

Arizona - California District Pastors Conference - October 21-23, 2014

St. Mark's Lutheran Church, Citrus Heights, California

Proposed minutes of and notes on the conference, subject to anyone's corrections, additions, deletions.

TUESDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 21, 2014

The opening service commemorated St. James of Jerusalem. The worship was enhanced by St. Mark's Lutheran elementary school's 5th-8th grades "Proclamation Choir." The preacher, Pastor Guy Marquardt encouraged us to practice the "Humility that Comes from Wisdom." He reminded us that pastors need to recognize this scripture as a "wake-up call" to resist false modesty as indicative of sinful pride, to recognize as selfish ambition the disappointment we feel when we don't receive the praise we feel we deserve for our accomplishments. Satan would inculcate these characteristics in us, but James' inspired advice leads us to repent, relying on Jesus' perfect purity as he focused on providing our salvation.. That perfect purity led him to consider the interests of the whole human race, that is, their salvation, as more important than his own life. That perfect purity is given to us as a mantle of righteousness from God through faith in Jesus Christ. Conscious of and grateful for that gift, we will be empowered to use every opportunity to glorify Jesus in proclaiming the Gospel. In doing so, as grateful imitators of Christ, but not considering ourselves equal to him, we will be able to say in true humility that we are wise and understanding.

The conference was called to order at 11:20am.

- A motion was made, seconded, and carried that we approve the agenda, as presented online. (A copy is included in the secretary's file.)
- A motion was made, seconded, and carried that we approve the 2013 Arizona-California District Pastors Conference minutes, as presented online. (A copy is included in the secretary's file.)

The role call was taken.

- Present: 80 active parish pastors, 3 retired pastors, 2 staff ministers, 2 vicars, and 1 guest, Pastor Malach; a total of 88 in the assembly..

The chairman asked the assembly for direction regarding filling the vacant office of "program coordinator", formerly held by Pastor Jon Bauer. It was agreed that the position should be filled to balance the workload of preparing the conference agenda.

The chairman opened the floor to nominations for the position of "program coordinator.

- A motion was made, seconded and carried to nominate Pastor Ross Else for the position.
- A motion was made, seconded and carried to nominate Pastor Paul Meitner
- A motion was made, seconded and carried to close nominations.
- The assembly was asked to vote by a show of hands.

Pastor Paul Meitner was elected to the position of "program coordinator."

Pastor Jason Schmidt presented his printed report on Youth and Family Ministry. A copy is included in the secretary's file.

District Secretary Pastor Steve Gabb requested that all information pertinent to the business and ministries of the district be forwarded to him for uploading to the district website.

Pastor Joshua Stahmann announced that the District Nominating Committee would meet immediately after the assembly was recessed for lunch.

Pastor David Clark announced that a Pastoral Institute will be held at Grace, Glendale, Arizona, January 19 and 20, 2015. He distributed printed details about the institute and encouraged early registration and hotel reservations due to the SuperBowl scheduled to be held in Glendale this year. A copy is included in the secretary's files.

The secretary announced that dues are due and that essay suggestions are welcome. The strong box and check list for 'paid', as well as the binder for writing down essay suggestions are both on the shelf just outside the main sanctuary doors.

Pastor Steve Hilmer gave the district's Commission on Evangelism report. A copy is included in the secretary's file.

Pastor Casmer led the assembly in a singing a hymn as a prayer before it was recessed for lunch.

TUESDAY AFTERNOON, OCTOBER 21, 2014

Pastor Aaron Christie, Trinity, Waukesha, Wisconsin, was called forward to deliver his essay, “The Quest for New Treasurer Can be Treacherous. A copy is included in the secretary’s file.

At 2:45pm, the assembly was recessed for a fifteen minute break.

At 3:05pm, the assembly was reconvened.

Discussion of the essay. Some of the comments offered follow.

- Good worship needs to be accompanied by planned outreach. It should not supplant an active evangelism program.
- Do not discourage the limited number of musicians/singers that are available by setting the bar too high in respect to the complexity of the compositions chosen. Remember: “The Lord blessed us at this time and in this place” with this skill-set. Encourage whoever is willing to participate by recognizing their skill level and providing appropriate music and opportunities to present it. This also involves knowing your congregation’s context and culture in respect to the acceptance of such performances.
- Avoid resentment by stressing excellence (well-practiced for the best presentation) over opulence (complex musical structures). Instill in musicians, singers, and congregation alike an attitude of gratitude for faithfulness over excellence, as well, so that those who work hard to glorify God in music are reassured that such is the goal, to glorify God.
- Take some reassurance in the knowledge that the Holy Spirit gives gifts to small congregations and large, as He will, for the common good.
- It is important to nourish a family atmosphere that appreciates effort as much as excellence.
- At the same time, the musician must realize that he is not just, “playing for God,” but also needs to elevate and enhance the worship of his fellow believers. Yet it is true, a higher skill level combined with a more musically aware (educated expectations) congregation, the more open to criticism are both the performer and the performance.
- The new hymnal project is “lots of hard work”; (Christie’s comment) The hymnal committee is analyzing all the hymns in the current Christian Worship with a mindset towards which hymns to retain, which hymns to drop, and which new hymns to include. “I (Christie) am committed to advocating for simpler harmonies for the pew edition and to providing piano/guitar accompaniments for every hymn. Some new tunes might be written, and those hymns in the current CW that will be dropped will still be available, perhaps in an electronic format of some kind.
- It was noted that “excellence” in music is vital in an evangelism program; poorly performed music can become an embarrassment and may discourage the continuing attendance of newcomers. The musician must avoid “shoddy” efforts by rehearsing with a focus on performing well.
- It was remarked that doing the “simple” arrangement well is far better than doing complex arrangements poorly. In other words, don’t sing four part harmony if you don’t have the personnel with the skill sets to do that.
- Contentment with mediocrity of any kind at any level of skill must be discourage.
- The lack of training and exposure to performance opportunities needs to be addressed if any future generation of magicians/singers are going to be encouraged to rise from “amateur” status (just playing at home) to well-honed worship service performers. This can be addressed by knowing your students and knowing your congregation’s context. Gentle persuasion in respect to the musicians and an awareness of your congregation’s acceptance of the initial efforts of any given musician or singer given member can lead to brief, but effective presentations as an offering of praise during the offering, school chapels, leading up to presentations in the church worship service.
- Initiating a music / instrument instruction program as a means of meeting and greeting the community around the church may not only serve the church by drawing in the unchurched in the community, but also might become a draw in those communities where public schools are eliminating such instruction

from their curriculums.

- It was also stated that we should challenge ourselves and others in our congregations to learn now to play an instrument, to learn to play and play well, to learn how to read the literature that addresses various levels of musicians and help ours to select what they can handle now, as well as encourage them to grow in their ability to handle more complex music later.
- The new hymnal committee will curvy all “e” resources in order to provide digital versions of the final hardcover book. Even hymns that are not selected may very well be easily obtained via Google or other available search engines.
- It was noted that songs considered to be of a contemporary nature will be in the new hymnbook.
- It was suggested that, if there is a default setting for a given hymn, it should be the simpler setting. If needed, the more complex setting may be purchased.
- It was further noted that pre-recorded music should not become the default, as opposed to available musicians, or they might be discouraged because the congregation prefers to play recorded “excellence” rather that help develop a budding church musician.

There being no further request for comment, Pastor Christie led the assembly through a “sampler” of “Music for the Small Parish, Choir and Congregation.” He accompanied himself in leading singing snippets of several of the samples. Sources for obtaining the same were also listed.

It was moved, seconded, and approved that we thank Pastor Christie for his presentation. And we did.

The floor was given to Pastor Matt Vogt who used a printed report (copy included in the secretary’s file) and a power point presentation to update us on our own district’s home missions.

Pastor Joel Gaertner, representing The Lutheran Home, Belle Plain, Minnesota, encouraged attendance at the Christian Leadership Experience to be in January, 2015, in Scottsdale, Arizona. He cited November 9, 2014 as the early registration deadline. He also noted the cross pollination taking place between the Highland Regency House (assisted living center) and MLC’s early childhood education center, as well as MLC pastor track students leading devotions at HCH. Residents from that facility also attend chapel at MLC once weekly followed by lunch on campus.

Pastor Gaertner tthen led us in our closing devotion utilizing the “Jesus Cares” standard order of worship, “Worship at the Cross”,

- explaining each segment’s symbol’s meaning prior to the assembly’s participation in that segment,
- explaining how that segment parallels the liturgical order in CW,
- noting along the way its use for elementary school children, as an outreach tool to the special needs children in the families in our community, and for older adults in nursing homes.
- (He emphasized that while any given congregation might not have special needs people in their midst, there are plenty of such families in the neighborhoods surrounding our parishes and most of those, in his experience, are unchurched.)

Before recessing for the evening, the secretary announced

- that the conference opening worship service offering was \$625 and that thought should be given regarding the individual or organization that might benefit from such a donation,
- That Pastor Bill Bein is look for a district congregation to host the 2015 National O.W.L.S. convention.

The conference was recessed until 9am Wednesday morning.

WEDNESDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 22, 2014

At 9am, Pastor Frey led the opening devotion. St. Mark’s elementary school children’s “Jubilations Choir” (grades K-2) joined us for the devotion. St. Mark’s elementary school choir enhanced our worship with the song, “We Want to Bear Much Fruit for Jesus“. Based on Matthew 21:33-43, Pastor Frey used a very straightforward law and gospel presentation. He emphasized for all the children present

(including all those adults of childlike faith) that our works are not perfect, that God can destroy in Hell all those who have not been perfect. But God sent His Son who suffered the full wrath of God when he was crucified so that we would not have to suffer it. And through the Gospel in Holy Baptism, God withdraws that wrath over our sins and holds us in His arms, and then leads us safely through life to Heaven. God loves “you, proved it by dying on the cross, and now Heaven is the anticipation of a place where only love exists, and God’s great glory is fully revealed.

The secretary reiterated that dues were due and Pastor Bein’s request for a host congregation for the 2015 National Convention of the O.W.L.S.

At 9:30am, Pastor Mark Zarling, president of Martin Luther College, was called forward to lead us in his interactive lecture, “Quo Vadis WELS Lutheran Schools?” The lecture’s printed outline is replicated below and a copy of same is in the secretary’s file. However, as the lecture involved feedback from the assembly, some of which was written on a whiteboard, as the lecture was supported by a series of power point slides whose contents would take too much time to replicate here, and as the secretary’s own notes would not be able to replicate the dynamic and edification provided by the give and take of the lecture style presentation, there is no attempt to expand on the outline given below.

However, Pastors Gabb and Basset are working to upload the power point slides to our district website.

➤ Responsive Prayer

PART ONE: Diagnosis of the Situation

- Why is it difficult, even dangerous, to try to pinpoint a diagnosis?
- Quick Stats - Factors that led to closure / “Rebuttal” of those facts
- More Stats
- Some Anecdotal case studies

PART TWO - Quo Vadis - “Back to the Solas” means “Back to the Bush”

- Objectives for the road map to this section

PART THREE - Solus Christus is Scripture’s Exclusive Claim

- The Tetragrammaton
- List some “I AM” statements of Jesus

Christ Alone shapes our understanding of the world

- Three “takeaway” truths

Christ Alone shapes our understanding of divinity

- One key truth and one relevant application

Christ Alone shapes our understanding of humanity

- Two Reasons “the Angel of the LORD” is a fitting title for the Christ

Christ Alone Shapes our teaching

- List the sacred in these so-called secular subjects

- (It was suggested that each member of the assembly email Koelpin for his essay, “The Cross - God’s Mark in Human Life and History.”)

Christ Alone shapes our witness

- The Difference Between apologetics and polemics is...
- Explain the danger of seeing the trees but not the forest...
- Two examples of classroom techniques

PART FOUR - Quo Vadis - Moving Forward under Christ

- What the Mission of the Church teaches us about Lutheran Schools.
- The mission of the Church speaks to the training of children: The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.
- The mission of the Church speaks to the training of parents to understand and assume their role
- The mission of the Church sees the Lutheran school within the comprehensive ministry of the congregation.
- The mission of the Church encourages the Lutheran School to be a bridge to the community, i.e., a

planned and principled mission arm of the congregation.

PART FIVE - Some resources moving forward under God...

Valleskey's papers - WLS seminary file

Commission for Lutheran Schools - funding for "Second Wind."

The translation of "The Battle for Christian Schools as The Battle for Christian Worldview"

Publication of "monograph" from August 2015

Kenneth Kremer's comparison charts of two competing world views.

(For clarification regarding the specific nature and content of these resources, please contact President Zarling.)

The first part of President Zarling's presentation ended at 11:45am.

The floor was given to Pastor Richard Kogler to report on the Ministry of Christian Giving.

His presentation was accompanied by power point slides and emphasized that Christ's love compels us to

- Give "transformational gifts", (gifts that can make a difference in a congregation's / our Synod's ministry,)
- To celebrate God's grace, indicated by the percentage of giving to Him reflected in personal income offerings and congregational commitment to the CMO, but
- To recognize the need to grow and that we have the ability to increase the percentages of our giving
- To do estate planning that includes composing a will that may focus on charitable bequests, the mission of the congregation and of the Synod overall.

The assembly was encouraged to

- Share the good news of God's generosity and how to respond to that grace,
- Share available gift planning opportunities
- **Gain more information at WELS.net/Ministry of Christian Giving**
- Contact Pastor John Stern for information about and presentations regarding current gifts that support our Synod's work,
- Contact Pastor Rich Kogler for information about and presentations regarding deferred gifts.

Both Pastors can provide Christian giving assistance and recommendations, including

- Options to help plan for one's family's future, for the Lord's work, and how to retain income for those purposes,
- Assist your congregation with ongoing education workshops regarding planned giving,
- Refer you to Biblical resources, stewardship tips, stewardship programs, "Heart in Focus" financial planning, WELS Endowments.

Such "transformational gifts" will assist in

- Celebrating Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary's and Luther Prep's anniversaries by providing funds to help eliminate debt and complete / repair / sustain various maintenance projects,
- Help WELS eliminate 5,000,000 in debt by the end of the 2015-2016 fiscal year.

Challenges remain to

- Keep God's grace and goodness before us,
- Study God's word to learn how to live generously and to be motivated to do it,
- Get the word out about planned giving and endowments so as to put the future ministry of congregations and Synod on solid footing for the future.

The floor was given to Pastor Allen K. Schroeder as chairman of the district's Ministry of Christian Giving. He focused on the importance of maintaining, increasing, and reporting the congregational CMO and the timely reporting of CMO for 2015 and congregational statistics for 2014.

The assembly was recessed for lunch and ended the morning session with the singing of the common doxology, "Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow."

WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON, OCTOBER 22, 2014

The assembly reconvened at 1:35pm.

President Mark Zarling was given the floor to continue his interactive lecture, "Quo Vadis

WELS Lutheran Schools.

At 2:30pm, a motion was made, seconded and approved to give President Zarling an additional 15 minutes to complete his lecture.

At 2:45pm, a motion was made, seconded and approved to thank President Zarling for his presentation. And we did so.

President Mark Zarling proceeded to give his report on Synodical schools. Printed reports for Luther Prep and for Martin Luther College were distributed. Copies are included in the secretary's file.

He noted that

- Young men are not going to college and cited our national culture's ongoing emasculation of men as one reason for that,
- At 153, MLC's preseminary enrollment is at its lowest since 1959.
- Teaching overloads need to be reduced in order to maintain accreditation in the future.
- Additional highlights were presented via power point.

He encouraged the assembly to support our Synodical schools' mission by prayer for the solvency of the overall system due to challenges caused by

- Rising expenses from salary and benefits,
- Cost of implementing compliance regulations, noting
- The Clary act -the responsibility for reporting all crime on or adjacent to the campus (which in MLC's case would include all of Flandrau State Park.

President Zarling was thanked for his report.

The floor was given to Pastor Aaron Mueller to report for the H.E.L.P. Foundation. He noted

- That anyone can give a portion of state tax dollars to support tuition assistance for our schools' students
- That everyone should go to helpscholarships.org and view a 2 minute 20 second video that teaches how easy it is to make such a donation,
- That every layperson should find out and report to H.E.L.P. (or Aaron Mueller himself) whether his / her business is a "C corporation" because there is a pool of \$50,000,000 from which H.E.L.P. may draw additional funds for tuition assistance.

The assembly was recessed for its afternoon break.

After the break, Pastor Don Pieper was called forward to present his essay, "The Broken Seige", a confirmation of the unity of Isaiah and a method of resolving the "unsettling" ending of Isaiah, The Gospel of the Old Testament. After reading through to page 21, discussion noted that Heaven is the abode of all God's people for all eternity which may evolve into either reipristination or restoration, but will include definitely include soul and body together in that resurrection glory, Every comparison limps, but the idea of a "prism" to represent the point of view change from what is Isaiah 1 through to Isaiah 2 is meant to separate the themes of the two parts so that the lesser (historical facts) may become metaphors for the greater (the glory of Jesus' passion history and his glorious return on Judgment Day), to transform vile facts into something more, something for the believer to desire.

The floor was given to Pastor Jon Buchholz to give his district president's report. A copy is included in the secretary's file. In the discussion that followed it was emphasized that

- We should try to determine the reasons for the high number of brothers absent from this conference and
- Seek ways to encourage attendance as part of each individual's and the conference's overall growth and education,
- Which "ways" might include a means of providing financial subsidy for those brothers whose congregations cannot afford to pay the costs involved in attending the conference,
- But each circuit should show concern for any circuit brother's absence, and, where and when it does not violate confidentiality, have the district presidium follow up on that concern, keeping those officers informed in respect to financial need (hardship) that might preclude a brother from the benefits accrued through attendance at this conference.

The secretary was directed to submit the list of those who excused themselves from the

conference to the district praesidium.

Discussion regarding the president's report continued and included

- Underscoring the importance of maintaining membership in the WELS VEBA health insurance program for called workers because it offers superior coverage compared to other policies especially in the area of long term disability,
- A reflection on the Christian Leadership Conference which cited
 - ✓ No sinister content nor any attempt to denigrate Scripture in the conference's agenda,
 - ✓ The fact that the C.O.P. does not endorse such "free" conferences, as a general rule,
 - ✓ Lack of information regarding the content of all presentations to be made at the conference,
 - ✓ Missteps along the way by the conference organizers,
 - ✓ Full vetting of the conference speakers and content has not taken place,
 - ✓ Pastor Gaertner willingness to answer any questions regarding the conference.
- A current review of the national armed forces military chaplaincy (Koelpin serving as chairman),
- A broad-ranging discussion regarding how the general pastorate of the WELS should view C.O.P. produced documents regarding doctrine and practice, especially in the area of marriage and the Scripturally sound grounds for divorce. Points made during the discussion included
 - ✓ The need to take into consideration the broad latitude of pastoral perspective in such matters,
 - ✓ The need to agree on the core principles governing marriage and divorce,
 - ✓ The need to reinforce the application of such core principles in a pastoral fashion,
 - ✓ The need for Scripture and Scripture alone to be the sole and final judge regarding principles and application of the same to life,
 - ✓ The need to determine if involvement with and/or addiction to pornography is a breach of the marital covenant
 - ✓ The need to articulate the spectrum of sexual sins that can / do lead to a breach of the marital covenant,
 - ✓ The need to avoid hard and fast rules of practice without negating the core principles that must be reinforced,
 - ✓ The need to avoid viewing the C.O.P. productions as an establishment of "canon law",
 - ✓ The need to evaluate each case on its own merits,
 - ✓ The value of studying Deutschlander's, "The Narrow Lutheran Middle", as a means of learning and applying evangelical practice in our enforcement of the key principles,
 - ✓ The need to avoid giving contradictory advice that might interfere in another brother's ministry,
 - ✓ The need to be aware of the C.O.P.'s documents and to have questions asked and general agreement achieved,
 - ✓ The need to work through C.O.P. documents in circuit meetings,
 - ✓ The need at the circuit level to share pastoral experiences and work towards consensus in practice,
 - ✓ The value of discussing casuistry with circuits.
- It was noted that
 - ✓ The C.O.P. document on marriage has not been finalized for release, and
 - ✓ The C.O.P. document on fellowship will be released soon, but is currently focused on fellowship practices with our Lutheran High Schools,
 - ✓ The C.O.P. document on fellowship will be expanded and modified to include all fields of ministerial practice.
- A concern was expressed that there should be a more orderly approach to the formation of C.O.P. documents, especially in the realm of soliciting information from other brothers in the field regarding the issues being studied by the C.O.P., so that feedback can be given to the C.O.P.
- That District president Pastor Jon Buchholz made it clear that feedback is encouraged and welcomed, and
- That the 2013 revision of Mischke's 1989 presentation on marriage is itself being reviewed thoroughly now.

The district president was thanked for his report.

**Pastor Johnold Strey announced the supper provided on campus by the host congregation and encouraged the brothers to attend the hymn festival celebrating the 30th anniversary of the congregation's Schwantz organ, featuring Aaron Christie on organ, that evening,
The assembly was recessed until Thursday morning, 9a.m.
Pastor Jason Schmidt led the assembly in a closing prayer.**

THURSDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 23, 2014

Pastor Rick Johnson led the opening devotion. Based on 2 Corinthians 6:1-13, he emphasized the importance of having a passion for sharing the Gospel. He cited the passion of two fellow pastors who ministered to himself and his wife while she was battling the affliction of cancer. He noted the opportunity God gave him to witness to a total stranger who was battling that same affliction as it attacked her husband. He encouraged us who know our Savior, who know that we will be with Him in Heaven, to seize any opportunity to share that good news, whether we do it with memorable wisdom or only articulate it in an unstructured (not "professional") fashion as the right man God placed at the right moment to plant a seed in a given person's struggle in life. We need to emphasize for ourselves, our fellow believers, and those who may not have any connection with us all, that Jesus will be with us as we struggle here and will be with us in Heaven when the struggle is over. Either way, Jesus will be with us, His forgiveness alleviating our most urgent need. That forgiveness opening our eyes to the reality of Heaven, and the presence of Jesus in our lives.

The secretary announced that the opening worship service offering totaled \$635, and that the body should be considering to whom or to what that offering should be donated. He also announced that dues are still due by some and that we welcome any essay suggestions.

Pastor John Kehren was given the floor to report on Special Ministries. A copy is included in the secretary's file.

Pastor Aaron Boehm's report on Adult Discipleship was distributed.

Pastor Don Pieper was given the floor to continue his essay on, "The Broken Seige."

The discussion that follow noted

- That the information provided in the essay regarding the historical accuracy of the events cited reinforces President Zarlring's point that a sound apologetic can be useful in disarming critics who, without solid historical foundation, seek to undermine the authority and application of Scripture,
- That the Valley of Hinnom, first and foremost as a location where the cremation of 186,000 bodies took place, but also as a place where child sacrifice took place and as a garbage dump during Jesus time on earth, could, regardless of how you describe it, serve as an excellent metaphor for the abhorrent nature of Hell, but especially in the light of the defeat of Sennacharib's forces, a metaphor to reveal God's ultimate victory over all his enemies on Judgment Day,
- That the current generation of Jewish archaeologists are digging up facts that provide validation of the essay's thesis,
- That, while the Holy Spirit convinces us to take the Scriptures as self-authenticating, and its teachings are absolute truth based on historical facts, there is a need to denigrate the ongoing suggestion by some that Christian doctrine should be an evolving process that keeps in step with current philosophy, psychology, and morality,
- That the Bible is history, but not primarily a history book, its main goal being to connect the supernatural, that is, the impact of God's omniscience, omnipresent, and omnipotence on history to me, a natural person burdened by a sinful human nature,
- That the Bible is not there to prove history, but to record history,
- That Isaiah leads us from the destruction of kings through the prism of the broken siege to the Messianic Kingdom where the One coming (King of kings) kneels before us and says, "I will take away your sins",
- That the essay has led the majority of the brothers present to look at Isaiah with different eyes and a refocused desire to mine its treasures,
- That Pastor Pieper has a nine week youth group course of nine lessons that he will make available to

anyone who wishes to have it.

A motion was made, seconded and carried to thank Pastor Pieper.

A motion was made, seconded and carried to submit the essay, “The Broken Siege”, to the editors of the Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly for inclusion in a future issue of that publication.

A motion was made, seconded and carried to direct the opening worship service offering of \$635 to the Jesus Cares Ministry.

It was announced that a Nevada congregation is needed to host the 2015 conference.

It was moved, seconded and carried to accept the invitation of Green Valley Lutheran Church, Henderson, Nevada, to meet there for our 2015 AZ-CA District Pastors Conference.

It was announced the Metro West Circuit will be responsible for the 2015 conference devotions.

It was announced that the 2015 AZ-CA District Pastors Conference will be held on October 20,21, 22, 2015.

The brothers of every circuit were encouraged to provide photo copies of the conference essays to those brothers in their circuit who were absent from this year’s conference.

It was announced that Pastor Strey will meet with Nevada (Las Vegas) congregations to discuss the details of a School of Worship enrichment workshop in their area.

A motion was made, seconded and carried that the Arizona-California Pastors Conference give praise to God and extend its thanks to

- The pastors, school teachers, students, staff and members of St. Mark’s, Citrus Heights, California, for
- ✓ Hosting the conference, and their generosity and hospitality in opening the doors of the congregation to us,
- ✓ Obtaining hotel accommodations and making transportation available where and when necessary,
- ✓ For providing a variety of delicious baked good, snacks, fruit, vegetables, and beverages,
- ✓ For hosting Wednesday evening’s supper and providing an abundance of food and desserts,
- ✓ For cleaning up after us,
- ✓ For providing excellent musical accompaniment for our worship service and devotions,
- ✓ For the excellent performances of the Proclamation and Jubilation children’s choirs, and to
- Those who planned and reproduced printed formats for the opening worship service and the daily devotions,
- Those who served us in worship as presiding pastors, preachers, and devotion leaders, communicating and uniting us in God’s grace through word and sacrament,
- Those who provided musical accompaniment for the worship service and devotions,

- St. Mark’s, Pastors Strey and Schmidt, for organizing and presenting the Wednesday evening hymn festival, as well as those district pastors who provided summations/devotions for each hymn, the instrumentalists, and organist Aaron Christie, for the excellent accompaniment provided for each hymn,
- Those who reported regarding their assigned area of district or syndical ministry, and especially
- Those who labored to research, write, produce power points for, and then present Scripturally sound, edifying essays and lectures for this conference.

There being no further items of study or report before the conference and no further requests for the floor, a motion was made, seconded and approved to adjourn the 2014 AZ-CA District Pastors Conference.

Pastor Dan Wagenknecht led the conference in its closing devotion. Using Isaiah 5:1-7, he emphasized how blessed we are to be part of God’s wonderful vineyard, to have been blessed with such amazing music skills, theological perception with our section of that vineyard, though we do not deserve to be so blessed. He personally acknowledged that he has been a lifelong recipient of God’s blessings, including his Mother and Father’s exemplary relationship, the Christian training and counsel they used to nurture him in his childhood, the Lord’s goodness throughout his teenage years at MLPS, NWC, and SEM, as well as during his pastoral ministry in circuits, conferences, districts, and synod; throughout his life he was surrounded by God’s word and God’s people. So have we all. Thus, in this scripture, the warning is that we do not take all these incredible and undeserved blessings for granted. Though we did

not earn or deserve them, God has been planning to give them and distributed them throughout the generations of His vineyard; from Adam and Eve in the vineyard of Eden, to Noah and the Vineyard of the Ark, to Israel and the planting that sought to preserve the promise of the Son who would inherit the vineyard. Always, God the Planter, and we the beneficiaries of that His planting. We should be careful not to misuse our blessings, to take them for granted, but be prepared to see this reading in the light of that prism of the Vineyard and God's picture perfect promise of a perfect deliverance to come.

The conference closed its final devotion singing, "May the Grace of Christ our Savior."

Respectfully submitted for correction, rebuke, instruction and training in how to accurately record the events of this conference,

Pastor Bill Herrmann