacher had smiled, but he did offer that young man an understandable critique. Dale said: "Never talk about people going to hell, and then smile."

[SLIDE 17:] Let me ask: unless there's a tired one-man audience smiling at the worst possible moment, why would anyone talk about people going to hell and then smile – even if that's only smiling on the inside? [SLIDE 18:] One possible reason is that deep down we might not believe that anyone really will go to hell, that everyone in the world is going to heaven. I rather doubt that this bulks large as a problem in Southern Illinois District churches. Still, God's people always need to be on guard against this teaching, which is called universalism. It turns out to be deadly for mission. Especially should we be on the lookout for universalism these days, as our society is taking the unimpeachability of personal genuineness to extremes that would hardly have been dreamt of 50 years ago in the heyday of "I'm OK – You're OK."

But could there be any other possible reasons for someone to smile, at least internally, when we note that people are going to hell? [SLIDE 19:] Well, we might recall the entirely biblical teaching that none of God's elect will be among those in hell. If I remember that, I might smile out of a sense of relief: it won't be me that causes any of

the elect to be lost, for none of the elect will be lost. Even if I fail in evangelism, my failure will not bring about the loss of the elect, no, not even one of them.

Now, you might ask: why even bring up the elect while talking about the church's evangelistic efforts? After all, we have no way of sitting on God's shoulder to see, the way He can see, precisely who the elect are. It seems to me that mentions of the elect have come into discussions of evangelism largely over against tendencies to try to move Christians to evangelism based on the Law. "If you don't act," that kind of persuasion might say, "think of how many people will die and go to hell, even while I am speaking this sentence! You have to prevent this. You must do something. Get up and get involved in evangelism and mission." So goes the attempt at persuasion. To counter this kind of claim, it is quite appropriate to point to Jesus' own prediction that false messiahs and false prophets would come doing miracles "to deceive, *if possible*, even those whom God has chosen" – for, you see, it is not possible.<sup>20</sup> Or think of Romans 8, which indicates that the people God elected end up being glorified.<sup>21</sup> It is true: none of the elect will be lost.

[SLIDE 20:] However, we can try so hard to avoid one error that we fall off the horse on the other side. The defense can go too far, if it is not cautious. [SLIDE 21:] It can go around carelessly telling Christians: "God's elect are going to be saved, even if you do nothing." (I will come back to that statement in a little while.) Or it can say, in effect: "Don't tell me that I ought to be speaking the Gospel to people. None of God's elect will be lost. If I meet someone but don't tell him the Good News, and he ends up being lost in hell, well, he was lost because . . . because God did not elect him." Right?

Wrong! Sinners are lost because of their own sin and unbelief, not because of God's choice. [SLIDE 22:] Despite claims by Calvinists, for example, God predestines no one to go to hell. He wants all people to be saved and to come to know the truth.<sup>22</sup> The Lord swears by Himself. "As I live," He says, He takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked. God wants the wicked to turn from his way and live.<sup>23</sup>

God's saving grace has appeared to all.<sup>24</sup> Christ died for all.<sup>25</sup> "He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only ours, but also for the sins of the whole world."<sup>26</sup> God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself.<sup>27</sup> With the completed work of Jesus, God was speaking a "not guilty" verdict upon all people.<sup>28</sup> [SLIDE 23:] As the Formula of

Concord put it, “the promise of the Gospel is *universalis*, that is, it pertains to all people.”<sup>29</sup> Keep in mind, as we noted earlier: a promise can be received only in faith. And faith needs a word to believe. *Promissio* is not only the foundation but also the tool for *missio*, and it is a promise of salvation that goes out to all.

[SLIDE 24:] 2 Thessalonians 2, verse 13 says that God chose people for salvation in sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. God’s choice in no way excludes means. The Spirit sanctifies through His Word, and people believe. The Holy Spirit blesses the elect in time by giving them faith in Christ through the means of grace. The elect are not just chosen, period, but they are chosen for salvation in sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. So you see, the biblical teaching on the election of grace hardly amounts to a barrier to mission. In no way does it discourage the telling of the Good News. The very next words that Paul wrote to the Thessalonians were: “For this purpose also He called you by the Gospel which we preach.”<sup>30</sup>

[SLIDE 25:] When you tell someone the Good News about Jesus, God is seriously offering that person forgiveness in Christ. Your Gospel witness may be precisely the way by which God gives faith in Christ to this person. For God creates faith through His powerful Word, and His Word packs this power even when the most humble Christian speaks it. This amounts to yet another reason for Christians to tell others the Good News – along with the fact that the telling is, like other good works, a fruit of faith.

Let’s be bullish on the biblical teaching of universal grace and the equally biblical teaching that God seriously offers His grace to all through His Gospel.<sup>31</sup> [SLIDE 26:] If *promissio* is limited, the resulting *missio* will be limited. Yet God has given a promise that is for all.

To be sure, a question remains: [SLIDE 27:] If God wanted to save all, why didn’t He elect all? He has not seen fit to answer this question. But He has sent His church to make disciples of all nations by baptizing and teaching His Word, and nothing in Scripture contradicts this.

[SLIDE 28:] God has not elected anyone to damnation. The election of grace is all Gospel. It is not Law. Think back to your Law-and-Gospel basics: the Gospel is to be proclaimed to troubled sinners, not to secure Pharisees. So the biblical teaching of



election, which is all Gospel, is to be proclaimed to sinners who are bothered by their sins, not to those who are secure in their sin and unbelief.

Now let me return to a statement I mentioned earlier, namely: [SLIDE 29:] “The elect will be saved, even if you do nothing.” It can indeed be a precious statement of Gospel to tell people that the elect will be saved even if they did fail to witness. Yet it is not to be applied carelessly, without due distinction. In a similar way, it was a very striking statement of the Gospel when Luther said that there is forgiveness for us in Christ even if we murdered and whored a thousand times a day. The statement is true, if grace is grace – and it is! Still, when properly distinguishing between Law and Gospel, you would never use this particular expression from Luther in speaking with a secure sinner. If he is secure in his sin, there’s no way you would want him to think he has permission to go ahead and sin some more. And so likewise, if a Christian is looking for some excuse to evade his evangelistic or mission responsibility, no one should tell him that the elect will be saved despite his inactivity. That would be speaking Gospel words where the Law is needed. On the other hand, when Christians are troubled by their sin in general, and maybe in particular by their failures to tell the Good News, this is not the time to remind them of their responsibilities, even responsibilities arising from love. That would be speaking the Law when the Gospel is needed. Christians who are troubled over their sins can certainly be told that they are sheep who hear the Shepherd’s voice, and no one will snatch them out of His hand.<sup>32</sup> They can even be told that none of God’s elect will be lost on account of their failures to witness, even if they did nothing – for none of the elect will be lost.<sup>33</sup>

[SLIDE 30:] Really, we have good reason to smile. Not smiling about people going to hell, you understand, but rather smiling in spite of the grim reality of hell! We have the Savior and the saving message of victory over sin, death, and damnation. When people feel the threat of hell, they – and we – need the Gospel which Jesus embodied when He rose from the dead. He had taken the worst that sin, death, and the devil could deal out, and He won. Through Word and Sacrament He conveys His victory and the forgiveness of our sins, and He creates the faith through which these blessings are received.

The same Gospel promise that is Good News for us is also good for the whole world. *Promissio* results in *missio*. This promise that is *for* all results in a mission *to* all.

[SLIDE 31:]

### C. Without God's *promissio*, a new and different *missio* arises

Do you perchance recall what you were doing, or not doing, during the spring and summer of 2020? Many of us found ourselves venturing online for a variety of reasons. During those months, I viewed online webinars and coaching sessions hosted by parachurch agencies that promote church planting, such as the Send Institute. Just about everyone in these sessions besides me would have described themselves as “missional.” I learned much from these sessions. They offered some good information for me to pass along in my District. I thank the hosting organizations for providing the sessions free of charge during the early weeks of our country’s collective bout with COVID-19.

I must say, though, that I kept hearing a disquieting note which emerged repeatedly in the sessions. [SLIDE 32:] Leaders and participants kept applauding the “decentralized” approach that the pandemic was forcing upon the church. This was at the time when most local churches were not gathering for services on Sundays. The folks in the online sessions regarded it as a silver lining in the COVID cloud that churches seemed to have very little choice but to operate in this “decentralized” way, without gathering for worship services. For this was the mode that many of the online folks said they have been trying to get into for quite a while.<sup>34</sup> Several times I heard the wish expressed that the church at large would not miss the significant opportunity presented by the pandemic. People wanted the church to make lasting changes and re-frame itself for the community.

What I heard a lot was that churches should not rely too much on Sunday morning gatherings. People compared Sunday morning to the queen in a game of chess, the most powerful piece on the chessboard. But if you really want to develop your chess-playing skills, you take your queen off the board and learn to make maximum use of every other piece. What I was hearing is that the pandemic had effectively done the church a favor in taking Sunday morning off the board. So now there could be a long-overdue *de*-emphasis on the mass gatherings that seem to be so beloved by megachurches and Church Growth adherents. Instead, the spotlight ought to be thrown

onto God's work with and in individuals and smaller groups. This is a hallmark of self-styled "missional" thinking.

But there is more to the missional approach than simply disliking larger groupings of people. The missional approach emerges from a Protestant matrix of teaching which fails to recognize that the means of grace truly *are* means of grace – that they actually offer and convey forgiveness and salvation from the risen Lord.

[SLIDE 33:] Yet Scripture teaches this very thing about the means of grace. Jesus said His men had been made clean by the Word He had spoken to them, and James wrote of the implanted Word which could save souls.<sup>35</sup> Peter taught that "baptism now saves us."<sup>36</sup> In the Lord's Supper, Jesus gives the new testament in His blood, and through the prophet Jeremiah the Lord had noted that the climactic reality of the then-coming new testament was His forgiving iniquity and remembering sin no more. So when Jesus gives you the new testament in His Supper, He is giving you forgiveness of sins.<sup>37</sup>

[SLIDE 34:] We Lutherans therefore confess that God's promise of forgiveness and salvation in Christ is most definitely available to sinners through the means of grace. As Philip Melancthon phrased it, ". . . we must call ourselves back . . . to the gospel and the promise of mercy in which the forgiveness of sins on account of Christ is freely offered."<sup>38</sup> Article XIII of the Apology says: "We are talking about that particular faith that believes the promise being offered . . . that believes the forgiveness of sins is being offered. This use of the sacrament comforts devout and anxious minds."<sup>39</sup>

Yet in the main, anyway, the self-identified "missional" movement does not acknowledge this point.<sup>40</sup> It will mention the Word, maybe even Baptism and the Lord's Supper, without taking them to be genuine means of grace. As a result, in the missional movement's approach the means of grace do not turn out to be decisive. [SLIDE 35:] In one of the sessions I saw online, one person said: "We don't get together to hear sermons."<sup>41</sup>

Well, Lutherans do indeed get together to hear sermons . . . and to hear the absolution and the reading of Scripture and to receive the Lord's Supper. All these amount to more than mere information, or opportunities for a potentially impressive

platform performance by a talented speaker. The Lord Himself works through the means of grace, the Gospel and the Sacraments, to communicate forgiveness and life as only He can.

[SLIDE 36:] Now, if you don't believe this – if you place a priority on connection over content, as I heard it said more than once – then it becomes thinkable for you to relegate church services to a backseat. For they are not where you would think the action is. The action would lie instead in what God is doing in your neighborhood, whatever that may be. The online sessions that I saw were placing a priority on the church figuring out what the movement of God might be in your locality and then getting on board with it, perhaps in smaller groups that are sometimes called “missional communities.” The action is supposed to be in these groups as their members get to know their neighbors, work with these neighbors and maybe other community partners for civic betterment, open up their thoughts and feelings to one another, pray together, share life together, and also talk about Jesus.

If you are not expecting God to bring people to salvation through the Gospel and the sacraments, you're tempted to begin looking for Him and His work elsewhere.<sup>42</sup> Various works of love done according to God's Law might be mistaken for Gospel. Now, such works are quite good and important in their proper time and place. Still, they do not bring about the righteousness that avails before God. The real Good News, the promise of forgiveness and salvation in Christ, can be muted.

It can also be mis-stated. Well-meaning Christians can start conceptualizing the Gospel not by going to Scripture to see what it teaches about Christ and what He has done, but rather by asking what seems to be good news for a given city, or neighborhood, or family, or individual.

Even if Scripture is not ignored, it is often misread. [SLIDE 37:] Years ago, the distinguished Lutheran theologian Hermann Sasse called attention to an abiding difference between Lutherans and the Reformed: “Both acknowledge that the chief article of the Christian faith is the forgiveness of sins,” Sasse observed: “the Lutherans consider it the *whole* content of the Gospel, while the Reformed consider it the *principal* content of the Gospel.”<sup>43</sup>

[SLIDE 38:] If the church is thought of as the sum total of various missional communities, its mission comes to be conceived partly if not mainly as expressing love and bringing about order in the world. Transforming the culture replaces proclaiming the Gospel to every creature in order to seek and save the lost.<sup>44</sup> That is a new *missio*, but not one that grows out of the *promissio*. In short, the church's mission is compromised.

[SLIDE 39:] The church itself can be compromised when it is simply described as the people of God, without further elaboration. So a speaker said at one of the online sessions I viewed. He said that the ontology of the church is: the people of God. Well, the church is the people of God. But I listened in vain for this man to say how these people get to be people of God.<sup>45</sup> We hear differently from the Small Catechism, which duly notes that the church is called, gathered, enlightened, sanctified, and kept in the true faith by the Holy Spirit *through the Gospel*.<sup>46</sup> Also different is the Augsburg Confession, which teaches that "The church is the assembly of saints *in which the gospel is taught purely and the sacraments are administered rightly*."<sup>47</sup> Consider this: "To think of the church only as believers is to think strictly in terms of result. But the Augsburg Confession gives us a great model to speak also in terms of the cause, the doctrine of justification. The Gospel as God's power unto salvation, power to build His church, will rise to prominence in a Gospel-centered church," a church founded on the *promissio*.<sup>48</sup>

[SLIDE 40:] So God creates and sustains the church through His means of grace. Therefore the church takes the public ministry quite seriously, because the Lord has given the church pastors publicly to preach the Gospel and administer the sacraments. Its life is centered around the Divine Service. It will prioritize Evangelism and Missions, bringing the Good News to others. Its members will also do good works, responding to the love of Christ, in their various callings.<sup>49</sup> In short, the church results from God's saving work in Christ, which is brought into the lives of people through the Gospel and sacraments. Through this church, He brings these saving means of grace to others.

That is *missio* from and with the *promissio*. [SLIDE 41:] When people do not recognize that the *promissio* is concretely available in the means of grace, a new and different *missio* comes about. Notwithstanding, however, the key to the *missio* given by God is the *promissio* given by God.

[SLIDE 42:] In sum, then, this first part of our essay has been called “Foundation for Mission,” or, if you will, “Mission: Why?” The theme in this part has been that *promissio* forms the foundation for *missio*. In fact, the *promissio* for all results in *missio* to all. This *missio* is profoundly shaped by the *promissio* offered by God in the Gospel, in Baptism and in the Lord’s Supper.

The church and her pastors have the privilege of bringing this Gospel and these sacraments to people. [SLIDE 43:] The second part of the essay will discuss this activity in practical terms as tomorrow we take up “Mission from the Foundation,” or “Mission, How, Now?”

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<sup>1</sup> 2019 LCMS Res. 4-09.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 7:24-27

<sup>3</sup> 1 Corinthians 3:10-11, NET.

<sup>4</sup> Wilhelm Loehe, *Three Books about the Church*, trans. and ed. James L. Schaff [reprint] (Ft. Wayne: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, 1989), 59.

<sup>5</sup> I am far from the first to juxtapose these Latin words. For example, on December 6, 1972 Martin E. Marty delivered a lecture with the title “*Missio et Promissio*,” an audio recording of which is archived by Concordia Seminary, St. Louis at <https://scholar.csl.edu/theo/1972/Schedule/8/>

<sup>6</sup> Galatians 3:22, NET.

<sup>7</sup> Ap IV 84 in *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, ed. Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 134-135.

<sup>8</sup> “Only if the word is promise (*promissio*) is faith really faith” (Oswald Bayer, *Theology the Lutheran Way*, ed. and trans. Jeffrey G. Silcock and Mark C. Mattes (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 139.

<sup>9</sup> Luke 24:19-27.

<sup>10</sup> Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45; 1 Timothy 2:6.

<sup>11</sup> Romans 4:25.

<sup>12</sup> 2 Corinthians 1:20.

<sup>13</sup> John 20:21-23, NET.

<sup>14</sup> AE 36, 42.

<sup>15</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:7.

<sup>16</sup> See 1 Corinthians 7:29-31.

<sup>17</sup> This paragraph and the preceding one are dependent on Marty’s lecture “*Missio et Promissio*.”

<sup>18</sup> AE 9, 96.

<sup>19</sup> Luke 24:46-47, NET.

<sup>20</sup> Matthew 24:24.

<sup>21</sup> Romans 8:29-30.

<sup>22</sup> 1 Timothy 2:4.

<sup>23</sup> Ezekiel 33:11. See 2 Peter 3:9.

<sup>24</sup> Titus 2:11. See John 3:16.

<sup>25</sup> 1 Timothy 2:6. This even includes those who end up in hell. See 1 Corinthians 8:11-13; Romans 14:15; and 2 Peter 2:1.

<sup>26</sup> 1 John 2:2, NET. See John 1:29.

<sup>27</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:19.

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<sup>28</sup> Romans 5:18-19.

<sup>29</sup> FC SD XI 28 (Kolb and Wengert, 645).

<sup>30</sup> 2 Corinthians 2:14.

<sup>31</sup> The Formula of Concord rejected the following errors: “that God does not want all people to repent and believe the gospel” and “that when God calls us to himself, he does not seriously intend that all people should come to him” (FC Ep XI 17, 18; Kolb and Wengert, 519).

<sup>32</sup> John 10:27-28.

<sup>33</sup> In general, anyone making the statement “The elect will be saved, even if you do nothing” should recall that God has chosen to bring salvation to His elect not immediately, but through His means of grace. If no one were to bring the Gospel and Sacraments to people, no one would be saved. Yet God does have His elect, and they will be saved through the means of grace which God has determined to bring to the world through the church. Therefore “The elect will be saved, even if you do nothing” has never been a general statement to be proclaimed to the whole church.

<sup>34</sup> Alan Hirsch, in a Send Institute webinar “Relaunching Decentralized Churches,” June 22, 2020.

<sup>35</sup> John 15:3; James 1:21.

<sup>36</sup> 1 Peter 3:21.

<sup>37</sup> 1 Corinthians 11:25; Jeremiah 31:31, 34.

<sup>38</sup> This is a quote from the octavo text of the Apology of the Augsburg Confession (Kolb and Wengert, 161-162). Compare the quarto text at a corresponding point: “Let us remember that the Gospel promises the forgiveness of sins with certainty. It would clearly be an abolition of the Gospel if we were to deny that the forgiveness of sins must surely be given by a promise” (Ap IV 264, in Theodore G. Tappert, ed., *The Book of Concord* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959], 146).

<sup>39</sup> Ap XIII 21-22 (Kolb and Wengert, 222).

<sup>40</sup> See Ken Schurb, “Grace, Free and Boundless,” *2015 58<sup>th</sup> Regular Convention, Central Illinois District, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod: Proceedings and Resolutions* (Springfield, Illinois: N.p, n.d.), 42 et passim. See also Ken Schurb, “Missional? The Church in Luther’s Large Catechism,” *Logia: A Journal of Lutheran Theology* 18 (Epiphany, 2009):15-21. Further development of the “missional” movement is suggested in a recent book by Alan J. Roxburgh, *Joining God in the Great Unraveling: Where We Are and What I’ve Learned* (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2021): “Missional is a logic of knowing rooted in God’s self-revelation that has been mostly lost in the Euro-tribal churches” (152).

<sup>41</sup> Jessie Cruickshank, in a Send Institute webinar “Relaunching Decentralized Churches,” June 22, 2020.

<sup>42</sup> “Missional” literature criticizes views of the church that would make it “the primary locus of God’s redemptive activity” (Craig Van Gelder and Dwight Zscheile, *The Missional Church in Perspective* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011], 75, quoted in Christopher B. James, *Church Planting in Post-Christian Soil: Theology and Practice* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2018], 159). Contrast the view of Luther, who taught that “God’s redeeming and justifying activity occurs through and in the church,” as summarized by Bernhard Lohse, *Martin Luther’s Theology: Its Historical and Systematic Development* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999], 281. See also a biblical studies essay by Martin H. Scharlemann, “The Congregation: Place of God’s Presence,” *Concordia Theological Monthly* 35 (November, 1964):613-621.

<sup>43</sup> Hermann Sasse, *Here We Stand* (New York: Harper, 1938), 121, italics original.

<sup>44</sup> “Gospel transforming culture” is the long-term vision of a number of people in the online discussions I viewed; e.g., Scott Moreau, in a Send Institute webinar, “Gospel and Culture in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century,” June 24, 2020.

<sup>45</sup> J. D. Payne, in a Send Institute webinar, “Churches Planting Churches as Normative,” June 25, 2020.

<sup>46</sup> SC II 6 (Kolb and Wengert, 355).

<sup>47</sup> CA VII 1 (Kolb and Wengert, 43, italics added). Compare the Smalcald Articles, which aver that “a seven-year-old child knows what the church is: holy believers and ‘the little sheep *who hear the voice of their shepherd*’” (SA III xii 2; Kolb and Wengert, 324-325, italics added).

<sup>48</sup> J. A. O. Preus [III], “To the Ends of the Earth: A Gospel-Centered Church in Time Singing God’s Praises in Eternity,” *Convention Proceedings, 60<sup>th</sup> Regular Convention, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, St. Louis, MO, July 11-17, 1998* (N.p. n.d.), 81.

<sup>49</sup> These are basically the section headings in Preus, 81.